

**Centralising the Social and the Cultural in Leadership Praxis and
Development: A Reconceptualisation of Educational Leadership
in England and Qatar International Schools**

Nidal Al Haj Sleiman

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Faculty of Education and Society
University College London (UCL)

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DECLARATION

I, Nidal Al Haj Sleiman, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Signature: _____

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Above all, I am grateful to my husband, Imad and my children, Reine, Nasser, Elissar, and Hala for their ongoing support. Your presence by my side is priceless and fills my heart with joy. To my mother, Hiam, my sisters and brothers, Razan, Obeida, Khalil and Zakaria, your unconditional love was all I needed throughout the whole path. To my late father, Ahmed, whose words and actions are my ongoing source of pride and inspiration. I dedicate this labour of love to your memory.

ABSTRACT

International schools have largely increased in number and diversity over the last three decades, however, 'research literature on leadership in international schools is still thin on the ground' (Lee and Walker, 2018, p.465). This study contributes to the field by examining leadership praxis, leadership development, and the relationship of leaders with the social and cultural capital of teachers and students in international schools in England and Qatar. To unravel the complexity of leadership in this context, the study draws upon three theoretical dimensions: educational leadership theories, leadership development theories and Bourdieu's social theory.

This research examines the theory, practice, and development of leadership in international schools, and analyses its relationship with the social and cultural capital of students and teachers. The research uses a mixed-methodology consisting of a questionnaire (N=49 principals) and five case-studies (schools), which included individual and group interviews with leaders, teachers and students, document analysis and field analysis. Findings are generally consistent with previous studies and confirmed that leadership is largely influenced by organisational structures and frameworks and disengaged from its social and cultural fields. Leadership of teaching and learning takes place widely through shared, distributed, and informal approaches induced by middle leaders and teachers. Furthermore, the findings exhibit broadly designed models of curriculum and pedagogy that largely misrecognise teachers and students' capital. The discussion offers a detailed discussion of leadership practice and learning, highlights the gaps driven by the needs of the field, and provides a sociological analysis of international schools and their influence on leadership and the experiences of teachers and students. The thesis concludes by proposing a theoretical framework for leadership and learning in international schools that recognises social and cultural justice and centralises the social and cultural capital of teachers and students in leadership praxis and learning.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This study contributes to the body of research studying educational leadership in international schools, particularly in England and Qatar. Through its focus on leadership praxis and development in these multicultural contexts, the study responds to the need for further research in the field. By linking leadership and learning to the field, the thesis not only discusses how leaders lead but how they learn to lead, and how leading and learning can be effective and responsive in the context of internationalisation. The thesis presents the perspectives of leaders in different positions, while also centring the voices of teachers and students and arguing for recognising and representing their cultural and social capital in their schools.

The core concepts, outcomes, theoretical and methodological engagements driven by this research were disseminated in ten academic conferences, five journal articles and three blog articles in English and Arabic (see Appendix A). In addition, I developed and led several workshops, roundtable discussions and panels internationally to school leaders and teachers in relation to my research. These different forms of engagement contribute to developing the impact of my research in many ways. Conference presentations and publications contribute to impact in academic communities. Blogs widen public engagement and encourage productive conversations with different stakeholders. Workshops, alternatively, contribute to engaging practitioners with the knowledge and the practical insights produced by this research, while webinars and panels enable the involvement with the thoughts of others around my research areas.

Based on the outcomes of this research, I co-founded the South West Asia and North Africa (SWANA) Forum for Social Justice in and through education; a community that initiates and supports discussions on recognition, representation, and engagement in educational spaces. The Forum was funded by UCL ChangeMakers (2021 and 2022) to engage researchers and practitioners within

and beyond UCL. Through this forum, I shared my work on leadership in international schools and the social and cultural particularities of their communities, and co-created a network of researchers and practitioners that continues to shape my knowledge and the impact of my research. In addition, I was awarded a visiting fellowship by the Centre for Lebanese Studies at the University of Cambridge to develop the outcomes of my doctoral research in the context of Lebanon. I was also awarded a British Academy postdoctoral fellowship at Ulster University, which focuses on educational leadership research in the Middle East. Both fellowships are opportunities to expand my research impact and develop my contribution to the fields of educational leadership and international education.

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GLOSSARY

BELMAS British Educational Leadership and Management Society

BLM Black Lives Matter

BSO British Schools overseas

CBME Council of British Schools in the Middle East

CIS Council of International Schools

CRL Culturally Relevant Leadership

CRP Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

CRSL Culturally Responsive Schools Leadership

COBIS Council of British International Schools

CS	Case study
DIEJ	Diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice
GCC	Gulf Countries Council
Gen Z	People born between 1996 and 2010
HPL	High Performance Learning
IBDP	International Baccalaureate Diploma Program
IBO	International Baccalaureate Organisation
IPDA	International Professional Development Association
ISI	Independent Schools Inspectorate
Millennials	People born between 1981 and 1995
ML	Middle Leader
MYP	Middle Years Program
PLT	Primary leadership team
PYP	Primary Years Program
RDSS	Research Data Storage Space
REDCap	Research Electronic Data Capture
SL	Senior Leader

1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The story behind this research: Professional background and positionality

1.1.1 My professional background

My doctoral research was inspired by own journey in teaching and school leadership in socially and professionally distinct contexts. I started my career as a teacher in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon amidst the reverberations of a sixteen-year civil war and a fragmented state. My first teaching experience took place at a semi-governmental sectarian school, where most students were displaced from the occupied villages in South Lebanon, or from the rural areas in the Bekaa Valley. In 2006 I was displaced with my family to Qatar, where I joined a governmental school for girls as a department coordinator and later as a vice-principal. The school was located in a rural, largely tribal Qatari neighbourhood, with a few minority groups. It was also a part of the Education Reform initiative that started in 2004 and transformed previously called public schools into independent schools characterised by independence, accountability, and choice. My middle and senior leadership experience in this school has immensely shaped my skills and perspectives, particularly with regards to instructional leadership and school improvement and effectiveness. Concurrently, I served as a trainer for incoming primary school teachers and was involved in the development of the foundation curriculum and the professional development modules for early years teachers. Additionally, I took part in the development and initial implementation of the National Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders. My experiences in Lebanon and Qatar have significantly enriched my professional journey, albeit in different ways.

Five years later, I accepted an offer for a principal position at an international for-profit school, that could be classified as type C according to Hayden and

Thompson's typology (Hayden & Thompson, 1995). The school hosted students and staff from multiple ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. The school offered the English Curriculum and French as a foreign language. Qataris and other Muslim students studied Islamic education in Arabic and English, while Arabic language was taught as a first language to Arabic speaking and as a foreign language to non-Arabic speaking students. This school was my first encounter with a stratified—and widely normalised—wage policy based on nationality and cultural background rather than qualifications. Furthermore, the school environment exhibited several forms of cultural hierarchies and dominant narratives and belief systems. Besides internal school issues, the school existed in a patriarchal, business-oriented, and administratively centralised ecosystem. My principalship journey encountered two major challenges: the first was pedagogical and instructional change in a high-grades instrumental culture, and the second was advocating for student learning, teachers, and staff development in a for-profit context. The seven-year journey was draining but highly rewarding. I am forever proud of the multiple accomplishments the school has made at every single level. I engaged in different forms of learning and exploration throughout this time, but simultaneously developed an unstoppable drive to inquire further and see the field through different eyes. Hence, I started working towards my doctoral research.

1.1.2 The researcher's position

Being a former principal and a researcher at the same time is intellectually and emotionally engaging. I had significant knowledge about the work of school leaders and the environments in which they work, besides a deep sense of relatedness and appreciation for leaders, teachers, and students. I was familiar with the cultural and social dynamics, the political and administrative 'rules of the game', and the tensions along and beyond the lines. My professional background helped me to easily navigate the content, context, and relevance of my research data. Nonetheless, my goal was to inquire and construct knowledge through my

research. Immersing myself in literature on reflexivity and positionality besides a wide range of readings in theory and methodological rigour helped me to develop critical awareness and the ability to distinguish between my prior knowledge and my research. Reflexivity requires 'self-consciousness and self-assessment of my views and position and how this might, may, or have directly and indirectly influenced design, execution, and interpretation of the findings' (Holmes, 2020, p. 2). My positionality incorporated how—as a researcher—I have constructed and viewed my identit(ies) and how others viewed them (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). While designing my research and during data collection and processing, I was consciously examining my perspectives and the influence of my social and educational experiences on my research. According to Bourdieu (1988), a researcher's attempt to be neutral and anonymous is never successful. In knowledge production, the research's identity is connected with their ontological and epistemological perceptions as their values and philosophical position are expressed in their research approach and methods.

While my professional identity was largely dominant during my leadership experience, moving to the academic world unfolded additional layers, which I refer to as complex identities. Besides being a researcher and a former practitioner, I am also a migrant woman and a mother who has experienced international schools as a parent for many years. I have experienced living in the Middle East, Europe, and the United Kingdom at different stages of my life. My identity and life history have a significant impact on my perceptions of the world, particularly the experience of migration and internationalisation and the invisible line of privilege distinguishing them. During the data collection process, I was identified differently by participants: in Qatar I was introduced by the principal as a researcher from UCL, London, while in England I was addressed as a Muslim Arab researcher, perhaps constructing an imagined identity that fits my name. I was an 'other' to all of them, but the way I was 'othered' varied depending on their own position. I started my research journey by acknowledging my prior experience and positionality, with the purpose of examining and understanding the field further.

Through this engagement, I examined not only my research subjects and contexts, but also my assumptions and values. I deconstructed my own ideas, unlearned, and learned while making choices and decisions, and navigating my identity and purpose throughout the whole process.

1.2 The Covid-19 pandemic

One of the goals of this research is to produce contextualised knowledge related to international school leadership in England and Qatar. For this purpose, this thesis does not only engage with geographic, historical, and demographic areas related to schools and leadership but also captures the particularities associated with specific times. The research context is highly important in educational leadership research (Harris & Jones, 2021), however, this 'context has rarely been more important than in the Covid-19 pandemic' (Goode et al., 2021, p. 42). The pandemic started in March 2020 and caused 'far reaching influences on all areas of society including schools and education' (Huber, 2021, p. 12). Both countries, England and Qatar, witnessed shocking losses and unprecedented levels of restrictions. The schooling system endured complete lockdowns where teaching took place virtually or in hybrid modes, and the teaching time was significantly reduced.

Amidst these circumstances and the unusual working mode in schools, it was difficult to maintain regular correspondences with leaders and staff regarding their participation in this research. Nonetheless, consistent and flexible communication patterns made it possible to gain a sufficient number of respondents in both countries, despite some variations that will be discussed in detail in chapter four. As school visits and face-to-face interviews were quite impossible at that time, the research plan was adjusted to take place completely online. It was still challenging to ensure participants commitment to interviews and questionnaire responses based on the agreed-on schedule due to increasing chances of illness, covering for colleagues who are ill, or taking care of an ill family member. Therefore, many

interviews had to be rescheduled, and in some cases, group interviews had a reduced number of participants. Despite these challenges and other unanticipated hurdles, the size and quality of participation was beyond sufficient and resulted in important and robust findings that will be uncovered in chapters four and five.

1.3 The importance of leadership

Historically, the field of educational leadership has established a connection between leadership and all outcomes of schooling, particularly learning. In his forward of the book *Linking leadership to student learning* (Leithwood and Louis, 2012), Knapp suggested that the relationship of educational leadership with the practice of teaching and student learning was inherently inferred for a long time before evidence was confirmed. Despite a firm assumption, several scholars acknowledged the difficulty of establishing a definite impact of leadership on teachers' practice and on student learning including Gunter (2001) and Nelson and Sassi (2005). However, studies conducted over the last three decades provided evidence on the influence of leadership on student learning, such as Hallinger and Heck (1996), Marzano et al. (2005) and Day et al. (2016), and on academic and non-academic outcomes such as Robinson et al. (2008) and Grissom et al. (2020). Leithwood et al. (2020a) suggested that the leadership effect on student learning is 'second only to classroom teaching' (p. 2). A previous study by Leithwood and Louis (2011) confirmed that they 'have not found a single documented case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership' (p. 3). This thesis starts with a firm assumption that leadership influences learning, teaching, and other outcomes of schooling through combined mechanisms of leading with others and through others (Day et al., 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020b). Nonetheless, this study and the questions it examined emerged from the need to investigate the potential impact of leadership in international schools, where the focus on cultural and social elements of the school community in leadership research is still narrow (Fisher, 2021; Lee and Walker, 2018). The study focuses on leadership 'praxis'—the link between theory

and practice— (Freire, 1970, p. 98) in particular social fields, leadership development, and the interaction of leadership with the social and cultural capital of teachers and students.

1.4 International schools

The unprecedented growth of international schools worldwide (Bunnell, 2016) calls for further examination of the social and educational phenomena associated with schools and their leadership, however, despite rising interests, research in this field is still minimal (Bunnell, 2021; Cravens, 2018). According to the International Schools Consultancy (ISC Research, 2023), the number of international schools has grown to 13,192 schools that employ 626, 767 staff members and serve 6,51 million students. Since 2015, the number of international schools in the Middle East has massively increased (Hunter, 2022; Shyam, 2022), including British schools overseas (Laas, 2023). The expansion in the size and services of international schools not only have an educational impact but also a societal and political one, due to their association with neoliberal ideologies (Bates, 2011; Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). Many of these schools are associated with transnational corporations (Bailey, 2021) that invest in chains of schools in different continents, mostly in Asia and Africa. International schools are characterised by a wide diversity that makes it difficult to examine them under simple typologies. While most international schools identify as global or international and host students of multiple cultural backgrounds, they largely represent Anglo-phonic structures that are mostly British and North American, with a few European schools representing different countries (Chatelier, 2022; Bunnell, 2022). The article written by Poore in 2005, still represents the reality of most international schools nowadays:

[...] are headed by white educators who are trained by leadership theories that are culturally biased; [...] staffed largely out of necessity by native English speakers; they operate from western liberal humanist curricula often packaged as international; they are more often than not accredited by agencies that have no concern with the

issue of culture than the superficial inclusion of the host culture in the curriculum; and they pride themselves in a 'third culture' which is generally rarely more than a variation of the dominant (usually American or British) culture. (p. 352)

1.5 Purpose of the study

This research aims to examine school leadership by studying leadership theory, practice and development in international schools, and the relationship of leaders with the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) of teachers and high school students. Through connecting leadership practice to leadership learning and development and examining the interconnection with the social field, this research aims to centre teacher and student capitals at the core of leadership praxis. By understanding the social field, a shift in leaders' knowledge and practice is rendered possible, which then enables them to respond to the field and incorporate its multi-cultural and multi-social capital(s) in the processes and practices of schooling, including leading, teaching, and learning. This research uses multi-theoretical and multi-methodological frameworks to analyse patterns of practice and address gaps in educational leadership literature in international school settings. The multi-theoretical analysis focuses on centring the social and the cultural capital and incorporating transformative learning in leadership praxis, based on empirical evidence from international schools in England and Qatar, in order to construct answers to the main research questions.

1.6 Research questions

1. What does the field of international schools look like in England and Qatar and how does it influence leadership?
2. How do leaders lead teaching and learning in international schools?
3. How do leaders develop their leadership and contribute to the development of other leaders in their schools?
4. How do leaders interact with the social and cultural capital of teachers and students, and to what extent is leadership informed by this capital?

The first question requires a critical analysis of international schools in England and Qatar and their influence on leadership. Answering this question compels an analysis of the field using different methods that can capture the complexity and features of these schools and unpack their influence on leadership. The second question focuses on how leadership is understood and practised in these schools; what leaders do as leadership of teaching and learning, how, and why. To answer this question, qualitative and quantitative approaches are utilised. Data collection and analysis are informed by leadership theories: student-centred (Robinson, 2011), learning-centred (Southworth, 2002), culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2021; Brown, 2004) and culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). Nonetheless, new themes and dimensions are introduced by the data, which are discussed under 'leading in a pandemic' and 'modern leadership approaches'. The third question focuses on understanding leadership development in these schools. The thesis uses adult learning theory to understand the role of leaders as learners and as educators (Joo and Kim, 2016) and examines the extent to which leadership development relates to the field in which they lead. Answering this question also requires utilising qualitative and quantitative approaches. The fourth question is analytical by nature as the data does not explicitly clarify how leaders' relationships with the field takes place, however, the discussion chapter establishes powerful links between leadership and the field and offers a nuanced illustration of the importance of leading and learning responsively.

1.7 Significance of the study

Research examining leadership and the influence of leaders on schools, teaching and learning is well established and widely disseminated (Hallinger, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008; Day et al., 2016). This research builds on existing evidence in educational leadership scholarship to examine specific areas within the theory and practice of leadership in international schools. Previous studies focusing on core educational leadership knowledge and practice (Leithwood et al., 2020a,

2020b) and those offering international perspectives on leadership (Dimmock, 2020; Lee et al., 2012) can be particularly important and relevant to the study of leadership in international schools (Cravens, 2018). International research on educational leadership can be useful, especially that it could be adapted and integrated with local factors and perspectives (Bajunid, 1996). According to Harris and Jones (2015), 'context matters a great deal' (p. 316) because it influences policy making and practice in educational institutions. According to Dimmock and Walker (2012) and Leithwood et al. (2020a), some elements of leadership can be universal and applicable to different contexts, whereas others need to be investigated in their unique environments.

Research on international schools has been taking place in line with their growth and increasing activities since the 1960s (Mayer, 1968; Leach, 1969; Allan, 2002; Hayden and Thompson, 2000). Nonetheless, the 'fluid and ambiguous nature of international schools' (Cravens, 2018, p. 584) and their exponential growth globally call for further research to examine the different contexts and phenomena associated with their leadership (Bunnell, 2021). International schools host millions of students and hundreds of thousands of teachers and leaders (ISC Research, 2023), however, there is 'little research focusing on [their] leadership' (Bunnell, 2021, p. 558). The following scholars have contributed to the study of leadership in international schools, which was particularly important for this thesis: Hawley (1994, 1995), Benson (2011), Lee, Hallinger and Walker (2012), Roberts and Mancuso (2014), Gardener-McTaggart (2018), Lee and Walker (2018) Bunnell (2010, 2019, 2021), Fisher (2021) Bailey and Gibson (2020) and Sawalhi and Tamimi (2021).

Given the sophisticated nature of many international schools globally, their 'tensions' and ideological 'dualities' (Keller, 2015, p. 906), the 'energy draining' experiences encountered by their staff (Caffyn, 2018, p. 503) and the diversity of their students, additional research on their leadership is needed. Several critical studies conducted recently have addressed the multiple complexities of

international schools, such as Kim (2019), Bunnell (2022); Bunnell and Gardner-McTaggart, (2022), and Bailey and Gibson (2022). Notwithstanding, studies that focus on the complex nature of international school leadership and their interaction with school communities, mainly teachers and students, are still scarce. While we know (now) about the elitist and 'precariat' (Bunnell, 2019, p. 546) nature of most international schools and their expectations of their leadership (Bunnell and Gardner-McTaggart, 2021), we do not know much about the perspectives and experiences of leaders, teachers, and students and how leaders respond to the cultural and social capital embedded within their school communities. In addition, little is known about 'leadership interaction with teaching and learning' (Cravens, 2018, p. 584), what and how they learn to lead in international schools and what this means for leaders, teachers, and students.

This research aims to contribute to the growing body of scholarship in international school leadership and pave the way for future researchers to build on its findings. A core goal of this research is examining the relationship between leadership and the social field, which constitutes teachers, students, communities, and structures. This research also aims to recognise the value of social and cultural capital within 'multicultural pluralistic international school settings' (Cravens, 2018, p. 548), and centre the voices of students and teachers. The goal of this research is to examine how leaders lead and what leadership activities generate influence on teaching and learning (Evans, 2021, 2022) and whether leadership is influenced by input from the field, including teachers and students' social and cultural capital. The design is not limited to leaders in senior positions but concurrently investigates the perspectives of middle leaders and teachers and elicits student voices on how leadership relates and responds to their capital.

This research benefits from existing scholarship in the field of educational leadership and aims to transform dominant assumptions by centring the voices of students and teachers in the study of leadership and leadership development. Through its investigation and outcomes, this research offers a multi-theoretical

contribution to the field. First, it examines leadership in relation to the social and cultural capital of teachers and students. In doing so, it creates a space for high school students to discuss their experience in international schools and reflect on their learning, identities and relationship with each other and their schools. The second contribution is the element of relationality (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Mohr, 2013) between leaders at different levels, teachers, and students. Relationality propels further exploration of agency, influence and engagement with teaching and learning; therefore, the key findings result from the analysis of relationships between different concepts and agents in schools, not independently of each other (Eacott, 2019). The relational analysis, enabled by the multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach, leads to outcomes that could be useful not only to the study of leadership, but also to the study of students and their experiences in international schools. The third contribution is linking leadership learning and development to leadership praxis and the outcomes of leading for social and cultural justice in international schools. This link was enabled through the conceptualisation of leaders as adult learners and adult educators, as learning is transformed from learning individually to learning collectively in response to the specific needs of the field. This transformative process centres learning in the leadership of international schools where critical reflection and engagement with social and cultural discourses are essential to understanding the field (Mezirow, 1996; Brown, 2004). To conclude, the significance of this research lies in its theoretical and methodological approach, which instigates a new conceptualisation of leadership and learning in international schools. The findings of this research align with existing scholarship in many ways—which supports the reliability of its results—and contribute to knowledge in the discipline by offering a multi-theoretical framework that connects leadership and learning to the social field.

Additionally, this research is particularly significant in conceptualising the international as the migrant (Morley et al., 2018) and the transient (Bunnell, 2018, p. 553), where mobility (geographical movement) is a key part of students and

staff experiences (Urry, 2010). By centring the notion of mobility, the whole perspective of studying international school experiences can be shifted. By acknowledging temporality at the core of international schools (Pinson & Arnot, 2020), the questions and reasons behind migration and transience, and the way they shape leading, teaching and learning are legitimised. This lens calls for understanding the growing presence of international schools driven by increasing conflicts—causing further dislocation and migration, neoliberal ideologies, elitism (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016), cultural superiority (Hayes, 2018) and homogeneity. While this thesis offers a critical stance in its theoretical approach and discussion of international schools and their leadership, it engages in a constructive critique that aims at social and educational transformation and hope within and beyond international schools. Through this transformative argument, the thesis calls international schools and leadership to recognise the multicultural and multisocial capital of their communities through a relevant and responsive pedagogical approach. Furthermore, this research captured leadership and learning during a global pandemic and interrogated mechanisms of response and change, while analysing potentials for shared leadership driven by trust and collaborative relationships beyond the scope of hierarchy and formal structures.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The first chapter introduces the main areas of this thesis and presents the research questions, purpose, and significance of the study. The second chapter offers a review of literature and highlights the need for using multiple theoretical frameworks due to the complexity of leadership in international schools, which encompass leadership theories, leadership development and learning theories, and Bourdieu's social theory. The third chapter discusses the worldviews and the methodological approach: a critical realist worldview combined with Bourdieu's relational perspective. The mixed methodological approach employs multiple tools: a questionnaire and multiple case studies, which includes individual and group interviews, document analysis, and field analysis. The fourth chapter

presents the findings of the empirical study. It presents vignettes of the five case studies and the integrated findings of quantitative and qualitative evidence across the study. The findings reflect particular features of international schools and their communities in England and Qatar, in addition to significant results related to leadership praxis and development. The findings of leadership dimensions showed dominant patterns of practice across all schools and in both countries, most of which are consistent with existing research (Robinson, 2011; Southworth, 2011; Cravens, 2018), except for minor differences stemming from leaders' perspectives and experiences. The findings on leadership development showed that learning is mostly driven by organisational frameworks that do not respond to contextual and individual needs. However, leaders' direct interaction with teachers and other leaders, trust relationships and dialogue were seen as effective. The findings chapter presents results driven by senior and middle leaders, besides teachers and students. The findings reveal a gap between leadership knowledge and practice and the social fields in which they work, particularly at senior leadership levels; an area that was flagged by some scholars such as Kim (2019) and Calnin et al. (2018), albeit not widely researched. Moreover, the findings depict the realities of schools—as well as leadership and learning—during the pandemic and show changing patterns of practice driven by the pandemic and other global events. The findings also show emerging patterns of leadership, especially shared and horizontal leadership practised by middle leaders and teachers (Wenner and Campbell, 2017). The fifth chapter discusses the findings and highlights the rupture between what leaders do, what they know and learn, and the social and cultural needs, identities and capital(s) of their students and teachers. The discussion builds on Bourdieu's theory (1986, 1990a) and existing research in social and cultural justice leadership to analyse leadership praxis and learning. Based on the discussion, the thesis offers two theoretical frameworks of leadership learning and leadership praxis in international schools in response to their students and teachers' multisocial and multicultural capital(s). Lastly, the concluding chapter offers a summary of the

main contributions of this thesis, as well as its limitations and implications for policy, practice, and research.

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter includes an overview of educational leadership theories that generally focus on the knowledge and practice of school leadership and leadership development. Within this review of literature, the key theme—leadership theory—is driven by the main research questions and includes a review of relevant theoretical frameworks, mainly the leadership of teaching and learning, and leadership development theories. In addition, the ‘leadership theory’ section includes a review of social and cultural justice leadership theories that were driven by the research data. This section also introduces Bourdieu’s theory (1977, 1986) and its key concepts—field, habitus, and capital—that were employed in conceptualising and analysing leadership and the relational aspects underpinning practice and the interaction with the field. The next section focuses on leadership in international schools, with a brief historical account addressing the development of international schools in England and Qatar. The discussion of country-context is important for understanding the practice of leadership in specific fields (Clarke and O’Donoghue, 2017; Ryu et al., 2022). The context section includes a conceptualisation of international schools, through different lenses, in addition to a discussion of the cultural features of both countries through Hofstede’s cross-cultural comparative framework (2001). Furthermore, Bourdieu’s theory enables the analysis of leadership and learning, the theoretical conceptualisation of social and cultural capital in international schools and the relationship of leadership with these fields.

A rigorous and comprehensive literature review plan was conducted throughout the research process. According to Snyder (2023), literature review can contribute to exploring and synthesizing existing scholarship in a specific field and can lead to enhancing and strengthening the contribution to knowledge. At the beginning of the study, literature review was based on the main research ideas, leadership

in international schools, international schools, leadership development, leadership of teaching and learning, and the social and cultural features of international school communities. The literature review related to these ideas started with the following journals: International Journal of Leadership in Education, Journal of Research in International Education, Globalisation, Societies and Education, Peabody Journal of Education, Educational Management, Administration & Leadership (EMAL), British Educational Research Journal, International Education Journal, and Journal of Educational Administration and History. The initial reading phase presented a list of widely referenced scholars in the field, whose research was foundational in understanding the field of international schools and the sophisticated nature of its leadership, such as Bunnell, Gardner-McTaggart, Hayden, Thompson, Dimmock, Walker, Lee, Bryant, and Kim. This review resulted in framing the research questions and the line of inquiry to be pursued in this research, which focused on leading teaching and learning and developing leadership, in addition to the emphasis on students and their learning. The literature review in these particular areas was mainly focused on the scholarly work of Leithwood, Robinson, Hallinger, and Southworth.

The emerging questions driven by this literature review provoked an additional set of themes related to the sociological areas of international schools and leadership research such as transience, mobility and multiculturalism, besides contextually relevant literature related to Qatar and England. The following journals were particularly useful in exploring these aspects: Comparative Education, British Journal of Sociology, and Journal of Cultural Sociology in the Middle East. Understanding the wider social and cultural implications of international schools as elitist entities lead to an additional focus on Bourdieu's theory, including Bourdieu's publications and scholarship on education and leadership using Bourdieu's lens, such as Gunter, Thomson and Grenfell. After collecting the data, the emerging themes related to educational inequality, marginalisation and social

injustice drove the literature review further into social justice leadership and pedagogy, and multicultural education. Social justice and critical leadership literature was derived from books and book chapters (see reference list), in addition to journal publications such as *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, *American Educational Research Journal*, *Intercultural Education*, *Sociology*, and *Theory into Practice*. This literature review process was a sophisticated inquiry that helped to generate relevant knowledge in the field, develop connections between different sub-fields, and highlight significant gaps that this thesis has addressed.

2.2 Conceptualising educational leadership

The nature and outcomes of leadership have been discussed in many large scale and key studies (Gurr, 2015; Day et al, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020b), which have discussed leadership conceptually (Bush and Clover, 2003) or based on empirical studies (Gurr and Drysdale, 2020). It is useful to start this review of literature by highlighting how the concept of leadership is understood in this research. This thesis focuses on educational leadership in schools and uses the term 'leadership' throughout the thesis to refer to school leadership. The investigation into leadership in this study stems from the assumption that leadership is about direction and influence (Leithwood and Louis, 2012; Biesta, 2017), as well as social action and relationship (Gunter 2001, 2018). This thesis looks beyond the narrative of individual leaders to explore the dynamics of leadership and the nature of relationships between leaders, teachers, and students. In this research, leadership is not viewed as an independent act but as a set of perceptions and actions that can be understood in relation to others (Eacott, 2019). This research is particularly interested in the conceptualisation of the nature and enactment of leadership and its development in international schools.

Leadership, as a field, has been studied from different perspectives with changing emphases depending on the context or purpose of the study (Lee and Walker,

2018). The call for connecting education—including teaching and leading—to the societal needs in relevant contexts has always been prevalent in educational leadership and administration research (Leithwood et al., 2020a; Arar, et al., 2017). Selznick (1984) and Smyth (1998, 2000), for example, defined leadership as practice that addresses the needs of a social situation, as it responds to the priorities and goals within a specific context. More recently, Biesta (2017) and Gunter and Courtney (2020) called for a form of educative leadership that reconnects the profession with the public realm, where leaders do not only serve within schools but engage in wider societal and political issues. However, their research was driven by specific country-contexts that might not respond to questions emerging in the contexts of internationalisation where schools are predominantly multicultural. According to Bunnell (2021), despite growing interest in the complexity and diversity of international schools, research examining their leadership is still limited.

The socio-educational emphasis and the relationship with the social and the cultural underpin the main questions of this research, in addition to the theoretical and practical aspects of leading international schools. This research employs Robinson's student-centred leadership theory (2011), which focuses on the practical dimensions of leading teaching and learning while building trust relationships with the community, and Southworth's learning-centred leadership model (2002, 2009), which focuses on leading teaching and learning. In addition to leadership theories, this thesis engages with Bourdieu's theory (1977, 1986) to examine leaders' relationship with the field and the social and cultural capital of teachers and students. Therefore, leadership in this study is conceptualised as educational (focuses on teaching and learning), and social (relates to students and teachers' social and cultural needs and backgrounds). Besides, this research is influenced by Smyth (2006), who called for centring students' voices in schools and Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b), who argued for culturally relevant pedagogical practice in schools. In addition, culturally responsive leadership (Brown, 2004, Khalifa et al., 2016) and socially just leadership (Fraise and Brooks,

2015) theories have also influenced this thesis. Although none of these scholars focused on international schools, their scholarship on educational leadership in the context of multicultural schools is relevant to the line of inquiry underpinning this research.

As this research examines leadership through an analytical lens, it distinguishes leadership from the functions of management, while acknowledging that a leader's role encompasses many acts of management and administration. The terms educational leadership, management and administration have been widely used in different contexts and times, mainly in the West, since the 1940s (Elmore, 2000). By the 1950s, educational leadership was seen as a form of public administration, which encompasses acts of managing and leading (Bush, 2022). However, towards the end of the century, the shift towards privatisation gained legitimacy in the United States and the United Kingdom in particular (Thomson, 2017). The trend to managerialise leadership increased with the new wave of standardisation, which then moved to different countries that adopted Western models (Ball, 2017). Management was seen by critical scholars as restrictive and limits leaders' ability to change (Thomson, 2017; Eacott, 2018). Eacott contended that educational leaders globally are constrained by a 'managerialist' ideology that 'penetrated the core of education discourses' (2010, p. 223), as leaders are 'habituated into the deliverer role' (Eacott, 2011c, p. 52) that primarily serves productivity policies and agendas. This managerialist ideology has strongly influenced the growth of international schools, and simultaneously, influenced leading, teaching and learning.

The field of educational leadership has massively developed over seven decades offering multiple conceptualisations of leadership, including the focus on approaches, styles, or purpose. Some approaches have had widespread readership and impact, such as transformational leadership (Leithwood et al., 1999), instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2010), distributed leadership (Harris, 2011), change leadership (Hargreaves, 2007), and the practical approach to

leadership (Marzano et al., 2005). Other scholars, alternatively, have taken a historical and socio-political path to explain leadership such as Gunter (2001, 2022), while others have focused on leadership preparation and professional development such as Bubb and Earley (2007). Although this study does not directly utilise these approaches, their input has contributed to my understanding of leadership within and beyond the scope of this thesis.

This thesis is concerned with school leadership in K-12 contexts at different levels: the principal, who is sometimes called head of school, director or headteacher and other senior leaders (deputies or associates). For clarity, the head of the school hierarchy is referred to in this thesis as ‘the principal’, and the seniors at the next level of the hierarchy as ‘senior leaders’. Where the discussion refers to both groups, they are referred to as ‘senior leaders’. In addition to principals and senior leaders, the study examines the perspectives of middle leaders, teachers, and high school students.

2.3 Leadership theories

This research is interested in constructing a contextual understanding of international school leadership in England and Qatar; therefore, it is particularly useful to look at global perspectives into the study of leadership in addition to studies discussing leadership in multicultural social fields. Bajunid (1996) encouraged scholars to build a localised knowledge in educational leadership based on the local culture, while Samier et al. (2021) called for a re-examination of educational leadership in contexts of internationalisation. Both approaches are useful, as limited scholarship has addressed leadership in international contexts through the local or internationalised lens. However, it is important to note that leadership in international schools cannot be examined only through localised cultural lenses, nor through global perspectives as they are largely driven by Western organisations and frameworks and mainly led and managed by Western—or Western-trained—leaders (Lai et al., 2022; Gardner-McTaggart, 2022). Accordingly, this chapter reviews scholarship on leadership of teaching

and learning, mainly through Robinson's (2011) and Southworth's (2009) research, which centre students and learning, and offer detailed theoretical explanations on leadership in contemporary schools. Furthermore, the chapter incorporates a review of culturally relevant (Brown, 2004) and culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016) that prioritise the needs of students and build on the knowledge and voices of teachers (Smyth, 2006; Fraise and Brooks, 2015). The connection between leadership and the social field—including students and teachers in under-studied international schools—warrants the engagement with Bourdieu's social theory, not only to understand the field and its components, but to analyse hidden narratives causing the marginalisation of social and cultural capital in schools (Samier, 2016). Bourdieu's theory (1977, 1986) enables the construction of a theoretically inevitable relationship between the school field and leadership, which was seen by Fisher (2021) and Calnin et al. (2018) as a gap in international school leadership research.

2.4 Leading teaching and learning

There is a firm assumption in educational research that leaders can and should make a difference in the academic outcomes of schooling (Gurr, 2015; Robinson, 2011). Studies on school effectiveness have reinforced the role of the leaders and the school's internal processes in student success (Higham and Hopkins, 2010; Townsend, 2007), which are referred to in educational research as leading teaching and learning (Zepeda et al., 2017; Grissom et al., 2021). Marks and Printy (2003) suggested that the principal's main responsibility is to create quality instruction and that the focus on teaching and learning is an inherent part of the principal's role. Robinson et al. (2007, 2008) also pointed to instructional leadership as key for school improvement, and offered a framework of five dimensions that have significant effect on student learning. However, despite the wide agreement on the importance of teaching and learning, Grissom et al. (2015, 2020) showed that senior leaders have little time to directly attend to teaching and learning.

This thesis uses the term leading teaching and learning to represent the focus of leaders' practice, guided by the belief that the focus on teaching and learning equally serves students and their education. The literature focusing on leading teaching and learning widely reflects the notions of instructional (Hallinger, 2010), transformational leadership (Lee et al., 2012b; Day et al, 2016), pedagogical leadership (Male & Palaiologou, 2012), and learning-centred leadership (Southworth, 2009, 2011), as they are essential dimensions of school leadership. Despite minor differences, these terms share a fundamental focus on influencing teaching and learning, whether directly, in collaboration with other leaders, or indirectly (Robinson et al., 2008; Southworth, 2002). Hallinger and Heck (1996) distinguished between three types of leaders' effects on student achievement: 'direct effects (with or without antecedent-effect), mediated effects that affect outcomes indirectly through other variables, and reciprocal effects where leaders' affect the factors influencing student learning and are simultaneously influenced by these factors' (p. 19). Leaders of teaching and learning are involved in pedagogical and professional activities such as reviewing curricular plans, managing teaching, and learning times, observing teachers and classrooms, modelling, conferencing, monitoring teachers' work and discussing student learning (Kruger, 2003; Zepeda et al., 2017). Leaders plan for professional development, arrange collaborative learning activities inside and outside schools, build partnerships and networks and evaluate schoolwork against its desired goals. In this sense, leaders direct the path of the school, invest in developing staff, and model ethical practice that is key to school improvement (Bubb & Earley, 2010). Southworth (2009) suggested that school leaders develop processes and systems that allow teachers to practise their work without interruptions, where they oversee the outcomes of teachers' work through interaction rather than intervention. Robinson and Timperley (2007) argued that although research shows that 'the impacts of leaders are relatively much smaller' than those of teachers, leaders influence student learning through leading teacher development (p. 248). In addition, the more experienced leaders create strong communities in

schools, develop family engagement and ensure that students' social capital is valued (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). This review of research on leadership that fosters teaching and learning is particularly useful in this thesis and can be seen as a foundation for investigating leadership in international schools.

2.5 Student-centred leadership

Robinson's theoretical framework was published in journal articles with other colleagues (2007, 2008) and in her book titled *Student-centred leadership* (Robinson, 2011). Robinson et al. offer a practical guide for understanding the practice of leaders and a nuanced examination of their impact on students' academic and social outcomes. Their research examined the impact of the most effective areas of leaders' practice (dimensions) based on reviewing a variety of quantitative and qualitative studies from different countries, then measuring the effect size only in 27 studies that examined leadership impact on student learning. Robinson et al. (2008) used an 'inclusive approach to leadership including studies on principals and leaders in different positions and emphasised distributed leadership and teacher leadership' (p. 640). Their work was commended by Leithwood and Louis (2012) and Hallinger (2010) as influential because it offers practical advice for school leaders and was recommended by Cravens (2018) as applicable to the diverse contexts of international schools. Robinson et al.'s framework was particularly useful in this research as it provides empirical evidence on effective dimensions and the academic and social outcomes of schooling.

Robinson's framework (2011) focuses on the role of relationships in leadership and the importance of dialogue and conversations as means to solving problems, while encouraging leaders to listen and learn instead of merely direct. The focus on relationships is strongly related to the goals of this research, and consistent with Bourdieu's theory and notion of relationality, which explain that practice and agency cannot be understood independently but in relation to the field and the practice of other agents (1986). Additionally, this framework acknowledges the

impact of existing leadership theory such as instructional and transformational leadership (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006), which have also influenced this research. Robinson et al. (2008) analysed the results of previous studies and built on the findings of others to develop their framework. Their contribution was meaningful and relevant to the research questions of this study; therefore, their theoretical framework was applied throughout the process of data collection and analysis. The framework consists of five dimensions that represent the most effective leadership practices on student outcomes, and three capabilities that are essential for the dimensions to happen (Robinson, 2011). The authors tested different areas of practice and reported the five most effective dimensions, as demonstrated by Figure 1.

Figure 1

Student-centred leadership model



Note: Copied from *Student-centered leadership* (1st ed., p. 16) by V. Robinson, 2011, Jossey Bass. Copyright 2011 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

2.5.1 Leadership Dimensions

Dimension-1 Setting goals and expectations

Goal setting has ‘significant effect on student outcomes’ (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 659) although it is more related to teachers’ work than directly connected to

students. Relating whole-school goals and expectation to the emphasis on student learning was found to be effective in different studies (Hallinger et al., 2018). Robinson et al. (2008) noted that although 'the content of goals is important, the emphasis should also be placed on communicating these goals by leaders and establishing relationships' (p. 660) to their school community to help them understand these goals and commit to their implementation.

Dimension-2 Resourcing strategically

Strategic resourcing does not only require skills in securing resources but the ability to allocate resources that serve their schools' instructional goals (Robinson et al., 2007). This dimension focuses on staffing, managing school supplies, building, technological and physical material that support the teaching and learning process (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006; Zepeda et al., 2017). While these resources do not guarantee effective teaching and learning, the way they are employed and their relevance to the needs and priorities makes a significant difference.

Dimension-3 Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum

This dimension was seen as powerful where leaders were closely involved in lesson observations and 'worked closely with teachers on planning, coordinating and reviewing, and where they set goals for teachers work' (Robinson, 2011, p. 663). The impact is stronger when teachers offer feedback to student learning and use their learning outcomes to improve the instructional program and their teaching (Marzano et al., 2001).

Dimension-4 Leading teacher learning and development

This dimension was reported as the most effective area of leaders' practice (Robinson, 2011). It does not only refer to leaders' arrangements, support, and promotion of teacher learning, but to 'participat[ing] in the learning as a leader or

as a learner, or both' (p. 663). Robinson et al. (2008) found out that in high performing schools teachers reported that leaders engage in discussions with them related to their work and problems they face, and generally offer advice on instructional issues.

Dimension-5 Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment

Robinson et al. (2008) explained that order and support enable teachers to focus on academic and social goals for students and allow them to focus on their instructional tasks. In schools characterised by order and support, matters such as safety, comfort and care were noted by teachers (Robinson, 2011; Cornell and Mayer, 2010), who also reported that their time and work were protected from distraction and from the pressure of education officers and parents (Kruger, 2003).

2.5.2 Leadership capabilities

The framework includes three main capabilities that underpin the effective practice of leaders: applying relevant knowledge, solving complex problems, and building trust relationships (Robinson, 2011). First, applying relevant knowledge requires using expertise 'about effective teaching, teacher learning, and school organisation to make high-quality administrative decisions', in addition to 'deepen[ing] their knowledge' and 'consider[ing] the implications on administrative processes' (Robinson, 2011, p. 17). Second, solving complex problems is an important leadership capability that enables leaders to unpack challenges and focus on the prospects of setting new goals and procedures to sort them out, while considering their specific context and needs. Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) explained that formulating the problem is parallel to deciding the solution requirements, including finding the adequate measures and ensuring that the solution is suitable and satisfactory for the school. The third capability is building trust relationships with the school community. Notably, the framework clarifies that without trust relationships, leaders would not be able to practise the dimensions

(Leithwood et al., 2020b). Robinson (2011) confirmed that ‘the values and skills involved in building trust provide an ethical foundation for all five leadership dimensions’ (p. 17). In addition to the main capabilities, the framework provides guidance on communication and negotiation in cases of disagreement, which is described as ‘the theory of engagement’ (p. 121).

Theory of engagement

The framework offers guidance for engagement with teachers through conversations between leaders and teachers in a way that helps teachers improve their teaching and influence student learning. Relationships are an important factor through which leaders can influence teachers’ work (Ryu et al., 2022), simultaneously, teachers should be directed towards effective practice. The engagement theory focuses on conversations and the open-to-learn approach by leaders, where they share their views without assuming they are correct (Southworth, 2009), invite teachers to share theirs, paraphrase what they heard and check for confirmation by the other person, then work on establishing common grounds where they can come to an agreement (Robinson, 2011). This could lead to the leader convincing the teacher or the opposite, but in both cases the conversation lays a foundation of respect and trust. Thus, the leader encourages the teacher to explain their theory of practice or the grounds for their specific behaviour or decisions, while the teacher, through this conversation, learns the leaders’ theory of practice. The outcome of this reciprocal learning builds mutual respect and helps to develop teachers’ confidence and instructional practice. This dialogue could lead to leaders agreeing with teachers or convincing them to change their behaviour. The ‘theory of engagement’ is based on dialogue in which solving complex problems can be nurtured by building trust relationships; a process that requires respect, expertise, and knowledge (Robinson, 2011).

Discussion of the student-centred leadership framework

Robinson offers substantive research on the impact of leadership on teaching and learning through her work with fellow researchers (Robinson and Lai, 2006; Robinson and Timperley, 2007; Robinson et al., 2008; Robinson, 2011). Her book *Student-centred leadership* draws on existing research in teaching, learning and organisational psychology to explain what and why each of the five dimensions works. Besides reviewing evidence on leadership impact, Robinson's research studies leadership at different levels of the school, assuming that leadership is shared practice or distributed influence and action that is not performed by a single leader (Spillane, 2005). This theoretical framework examines leadership influences on academic and social development of students and leaders' activities influencing teaching and learning, which is the core activity of schooling (Robinson et al., 2008). Robinson (2011) suggests that succeeding in different areas of practice—other than the five dimensions—is not sufficient unless teaching and learning are well maintained.

The dimensions reflect effective areas of practice in leaders' work in relation to teaching and student learning and align with some of the key findings of a significant number of pre-existing research (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006; Day et al, 2016). The authors acknowledged 'the influence of previous leadership theory and research' on their work (Robinson et al., 2008, p.668), particularly Hallinger (2005) and Heck (1992), whose work is strongly connected with the core of teaching and learning in schools. However, Robinson et al. (2008) described previous frameworks as 'abstract and theoretical', unlike their own work that offers more 'insights into practice while combining knowledge and skills' (p. 668). They present the outcomes of measuring the effect-size in both high and low performing schools, but the factors contributing to making one dimension more effective on student outcomes in one school and less effective in another are not very clear. Due to the complexity in leaders' work, influence could be compromised by factors such as school developmental age, internal and external factors, policies,

cooperation of community members, resources, and other elements. As the framework could not cover more areas than it did, the authors recommended further research on core leadership practices at different leadership levels; an area that is examined by this thesis.

The fourth dimension in Robinson's framework, leading teacher learning, was found to be the most effective area of practice (Khalifa et al., 2016). The framework mentions leadership learning as an essential component to achieving impact, however, it does not clearly discuss how learning takes place: 'The more leaders focus their relationships, work, and learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater will be their influence on student outcomes' (Robinson, 2011, p. 15). The framework focuses on leaders' engagement in teacher learning as learners or leaders but does not offer sufficient emphasis or an explanation of how leadership knowledge and learning are developed, which is the focus of the second research question.

2.6 Learning-centred leadership

In addition to Robinson's framework (2011), Southworth's learning-centred leadership framework (2002a, 2009) emphasises three key areas of leaders' practice: modelling, monitoring and dialogue. This framework focuses on effective leadership that prioritises the work of teachers. Southworth (2009) explains that effective leadership and management are necessary for teachers to do their job properly, and for 'staff and students [to be] better motivated' (p. 3), which was consistent with other studies focusing on the effects of leadership. Leithwood and Louis (2012) confirmed that 'leadership has significant effects on student learning, second only to the effects of the quality of curriculum and teachers' instruction' (p. 3). Southworth's research investigated leadership in primary schools in Britain, however, his model is conceptually beneficial and could be utilised in other contexts with adaptation. Southworth explained that leadership should be adaptive and sensitive to the context in which it is exercised (2009, 2011). In addition, leadership is distributed and can be viewed as a 'shared function, not

restricted to those who occupy senior role positions' (2009, p. 4) and not confined to the hands of the individual leader. His model was influenced by the work of Hallinger and Heck (1999) and Blasé and Blasé (1998), mainly in emphasising the influence of leaders on student learning and classroom activities. Southworth (2004) suggests that leadership influence occurs directly, indirectly, and reciprocally through their exchange of influence with teachers, and this interaction affects students. However, 'indirect effect' has the largest impact because leaders work with others and through others' (p. 102), use strategies and processes and utilise school structures and systems. The model suggests three strategies to influence student learning through working with teachers.

The first strategy is modelling, where leaders set examples to teachers and other leaders through their actions (Southworth, 2002b). Modelling includes visibility, presence, and 'walking the talk' (Southworth, 2003, p. 10). The second strategy is monitoring, which helps leaders learn about how teaching and learning are going in the school. It 'includes analysing and acting on students' progress and outcome data' and learning how to improve teaching and leading based on this data. Monitoring involves engaging in discussions with teachers about the data and its significance, rather than merely being informed by data. The third strategy is dialogue, where discussions with teachers enable leaders to learn about their work, while teachers also benefit by reflecting and analysing their work. Dialogue is used interchangeably with conversations in this framework. Through dialogue, leaders influence teaching and learning, as they create conversations and opportunities to speak to colleagues about pedagogy and student learning. Southworth recognises the power of talking about teaching and classroom activities: 'dialogue is not simply talking but a form of professional learning' (Southworth, 2009, p. 7), which takes place through a process of collaborative construction of knowledge.

Southworth (2009) explained that 'the three strategies interrelate and overlap. Each makes a difference, but it is their combined effect which really matters' (p.

7). Monitoring fosters conversations about teaching and learning while modelling reflects leaders' concern for learning, which leads to strengthening the teaching environment and influencing student learning. Conversations, although informal, generate learning and enable analysis and learning by sharing practice with others (Southworth, 2003). The model acknowledges and supports learning on-the-job but does not elaborate on other forms of leadership learning and development. While the model offers practical guidance to school leaders, it does not clarify how leaders can encourage teachers to deal with the rising diversity and multiculturalism in British schools. Although Southworth (2009) explains that contextualisation is key to leading, his work does not explain how leaders can practically respond to the cultural and social diversity of students. Southworth argues that the focus should be on leadership not on leaders because the latter undermines the importance of management and its supporting systems and structures that are key to a successful teaching and learning experience (2009). Southworth believed that 'structures and systems create and sustain conditions for staff and students to work effectively and fairly' (2009, p. 9) and make a difference to student learning. Some of these systems and processes include academic planning, communication systems, monitoring systems for learning, teaching, assessment and marking (Southworth, 2004).

Southworth criticises the increased focus on curriculum as content and teachers as transmission models (Southworth, 2002a), and calls for an understanding of learning as 'an active process of the mind', where students and adults 'construct meaning and understanding' through dialogue and 'make sense of the world' (Southworth, 2009, p. 12). His framework calls for a culture of shared leadership and collaborative learning that transforms schools into professional learning communities, where teachers and leaders share and exchange innovative practice and take responsibility for one another's learning (Lin et al., 2018). Correspondingly, the 'social context in which learning takes place is important', where 'dialogue stimulates analysis, reflection, and the organisation of knowledge, enabling teachers and leaders to review their learning and relate it to

previous experiences and understandings' (Southworth, 2009, p.12). Southworth's views were aligned with the work of Lambert et al. (2002) who argued that leadership of learning is a constructivist process where leadership should be consistent with new ways of learning and mirrors the construction of new meanings in the classrooms.

Discussion of Southworth's framework

The framework focuses on student, teacher, and leader learning, where leaders lead and develop other leaders—middle leaders and teachers. It discusses the collective construction of knowledge and advocates for shared leadership as a collective responsibility (Southworth, 2009). The model offers practical guidance to leaders through the three strategies and emphasises leadership influence on student learning through working with teachers. However, it does not address the complexity of this collective dimension in schools where individuals and groups are not equally influential and where the cultural and social capital of individuals is not equally valued (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In contexts of diversity like international schools, the social field in which learning and leading take place is inhabited by different types of capital(s), and relationships are governed by the influence of more dominant agents. The invisible cultural and social hierarchies in schools could create barriers to reciprocal learning (R'boul, 2020). The framework does not explain how the complex dynamics of diversity can be tackled and whether senior leaders would learn from their multicultural communities. Although the framework mentions reciprocity in knowledge between teachers and leaders (Southworth, 2009), it does not explain how this knowledge responds to students' multicultural needs. The model prescribes changes in the modes of learning from transmission to construction and suggests constructivist ways of teaching and leading but does not clarify how these changes take place. The notion of collective production of knowledge offers no clarity on what knowledge and whose knowledge is applicable (Lopez, 2020), and whether different perspectives in diverse schools are equally recognised (hooks, 1994). Furthermore, the model

briefly mentions changes in pedagogic practice and curriculum without offering much nuance.

In addition, the model includes a limited discussion of leadership development, except for on-the-job learning that is embedded in dialogue and conversations (Southworth, 2009). Southworth explains that classrooms are learning centres for staff where they learn about pedagogy by visiting each other, especially as peer-learning becomes a normalised system (2011). Nevertheless, his theoretical model includes no reference to how leaders learn to lead and where their knowledge and skills come from. Both framework's—Robinson's (2011) and Southworth's (2009)— do not offer sufficient focus on leading pedagogy and curriculum in multicultural international schools. Robinson (2011) notes that family and cultural background strongly affect student learning and suggests that 'leaders of schools that serve culturally heterogeneous communities need to take more active steps to overcome mistrust' between the school and the parent community (p. 137). However, the framework does not explain how leaders and teachers can practically respond to the multicultural needs of their students. Consequently, this chapter engages in a wider review of leadership theories that focus on relevant pedagogy and curriculum and offer clearer insights on leading teaching and learning in international schools. The following sections focus on leadership theory that addresses students' cultural and social needs and emphasises relevant adaptations in teaching and the curriculum.

2.7 Leading teaching and learning in multicultural international schools

The discussion of leadership theory in the previous sections showed that leaders, mainly principals, do not necessarily have to be experts in specific areas of pedagogy, however, their knowledge of pedagogic principles and approaches are essential. Leaders model, guide and support certain pedagogic practices informally through dialogues and feedback on lessons, and formally through developing or enacting school policies that support or enhance specific pedagogies (Southworth, 2009). In international schools where diversity includes

multicultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic, and different socio-economic groups, understanding the relevance of curriculum and pedagogy is a vital part of the leadership role regardless of the position or years of experience.

2.7.1 Culturally relevant leadership (CRL)

Culturally relevant leadership (CRL) combines school context and pedagogy and focuses on academic and non-academic success. CRL calls for success in the classroom and beyond through developing critical consciousness and awareness of the world besides literacy, numeracy, technology, and other academic areas. Furthermore, CRL requires a 'deep understanding of the self, the other and the context' (Brooks Fraise, 2015, p. 10) in which education takes place. CRL works toward unpacking the visible and the hidden hierarchies in schools and classrooms, through the engagement of teachers and students in conversations where they can learn from each other (hooks, 1994) and learn about each other's values and histories. In addition to guiding others, culturally aware leaders reflect on their own biases, knowledge, and attitudes about the other (Schepen, 2017). The role of leadership in nurturing this process is indispensable to move reciprocal learning from individual initiatives (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) to a whole-school culture. Reciprocal learning, as described by Mezirow (2000) requires individuals to engage in societal and cultural discourses that enable them to learn from others. Fraise and Brooks (2015) offer a culturally relevant leadership model which includes reflecting on the context and the 'hidden' and visible curriculum and 'learning about it' (p. 15), 'deconstructing' existing knowledge and 'reconstructing' a more relevant approach (p. 16).

This approach to leadership is based on collaborative practice between leaders and teachers, which also takes into consideration the voices and knowledge of students and their communities (Brooks and Fraise, 2015). The curriculum is seen as dynamic and flexible and can be re-constructed according to cultural and societal changes and events (Banks, 1995, 2013). Curricular changes are relevant to students and co-developed by teachers based on dialogue and critical

conversations where the input of students and community members are essential (Sleeter, 2018). Brooks and Fraise's approach (2015) centres the teacher in curriculum development and classroom teaching and discourages the performative delivery of a predetermined set of instruction and outcomes, which can be equally challenging in international schools.

2.7.2 Centring the student voice in leadership praxis

The amount and size of leadership research which focused on students' voices is limited and not given the attention it deserves by scholars in the field (Smyth, 2006). Smyth argued that work on school leadership, policy, reform, and teaching that is not driven by the voice of students could be 'unsatisfying, dehumanising and unrewarding' as it 'trivialis[es] students' experiences and cultures' (p. 479). Cook-Sather (2006) called for the engagement of leadership with students' needs and voices, and creating spaces in schools that build on these needs and voices in teaching and curriculum. Her research criticised leadership scholarship and practice that focus on academic outcomes and marginalise the needs of students to be included, celebrated, connected, and represented (Cook-Sather, 2006)). According to Smyth (2006, 2013), developing a relevant curriculum that connects to students' lives contributes to developing an environment of care, respect, and trust relationships, which is aligned with Robinson's focus on trust relationships between leaders, teachers, and the school community. Smyth (2006) argues for 'promoting flexible pedagogy that understands the complexity of students' lives [...] regardless of their problems or where they come from' (p. 282). His approach could be useful to bridge the gap noticed in previously mentioned frameworks, which focused on leading teaching and learning but didn't allocate sufficient attention to how leadership can respond to students' needs. Smyth's approach (2006) could be particularly useful in international schools where students' multicultural identities are not represented in their school curriculum and teaching approaches (Golding & Kopsick, 2019). Cook-Sather (2006) argued that centring students' voices and needs should be paralleled with a flexible leadership and

administrative environment that enables teachers and leaders to contribute to decisions related to the curriculum and the needed pedagogical approach. Based on her research, Cook-Sather called for a distributive form of leadership where a team—instead of a single person—are responsible for leadership, and teachers have fewer restricting timetables that limit their agency and creativity. Galloway et al.'s research (2006), in addition, showed that incorporating students' voices in schools' decision making can create engagement and a sense of relatedness and belonging.

2.7.3 Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP)

One of the key goals of this research is to examine school leaders' relationship and response to the social and cultural capital of their students. According to Hollins (2011), when teachers and leaders understand the cultural dimensions of their students, teaching and student learning can be more effective. Therefore, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) can take effective leadership to a more practical level that is more suitable for diverse international schools. CRP not only incorporates students' cultures, but also engages with the culture of teachers and creates spaces and opportunities so they can share their culture with colleagues and students and develop a curriculum that accepts and reflects multiple cultures (Brooks and Miles, 2010)

Ladson-Billings's work on CRP (1995a, 1995b, 2021) provides a critique of different forms of pedagogies that aim to adapt learners' behaviour to the mainstream social and learning norms, and argues, instead, that pedagogy should respond to the culture of students and their respective needs. CRP requires 'develop[ing] students academically, supporting their 'cultural competence' and fostering their 'critical consciousness' (1995a, p. 483). Ladson-Billings's research focused on Black African American students in underperforming schools versus White better-performing schools. Her research reflects the gap between mainstream curriculum and students who come from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds with different languages and

social communication methods at home. She 'encourage[d] teachers to ask about the nature of teacher-student relationship, the curriculum, schooling and society' (p. 483). The three underpinnings of CRP are the conception of the self and the other, social relations and assessing knowledge claims. Accordingly, Ladson-Billings called for grounding pedagogy in social relations, adapting curriculum and teaching and supporting the identity and language of students, while encouraging teachers to use curriculum as a dynamic source of knowledge that serves students' needs (Grant, 1995; Banks, 2013).

CRP was driven by research in American urban schools (1995a), where multicultural diversity and marginalisation of students' identities were prevalent, which is different from the context of this research. Nonetheless, it is relatable to the study of leadership in international schools due to the student and teacher diversity and the dominant narrative and a monolithic curriculum. The complex diversity and the multicultural backgrounds are relevant to the plurality of communities in international schools. Ladson-Billings et al. (1995a) argued that CRP aims to make students from diverse cultures 'fit' into the mainstream system which the school represents and creates a 'synergistic relationship between home/community culture, and school culture' (p. 467). In addition, CRP theory is foundational to the work of many scholars who focused on cultural diversity in schools and social justice leadership. Fraise and Brooks (2015) and Khalifa et al. (2016) drew on CRP in their work and focused on the role of leadership in understanding and responding to culture(s) by leading teaching and the curriculum in partnership with teachers and students.

The centrality of culture in culturally relevant pedagogy and leadership calls for a nuanced understanding of what culture is and why it is important in educational research. Khalifa et al. (2016) noted that many leadership studies are concerned with the role of leaders in changing the school culture rather than recognising the different societies and cultures within their school. Banks (2013) and Fraise and Brooks (2015) affirmed that the term culture has been widely used in education

research, but more often associated with generic characteristics rather than representative of the societies that comprise the school community. Most leadership research associated with culture focuses on how successful leaders change their school cultures instead of adapting their practice to serve the culture(s) within their school community or co-constructing a culture that works for all of them (Christie, 2002; Brooks and Fraise, 2015). Ladson-Billings (1995 a) argued that cultural change practised by leaders represents privilege and power that justifies the assimilation of marginalised cultures by a dominant one. Her argument aligns with Poore (2005) and Kopsick's (2016) description of the experience of international schools. Spring (2022) described forced culture change as 'deculturalization' (p. 461), whereas Samier (2022) described it as a form of 'symbolic cultural violence', in reference to Bourdieu's term (1999a). Scholars of social justice education and leadership affirmed that respect and understanding students' cultures in highly diverse schools are important so that all students can be recognised and represented as equal 'participants' rather than 'subordinates' (Fraser, 2000, 2005).

Culture is central to the capital embodied by students, teachers, and leaders, and is reflected in their ways of learning and doing things (Bourdieu, 1986). By not attending to students and teachers' cultures, leaders continue to reproduce the same dominant curriculum and knowledge, which could be contradictory or disrespectful to the knowledge(s) and histories of some of their teachers and students (Khalifa et al, 2016; R'boul, 2022). Students come from different cultures with different perspectives and 'learn the espoused and hidden curriculum' differently (Dulpit, 1995, as cited in Fraise and Brooks, 2015, p. 8). When students learn the knowledge that contradicts their own home and local knowledge, they suppress themselves to cope with what will make them a part of the whole. Dominant cultures or the monolithic curriculum in schools could cause a sense of alienation (Bourdieu, 1979; Calhoun, 2006), or 'cultural dissonance' (Drake, 2004, p. 198). Many schools silence their students' cultures, while maintaining a trivial notion of cultural diversity, which signifies a process of assimilation (Spring, 2022)

that leads to promoting school knowledge and devaluing home knowledge. Bourdieu (1977) argued against neglecting the social or the cultural capital of students and teachers as it can harm and restrain their momentum of development. He explained that dispositions—and habitus—are not static but evolve as they interact with the field and its institutional habitus (Grenfell, 2014). Habitus is gained through different social and cultural encounters; it embodies the individual's capital and sense of identity, while simultaneously internalising the new culture in schools. When the habitus of their school contradicts and marginalises their own habitus with no opportunities to represent and share their culture and identity, a sense of rupture appears (Go, 2006). This rupture between them and their school creates further disconnection and limits possibilities of belonging to the place (Riley, 2022), which can be detrimental to student learning, well-being, and identity development (Allen et al., 2016).

2.7.4 Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL)

Khalifa et al (2016) developed a culturally responsive school leadership framework (CRSL), which supplements the work done by CRL and CRP. The term 'responsive' means that leaders have the responsibility to create pluralistic and inclusive curriculum and teaching approaches, in addition to engaging students' home lives (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Khalifa et al.'s (2016) research took place in culturally diverse schools with teachers and leaders of minoritised students where they analysed CRP, curriculum, and classroom management. Besides adapting teaching and curriculum, they recognised the importance of including different forms of indigenous epistemologies in multicultural educational environments. CRSL involves leading professional development to ensure curriculum and teaching approaches are responsive, which results in improving student learning (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Although Khalifa et al. (2016) studied schools with minoritised students of colour, they recognise that their theoretical framework applies to schools where diverse students are not a minority, which applies to international schools where students

represent many cultural minorities and identities. Sleeter (2012, 2018) confirmed that all students would benefit from learning a culturally responsive curriculum, where they learn about each other's histories, backgrounds, and agency, which is also consistent with Banks multicultural curriculum (2013). Khalifa et al. (2016) emphasised the critical awareness of leaders in equity and justice, which would enable them to lead a culturally responsive school and 'ensure teachers are and remain culturally responsive' (p. 1281).

Gay (2010) argued that teachers should use instructional strategies that do not degrade their students' cultural values and identities. Leaders who aim to lead culturally responsive schools should incorporate cultural responsiveness and inclusivity principles in their school visions and ensure that all teachers and staff incorporate them in their daily practice (Khalifa, 2011). Ladson-Billings (1995a) and Howard (2003) suggested that teaching is more than recognising students' cultures, but also about embracing their identities, dispositions, languages, knowledge, and interests, which are incorporated in the notion of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This dimension of leaders and teachers' practice is particularly important in international schools where the community encompasses multiple identities and cultures. Lindsay et al. (2004) suggested that all students, regardless of their identity and culture, should feel valued and recognised in highly diverse multicultural schools.

Khalifa et al. (2016) highlighted the strong link between cultural responsiveness and social justice principles in school leadership. Social justice leadership was conceptualised by Theoharis (2007) as 'a process built on respect, care, recognition and empathy' (p. 223) in schools. Theoharis's definition centres social justice in the 'daily realities of school leadership', which primarily focuses on 'addressing and eliminating issues of marginalisation in schools' (2007, p. 223). However, when leaders are not critically aware of cultural and social injustice, and haven't had any preparation, it might be difficult for them to lead equitably and address injustice where it appears. Leaders and staff might not see issues of

cultural injustice because it is historical, ingrained, and normalised (Toure, 2008), but parents and students internalise the dominant discourse or suppress their cultural capital.

By 'recognising and nurturing the cultural identity and cultural capital of students, staff and the community' (Khalifa et al., p.1290), and creating spaces for students and teachers' voices to be represented (Smyth, 2006), leaders can create a reciprocal social and educational engagement within the school. This includes acknowledging cultural epistemologies, beliefs and the intersectionalities of multiple identities and histories in different contexts (Sleeter, 2018). Acknowledging that students' social and cultural capital are valued and represented, not merely existent, is an important dimension that has been neglected in mainstream leadership theory (Lopez, 2021). Lopez (2020) called leaders to engage in critical reflection on colonial legacies and reflect on their own knowledge and practice. In many schools, leaders and teachers might misidentify 'cultural centrism' (Wimmer, 2007, in R'boul, 2022, p. 1154) as the norm, do not acknowledge the uniqueness of student cultures, and fail to notice that CRP, CRL and CRSL are beneficial to all students. Leadership that responds to—all—students' cultures and identities can be seen as a practice of care, hope (Freire, 2021), and intercultural appreciation.

The work of Warner and Grint (2006) and Khalifa et al. (2016) assert that CRSL cannot follow a predetermined path; instead, leadership varies depending on the geographic and cultural setting in which the school exists. This idea has strong implications for international school leadership. According to Gay (2010), leadership approaches and strategies depend on the communities which leaders serve and their relevant histories. Culture is not simply an adjective attached to a group of people; it is associated with ways of thinking, behaving, and learning (Fraise and Brooks, 2015). Therefore, the connection of the social and the cultural is inevitable and indispensable, and highly relevant to the context of international

schools. Thus, adopting a de-contextualised leadership style in international schools might not be effective or might have unfavourable effects.

Scholars of cultural sociology, social justice leadership and CRL waved flags against universalising leadership approaches without carefully considering the needs and values of each context (Hofstede, 2001; Weng, 2015; Arar and Oplatka, 2015). These approaches, despite evidence of effectiveness, are neither simplistic nor predictable (Weng, 2014; 2015). They require consistent commitment from leaders and staff to navigate dominant narratives, understand the historical and cultural context and practise critical self-reflection (Khalifa et al., 2016). The work of Gay, Weng and Khalifa aligns with the work of Brown (2004), who called for linking leadership practice with transformative learning (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1996) so leaders can be prepared to lead for social and cultural justice in multicultural contexts. Brown (2004) and Furman (2012) called for a critical stance that weaves social justice into the fabric of educational leadership curriculum, pedagogy, programs, and policies. In addition to this discussion, this thesis suggests that cultural recognition also matters and should be embedded in social justice approaches.

Scholarship of social justice and critical leadership and pedagogy has influenced this research, mainly through connecting leadership, learning and culture and adapting pedagogy and curriculum to the cultural and social capital of students, teachers, and the social field (Bourdieu, 1979, 1986). This scholarship is relevant and useful to the current context of international schools despite taking place in different times and spaces and with different demographics. The work of Khalifa et al. (2016), Fraise and Brooks (2015), Brown (2004, 2006) and Ladson-Billings (1995a, 2021) highlights the lack of reciprocity between the schooling system and policy and students' socio-cultural backgrounds and offers conceptual tools to examine leadership in multicultural international contexts.

2.8 Bourdieu's Theoretical Framework

This research investigates leadership of teaching and learning, leadership development and the relationship of leadership with the social and cultural capital of teachers and students, that is embedded in the school's social and cultural field. For this purpose, the study uses leadership and learning theories in combination with Bourdieu's social theory and his concepts: field, habitus and capital, and their relationship with each other (Wacquant, 1989; Bourdieu, 1984, 1998a). Bourdieu's theory is utilised as a theoretical and methodological foundation for this study, not only through concepts but through a coherent relational approach that analyses social phenomena (leadership and learning) in relationship to each other and to their context. Bourdieu offers a set of interconnected conceptual, methodological, and analytical tools (Thompson, 2017) that guide the analytical and empirical work in this research. Bourdieu's theorising of education as a form of social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) underpins this literature review and the analysis of findings and offers an explanatory power that helps us see beyond the shiny surface of well-advertised schools and leadership profiles. In the context of international schools, Bourdieu's theory allows the interrogation of what is normalised, provokes thinking of leadership as agency (Evans, 2022) and 'challenges the status quo' by providing 'alternate' and more 'productive ways' of research (Eacott 2013b, p. 118). Engaging with this lens throughout the research process promotes further questions on the role of schools and leadership in reproducing further social realities that affect the whole community, including issues of internationalisation, learning, and responding to the different needs within these spaces. Bourdieu's lens focuses on possible 'changes of the game, and how it influences the different positions, their relationships, and the whole logic of practice (Thomson, 2014). This social lens, alongside educational leadership theories, helps to examine leadership in the context of international schools, where leadership (agency) and learning (habitus), interact with the social and cultural capital of teachers and students.

Using Bourdieu's theory offers productive, rather than reproductive, ways of researching leadership and analysing what it is that leaders do that makes a difference in the status quo of teaching and learning. It provides an additional lens to examine leadership as practice rather than a managerial role amidst rising waves of performativity and accountability (Ball, 2012a, 2017). Relatedly, this theory enables the conceptualisation of schools as structures that influence the enactment of habitus and capital. Based on this lens, the study investigates the leadership of teaching and learning and how it responds to the field and its rules; whether it reproduces monolithic approaches in teaching and learning or challenges and changes them by responding to the needs of its community. This relational approach to the study of leadership (Eacott, 2013b, 2019) centres the interconnection of leading, learning, and international schools as social fields.

2.8.1 The Field

Bourdieu's fields are 'networks of social relations' and 'structured systems of social positions' (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 25) which constitute the cultural and social spaces and hierarchies through which social agents interact (Eacott, 2013a). Each field has its own set of beliefs and perspectives or what Bourdieu called doxas, which legitimise the game in the field (Bourdieu, 1977). Doxas also explain why certain forms of capital can be valued more than others. The positions of agents in a field are determined based on the amount of capital and power they have, which means that individuals in the same field do not necessarily have the same capital. Agents could also be institutions such as a certain type of school in a specific society (Thomson, 2017). Positions in the field are based on the capital accumulated by agents, their recognition, and the habitus they gain over a certain period. Hence, field, capital and habitus are interconnected concepts, and international schools—in this research—are conceptualised as fields of power that (re)produce cultural transposition and advantage (Grenfell, 2014). In Bourdieu's words (1996), a field

contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. (p. 4)

2.8.2 The Habitus

Habitus is the set of embodied 'dispositions', 'feelings', and 'perception' that individuals develop through their interaction with the social world, which are represented by their ways of 'speaking', 'eating' and behaving (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 70). Habitus is one of Bourdieu's key concepts that is central to understanding his theory and methodology. According to Bourdieu, it is through the workings of habitus that practice (agency) is linked with capital and field (structure)' (Reay, 2004, p. 432). Bourdieu (1990a) defined habitus as:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures, predisposed to function as structuring structures or principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express of the operations necessary in order to attain them (p. 53).

An individual's habitus impacts the field in which they act and can be reinvented and reshaped. In this research, international schools are viewed as fields that function as 'structuring structures' aiming to shape the mental habits, dispositions, and behaviour of those who join their communities, including leaders, teachers, and students. Schools also develop their own institutional habitus, which incorporate a set of visions and practices. Nonetheless, habitus is not permanent nor static, it evolves as the individual interacts with the field and can be reinvented or reshaped, especially if the person enters a new field where the previous habitus no longer serves them, or when faced with challenging circumstances (Calhoun, 2006). Habitus adaptation can be described as an internalisation of social,

professional, educational, and political expectations, which applies to the development and practice of school leaders.

2.8.3 Capital

Bourdieu's notion of capital is associated with power (Calhoun, 2006). Capital places individuals in different social positions and allows them to claim control over a certain field or within it. Bourdieu suggested four types of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic, which are 'mutually convertible' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 183). Capital does not have a universal value but derives its significance and value from the social space in which it exists. Economic capital refers to financial resources owned by the individual, whereas social capital is the amount of networking and social connections an individual has, or the amount of capital the individual's connections have. Social capital can be enhanced by family, social groups, or class, and comprises acceptance and recognition. It represents the bond that affiliates an individual with a group of people and contributes to their sense of belonging to the group. Social capital is inherent in the ability to build relationships of trust with others based on shared cultural backgrounds, expectations, norms, values, and interests. Cultural capital, alternatively, reflects the range of skills an individual possesses, and it comes in three forms. First, the embodied or incorporated, which is acquired through language proficiency, accent, taste, cultural or work experience. Second, the objectified, which exists in material state such as works of art, books, dress, accessories, or equipment. Third, the institutionalised, which comprises recognition by official institutions represented in degrees, awards, and qualifications. The value of cultural capital is contingent on specific fields and times (Bourdieu, 1987), and it grants its owners a 'superior' position in relation to others (Joy et al, 2018, p. 14). The last form of capital is the symbolic, which is the power accumulated by individuals as a result of their exchangeable forms of capital—economic, social, and cultural capital—and it results in social recognition or a position of power (Bourdieu, 1986). Capital is inherent in the individual's habitus and continues to be shaped as the individual

moves in the field or from one field to another (Calhoun, 2006). The social and cultural aspects of the field are intricately connected, and interchangeably influence habitus.

International schools are fields that comprise all types of capital and are chosen by families who seek symbolic power for their children. They are not schools where education is equitably distributed, but schools for the privileged owners of economic capital (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). Schools provide embodied capital where students learn language, manners and academic knowledge, and objectified capital where they have access to resources, technology and other materialities in schools. They also provide institutionalised capital through recognised qualifications incorporating the privilege of the international school. The reputation of a school in a specific field is important to leverage the symbolic significance of the reports it offers. This is important for families who choose international schools for academic and symbolic recognition. International schools can also offer their students a significant social capital, where they build a social network consisting of other privileged students.

The process of interaction between leaders as social and instructional agents with the schools' structural body is an important phenomenon that is analysed by this study. A Bourdieusian perspective views schools as fields of power, influenced by the larger field, such as organisations or chains of schools that offer economic, cultural, and symbolic capital to their member schools. Social fields also include communities within schools such as staff, teachers, students, families, and other stakeholders. International schools compete to increase their forms of capital and hire principals with high symbolic capital. Leadership positions are generally exchanged for all forms of capital (Gunter, 2001; Thomson, 2017). However, leaders work towards placing themselves and their schools in higher positions locally and internationally (Eacott, 2013a) as their schools expect them to act 'rationally' and to master the 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 11), which can be both ambiguous and disordained.

2.8.4 Bourdieu and educational leadership

To examine educational leadership through Bourdieu's lens is not a simple undertaking but a sophisticated one. Bourdieu's theory does not offer a neat and structured framework that could be easily laid out against key themes and subthemes. In contrast, it offers a mechanism that leads to an intellectual exercise channelling difficult questions into existing phenomena. Bourdieu's theory conceptualises leadership as agency, which mobilises the school operations to produce capital rather than merely reproducing power relationships and maintaining the status-quo. Leadership, in this sense, is not merely about position and policy reproduction, but about challenging the dominant system to enhance learning and school improvement. The leadership frameworks discussed earlier in this chapter offer a nuanced discussion of what educational leadership is and how it is practised, the complexity of the role, and why leaders need to respond to the social and cultural contexts of their schools. However, the sophistication of leadership in these times and spaces (Eacott, 2013b), and the ambiguity and convolution of leading in international schools, necessitates a theoretical lens that would guide the analysis of the connection between schools and their communities, and between leadership practice and learning. Bourdieu's theory not only helps to interpret data but enables additional layers of analysis and facilitates the study of leadership practice and development and their relationship with their social fields and why they do or do not.

The review of leadership literature did not reveal a powerful lens that centres the people of the field, not only their voices, but their whole beings, identities, and everything they represent (Khalifa et al., 2016). Literature on educational leadership and international schools does not clarify why many groups of students and teachers have no voice or presence in their schools. This absence calls for a theoretical perspective that helps to find the unseen and the under-researched. Bourdieu's theory offers analytical tools that explain the invisible hierarchies and barriers to educational practice that activate different forms of capital, while

suppressing others (Vincent, 2022). A part of leadership theory discusses effective leadership dimensions, and the other part explains what is missing in the field and what can be done to respond to the needs of diverse communities. Despite comprehensiveness and value, there is a gap between these theories and international school communities and their leadership. A sociological understanding of the field and its interrelation with capital, habitus and the exchange of influence is crucial to steer this analysis further and to drive leadership and learning theories to new dimensions.

Nonetheless, understanding the reasons behind the lack of plurality and responsiveness in multicultural international schools would not have been possible merely through Bourdieu's theory. A thorough review of educational leadership and leadership development theories was needed. While leadership theories present insights on what works best in schools, Bourdieu's theory enables studying leadership beyond the discourse of effective or successful practice. The leadership frameworks discussed earlier in this chapter explain the core acts of leadership and examine leadership development in international schools, whereas Bourdieu's theory takes this understanding to a different level as it analyses the relationship of leadership to the field and the capital brought to the school by its teachers and students. Bourdieu's theory enables responding to the question of why it is important to value and respond to the field and brings forward a new understanding of input from the field into leadership.

Bourdieuian research requires a sense of criticality and reflexivity throughout the entire process and offers opportunities for researchers to unpack educational leadership as a social phenomenon (Eacott, 2010a). 'Using Bourdieu's theory to think [...] about educational leadership research' (Eacott, 2016, p. 1) is less about reproducing an effective system and more centred on questions that lead to social change (Thompson 2017). One of the advantages of using this theory and its analytical tools is enabling researchers to analyse and evaluate the distinct factors underpinning leadership practice so the roots of these issues can be revealed. To

add a Bourdieusian lens to the study of leadership is to engage with the trio: habitus, capital, and the field, and to centre their interrelationship as essential (Wacquant, 1989) in understanding the work of leaders.

Leadership (habitus + capital) uses its position that is valued and legitimised in the field to mobilise capital. The process of activating and expanding capital, through the habitus, to mobilise the field, defines leadership practice in Bourdieusian terms: [(Habitus)(Capital)+Field] =Practice (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 110). There is no leadership without the field and no mobilised capital without the field or without the habitus that develops it. It is the relationship between them that explains school leadership as an agency interacting with the social field and influenced by the structure. The capital of other agents in the field, including teachers and students, is key to how leaders lead schools and how they learn and prepare to do so. Therefore, all forms of capital in the field are meaningful to the praxis of leadership and should be addressed by leadership development. Viewing leadership merely as a social position that fulfils a predefined role in an organisational structure, or as a success story (reproduction), undermines the relationship between leaders, teachers, and students—who embody different capital(s)— that is central to the study of leadership.

2.8.5 A productive critical perspective

A productive critical perspective—versus an instrumentalist one—does not confine to isolated schoolwork; in contrast, it acknowledges the role played by different contextual factors influencing leaders' practice. Thomson (2017) and Hammersley-Fletcher (2022) suggested that senior leaders are viewed by their organisations as individually responsible for maintaining or securing symbolic school capital represented in high accountability records. A key disposition of effective leaders in the literature is delivery (Gunter & Forrester, 2010; Eacott, 2013a), which is expected across most contemporary schools including international schools. The challenge is to move from delivery and management mode to doing more or different than what they are expected to do. Besides

committing to evidence-based effective practice, leaders are expected to think about their educational provision all the time, to critically analyse policy directions, understand their school field and the local culture's history and capital which define their school population (Thomson, 2017). However, this approach in leadership can be challenging under the hegemonic system of educational corporations such as international schools. Whether leaders can focus on teaching and learning and respond to the needs of their social fields while also fulfilling corporate expectations is a difficult question that might not be easily answered (Courtney et al, 2017). However, it is important to maintain this question as a cognitive flag during the research process (Bourdieu, 1999b).

This discourse could be criticised for its pessimistic view of leadership as dominated. In the least, it could be argued that leadership is not emancipated (Gunter & McGinty, 2014). Despite what could be seen as a pessimistic tone, Bourdieusian studies of leadership offer productive and optimistic views of educational leadership (Eacott, 2010). Eacott argued that leaders could have autonomy within the system despite exacerbating 'managerialist regimes' (Eacott, 2013c, p. 29). His argument is based on a case study of a principal in St. Margaret, Australia, who successfully led the school into many accomplishments, not against or outside the system, but by demonstrating a freedom to act that is not very common in education. In this example, building relationships with the community was central to achieving the school's objectives.

Bourdieu's theory can be seen as an intellectual resource. It is a way of thinking about leadership, not a theory to be tested out in the educational leadership space (Wacquant, 1998; Eacott 2013a). Bourdieu's 'relational approach' helps researchers to explain school leadership as a set of relations (Mohr, 2017). It is not a concept but a series of events, interactions, and social transformations (Calhoun, 2006). A Bourdieusian study of educational leadership needs to develop its arguments beyond roles and positions, by drawing on the nature of 'social spaces', 'positions' and 'relationships within the social space' (Bourdieu,

1985, p. 723) and how leaders utilise them to advance their field. Accordingly, this thesis adopts a Bourdieusian perspective paralleled with leadership and learning theories to create a productive account of leadership in a social space that is typically designed for reproduction, and where leadership is meant to influence instrumentally and within specific boundaries. The theory enables the imagination of leadership as a possible multidimensional process, where agents within the field can influence each other, their leadership, and the educational structure.

2.9 Leadership development

Research confirming the importance of leadership development for student learning is well-established (Grissom et al., 2021). A recent study by Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) confirmed that principal development is not only important for student learning, but for teachers' work, and for 'principals' sense of preparedness and engagement with effective practices' (p.1). Research on the relationship of leadership development and the outcomes of schooling has been documented for a few decades. Leithwood (1994) and Hallinger and Heck (1997) affirmed that ongoing learning and supporting leader and teacher learning are some of the most effective ways to support school improvement and learning outcomes. Principals affect teachers' work outcomes through creating an organised learning environment, and affect their retention, knowledge, and skills (Hughes, 2012). Earley (2013) argued that all school leaders benefit from ongoing professional learning regardless of their years of experience or the type of their work. Therefore, leadership development can be 'seen as a crucial theme in school improvement research' (Joo and Kim, 2016, p. 2) due to its influence on teacher motivation, school culture, and student achievement (Liu et al, 2016). In general, the review of educational leadership literature shows that the relationship between learning and leading is embedded in the role of leaders (Levin, 2006; Bush, 2009).

As the definition of education quality is changing with complex and challenging norms, policies and expectations, leaders need to build new capacities, skills, and

attitudes. Leadership development—before appointment in key positions and during the role—is essential to prepare leaders for the complexity of the job (Bush et al., 2007). However, ‘in many cases, leadership training takes place [but fails] to keep pace with the evolving role of school leaders’ (Mitgang, 2012, p. 6). The changing responsibilities require leaders to develop new skills to cope with the rising challenges in times of accountability and global socio-economic, political and health pandemics.

Leadership development can be defined as a process in which the leader’s habitus is shaped and recreated in response to the interaction with the field; through this process, leaders’ habitus evolves as they gain additional cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Perceiving leadership development as a result of the interaction between the habitus, field and capital enables a better understanding of contextualised leadership development. Leadership development that is contextually driven addresses the needs of the field, leads to developing relevant skills and dispositions, and simultaneously influences leadership teams and schools. This requires that leaders develop critical thinking skills and tools to understand policy directions, analyse and evaluate their context-unique needs and strengths (Eacott, 2010b) and grow their sense of pedagogic and professional responsibility to critically monitor teaching and learning in their schools.

In their earlier work, Hallinger and Wimpelberg (1992) critiqued the dominant patterns of leadership development programs that are generally determined and designed by authorities while leaders are delegated to attend with limited choice and input. Hallinger evaluated several preparation programs in the United States based on content, mode of participation, curriculum, and governance. While these programs provided opportunities for networking and professional socialisation, most of them excluded or marginalised theory and did not offer sufficient space for reflection and analysis. Furthermore, the programs generally offered non-contextual training where leaders heard success stories from others but came

back to their schools feeling helpless and broken as their school realities were completely different (Hallinger and Wimpelberg, 1992).

Thirty years after Hallinger and Wimpelberg's study (1992), research on leadership development still pinpoints similar issues regarding the relatability of leadership development programs, decontextualisation, absence of coaching and in-service support, and limited opportunities for reflection and analysis, particularly in the context of international schools (Calnin et al., 2018; Fisher, 2019). The uniformity of highly rated programs might not suffice to deal with the complex and rapidly changing matters and concerns of schools (Bush, 2009). In addition, the question of programs that ignore emotional or affective capacities and cultural leadership is persistent (Darling-Hammond, 2022). Eacott (2010a) argued that when leadership training and education is homogenous or generic, leaders are not prepared to lead the diversities of schools, contexts, and populations, such as international schools. Leithwood and Riehl (2005) suggested that leaders should learn how to interact and respond to their students and staff's individual and social matters so they can support their learning.

Recent studies on leadership show that the expanded role of principals has led to more leadership instructional roles allocated to heads of departments, academic coordinators, and teachers (Grissom et al., 2020), or the creation of new academic leadership positions (vertical and horizontal) that vary with the diverse types of schools (Thompson, 2017). Providing teachers and leaders with opportunities to engage in professional development or conversations has a positive influence on their practice and can support them to persist and lead amidst complexity. The process of structuring and positioning of leadership teams across different schools is undergoing massive changes, reframing early career leaders in vertical and horizontal hierarchical structures (Thomson, 2017). This happens without or with little training as a response to changes in school size, enrolment rates, priorities, location, or contexts (Evans et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2013; Bryant et al., 2023). Nonetheless, leadership training might not always be about

empowerment and capital enhancement, or promotion within the school. Training can be a tool to implement an organisational agenda, such as branding schools' corporate identities and ensuring that leaders abide by the organisation's strategic goals, particularly as groups of international schools are becoming more popular (Bailey, 2021). The components of leadership development programs could lead to inferences about what kind of leadership it is intended to produce, and what leadership is not meant to be. This literature review was challenged by the limited scope and size of research on leadership development in international schools, despite the important impact of leadership development on practice and the growing interest in international schools (Walker et al, 2013; Calnin et al., 2018; Fisher, 2019).

This research aims to examine leadership development in international schools and construct a relevant conceptualisation of how leaders develop and how they contribute to the development of others in international schools. Therefore, the review of literature not only examines literature that unpacks the importance and influence of leadership development, but also theories that explain how leadership learning happens and why, mainly research driven by adult learning theory.

2.9.1 Adult learning theory: Andragogy and Transformative Learning Theory

This thesis examines leadership learning and development through an adult learning theory perspective (Knowles, 1975, 1980) and the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1996; 1997), while utilising the leadership development framework of Joo and Kim (2016) and drawing on other relevant literature in the field. Andragogy is the approach defining all systematic forms of adult learning and education (Poggeler, 1957, cited in Loeng, 2018, p. 3), and is used in this thesis to analyse the development of leaders as adult learners and as educators of other adults. Andragogy is defined as the 'total embodiment and expression of the philosophy of education for adults' (Nottingham Andragogy Group, 1981, p. 2) and includes 'the body of theory and practice' of adult teaching and learning

(Knowles, 1975, p. 11). The term goes back to the Greek words *aner* (adult) and *gogus* (to guide or to teach) and was used by the 'German scholar Rosenstock-Huessy [...] in the 1920s' as a kind of teaching that aims to 'solve social problems', improve people's lives, and develop the social structure (Loeng, 2018, p. 2). Andragogy, as a discipline, was developed by East European scholars in the 1950s, who defined it with reference to all forms of adult learning and pedagogy (Loeng, 2018). Soon after that era, andragogy was studied in the UK in the 1960s at Nottingham University as an alternative to pedagogy that represents a 'unity of reflection and action, with dialogue as a central feature' (Loeng, 2018, p.4). In the mid-1970s, Knowles reintroduced andragogy in the United States as an adult learning theory that is based on self-directedness, independence, and self-actualisation (Hartree, 1984). His work primarily focused on adult learners as individuals, while the European perspective had a social and political function, in addition to self-actualisation (Loeng, 2018).

In 1991, Mezirow developed an adult learning theory and called it the 'transformative learning theory', which is based on the principles of constructivism, humanism, and critical social theory (Mezirow, 1996). The main difference between andragogy and transformative learning theory is that the former focuses on guiding adult learning, while the latter focuses on unpacking and explaining learning (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). It suggests that adults construct their perceptions based on their current and past experiences and centralises human freedom of choice and autonomy as important values (Joo and Kim, 2016). In addition, the theory highlights the importance of understanding dominant narratives and ideologies that influence social systems and cultures, which could be uncomfortable because they challenge widely established assumptions. Mezirow's theory centres social problems and social change at the heart of adult learning, which makes it aligned with Bourdieu's theory that centres the social and the cultural in the study of learning (*habitus*) and practice.

Mezirow defined transformative learning theory as the transformation of individuals' meaning perspectives (2012), which relates to the individuals' emotional and unconscious learning processes and criticality. He discussed the importance of being self-aware of cognitive processes and critically acting on values, emotions, and meanings. Mezirow (1996) explained that 'meaning structures are formed based on existing frames of references' within the individual's realm of experience and culture, which create broader 'meaning schemes' (p.163). The frames of reference are composed of 'habits of minds' consisting of predispositions that guide and influence 'the points of view and the structures of meaning', which relate to Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Bourdieu (1977) clarified that habitus encompasses dispositions and mental structures resulting from someone's previous knowledge and experience, guides other structures of thought and behaviour and enables individual development in relation to their social context. The connection of Mezirow and Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks is inferred in this analysis, rather than highlighted in Mezirow's work. However, Mezirow was explicit about the relationship of his theory with Habermas's (1984) sociological theory, mainly the concepts of instrumental and communicative rationality. Mezirow defined instrumental learning as 'learning to control and manipulate the environment or other people' and communicative learning as 'learning what others mean when they communicate with you and this involves feelings, intentions, values, and moral issues' (Mezirow, 2012, p. 77). Communicative learning relates to understanding the values and perspective of others beyond their words and actions, and analysing what is being observed, which involves emotions and moral judgements and leads to a sense of solidarity with the other (Habermas, 1984). Both categories of learning relate in many ways to the role of school leaders as educators who guide—and lead—other adults and as learners who lead their own learning.

Mezirow's work incorporated adult learning theory and focused mostly on how adults' perspectives shift over time, or in different contexts. The three main

components of his theory were experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (2012). Mezirow explained how adults make sense of their experiences and reflect on the nature of structures that influence them, the dynamics involved in making meaning, and the way structures of meanings undergo changes (Mezirow, 1996). Meaning structures (which include meaning schemes) are frames of references that individuals construct according to their cultural and societal experiences. For meaning structures and perspectives to change, individuals must engage in a critical reflection on their experiences and immerse themselves in cultural and social discourses or in new contexts. As they are immersed in these new contexts and discourses, they can develop new or shifting perspectives, particularly when confronted with disorienting dilemmas, where their previous meaning structures seem inefficient, or simply don't work. The above discussion can be applied to the learning of leaders in international schools as they interact with new fields, both as learners and as educators who guide the learning of others.

2.9.2 The leader as an adult learner and an adult educator

An adult learning approach implies that leaders are not only expected to develop their knowledge and skills, but their emotional, cognitive, analytical, and reflective processes based on motivation and needs (Joo and Kim, 2016). Joo and Kim's (2016) study of leadership development examined the role of principals not only through leadership theory, which focuses on praxis, but also through learning theory, which examines the position of leaders as learners and educators who are responsible for guiding and educating other adults (leaders and teachers). Leaders are expected to be involved in setting their goals and leading their learning and the learning of other leaders and teachers (Bush, 2013). Nonetheless, a few studies identified a gap between leadership development literature and leaders' development experience (Calnin et al., 2018; Joo and Kim, 2016; Jun et al., 2003), pointing to the dissonance between research and practice. Moreover, these studies critiqued the uni-dimensionality of existing programs and

the limited opportunities for leaders to reflect on their practice; such areas were also highlighted by Donaldson (2008) and—before that—by Hallinger and Wimpelberg (1992).

Based on their research, Joo and Kim (2016) developed a framework that draws on adult learning theory and transformative theory and conceptualised leaders as adult learners and adult educators. Their framework highlights the role of leaders-as-educators in leading staff learning through assessing and reflecting on school and staff needs and guiding others to think of their own learning needs, organising and channelling professional development programs which relate to and affect these needs, and offering leadership expertise by modelling and sharing their knowledge in teaching, learning and educational management (Joo & Kim, 2016). This dimension of the leader's role leads to nurturing and encouraging teacher learning and aligns with the literature on leading teaching and learning and the dimensions of student-centred learning (Robinson, 2011; Southworth, 2009).

The need to design leadership development programs to suit the context of leadership has been highlighted by many scholars, including Bush and Jackson (2002) and Earley (2013). This literature review showed recurrent reminders to the need for contextualising leadership preparation and development while equally responding to the needs of individual leaders, teachers, and students (Walker & Dimmock, 2005). The literature reflects ongoing debate between scholars calling for the focus on specific contexts, such as Southworth (2002, 2003) who focused on the importance of having a national system for preparing leaders in England, while others—such as Thomson (2017), challenged the uniformity of this program and called for responding to the specific needs of individual leaders and their school contexts instead. Thomson argued that leadership development has generally become the business of corporate or transnational organisations, including international schools (2017). These organisations develop and deliver their programs to leaders of their schools, which are usually generic and focus on creating or reproducing their brand rather

than particularly responding to the needs of the school (Fisher, 2019; Evans et al., 2022). As a result, these programs generally aim to equip leaders with the skills to run their schools with uniform guidance and perspectives. Consequently, there is limited space (Earley, 2013) for leaders to critically reflect on the needs of their own staff and students as they predominantly focus on leading within their organisational strategy.

2.9.3 Contextually responsive leadership development (CRLD)

While there is a range of research focusing on leadership development in different contexts that is largely described as international perspectives on leadership and leadership development, the limited focus on leadership in highly diverse international schools calls for further exploration of the field (Walker et al., 2013; Fisher, 2021). Fisher (2019) confirmed that little research is provided to guide educational leaders in multicultural international schools and that 'leaders' behaviour is driven by experience rather than by preparation and training' (p. 100). Likewise, Easley and Tulowitzki (2013) noted that leaders in international schools lack sufficient training in areas of contextual and cultural knowledge related to the communities they serve and the social fields in which they work. Hence, it is 'important to examine leadership and leadership development in these contexts' to 'understand the range of practices and what appears to make a difference' (Walker and Hallinger, 2013, p. 401). Scholars examining leadership development programs in multicultural and pluralistic contexts found out that these leaders are not prepared to deal with the multicultural, historical, and social contexts of their students, and accordingly, fail to acknowledge and respond to issues of race, gender, socio-economic inequalities, and cultural isolation experienced by their students (Wang, 2015; Tollefson and Magdaleno, 2016). As a matter of fact, inclusionary practices and response to diversity are not only relevant to leaders in international schools. Toure and Dorsey (2018) argued that policy makers should prioritise culturally relevant or social justice as topics to be included in all leadership preparation and ongoing leadership development.

The complex context of international schools, their changing demographics and the multiculturalism of their communities call for a reconsideration of leaders' preparation and development. Examining content, delivery and modes of participation is important to understanding the context of what leaders learn, what they are prepared for and whether this preparation helps them in leading international schools. Mezirow (1996) and Brown (2004, 2006) acknowledged that transformative learning might be challenging and uncomfortable as it disrupts established beliefs and assumptions. However, it might be necessary to prepare leaders to lead more equitably in diverse contexts. Brown (2004) offered a theoretical framework where 'transformative learning theory, critical social theory and adult learning theory are interwoven with three pedagogical strategies of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis, to increase awareness and action within leadership preparation programs' (p. 78).

Brown's research found out that 'effective leaders take responsibility for their learning' and challenge their own perspectives to 'understand the structural and organic nature of their schools' (p. 78). Therefore, leadership development programs should prepare leaders for social and cultural justice leadership and provide them with opportunities to gain these skills (Banks, 1995, 2013). Preparation programs should equip leaders with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions so they can recognise, examine, and understand when and why certain school policies 'devalue the identities of some of their students while overvaluing others' (Nieto, 2000, p. 183). According to Henze et al. (2002), 'while diversity is given a certain degree of lip service in administrative credentialing programs, leaders have not been prepared with tools [...] or with specific strategies for building interethnic communities' with intercultural skills (p. 4). The gap described by Henze et al. is still ongoing. Educational Leadership programs that prepare current and aspiring leaders for leading multicultural schools rarely offer social justice topics and discussions (Calnin et al., 2018; Evans, 2022). Brown (2004) suggested that the more diverse a community is, the higher the need for leadership development programs to include topics of social justice,

equality, and respect in addition to criticality, awareness, and action. Shields et al. (2002) and Furman (2012) suggested that leadership development programs should provide leaders with the tools and knowledge to engage in dialogues and critical reflection related to their work in pluralistic communities. Leaders should be prepared to create safe spaces for teachers and students and to unpack their perspectives (Shields et al., 2002) and unpack issues of 'cultural dissonance' (Hammad & Shah, 2018, p. 750); otherwise, both teachers and students will fail to develop a sense of belonging and trust (Riley, 2022).

Brown (2004) calls for alternative practical approaches to prepare leaders to lead in diverse and multicultural environments, such as life histories, cultural autobiographies, reflective analysis journals, cross-cultural interviews' (p. 82), in addition to other learning tasks that allow teachers and students to reflect deeply and effectively. While Brown's research (2004) was conducted in multicultural urban schools, the outcomes and the theoretical underpinnings could be useful for international schools. Brown offered a nuanced explanation of adult learning that encompasses four main constructs. The first construct is self-directedness, which relates to the autonomy of adult learners, and their ability to make decisions related to their learning (Knowles, 1975). The second construct is critical reflection, which encompasses the constructs of logic and reasoning, and the awareness of historical and social contexts (Giroux, 1983). Brown (2004) and Mezirow (1996) linked critical reflection to the understanding of context and one's own needs and interests, which are situated within a wider social and cultural field. This understanding of the self and the other allows leaders to understand the hegemonic framework of knowledge and practice, which was described by Gramsci (1978) as the dominant ideology that convinces people to adopt a specific framework as the route serving their best interests. The third construct is experiential learning, which was discussed by Dewey (1938), as a key component in the social construction of knowledge in addition to action. The fourth construct is learning to learn, which is central to Knowles's adult learning theory (1980) and includes the awareness of one's own judgements and perspectives.

The concept of criticality is central to the conceptualisation of adult learning and transformation in educational leadership. Reflecting on their context, practice and knowledge becomes critical when it leads to understanding and practising the leadership role in the transformation of others. Additionally, learning and experience contribute to the development of leaders' cultural capital and habitus resulting from their interaction with the social field (Bourdieu, 1977). Leadership development that contributes to social transformation requires social and cultural engagement with the field—referred to by Fraise and Brooks (2015) as the school culture. Accordingly, leadership development is crucial for the collective development of adults, students, and the whole-school culture.

Critical reflection (Mezirow, 1996; Brown, 2004), strongly relates to leaders' experience as adult learners in internationalised fields. It allows adults to connect their experiences to external structures and examine the influence of dominant cultural and societal influences on their thinking. In addition, rational discourse (Habermas, 1984) allows the leader to engage in dialogues with others and listen to their cultural and societal perspectives while 'testing the validity of one's own construction of meaning' (Brown, 2004, p. 85). Critical leaders think freely and reflect objectively on conversations and information, so they can speak, listen, question, and challenge their own assumptions and those acquired through previous encounters. As leaders immerse themselves in new fields, their frames of reference contribute to the development of habitus which (re)shape their knowledge and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1986). Besides dispositions, the development of habitus incorporates learning new skills and sharpening existing ones, as they engage with others in new fields or new situations. The leader's interaction with their social field leads to a social transformation that is both professional and cultural (Bourdieu, 1989). Bourdieu's notion of learning as embedded in the habitus is not only individual but influences the habitus of others through social interactions, which relates to the role of leaders as educators who guide the learning of others. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the habitus—individual and collective—is inherently similar to Freire's (1973) notion of critical

reflection, which equally leads to individual and communal social transformation. Freire's critical reflection is a process through which individuals critically deconstruct their context and reconstruct their consciousness while immersing in social transformation and liberating others through education.

hooks (1994) called educators to interrogate single-dimensional educational policies which enforce curriculum and standards that do not take into consideration the needs and cultures of students and teachers. hooks, like Freire (1985), Banks (2013) and Brown (2004), called for confronting educational policies and norms that embody racism, discrimination and marginalisation of specific cultures and social groups. In her book *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), hooks called for a critical pedagogical approach that de-hierarchises educational environments and enables shared leadership practice not in specific positions but across the whole organisation. Transformative educational leaders who guide and educate teachers and leaders expect them also to be learners. When leaders engage in critical reflection, rational discourse related to their own work and relationship with others, they discover new knowledge(s) (Mezirow, 2012) and learn to embrace new ways of teaching, leading, and learning. As a result, leaders do not monolithically lead but engage in reciprocal learning which encourages them to use inclusive pedagogical approaches (Brown, 2004). As a result, exposure to new perspectives allows leaders to expand their views and assumptions, confront their biases and embrace new ways of leading and managing (Schepen 2017).

Scholars of professional learning in multicultural international schools suggest cross-cultural learning and 'boundary brokering' as a part of leaders' role and professional development (Lai et al., 2019, p. 1120). Brokering refers to 'bridging boundaries' in diversified international schools that are full of 'cultural dissonance in the norms of being and practice' (Lai et al., 2019, p. 1106). Boundaries represent the hidden barriers and differences (Wenger, 1998) within communities of practice that are different culturally, linguistically, and pedagogically (Wenger,

2000). The notion of boundary crossing refers to the role played by leaders and teachers in international school communities who are willing to bridge the cultural, professional and knowledge gap driven by power dynamics and hidden hierarchies (Wang, 2014; Leung & Waters, 2017). According to Lai et al (2019), Western teachers perceive themselves as pedagogically superior and view the pedagogies of other teachers as inferior to theirs. They do not engage in reciprocal learning to learn from others or about others (Mezirow, 1996), which is very common in contexts of internationalisation (Knight and Liu, 2017). Therefore, it takes leadership and courage by people who can see both knowledge(s) to create bridges based on cross-cultural and intercultural learning.

Cultural learning includes different tools and strategies that help leaders to practise their self-reflection while learning about their attitudes and perspectives and the communities they serve (Brown, 2004; Ryan, 2013). Brown (2004) suggested several tools and strategies that would prepare leaders to lead for social and cultural justice in multicultural schools. Cultural autobiographies are one of the important tools for adult learners because it allows them to reflect on their own experiences, examine and describe their own cultural identities and develop a sense of self-consciousness (Freire, 2021). Second, life history is a tool through which preparation programs could encourage leaders to reflect on the history of the educational system they are engaged with. Third, prejudice reduction workshops can help leaders to unlearn and relearn new information about themselves and different groups, recognise misinformation and engage in critical discussions through journals and counter commentaries (Banks, 2013). Fourth, engagement in rational discourse is an effective way through which leaders are involved with issues of social and cultural justice in multicultural schools, (Brown, 2004; Shields et al. 2002). Cultural learning can be crucial to leaders who work in international schools as it helps them to question and adapt their practice to meet the needs of their school communities (Fisher, 2019).

Dialogic interactions, as suggested by Mezirow (2000), encourage understanding beyond the surface of social phenomena and events. Dialogue has been emphasised by Southworth (2002) and Robinson et al. (2008) as foundational to leadership practice. In 1970, Freire introduced dialogue as a teaching approach that is useful for students and teachers, especially when a curriculum is predesigned and does not represent the life events of students and teachers (Freire, 2014). Dialogue is an essential element in Mezirow's theory, where the immersion of adults in social and cultural discourses enables them to understand the complexity of their new contexts. However, dialogue and critical reflection are not enough to produce change, action on reflection is important (Freire, 1994) and essential in adults' transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1996).

Brown (2004) suggested that engaging in self-directed learning, critical reflection, and rational discourse enable leaders to put their new knowledge into social action within their schools and communities. While this could seem difficult for leaders whose role is primarily seen as an implementation of predesigned frameworks of curriculum and teaching, their new perspectives of practice should enable them to direct the path of their schools into a pluralistic environment using engaged (hooks, 1994) and responsive pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Transformative adult learning theory paves the way for leadership development programs that enable leaders to (re)construct their understanding of their leadership roles, particularly in contexts of internationalisation.

2.10 The Context: International schools in England and Qatar as social and cultural fields

This research aims to study leadership in international schools in England and Qatar and leaders' relationship with people in their schools. International schools in this study are not merely viewed as educational institutions offering internationalised education, but also as multicultural social fields. This research analyses their identities and structures and how these shape leaders' practice, development, and interaction with the field. The multiple cultures constituting

international schools and their histories and locations influence people's perspectives and the practice of leaders (Walker & Hallinger, 2015) and how they perceive knowledge in the field (Bajunid, 1996). It is no exception that an international school is viewed differently in the Arab Islamic context, such as Qatar—where there is a Global South majority (World Population Review, 2023)—than it is in England, where there is a dominant Western knowledge paradigm (Bajunid, 1996).

Leithwood et al. (2020a) encouraged leaders to be 'sensitive to the context in which they find themselves' by applying significantly different practices 'as contexts change' (p. 5). However, as this thesis is concerned with leadership knowledge and practice, this review acknowledges that educational leadership knowledge is largely produced by Western scholarship (Samier & ElKaleh, 2023). Although there is a growing interest in leadership research in non-Western contexts, interest in international school leadership—especially by non-Western scholars—is still emerging (Hammad & Shah, 2018; Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2021; Khalil, 2019; Kim, 2019). Context that influences educational leadership practice includes institutional elements, socio-cultural, political, and economic factors (Hallinger, 2016). In this research, context is referred to as the social field, which indicates the social and cultural space, its structures, and relationships with the larger field of power—and its history, knowledge, traditions, and capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) argued that schools and leadership practices are significantly influenced by culture and knowledge traditions in specific contexts, despite the particularities of different schools. More recently, Thompson (2017) called researchers using Bourdieu's lens to start by examining the field, where 'knowledge is particular' and strongly 'rooted in its indigenous traditions and culture' (Bajunid, 1996, p. 12-18). The historical context of the organisation, its regulations, problems, accomplishments, staff backgrounds, budget, structure, and parent community are referred to as the school culture. Alternatively, the

country's historical, social, legal, and economic features and its educational system are referred to as the local culture. The school culture and the local culture are both a part of what this study refers to as the social field. Although social fields are subject to various and fluctuating influences, the interaction between leadership and the field is constant (Evans, 2021).

2.10.1 The Covid-19 pandemic

This research took place during the pandemic, while schools were in complete or partial lockdowns. Leadership and schools were trying to cope with—rather than anticipate or prevent—a disorder. Schools and communities experienced a 'state of anxiety, fear and widespread illness as governments introduced social distancing, lockdowns and isolation measures to limit the spread of the infection' (Argyropolou et al., 2021, p. 24). The whole situation was reminiscent of Bourdieu's notion of hysteresis (1963, 1999), where a sense of chaos and disorder hits the social system and causes ruptures and lack of direction. Schools and their leadership witnessed massive changes, less certainty, and more surveillance through enhanced technological channels. Some schools were merely reacting while others had the means to respond, adapt and meet the challenges. Goode et al. (2020) found out that most school leaders adopted an 'adaptive style' (p. 45), which 'mobilises people to tackle tough challenges and thrive' (Heifert et al., 2009, p. 14). Adaptive leadership requires patience, management of vulnerability and strong foundations of pre-pandemic strengths (Goode et al., 2021). Consequently, leaders responded differently depending on the facilities and capabilities of their schools and team members. In general, research investigating educational challenges during the pandemic confirmed that leaders outstandingly managed to keep schools going and the teaching and learning process in place despite different levels of capabilities (Harris & Jones, 2021; Arar et al., 2023).

2.10.2 England and Qatar's relationships: The historical context

This section focuses on the contexts of England and Qatar as research fields and analyses the local and historical culture of each country and the way they influence international schools and leadership. The study adopts a critical realist approach where knowledge is contextualised, situated, and deeply influenced by cultural and historical realities (Bhaskar, 2016). Although this research is not comparative, it utilises Hofstede's cross-cultural framework (1997) to cross-examine aspects of the local cultures affecting schools in both countries. England is a western country with democratic values, while Qatar is an Arab country where laws and social norms are rooted in the Islamic culture. Qatar gained independence from the British Empire in 1971 (Adiong, 2012) but maintained its political and economic relationships with Britain (Smith, 2016). According to Bhambra (2016), while modern states have moved away from imperialism in the legal sense, the invisible power dynamics are not easily forgotten. Go (2017) argues that empires relate to people vertically as the relationship is between a sovereign and a subject, whereas the relationship between nations is presumably horizontal. Historical relationships are significant in this research as they encompass parts of people's collective memory and run deep in the assumptions underpinning their social and cultural capital. This study considers the historical, political, economic, and cultural aspects leading to the development of international schools in both countries, which influence schools—and the education they offer—and the practice of their leaders. The study acknowledges the particularity of each context and the unique features of each school within each country, while recognising that schools in the same country share specific experiences (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996), and schools in different countries operating within similar structures could also have common features and experiences.

2.10.3 Qatar

Qatar was a protectorate of the British Empire until 1971 (Fromherz, 2017). After announcing its independence, the State of Qatar was engaged in political and economic agreements with the British government through the Gulf Cooperation Council (Smith, 2016). A historical literature review shows that British education in Qatar was strategically planned by Britain in the early 1950s to ‘prevent rising sentiments of Arab Nationalism and anti-Western sentiments to penetrate local societies’, especially as the influence of the Soviet Union and the emerging Islamic movement were increasing in the region (Power, 2022, p. 48). Additionally, the increasing Nasserite power in Egypt, the surge of oil revenues in the Gulf, and the influence of Egyptian and other Arab educators on state education propelled inherent threats to British rule in the region. As a result, the British mandates in Qatar and the Trucial Gulf states convinced the ‘Sheikhdoms’ that cultural and educational strategies would serve the interests of both parties, which led to the establishment of the British council in Qatar in 1955 (Sato, 2017; Power, 2022). The purpose was to influence educational policy and ‘shape everything from the physical planning of school buildings to educational philosophy’ and maintain long-term ties (Power, 2022, p. 56). The period between 1955 and 1970 witnessed growing activities of the British Council in Qatar, paving the way for (later) highly esteemed schools, despite polemic rhetoric at the time. The British Council and their potential educational projects gained the support of Qatari leaders, which resulted in the Ministry of Education’s approval for the establishment of British international schools in the early 1970s (Sato, 2017).

The first English international school in Qatar was established in September 1971 to provide English education to the children of British and other international expats (Almuhannadi, 2020). The development of international schools was paralleled with the growth of the oil and gas industry that recruited hundreds—and later thousands—of expatriates from all over the world. In 1985, the first American international school was founded to support the growing American

community that has increased with the growing presence of American companies and the establishment of the largest military base in the Middle East at the outskirts of Doha (Saidy, 2017). More recently, the number and diversity of international schools, including European and IB schools also increased. Many of these schools offer an international or a mixed program, teach in English, and are predominantly managed by Anglo-phonetic staff (Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2021). Despite the wide diversity of communities and schools, British international schools are still the dominant majority of international schools in Qatar and the rest of the Gulf, where they are seen as providers of quality education (Khalil, 2019; Power, 2022).

Qatar is home to 324 private—including international—schools, while the total number of schools in the country is 532 (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2021, p. 16). International schools are supervised by the Private Schools Office of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Since 1971, the number of international schools has largely increased, especially after 2005 as the education reform movement encouraged international educational investments (Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2021). The clientele of international schools are generally the children of locals and middle- and upper-class expatriates. The structure of school fees—ranging from (£)5,000 to 25,000—strongly mirrors the Qatari-expat dominated social field, which excludes low-paid workers and their communities. Each international school has its own unique institutional identity and values, which shape the habitus of its staff and students. Nonetheless, despite differences, international schools in Qatar have common characteristics; they are largely Anglo-phonetic with international curricula and a dominant Western teaching body (Bailey, 2022; Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2021). Their textbooks and resources are fully or mostly chosen from the Global North (Kopsick 2017), with a few exceptions. International schools in Qatar are expected to teach Qatari history, Arabic, and Islamic studies to Qatari students, but the historical context of the region and their students' cultures are largely marginalised.

2.10.4 England

Long before the contemporary wave of internationalisation, international schools and colleges have been known in England since the last quarter of the 18th century and were associated with foreign communities and political bodies (Sylvester, 2002, p. 101). Nonetheless, these schools were predominantly associated with European and American communities and were generally driven by international relations and ideological interests (Sylvester, 2002; Callahan, 1961). In the 1970s, the British ties with the European Market attracted many European individuals and families, who relocated to the United Kingdom—and particularly to England, creating additional demands for schools that would culturally and linguistically serve their children. To this day, most international schools in the United Kingdom are centred in England (Bunnell, 2016). While many schools in England—both public and private—offer the IB Diploma Program or one of the IB programs, the number of schools identifying as ‘international’ is still limited. Although many independent schools in England cater for the needs of international students (BESA, 2023) and local students looking to expand their ‘globalised capital’, ‘internationalism’ is often a ‘hidden’ dimension (Brooks & Waters, 2015, p. 101). In addition to Brooks and Waters' argument, Bunnell (2016) offered a record and an analysis of the systemic and technical factors underlying the ‘decline’ of IB programs in England between 2013 and 2015, despite the anticipated growth noted in 2010 (Bunnell, 2010).

The contemporary notion of internationalisation of education in England can be traced back to the DFID ACT (2005) which encouraged international education and promoted the growth of English education outside the UK. The New Labour government (1997) encouraged English schools to establish ties and partnerships abroad and to grow the Global dimension and international education inside the UK (Bunnell, 2010, Ball, 2017). The Department for International Development’s (DFID) initiative issued in 2005—currently the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)—contributed to developing an internationalised environment and a wider

acceptance of international education in England under the 'Global dimension' (DfES, 2006 in Bunnell, 2010). Furthermore, English education under Blair's government was encouraged to develop its global impact and global citizenship values (Ball, 2017). The aim was equipping young people and adults with skills needed for life and work in a global economy (Brooks & Waters, 2015).

The DFID's initiative encouraged independent schools to grow their business overseas, while supporting the development of international schools in England to cater for the needs of diplomats and wealthy expats who chose England as a second home. The growth of international schools in England can be linked to a growing wave of privatisation and the increasing emphasis on business models and branding of educational services since the 1980s (Ball, 2017, Ball & Nikita, 2014). Gunter (2001) also argued that the reason for this growth was strategically economic, preparing the British workforce to engage in global corporate partnerships, besides a developing ideology of private international education.

Since the 1990s, many independent schools have decided to expand their business overseas (Ball, 2017). Several entities were formed to support and serve British international schools globally, especially in the Middle East, such as the Council for British Schools in the Middle East (COBIS) and British Schools Overseas (BSO). These schools are listed under independent schools and follow the guidance of the Office of the Secretary of Education and host students from multiple cultural and backgrounds. However, while British international education has been flourishing overseas, the growth of international schools within the United Kingdom has not been equally promising.

2.10.5 Hofstede's cross-cultural analysis framework

Examining international school leadership in England and Qatar and its relationship with the social and cultural fields necessitate a socio-cultural understanding of the different factors influencing schools and their communities. One of the relevant approaches in this field is Hofstede's cultural framework that

is seen as useful for leaders and managers who work with multicultural environments (Almutairi et al., 2020). Hofstede (1997) proposed six cultural dimensions or indices through which cultures can be ranked: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term-short-term orientation, and restraint-indulgence. However, applying these indices does not necessarily mean they are equally significant to all cultures. While some indices can be irrelevant, others can be partially or significantly applicable. This framework has been critiqued for making sweeping generalisations on distinct cultures (Fisher, 2021). Additionally, countries rarely have homogenous cultures but multiple ones, which could significantly vary between cities and rural areas or different social groups. The sole focus on cultural traits of countries regardless of the wider historical, ethnic, or religious context can sometimes be flawed (McSweeney, 2002; Chiang, 2007). However, the framework is still widely used in social and educational research.

Applying Hofstede's (2001) framework to Qatar and England shows major differences on the individualism-collectivism and power distance indices. The analysis of both indices show that they are relatable to the Qatari and English cultures and strongly influence schools and leadership practice. According to this framework, Qatari culture is highly accepting of the 'unequal distribution of power in society' and the hierarchical positioning of individuals within the Qatari society (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede insights, 2023). People generally 'accept the power distance dynamics and follow instructions and orders' and rarely question the significant power allocated to few individuals (Hofstede Insights, 2023). The expatriate communities in Qatar generally conform with political and societal norms and avoid disrupting the country's harmony. In contrast, people in England see themselves as equal while simultaneously accepting policy enforcement by law and respecting hierarchical structure (He, 2021). The individualism-collectivism index also reflects differences between both countries. Qatar is a tribal society that has been rated highly on this index by Hofstede and Minkov (2013), while a recent study by Almutairi et al. (2020) rated it as average on this

index; the communities' interests are highly valued, but individuals still care for themselves and their own families. Social norms and relationships are largely based on group expectations and face-saving. The social capital among the Qatari population is still significantly high and influential. Leaders work with school sponsors—or governors—who are influential members within their tribes and who prioritise the interest of their community, which could affect school-related decisions.

Contrastingly, individualism in England is prevalent (Hofstede Insights, 2023) as individual interests and rights are highly valued and cannot be suppressed for the sake of the group (He, 2021). Accordingly, people can openly share views on socially controversial issues; an aspect that could be discouraged in Qatar. The English society, contrastingly, values and normalises standards of equality with regards to political and social life. Despite political polarisation, people 'strive to equalise the distribution of power' (Hofstede Insights, 2023). Both areas reflect differences in how international school staff perceive their work in a country where cultural norms are different from their own.

Uncertainty Anxiety Avoidance index is highly relatable to schoolwork. Governmental bodies strive to promote a country-wide culture of improvement, represented by Qatar National Vision 2030 (GSDP, 2008), and demonstrate a significant level of control and intolerance for violating directives. The Ministry of Education oversees international schools and has strict expectations in place. However, while this aspect aligns with Hofstede's index description, the high productivity aspect described by Hofstede as a part of this index is not accurately applicable to the Qatari context as operational norms and commitment to timelines can be loose. This variable could influence the practice of leaders as they are expected to share timely information with the community, which can sometimes be difficult. Coping with ambiguity regarding timelines, although frustrating, is somehow accepted by the public in Qatar and the region due to historical and sociological reasons where the lack of accountability to the public

is replaced by accountability to authorities (Hanafi, 2020). In contrast, commitment to timely expectations and access to public information are normalised in England, which could influence leaders' work, relationships with authorities, staff, and parents. Schools and communities in England have a higher level of intolerance to vague deadlines and information and might not tolerate the behaviour of families who do not commit to daily schedules, as an example. Understanding the cultural elements behind these traits can help leaders find a suitable approach to deal with different contexts (Fisher, 2021). The difference between schools performing in England and others performing in Qatar could be attributed to cultural narratives besides socio-economic ones. Although the different cultural dimensions might not change the school's program, they could influence leaders' day-to-day activities and relationships with others.

2.11 A theoretical conceptualisation of international schools

The very foundation of inter-national schools is deeply rooted in the European notion of the modern nation state (Bhambra, 2016), and can be associated with the Weberian model of the state as a legitimate political power claiming sovereignty over a defined territory (Weber, 2020 [1895]). It could be argued that the core feature of international schools—as entities encompassing people from different nations—is incompatible with the core notion of the nation state that is rooted in the boundaries separating people rather than narratives of integration and co-existence (Said, 1993). The notions of globalisation, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism associated with international schools' philosophies (Hayden & Thompson, 2000) could be seen as inconsistent with the name 'inter-national' where the nation is a core construct. This is particularly problematic in the Middle East, for example, where the borders of most modern nation-states were set by colonial powers regardless of historical, ethnic, or cultural considerations. Connor (1987) called for reimagining the term 'nation' as it is associated with people, culture, linguistic and ethnic communities. This call could be useful in this thesis,

which argues for reconstructing international schools as multicultural social fields, regardless of the 'national' affiliations of the school or its community members.

International schools are conceptualised as diverse environments that provide education and educational services for an economically rising globalised elite (Bates, 2011; Bailey, 2021). They are characterised by a set of distinctive features, focus on promoting a sense of global citizenship and offer foreign or an international type of education as well as 'social and cultural reproduction for the cosmopolitan privileged communities' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018, p. 149). Although historically associated with serving the children of expats overseas, contemporary international schools are increasingly serving local communities (Ibid.). The bodies that identify as international schools are widely distinct (Hayden & Thompson, 2000) and can be difficult to categorise into fixed typologies (Bates, 2011). This thesis defines international schools as organisations that serve students between three and 18 years-old, self-identify as 'international' through their prospectuses and websites regardless of the name, offer a foreign (not national) curriculum fully or partially in English, and host international—or both international and local—students. This definition is aligned with the definition of the ISC Research (ISC Research, 2023, par. 2); a commercial data and intelligence body, whose definition has been used by several academic researchers, including Pearce (2023) and Bunnell (2019).

International schools generally share common discourses of global citizenship, international mindedness and diversity and offer transnational projects that could be described as elitist and privileged. In addition, they tend to position themselves as ideological entities or market agents who offer competitive services that are desired by many middle or aspiring-middle class families (Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2021). Their leadership personnel are generally chosen and introduced as 'White' or 'English' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018, p. 158). They aim to produce a globalised class of young people and prepare them for a new era of internationalisation through transferable qualifications and different forms of capital, which enable

them to join reputable universities and a 'globally active network' (Bates, 2011). It is also expected that students will learn English language skills that help them join the future elite of businesspeople, leaders, and other social positions. Thus, students gain symbolic capital as they are immersed in their school's culture and acquire specific ways of behaving, speaking, and socialising (Bourdieu, 1984).

The term 'international school' has been associated with the International Schools Association in 1951 (Hill, 2015) and the development of 'United World Colleges' in 1962 in post-war Europe with a focus on diversity and peace (Hayden & Thompson, 2006). In the 1980s and the early 1990s, the number of international schools increased massively, particularly with the rise of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) (Hill, 2015) and the movement of British and American schools overseas (Samier, 2016, 2022). The rising numbers worldwide benefited from neoliberal policies and the mobility of thousands of families across borders mainly in Asia and Africa (Kunz, 2019). While these groups are viewed as 'expatriates', their geographical mobility could result from different factors which influence their livelihoods and experiences in their new spaces (Urry, 2007; Higgins & Kunz, 2022). This mobile group has grown over the last 30 years and created an increasing demand, besides rising interest by local communities, which resulted in expanding the services of international schools, particularly, in growing economies (Bunnell & Gardner-McTaggart, 2022). Most of these schools are described by their 'high-fees' and a widely assumed prestigious cultural and social capital that would position students in a distinguished potential social class (Thompson, 2017).

In addition to popular concepts such as global citizenship, diversity, and quality learning, the discourse of marketability in international schools is largely noticeable. The growing commercialisation of the international schooling sector benefits from widespread neoliberal policies (Ball, 2017). Although this research focuses on the leadership of international schools in England and Qatar, it is important to situate the growth of these schools within a global movement that is

linked to post-modern economic, social, and technological changes that are inherently political (Sahlberg & Verger, 2016). This discussion brings in the tension underpinning the terms globalisation and internationalisation and the implicit ideological assumptions embedded within each (Cambridge & Thompson, 2020). This literature review noted an association of the term globalisation with economic strategies and the movement of edu-expats from the West to the rest of the world, whereas the term international was used more in association with Euro-centric schools spreading into the Global South(s) or with the movement of higher education students and academics from the South(s) to the North, and in connection with international relations. While this distinction could be perspectival, it might signify embedded cultural hierarchies (R'boul, 2021) underlying the conceptualisation of international education. Kim (2019), for example, used both terms interchangeably in her discussion of families who are willing to 'internationalise' or 'globalise' their children. Generally, both terms incorporate significant symbolic capital and can benefit from further discursive and sociological analyses.

The number of international schools in the Global South(s) compared to that in the Global North represents a history of colonialism and unbalanced power relationships. The symbolic power and value associated with British and other international schools in Qatar and the Arab region, largely stem from colonial European history where invisible power dynamics still prevail (Samier, 2020). Alternatively, international schools in England, as in the rest of the Global North, are still a growing field, with the majority of their students coming from non-Northern backgrounds (R'boul, 2020). Paradoxically, these schools do not in any way address concepts of power or coloniality in their philosophies, mission statements or general discourses. The denial or reduction of historical narratives send a message of marginalisation to students and their families (Sleeter, 2012). This reductionist approach challenges the work of leaders, who could be otherwise bridging cultural gaps and building a stronger social capital within their school communities (Kopsick, 2018).

2.11.1 International schools viewed through Bourdieu's lens

This study employs Bourdieu's theory to examine the nature of international schools and their relationship with school leaders. Leaders' interaction with the field leads to advancing their habitus and capital while influencing the field and developing its symbolic capital. Bourdieu's theory helps researchers to see beyond the definitions and characteristics of international schools by understanding their identity, interests, and symbolic power. The theory offers analytical tools that are tested and (re)shaped through the research process as they examine the research fields and subjects and their relationships (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this study, international schools are viewed as fields of power—established in a context of economisation and neo-liberalisation of societies—building on the needs of certain communities and policies that call for foreign or local investment in the market. Therefore, engaging in a discourse of internationalisation, diversity, and globalisation (Bates, 2011) while ignoring the economic, social, and political directions associated with the phenomenon of international schools does not serve the goals of this research.

In this same context, parents are viewed as clients and consumers rather than partners in accountability and support (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). The performative perspective of student learning, exams, scores, and accomplishments not only dominate their staff but also families, who generally internalise the dominant discourse (Khalil, 2019). The legitimisation of international school hierarchies 'has taken away the doxa of public education and equal entitlement to free schooling' (Thomson, 2017, p. 20), especially in places where people have limited or no options other than international private education. 'The lexicon of global, open, free, international, personalised' (Courtney, 2015), world-class and other relevant terms have replaced 'doxas' of accountability, entitlement, and public rights' (Gunter, 2001). Therefore, leadership in these schools could be seen as an important contribution to maintaining organisational interests (Thomson, 2017), while engagement with societal discourses within and

beyond the school could be seen as a challenge (Evans, 2021). Conceptualising the school and its communities as a social and cultural field enables a deeper examination of the mechanisms governing schools and their connection to the core work of leadership.

This review noted limited attention to societal and sociological factors influencing school communities in international schools' leadership research. The influence of family relations, cultural differences, migration, or displacement on student learning are under-acknowledged or completely neglected (Urry, 2007; Egekvist et al., 2017). Furthermore, relevant issues such as discrimination, identity crises, and conflicts in home countries, the constant worry of families about visas and residence permits and the financial pressure could be detrimental to the mental health of students (Kingston, 1993 in Hayden & Thompson, 1995). The threat of frequent or sudden relocation disrupts students, teachers, and the learning process as well as their wellbeing and social capital. Harris et al. (2006) confirmed that the influence of the broader social, economic, and cultural realities on schooling could be invisible, but affect student learning in many ways. The social mechanisms influencing students and teachers in international schools and their relationships with leadership learning and practice are understudied areas in leadership research that will be explored and analysed by this thesis.

2.11.2 International school leadership

This research aims to analyse, 'deconstruct and reconstruct the concept of leadership' in international school settings (Thomson, 2017, p. 53). Leadership in the context of corporatisation and internationalisation could present great challenges to leaders and to researchers (Fisher, 2019). Fisher (2021) explained that international school leaders do not have any training in leading culturally diverse settings before appointment, and many do not have training to lead business-like organisations. The internationalisation of leadership is becoming a new dimension that is associated with a neoliberal ideology, where the more

effective leaders are those who respond to this culture of maximisation (Gunter, 1997, 2001).

This materialistic trend has objectified and quantified educational leaders' work, particularly in corporate international schools. Leaders are expected to lead with a business mindset and to deliver prestigious pre-designed programs regardless of their students' needs and backgrounds (Calnin et al. 2018). This approach has been critiqued by Smyth (2014c), Ball (2012a), and Biesta (2017) as a discourse of commercialisation and reductionism that marginalises teachers and leaders' voices in the design and development of the curriculum. The nature of international schools as corporate organisations influences the behaviour and dispositions of leaders, as they are expected to act based on the desirable commercial discourse and interests of their school governors—or sponsors. Courtney (2015) argued that 'governors influence leaders' identities and practises through their economic and symbolic capital, constructing these leaders as new corporatised actors themselves' (p. 214). As a result, leaders are generally expected to prioritise attainment and high-outcome standards delivery and embody the school's ideology.

While they are seen as providers of international education which emphasises global mindedness and academic skills, international schools are structured as entities with market strategies rather than social and educational agendas (Bates, 2011). They prepare students to be workers and consumers in the global economy and recruit teachers and leaders as a manageable work force rather than education professionals (Kim, 2019). The corporate environment encourages leaders to adopt dispositions from the field and embody ways of knowing and doing where the notions of care and trust are limited. In these environments, decisions about teaching management, recruitment, wages, and curriculum are largely beyond the hands of leaders, which negatively affects their professional identities (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2022). In these contexts, there is a limited space for a thorough engagement with the contextual learning needs of

students, teachers, and leaders despite the dominant discourse of diversity and globalisation.

Kim (2019) argued that the use of the word 'global' and 'globalisation' in international schools is derived from their widening collaboration and partnership with international organisations and global market providers in different countries. As schools promise their students future employability skills (Kim, 2019) they openly engage in formulating new 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1984) within educational landscapes and promote a global education industry that is not concerned about who it serves but what and how much it serves. They create a new form of institutional habitus that is nourished by objectified capital as means to generate economic capital and reproduce globally acknowledged symbolic privileges (Ball, 2017). According to Bourdieu (1990a), the field creates its embodied dispositions to act and think in certain ways, which could influence leadership capital and habitus and create further challenges to leaders. Globalising schools and education contradicts with research evidence on the importance of contextualised leadership, for after all, good leadership needs to focus on local and unique contexts and histories in order to be able to change schools (Bajunid, 1996). Therefore, the study of leadership in international schools requires looking at the larger field while examining leadership praxis in unique school contexts (Thomson, 2017).

Although this research presents the social field (context) as an inherent part of leadership praxis, examining international schools reveals increasing evidence of (de)contextualisation. In her article *International Education Goes Global*, Kim (2019) explains that international schools cherish their 'globalised' features by teaching their students to connect and identify with students who 'are like them' in partner schools in a different country. They position students among a global elite academic class, but this 'global is only juxtaposed against the local' (Kim, 2019, p. 92). Schools isolate themselves from the local, and leaders distance themselves from local contexts not only practically, but physically (Pearson,

2022). They 'imbue students with a sense of belonging to their own like-minded community' (Kim, 2019, p. 96) while disconnecting them from any sense of belonging to their local community and disengaging them from matters related to the local context. According to Dewey (1938), education's key purpose is to instill a sense of social consciousness in children and teach them how to connect with their social environment. Contrastingly, many international schools are creating a new concept of context leading to a sense of individualisation (Van dermijnsbrugge, 2023), denationalisation, delocalisation, and disconnection with their surroundings (Kim, 2019). The disjunction between schools and their social and cultural fields poses multiple questions on leadership and learning in international schools, which is a key area in this thesis.

Literature on educational leadership for more than four decades offers multiple perspectives depending on the era in which they researched schools or their own conceptualisation. Some of the older scholarship on international schools offered descriptive accounts such as Peterson (1987) and Mathews (1988), who used an explanatory approach to document the rising phenomenon of international schools. Hayden and Thompson (1995) noted that studies on international schools are mostly descriptive and comparative in nature and called for further philosophical discussions. Their later work presented a review of studies on international schools focusing on globalisation, international mindedness and hoping that international schools research and practice would contribute to bringing communities together. A decade later, Hayden and Thompson's reviews of research on international education discussed a futuristic perspective of the role of international schools in national educational systems and documented the growing interest in the field (2016). Nonetheless, Fisher (2019) suggested that research examining international school leadership is still thin and narrow despite massive developments in the field of international schools. As a matter of fact, the work of critical scholars such as Kim (2019), Bunnell (2020, 2022), Bailey (2021), Gardner-McTaggart (2018, 2022), Bates (2011), and Richards (2016) have

influenced this research and created a foundation for further understanding and analysis of the field.

In this complicated context, Bourdieusian style questions are inevitable, particularly questions on the nature of leadership and how it guides and influences teaching and learning. ‘What leaders do, how, why and who—actually—leads’ are important questions, but the most difficult one is the question of interaction with and response to the social field and the social and cultural capital of teachers and students. How do leaders lead teaching and learning, how does leadership development prepare them for this role, and how do they respond to teacher and student needs while complying with corporate ideologies and a highly competitive global field? Not only are these questions important, but their answers—however complicated and hard to attain—also matter. This thesis argues that leading teaching and learning in this context while adequately responding to the needs of the social field is mostly crucial, but also challenging due to the nature of these schools. The diverse nature of international schools and their increasing numbers and sizes raise questions related to hundreds of thousands of students, who are served by these schools, whose voices, identities, capital, and interests are marginalised (Kim, 2019; Smyth, 2006; Sleeter, 2012). Besides marginalising students’ voices, teachers’ capital and pedagogical knowledge in this field is confined to fixed frameworks and discourses of high attainment, delivery, and competitiveness. Therefore, it is important to examine—in these times and spaces—when some leaders move from delivery and management to doing more or different than what is expected.

2.11.3 The social and the cultural: Why do we care?

Bourdieu’s theory pursued a social explanation of the different phenomena taking place in the social field including schools and argued that the educational system works to produce and reproduce the social, economic, and cultural status-quo (Bourdieu, 1989). Accordingly, the best way to understand leadership is to examine its relationship with its social field, while being aware of the

interchangeable influence between the field and its structures, and the dynamic nature of leaders' habitus and their agency (Addison, 2009). According to Thomson (2017), 'too much emphasis on structure denies agency, too much emphasis on individual agency leaves out the ways in which social structures frame and shape what individuals can do' (p. 5). A Bourdieusian perspective views schools as social organisations, leadership as agency and a form of social practice, and teachers and students as social beings, which calls for a sociological and relational understanding of the school leadership phenomenon. All aspects of practice, analysed in this research, are relational aspects that result from the interaction of people (agents) and the structures in which they work and learn.

Leadership research that focuses on diverse students and their needs has been described as critical (Foster, 1986), emancipatory (Corson, 1996), or leadership for social justice (Smyth, 2006). The connection of school leadership to the social needs of students and teachers and the main issues taking place within the school community were seen as priorities by the above-mentioned scholars. Thus, socially responsive pedagogy and leadership were based on the assumption that leaders need to prioritise understanding their school community and accommodating their needs (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Khalifa, 2018). Leithwood and Riehl (2005) encouraged leaders to respond to the different social issues surrounding their community and build on the social capital of teachers, students, and families to develop equitable learning environments. They argued that a leadership approach that does not address social and cultural issues might not be capable of mobilising and transforming teaching and learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Accordingly, leading teaching and learning should be critically responsive to social matters and encompasses awareness of the social and cultural dimensions (Arar, 2020; Smyth et al., 2009). Leaders are expected to be sensitive to feelings of otherness and alert to facets of inequity, institutional boundaries and social positioning taking place within and beyond the walls of their schools. Brooks and Miles (2006) affirmed that leaders in highly diverse schools need to be conscious and sensitive to issues of 'exclusion and marginalisation'

(p. 5) and to realise how institutional practices could benefit some students over others (Arar and Oplatka, 2015). Leaders' social knowledge is crucial for their practice in culturally diverse communities, which could be relatable to international schools where students come from different cultural backgrounds and social groups, and speak different languages (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Nonetheless, although the social and cultural dimension is widely acknowledged in educational leadership research, it is still an emerging area in the study of international schools and their leadership.

2.12 The social dimension of leadership

The social dimension of leadership has been discussed by different scholars such as Smyth (2006; 2013), Arar (2020) and Lopez (2016; 2021). Robinson (2011) suggested that dialogue and building trust relationships with the school community—including parents and staff—can help leaders to lead successfully. Building positive social relationships in the school community is key to an indirect influence on student outcomes. Building trust relationships between leaders and their team members enable them to be persuasive and work towards the goals and needs of the social space in which they work (Robinson et al., 2008). However, understanding the social characteristics of their school community, encouraging relationships, collaboration and modelling approachable behaviours are important but not sufficient. Leithwood and Riehl (2005) argued that school leaders must understand the social relations and ties connecting their students to their social groups and use these as resources in developing relevant education. A nuanced and thorough response to the diverse social components of schools that do not act on this diversity through curriculum, pedagogy and teacher training would not adequately support the social and the cultural needs of students (Brown, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). According to Eacott (2009), leadership is a complicated process where leaders should understand societal and power dynamics within and beyond schools, while critically reflecting in order to develop educational knowledge that informs their practice.

2.12.1 The significance of social capital

Social capital is a widely discussed concept in academic research, however, it has been understood and used differently by different scholars. Bourdieu (1977) defined social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (p.179). Social capital is not only about individual connections but is ‘often accompanied by the collective cultural capital and maintained through social exchange’ (Thomson, 2017, p. 12). The notion of social capital cannot be isolated from other forms of capital in Bourdieu’s theory, as they complement each other and can be exchanged with each other (Calhoun, 2006). This study uses social capital based on Bourdieu’s theory, but also acknowledges the contribution of Putnam (1993) and Coleman (1980) to the conceptualisation of this term.

Coleman’s (1980) definition was broader than Bourdieu’s, but not fundamentally different. To Coleman, social capital refers to the gains and assets accumulated by individuals as a result of their relationships with other individuals or a group of people. Coleman also explained that social capital does not only include networks and group memberships but trust, norms, and shared expectations, and can vary with changing contexts and circumstances. Putnam (2002) also highlighted the individual and the collective aspects of social capital and introduced social capital as the body that brings people together. Building on Putnam’s work, Papapolydorou (2011) explained that social capital includes the ‘features of social life (networks, norms, and trust) that enable people to work together’ towards achieving common goals (p. 40). Calhoun (2006) argued that Coleman and Putnam’s notions of social capital are both influenced by Bourdieu’s theory, which suggests that ‘all forms of capital are interconnected and are inherently social’ (p. 11). Both Coleman and Putnam ignored the social reality, which is power and the structural institutional aspects behind the formation of social capital; an area that

is deemed important in this research as it acknowledges the relational aspects between leadership and the organisation and between individuals and groups.

This research looks at the different factors shaping social capital such as identity, culture, and socio-economic status. It would be interesting to find out to what extent school leadership, as representative of institutional power, can (re)shape the structural inequalities that influence social capital. According to Bourdieu, social capital is influenced by the powers and positions within particular social fields (2021). Bourdieu affirms that schools do not only educate students but socialise them and 'offer [them] opportunities to become a particular kind of people through the embodied and institutionalised cultural and social capital that is not dispersed equitably' (Thomson, 2017, p. 17). Bourdieu's theory enables the examination of social capital as both process and practice (Stelfox, 2016), and an explanation of the constant interaction between habitus, field, and all forms of capital.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) introduced their notion of social capital as a component of professional capital, that is equally important to the notions of 'human capital' and 'decisional capital' (p. 88). Social capital, to them, is about how teachers 'identify as a group and how they work together and respond to their student's needs', which is highly aligned with Bourdieu's definition. Their notion of social capital centralises trustful and collaborative work relationships and can be understood as a mechanism that facilitates confident and more effective change in the practice of teachers. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) focused on the social capital of teachers, while Leithwood and Riehl (2005) focused on students' social capital and defined it as a set of resources and mechanisms that encompass norms and expectations as well as knowledge of rules and obligations that help students to go through the schooling experience smoothly and effectively. Smrekar (1998) suggested that family culture is central to the social capital of a child (as cited in Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). However, schools might favour or recognise the social capital of certain social groups more than others (Diem &

Boske, 2012) based on their language, religion, or other cultural characteristics especially if these values and norms seem different from those produced and promoted by a specific dominant culture (Fraise & Brooks, 2015)

Social capital, in this thesis, signifies the ability of individuals to form network relationships that help them work with others and refer to them as resources. It encompasses aspects of the habitus such as identity construction, values, shared norms and expectations, attitudes and experiences that are acquired over time and help individuals engage in network relations (Papalodorou, 2011). International schools incorporate populations of multiple cultures, who are refugees, migrants, or expatriates with single, dual, or multi-nationalities. They also host children of staff or the children of rising white-collar middle-class families, or privileged diplomats and high-status officials. The social components of the school constitute a significant part of its context as they encompass its communities' cultures and identities—existing and constructed. These components influence how groups and individuals build or maintain trust relationships and conform to shared norms and expectations or construct new ones.

2.12.2 The significance of cultural capital

Bourdieu's interest in the social 'underpins his account of the forging, conversion and communication of cultural capital' (Calhoun, 2006, p. 8). He defines cultural capital as 'ways of knowing, doing and behaving' (Ref), which is strongly connected with the social norms and expectations of a specific social field and the extent to which it is valued and recognised. The importance of cultural capital in this research refers to its connection with the experiences of individuals and the collective and accumulated social and educational encounters that are embedded in the individual's habitus. This could incorporate different forms of arts, music, sports, languages, skills, traditions, and other cultural elements, which affect how people learn and acquire new forms of capital. Bourdieu defined these areas as the embodied cultural capital, which—in addition to formal education and

objectified capital—are inherently associated with how individuals view themselves and how they are viewed by others. While Bourdieu acknowledged that habitus, as influenced by cultural capital, is constantly evolving, he also explained that what is acquired cannot be unacquired as it is encompassed in one's dispositions and bodily mannerisms and behaviours (1990a, in Go, 2013, p. 61). Cultural capital has been a popular and debatable concept in some educational fields over the last few years; in general, the role of culture in cultural capital and its relationship with the habitus of students were largely forgotten.

The conceptualisation of cultural capital from a Bourdieusian perspective is important for this research, where the knowledge of students driven from their previous experiences, home culture and their collective capital are fundamental parts of their identity. This could also influence who they connect with and who they refer to as part of their trusted network or social capital. Cultural capital refers to historical and social narratives and values, whether religious or political, and incorporates their previous education, how and what they were taught in previous schools or at home. The cultural capital of teachers, similarly, refers to their own embodied knowledge, ways of learning and interacting with others, and other personal and social encounters that shape their education, learning and professional judgement (Bourdieu, 1998). Cultural capital, therefore, is an important part of who people are and their ways of living, working, and learning, and can influence how they interact with new knowledge and new field expectations and form relationships (Grenfell, 2014). Thus, the question of leadership response to the social and cultural capital of teachers and students addresses the recognition and representation of this capital in schools and the role played by leaders in this direction (Fraser, 2000, 2005). Recognition and representation—in this research—do not only mean acknowledging but relating to and building on teachers and students' capital, and providing relevant learning experiences that enable them to develop their learning.

2.12.3 Leadership and the social and cultural capital

Scholars of educational leadership highlighted the importance of building a shared vision and a sense of community where stakeholders work towards the same goals (Leithwood et al., 2020a). Additionally, building trust relationships in the classroom and across the school is seen as an effective leadership capability (Hallinger, 2016; Robinson, 2011). Nevertheless, international schools are highly transient environments where teachers, learners, and leaders' turnover is relatively high (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018; Benson, 2011), which makes it difficult to build consensus around shared values and goals. Thus, it is important for leadership to dedicate special attention and effort to understanding the social capital of teachers and students—individuals and groups—and to model relationships based on trust, shared values, and expectations.

There is multiple evidence in the literature suggesting that responding to the social and cultural capital of students enhances their learning (Riley, 2022; Khalifa et al, 2016). Leithwood and Riehl (2005) confirmed that successful school leaders build on their students' social capital, acknowledge it and help them utilise it to improve learning. Papapolydorou's research (2011) showed that 'social capital is both a generator and an outcome of education' (p. 16), and Stelfox (2016) confirmed that social capital impacts students' educational outcomes in different ways. Additionally, Khalifa et al. (2016) and Ladson-Billings (1995a) explained that responding to students' cultural needs and capital has a tremendous effect on their sense of belonging and engagement with their learning, which improves learning outcomes (Riley, 2022). Nonetheless, despite multiple evidence confirming the relationship between leadership and students' social and cultural capital and their influence on learning, scholarship examining this relationship in international schools' context is rare. Healy (2006) explained that social and cultural capital influence education in many ways; nonetheless, this assumption should be critically employed as other contextual elements might interfere in this process.

2.13 Limitations of the main theoretical frameworks

This section considers the limitations of the main theoretical frameworks discussed in this review, mainly, the educational leadership frameworks and Bourdieu's theory. As the goals and the main questions of this research focus on examining leadership in a specific field and analysing its relationship with the social and cultural capital of students and teachers, the subject-specific nature of leadership frameworks does not fully respond to all the research questions. While student-centred leadership and learning-centred leadership are useful to interpret the practice of leaders and their perspectives of leadership, both theories are not sufficient to analyse the new dimensions brought forward by the data. The data elicited a more specific impact of the experience of internationalisation and concerns regarding the homogeneity of teaching and the curriculum and the limited recognition and representation of students and teachers' cultures in schools. Therefore, the literature review was extended to include theories of cultural relevance, responsiveness and social justice in leadership and pedagogy, and transformative leadership learning. Additionally, to unpack the complexity of international schools as social and cultural fields and examine its relationship with leadership, the engagement with Bourdieu's theory was inevitable. Combining educational leadership and leadership learning frameworks with Bourdieu's social theory can be seen as a multi-theoretical alignment that strengthens this research (Habermas, 1987) and provokes further intellectual opportunities and contributions.

Bourdieu's theory is used in this study to analyse the practice of leaders, their influence and relationship with others and with the social and cultural field in which they work, and to connect leadership learning with practice. Because the theory is used conceptually, relationally and in combination with other theories, it would be useful to explore some of its critique and how it might relate to this research. Bourdieu's theory of production and reproduction was described as being deterministic for offering no way for social change (Reay, 2004). However, a

deeper understanding of Bourdieu's theory shows that change is possible through the interaction of the habitus and the field (Thomson, 2017). This research acknowledges that Bourdieu's theory does not offer answers to all social questions, and instead, uses his relational thinking and concepts as resources and tools to analyse educational praxis and the social field (Grenfell, 2014). Bourdieu's theory encourages researchers to question what is widely normalised in educational landscapes—including the dominant structure—and examine their history, impact, and interests. His theory suggests that schools can be hubs for change, as field and habitus are inherently and constantly changing due to the interaction between and within the field, structure, agency, habitus, capital and practice (Gunter, 2001, Thomson, 2017).

This research acknowledges that leadership is a sophisticated process which requires navigating decisions, resources, relationships, and goals, while addressing contextual matters prevalent within the school (Harris, 2020a). Leadership and learning in this sense are intertwined and incorporate critical reflection about attitude, knowledge, practice, relationships, curriculum, and pedagogy. Thus, the question of leadership learning and development in this research is crucial and can 'bridge the boundaries' (Lai et al., 2020) between leadership and the needs and capital(s) of teachers and students.

Bourdieu's theory helps to explain how the social field works and why and unpacks the influence of the power structures dictating the field. His theory centres the contributions of different agents in the field (leaders, teachers, and students), who embody their own accumulated capital and habitus. Therefore, when the capital of certain agents is suppressed or marginalised, the theory provokes questions on the reasons behind marginalisation and provokes further analysis into what is needed to acknowledge this capital and respond to it. Questioning the marginalisation of the social and cultural capital of international school students and teachers is the outcome of deep engagement with Bourdieu's

theory and his conceptual tools, that is investigated through mixed-methods and unpacked in the discussion of findings.

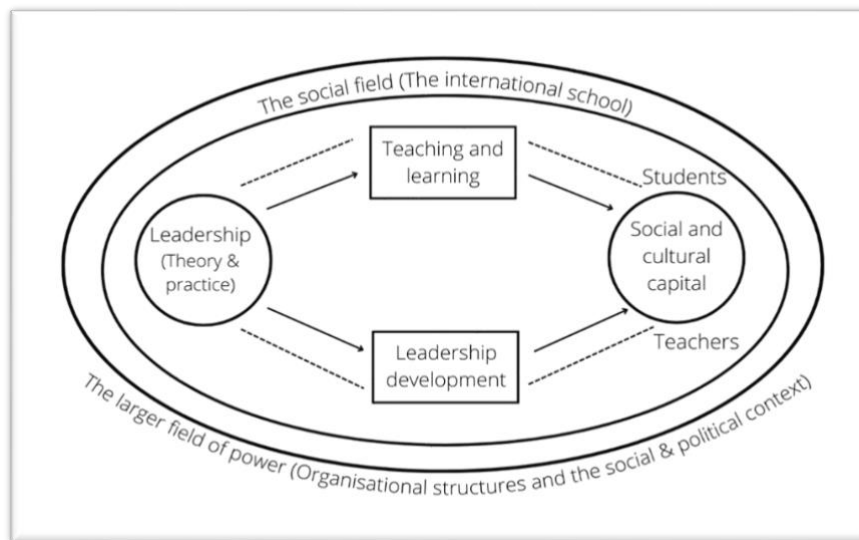
2.14 Conceptual framework

The thorough literature review presented in the previous section led to the formulation of the conceptual framework (Figure 1), which represents the main concepts in this research and the relationships between them. The framework incorporates leadership praxis (theory and practice) of leaders, particularly how they lead teaching and learning (Robinson, 2011), how they learn and develop their leadership and lead others (Joo & Kim, 2016). The framework examines the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990a) of teachers and students, how leaders relate to and interact with this capital and whether they are informed by it. This research situates the key concepts within a particular social field—the school, which is also a part of a ‘larger field of power’ (Bourdieu, 1990a). The arrows represent the direct relationship between leadership and teaching and learning, and its relationship with leadership development, where leadership directly influences teaching and learning, but this relationship is not entirely reciprocal (Brown, 2004; Fisher, 2021).

Based on the literature review, leadership determines the path of teaching and learning but teaching and learning do not equally—or necessarily—influence leadership. Similarly, leadership defines the content and timing of leadership development, but the latter does not significantly inform leadership (Hallinger, 1992; Calnin et al., 2018). This framework reflects the indirect relationship of leadership with the cultural and social capital of teachers and students, however, the input of this capital into leading is not significant (Brown, 2004). The framework shows that the key concepts are situated within a social field, which theoretically constitutes multi-directional relationality (Bourdieu, 1977) and reciprocity (English, 2018). Nonetheless, input and influence within this field do not flow reciprocally. Based on Bourdieu’s theory, the field is a relational social space, where elements and agents influence each other, and the social field is influenced by larger fields

of power (Bourdieu, 1999a). Consequently, organisational frameworks and policies influence leadership (Fisher, 2019). Based on this conceptual framework, the study aims to investigate the relationship and the exchange of input between leadership and teachers and students' capital in international schools, supported by a mixed-methodological approach.

Figure 2
Conceptual framework



2.15 Conclusion

The key theories informing this thesis are Robinson's student-centred leadership (2011) and Southworth's learning-centred leadership (2002, 2009), with insights from other scholars in the field of educational leadership (Leithwood, 2020a, 2020b; Hallinger, 2010; Thomson, 2017), leading internationally (Bunnell, 2016, 2021; Gardner-McTaggart, 2018) and leading for social justice (Smyth, 2006, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Fraise & Brooks, 2015, Ladson-Billings, 2021). The leadership development section includes a discussion of leadership learning as essential components of leading in education. This part of the review discusses andragogy or adult learning theory (Knowles, 1975) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1996), and benefits from the work of Joo and Kim (2016), and

Brown (2004). The theoretical review of leadership development theory highlights gaps in leadership development literature in international school contexts and argues for leadership development that relates and responds to its social fields.

Bourdieu's theory helps to tackle the complexity of international schools and offers intellectual tools to analyse the imbalance of capital and to challenge the homogeneity imposed by organisational structures and frameworks. The narrow representation of students—and their capital—in schools and the limited space for agency and decisions by teachers is another questionable area that is provoked by Bourdieu's theory and unpacked through this research. This literature review showed that leadership theories offer detailed explanations of leadership practice and development. However, the missing elements in this praxis would not have been clearly captured without a sociological lens that examines the relationship between leadership and the social field. This lens supports an imagined reciprocal encounter where the socio-cultural dimensions of the field are recognised and represented with care and equity. To conclude, the review addresses the interconnection of leadership and learning theories as integral to teaching and learning in schools, in addition to social theory that is essential to understanding the field and its incorporated capital(s).

3 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter of this thesis shows that scholarship in the field of educational leadership is widely established and disseminated, however, research on leadership in international schools is still thin despite a massive growth in their number and variety worldwide (Lee & Walker, 2018). Furthermore, research in the field has heavily relied on single methods, mainly questionnaires, interviews, and case studies (Hammad & Hallinger, 2017). The systematic reviews conducted by Hallinger and Chen (2015) and Bellibaş and Gümüş's, (2019) showed a dominance of quantitative methods, increasing reliance on qualitative methods, and only a limited margin of studies using mixed methods. This study uses a multi-theoretical framework and parallel and convergent (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018) mixed-methodological design. This design enables building a multi-dimensional understanding of key constructs and the relationship between them, which aims to mirror the complexity of leadership in international schools. This chapter outlines the path through which this study contributes to existing knowledge on leadership in international schools at the ontological, epistemological, and methodological levels. The goal of the chapter is to highlight the link between the research questions, worldviews, theoretical frameworks, methodology and methods that will support the reconceptualisation of leadership and its relationship with the social and cultural field.

3.2 Research Questions

The main line of inquiry in this research is led by four research questions; each is aligned with one of its goals. The first question aims to understand and analyse the features of international schools in England and Qatar as social fields, and their influence on leadership. The second question aims to reveal how leadership

of teaching and learning is understood and practised in these schools and why. The third question examines the learning and development of leaders in these contexts, as learners and as educators. The fourth question investigates the interaction of leadership with the social and cultural capital of teachers and high school students, and whether this capital informs leadership.

1. What does the field of international schools look like in England and Qatar and how does it influence leadership?
2. How do leaders lead teaching and learning in international schools?
3. How do leaders develop their leadership and contribute to the development of other leaders in their schools?
4. How do leaders interact with the social and cultural capital of teachers and students, and to what extent is leadership informed by this capital?

3.3 Mixed-Methodology

Methodology is the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 1998). 'Methodology is concerned with why, from where, when and how data is collected and analysed' (Scotland, 2012, p. 9) and is expected to meet the goals of the research paradigm. The methodology of this research is influenced by a critical realist worldview and by Bourdieu's Social Theory. Critical realism is a worldview that offers a flexible space for multiple research approaches, while Bourdieu's theory provides the analytical and relational framework that enables the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Both offer a philosophical, theoretical, and practical foundation for the use of mixed methodology. This study adopts the definition of mixed-methods by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018), who explained that mixed methodology involves mixing philosophies, positions, methods, and interpretations of data throughout the whole research process. Their definition aligns with Johnson et al. (2007) who defined mixed methods as:

the type of research in which the researcher combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p. 123)

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) focused on ‘the core characteristics of mixed methods (methods, research design and philosophy orientation)’ (p. 1), and offered a detailed account of the role of a mixed-methods researcher:

a mixed-methods researcher collects and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data rigorously in response to research questions and integrates or combines the two forms of data and their results, organises these procedures into specific research designs that provide the logic and procedures for conducting the study, and frames these procedures with theory and philosophy. (p, 5)

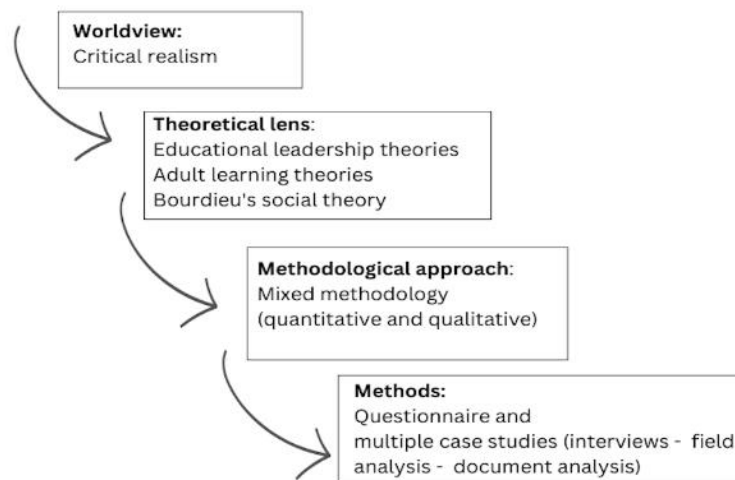
Attempting to investigate and understand leadership practice in a specific context, ‘honour the voices of participants, map the complexity of the situation, and convey multiple perspectives of participants’ can be reached through using a qualitative method (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018, p.8). However, to understand the views of a larger population, the relationship of certain variables in a quantitative source is needed (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The nature of the research questions seeks answers on certain areas of practice in specific contexts and aim to understand specific areas in a larger population of international schools. Therefore, investigating a relatively large sample without the deep and focused inquiry of a smaller sample of schools would not be sufficient. Similarly, investigating in-depth leadership practices in specific schools without looking at a broader view of how these constructs are perceived and practised in a wider population of school leaders would not fulfil the goals of this study. The nature of the research questions requires developing a nuanced understanding of praxis using different sources of data from individuals and groups at different levels of the school hierarchy and examine their perspectives (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). Similarly, there is a need to gain comprehensive knowledge using quantitative

data that involves a larger sample of participants who would respond to questions sharing their perceptions and practices, while maintaining distance, anonymity and limited or no interaction with the researcher. For this purpose, this study uses both approaches as they—collectively—provide a more comprehensive picture and a deeper understanding of leadership in international schools.

Crotty (1998) argued that there are four major elements in designing a research study. At the broader level there are the issues of philosophical assumptions or worldviews, such as ontology and epistemology. The philosophical assumptions inform the theoretical stances or lenses that the researcher uses such as the social science theory and the theories related to the specific discipline. This lens informs the methodology used which is a research design or strategy, then the methodology includes the methods used to gather, analyse, or interpret. Figure 3 presents an adaptation of Crotty's four elements of research (1998, p. 4).

Figure 3

The four elements of research



Note. Adapted from *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and perspective in the research* (p. 4), by M. Crotty, 1998, Sage Publications. Copyright 1998 by Micheal Crotty.

3.4 A Critical Realist Worldview

According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), philosophical assumptions in mixed methods consist of a set of beliefs that guide inquiries. Paradigms differ in 'what is considered real in the world (ontology), how we gain knowledge of what we know (epistemology)' and 'the process of conducting research (methodology) and the rhetoric (language of research)' (p. 225). Creswell (2009) explained that theoretical issues have practical consequences as our choice of approach influences the nature of data, which has implications for the research findings. The goals of this research and the nature of its questions require an understanding of 'causation, agency, structure and relations, and the relationship between them', while understanding the fields in which they take place (Archer et al., 2016, para. 6). Critical realism accepts that there are objective realities and agreements about them but does not rely on positivist reasoning to understand the world (Archer, 2009). Critical realism requires a mixed-methodological approach that acknowledges structures, deals with them at distance through observation and simultaneously immerses itself in analysing the multiple layers of the phenomenon it studies. According to Zachariadis et al. (2013), critical realism does not limit social research to a specific level and form of methods but 'encourages flexibility and creativity in the application' of methodologies. Therefore, critical realists combine statistical methods with explanation and interpretation while acknowledging that the truth can be historically, culturally, and socially situated (Bhaskar, 1978).

Critical realism was established with the writings of Bhaskar (1978, 1979) who viewed 'reality as structured, differentiated and changing'. Critical realism believes that our knowledge of the world is context-, concept- and activity dependent (Archer, 2016), which allows the critique of ideology that can be generalised to the critique of 'social systems' and 'structures' (Thorpe, 2020, p. 7). Critical realism is a powerful way of gaining knowledge through 'intensive and extensive research methods, that when used in conjunction can come closer to achieving a

much-needed systematic understanding of the relationships, structures and mechanisms constituting the material and social world' (Zachariadis et al., 2013). Bhaskar (2016) encouraged social scientists to articulate their philosophical views that are usually inherent in their work but hidden under theoretical and practical nuances of their research. The nature of social science research, particularly in the field of educational leadership, can benefit from critical realist 'stratified ontology' (Bhaskar, 2016) which goes beneath empirical realist and beyond pure interpretation and allows causal interpretation.

Leadership is a sophisticated form of action that takes place in a complex field and engages in relationships with governors, other leaders, teachers, students, and families besides organisational structures. Therefore, a mono-methodological approach could fail to address this complexity. A philosophical and theoretical framework that utilises realist, constructivist and analytical approaches would be best suited for the purpose of this research due to the complex nature of leadership and the field in which it is exercised. In addition to the realist and constructivist combination, the analysis of leadership as a social phenomenon could incorporate a critical or transformative perspective. The transformative perspective recognises the 'multiple forms of reality constructed on the basis of the social and cultural positions of individuals' (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018, p. 40) and the different power positions within and beyond schools.

A critical realist transformative perspective focuses on observing and analysing data driven by the interaction of the researcher with research participants and their environment, and challenges existing policy and practice, then offers a path for positive change in which the rights and interests of the under-recognised are centralised (Mertens, 2007). It addresses issues of (in)equality and social (in)justice and calls for embracing an emancipatory role of knowledge (Scotland, 2012). Through this perspective, change can be realised through praxis, which is a shift from knowledge to action informed by reflection (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1995). In this study, the critical transformative perspective guides the latest stage

of the analysis and unpacks the reasons behind the mono-dimensionality of leadership development and practice. This perspective draws a connection between leadership praxis, leadership development and the realities and experiences of teachers and students in international schools. When combined with a Bourdieusian analysis, the critical realist perspective enables the discussion and conclusions presented in this thesis and calls for transformative leadership learning that could guide leadership in international schools. This multi-perspective lens does not merely accept pre-established assumptions of international schools as myriads for diversity but interrogates the field and the practice of leaders and offers paths of hope through possibilities of social and educational transformation in this field.

3.5 The Bourdieusian Perspective

Although Bourdieu did not speak of a specific methodology in his work, his theory of relational concepts and the interplay of subjectivity and objectivity encourages researchers to combine quantitative and qualitative methods so they can complement and strengthen each other (Stelfox, 2016). Knowledge, according to Bourdieu, lies between the subjective (agency) and the objective (structure) and their interrelationships within specific social fields (Bourdieu, 1990a). Thus, this research works towards understanding the fields (schools and their contexts), leadership knowledge and action (praxis) and relationships between leaders, teachers, and students. Bourdieu's social theory guides the nature of the questions asked and answered in the study and defines the conceptual framework that explains what the researcher seeks to find (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). While this study is interested in finding out how leaders practise their work and lead their relationships within schools, it acknowledges the influence of organisational and societal structures beyond the school.

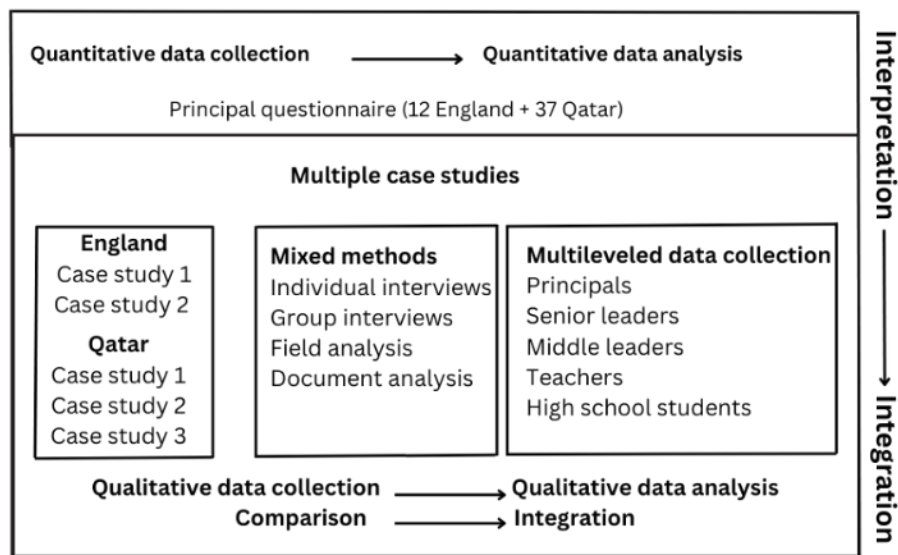
Bourdieu's theory and key concepts—field, capital, and habitus—offer the analytical tools and foundational knowledge underpinning the research questions. According to his theory, each of these concepts is defined in relation to the others

and to the milieu in which it is situated. Thus, the concepts of leadership praxis, development, social and cultural capital, field, and relationships are examined at a contextual and relational level (Eacott, 2019). This theory allows examining the *what, how, who and why* of school leadership and enables an analysis of the field (Thomson, 2017). Bourdieu's theory, aligned with a critical realist position, advances opportunities for the researcher to use a mixed-methodological design (Savage & Silva, 2013), that not only explores and collects quantitative and qualitative data sets but integrates findings and analyses their relationship and how they shape each other.

3.6 Research Design

Leithwood and Louis (2012) called researchers in the field to utilise multiple methods and different approaches, which could enable moving from exploring the breadth of a topic—via quantitative methods—to a deeper understanding of the topic—via qualitative methods (Cohen et al., 2018). This research uses a mixed methods design to construct profound and inclusive knowledge that allows the researcher to answer the key research questions. The design and implementation of multiple research methods, with different philosophical stances and dimensions, can offer new possibilities and opportunities for this research. The design of this study consists of quantitative and qualitative strands that take place simultaneously: both are essential and have 'equal importance and priority' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This design is 'parallel, equivalent, convergent, integrated, multi-method, and multi-levelled' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Data from each strand is collected at the same time, analysed independently, then integrated and discussed as a whole. The design is illustrated in Figure 4, which explains the sourcing of data for each strand, the analysis and interpretation of each one, then the integration of findings.

Figure 4
Research design



In this convergent design, all methods are implemented concurrently and have equal emphasis, which allows comparing and joining the results from both data sets (Morse, 2003). The purpose is collecting quantitative and qualitative data on the same topic in order to best understand the research problem. This design supports the ‘validation and corroboration of findings from a qualitative quantitative strand with a large[r] sample, objective measures, trends, generalisation, combined with a qualitatively small[er] sample, subjective interpretation, details and depth’ (Paton, 1990, in Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018, p. 68). This design allows direct comparison and convergence of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, which can be compared or aligned with participants' perspectives in the questionnaire’s closed-ended questions. Despite being concurrent, data collection in each strand is separate and independent from each other. Data analysis is also conducted separately using different analytic procedures. Integration or merging of data findings includes comparing findings, then showing the extent to which the results diverge from or converge with each other in different areas (Creswell, 1999). The quantitative part allows the

researcher to be objective in how data is collected and interpreted, while keeping distance from questionnaire respondents. The questionnaire offers a general description and allows the researcher to observe and learn about patterns of perceptions and practices. It allows certain statistical calculations to validate these findings and examine patterns of practice and views across participant schools. Although this might not be sufficient to generate theory; however, it produces insights that could inform the research questions and could be useful to other studies.

Alternatively, qualitative data allows a deep understanding of the leadership experience in their own schools and explains the relationship between people in different positions. The interviews, field analysis and document analysis are qualitative sources of inquiry that allow data generation and construction. The interest of this study is not merely in factual knowledge about the school, but in linking this knowledge to its relationship with leadership. The quantitative tool (questionnaire) supports the findings of the qualitative strand (multiple case studies) and provides insights on the context and the practice of leaders and their relationship with the social field. Both qualitative and quantitative methods assist in eliciting the perceptions of participants and enable the triangulation and validation of quantitative findings with qualitative data results (Creswell, 2009). Through 'dialoguing with a qualitative and quantitative design', the researcher can 'delve underneath the surface and explore the experiences of participants' not to compare and contrast results but 'to be comfortable residing on multiple levels of realities that inform one another' (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 458).

The design illustrates the limitation of using only a constructive or only a realist approach for the purpose of this research (Zachariadis et al., 2013). Statistical analysis alone cannot make sense of the deep assumptions behind leadership actions, perceptions, and relationships; similarly, the qualitative part is not sufficient to understand the patterns of leaders' practice and assumptions. For this purpose, a critical realist position recognizes the contribution that multiple

research methods can make when utilised within a research design that is theoretically and methodologically consistent.

3.6.1 Multiple case-study design

The study utilises a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018), where five schools are selected as a representation of international schools in Qatar and England. Each school is an independent case-study and represents a unique context of its own. The multiple case-study design embraces the analytical nature of this research and reflects its multi-methodological approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Yin (2018), 'multiple case-studies strengthen the results by replicating the patterns, thereby, increasing the robustness of findings' (p. 114), which provides external validation. As context is an important factor in answering the research questions, a multiple case-study approach is most suitable (Stake, 2006). A multiple case-study design is not only practically helpful but also theoretically as it supports a coherent research structure and strong internal and external validity of results (Yin, 2013). The choice of the case study as a methodology is aligned with the constructivist approach embedded in the critical realist paradigm, which aims to investigate the depth of practice and look for the underlying factors shaping and yielding findings. The case study investigation included the following methods: field analysis, document analysis, individual and group interviews.

3.6.2 Field analysis

This method is inspired by Bourdieu's notion of the field and its theoretical relationship with the forms of capital, habitus, and practice. Understanding the perspectives, practice and experiences of research participants requires an intellectual engagement with the different elements, processes and relationships constituting the field (Mu & Pang, 2022), which shape the experience of schooling and leading. 'The value of the field in Bourdieusian research is not only theoretical but also methodological' (Savage & Silva, 2013). Understanding the structure, the

nature of the field (school) and its position vis-a-vis other schools in the country helps to examine each case study independently. Field analysis is broader than context analysis; it involves looking at the patterns of relationships within schools and between schools and the larger field, including governing and accrediting bodies or authorities. This process starts with the selection of samples and continues throughout the data collection period and alongside other methods.

Field analysis refers to collecting, annotating, and analysing notes on different areas—related to the purpose of the study—from the school website and social media channels and exploring the school’s relationship with the local context. Field data includes the school identity, goals, values, governors, leadership team, managerial and hierarchical structure and the demographics of its staff and students. It also includes data related to the curriculum, major assessments, school evaluation status, funding, fees, and main events. Data collected from each field is combined and analysed, then triangulated with data from other case-studies and other methods within the same case study. This method helps the researcher to develop a deeper and broader contextualisation of each school, which not only results in constructing a vignette of each case but informs the findings of other methods within and across schools. Bourdieu’s theory centralises the field in the study of social and educational phenomena, thus, suggests a methodology that allows exploring ‘the two-way relationship between objective structures of the social field (‘the game’) and the incorporated structures of the habitus (‘the rules of the game’) (Savage & Silva, 2013, p. 113). This method centralises and unpacks the crucial relationship between leadership and schools and their embedded capitals as none of them can be understood without the other.

3.6.3 Interviews

Qualitative interviews have a significant presence in educational research (Cohen et al., 2018). Interviews allow ‘social actors’ to actively participate in the research process as they have a ‘practical consciousness’ regarding their role (Hamel, 1998, p. 10). The research interview is ‘requested by the interviewer who

accompanies the interviewee' and helps them 'through communication exchanges' to reveal their 'social positions, dispositions, and actions' (Hamel, 1998, p. 7). Giddens (1984) explained that interviewees are social agents with a significant experience in the production and reproduction of knowledge, but their knowledge is largely practical, not theoretical. It is the researcher who generates 'theoretical knowledge from the routine knowledge' of school leaders 'through a sociological interpretation' and guides the conversation from the discussion of daily practice to a deeper level where connections can be made with the underlying research goal (Bourdieu et al., 1991 in Hamel, 1998, p. 13). The interaction between researchers and research participants is recorded and socially interpreted by the researcher who moves the focus of the conversation from a narrative of practice to the theoretical level (Hamel, 1998). Interviews offer an opportunity for a 'deep listening between the researcher and the researched, to get [...] a more genuine expression of beliefs and values that emerge through dialogue' (Howe, 2004 in Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 456). According to Thornberg and Charmaz (2014), in-depth interviews do not have to seek specific answers to certain questions but aim to provide opportunities for participants to reflect and share experiences on specific concepts and realities around their work. Interviews help to 'generate patterns of responses' that complement the findings of other methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) and help to integrate findings from both data sets.

Individual interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with principals or heads of schools as a part of the case-study investigation and were followed by interviews with groups of participants from each school. Interviews took place online and were recorded via the researcher's UCL Microsoft Teams account. Before the interviews, there were multiple correspondences with principals and their assistants and a short online meeting with three of the five principals for a brief introduction. Prior to the interviews, principals received information sheets and interview guides and were

asked to sign digital consent forms. Principals were copied on all the correspondences related to the group interviews within their schools. Principals were invited to take part in an in-depth open-ended interview for 40-45 minutes via Teams. The interview guide was prepared based on the research questions and the literature review and was sent to interviewees ahead of the interview time. This initial communication prior to the interview helped to maintain an environment of trust (Gibson & Simon, 2020), which is an important element in case study research.

Group interviews

Group interviews followed principals' interviews and included three different groups: leaders, teachers, and high school students. Group interviews are helpful to engage participants in a dialogic relationship with the researcher, where they can share their views, beliefs and conceptualisations of specific concepts related to the issues in question (Barbour, 2007). They also help to reduce the tension of 'nervousness and anxiety associated with an individual interview and allow the flow of ideas that will be triggered by the group' (Burns, 2010 as cited in Xerri, 2018, p. 142). Like individual interviews, working with a group requires a trustful relationship that can be established prior to the session. It also requires prior approval from the management or the principal and negotiations of convenient timings with administrators. The use of group interviews in this research enables the triangulation of data with that collected from other methods. The recruitment of group interview participants is fully controlled by the school and based on participants' willingness to join the group. The interview guide clearly asks the school to ensure that groups include a diversity of participants' cultural and professional backgrounds and gender. All interviews were conducted via the researcher's UCL Microsoft teams for 30-40 minutes each and were recorded for transcription purposes. Participants received an information sheet explaining the research goals and their data-protection rights besides the interview guide. Furthermore, participants were asked to sign a consent form before the session

and were assured that they can opt out of the study at any time without any consequences.

Leaders' group interview

This group consisted of 2 or 3 senior or middle leaders, depending on the structure of the school. In two of the five schools, only one senior or middle leader was interviewed instead of a group due to the difficulty of arranging free time for two people at the same time. These interviews included discussions around leadership practice and leadership development, particularly the role of learning and development in shaping their work as leaders of teaching and learning. Interviews also included a discussion about their perceptions and interaction with the social and cultural capital of students and teachers and the extent to which it informs their learning and practice.

Teachers' group interview

This group consisted of 3-4 teachers who shared their reflection on leading teaching and learning in their school and on opportunities of leadership development and professional learning. They also reflected on their social and cultural and professional capital, the formation of this capital, its influence on their work and relationships with colleagues and leaders, the role of relationships and conversations in their learning, and whether the school leadership was influenced or informed by their own capital.

Students' group interview

This group included grade 12 students, who reflected on their schooling experience, the way their cultural and social capital is represented within their schools, and their relationships with friends, teachers, and leaders. The goal was to examine their perceptions of their status as students in an international school through a reflection on their identity, cultural background, shared norms and expectations, and relationships. Student interviews also focused on how networks

and social capital influenced learning and schooling experience and the influence of leadership on this process. These sessions were open to a staff member joining for security purposes. Before the interviews, information sheets, interview guides and consent forms were shared with students and their parents. Arabic translation was provided for some parents based on the school's request.

3.6.4 Documents analysis

Document analysis is a 'systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents' in order to generate empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). According to Fitzgerald (2012), documents allow a triangulation of data to strengthen research findings about the nature of institutional life, 'which could initially be explored through interviews. Document analysis enables learning about institutional life and policies and helps the researcher to have another look at the topics discussed during interviews with leaders, teachers, and students (Fisher, 2019). Although documents might not show how practice takes place or reveal the details behind many important aspects of the school life, they show an institutional orientation to acknowledge, prioritise, promote, or even ignore certain areas. For the goals of this study, the most relevant documents are the guiding statement and strategic goals and official evaluation reports. Scott (2014) suggested that document analysis takes place based on 'authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning'. To improve the validity of document analysis in this study, a structured method is used which includes a list of themes that are reviewed and analysed. Data from document analysis is analysed using thematic analysis, so it can be integrated with data from other methods and other case studies.

3.6.5 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a quantitative tool that helps in understanding the field in which participant schools are situated and the construction of patterns of practice including leaders' actions and relationships in their contexts. Questionnaires

provide a description of perceptions, backgrounds, and activities (Fink, 2013). In a mixed-method paradigm where the purpose is analysing phenomena of specific contexts, a quantitative method provides the knowledge needed for a thorough examination and offers additional strengths for the qualitative analysis. This research used an online questionnaire, which invited a larger sample of international school leaders than those invited for the qualitative case studies. The outcomes enabled cross-context analysis and established a contextualisation of the key concepts. Selected schools from England and Qatar were sent an information sheet that explained the research goals, an instruction sheet to simplify the questionnaire administration and an electronic consent form.

The questionnaire was addressed to principals or senior leaders and included 56 questions and sub-questions that can be completed in about 25-30 minutes. The questionnaire included an introductory description of four main sections representing the four research questions. Questionnaires were conducted using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap), which is a secure, web-based software platform hosted by UCL and designed to support data capture for research studies (Harris et al., 2019). Forty-nine responses were received between September 2020 and January 2021.

3.6.6 Sampling framework

This research uses a purposeful sampling design, which is useful to study a particular population of international schools in England and Qatar. Purposeful sampling is used when the phenomenon being studied requires the 'identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest' (Patton, 2002 in Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 2). This strategy was used for selecting questionnaire participants. The on-line questionnaire used the expert-sampling strategy that is based on targeting a larger number of schools within the sampling criteria. This strategy is used to collect as much knowledge of international schools—and their leadership—as possible.

The online questionnaire was sent to 60 international schools in Qatar and 20 in England that matched the international school definition adopted by this study and listed on the International Schools Database website (international-schools-database, 2022). It was beneficial to utilise an existing digital database for both countries for consistency purposes, although not an academic source. However, the selection of case study participants was based on a stratified purposeful sampling strategy, that includes criterion sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The stratified or dual selection strategy is used to gain an in-depth understanding of leadership in international schools as well as their structures and processes. This strategy includes six criteria for school sampling that is applied to schools from within the questionnaire sample.

Sample selection criteria

The choice of Qatar and England as contexts for this research resulted from my professional experience as a principal of a international school in Qatar, where relevant leadership training and knowledge were limited. Concurrently, the number and variety of international schools in Qatar were rising tremendously. The phenomenon and its perception by the public and the government as an indicator of advancement of education was worth a thorough examination, especially with limited research studying international schools and the role of leadership. As a former principal, I noted the scarcity of resources discussing the needs of leaders and teachers in international schools, mainly professional, pedagogical, and organisational needs. There was a need for research and training to lead in this complex field and to understand the needs of students, teachers, and the wider community. Thus, examining international school leadership in Qatar was prioritised. Besides, the strong connection between many international schools in Qatar and the English educational system, the widespread assumption in Qatar related to the effectiveness of England-based international schools, and the historical relationship between Qatar and Britain and its influence on Qatar's international education were important areas to explore (see Chapter

2, pp. 82-84). Therefore, the decision to examine international school leadership in England and Qatar was driven by my professional background, the scarcity of research in the field, and the increasing size and influence of international schools.

Based on the research goals, a methodologically contextualised approach, and the needs of the field, I decided to include a wide range of schools from both countries in the questionnaire and examine a more limited set of schools as case studies. Eighty schools were listed in the initial sampling phase and invited to participate in the questionnaire. This initial list included schools that are registered as an international school, offer an international curriculum with English as the medium of instruction (fully or partially), and serve international students or both local and international between three and 18 years old. The second selection phase aimed at sampling schools for the case study investigation from within the schools taking part in the questionnaire.

The case study selection list aimed at recruiting six schools (3 from each country) that meet the selection criteria (p.131). For the purpose of consistency, the criteria included local or international accreditation, which would imply that case study schools are overseen, evaluated, or guided by a recognised professional and organisational body. As this criterion applied to most schools within the questionnaire-participant list, accreditation by the Council of International Schools (CIS) was added to ensure an element of consistency among case study schools. While these criteria restricted the sample size, it was essential to recruit schools that have comparable levels of instructional and organisational development. Six schools were invited from each country (12 in total), and the responses were three participant schools from Qatar and two from England. As the invitations were sent to schools during the pandemic and the lockdown periods, it is inferred that the timing might have limited the size of participation; however, the sample size was sufficient for the research to commence.

Case-study selection criteria

1. Identifies as an international school regardless of the name
2. Offers an international or a foreign curriculum (other than the curriculum of the host country)
3. Host international or international and local students
4. Has been established for more than five years
5. Accredited by an international or a local entity
6. Accredited as a member of the Council of international schools (CIS)

3.7 Data Collection

March 2020 marked the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and governments in England and Qatar announced a lockdown. The surging Covid-19 cases caused uncertainty and tension almost everywhere and schools were instructed to close and move their teaching online. The situation called for a reflection on the timing of my research, and upon discussions with my supervisors, we agreed that capturing the experience of leaders during this unprecedented time was worthwhile. Therefore, I decided to conduct the interviews remotely, while the rest of my methods were pre-designed to take place digitally. Contacting schools during the peak of the pandemic was not ideal and I didn't know what to expect. In April 2020, I had a list of potential participants and their contact details, in addition to some notes on the history and identity of each school in order to personalise invitation letters.

A detailed review of schools—based on the International Schools Database website (International Schools Database, 2020)—helped to identify a list of 80 schools that matched the sampling framework: 60 schools in Qatar and 20 in England. The initial process of contacting schools started in May 2020, and I shortly received rejection messages, while many of my emails remain unanswered. However, the few responses I received were encouraging. I followed

up with recurrent messages and phone calls to ensure that the invitation and questionnaire link were sent to a senior school leader. While the questionnaire data collection was ongoing, I went through a second round of selection for the case studies based on the sampling criteria and chose 12 schools (six in each country). Responses to case study invitations were more difficult than questionnaire invitations—as expected, because it requires further commitment from senior leadership, including arrangements for the group interviews and consents, which could only happen if they allocated some staff to assist. Between September 2020 and January 2021, and despite the unusual situation resulting from the pandemic, I received 49 questionnaire responses and confirmations for five case studies.

Case study investigation was conducted in five schools (three in England and two in Qatar). Data was collected via individual and group interviews, document analysis and field analysis. Case studies are referred to as CS throughout this thesis, followed by the number of the case, such as (CS-1, CS-2, CS-3, CS-4 and CS-5). Table 1 represents the tools used to collect data for each of the five case studies, and the number of data sources: interviews and interviewees, field analysis and document analysis, whereas Table 2 shows the number of interviews (N=24) and the number of interviewees in all case studies (N=43).

Table 1
Case study methods and data sources

Research approach	Research method	Case studies				
		CS-1	CS-2	CS -3	CS-4	CS-5
Qualitative	Interviews					
	Interviews n=24	5	6	5	4	4
	Interviewees n=43	14	15	5	5	4
	Field analysis	1	1	1	1	1
	Document analysis	2	0	0	2	1

Table 2

Case studies' interview structure

Case study Number	Interview type	No. of Interviewees
CS-1, Qatar	Individual - Principal	1
	Group - Senior leaders	2
	Group - Middle leaders & teachers	2
	Group 1 - Students	5
	Group 2 - Students	5
CS-2, Qatar	Individual - Principal	1
	Individual - senior leader	1
	Group - Middle leaders	3
	Group - Teachers	4
	Group 1 - Students	4
	Group 2 - Students	3
CS-3, Qatar	Individual - Principal	1
	Individual Middle leader & teacher	1
	Individual - Teacher	1
	Individual interviews -Students	2
CS-4, England	Individual - Principal	1
	Group - Senior leaders	2
	Individual - Teacher	1
	Individual - Student	1
CS-5, England	Individual - Principal	1
	Individual - Senior leader	1
	Individual - Teacher & middle leader	1
	Individual - Student	1

The online data collection process started on September 1, 2020, simultaneously in both countries. It required a set of procedures and preparation to ensure that the database, recording, and transcription were securely managed and stored, first on UCL's OneDrive, then transferred into UCL's Research Data Storage Space (RDSS). Information sheets, invitation emails and consent forms were prepared in English, however, CS-2 recommended parent consent forms to be translated into Arabic. All interviews took place in English in all interviews. Prompts in Arabic were only used with a few participants as needed, but rephrased in English so other participants can be aware of what has been said. Interviews took place according to the interview guide. However, interviews with principals were less structured than other interviews as they chose to elaborate on some areas more than others. Principals were encouraged to introduce themselves and their schools before answering interview questions, which provided significant information about their background, preparation, priorities, and their schools' history. Although all interviews included the same questions, responses went in different directions based on which areas of practice were seen as more important by the principal. During interviews, I was taking notes of important references besides recording, which helped me later in data processing and analysis.

The key focus during the data collection phase was ensuring that participants commit to the process, which required consistent and thoughtful communication. There was always a risk of not responding to the questionnaire, after signing the consent form due to the busy nature of the school day. Reminders were helpful in many cases. Likewise, the case study data collection required deliberate communication with principals and their assistants after the principal interview, to ensure their continuous support for the remaining interviews with groups of leaders, teachers, and students in their schools. Besides communication, my priorities at this stage were organising data files, adequately labelling, and storing them in safe spaces, and keeping a record of notes on data collection and

management process, which was helpful during the analysis and conclusion stages.

3.8 Data Processing

Questionnaire responses were received inconsistently over four months, as participants responded during their own time. I received notifications from REDCap for the questionnaire's anonymous responses, and often reviewed them on the spot. Responses—generally and implicitly—matched my prior assumptions, with some variations, but the bigger picture that allows the formation of patterns wasn't there until the end of the collection period by January 2021. Data from the questionnaire was stored in REDCap then exported into Excel and SPSS to conduct different types of descriptive analysis that could help to generate patterns, correlations, and relationships. The case study data collection, alternatively, was more consistent despite difficulties. Five principals responded to my invitation agreeing to be a part of the investigation. After initial responses, it was essential that I follow up consistently, so leaders and their assistants do not lose interest. Therefore, interviews with the principal and the rest of the groups from each school were generally close to each other. I was keen to send regular reminders and relevant details. Document analyses, where available, were conducted after the interviews, whereas field analysis took place throughout the whole period of data collection.

The largest portion of case-study data was collected through individual and group interviews which were recorded on Microsoft Teams. In total, I had 830 minutes of recorded interviews to transcribe. Transcription was conducted verbatim as soon as possible after an interview took place. Sometimes, I needed to take breaks between different sections of the interviews because I was emotionally engaged, which could be related to my previous experience as a principal. I could relate to challenges and experiences, which required reflection and journaling so I can process my thoughts. A journal was always available when I did the interviews and when I transcribed. These notes helped me later to make

connections between interviews, field analysis and questionnaire data and to find relationships and contradictions between different interviews from the same school (Fryer, 2022). Transcriptions were initially stored on UCL's OneDrive, then transported into Nvivo12 to be processed.

3.9 Data analysis

The analysis of questionnaire data took place on Excel and SPSS depending on the applicability of each to specific tests. Due to the limited size of the data, inferential statistical tests were generally not applicable, but the patterns of leaders' perceptions, actions, and relationships between different clusters of data were powerful and informative. The analysis was conducted at three stages, after highlighting missing values and excluding them. The first stage included examining total responses to each question and looking at rates, patterns, and graphs. Second, looking at clusters of responses to questions under each theme which respectively respond to the four research questions. Similarly, patterns and general trends were noted besides differences and inconsistencies, supported by insights from the literature review. Third, I explored relationships between data sets from England and Qatar's respondents to investigate possibilities of general similarities or differences.

Questionnaires' short-answer responses were exported from REDCap to Nvivo12 and added to qualitative data. Quantitative information was particularly useful for producing trends and patterns in events, activities, and perceptions (Danemark et al., 2001), while qualitative information was useful for finding relationships between different patterns, perceptions or events and helped 'to understand the causal mechanisms that produce them' (Fryer, 2022). The analysis of findings from each method was compared to the findings of the same method in other schools and added to the analysis of data collected within schools and between schools, which resulted in case study vignettes and a cross-case study report. Simultaneously, findings from quantitative methods were analysed and compared to findings from qualitative methods. As a result, the results were triangulated

within case studies, between case studies and through merging and integrating all data sets. Triangulation was helpful in finding broad lines and patterns (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018) in different schools and datasets, besides significant differences.

Qualitative data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) guidelines, particularly familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing, refining, and naming themes, then producing the report. The first stage involved reviewing the transcripts from interviews within the same case study, which produced key codes and helped to generate features for each school while provoking initial ideas for inferences about leadership and context. The codes in the first stage were mostly theory-led in addition to initial codes driven by the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fryer, 2022). I followed the advice of Braun and Clarke (2019) to avoid one-word codes, and to use sentences or phrases to capture meanings instead. I reviewed interviews and initial codes from each group of interviewees independently. This was a lengthy process but helped to develop codes and offered additional insights about key dimensions of leadership, challenges, patterns, and approaches besides specific features of leading at different levels and leading in a pandemic. This process was useful and generated what I like to call 'threads of meaning', interwoven into my conceptualisation of leading, teaching and learning in these schools; a process of meaning-making that has deeply guided my analysis of the findings and my conclusions.

The coding process in the second stage was data-driven and included both semantic (explicit, surface level meaning) and latent (implicit, assumptions under the surface) codes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). However, I ended up with a long list of codes which required reviewing additional literature to inquire on emerging references, while simultaneously refining the codes and searching for themes (Stage 3), which at this stage became relatively well-defined (stage 5 is defining themes). Before the final revision of themes, there was a process of moving back

and forth between stage two and stage five, which was complex, deep, and intense, but highly rewarding.

As the themes were under revision, discussions with my supervisors were taking place once a month, their insights and questions helped in shaping this process. My supervisor suggested that I utilise an inter-coding approach, which is a 'comparison' between researchers' 'impression of the data', in order to 'ensure the consistency of coding' (O'Conner & Joffe, 2020, p. 2-3). Therefore, I asked two researchers in relevant areas to code some interview extracts that I have previously coded. Although different researchers have different approaches, this exercise was useful and reassuring. We had meetings before and after the exercise to introduce the research questions, context, and methodology, and I shared an abstract of my research and original uncoded extracts of interviews. The process showed consistent outcomes despite different approaches. One of them used strictly single-word experiential codes, whereas the other used a sentence or a phrase to express the meaning. Their coding outcomes were highly aligned with different versions of my codes, as I was moving between different stages of my thematic analysis. The comparison was encouraging and showed that my coding technique was reliable and 'communicable' (O'Conner & Joffe, 2020), therefore, I proceeded with consolidating my themes.

This stage involved revisiting and refining themes, synthesising, note-taking, and reading, as I developed sub-questions, driven by the research questions, leading to the discussion of findings and final conclusions. The questions were based on my thematic analysis, although not final, and on the meaning behind and beyond the data. It was essential that I develop themes that could capture 'causal relations' (Fryer, 2022), or 'dispositional themes' (Wiltshire & Ronkainen, 2021) in order to engage in a deeper level of analysis and in rigorous arguments and conclusions. Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021) suggested three kinds of themes: experiential, inferential, and dispositional. Experiential themes are related to the participants' subjective views and perceptions, inferential themes refer to more

abstract and theoretically informed words that also reflect participants' views, behaviour and dimensions of action, and dispositional themes capture the underlying causes behind these dimensions or events. This nonlinear process of moving between the different forms of themes and Braun and Clarke's (2022) six stages, incorporates what was defined by Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021) as a process of rigour and validity which 'does not simply come from following a list of steps' (Fryer, 2022, p. 16). After defining the themes, they were categorised in four main categories or domains which respond respectively to the four research questions.

This final stage of my thematic analysis involved going back and forth between quantitative results and qualitative themes to support my inferences and critically examine the findings. After drafting quantitative and qualitative findings independently, I used the main categories and themes resulting from the thematic analysis as 'frames of reference' (Mezirow, 1996) and started the process accordingly. I listed the integrated findings in light of the research questions, and highlighted areas of convergence and divergence (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2014) where they appeared, and simply presented findings independently where there was no relationship between the quantitative and the qualitative. The reason is that quantitative data was collected from principals' questionnaires, while qualitative case study investigation included principals, senior and middle leaders, teachers, and students. The integration of results, beyond the technical aspects, was a process of reflection on the whole picture produced by this research and its value and position within the field.

3.10 Reflexivity, validity, and reliability

The process of internal dialogue between the researcher and their findings before the final conclusions are made is described as reflexivity, which leads to 'constructing narratives' (Fryer, 2022, p. 15) and 'stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data' (Braun & Clarke 2019, p. 594). In this research,

the dialogue between quantitative and qualitative data, the multi-theoretical assumptions driving the study and the process of reflexive analysis employed by the researcher have collectively produced the integrated findings, the discussion, and the conclusions. While the researcher's role as an active part of the research cannot be denied (Carr, 2000), in critical realist investigations the subjective interpretation of the researcher is aligned with ontological realism through the presence of patterns and trends obtained from quantitative data (Wiltshire & Ronkainen, 2021).

Reflexivity is about engaging in self-reflection and questioning the researcher's own perspectives and actions while consciously limiting their subjectivity and bias (Jootun et al., 2009). Maxwell (1992) argued that rigour in research is based on whether the conclusions can be justified, which comes from reflecting on the questions of descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity. Maxwell called for reflecting on the descriptive validity, which refers to the extent to which codes can describe the data, interpretive validity which looks at whether the meaning implied by the code reflects the experience embedded in the data, as opposed to being abstract and broad (1998). Theoretical validity refers to the alignment of themes with codes and the extent to which they both align and underpin theoretical inferences and enable causal assumptions, which can also increase the reliability of the research as findings and conclusions calibrate with existing research in the field.

While the multiple case-study approach primarily focused on examining unique contexts, its rigorous design, implementation, and the alignment with other methods strengthened the data and improved the representativeness and relatability of the findings to other contexts. The mixed-methodological approach aligns realist and qualitative paradigms, which collectively produce coherent and credible research by utilising reflexivity and robust procedures (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Maxwell (1998) explained that consistency between the theoretical framework, design and procedures can strengthen the trustworthiness of the

study. In order to address concerns about representativeness, this research chose multiple case studies that make the results more rigorous and convincing (Maxwell, 1992, 1998), as they enable producing results that could be relatable or applicable for a population beyond that of the five schools. This offers a thick description of the phenomena being studied and a deeper analysis of the field. Additionally, the quantitative part strengthens the multiple case-study approach and contributes to more relatable findings. The analysis of findings from both strands allows constructing a body of knowledge on leadership in the five schools, providing insights and possibilities for applicability to other relevant contexts. The critical and transformative part—introduced in the discussion chapter—analyses the findings within the wider social and cultural context based on input from students, teachers, and leaders, and addresses the relationship of leadership with the social field.

There are different ways in which this study reflects the validity and reliability of its findings. Validity is reflected through its mixed methodology and the triangulation of data from quantitative and qualitative methods, which serves to provide a convergence of findings (Campbell et al., 2020). Qualitative research often uses words such as integrity and precision where the findings reflect the data. Moreover, validity is reflected throughout the whole research process (processual validity), the consistent connection of the initial plan to the theoretical framework, the design and implementation, besides constant reflection while doing the research (Maxwell, 1998). Similarly, reliability is reflected through words such as rigour, credibility, relatability, applicability, and flexibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Reliability is improved through the coherence of methods, goals and procedures and the consistency in measuring the same concept in the same analytical procedures in different contexts. Reliability is also about flexibility and openness to using different methods or procedures, as needed, during the research process, and the ability and freedom to interpret and share findings.

3.11 Ethics and positionality

Ethical considerations were incorporated in the initial phases of the research design and influenced its methods, implementation, and relationship with participants. In addition, the conceptualisation of the research topic and the framing of research questions took into consideration the ethical dilemmas involved in researching international schools and their leadership. Gregory (2003) suggested that ethics in educational research involves more than moral issues related to the context of working with humans, but includes wider sensitive considerations related to the context in which research is conducted. Therefore, ethical issues about the cultural and social issues embedded in leading international schools, and the potential harm of not representing the diverse cultural and social perspectives in schools were considered. According to Samier and Elkaleh (2023), researching educational leadership in international contexts requires representing the diversity of approaches and world views, in addition to acknowledging the right to cultural and identity representation that are identified by United Nations conventions as essential rights (UN, 2016; UNESCO, 2005). Therefore, ensuring representation of students and teachers' voices and perspectives in the research design was an ethically driven choice (Osler, 2023), in addition to a conceptual and methodological one. Furthermore, the design recognised the ethical dimension embedded in the relationships of leaders with others (Biesta, 2023), which are essential for understanding the dynamics and impact of leadership, particularly in multicultural international schools, where people have different values and communication methods.

Informed consent and data protection

This research was conducted in line with UCL's research ethics guidelines and the British Educational Research Association ethics and integrity guidelines (BERA, 2017). Transparency about research goals, dissemination plans, confidentiality and data protection issues were taken into consideration in the ethics application and during implementation. Information sheets, interview

guides and informed consent forms were shared in advance and reviewed with participants before starting interviews. Principals were the gatekeepers who granted permission and chose or approved the participation of leaders, teachers, and students in case-study investigation, in addition to their own (Ramrathan et al., 2016). Therefore, participants were reassured that they can opt out of the study at any time without consequences. Additionally, due to the sensitive nature of school relationships, and the possible harm resulting from disclosing critique for their schools or leadership, confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection were thoroughly explained to all participants, in addition to being included in their forms. In order to protect the data, interview files were transferred to UCL's Research Data Storage Space (RDSS), where they were de-identified and stored safely. Finally, the integrity of the research was prioritised throughout the whole process, and particularly upon combining data, triangulating, analysing, and presenting findings in this thesis. The validity and reliability of the data and the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings underpinned the research process, while managing and acknowledging my own positionality and assumptions as a researcher (Bourdieu, 1999b).

3.12 Conclusion

As pointed out earlier, there is no value-free research (Bourdieu, 1988). An independent researcher approaches a topic and chooses a specific paradigm based on their values and social conscience. However, credible research requires a high level of reflexivity, which allows the researcher to consciously make decisions related to their research including paradigm, methodology and methods (Deer, 2014). There is no contradiction in using quantitative and qualitative tools. It is the methodology, not the method, which determines what type of research practice best serves the research goals. The critical realist paradigm offers insights into the relational aspects of leadership, revealing how relationships between principals, leaders, teachers, and students are managed and shaped and how social and cultural capital(s) are framed in these contexts. Critical realism

reflects the multi-layered levels of realities within schools and leadership in international schools and enables a construction of knowledge on their logic of practice and their relational work (Bourdieu, 1989). The critical part, additionally, empowers this research by addressing its connectedness with societal structures and fields (Archer, 2016). Constructing a body of knowledge that dissects leadership practice from its connections with the field is not realistic. What is realistic is acknowledging that leadership is not only surrounded by structures and is impacted by them, but functions within and influences social structures through reflection and action.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: THE MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects an integration of research findings from qualitative and quantitative data, which was collected in England and Qatar international schools using different methods. Qualitative data was collected via multiple case-studies (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018), which included individual and group interviews, field analysis and document analysis, while quantitative data was collected via a questionnaire. Data collected from these methods was processed and analysed independently, then integrated to produce a holistic view of the results. This chapter presents independent vignettes of the five case-studies and a summary of their outcomes, in addition to the integrated findings derived from the questionnaire and the multiple case studies. The findings chapter summarises the results of this research based on four main categories of themes (Figure 5), which respond respectively to the four research questions. The first research question examines international schools as social fields and analyses the social phenomena influencing schools and the practice of leaders. The second question examines leadership praxis (knowledge and practice) and focuses on leading teaching and learning in international schools. The third question investigates leadership and development and the extent to which it relates to the needs of leadership in this field. Finally, the fourth question examines how leadership relates and responds to the social and cultural capital of teachers and high school students.

4.1.1 The main categories of themes

- 1- The field
- 2- Leadership praxis
- 3- Leadership development
- 4- The social and cultural capital

Figure 5

The main categories of themes



4.1.2 Qualitative data

Qualitative data is based on five case studies in which five international schools were examined. Case study investigation included individual interviews with principals, group interviews with senior and/or middle leaders, teachers, and high school students (see Table 1). For the purpose of consistency, heads and principals are referred to and quoted as 'principal', while senior and middle leaders are referred to as 'SL' and 'ML' when quoted and followed by the number of their case-study. Field analysis data was collected from the schools' websites, related to the events, programmes, services, partnerships, or other featured areas. Document analysis data was driven from reviewing and analysing school

inspection or evaluation reports and guiding statements. Two schools did not provide inspection reports despite recurrent reminders. Responses to short-answer questions from the questionnaire were added to the qualitative data besides data collected from field analysis and document analysis. All qualitative data sets were added to NVivo and classified into five case studies, then coded and analysed thematically.

4.1.3 Quantitative data

Quantitative data was collected through a REDCap questionnaire, which included 56 questions designed in multiple formats. The questionnaire targeted school principals and consisted of questions related to the four main research questions. The questionnaire was conducted alongside case-study investigation and focused on the same areas: understanding international schools as social fields, leadership praxis (leading teaching and learning), leadership development, and leaders' perceptions and relationships with the social and cultural capital of teachers and students. The questionnaire was sent to 60 international schools in Qatar and 25 schools in England. The respondents were 39 school leaders located in Qatar (response rate: 65%) and 10 school leaders located in England (response rate: 40%). Overall, 49 respondents filled the questionnaire.

4.2 Case-study vignettes

This research included five case-studies: three in Qatar and two in England. The below section includes a summary of each case study and a brief cross-case analysis that responds to the four research questions and the main categories of themes. The vignettes provide a brief profile of each school that explains its position within the field and a description of the key aspects of schoolwork that are related to the main themes of this research. The content of the vignettes and the inferences presented in the cross-case analysis are based on the triangulation of document analysis, field analysis and interviews' data.

4.2.1 Case study 1

The first case study is one of the largest British international schools in Qatar, which offers a British curriculum, represents British education and values. The school is accredited by multiple international and regional bodies and is rated 'very good' and 'outstanding' in most areas. The principal, leadership team and staff are predominantly British, while the rest of the staff are mostly White Anglo-phonic teachers and administrators (Gardner-McTaggart, 2019), with a minority of teachers and support staff from other backgrounds, especially those who teach Arabic and Islamic subjects or support teaching and learning.

The tuition fees of this school are among the highest on the list of schools in Qatar (International Schools Guide, 2020). The school is governed by a diplomatic body and an appointed board of governors (Principal, CS-1). The leadership team consists of a principal, who is also the business director, three vice-principals, senior and middle leaders, vertical and horizontal leadership teams across academic subjects and year-groups. According to leaders, teachers are encouraged to take risks and take responsibility for their professional development and student learning. The school offers the English national curriculum and takes pride in its students' high attainment. Like other private schools in Qatar, the school is overseen by the Private Schools Office, and offers Arabic language, Islamic studies, and Qatar history for its Arab, Muslim, and Qatari students.

The school is accredited as a leadership training provider by the Council of British International Schools (COBIS) and offers leadership courses to its teachers and leaders and to other schools in Qatar. In addition, the school encourages learning forums for its teachers, who utilise this space to share ideas and action research projects. Both leaders and teachers explained the growing sense of ownership and autonomy among teachers, which enhances teacher leadership in the classroom and in teaching teams regardless of position and title. Leaders mentioned that younger generations of teachers are easily inclined to adopt

modern student-centred approaches (SL, CS-1), unlike older teachers who are less willing to implement changes.

Students in this school are generally international: 50% are British nationals of different ethnic backgrounds, while the rest are mostly Asian, Arab, and Qatari. During interviews, students shared their experience of mobility, identity, belonging, and their perception of internationalisation within their context. They discussed their relationships with peers and teachers and their influence on learning. The pandemic has largely impacted this group while studying at home, causing a sense of isolation and discouragement. They missed their exams in summer 2020 due to the lockdown, and they were—at the time of the interviews—preparing for their Advanced Level qualifications in summer 2021. Students struggled with exam preparation pressure and the disconnection from their regular social and learning environment.

Teachers in this school are generally disconnected from their surroundings due to language barriers but maintain connections with other staff in the school. During interviews, teachers described their isolation and sense of uncertainty and anxiety due to the pandemic, particularly during lockdowns and while going back to school. Recording lessons or working with one group on Zoom and the other in the classroom has been an unusual experience that subjected teachers to additional burdens. On another level, senior leaders explained that they engage everybody in decision making and promote a sense of cultural appreciation. The principal discussed the ‘cultural flare’ resulting from having different skin colours and different ethnicities in the school. They mentioned that parents are happy to hear their children speak English with an accent that they don’t speak at home, and that the school is highly desired by parents and ‘over-subscribed’ (Principal, CS-1). Middle leaders and teachers, in contrast, reflected on their practice as they taught a pre-set curriculum, which does not respond to the cultural diversity of their students. They also focused on the limited diversity in their recruitment policies and thought about potentials for further inclusivity. In addition, students

mentioned that the school mainly focuses on the British identity despite celebrating international days. Consequently, students from other cultures or identities do not feel represented or appreciated (Student, CS-1). Students called for further recognition of different cultures and an acknowledgement of the additional pressure they have experienced during the pandemic and its influence on their well-being and studies.

4.2.2 Case study 2

This school is an Arabic International Baccalaureate (IB) school in Qatar that is governed by a semi-governmental non-profit educational organisation and teaches its curriculum in English and Arabic. The school is financed by students' fees, which rank among the highest fees on the list of international schools in Qatar (International Schools Guide, 2020). The school is well-staffed and has a leadership structure consisting of a board of trustees, an executive officer, a principal, two primary and secondary senior leaders and middle leaders.

The school's academic program offers three languages and a variety of cultural activities. Students described their school as competitive and highly focused on exam results. Leaders and teachers, alternatively, described their work as collaborative and aligned with the IB inquiry-based pedagogy. The school offers internal professional development activities to 'ensure that teaching and learning are aligned with IB standards and the school's goals and priorities' (Principal, CS-2), in addition to external opportunities based on individual and group needs. Teachers and middle leaders explained that the school offers many opportunities and resources for professional development.

The relationship of leaders with other leaders and teachers was described as respectful and trustful. Middle leaders mentioned that their work with teachers is focused on guiding teaching and learning to ensure teacher development and student engagement. Teachers, who mostly come from Arab backgrounds, confirmed having multiple professional learning opportunities and positive

relationships. However, some international teachers from the Global South, who are a minority within the school, explained that their cultural and social capital are not as valued as that of Arab teachers (Teacher, CS-2).

The school hosts 2200 students, most of them are Arab nationals or from Arab backgrounds, though many of them hold non-Arab passports, which is common across the Arab region (Principal, CS-2). Although students are predominantly Arab, many of them come from different contexts with distinct social norms and expectations. Students explained that their cultural capital and identities are often represented in school activities, but their social capital and social and emotional needs as individuals are less acknowledged. According to students, the school merely focuses on attainment. The focus on the norms of internationalisation as prescribed by the IBO frameworks was prevalent throughout the discussions with leaders, teachers and students.

4.2.3 Case study 3

This school is a member of a global chain and is located in Doha, Qatar. The school hosts 900 students and has one of the highest tuition fees in the country. The school attracts 'some of the most affluent students' (Principal, CS-3), in addition to a large Qatari community. It offers an American and an IB curriculum and recruits predominantly White western leaders and teachers (Student, CS-3), with a minority of international support staff and locally hired Arabic and Islamic studies' teachers (ML, CS-3).

The school has a well-defined leadership structure consisting of a principal, two principals, four associate principals and middle leaders. Relationships between leaders and teachers are governed by specific protocols and common expectations. The school offers many professional development opportunities, which continued to take place online during the pandemic. The notions of diversity and community were used widely during interviews and on the school's website, nonetheless, some staff noted being treated differently or not at the same level as

others. The school strictly follows the guidelines of its central office and is keen to provide a predesigned set of programs to its students, in line with its international affiliation.

The 1600-student population is highly diverse, representing an international community of 70 nationalities, with three majority groups: Qatari, American, and Canadian. Students mentioned that being around people from different backgrounds in this school is the norm, and that they build relationships based on social and academic interests. Teachers explained that local students hardly socialise with international students due to traditions and cultural barriers. This area seems to be recognised by leadership, as the principal explained that one of their key priorities was to build a community that brings people together and allows them to feel comfortable and trust each other and the school. Additionally, they explained that the school started a series of anti-bias workshops and acknowledged that they are biased in different areas (Principal, CS-3).

The pandemic affected students and caused demotivation and disconnection. It also reduced the frequency of teachers and leaders' interactions, added a strain on teachers' timetables and a sense of job insecurity for others. Leaders, in contrast, noticed that online channels improved their interaction with parents and brought them closer to the school. It was noted during the time of data collection that the pandemic has affected the school's financial status, hence, leaders became more focused on maintaining school-family relationships to improve collaboration with families and maintain enrolment rates. Simultaneously, the school offered significant support services to families and students during the pandemic.

4.2.4 Case study 4

This case study took place at a small school of 180 students in London, which was established as a family-business more than forty years ago and became an IB school more than a decade ago. In 2017, the school became affiliated with a

global network of schools that are mostly based in Europe and the Middle East. The school is accredited by the IBO, inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), affiliated with the British Council, and offers a mixed program that combines the English national curriculum and the IB curriculum.

The document analysis showed that the school has a new head every 2-3 years. In addition, the documents reviewed showed that the school was evaluated as under-performing in several areas by Ofsted in 2014, followed by an emergency inspection in 2016. Two years later (in 2018), the ISI report showed that the school has met most of the expectations for independent schools' standards. The previous poor inspection reports could be the reason behind the short tenure of heads. The school is governed by a company and led by a principal and senior leaders, who also have teaching duties, act as academic coordinators and manage performance and internal teacher professional development. The head believes in open communication and has casual conversations with staff and families as needed. The head supported principals and teachers' professional learning and allocated funds for this purpose whenever possible. Leaders and teachers mentioned that they previously had access to professional learning through their company's network of schools. Nevertheless, due to the pandemic, training was reduced into in-school meetings focusing on managing teaching and learning.

The school had a diverse population of students who come from different cultures, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds, mainly the Middle East, Europe and China. Thus, students have different social norms and behaviour expectations, which led to behavioural issues that principals tried to address through developing a personal development curriculum. Teachers, in contrast, are less diverse than students but also had 'some cultural clashes' (Principal, CS-4). The head and the principals explained that they frequently lead conversations with teachers, which helps them to learn about each other and establish a collaborative work environment.

Collaborative relationships were described as important and essential by all case-study participants in this school. As a small school, staff, families, and students were well connected until the pandemic, when social distancing became the norm. The pandemic added additional challenges and financially impacted the school. The interviews were conducted during the second lock-down (2020) and reflected a sense of instability and frustration due to recent managerial decisions related to dismissing a number of staff and reducing wages. Despite these circumstances, teachers and leaders showed positive and professional demeanour, attempting to hide their sense of frustration during interviews.

4.2.5 Case study 5

The fifth case study is a relatively large state-funded school in England, which was developed when the United Kingdom was engaged in advancing its European ties. The school is heavily populated and has established strong relationships with its community and local authority. The student body represents a massive European community, in addition to students from other international backgrounds. Students and staff represent 30 ethnicities, 55 nationalities and 75 languages. The school is affiliated with the IBO and CIS and has a remarkably low rate of leadership and staff mobility. According to the principal, the school focuses on developing international mindedness, respect, and appreciation for other cultures, and offers a culturally rich curriculum with eight languages and international exchange programs.

The school is led by two principals, a 'man and a woman, who co-lead the school and teach at the same time' (Principal, CS-5). In addition, there is a team of deputies, associate heads for each stage in the school. The principals invested in developing the leadership abilities of their staff, despite non-existent or rare payment schemes. Professional learning is promoted internally through consistent peer observation, sharing feedback, and modelling good practice. Principals also encourage teachers and administrators to benefit from training opportunities through the Department for Education (DFE). The principal

explained that teachers and staff are trusted, and that the school environment is mostly about learning from each other. The principal was critical about governmental policies and, particularly, their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The principal explained the extent to which the school struggled with maintaining health and safety, while teachers were still teaching face-to-face during the pandemic. Another area of struggle was financial as the school needed to take special measures and create further facilities during the pandemic with no additional funding from the government.

One high school student contributed to this case study. They explained that their school encourages international values and fosters a sense of community through local activities and international exchange programs. Over 45 years, the school 'gained the trust of many families from different backgrounds; mainly White Christian British and European' (Principal, CS-5). However, despite having a largely diverse student body, teachers and staff were mostly British, with some of them speaking different languages or belonging to multi-ethnic backgrounds. The principal acknowledged that the school needs to reconsider further diversification of its teaching staff in the future.

4.2.6 Cross-case analysis

All case study schools are K-12, officially recognised as international and registered members of the Council of International Schools (CIS). CS-1 (Qatar) and CS-5 (England) offer the IB diploma program in addition to A levels and, while the other three case study schools offer the full IB program. The analysis of integrated findings from all five case studies showed common overarching characteristics related to organisational structure, leadership attributes, students' social and cultural capital and recruitment policies.

Organisational age and growth

CS-1 and CS-5 were established in the 1980s and have been successfully managed, as described by their inspectors. Organisational age was associated

with a sense of efficacy and confidence of their leadership and stability of policies and structure (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). CS-3 was established in 2012 by an international educational company, whereas CS-2 was founded in 2016. Both schools reflect the huge investment in equity, assets, and marketing strategies, as revealed by the field analysis. These four schools grew over the years, with a relatively high number of students; CS-1: 2500 students, CS-2: 2200 students, CS-3: 900 students, and CS-5:1700 students. CS-4, contrastingly, was established in the early 1970s, but remained small in size and reflected concerns related to organisational performance, according to the inspection report issued in 2018.

Leadership confidence and stability

The findings showed that the number of students in a school had a significant impact on its budget and the stability of its leadership and teaching team. While the school's budget was not the only factor behind leaders' tenure, it was seen as crucially important by principals. Having a stable and sustainable budget means that a principal is supported by a leadership team and a sufficient number of staff. The stability of the leadership team, in turn, influences the stability and progression of the teaching and learning process and has a positive impact on teacher performance and motivation. Where the financial position of the school was stable, leaders were generally confident in their interviews despite their workload and the challenges brought by the pandemic. Likewise, teachers generally felt supported, empowered, and confident about their jobs. The influence of leadership stability on teachers was noted in all case-studies, despite evident financial pressure and the uncertainty of the pandemic. Consequently, teachers spoke confidently and had a high sense of self-efficacy. In contrast, when principals were frustrated about the financial position of their schools, they appeared demotivated, drained, and sometimes distracted, which was mirrored in the interviews with other leaders and teachers in the same school. CS-4, as an example, had a significant shortage in student enrolment, and consequently,

a limited budget. The head and the principals explained that they were facing problems with their management, which caused frustration and uncertainty regarding the future of the school. Principals were teaching, supporting teachers, and coordinating the curriculum while trying to meet the requirements of the IBO and ISI; thus, working under significant pressure. In addition, there was a plan in place to reduce staff and wages, which reflected a sense of insecurity and demotivation. Leaders of CS-4 were feeling dis-empowered by the management and self-disappointed as they could not offer their teachers a sense of security.

Students' cultural and social capital

During interviews, principals described the diversity of their school communities as enriching to their school culture. Leaders in CS-1 and CS-3 believed that their schools shaped students' cultural capital by embedding their school values and strategies in the curriculum and through daily activities and modelling. They did not acknowledge the cultural and social capital that students have accumulated through their families and home culture or before joining the school. In contrast, they discussed student capital, including knowledge skills and language, as a deficit that is remedied or fully developed by the school. Nonetheless, middle leaders in these schools were more reflective and critical, and addressed concerns about the irrelevance of their teaching and curriculum to the culturally diverse needs of students. Most of them noted issues related to the alienation of students' home cultures and the disconnection of certain social groups from the wider social circles within the school (Khalifa et al., 2016). Additionally, some students were dissatisfied with the lack of acknowledgement of their own cultural and social capital by the school.

Principals in CS-4 acknowledged the diversity of cultural and social capital of students and the influence on student behaviour and learning. To them, this was a deficit that needed to be remedied through a personal development curriculum that could help students to adapt to new ways of behaving and learning. School leaders in CS-2 and CS-5, conversely, acknowledged that students bring a wealth

of cultural and social capital, which continues to develop through the interaction with the school. They explained that they adapted their programs to incorporate the cultural elements of their students and make them feel valued.

Biased recruitment and hiring policies

While the documents reviewed and analysed showed that schools were fair and diverse, leaders' interviews revealed significant biases in their recruitment and hiring policies towards non-western, and in some cases, non-British staff (CS-1, CS-3, CS-4 and CS-5). Leaders clarified that they predominantly recruit White British or Anglo-phonic teachers and staff (CS-1, CS-3, CS-5). A few leaders disclosed that they are currently trying to address their biases (Principal, CS-3) or planning to diversify their recruitment panels and update recruitment policies (ML, CS1). While discussing student diversity, leaders noted that their staff were less diverse than students and concluded that this could be changed in the future by adopting a more culturally and socially diverse strategy (Principal, CS-5). The principal in CS-1, however, saw this homogeneity of staff as a strength that could be attractive to parents. Moreover, CS-2 had relatively equivalent proportions of students and staff diversity. Nonetheless, international —non-White and non-Arab—teachers in CS-2 believed that their cultural and social capital were less recognised or appreciated by the school than other dominant cultures.

4.3 Integrated results

This section represents integrated findings driven from the questionnaire and the case studies, which are a combination of data collected from interviews, field analysis and document analysis. The integrated findings are categorised based on the main categories of themes and subthemes, as presented in Figure 5 and in Appendix F, whereas Table 3 offers a detailed breakdown of the sources of data and the number of data units within each method.

Table 3

Sources of data integration

Methodology	Methods					
Quantitative	Questionnaire responses N=49					
Qualitative	Questionnaire short-answer questions N=49	Case studies N=5				
	Interviews n=24 Interviewees n=46	CS 1 5	CS 2 6	CS 3 5	CS 4 4	CS 5 4
		15	17	5	5	4
	Field analysis	1	1	1	1	1
Document reviews	2	1	1	2	1	

4.4 Theme 1: Understanding the Social Field

The field is a Bourdieusian concept that represents the social space in which actions and relationships take place. The field is a self-autonomous space that generates its governing principles, characteristics, and boundaries (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It refers to the local, regional, and global context in which agents interact, and the powers influencing this interaction. Bourdieu defines local contexts as social fields and wider contexts as larger fields of power (Bourdieu, 2021). In this study, the field refers to the school in which leadership takes place and the particular social and cultural context surrounding each school in England and Qatar. The larger field of power refers to the national, regional, or global contexts that influence the work of leaders and their interaction with their fields. The headings and subheadings in this section reflect the themes and subthemes identified by the literature review and those constructed during the data processing and data analysis phase.

4.4.1 Mobility

International schools are described as transient and mobile communities (Ota, 2014). Mobility, in international school research, is interlinked with a sense of internationalisation, which characterises communities as it shapes their livelihoods and leads to a normalisation of de-location and relocation (Kingston, 1993). The notion of mobility is inherent in the experience of internationalisation as described by case-study participants. Internationalisation in academic research is portrayed as a 'desirable capital' (Samier & and Elkaleh, 2023) connected with the transnational movements of specific socio-economic classes (Kunz, 2016), whereas the notions of 'disrupted' connection with 'space' and 'place' caused by mobility are usually ignored (Morley et al., 2018, p. 539). The experience of mobility was common among students, who shared their perceptions and personal journeys across schools and countries. Students were negatively affected by mobility due to the difficult emotions associated with losing friends or the inability to make friends. A student in Qatar explained how they were affected by mobility:

Due to the 2017 Blockade on Qatar, we had a very high turnover: people leaving, people coming. I lost six of my close friends within two years. That really affected me. (Student, CS-1)

Teachers also acknowledged that mobility affects students: 'international students tend to transfer schools or countries, which causes hesitancy in creating close social bonds' (Teacher, CS-3). Moreover, most teachers have had frequent mobility across schools in different countries in pursuit of career development, especially when a promotion or an additional experience in their countries seem difficult (ML, CS-1). A school leader in England shared their perspective on teacher and student mobility: 'because we had a transient community, the challenge was to communicate the values of the school to them efficiently when they first join us, and to bring them on board' (Principal, CS-4). Similarly, another leader in Qatar explained that staff mobility affects leadership development within their school:

Another challenge facing most schools, whether in Qatar or the Gulf area, is the turnover of teachers and staff, which makes it difficult to develop leaders within the school. The average is three years for a staff member to stay in school, and this is not enough. Only around 50% of staff stay in the school much longer, and we try to work with them on developing leadership expertise. (Principal, CS-2)

While most schools discussed frequent mobility of their staff, a principal in England had a different experience at his school. They related the stability of their staff to leadership stability, and in part, to the leadership development opportunities that the school creates for its teachers:

We have a good record of creating opportunities for colleagues to spread their wings, and that's important because the average length of service in the school is seven or eight years, which is largely down to the fact that I've been here for 26 years, but that average time in school is above the national average. We try to maintain that because it builds up a lot of cultural capital. (Principal, CS-5)

In addition to findings from interviews, the questionnaire confirmed that mobility among senior leaders was quite common. Table 4 summarises senior leaders' responses to a question on the time spent in their last school as senior leaders (N=42). On a scale of zero to 10, most responses were clustered on the lowest category confirming a relatively new experience in their current school. Table 4 reflects the time spent by (n=42) senior leaders in their last position with an average (X) =3.7 years.

Table 4
Years of service in current position (Senior leaders)

Years spent by senior leaders in current position	N of senior leaders in each category (n= 42)	Percentage of senior leaders in each category
0-1	12	28.5%
2-5	20	48%
6-10	10	24.5%

4.4.2 Community, culture, diversity, and internationalisation

The sense of community in case-study schools is developed based on a common understanding of the experience of internationalisation by students, teachers, and leaders. A student in Qatar explained that they enjoy ‘interacting with people who view the world based on a multitude of perspectives’ (CS-1). Teachers also recognise the unique experience of teaching internationally with children from different backgrounds and ethnicities. We learn about different cultures, and that makes international teaching special’ (Teacher, CS-1). Familiarity with internationalisation is also common among school leaders: ‘the majority of staff are international teachers, which means they are familiar with travelling or working in international schools’ (Principal, CS-2). Leaders viewed internationalisation as an advantage that allows them to ‘learn about people and cultures’ (Principal, CS-4). The school, to them, is a social space with intricate mechanisms, where people generally embody a shared perspective, despite different backgrounds. The sense of community in this space is drawn from the shared experience where being ‘international’ is not only normal but appreciated:

When I came to this school in year-10, it was the most welcoming experience for me. Everyone here has seen different cultures, so people weren’t judgmental. [...] In an international school, it is quite hard to be an outsider. I feel appreciated and my culture is appreciated too, even if it is not intentionally done by the school. (Student, CS-1)

Leaders are generally involved in managing relationships with international parents or recruiters from the initial stages of student enrolment. A principal in England described the student population and the school’s support for international families:

We have more than 45 nationalities of students, and more than 50% of our teachers are international. More than half of them [students] are paid for by their governments, diplomatic bodies or by employers.

Companies contact us, and I speak to them [families] to ensure they get sufficient guidance before and as they move to London. (CS-4)

Through encountering distinct cultures and cultural dynamics, school leaders perceived their work as a learning journey despite their distinct locations, school structures and demographics:

It's the first time I've dealt with Middle Eastern parents. A father came today and asked about where his son can pray during the day. I think I need to do a bit of learning on that front (SL, CS-4)

Our student diversity is one of the most important resources we have in terms of educating young people. They teach each other, and it's something we can learn from. (Principal, CS-5)

School leaders engage with the peculiarities and mechanisms governing the field and learn about the distinct positions and roles played by different agents. Understanding these positions and relations allow them to meet their school goals and interact better with parents and their surroundings. Students come from distinct backgrounds and have different ways of knowing and behaving (Bourdieu, 2021), which are rooted in their social and cultural backgrounds. According to a principal in CS-4, 'students have a mixed notion of what they can and can't do, and what is and isn't respectful', therefore, leaders and teachers work on reshaping student behaviour (Principal).

Building a community is a key area in the work of leaders, which is equally important for everyone else in the school. Leaders reflected on the sense of community in their schools during interviews: 'the strength of the sense of community has attracted me to this school'. However, they suggested further multicultural education for staff: 'we need to be more proactive about educating staff about the different cultures' (Principal, CS-4). Leaders generally acknowledge the role of relationships between the different agents in the field; mainly, relationships with students, teachers, and parents: 'our core value is our

fine relationships, and relationships are not only amongst the students, wherever they're from, but also amongst staff, students, and parents' (Principal, CS-1). Conversations with parents and staff are essential to building a community based on trust: 'relationships in the school are professional yet informal. We have conversations around the children and what is happening in the community, and this helps build trust and connection' (Principal, CS-4). Another leader agreed that 'the success of [their] community was based on quality relationships between parents and teachers, teachers and teachers, students and students, students, and teachers' (Principal, CS-5).

Building a sense of community is about involving every community within the school, however, this could be challenging due to inherent biases in the school systems. Schools deliberately work towards understanding the cultural elements in their community and encourage their staff to join equity and diversity training (ISC Research, 2021): 'We do training in the school about our unconscious bias. We all have our biases that influence our decision making' (Principal, CS-3). Another challenge in building an inclusive community is attributed to financial barriers. Nevertheless, acknowledging barriers to inclusion does not abolish them.

How inclusive can you be when you're one of the most expensive schools in the country? In the UK, our schools offer bursaries to families in the community. We've been talking about it in Qatar but could not implement it. (Principal, CS-3)

Understanding the field involves examining the positioning of the school within the larger field of power, which includes other international schools and the societies in which they exist. While international schools describe themselves as multicultural, interviews showed that they embody a sense of cultural positioning (R'boul, 2020), where multiple cultures are viewed hierarchically rather than internationally. The sense of cultural positioning is stronger in Qatar where some schools saw themselves as inherently teaching the community: 'many of them [parents] have learnt from our way of doing things as a British international school'

(Principal, CS-1). Students at this school, for instance, had a different perspective: '[...] because we are in a British international school, most of the cultural appreciation is directed towards it [Britishness] ... Being a British school means celebrating British things...' (Student, CS-1)

Competitiveness is another feature that characterises international schools' culture: 'with fee-paying schools where there's a level of competition, they [schools] do not necessarily want to share good practice. It's been a battle to find good quality professional development' (Teacher, CS-1). However, there is a growing sense of collaboration in the field where schools became more open to exchanging knowledge with each other: 'a few years ago, they [other schools] wouldn't share anything with anyone, but now we're finding that more international schools are open to sharing best practice' (SL, CS-1). Schools also foster a competitive culture in academic attainment: 'studying in international schools is quite competitive', thus, 'it is important to have a support system at school because we are subjected to many stressful situations' (Student, CS-5).

4.4.3 Organisational identity

Schools' organisational identities were highlighted in leaders' interviews and document analysis. While some schools were identified as British international, Arab international, or European international, others were described as purely international: 'we're not the American or the British school, we're a truly international school' (Principal, CS-3). School identity was associated with positioning the school within a specific field, for example, the principal of CS-1 described their school as 'the largest British International school in the Middle East [...] that is accredited by the world's top leading accrediting organisations'. Schools' identities are generally based on the curriculum they offer, the official registration with the Department of Education, affiliation or international accreditation and the main exams their students take.

Case-study schools have different management models. Two schools are owned and managed by international educational service companies. The third is owned by a Qatari organisation and governed by a board of directors, the fourth is owned by the school itself, sponsored by an embassy and governed by a board of elected and appointed governors. The fifth is a comprehensive state-funded school in England. Ownership and management models affect the school budget, which in turn affect its operations, resources, and the way the school coped with the pandemic. None of the methods of data collection fully disclosed these areas of influence, but combining data from different tools clarified the power dynamics and the influence of organisational management on schools. Relationships with the management were hardly mentioned during interviews. A few leaders briefly mentioned financial limitations by the corporate bodies and the expectation to manage their schools within restricted budgets. Questionnaire responses (N=46) reflected a wider range of ownership and governance. The below table **Table 5** represents the typology of schools. One school is state funded, while the rest are private, corporate, a part of a global chain and family owned.

Table 5
Typology of schools

Type of ownership	Private	Corporate	Family business	Member of a global chain	State-funded
N = 46	22	16	1	6	1

4.4.4 Organisational policies

While policies were not explicitly mentioned in interviews, they were implicitly referred to when leaders described the regulations and expectations of organisations or educational authorities. When discussing the social and cultural characteristics of the field, most leaders acknowledged that further attention was needed to improve their policies, mainly employment and curriculum policies.

Recruitment and hiring policy

The discussion of the social and cultural capital of teachers and students with leaders included a reflection on the diversity of the school community. Most leaders explained that many of their teachers and staff were British, or mostly White. A principal in Qatar said: 'our staff are predominantly British, that is teaching staff and teaching support staff' (CS-1). Although the student body in most schools is highly diverse, teaching staff are mostly homogenous. This feature was widely common across all case studies, which was attributed to recruitment and hiring policies. However, this attribution was followed by an acknowledgement that their employment practices need to be more inclusive.

We are not as culturally diverse as we should be. Our staff are either White male or White female teachers that are from either England or the UK. (ML, CS-1)

We may need to look at who we are interviewing and who is going to be involved in the interviewing process. (Principal, CS-3)

The teaching cohort is not as diverse as we would like. That is due to the way in which recruitment into teaching takes place. We have people from different ethnic groups, but not at the same scale as the diversity in the student body. (Principal, CS-5)

Table 7.6 summarises questionnaire responses from principals in both countries with regards to the population of their staff and students. The figures presented in the table largely support the findings from interviews, where principals explained that they largely recruit British or Western staff, while their student populations are highly diverse.

Table 6

Staff and student populations

England	Predominantly international	Predominantly local	A combination of both
Staff	21%	14%	65%
Students	55.56%	11.11%	33.33%
Qatar			
Staff	78%	0%	22%
Students	33%	17%	52%

Curriculum policy

The discussion of leading teaching and learning during the interviews included examples of management processes, goals and expectations, professional development, and more importantly, the curriculum. These discussions focused on linking what schools teach to who they teach (Sleeter, 2012), which encouraged leaders and teachers to reflect on their curriculum and the extent to which it relates to their students' backgrounds and cultural identities. Leaders and teachers were generally aware that adapting their curriculum to match their students' cultural capital is important.

We are an English international school, and we teach from our own perspective rather than a culturally diverse curriculum. It would be interesting to find out how that impacts our students and their attainment. Our work is based on texts that are written by famous English or UK authors. When children describe characters, whether they are from India or Pakistan or Qatar, their characters' names are predominantly UK names. They don't think about characters from their own cultural background. (ML and teacher, CS-1)

They [students] have been immersed in the culture that we've created. Perhaps we've had an unconscious bias and we may need to reconsider this as a school. We need to gradually immerse students

in a wider variety of cultures and racial backgrounds through the curriculum. (Principal, CS-4)

Students have predominantly White male or female teachers at the school. The texts are predominantly written with English, UK or European names. That's what students read, and they see this as the norm. (ML, CS-1)

Students are influenced by the visible curriculum represented by texts and resources besides the hidden one induced by the dominant values and the general discourse reproduced by the school (Bartlett and Burton, 2016). Curriculum is seen by the school as a part of a package that is determined by the organisation, while leaders and teachers are seen as responsible for delivery and implementation (Thomson, 2017). Responses to the questionnaire highlighted the type of the curriculum offered by participant schools (N=49). N=21 schools offer an IB curriculum, n=12 schools offer the National English curriculum, n=12 schools offer Cambridge curriculum, n=8 schools offer a mixed curriculum (English and IB curriculum), while seven schools offer the Qatari curriculum besides another curriculum. The curriculum offered at the school generally signifies the school's identity and affiliation, although there might be some exceptions.

4.4.5 Relationships with other agents in the field

The field is 'a space of relationships [...] and positions' (Bourdieu, 2021) where individuals and groups influence each other, and the field based on their positions and the capital they possess. The social interactions taking place within a specific field influence the experience of leading, teaching and learning and allow schools and their leaders to occupy special positions that are generally trusted by the authorities and the community. Relations with educational authorities were seen by school leaders as learning opportunities that helped them to understand the community in which they work:

I didn't know much about the community in Qatar, the problems facing schools or the relationship with the Ministry. This was a learning experience for me. (Principal, CS-2)

The work of leaders is affected by internal and external factors. Internal school factors include budget, salaries, staff and parents' backgrounds, organisational policies, and board decisions. Contrastingly, external factors include the social and economic structure of the country, history, culture and traditions, policies, and educational authorities. The questionnaire asked principals and senior leaders about the factors that affected their work the most. The responses (n=40) showed that internal factors generally had greater influence on the practice of leaders than external ones. These outcomes reflect less interaction with the school surroundings including community organisations, which is consistent with the findings of Kim (2019). Schools have legal relationships with local authorities, whereas the political, social, and economic phenomena within the country are not considered to have direct influence. External factors are mainly seen as having partial influence on leaders' work or overlapping with internal ones.

Table 7
Contextual influence on leaders' work in England and Qatar

Contextual factors	Number of responses	Percentage
Internal factors	20	50 %
External factors	3	7.5 %
Both have the same influence	17	42.5 %

4.4.6 Challenges

Unlike questionnaire responses, interviews outcomes showed that leadership is influenced by political, economic, and health issues arising in the field, particularly major events. In addition, leadership is influenced by internal organisational and

school issues, such as staff engagement, budgeting or restrictions by school governors or educational authorities:

The biggest problems are budget and making sure everybody is involved. There are also political issues that influence the school and relationships within its community, such as the blockade on Qatar in 2017, Iran and the United States having a political disagreement, and now COVID-19. (Principal, CS-3)

Schools were strongly influenced by the shortage of economic capital in 2020 due to the health pandemic: 'in England, more people are coming into teaching. This often happens with an economic downturn; it certainly happened in recent months' (Principal, CS-5). One of the principals explained the difficulties resulting from economic shortages during the pandemic: 'student enrolment dropped, so the budget was restricted, and staffing cuts were being implemented. Maintaining the quality of education in difficult circumstances has become the priority' (Principal, Questionnaire). The shortage of financial resources can be significantly restrictive in proprietary schools:

We work under a tight budget. I explained to staff that there is only so much we can do in a proprietary school, and that is to be flexible and do what is best for the children. (Principal, Questionnaire)

Restrictions could also result from governments and other educational authorities: 'current governments [England], and arguably previous governments, see education almost as a commodity and not a process. They see it as a place where we generate data, instead of a place which aims to develop young people holistically, (Principal, CS-5). Restrictions in Qatar were also mentioned by principals: 'at certain points, there were some challenges where the Ministry of Education steps in and asks for certain tasks to be conducted in a certain way' (Principal, CS-2). Besides externally imposed challenges, leaders dealt with internal issues, mainly those related to teachers and students: 'hiring good teachers is always a challenge everywhere in the world. Good teachers are key for a good school' (Principal, CS 3). However, sometimes good teachers are

resistant to change, which could be challenging to school leaders: 'our biggest challenge comes from teachers that have been here for a long time, who do not see the need to change how they do things' (SL, CS-1). In addition to the above challenges, supporting students who don't speak English proficiently was one of the key challenges mentioned by leaders as most of their students have multiple or dual linguistic backgrounds (Principal, CS-4). Providing an inclusive environment that caters to the needs of all students, especially bilingual or multilingual students, was addressed in deficit terms (Mehmedbegović, 2017) and described as a challenge to inclusivity rather than an opportunity.

Inclusivity is always a challenge. We have students who are not English, whereas we are an English teaching school. So, if they [students] do not have a good foundation of English, it is a challenge. We have programs that help those kids to grasp the English language. (Principal, CS-3)

4.4.7 The Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic caused unforeseen burdens to the existing challenges experienced by school leaders. The pandemic started in England and Qatar more than six months before the start of the data collection process. Leaders were dealing with a chaotic situation, worried about students, staff, and themselves, while responding to changing government guidance. Schools shifted their teaching to online or hybrid modes where different groups of students attended school on alternative days. Staff and teachers were asked to continue working in schools to prepare resources and lessons and run lessons remotely to students studying at home. This situation positioned staff and teachers at risk, and many of them felt betrayed by leaders for asking them to be in schools (Principal, CS-5). Leaders had to intensify their efforts to meet urgent and emerging challenges in many areas, mainly, technology, reorganising timetables and work allocation, illness and suspected illness, mandatory isolation, and additional cleaning and resources required to secure precautionary measures (SL, CS-1). Furthermore, individual and group

interactions went fully into remote or socially distant situations. A few months later, many families were affected, and some lost their sources of income, thus, withdrew their children from private international schools (ML, CS-3).

Most participant schools were affected by the financial uncertainty, and the additional cost of maintaining technological and health support systems. What started as a health emergency turned into a crisis; soon after, it started to look like a 'new normal', where changes affecting every aspect of schooling became normalised. Some schools coped better than others but none of them was completely safe or immune to challenges. Accordingly, the findings chapter discusses the pandemic influence on different areas related to schools and their leadership. Challenges and changes were too intense to ignore, and this intensity has shaped some of the key priorities, goals and conclusions of this research.

4.5 Theme 2: Leadership praxis

The findings under leadership themes and subthemes were determined based on multiple theoretical frameworks. The first theory is Robinson's student-centred leadership (2011), which informs the outcomes related to leadership dimensions, including what leaders do and how they lead. The second theory is Southworth's learning-centred leadership (2002), which includes modelling, monitoring and dialogue as key areas of practice. The third is Bourdieu's theory (1977; 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), which informs the relational approach within the practice of leadership and its interaction with the field. As an analytical framework, Bourdieu's theory enables a thoughtful investigation of leadership knowledge and practice and its relevance to schools as social fields, in addition to the learning and development of leadership as habitus and embodied capital. Through this framework, the relationship of leadership with the social and cultural capital of teachers and high school students is thoroughly investigated. The rest of the themes were informed by the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and influenced by critical studies in educational leadership, mainly those calling for social and

cultural justice (Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Smyth, 2006; Khalifa et. al, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). After processing interview transcriptions, the data reflected additional themes and sub-themes that were not included in the main theoretical frameworks, such as modern leadership approaches and leading in a pandemic.

4.5.1 Theorising leadership

This theme refers to leaders' understanding and knowledge of leadership theory and the way they apply their knowledge within their schools. Leadership knowledge is foundational for the role of school leaders; however, the focus of this thesis is leadership praxis, that is leadership as informed action (Freire, 1970), or practice that is guided by knowledge and reflection (hooks, 1996; Burney, 2016). Therefore, the thesis focuses on leaders' understanding of their role and their areas of practice. The findings showed different perspectives of leadership across schools, but in some cases, a sense of agreement was noticed when interviewing leaders from the same school. For example, a middle leader in CS-2 understood 'leadership is a function and [...] it is all about change', while another leader in the same team explained that their 'leadership style is relational and focuses on building a strong team' (ML, CS-2). The common understanding is that leadership is not static, but dynamic and exists in relation to others (Thomson, 2017). Leadership, in most interviews, was associated with multiple approaches and inherently embedded in the leader's educational philosophy:

We believe that all children can and will do well. That is not only an idea but also what we want and how we teach, and it comes with a very intricate feature of teaching and learning. My leadership philosophy drives my leadership approach; I'm a collaborative leader, but I use all leadership styles depending on the situation. (Principal, CS-1)

The leadership of teaching and learning is a key focus for most leaders, despite different school structures. Leaders interacted with teaching and learning closely

or indirectly, depending on their position in the school hierarchy: most middle and senior leaders had a teaching role and were closely connected to teaching and learning. The heads of schools were less involved in details and processes, but were involved in leading the direction of teaching and learning despite different levels of engagement:

Our focus is fundamentally on teaching and learning. (Principal, CS-5)

When we're making decisions, we're trying to maintain the best interest of the student. The key point is keeping students at the forefront of what we're doing as leaders, because we can get caught up in other things and forget about students. (Principal, CS-4)

Shared, collaborative and relational leadership

Shared leadership was noticed across most schools where leading was common across teams, departments, and year-levels. Principals explained that they do not lead alone anymore but engage others in different decisions (Lambert, 2002). The complexities of the job required that leaders rely on and prepare other members of staff to lead specific areas (MacBeath and Townsend, 2011). Gronn (2003) explained that 'the task of leading a school in the twenty-first century can no longer be carried out by the heroic individual leader single handedly turning schools around' (p. 197). This change required moving away from previous patterns of leading individually into more shared and team leadership approaches:

The way in which we lead our teaching and learning has significantly shifted in the last few years. It used to be top-down, and we used to take the overarching aims of the school and filter them down. For the last few years, we developed a top-down-bottom-up approach. (Principal, CS-1)

We want to allow everyone to have the opportunity. We learn from them as much as they're learning from us. We are now learning from good practice. (SL, CS-4)

The collaborative and relational nature of leadership was common across all case studies in both countries and was seen as fundamental to the work of leaders (Eacott, 2019). Most leaders explained that their leadership was predominantly based on trust, collaboration, and relationships. Furthermore, leadership is viewed as a collective process rather than the role of different individuals (Southworth, 2009).

We work as a team, where nothing can work without trust relationships. (ML, CS-2)

Our collaborative leadership approach has ensured that we have met many challenges well. Everyone's voice must be heard. (Principal, CS-4)

Collaboration was seen as essential for IB schools: 'as an IB school, our work is based on collaboration, not just in the classroom, but also for the staff' (SL, CS-4). Although many principals worked individually, they viewed leadership as inherently collaborative and were inclined to collaborate with other members of the leadership team and service professionals as needed. The collaborative and relational nature of leadership was confirmed by interviews and questionnaires, where senior leaders (N=43) described *collaborative relationships* inside the school as one of the most influential factors influencing teachers' work (teacher-teacher, teacher-mentor, or teacher-leader relationship). In response to another question in the questionnaire, senior leaders (N=40) described the role of relationships in the professional learning of teachers and leaders as essential (see Appendix I, Figure 18)

4.5.2 Leadership dimensions

The following section presents data findings in areas related to leadership dimensions (areas of practice), which are derived from Robinson's framework (2011). The framework includes five dimensions and three capabilities, which were consistently evidenced across all participant schools, despite being

perceived and enacted differently in some cases. Different groups of participants (leaders, teachers, and students) perceived the dimensions differently. In addition, the experience of participants in perceiving and practising these dimensions varied based on the nature and characteristics of their school communities, such as transience, cultural backgrounds, and expectations. Furthermore, the pandemic added an additional challenge that is clearly reflected in these findings.

Setting goals, expectations, and a shared sense of identity

Establishing shared goals and expectations across the school was seen as an important area in leaders' work. Leaders worked deliberately on spreading these goals and ensuring that staff and students engage with them: 'there is an acknowledgement that we all share the same values in this community.' (Principal, CS-4). For some schools, the shared goals, and expectations stem from the IB organisational goals or are linked to them: 'we have shared goals, and we make sure they are inherent in our practice. As an IB school, we have a fundamental educational philosophy that everybody believes in' (Principal, CS-4).

School vision is important, and we dedicate time every year to discussing our vision and reviewing the strategic plan. Most of our staff believe in our vision, mission and goals, and work accordingly. (Principal, CS-2)

The school's values and mission statement are inseparable from what we do in the classroom and the corridors. We've had nearly 50 years to embed this, very little of it has changed. It either comes from the IB, or these are the aims that we devised 30 years ago. I can say with some confidence that the values run deep. (Principal, CS-5)

Leaders generally work towards creating clear expectations that the whole community should be aware of: 'there is an expectation that all the students we teach will reach a certain standard' (Principal, CS-4). Leaders work toward engaging the whole school in planning and setting expectations, mainly other

leaders, and teachers, and sometimes students and parents. However, this process does not entirely take place by leaders, bottom-up dynamics also contribute to planning and setting goals and expectations. According to Robinson (2011), setting goals and expectations is not sufficient unless leaders can ensure that staff and teachers are convinced, and they incorporate these expectations into their daily practice.

As a leadership group, we decide together our priorities for the next three years. Then it goes back to the teaching staff who might come up with priorities that the leadership hadn't thought of. Then, we combine these ideas and transfer them into a development plan format, and it goes back to the teaching staff. (Principal, CS-1)

It is important that they understand what we stand for as a school, and what our core values are. One of the challenges is making sure that we allow time to revisit our core values to ensure that everyone is still on the same page and not going in diverging directions. (Principal, CS-2)

Creating shared goals and expectations in schools include creating a shared identity, which was particularly important in international schools' communities due to the diversity of backgrounds and frequent mobility: 'we have a transient community, and the challenge is to communicate the values of the school to them efficiently when they first join us and to bring them on board' (Principal, CS-4). Creating shared values and a common identity that incorporates everyone in the school community was common across leaders' interviews, however, responses were generally generic rather than detailed. One leader, exceptionally, explained that they build expectations for an inclusive environment, which respects the cultural identity brought to the school by staff and students, not only the identity created by the school: 'we focus on the cultural identity of students, the mother language and relevant cultural elements' (Principal, CS-2). Establishing goals and expectations and creating a shared identity are key areas in the work of leaders across the five case studies. Nevertheless, with the unexpected disruption of the

Covid-19 pandemic, sharing goals and expectations was challenged especially with new teachers:

We hired new teachers last semester [summer 2020] and we found it difficult to introduce them to everybody. We had different meetings on Zoom and made sure they knew our priorities, values, and strategies, and listened to them tell us about themselves; but it wasn't as effective as it would usually be. (Principal, CS-4)

Ensuring an orderly and safe environment

Leaders generally prioritised safety and order in schools, including emotional, social, and physical safety. They perceived the school as a space 'where teachers are encouraged to take risks, try new practices and reflect on them' (SL, CS-1). Leaders ensure the order and stability of school processes through inclusive relationships, planning and administrative procedures: 'a development plan where everybody is involved keeps the school in order and allows staff to feel a sense of ownership and appreciation' (SL, CS-1). A group of leaders in CS-2 explained how they ensure an orderly and safe environment in their school: 'I [the head] review policies, meet with principals to discuss issues of concern, review feedback from teachers and parents, and review policy implementations (Principal, CS-2). A middle leader in the same school clarified: 'we have daily meetings with groups of year-leaders, and they pass instructions and expectations to teachers' (ML, CS-2). However, the principal in this school discussed some challenges in managing order and safety within and beyond the school, including the risks embedded in leading relationships with 'people from different backgrounds, expectations, and approaches' (Principal, CS-2). In general, challenges to the established order were common across schools, particularly during the pandemic due to the difficulty of fully controlling online platforms and the disruption of major school operations: administrative and academic.

Teacher safety

Providing a safe environment for teachers to work, collaborate and learn was one of the key areas discussed by leaders and teachers in most interviews: 'we have an open-door policy where teachers can share concerns without fear, and this is based on trust' (ML, CS-2). Leaders explained different elements of teachers' safety such as engaging in open conversations and trust relationships, and the freedom to express one's cultural identity and values:

My relationships with teachers and students are indirect. I have an informal relationship with teachers and an open-door policy with staff and parents. (Principal, CS-4)

If teachers are feeling comfortable, not necessarily happy, but cared for and valued, they're going to do a much better job for the students. (SL, CS-2)

However, despite leaders' efforts to maintain order and harmonious relationships in schools, conflicts happen due to the different cultural values and behavioural norms:

We have incidents of cultural clashes. I wouldn't say often, but they exist within the staff community. Thus, one of our goals is to bring everybody in with their different perspectives and have discussions around relevant topics. (Principal, CS-4)

In some cases, teachers were encouraged to share feedback on the work of leaders, and this has been particularly important to them: 'our senior leaders are quite open to change and feedback' (Teacher and ML, CS-1). Teachers' interviews revealed that they generally linked their sense of safety to their social capital and collaborative team relationships, which made them feel supported within their teams. This feeling was particularly important during the pandemic where people were overwhelmed with uncertainty.

The social capital in our school is powerful. People around the world are struggling socially, financially, and emotionally, but we felt supported by our school leadership. (Teacher, CS-2)

Notwithstanding, relationships and collaboration were not sufficient when job security is threatened, and this has been an issue for a few schools during the pandemic. A leader in CS-2 explained that ‘acknowledging contributions and offering job security’ allow people to feel safe and settled (ML, CS-2). It wasn’t clear though how fixed contracts in international schools would offer teachers a sense of job security (Bunnell, 2016). This could be attributed to a normalisation of short-term contracts in times and contexts, where obtaining or maintaining an employment contract was seen as an accomplishment amidst a global pandemic, and where the threat of unemployment has been increasingly present. The sense of insecurity was reflected in some interviews.

Currently, because of the financial constraints, [...] we could lose a portion of our salaries and we can do nothing to stop it. Due to Covid-19, many schools reduced their staff salaries, and many staff lost their jobs even in well-established schools. (ML, CS-3)

Student safety

Leaders viewed themselves as responsible for the emotional, social, and physical safety of students and were aware of the importance and influence of safety and order on student learning. In addition, leaders prioritised students’ order and structure to maintain a positive learning environment. Different schools had different systems and ways to ensure safety and order; some schools had a leadership structure that administered order and safety, while others had an integral approach that was embedded in teaching and learning. In general, interviews confirmed that student safety is prioritised in schools, but some interviewees described it as an administrative and structural priority, while other leaders referred to students’ wellbeing and its influence on their learning. In

contrast, only a few others acknowledged that safety means creating an inclusive space for the multiple identities.

If they [students] feel secure in their social world, they are more emotionally available and relaxed for learning. Safety makes collaborative work more accessible, and they are less likely to feel insecure about their 'place' in the classroom. (Teacher, CS-4)

Children feel safe when they feel included and are appreciated for who they are. (ML and teacher, CS-1)

The pandemic rendered safety and order more difficult and burdensome for school leaders: 'safety meant ensuring cleanliness and sanitation of all resources, furniture and working spaces, and not travelling home' (Teacher and ML, CS-1).

We became more proactive as we returned to school, because many children have been suffering from mental health issues. This meant that children would stay in the classroom and teachers would move to them, which places a greater responsibility in terms of staff well-being. Because schools have gone back to work, we are seeing a spike in infections. However, the basis upon which the government decided that school should come back, is partly due to students' mental health, and schools are good places to be. (Principal, CS-5)

Students in international schools potentially require additional attention to the emotional and social aspects as they come from different backgrounds and places. Thus, feeling connected and engaged in relationships with others, and developing a sense of belonging to the place were important areas that do not come naturally to international students.

The student perspective

Student interviews focused on learning, social and cultural capital, relationships with others and their schooling experience. Most students connected social relationships with their wellbeing, emotional safety and learning and reflected on their experience including the latest lockdown. Due to the nature of group

interviews, students had the opportunity to reflect and build on each other's ideas. Responses related to safety were common and prompted meaningful input on social and emotional elements, particularly, relating safety to connections, relationships, and support:

Social connections influence my learning because they make me more comfortable in the classroom. Having a deeper relationship with people in my group makes me more willing to answer questions in class. (Student, CS-5)

It is important to have a strong support system at school because we are subjected to stressful situations, especially that studying in international schools is quite competitive. (Student, CS-4)

According to students, leaders could encourage relationship building and help students develop their connections through 'allowing social times in timetables and creating common spaces. (Student, CS-1). Some students explained that leaders should have the authority to influence 'policies that protect people and keep them safe against any sort of discrimination or racialisation' (Student, CS-1), which is sufficient to make them feel safe in their schools. While 'students do not know much about the work of leaders' (Student, CS-5), their interviews showed that they genuinely linked their sense of safety to school leadership dimensions.

Safety and order during the pandemic

The pandemic started in February 2020 and brought forward difficult and unprecedented experiences to schools. The previously well-established structures and orders of the schooling system were disrupted, while schools and governments had to find ways to respond to the emerging situation. The pandemic, thus, placed a significant amount of pressure on the whole schooling system, including students, teachers, and leaders.

We are worried about whether we will have exams or not, and how. There is so much stress that no one has experienced before. [...] Last

year, we couldn't do our GCSEs. So, we have not had a good feel for exams. We are unfortunate to get that jump between GCSE and A levels. (Student, CS-1)

We started school during the pandemic and it's not natural for us to be teaching amidst strict regulations. Everything had to be more structured because of having cleaner sources. Teachers were trying to protect the children while dealing with their own personal anxieties. (ML, CS-1)

Building a community that embraces different cultures

Creating and maintaining communities by establishing common values and a uniting school identity was a common priority for all leaders, which confirms the evidence established by previous studies (Robinson, 2011; Leithwood et. al, 2020a). Nonetheless, building a community in international schools requires additional attention and effort due to frequent mobility and the multicultural population (Langford, 1998). To establish order and safety, and avoid cultural conflicts, schools need to nurture an inclusive environment that celebrates internationalisation.

We tell students that we want to embrace their culture, and we used to have events that promote that, pre-pandemic. We have international food fairs, learning celebrations through the lens of different cultures, countries, and languages, with which the parent community gets involved. [...] These events gave us a platform to be pre-emptive when there is a clash, as we have built a narrative to rely on. (Principal, CS-4)

Working with people from diverse cultures could be challenging. One of the principals acknowledged that she struggles with managing her work with staff from different backgrounds and aims to develop her 'understanding of the ways through which people think and behave in different cultures' (Principal, CS-2). Behavioural differences were rooted in cultural capital where people acquired ways of doing and thinking that accumulated over time, which becomes embedded in their habitus and guides people's dispositions and behaviour

(Bourdieu, 1977). Understanding cultural differences could be key to establishing productive relationships in schools. In fact, cultural capital does not only affect staff behaviour and interactions, but also student motivation and learning habits. In addition to the influence of cultural capital, the family's social and economic capital was seen to have a significant influence on student learning, which could affect the dynamics of the school-family relationship and students' self-perception. A principal in England explained that the family's financial position could affect students' attitudes and motivation to study, especially children of diplomats, politicians, or business executives (CS-4). The head implied that the effect of the family's capital in this case is negative. In addition, a Qatari student shares her perspective, which shows how culture and accumulated capital can shape the student habitus:

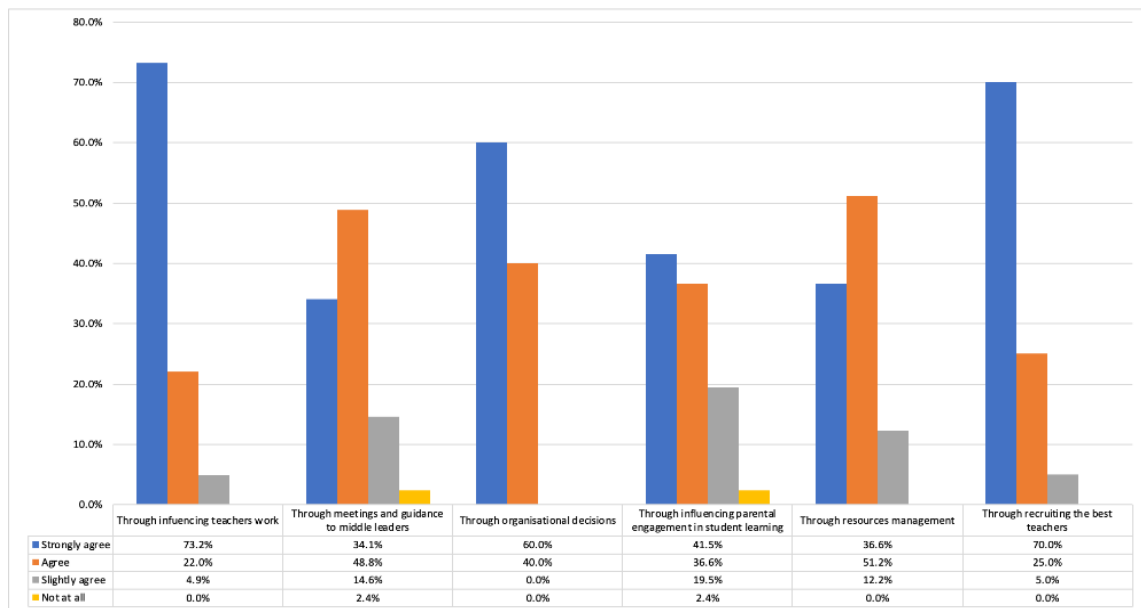
The Qatari population is affluent, and we don't have to pay taxes. It's a relief when it comes to finances, and we do not need to work hard, but people who come from other places work hard and aim to get high grades. Therefore, being friends with international colleagues who have a motivation to work hard has changed my perspective and helped me gain motivation and strengthen my study habits. (Student, CS-3)

Leading student learning

One of the main research questions investigates how leaders lead teaching and learning in international schools, therefore, this theme was a key area in leaders' interviews. Whether directly or indirectly, interviews showed that leadership is largely focused on student learning (Grissom et al, 2020). Interview findings related to student learning were supported by quantitative data, which confirmed the centrality of student learning in leaders' practice, and offered specific insights on how leaders perceived their influence on this process. The below graph summarises leaders' perceptions of how they influence student learning. Senior leaders believed that they influenced student learning in different ways. These areas are listed in the order of significance according to leaders: through

influencing teachers' work, recruiting the best teachers, making the right organisational change, resources management, influencing parental engagement, and administrative decisions and meetings. The below graph summarised the responses of (N=42) senior leaders to questions on their perception of how their work influences student learning, where they responded to each sub-question by strongly-agree, agree, slightly-agree, or not at all.

Figure 6
Senior leaders' perception of their influence on student learning



While quantitative data showed a wide agreement among leaders that their work influences student learning, leaders' interviews reflected multiple theoretical and atheoretical positions related to how learning happens and what matters most for student learning. For instance, while one principal believed that knowledge is constantly changing and 'skills are more important than knowledge' (Principal, CS-1), another believed in 'inquiry-based teaching and student engagement' (Principal, CS-2), while a third principal believed that learning takes place through conceptual understanding and the application of knowledge' (Principal 1, CS-4). In their interviews, leaders explained how goals and expectations for student

learning are disseminated and practised across the school. Principals generally adopted a managerial approach that included policy development and enactment and created mechanisms to support teaching and learning. On another level, middle leaders had robust pedagogical approaches that incorporated elements of andragogy (Knowles, 1975, 2010) as they explained how teachers work and learn best together. Most leaders believed that leading learning takes place through 'building teachers' confidence and establishing collaborative relations and social skills in the classroom' (ML, CS-3). They also believed that motivation and social skills enable students to improve their learning and 'feel less insecure about their place in the classroom' (Principal, CS-4). Leaders also agreed that assessment is central to leading and improving student learning. The focus was generally related to monitoring student learning and ensuring readiness for high-stakes assessment, which is consistent with previous studies examining the instructional areas of senior leaders' work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Leithwood et al., 2010).

I review the results of students periodically, both internal assessment and assessments conducted through external bodies. I review the analyses of results and discuss them with heads and principals. (Principal, CS2)

The questionnaire showed that most leaders monitor student learning in their schools through reviewing assessment results, such as samples of student work, formative, summative or international exam outcomes. The frequency of reviewing learning outcomes is an indicator of the extent to which senior leaders focus on student learning (Wahlstrom, 2012), which confirms qualitative outcomes showing that leaders are generally involved in guiding the teaching and learning process, despite engagement with a wide range of leadership dimensions (Robinson, 2011).

Table 8

Monitoring student learning

Activity	No of responses	All the time	Frequently	Sometimes	In some cases	Not at all
Analysing students work	42	13	21	6	2	0
Formative assessment	42	27	13	2	0	0
International examinations	42	7	12	13	6	4
Summative assessment	41	10	17	9	1	4

Leaders generally discussed high-stakes assessment as an inherent part of their work; leaders in Qatar generally explained their practices in leading and monitoring student learning without pointing out any flaws in policy and practice, nor did they recommend areas for further consideration. Nonetheless, leaders in England were more critical, where one of them criticised government policies for heavily focusing on exams and using schools as hubs for ‘data collection and recording’ (Principal, CS-5), while another was sceptical about IB exams and A levels:

Our assessment builds on the philosophy of holistic student education, but practically, there is a wide range of prescription and restriction. The transition into the IB diploma is similar to British A levels, which is a prescribed curriculum that is tested through tests, and nothing else. (Principal, CS-4)

Ensuring quality teaching

Ensuring quality teaching requires knowledge of effective teaching approaches and the ability to manage and lead a ‘coherent instructional program’ (Robinson, 2011). While different approaches to teaching were seen as effective in schools,

it was up to the leaders to determine what was considered effective in their context and what helped their teachers meet curriculum goals and improve student learning. In their interviews, leaders discussed their approaches to leading teaching both directly and indirectly. Middle leaders were naturally in direct relationship with teachers, senior leaders were at different levels of interaction with teachers, whereas heads of schools were mainly guiding the leadership team who guided teaching and the curriculum.

During interviews, leaders clarified that leading teaching, and the curriculum were amongst core priorities, and that they offer guidance to the teaching staff directly, through meetings with leaders or teachers or during post-observation feedback. Middle leaders were generally concerned with reviewing the outcomes of academic plans and visiting classrooms. Both senior and middle leaders examined student assessments to determine whether teaching was making a difference, and whether it was aligned with the curriculum, then used the outcomes of their review as guidance to support teacher learning. The most common area across all interviews was the centrality of student learning:

My key responsibility is to ensure that teachers implement the teaching and learning strategies that we adopt as a school. I look closely at feedback from parents, students, and staff, then discuss these in detail with principals. A key part of my role is knowing how the teaching and learning is going (Principal, CS-2).

Aligning qualitative and quantitative data offered consistent findings and helped to construct an idea of how leaders lead teaching. The questionnaire included a few questions that aimed to examine leadership of teaching and the curriculum, which was aligned with quantitative data. In response to a question about the most common activities performed by senior leaders daily and/or weekly, answers showed several activities that are strongly related to leading quality teaching. These activities reflect significant engagement with teachers' work, through different modes of interaction: pedagogical, instructional, and administrative.

Table 9 The most frequent instructional activities of senior leaders

Daily and weekly activities	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (N=44)
Lesson observation & feedback	n=24	54.5%
Managing resources	n=26	59.1%
Teaching/mentoring	n=15	34.1%
Planning	n=31	70.5%
Teacher & staff meetings	n=36	81.8%

Table 9 showed that senior leaders influenced teaching through mixed approaches: direct and indirect. Some activities imply direct influence on teachers' work such as 'lesson observation and feedback to teachers', while others imply indirect interaction and influence on teaching such as planning'. Teachers' meetings, however, involve different levels of direct engagement with teachers and teaching. Meetings represent indirect and general interaction when conducted with large groups, and direct interaction when conducted with small groups or individuals. Furthermore, senior leaders (N= 45) were asked in the questionnaire whether they influence teachers' work directly or indirectly. The results summarised in Table 10 are consistent with Table 9.

Table 10 Senior leaders' direct and indirect influence on teacher's work

Senior leaders influence on teacher's work	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (N=45)
Direct influence	6	7%
Indirect influence	3	14%
Both direct and indirect influence	36	79%

In addition to the above results, quantitative data showed what factors influence teachers most based on the views of leaders who participated in the questionnaire. The below table summarises the responses of (N=44) senior leaders to the statement: ‘please choose only five factors influencing teachers’ performance at your school’.

Table 11

Senior leaders’ perceptions of the most important factors influencing teacher performance

Factors influencing teacher performance at school	Number of responses (N=44)	Percentage of responses
Collaborative relationships	43	98%
Organisational culture	34	77%
In-service training	34	77%
Norms and expectations	33	75%
Availability of resources	25	57%
External training	15	34%
Student behaviour	12	27%
Salary	10	23%
Extrinsic motivation	5	11%
Flexible timetable	4	9%

The findings presented in Table 11 are consistent with the findings of the case-study investigation. Principals and senior leaders in the questionnaire widely acknowledged the influence of collaborative relationships, organisational culture and having clear norms and expectations on teachers’ performance. Interviews with leaders and teachers showed that collaborative relationships are highly important for teachers and leaders and have significant influence on their work.

Moreover, in-service training, where leaders lead other leaders and experienced teachers lead other teachers, are particularly powerful as it is embedded in the organisational culture and responsive to contextual needs.

Direct interaction and support

In addition to the above findings, collaborative relationships based on trust, clear expectations and establishing a culture of professional support led to constructive dialogic interactions between leaders and teachers. This form of relationship was enhanced by classroom observations and post-observation feedback to teachers. During interviews, classroom observation was described as one of the most important practices performed by senior and middle leaders. Some principals mentioned that they frequently step into classrooms to have clarity on the teaching and learning: 'my role includes overseeing and supervising the school's general practice but the heads of primary and secondary are the ones managing teaching and learning directly' (Principal, CS-2).

I do short walkthroughs rather than full observations. Therefore, I get regular input of what is happening in the classes, and what is the relationship like between teachers and students, and between students themselves. (Principal, CS-4)

Middle leaders, in contrast, are 'heavily engaged in the teaching and learning process and often observe lessons' (ML, CS-2). Leaders acknowledged that leading quality teaching in their schools involves focusing on student learning and equally prioritising teacher learning and development. Leaders support teacher learning and monitor the impact of learning on teacher performance. However, they can't necessarily ensure consistent teaching approaches across the school. The challenge is to bring everyone on board with implementing the effective teaching practice that aligns with school goals and its instructional strategies, such as the collaborative and shared planning approach that was described as the most effective (Principal, CS-2) by most teachers and leaders. Adopting these approaches was easier in the primary stage as teachers have common times to

work together but was seen as more difficult in the secondary stage where teachers work in different departments and focus more primarily on exams results (SL, CS-1).

Contextual relevance

Leaders' interviews commonly reflected a focus on leading teaching while keeping the student in mind, but the specific needs of their students as international and multicultural were only mentioned in a few interviews. Student-centeredness is particularly important in international schools' context as students frequently move from one place to another. Mobility causes a disruption of learning due to changing educational environments and encountering unforeseen difficulties. Therefore, it is essential that leaders provide opportunities to bridge the gap between newcomers, the learning environment, and the curriculum:

We have new students coming all the time with different academic backgrounds, so we spend a few weeks every year building skill sets that are appropriate for that age. We define these as prerequisites for that year-group for core subjects. (Principal, CS-4)

Ensuring effective teaching and a coherent curriculum in international schools also require relevance to students' multicultural backgrounds (Banks, 2013). However, contextual, and cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) did not seem to be important to leaders as they prioritised implementing their predetermined curriculum. The focus on cultural relevance was easier in the early years' stage, as explained by a middle leader in CS-1:

Part of our curriculum manual looks at context, which ensures that our foundation stage and year-one have that basis of diversity and represents the different cultures we have in the classroom. We also make sure that books in the reading corners are diverse.

Resourcing strategically

Strategic resourcing includes ‘acquiring and managing people, money, time, and other resources in ways that reflect priority goals’ (Robinson, 2011, p. 67) and the allocation and reallocation of resources and managing complex problems.

Recruiting leaders and teachers

During interviews, leaders discussed options available for their senior teachers and middle leaders to join their leadership team through promotion or opportunities to engage in leadership roles and meetings (Principal, CS-3). They also explained that they prefer appointing leaders internally due to their knowledge of the school needs, whereas external appointments require significant training. Nevertheless, if they ‘don’t find the appropriate candidate internally, [they] look elsewhere’ (Principal, CS-2). Qualitative data didn’t clarify the recruitment and appointment of heads or principals, however, their responses to the questionnaire reflected limitations related to leader retention. The average time spent by a senior leader in their last school was ($X=3.7$) years (see Table 4), which showed that many leaders were ‘at the revolving door’ (Robinson, 2011, p. 65).

Recruiting and retaining teachers was seen as an important area for school leaders due to its influence on student outcomes (Earley et al., 2009). A principal in Qatar explained that ‘hiring good teachers has always been a challenge, but good teachers are key for a good school performance’ (CS-3). The challenge was not only recruiting and hiring good teachers but retaining them (Jacobson, 2005). A principal in England said: ‘we had turnovers as other international schools, and I’ve been involved partly in recruiting some of the new teachers.’ (CS-4). The importance of teacher recruitment was also confirmed by the questionnaire responses. N=42 senior leaders responded to the statement: ‘Leaders can best influence student learning through recruiting the best teachers’. N=30 strongly agreed, n=10 agreed, while only n=2 slightly agreed.

Managing financial and technological resources

Managing financial resources is a key area in school leaders' work, particularly senior leaders. Budgetary expectations vary between different schools depending on their company's policies and whether they work with a centralised corporate financial office or independently. In general, leading a school requires a significant amount of fiscal knowledge and management abilities, besides a much-desired commercial acumen (Courtney, 2015). A few leaders described themselves in the questionnaire as 'effective with resource management' and 'budgeting and planning' (Principal, Questionnaire). While the importance of budget management was confirmed in both questionnaire and interviews, the latter revealed the difficulties encountered by leaders when working within a tight budget:

Management is not only about people, but also about managing a school that is running on a specific budget. (Principal, CS-2)

Having a strict budget is a challenge. We cannot hire enough staff to teach a wide variety of courses for IB classes because we have a limited number of students and budget is critical. (Principal, CS-4)

One of the challenges faced by leaders resulting from managing restricted budgets is the demotivation of teachers. 'When teachers struggle with low wages and crowded timetables, they work less effectively and could be easily demotivated' (Principal, CS-4). In these cases, leaders should allocate additional efforts into managing relationships to establish a sense of motivation among teachers, despite precarious conditions. 'Our school is going through tough staffing cuts' but despite financial difficulties, we invest in building trust relationships with teachers to ensure they feel valued not just in the classroom, but for their professional expertise' (Principal, CS-4). In summary, interviews with leaders reflected multiple challenges, particularly those associated with resource management. These difficulties were elevated by the health pandemic, which led to reduced and restricted budgets in most schools.

Investing in educational technology was seen as a part of resources management. The difference between strategic technological resources and just using technology lies in its relevance to school goals and the teaching and learning needs (Robinson, 2011). This requires training teachers to use technology and providing adequate support by the school. The extent to which these conditions were met by schools was not clarified in interviews. However, a few teachers and leaders mentioned 'the abundance of technological resources and the availability of support systems' (Teacher, CS-2). The value of technological tools and platforms and the capacity of staff to use them effectively became one of the more important areas of schoolwork during the pandemic. The pandemic disrupted school routines and forced new priorities, but it was still seen as an opportunity by some staff to 'focus on what matters most in their schools' (Principal, CS-4), and to 'step up and learn new skills and strategies' (Teacher, CS-2).

Leading teacher development

This section reflects the role of leaders in leading teacher development as one of the most effective dimensions in Robinson's student-centred leadership (2011). Leading teacher learning refers to 'building capacity in schools by integrating doing the work with learning how to improve the work' (Ibid., p. 103). Leading teacher learning and development takes different forms in this research, but the most effective areas mentioned by participants were learning collectively and focusing on student learning. Collective and shared learning in schools contributed to developing professional learning communities (Hoffman & Jacobson, 2010) where everyone learned with and from the other:

Our school is a learning community. We do peer observation where we get the chance to visit other classrooms and learn from their knowledge. (Teacher, CS-2)

Encouraging teachers' risk-taking, ownership and autonomy

In some schools, teacher learning is not a structured experience. Teachers do not follow specific rules but are guided by their sense of responsibility toward their individual and collective learning as a group (Robinson, 2011, p. 107-108). Some leaders explained that they created spaces where teachers take responsibility for their work, and this freedom helped them grow confidence and autonomy. A senior leader in CS-1 explained that they 'give class teachers autonomy, ownership and encouragement and support the changes they make. There is no harm if something does not work'. Leaders acknowledge the importance of establishing a culture of trust so teachers can take responsibility and lead the needed change in their classrooms:

Teachers should feel confident and powerful as they lead their classrooms, students, and curriculum. They need to feel this authority, autonomy, and trust by leaders so they can do what is best for their students. They would feel comfortable working and owning their work. (Principal, CS-4)

Collaborative relationships

Middle leaders in most schools were directly involved in supporting teacher learning and development. Direct interaction between leaders and teachers, close supervision and support were seen as important factors in developing teacher learning and confidence.

The role of the primary leadership team is not only to supervise the quality of work but also to coach teachers, see the challenges and address them. (Principal, CS-2)

Building relationships between teachers was seen as essential to developing collaborative work patterns: 'we encourage teachers to learn about each other by engaging in ice breaking sessions where we learn who the other person is and where they come from' (Principal, CS-2). Collaborative relationships are central to the work of schools: 'teachers not only plan for student collaborative activities,

but also work together on planning for lessons' (Principal, CS-5). In addition to direct interaction, collaboration, and feedback, creating an environment and a structure that support teacher learning are some of the ways through which leaders support teacher learning and practice.

Examining leadership impact

Leaders examine their impact on the school culture and on the teaching and learning process in several ways, such as reflection and collecting data on student learning and teacher performance. They also link the effectiveness of teacher learning to student outcomes (Robinson, 2011).

We collect data and check lesson plans at the beginning, middle and end of the school year. If students are learning, then teachers are also learning. We measure this change in teacher practice by collecting data; both quantitative and qualitative. (ML, CS-2)

The questionnaire offers nuanced information related to how leaders examine the impact of their work (Table 12). Professional reflections, feedback from staff, the community and other stakeholders, and formal reports by governing and accrediting bodies and student achievement were seen as significant means through which leaders examine the impact of their work. In contrast, student enrolment rates were seen as less important in evaluating leaders' work, while financial revenues were seen as minimal.

Table 12
The evaluation of leaders' work

How leaders' work is evaluated	Number of responses (N=44)	Percentage of responses
Professional reflection	43	97.7%
Staff and teachers' feedback	42	95.5%
Community feedback	36	81.8%

Superiors' feedback	29	65.9%
School evaluation reports	28	63.6%
Student exam results	27	61.4%
Performance appraisal	25	56.8%
Student enrolment rates	16	36.4%
Revenues' growth	7	15.9%

The questionnaire also investigated the exchange of impact between principals and their schools and showed that most leaders perceived 'impact' between them and their schools as 'mutual', as evidenced in Table 13. The short-answer questions in the questionnaire asked leaders to explain their responses on 'impact'. The responses reveal patterns of influence in specific areas, mainly improving the quality of relationships, fostering a culture of trust, creating a space for the voice of teachers, and developing student and staff achievements (see Appendix I, Table 18). Conversely, a few responses focused on how schools influence leaders, suggesting that leaders adapt to specific ways of leading in a new context. In general, principals perceive themselves as influential leaders who contribute to developing their schools and driving them forward by focusing heavily on teachers and student attainment.

Table 13

Senior leaders' perception of the exchange of impact with their schools

Leader-school exchange of impact (N=41)	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Leader impacted by school	3	7.5%
Leader made significant impact	14	35%
No exchange of impact	0	0%

Mutual impact	23	57.5%
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Impact from the perspective of students

The voice of students or their wellbeing were rarely mentioned in the questionnaire and the interviews with leaders and teachers. Besides discussing student learning and results, wellbeing was only mentioned in relation to the pandemic and in broad terms. A few leaders acknowledged the importance of social relations in promoting student learning: 'if they feel secure in their social world, they are more emotionally available and relaxed for learning' (SL, CS4). However, most students did not agree that teachers or leaders directly influence their social experience within the school or care about it beyond learning and attainment. While some leaders said that they directly impact students and teachers, some students had a different perspective. Students believed leaders had limited impact on their schooling experience and criticised the excessive focus on academic attainment. Additionally, students believed that leaders 'should create links with kids and teenagers in order to be role models' (Student, CS-2). Students explained that they 'cannot reach out to leaders' as their interactions are only limited to coordinators and teachers (Student, CS-1). According to students, social aspects strongly shape their learning, which leaders and teachers don't seem to prioritise.

Whenever teachers put me in a group where I don't know the people and their abilities, it makes me a little bit shaky and less confident. (Student, CS-1)

They [leaders and teachers] want to create a very academic environment, but it shouldn't be that all we care about is grades. They should also care about the social experience of students and group relationships. (Student, CS-2)

4.5.3 How leaders lead

The theme 'How leaders lead' represents important aspects associated with leaders' role and the main activities they perform in the different areas of practice, described as dimensions by Robinson (2011).

Leaders as authority figures

Despite well-established notions of team and shared leadership across case-study schools, the findings confirmed that principals still have an authoritative voice in their organisations (Moreno, 2020). While it was evidenced that leaders do not lead alone and rely on other leaders such as deputies, senior and middle leaders (Lambert, 2002), they are still viewed by others and view themselves as authority figures in their schools. In an interview with a principal in Qatar, they described how everybody in their community (staff, parents, and students) had 'ownership' of the school plan. However, as the interview went on, they said that they direct and influence every single activity in that plan and other important activities:

I own and direct the development plan, which leads the direction of the school. I prepare this plan with staff, students, and parents so that everybody has ownership. I also run the accreditation committee and my role influences every activity related to school accreditation.
(Principal, CS-1)

Leaders as administrators

Most leaders explained their contributions to the school's administrative structure and the development of effective procedures to facilitate schoolwork, which reflected their theoretical understanding and what they viewed as priorities. Findings from case studies showed that leaders perform many administrative tasks and create work-related mechanisms as parts of their roles. These include designing and implementing 'specific procedures for how things should be done' (Principal, CS-4), 'meetings with leadership teams who then pass on the priorities

to their team members in different departments' (Principal, CS-2). Administrative processes take place at micro-levels such as day-to-day activities and sorting out school matters within different groups, as well as macro-levels with regard to whole-school processes:

Middle leaders lead their sections and I support them and lead the school's overall administrative processes. I meet with program coordinators and team leaders regularly to review policies and discuss major issues, and supervise the quality assurance leader, whose role is to ensure that policies are implemented. (Principal, CS-2)

Besides case-study findings, the questionnaire reflected the wide range of administrative tasks performed by leaders, in addition to instructional or non-administrative areas. Table 14 represents responses related to the frequency of specific tasks, which is not an exclusive list but indicates how leaders lead day-to-day matters and priorities. Senior leaders (N=44) responded by selecting the tasks they perform on a daily or weekly basis.

Table 14

Most common activities performed by senior leaders

Senior leaders daily and Weekly Tasks	Number of responses for each task (N=44)	Percentage of responses for each task (N=44)
Solving problems	38	86.4%
Teachers & staff meetings	36	81.8 %
Office work	33	75 %
Parents' meetings	31	70.5 %
Planning	31	70.5 %
Speaking to students	27	61.4 %
Lesson observation & feedback to teachers	24	54.5 %
Working with governors	24	54.5 %
Resources management	26	59.1 %
Reflection	24	54.5 %
School tour	23	52.3 %
Budgetary meetings & activities	19	43.2 %
Teaching and/or mentoring	15	34.1 %

Monitoring teaching and learning

Monitoring learning was one of the widely established areas of practice across all schools. It enabled leaders not only to know what is going on but also the strengths and needs for development (Robinson, 2011). Monitoring learning is mostly performed by middle leaders who are closer to the classroom experience, but some senior leaders also supervise the entire process and contribute to it at different times. Monitoring includes checking different forms of evidence on student learning, such as writing, exams and projects, in addition to visiting classrooms and leading conversations with teachers afterward or engaging in meetings and discussions related to professional learning (Southworth, 2009). Monitoring, however, does not mean distrusting teachers, as one principal explained (CS-5). It meant sharing feedback with teachers and gaining opportunities to think about the wider impact of teachers' practice on curriculum and professional needs.

We have a performance management program, which is based on trust and sharing knowledge. We monitor through learning walks, lesson observations, commentary from colleagues and looking at examination results. This practice was embedded over years; it informs our thinking about the curriculum and informs our professional development. (Principal, CS-5)

Modelling and visibility

Southworth (2002a) suggested that 'leaders know they are being watched and that others see them as role models', so they use 'the power of examples' (p. 5). Leaders generally encourage other leaders and teachers to model specific approaches to teaching and leading. Modelling could be practised in the classroom, the hallways and in meetings and events. By showing their presence and being visible at school premises and events, leaders set an example that they want others to follow or recognise (Southworth, 2009). They do this purposefully and often notice that their presence sends powerful messages to the school

community. It is an indicator that they are available to sort out problems or offer support if needed. Visibility is not passive presence but associated with sharing feedback and building relationships, which also applies to virtual visibility.

By being visible and developing positive relationships with staff, students, and parents, I am setting consistent standards for other leaders in the school. (Principal, Questionnaire)

Dialogue and conversations

Dialogue was seen as another way through which leaders 'interact with the school community, listen and share input' on matters related to teaching and learning (Southworth, 2011, p. 6). The concept of dialogue was rooted in the belief that there is a mutual respectful relationship and that both parties are willing to listen and speak to each other (Freire, 1970; Robinson, 2011). Dialogue indicates a culture of interaction rather than a top-down approach and is practised through formal and informal feedback, discussion groups, or casual conversation. A culture of dialogue was also seen as 'inclusive and engaging, especially when teachers are a part of the conversation in decisions affecting their work' (Principal, Questionnaire). The word 'conversation' was used frequently in interviews and, sometimes, interchangeably with 'dialogue'. However, it refers to more informal forms of dialogue or a quick exchange of ideas. Conversations were seen as important to 'maintain professional relationships and to enable professional learning, so people can feel comfortable asking for support, when needed' (ML, CS-3). Conversations and dialogue are key leadership capabilities that require listening more than speaking and acting on what has been captured (Robinson, 2011). This includes attention, understanding and acting on what teachers said:

I worked with many teachers over the years and developed the ability to just sit and listen, understand, and make notes, and then follow up on what the teachers said. (ML, CS-3)

Building trust relationships

According to Robinson (2011), 'building trust relationships is key to making an impact in schools' (p. 17). The findings of this research showed that understanding leadership theory was not sufficient to successful and effective leadership unless leaders built a foundation of trust with the school community. When leaders attentively engage in conversations with teachers around their theory of action (what the teacher does and why), they can learn from them, show respect and recognition of their knowledge, and eventually reach a mutual new 'theory of action', which helps them improve the area of concern (Robinson, 2011). Thus, conversations and dialogue are key to establishing trust relationships:

Teachers do not always do things perfectly; they make mistakes. But I trust them as professionals. I ask, listen, and discuss the matters of concern with the person involved and I learn from them or convince them with my perspective. (Principal, CS-2)

'Relationships are essential to leaders' professional learning' (Principal, CS-1). They are the invisible mechanism that allows productive work to take place, especially as leaders continue to develop and maintain them (Principal 1, CS-4). Trust is key in a leader-teacher relationship: 'I'm close to the teachers, and they feel safe asking me questions and sharing their concerns or problems' (ML, CS-2). Constructive collegial feedback can enhance a culture of trust and create opportunities for professional learning (Teacher, CS-2).

Trust is an important factor, but this doesn't happen overnight. It takes place over a period where they can see that they are able to trust you. The success of this community is based on trust and quality relationships between parents and teachers, teachers and teachers, students, and students, students, and teachers, etc. (Principal, CS-5)

Relationships are central to how our school works. They are important not only for the school but for families and for all of us (Principal, CS-4)

Working in an international school setting creates an additional need to foster relationships and build trust, especially that people move frequently, and others come with the sense of getting to know the place. Thus, establishing trust relationships and open communication could be particularly important. 'We have turnovers as you would get in an international school' (Principal, CS-4), which means that leaders should constantly be working on initiating trust relationships with newcomers. Being a leader and a teacher at the same time requires working on relationships with teachers (Principal, CS-4). Furthermore, trusting teachers means appreciating their work: 'if they [teachers] feel valued and appreciated, the quality of their teaching and their commitment to doing the best for their students are enhanced' (Principal, CS-4). The questionnaire also included a short-answer question, where senior leaders were asked to describe their relationship with teachers. The responses were consistent with interviews' findings and reflected a common understanding of the importance of relationships in schools, particularly those developed based on trust, mutual respect, support, and collaboration. Most responses included references to positive relationships that lead to establishing a sense of support and guidance rather than supervision and control (see Appendix I, Table 19).

Skills and experience

Leadership benefits from education, experience, and the development of specific skills in distinct contexts and roles. Leaders who participated in this research had different levels of experience and preparation. During interviews and through questionnaire responses, leaders shared how their experiences helped them sharpen their practice and develop a deeper understanding of their leadership roles (Bush, 2009). Experience enables leaders to solve complex problems in their schools (Robinson, 2011) and manage day-to-day challenges and uncertainties. Leaders predominantly moved from teaching positions to middle leadership, then to senior leadership and principalship. Throughout the journey, leaders develop specific skills that help them to meet the expectations associated

with their roles. Experience allows leaders to develop problem solving and negotiation skills, and navigate difficult circumstances, especially managing people and relationships: 'we solve problems in the school with parents, and sometimes within the staff' (ML, CS-2). Managing a school within a strict budget was also seen as a challenge that requires specific skills. Problems, however, are not necessarily going to be solved. Thus, working through a challenging situation is an important leadership skill. It takes experience, wisdom, and skills to lead with perseverance when there is limited or no support from governors or authorities, but it can be draining to school leaders: 'we are effectively bankrupt. I hope the government will recognise this in due course and help us out, but there's no prospect of that now' (Principal, CS-5).

4.5.4 Modern leadership approaches

The previously presented findings on leadership theory, dimensions and practices were based on established theoretical frameworks in the literature review chapter. The below findings, contrastingly, originated from the data of case-studies and questionnaire. Although the findings within the 'modern approaches' theme are not new to leadership research, they represent contemporary, non-conventional or emerging patterns of leadership in the researched schools.

Horizontal and shared leadership

All case-study schools had well-defined leadership and management structures, where hierarchical leadership was powerful and controlled major decisions and directions in schools. The data showed an emerging form of horizontal (less- or non-hierarchical) form of leadership. However, it is important to note that case study schools have a record of leadership titles and positions that are not necessarily reflected in additional benefits, such as team leaders, committees' leaders, or leaders of specific areas of activity, who are teachers or middle leaders with additional duties. Nevertheless, the increased number of leadership titles is not what this section refers to. Horizontal leadership refers to a group of middle

leaders or experienced teachers, who plan, discuss, make decisions, and create impact together in regard to their stage or department. It implies a real sense of leadership and ownership at the level of middle leaders and teachers across most schools. It was made clear during interviews that senior leaders—including heads and principals—supported this form of leadership development. Some of the emerging leaders are baffled with a performative form of duties, while others took their role to new dimensions and practised leadership in their groups and classrooms, and influenced their superiors, with or without a title.

This form of leadership is mostly carried out by two or more leaders working together and driving change in their schools based on their shared work, such as CS-4 where two principals lead the primary and the secondary school and synchronise approaches and strategies, or CS-2 where a primary leadership team (PLT) of four middle leaders work in alignment with each other and ensure that teaching and learning across the school is coherent and connected: ‘most of the time, we plan and make decisions together’ (ML, CS-2). Likewise, CS-3 is led through shared principal leadership, where principals and heads of departments work closely and synchronously. Likewise, CS-5 is led through two co-principals, and closely connected middle leadership. Moreover, in CS-1 leadership at middle and teacher level is enacted through a learning forum, where experienced teachers suggest new ideas or action research projects. In this school, teacher leaders create their teams, do their research, then share the outcomes with the school. Their approach reflects a group-decision mechanism rather than a single decision by positional leadership. In all cases, a new dynamic of leadership is taking place non-hierarchically:

Senior teachers started to drive and lead teaching and learning changes across the school. So, [change] was coming from the classroom to the whole school. This process has enforced policy changes all the way up. (SL, CS-1)

While it was not common for senior leaders to encourage informal forms of leadership, engaging with teachers and interacting with daily school matters allowed them to practically respond to and endorse non-conventional emerging leadership mechanisms. Throughout all case studies, the role of the second-in-line leaders was evident in bridging the gap between principals and middle and teacher leadership teams, who represent the teaching force and engage in direct interaction with students. Thus, senior leaders play the mediator role between top-level leadership and middle or teacher leadership and support a growing pattern of horizontal and shared leadership within schools. This flexible leadership approach reflects confidence and agency and challenges the conventional norms of hierarchy and control in schools.

Ethical and adaptive leadership

Ethical, reflective, and adaptive leadership were mentioned by a limited number of leaders during interviews and in the questionnaire. While it is not a prevalent approach, ethical leadership represents awareness of the purpose and the moral imperative associated with educational leadership, which—given the pandemic situation—requires a reconsideration of priorities and strategies. Leadership associated with an ethical and reflective practice within participant schools exhibited a sense of adaptability in responding to the turbulent situation. A few leaders demonstrated an ‘ethic of care’ and ‘ethic of community’ as they prioritised students and staff safety and interests (Arar & Saiti, 2022, p. 132). However, beyond the influence of the pandemic, ethics, and adaptability—as dispositions—were appreciated by some leaders. In addition, a few leaders demonstrated a humanistic approach (Samier et al., 2021) that motivated them to constantly adapt their work to meet the needs of the human beings they serve:

Flexibility is ideal to maintain balance between plans, practical procedures, and the school environment. (Principal, Questionnaire)

We cannot lead from your desk, screen, or files; we need to engage with teachers and interact with practical issues. This will give us insights because we are dealing with human beings not robots, and we have a moral duty to adapt our leadership to meet their needs. (Principal, CS-2)

Cultural education for leaders, teachers, and students

While it might seem inevitable that international school leaders and staff are educated about internationalisation, diversity and multiculturalism, the data showed emerging and limited attention to cultural education within case-study schools. The poor attention to this area, or the lack of it in some interviews, was noticeable. Nonetheless, in other interviews leaders found the opportunity to reflect on their cultural literacy and the cultural relevance of their work. The interviews helped them to establish a connection between leading and teaching and the social and cultural backgrounds of their school community and think about a more inclusive future through a culturally connected curriculum. The below quotes represented these reflections:

We need to be more proactive in educating staff about the diverse cultures, and especially the students in their classrooms and their parents, to make sure they are aware of their cultures and backgrounds. (Principal, CS-4).

We need to gradually immerse children in a wider variety of cultures and a wider diversity of people from different racial and religious groups and gender identities. (ML, CS-1).

Encouraging student leadership

During interviews, student leadership was repeatedly mentioned, yet distinctly perceived by different leaders. The core goal according to most leaders was developing leadership skills for students, such as independence and critical thinking, but the way this could be achieved was significantly different. For example, one principal explained that developing leadership qualities and

attributes happens in the classroom, while another focused on developing student leadership positions that replicate the organisational hierarchy. The former viewed student leadership from a collaborative and dispositional lens, while the latter prioritised practical preparation to leadership and administrative positions:

I expect students to be leaders in the classroom and lead their groups, especially when working together. We must build the leadership quality among students, not only teachers. (Principal, CS-2)

My entire leadership group is emulated by the students. There's a head boy and girl like me. There are also deputies and committees of prefects, and they act like my middle leaders. (Principal, CS-1)

4.5.5 Leading in a pandemic

The pandemic disrupted the schooling system across the world and affected leaders, teachers, and students in different ways. Schools responded to government guidance differently depending on their resources, staff size and capabilities or infection rates within the school community. The findings of this theme are informed by the questionnaire and case-study interviews.

Changes to the leadership circles

The pandemic forced many changes in schools beyond teaching and learning, including structural and procedural areas (Arar et al., 2023). Interviews with leaders included references to disruptions of their work patterns. One of the notable changes in most schools was expanding the leadership circle, where staff from the technical and support teams were invited to contribute to the decision-making process, particularly logistics, security, finance, counselling, and health staff.

Due to the pandemic, we adopted a participatory approach and involved people who weren't a part of the leadership team. They were included because of their expertise and wisdom that are relevant to the pandemic; not only health wise, but administratively and technologically. There were major changes of procedures and precautionary measures during the school closure and when we reopened the school. (Principal, CS-1)

Nonetheless, while most schools responded by widening the leadership and management circle as a pandemic-driven change, there were some exceptions: 'the focus of leadership [in their school] shifted from distributed to more situational and directive during the pandemic' (Principal, Questionnaire). A few leaders mentioned that there was no time to consult with other leaders and staff as they would usually do. Decisions had to be taken quickly, especially with changing directives from the government.

Rethinking priorities: leading teaching in unprecedented circumstances

The disruption to the teaching and learning patterns and the lack of clarity about how to lead adequately amidst the crisis were the dominant themes throughout the data collection process in both countries. Leaders encountered difficulties as they were planning for changes in teaching and learning management, while responding to government directives of social distancing in schools, separate bubbles, hybrid, or fully online modes. In addition to managing an additional workload, uncertainty, wellbeing and health risks, leaders and teachers were attending to the needs of concerned parents and students (Harris & Jones, 2020b). None of them claimed to be managing competently; in contrast, they shared their frustration and explained that they narrowed down their focus areas into essential tasks and day-to-day priorities. Narrowing down their focus areas allowed them to reduce their curriculum to fit a limited teaching schedule and redesign new learning tasks that students could do asynchronously.

As leaders, we stepped outside the 'normal' teaching experience. We used contact tracing methods and changed our scheduling. Teachers were expected to maintain a student-centred approach while working with online and face-to-face students simultaneously. (Principal, Questionnaire)

It was difficult to deal with teaching in a pandemic while being mindful of staff and students' mental health. We went from an expectation of teaching fully online to a 50% reduction in online lessons due to the fatigue of both teachers and students. It was a challenge to produce tasks that are rich enough to be done off-screen. (Principal, CS-4)

Acknowledging the leadership limitations

While the common pattern in leadership research is to examine how leaders describe their work and how well they lead their schools, the pandemic has brought up unconventional findings as leaders acknowledged their limitations and described what they cannot do. The difficulties of leading, managing and teaching during the pandemic were reflected in case studies and questionnaires. Leaders explained the 'difficulty to monitor the quality of teaching and learning online' (Principal, Questionnaire). Another leader acknowledged feeling 'inadequate', 'ineffective' and 'slightly helpless' in terms of being unable to connect with people (Principal, CS-4). Leaders generally struggled with fulfilling their student exam schedules so many students ended up not taking their end-of-year exams in 2020. Moreover, leaders had difficulty maintaining the integrity of exams during online assessments in the first term of 2020-2021.

Increased digital access and control

The pandemic caused a major shift in schools by moving teaching from the classroom to online platforms, thus allowing additional and easier access of leaders to the teaching spaces. School leaders explained that online platforms enabled them to practise their 'supervisory role' better by accessing classrooms and 'documenting meetings', which meant that everything teachers did during

their teaching day could be tracked and controlled. The additional requirement to record and send videos to families made some teachers feel uncomfortable.

The pandemic enhanced my supervisory role. I have more time now to visit the virtual teaching rooms and meet the middle leadership team most of the time with documented communications. (Principal, Questionnaire)

My role requires monitoring what is going on in different corners of the school, and now with access to virtual classrooms, I can access any class anytime and see what is going on. (Principal, CS-2)

Leadership Learning through the pandemic

The pandemic disrupted the well-established structures of schoolwork, including teaching, learning and management, and led to a re-prioritisation of tasks and goals. Consequently, leadership learning has completely moved from pre-planned courses and networking-based events to a spontaneous 'learn-on-the-job' mode that mostly focused on using technology to manage the emergency response. This theme was clarified during interviews and was consistent with the questionnaire responses:

We have been learning new technologies to teach and manage our work. We have, explicitly and implicitly, upskilled as a leading and teaching force. If it [the pandemic] happens tomorrow, we'd be much more confident going into it. (Principal, Questionnaire)

It doesn't matter how many schools you have worked in or how many leadership courses you have taken, when you are hit with a crisis such as a global pandemic, you're learning on your feet. (SL, CS-1)

The findings showed that leadership learning continued in different modes and that leaders could offer their colleagues and staff different forms of support despite pressure and uncertainty. These findings were aligned with evidence from global scholarship on leadership and learning during the pandemic, such as Harris and Jones (2022), Huber (2021) and Fornaro et al. (2021).

The data collected from the questionnaire's short-answer-questions confirmed interview findings showing that the pandemic was an opportunity to elevate leader learning. While it added additional challenges to leadership and management, its influence on leader learning incorporated important changes. It allowed further opportunities for collaboration through online channels, reduced the pressure of working to an expectation and shifted the focus toward working on need and context. The main influence of the pandemic on leaders' professional learning was enhancing a sense of shared responsibility among staff and teachers. Learning on the job, figuring out how to respond to urgent matters, and cancelling pre-scheduled formal programs were common responses within the questionnaire. A few leaders mentioned that they benefited from the production of online workshops focusing on the rising need for online management. The majority of responses, however, clarified that formal leadership learning was substituted by frequent or weekly leadership team meetings, which enhanced collaboration and communication skills.

4.6 Theme 3: Leadership learning and development

4.6.1 The leader as a learner

This theme was informed by three theoretical frameworks: adult learning theory or andragogy (Knowles, 1975, 1980, 2010), transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1996, 2012) and leadership development theory (Joo & Kim, 2016). Based on these frameworks, leaders are viewed as adult educators who lead the learning of others and as learners. The findings of this theme were to a great extent aligned with the literature review, confirming that leaders learn experientially (Knowles, 1975) and through professional socialisation, reflection (Hallinger & Wimbledon, 1992). The below quote represents a principal's self-perception as a learner:

I am learning from my teachers as much as they learn from each other. Being a learner, encouraging people and showing them that you are willing to learn is important and productive. (Principal, CS-4)

Leaders learn 'on the job' through conversations and professional socialisation within their schools. Leaders generally explained that they learn while performing their tasks, through their leadership roles or through professional interactions with colleagues: 'The best leadership training I had was on the job and through conversations with my peers' (SL, CS-1).

I try to work with people that I can learn from. I learn from others in the primary and secondary teams. There is so much that they know and do better than me, which turns meetings into professional development inherently. (Principal, CS-4)

Learning through networking and professional socialisation

Learning with others and from others is seen as a powerful form of professional socialisation where leaders engage in professional development programs and interact with a group of leaders from other schools and backgrounds. This process of interaction enables leaders to build relationships with others and 'leads to emerging social norms about the value of professional development and 'shape the[ir] behaviour' (Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992, p. 11). The findings showed that leaders' goals through these programs are different but are all seen as opportunities for growing their professional capital. Some leaders aim to learn from other people's experiences, while others aim to grow their social capital within the field. In all cases, professional socialisation was seen as 'very helpful':

There is an opportunity to build relationships and find the links between different areas of expertise through the COBIS meetings, where there is a range of schools, and we have the chance to speak to one another. Those have been the most rewarding conversations. They help me think and apply new ideas to my own situation. (SL, CS-1)

While networking was used in the data to refer particularly to external connections and opportunities to learn from others beyond the school, professional socialisation was used to refer to internal shared learning experiences besides external ones. Professional socialisation was seen as a valuable opportunity for

leaders: 'it is those shared experiences that have been useful' (SL, CS-1). However, while the interviews showed strong engagement in professional learning among leaders, the questionnaire reflected different results. When senior leaders (N=33) were asked if they saw a need for professional development while in their current position, the majority of the responses were within the lowest and middle percentiles, implying a limited need for professional development ($X=31$). This could mean that principals and senior leaders generally see themselves as capable of leading their schools and do not necessarily consider the need for further learning whilst in their positions.

Figure 7

Senior leaders need for professional development



Professional learning as an individual venture

During the interviews, leaders discussed their own experience with their professional learning. Some of them explained how they planned their own professional learning and pursued opportunities formally and informally, especially when there were limited opportunities offered by their organisations. Middle leaders generally worked in groups and managed to design their

professional learning in areas related to their school context. However, senior leaders, mainly, principals and heads planned individually and booked their own courses, which led to an isolating learning experience beyond their school context.

I'm organising my own CPD. I think educational leaders in larger institutions with impact on many students must be proactive rather than waiting for funding to come up. (Principal, CS-1)

I've been working on my self-development within the IB community. I started developing my leadership skills, through training, coaching and seeing things from different perspectives (Principal, CS-2)

Reflection

When leaders were asked in the questionnaire to list their professional learning activities, only a minority mentioned reflection; perhaps it was not seen as a form of professional learning. However, when it was listed as one of the activities performed by principals and senior leaders on a daily or weekly basis, (n=24) chose 'reflection' out of the (N=44) participants who responded to this question. According to Hallinger and Wimpelberg (1992), 'reflective modes of practice, though lacking social legitimacy, may produce lasting change in attitudes [...], and can reshape the normative conception of what it means to be a principal' (p. 18). The below quote was extracted from an interview where a principal shared their simple reflection exercise:

I ask myself frequently whether I am doing it right and how I can lead even better. There were times in my life where I was looking for my own professional development, but now I focus on what the school needs me to know and do effectively. (Principal, CS-2)

Education and formal qualifications

While most leaders discussed their experience in schools and the training courses they engaged in, only a minority mentioned qualifications or formal education as

a part of their leadership learning and development. Thus, reflecting the limited attention to this area in their preparation and employment process. Those who mentioned their qualifications, described them as an individual endeavour rather than an essential part of their learning or career path:

I've just started my NPQH with UCL, but my main professional development for the last few years in leadership comes from working with other people. (Principal, CS-4)

One of the senior leaders, during their interview, reflected on their experience as they moved from teaching to leading and managing. They were critical of the lack of preparation for leadership and management positions as leaders move from teaching, which requires different knowledge and a new set of skills: 'the better you get in the classroom, the less teaching and the more managing you do, but you don't really get trained for that in teaching' (Principal, CS-4).

In the questionnaire, leaders were asked to choose professional development activities that they considered to be most effective. The responses showed that the most effective activity, according to principals and senior leaders (N=41), was 'discussion with teachers and leaders', followed by 'training provided by leaders to their staff' and 'professional courses'. These findings corresponded with the qualitative data, which was obtained through case-study investigation.

Table 15

Senior leaders' perceptions of the most effective professional development activities

Effective professional development activity	Number of responses N=41	Percentage of responses
Networking in local events	18	44%
Networking in international events	21	51%
Discussions between leaders & leaders, leaders & teachers	33	81%
Training sessions provided by senior leaders for staff	22	54%
Formal learning opportunities	17	42%

4.6.2 The leader as an educator: Developing other leaders and guiding teaching

Leaders play an important role in leading the development of teachers and other leaders in their schools. While the previous section discusses how leaders learn and grow professionally, this section reflects their self-perception as educators and supporters of others. The data shows that leaders generally identify the strengths and potentials of other leaders or teachers and facilitate their learning.

The principal at my previous school encouraged me to think about my leadership development. She was a leader who identifies potentials in someone and says: 'have you considered this?' I went from a curriculum coordinator to an assistant principal because I was given opportunities to develop my leadership skills. (Principal, CS-4)

One of our principals was working toward their headship qualifications. They took time off to visit other schools and prepare reports and assignments. We allowed this and spoke about how their learning can benefit our school. (Principal, CS-4)

Interviews with leaders confirmed that they design their own school-based professional development programs or engage in partnerships with external organisations to provide learning opportunities for their leadership team and teachers.

Promotion

Promotion was seen as the natural order of progress in status for experienced and senior teachers in all case-studies, although the findings did not show a specific pattern governing this process. However, short-term contracts and frequent mobility in international schools do not allow many teachers to develop their knowledge of the context or make an impact in their schools, which affects their chances of promotions. A few leaders mentioned applying for leadership positions after working in teaching for a few years. During interviews, senior leaders acknowledged middle leaders' right for promotion whenever there is a leadership vacancy rather than recruiting externally. Moreover, in some cases senior leaders offered non-paid promotions where there was no funding allocation, which they saw as an opportunity for aspiring leaders to develop leadership skills despite being unpaid.

We support leadership development by encouraging and supporting internal promotion. (Principal, CS-4)

We encourage leadership development by creating opportunities. We prioritise recruiting our staff because they understand the school and its culture, whereas external candidates might not. We also have a scheme of secondments onto the leadership team, and we have a range of associate posts for which we give people a leadership title but no money. (Principal, CS-5)

Developing teacher leadership

Leaders worked on developing teachers' leadership abilities through formal and informal measures such as encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles,

supporting them through additional professional development and entrusting them with leading their work with a sense of autonomy and ownership:

Leaders identify class teachers and middle leaders who have areas of strengths that they want to develop. (Teacher and ML, CS-1)

As leaders, we allow and support the professional growth of our staff because while they are undergoing this development, we also benefit from their growth. (Principal, CS-4)

Qualitative findings reflected a strong focus on instructional areas; senior and middle leaders support and guide other leaders and teachers to improve teaching and student learning. Most leaders explained that their role is primarily to empower teachers, develop their capacities and entrust them to practise leadership and decision making in their classrooms.

Teachers lead teaching and learning changes across the school. Change comes from the classroom, then enforces policy changes. Our goal was to ensure that what was being delivered was appropriate and fit-for-purpose. We gave teachers autonomy and ownership, and it created immense effects throughout the school, probably more in primary than secondary. (SL, CS-1)

During interviews, senior leaders discussed the growing sense of independence and autonomy within their schools, particularly among teachers. They explained that they created and supported teacher classroom autonomy, where teachers were trusted to make decisions and deliver their instructional material. Leaders' role includes practical support such as providing logistics and coordinating opportunities, spaces, and timings to enable teacher leadership. Besides leading classroom teaching and their work with students, teacher leadership involves sharing best practices with colleagues and contributing to building each other's confidence and capacities:

Primary teachers work closely because they are not siloed by subjects and want to share their practice with each other. They create their own events where they share practice from their classrooms and action

research projects. The driving force of teaching comes from the class teachers and middle leaders, then it is reinforced by senior leadership, influences policy, and consequently, influences the students. (SL, CS-1)

Professional capital

Professional capital is a combination of social and decisional capital which refers to learning the skills of professional practice. It reflects the importance of social relations in supporting and aligning decisional capital and growing relational elements in one's own professional field (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2018). During interviews, some leaders and teachers shared examples from their schools on how professional capital is enhanced through collaborative relations. In CS-2, middle leaders described their school as a professional learning community where they learn together and where learning happens all the time, thus, reflecting an accumulation of professional capital individually and collectively. Likewise, in CS-1, teachers and leaders shared their experience of learning from each other through a school-supported (but informal) learning forum: '95% of staff showed up to every learning forum. It shows that they want to learn from one another, where they share resources and ideas' (SL, CS-1). Principals in CS-4 described their school as a professional learning community where members support each other's career progression within and beyond the school. Engaging in professional discussions with colleagues and the interaction with the school environment were seen as opportunities for enhancing teachers and leaders' professional capital:

It is an amazing opportunity to talk to similar—and different—minded individuals about different concepts. Professional development happens when a person is open to the school environment and when they interact and share their opinions. (Teacher, CS2)

During interviews, leaders shared their concerns about the influence of the pandemic on teachers and leaders' professional capital and learning. However, some teachers were more optimistic and recognised the positive influence of the

pandemic on their professional learning, as many teachers stepped in to support colleagues who were new to some technological tools. Despite physical distancing and restrictions, teachers in most schools managed not only to maintain, but to improve their professional capital.

4.7 Theme 4: The social and cultural capital and the relationship with leadership

4.7.1 Conceptualising the social and cultural capital

Social capital is defined as the aggregate of social relations an individual accumulates in particular fields over a period of time (Bourdieu, 1986, 2021). It also refers to one's ability to engage in trust relationships with individuals and groups based on common values, norms and expectations, shared identities, or interests. While the number of social relations is important, it is the strength of these relations and their value to the individual and the group that make social capital powerful and important. When individuals are associated with a group, the common features and dispositions gained through this affiliation shapes their habitus and influences their cultural capital. Thus, social and cultural capital are generally connected. Cultural capital includes embodied, objectified, and institutional capital, which represent accumulated knowledge, skills and dispositions acquired through one's home culture, school, or society (1986).

This section includes two parts: the first clarifies the different components of social and cultural capital based on the data, while the second focuses on how leadership relates or responds to these forms of capital or is informed by it. Due to the transient nature of international schools (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018; Bailey & Gibson, 2020), relations and common elements embedded in social capital become particularly important and entrenched with the embodied cultural capital that people acquire and incorporate as they move from one place to another. The findings showed that different forms of capital were in constant interaction with

each other and with the field, and were embedded in leading, teaching, learning, and interacting with other people.

4.7.2 Identity, belonging, and the pandemic influence

The relationship between social capital and belonging has been well-established in social research. Belonging was defined by Morales et al. (2007) as the ‘degree of consensus felt by the members of a social group in the perception of belonging to a common situation’ (p. 810). The themes in this section were heavily informed by interviews with leaders, teachers, and high school students. According to leaders, schools played a major role in setting common expectations and shared values among their community members, which aim at shaping behaviour, strengthening relationships, and creating a common identity.

We have a shared expectation of what it means to be a student at this school. Our values run through the whole school, which means that our expectations in terms of behaviour, interaction and relationships exist alongside their shared experiences. (SL, CS-1)

Teachers believed that having a strong social capital contributes to building a successful community due to sharing the same goals and expectations. Some teachers explained that ‘[their] social capital influences work’ and that they ‘feel a great deal of responsibility to contribute to the success of the school community and the wellbeing of [their] colleagues’ (Teacher, CS-3).

Identity

Social capital involves the collective sense of identity that includes how people see themselves, but this did not necessarily influence how they were seen by school leaders. Some school leaders viewed students as having generic identities: ‘our students are mostly Arabic or Asian people’ (Principal, CS1). Contrastingly, students from the same school perceived themselves as having more specific identities that affect their social capital.

I'm Palestinian and most of my friends are Arabs. My friends are mainly people with the same values or a similar ethnicity. (Student, CS-1)

There is always that subconscious bias in my head. A lot of my friends are from the same background as me: either Irish or from Northern Irish churches where I come from. But the next level of close friends is still British or from the UK, then there are a few from other cultures. (Student, CS-1)

Teachers acknowledged that students were more likely to connect and 'bond with other students based on shared backgrounds and values' (Teacher, CS-4). Middle leaders had similar views as they worked closely to teachers and students, however, they spoke about students as a diverse body without attending to the particularities of their identities and how this could be significant for their work: 'we have so many nationalities in one melting pot; we have to cater to the cultural backgrounds of different employees and students, and this includes religious backgrounds' (ML, CS-2). They noticed that children might engage in friendship with peers from any background, but this reality would potentially be shaped by social influences with time: 'as children get older, they tend to migrate to the culture where they come from' (ML, CS-1). In addition to societal influences, academic factors were also viewed as influential in enhancing or suppressing student identities and cultural capital:

We teach the English Curriculum, and most of our work is based on this context; that is, written by famous authors or people from English or British backgrounds and not culturally diverse. As children get older, they become aware of that. When we are writing stories, we ask the children to describe a character. Whether they're from India, Pakistan or Qatar, their characters' names were predominantly the UK names that we taught them. They don't think about characters that come from their own cultural background. (Teacher and ML, CS-1).

The above description of the curriculum reflects students' embodied cultural capital that is shaped by the school, despite being disconnected from students' social and home-cultural capital. In addition, their principal believes that the

school shaped students' identity by defining the learning culture and relationships of students. They marginalised the influence of students' home culture to a minimal input: 'while there might be a little bit of input from outside, these relationships are predominantly determined and defined by what we do in school' (Principal, CS-1). They admitted that there was a disconnection between the school and its surroundings: 'they (staff) don't speak Arabic, and they can't really access anything' (Principal, CS-1). Alternatively, teachers' interviews reflected awareness of the importance of students' feelings of belonging to a specific group or the school. Teachers explained that relationships affect student learning experiences, especially in schools where collaborative learning is a common expectation:

If students do not feel safe, cared for, connected and comfortable with the people around them, they are less likely to ask for support and take meaningful risks. (Teacher, CS-3)

Belonging and non-belonging

Belonging is the 'subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences' (Kelly-Ann et al., 2020). It is seen by students and teachers as a crucial element that influences their well-being and learning. For international students, it is particularly difficult to establish a sense of belonging where mobility is the norm: 'it is hard to belong in a transient society. For the last three years, we have had a high turnover of people leaving, people coming' (Student, CS-1). 'International students tend to transfer schools or move from one country to another, which creates some hesitancy in creating close social bonds with other students' (Teacher, CS-3).

Some students discussed the difficulties they encountered when they first moved to another international school in another country: 'in the beginning it was difficult. I felt that I did not belong here at all. Now, I have some sense of belonging; it just needs more time' (Student, CS-2). Some students struggle to find a sense of

belonging to their new school, which makes their learning quite difficult: 'when I first came here, I was miserable and I didn't want to continue learning here' (Student, CS-2). In contrast, other students clarified that identifying as mixed-race students or having multiple identities was seen as the norm in international schools: 'I haven't faced that encounter in this school; there are many mixed-race people and it's nice not to feel excluded' (Student, CS-1). A few students described their school as 'culturally diverse', where they 'can meet people coming from different places who share the same experiences' (Student, CS-1). However, despite this common experience of mobility and cultural diversity, students and staff generally embody their own social and cultural capital 'depend[ing] on the environment they grew up in and their country or nationality' (Principal, CS-2).

The pandemic influence

The pandemic influenced students and teachers' wellbeing and relational aspects. Students were demotivated and negatively impacted by the physical distance from their friends and school environment. A few students shared their experiences during the interviews: 'due to Covid-19, we went into social distancing and followed the ministerial protocols, and now we struggle to form connections with each other now' (Student, CS-2).

As online learning kept dragging out, we lost motivation because we didn't have our friends around to give us that enthusiasm to attend lessons. It was all online and they were on the other side of the screen. (Student, CS-1)

The pandemic affected schools in diverse ways, but one of the important changes was drawing further attention to teachers' wellbeing: 'the pandemic brought to the fore the need to embed the wellbeing of teachers in the school culture' (Principal, Questionnaire). There was a risk of professional and social disconnection resulting from social distancing: 'we run the risk of groups not mixing with one another, just by the nature of their physical distance (Principal, CS-1). Some teachers were more flexible and didn't necessarily perceive online activities as

negative, as long as they could carry on professional relations and work-related tasks. However, a few teachers also noted that having a stronger social capital allowed staff to cope better during the pandemic. In general, the pandemic affected teachers' work and student learning to different extents.

When the pandemic started, we needed to respond to teachers' needs, not only students. At the beginning of this year, we focused on community wellbeing, ensuring that as students came back, they are reconnecting with each other and with school expectations before we focus on the curriculum. (Principal, CS-4)

The role of trust in social capital

The ability to engage in trust relationships with others in the workplace and in the classroom is a key part of the individual and the group's social capital (Putnam, 2002). The extent to which individuals trust others and develop relationships with them can be influenced by different factors such as shared values, norms and expectations, or institutional factors (Minckler, 2013). Trust affects people's ability to work collaboratively or learn from each other. Teachers in Qatar and England schools had similar perspectives on the role of relationships in shaping their work, as they are essential for professional learning and work routines.

Relationships and conversations are vital for my professional learning. In my role, they take place in one-to-one or small meetings, reflecting on situations and students. These meetings are still happening throughout the pandemic, either in person or by zoom during the lockdown (Teacher, CS-5).

Most leaders' interviews discussed 'trust' as an important factor that makes collaboration easier and more productive (Robinson, 2011). Creating a culture of trust in the school can be enhanced 'when teachers feel that their voices are being heard, which can build trust between leader and team members' (Principal, CS-4). In addition to leaders and teachers' perspectives, students confirmed that teachers played a role in developing their trust relationships: 'teachers affect the

way we communicate and develop friendship through the way they speak and listen to us' (Student, CS-2). Peer relations are important to students:

The connection with my friends influences my learning because it makes me more comfortable in the classroom [...] and more willing to answer questions. (Student, CS-1)

Relationships and connectedness create 'webs of belonging' and bring people together (Calhoun, 2003, p. 536), especially in international schools where people come from multiple cultures and try to recreate their social life: 'we have teachers and students from different backgrounds [...]. They need to find a way to engage in relationships with each other. Nothing can work without a relationship' (Teacher, CS-2). However, while engaging in trust relationships is seen as essential, it is not always easy or natural for students in international schools (Halse, 2018). There are cultural barriers which reduce the chances to form close connections: 'because of the nature of the population we serve, local students do not socialise outside of school as much as in western cultures' (Teacher, CS-3). Relationships based on trust and collaborations are seen as resources in schools, particularly to enhance teamwork and shared curriculum planning: 'we try to employ our collaborative capital as a team to develop a culturally relevant curriculum that is connected to students' cultures'. (ML, CS-1)

Shared values, common norms, expectations, and interests

Shared values and common norms, expectations and interests are key components of social capital that underpin the school's common identity and shared goals. The sub-themes 'values', 'norms' and 'expectations' in the data analysis process were based on the literature review (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; Halse, 2018; Putnam, 2002; Coleman, 1988), while the theme 'common interests' was informed by students and teachers' interviews. Based on the findings, this section shows how people connect to each other and work better when they have common ties and connections that bring them closer. These commonalities are

essential in developing trust relationships, harmonious learning environments, and safe and orderly social spaces (Robinson, 2011). Norms, values, expectations, and interests are developed over a period of time and through experiences within family or cultural environments. They also continue to develop and accumulate as individuals interact with their new field (Reay, 2004; Bradbury, 2016).

This section reflects students' views on what primarily shaped their social capital: 'in order to build stronger relationships, we need to have commonalities' (Student, CS-2). 'Having a one-demographic environment seems unnatural to me. Contrastingly, the norm is 'being around international people who have the same outlook on life' (Student, CS1). In many cases, having a common interest was key to growing the student's social capital: 'my friendships stem from having a common interest with others' (Student, CS-1). In addition, many students adhered to their cultural norms, which affected how they bonded with peers: 'moving around international schools in Qatar didn't affect me, because wherever I go, I would always connect with Qatari girls' (Student, CS-3).

School leaders believed that building a 'community requires the acknowledgement that we all share the same values, but we are unique at the same time' (SL, CS4). While students believed that their social capital was based on cultural elements besides new ones formed through their school connections, some leaders viewed their school values as the main factor bringing their community together: 'the one shared experience that we have is being ex-pats and being in a British international school' (SL, CS-1). The principal of the same school explained how their school purposefully developed shared values for staff and students:

There is a common vision and mission for our school, and the core values are everywhere, on books, walls, and the website. Our students and staff talk about them all the time. (Principal, CS-1)

According to a student in England, 'relationships are formed through common classes and houses' (Student, CS-4), but according to another, they were based on 'shared cultural background and social alignment, in addition to shared values' (Student, CS-1). Some students maintain social boundaries due to 'their home and cultural background', where sometimes 'getting closer to others could be a bad influence' (Student, CS-4). Students' social capital also develops when they have a common academic interest with others, in addition to the sense of support that gives their social relationship an additional value: 'we have a small group of friends, which is mostly about helping each other with studies, but then we ended up becoming friends' (Student, CS-3). Another student attributed their work habits to her social capital: 'my new social circle has helped me to work harder since I came to this school, and I am now able to achieve my goals' (Student, CS-3).

(Mis)Recognition

Students, teachers, and leaders acknowledged the importance of social capital in influencing learning and in building collaborative and trust relations within the school. Furthermore, many of them noted that having a recognised and respected social capital was key to maintaining a positive environment and improving their teaching and learning experience. Being in an international school allows students to 'share their perspective and culture without being ashamed or ostracised as they would somewhere else' (Student, CS-1). A few students also shared their perspectives and experiences:

When I came to an international school, there were so many different people. It was quite hard to be an outsider. I felt appreciated, or my culture was appreciated, even if it was not intentionally done by the school. (Student, CS-1)

I think more should be done to celebrate diversity or acknowledge that, because it is beneficial, not just for the people, but for the whole school. When someone appreciates your culture, you feel more connected to them. (Student, CS-1)

School leaders viewed diversity as a resource for the school, especially that hosting international students and staff was one of the core characteristics of most international schools. A senior leader, for instance, mentioned diversity as a surface-level feature that adds an 'exotic flare' (Principal, CS-1), without unpacking the value that these students add to their school. Another leader, in contrast, discussed the diversity of beliefs and cultural values and how the school works on adapting its own identity and values to theirs.

There are shared beliefs and a vision for the school that should be common to everybody. However, there are individual beliefs and cultures that everybody needs to respect, and then act accordingly while making sure that no one feels intimidated because of what they believe in or where they come from. (Principal, CS-2)

One of the schools in Qatar introduced training sessions for its staff addressing issues of bias: 'we do training in the school about our unconscious bias because it's going to influence our decision making' (Principal, CS-3). In addition, a few teachers shared their experiences of educating their students about different cultures and involving families at the foundation stage. A teacher in CS-1 explained that their department 'celebrates their students' cultural stories and traditions and invites parents to participate'. However, they were sceptical about 'what the real world will teach the children when they grow older', as the social world does not seem to cherish diversity and equity.

Issues of misrecognition (Bourdieu, 1989) or under-recognition (Novelli et al., 2017) of some cultures in international schools were brought up by a few participants. These issues represented acts of intentional and unintentional marginalisation of certain groups by treating them differently or, simply, not acknowledging their existence as cultural components of the school community:

Our British international school celebrates British things, and obviously, the school celebrates how international we are and Qatar National Day, but I don't feel like there's a huge focus on us being international or an appreciation towards our diverse cultures within the school. I don't feel like the school does enough to appreciate our cultures or really acknowledge them (Student, CS-1)

Wherever there is a dominant cultural group, there is a probability that a few other nationalities or cultures might take more time to feel well settled or represented. It might be unconscious; many people may or may not think it's happening. (Teacher, CS-2)

I have witnessed some teachers from specific cultures and nationalities treated differently, spoken to differently even within a meeting, and they noticed that they have been spoken to not in the same way or at the same level as a person perhaps coming from a western country. (ML, CS-3)

In the above examples, the teachers' identities and the capital they embody as individuals, professionals and their collective culture are misrecognised and hardly represented. Some forms of social and cultural capital are seen as more important than others in international schools' fields.

Unlike qualitative results, which revealed the limited understanding and acknowledgment of social and cultural capital in participant schools, quantitative results reflected a general agreement among questionnaire participants on the importance of social capital and its influence on teaching and learning. In response to the question 'do you think social capital influences teaching and learning at your school?', senior leaders (N=35) largely responded within the highest percentile, using a slider on a scale from 1-100.

Table 16

The influence of social capital on teaching and learning

N	Min	Max	Mean	Median
35	13	100	76.54	82

Furthermore, the questionnaire included a question on leaders' perceptions on the importance of the different social aspects in their schools, which constitute the social capital. The responses (N=40) almost show a consensus among responding senior leaders on the importance of these aspects to their schools,

yet the majority did not see that a high rate of mobility or ‘turnover’ affects the social capital in their schools. It was clear that the questionnaire did not allow leaders to capture the complexity of social capital and its different facets. As questionnaires were filled by principals and senior leaders, they do not reflect the perception of middle leaders, teachers, and students. The interviews, contrastingly, captured the nuanced nature of social and embodied cultural capital and revealed their depth and importance to students and teachers, in addition to leaders.

Table 17

Senior leaders’ perceptions of the importance of social capital

‘Why is social capital important?’	Number of responses (N=40)	Percentage of leaders responding
High turnover of staff and students	7	17.5%
Creating a shared identity	18	45%
Acknowledging diversity as a strength	24	60%
Enables students to seek support of peers	20	50%
Enables teachers to seek support of colleagues	21	52%
Promotes feelings of belonging	23	58%

4.7.3 Cultural capital: The embodied and the objectified

Bourdieu’s concept ‘cultural capital’ was not explicitly explored in the data collection methods due to its contested use in different educational landscapes.

Alternatively, it was examined through different themes related to leadership, teaching, and learning as well as culture, behaviour and acquired dispositions. Cultural capital is strongly connected to the notion of social capital and inherently embedded in schools as social and cultural fields. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as ways of knowing, doing, and behaving (1990a), where knowledge is accumulated through education, experience and interaction with a certain culture, group, or family (Bourdieu, 1986; 2021). The findings mainly reflected embodied, institutional, and objectified forms of cultural capital. The embodied form appeared through the expressions of culture, cultural and academic knowledge, languages, and world views. The institutional was represented by courses, certificates, reports, or accreditation outcomes, whereas the objectified cultural capital was represented through school uniforms, technological tools, and in some fields, speaking English with a specific accent. While accent is a part of spoken language and could be seen as embodied, its overrated value in some social fields makes it objectified and exchangeable into other forms of capital. Schools influenced the cultural capital of their staff and students through curriculum, training, resources, and dominant discourses.

Students and teachers' cultural capital

Every student has their own cultural capital, which has developed throughout their lifetime, based on the languages they speak, academic capacities and skills, the different forms of sports or arts they enjoy and practice, and their ways of living and interacting with school. Students exchange knowledge from their own home cultures and social environments, and 'they teach each other in schools, and it's something that staff can learn from' (Principal, CS-5). The experience of students in case-study schools is unique due to their interaction with peers from a wide range of cultures. Students learn from each other and gain additional cultural capital through this interaction, which grows their intercultural knowledge and skills. Students are aware of and value this intercultural exchange as a key feature

of their schools. However, some of them noted that the cultural capital of students is not equally valued or recognised.

Students here are more open-minded than in different types of schools. We see different aspects of the world and learn about different cultures and religions. (Student 3, CS-1)

It is important for a school experience to acknowledge someone's culture, traditions, and heritage. More should be done to celebrate that because it is beneficial for the whole school. (Student, CS-1)

Some school leaders acknowledged the heterogeneity of students' cultural capital and tried to find ways 'to address matters differently' (Principal, CS-2). Another leader, in contrast, believed that the school's mission is to improve students' cultural capital. The school's vision, according to them, is 'to cultivate motivated, resilient, lifelong learners who embody the learner profile' (Principal, CS-3). In their views, students do not come to school with capital, but school and family develop their capital by feeding their passion and cultivating their interests.

Like students, teachers working in international schools also acquire additional cultural capital resulting from the interaction with colleagues, families, and students in different social fields, which also incorporates a form of 'transition capital', a term suggested by Bunnell and Poole (2023, p. 475). Teachers describe themselves as open to multicultural environments and willing to gain intercultural knowledge and skills. A principal in England suggested that there are common attributes of teachers working internationally:

Those lining up to be international school teachers are open-minded about being in an international environment. This means that they want to be involved in different cultural experiences and get to know people from different backgrounds. (Principal, CS-4)

Teachers generally have an aggregate of cultural, social, and professional capital which expands as their experience in international contexts increases. Notwithstanding, travelling and engaging in cultural experiences in different

countries might not be sufficient for a teacher to competently teach internationally. One of the principals suggested 'educating staff about different cultures, and especially about the students in their classes and their parents' (Principal, CS-4). In addition, the principal in CS-5 recommended that 'teachers stay in the same school as much as possible', where they can learn from the school community, 'enhance their cultural capital' and develop their intercultural knowledge and communication skills.

Language as capital

Language is a part of the student's embodied capital, which is particularly supported and developed with the help of the school: 'most students came from different countries and linguistic backgrounds with limited English' (Principal, CS-4). Nevertheless, most leaders mentioned students' needs for additional English language support (Principal, CS-4; Principal, CS-3), addressing students' bilingualism or multilingualism as a deficit (Mehmedbegović, 2017). In contrast, one principal was proud of the multilingualism and multiculturalism of their students and described them as a core part of their school:

The school was established in the seventies when the UK saw an opportunity to develop their cultural and economic ties with Europe. They established this school that offers eight languages and cultural exchange programs. We have 55 nationalities, 12 faiths and 30 ethnicities representing 75 languages spoken in the homes of our students, and half of them speak English as an additional language. Although it is predominantly an English, white and Christian culture, the diversity is much greater than that. (Principal, CS-5)

The objectified cultural capital: Accented English, multiculturalism, and attainment

Objectified cultural capital refers to the tangible forms of cultural capital such as books, produced work, instruments or pieces of arts, which can be transferred into other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Some schools highlighted their British identity and British English accent as an additional capital used to promote their

brand: 'we are all connected through one common brand and that is British education for our students, whatever their background'. The principal of CS-1 promoted accented English as one of the key features of their school, thus, transforming it into an objectified cultural capital: 'We are a British international school in Qatar, which is not just British, but a British English-speaking school' (Principal, CS1). This principal believed that 'accented English' is very important to the parents as many of them do not have English as a first language but speak good English. Parents chose this school because here the children speak accented English, and the parents are quite overwhelmed by that' (Principal, CS-1). The principal described key elements of the school in materialistic terms that can be exchanged into 'beneficial' assets to the school. First, they objectified the school's Englishness, then objectified the population diversity describing multiculturalism as a 'cultural flair'.

We benefit from that diversity, because our Asian ethnicity in the school is much bigger than the European ethnicity. 50% of our nationalities are British, but the overwhelming ethnicity is Asian; mostly South Asian. This adds a cultural flair to the school, but it is quite phenomenal that a lot of the Asians speak English like everybody in England does, often with a local accent. This is because they spent most of their lives in the UK. (Principal, CS-1)

The principal also explained that the school is highly desired by the community, and 'oversubscribed' due the 'exceptional' attainment of its students, using exam results as a promotional substance.

Our results are exceptional, and we are heavily oversubscribed because of this. The results this year [2020] were 74 % A* and A at GCSE and 70 % A* and As at the A levels; 100 percent passed. (Principal, CS-1)

Leadership development as an objectified cultural capital

Educational qualifications are seen as important for obtaining leadership positions, but not as essential requirements: 'the qualifications were helpful when

applying for jobs' (Principal, CS-4). Furthermore, schools promote their leadership development programs as branded products and promote themselves as providers. They offer different programmes in collaboration with international schools' organisations, and have developed further categories reflecting the expansion of norms and forms of leadership' discourse (O'Reilly and Reed, 2010, p. 962), where almost everyone had a specific leadership title or is expected to fit into a leadership category:

We are an extensive provider of COBIS CPD for British international schools, and for local schools. We offer accredited COBIS courses for leadership, teaching and learning for which my leadership team and myself are accredited trainers. We also have a module for aspiring and existing middle leaders, and for aspiring heads. (Principal, CS-1)

Accreditation as institutional objectified cultural capital

Institutional cultural capital is defined as the form of capital related to organisations such as degrees, qualifications, and reports. International schools have increasingly prioritised accreditation status and affiliation or partnerships with different international organisations, as a form of credibility and trustworthiness, that are important for parents and authorities (Khalil, 2019). Schools in Qatar were keen to obtain and maintain a recognisable status in the Qatari community: 'we wanted to establish a school in Qatar that is international, of high educational quality, and provides internationally accredited programs' (Principal, CS-2). The below quotation from another principal in Qatar reflects the same perspective:

We are recognised by leading organisations in the world. We are an ICS School, which is the organisation for private schools in the UK. We are a very prominent COBIS School, a CIS school, and one of 25 accredited High-Performance Learning schools. (Principal, CS-1)

4.7.4 How does leadership respond to the social and cultural capital of students, and does this capital inform leadership?

The data shows that leaders' knowledge of their students' social and cultural capital is limited and trivial. While quantitative data reflected a predominantly positive response confirming that leaders value student capital, qualitative results showed generally limited knowledge and minimal engagement with students' social and cultural capital. Where leaders were aware of the variety, value, and depth of their students' capital, they acknowledged that more work was needed to reflect this capital in their school life, policies, curriculum, and teaching. Interviews with school leaders showed different perspectives and levels of interaction with students' social and cultural capital. CS-1 and CS-3 leaders explained that their schools developed and defined student capital. Despite repeatedly mentioning that their schools are proud to have a diverse community, results showed a thin approach to understanding student capital, and a lack of engagement or response to this capital.

The head of CS-3 for example, believes that leaders might not need to learn about the cultural capital of their students or aim to respond to it. They explained that leaders can simply 'just try to accept people for who they are, ensure that they're learning and move on from there'. They shared reflections on the cultural diversity of their school, which looked like a plan stemming from their position of power rather than current practice: 'we want to be an inclusive school with race and religion; we want to give every skin colour a place at our table' (Principal, CS-3). In addition, a middle leader in CS-1 acknowledged that their school never offered training on how to work in international environments or with international students. Hence, they suggested that 'leaders need to be proactive and acquire relevant personal development that enables them to cope better in this context' (ML, CS-1).

CS-2 and CS-5 leaders, alternatively, were aware of the diversity of cultures and explained that they valued and recognised their students' social and cultural

capital. Their response to student capital included mainly cultural and social events and activities, international days, and celebrating multiculturalism and multilingualism. Both schools focused particularly on humanities, social sciences, and performative and visual arts, which include different learning areas and pedagogical approaches. The head of CS-2 clarified that diversity is enriching and adds value to their school. The job of leaders and teachers, according to them, is 'to build a common culture, but at the same time maintain a space for staff and students who have different ideas and beliefs, which could enhance the school culture'. In the below quote, they share how their school promotes respect and understanding of different beliefs and cultures. They also describe their focus on intercultural communication, with the purpose of bringing students closer to each other, especially that the Arab region has a history of conflicts driven by political, religious, and socio-cultural problems:

Over 95% of our students come mostly from Arab countries and their mother language is Arabic. This makes it easier to develop a common culture and understanding. Our staff, on the contrary, are more diverse. We have teachers coming from different parts of the world, so we build our relationships on mutual respect. We try to bring them together, without affecting their individuality. There is much more work to be done with young people to be able to accept and respect other people's differences and beliefs. Being able to communicate and understand others is important, particularly in the Arab world. (Principal, CS-2)

The principal of CS-5 discussed their perspective on how the social and cultural capital of their students and staff inform their leadership and how they respond to this capital. In the following quote, they explained the elements of internationalisation and the expectations for cross-cultural understanding in their school:

We expect a dimension of internationalisation to permeate into all lessons, which incorporates a multicultural and intercultural behavioural approach. This is understood by everyone in the school, and informs our thinking about the curriculum, professional

development program and recruitment. This is embedded yet needs to be refined and monitored. (Principal, CS-5)

CS-4 leaders were also aware of the distinct social and cultural of their students due to the small size of their school. One of their principals said that the school needs to 'improve the knowledgebase of its teachers, depending on the culture they come from; it would be helpful if teachers understand the culture of their students' (Principal, CS-4). Learning about the culture of students, to them, is a goal or a future perspective. One of their teachers explained that they utilise different opportunities to engage families in their classroom learning: 'When we have a unit of inquiry related to cultural backgrounds, teachers actively engage families and students in sharing knowledge' (Teacher, CS-4). The principals in this school clearly saw the cultural and social divergences within their school and decided to work towards improving this situation by developing a whole-school curriculum. Instead of attempting to understand and engage with their students' social and cultural capital, they decided to teach their international students generally accepted manners and behaviours, which are mainly based on their own British context and identity.

Many international families move around every few years, particularly when they work for embassies, which leads to children having a mixed notion of what they can and can't do, and what is and isn't respectful. So much work is done in this area through our personal development curriculum, from foundation years and all the way up to 18-year-olds. (Principal, CS-4)

Student perspectives

Students generally recounted that teachers were sensitive to student cultures and beliefs. Teachers 'avoided offending students. In history, we learned about religion and other stuff, but our teachers were careful not to hurt students' religious or cultural feelings' (Student, CS-1). Where teachers understand and appreciate

the student cultural and social capital, students feel respected and motivated to engage:

When someone appreciates your culture, you can form a connection with them and other people based on culture, which is very important for us in terms of growing together as a school. (Student, CS-1)

Nevertheless, cultural appreciation might not be sufficient unless teachers actively and respectfully listen to students: 'When teachers are open to listening to their students and understand their connections and their backgrounds, this creates a more relaxed environment and makes students more prone to interactions with teachers' (Student, CS-2). Discussing sensitive cultural issues when teachers do not recognise student knowledge or perspectives could be disappointing to students: 'I would not prefer going to a class where the teacher wouldn't want to listen to me or my views' (Student, CS-2). A student from another school agreed that teachers could make a difference by listening to their students: 'Teachers affect the way we communicate with each other and with them through the way they listen to us' (Student, CS-1). Students expressed concerns about the excessive focus on exams, which suppresses their social experiences: 'It is a competitive culture and a negative one; we can't have a social experience here, which has made me insecure' (Student, CS-2). In contrast to secondary schools, primary school leaders said that their classrooms are inclusive and representative of student voices and offer learning experiences where students are engaged and autonomous.

4.7.5 How does leadership respond to the social and cultural capital of teachers, and does this capital inform leadership?

Most leaders discussed with pride their schools' diversity and the multicultural and multi-ethnic backgrounds of their communities, despite acknowledging that the majority are White Anglo-phonetic or predominantly British staff. The only exception was CS-2 where teachers and leaders were predominantly Arab, although they

came from different countries where different norms and expectations prevail. Leaders explained that the diversity of teachers and students 'brings a richness of experience and perspectives to discussions' (Principal, CS-4). They commonly implied that bolstering teachers' voices was a priority, while a few leaders explained that their teachers lead their work with a sense of autonomy. The following quote is an example of this perspective: 'I have made a significant impact by amplifying the teacher's voice in the school, through individual meetings with staff, staff surveys, etc' (Principal, Questionnaire).

In addition, teachers' interviews included positive statements about appreciating being respected or praised, but their responses do not show nuanced evidence on how leadership interacts or responds to their social and cultural capital: 'Leaders value my social capital and show respect and appreciation' (Teacher, CS-4). Some teachers appreciate receiving 'thank you' messages from their school leaders and the leaders' engagement of stakeholders. Nevertheless, it was not clear whether teachers are a part of these stakeholders and how their voices are heard: 'Leaders include all stakeholders in decision making, which makes us [teachers] feel heard and valued. They often thank and congratulate us for our efforts' (Teacher, CS-3). Conversely, teachers from ethnic minorities in schools were rare and were treated differently. A black primary-school teacher expressed her disappointment about the low recognition of her social and cultural capital in an Arab majority international school in Qatar, while another leader and teacher in a White-majority school shared a similar example regarding non-White teachers.

There have been times when I felt out of place because, although we are an international school, it feels like the Arabic element of it is stronger than the international. I did not feel that my own social capital and the whole culture I represent meant anything to the school, so, I started bringing bits and pieces of my culture to my students. (Teacher, CS-2)

This data shows limited or poor insights on whether teachers' social and cultural capital informs leadership. Teachers from dominant cultural groups explained that

their work was mainly focused on teaching 'The Curriculum' that the school has chosen, and that they were given specific instructions and guidance for teaching and preparing students for exams at the high school level. It was not clear whether the identities, voices, cultures, knowledge(s) and pedagogies of these teachers mattered at all in affecting important school decisions. In cases where teachers' voices made a difference, it was through trivial and surface-level procedures and activities related to teaching, learning and extra-curriculars. The teachers' role was explicitly to follow directives and ensure that students were generally successful.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the integrated findings derived from the different methods employed by the research design. At the start, the chapter introduced vignettes of the five case studies and a summary of cross-case findings. Then, the chapter presented the integrated findings—from different methods—combined under the main categories, themes, and subthemes, that are represented respectively in headings and subheadings. The findings can be summarised in four main ideas.

First, examining schools as social fields showed that the majority of their students and staff experienced mobility and migration that influenced their sense of relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2019) and belonging (Halse, 2018; Kelly, 2020) to their new fields and the overall learning experience. Mobility takes place not only among students and families, but also teachers and leaders, which affects leadership development and leaders' impact on their schools. The findings in this section offered a detailed picture of the key descriptors of schools, including their diverse communities, organisational identities, programs, affiliations, and policies—particularly curriculum and recruitment—and the way these influenced leading, teaching and learning. The pandemic added additional feelings of disconnection and dis-belonging and confirmed that social relationships are important for student learning. Teachers, in contrast, found out that they could maintain and develop their social and professional capital during the pandemic,

nonetheless, they generally believed that their teaching and learning during the pandemic were not as effective as it would usually be when they interact with students face-to-face.

Second, the findings on leadership praxis offered a detailed picture of the perspectives and knowledge underpinning practice, including overviews of what they do (dimensions of practice) and how they lead (Robinson, 2011). Findings showed broadly demarcated patterns of leadership dimensions regardless of school location or organisational identity. Leadership is largely driven by organisational frameworks and evaluation benchmarks rather than the needs of their social fields. Leadership takes place through well-defined channels; however, action and influence occur relationally (Eacott, 2019) through the interaction of individuals and teams, mostly at the middle leadership and teachers' levels. The concepts of trust relationships and dialogue (or conversations) embedded in leadership practices are seen as important and effective across all interviews and questionnaires in both countries, whereas recognition and representation (Fraser, 2000; Novelli et al., 2017) were added to the above concepts in the interviews of teachers, middle leaders, and students. In addition, leadership at headship level is less engaged with contextual knowledge related to the social field and less likely to recognise the needs of students and teachers. In contrast, heads and principals are more focused on meeting normative organisational goals that often overshadow the needs of their school community. The pandemic created multiple challenges and disrupted the usual pattern of leadership and management. Consequently, schools witnessed new changes to the leadership circles and norms, which became more focused on contextual needs. The findings also showed several patterns of change in leadership, mainly represented by horizontal and shared leadership.

Third, the findings revealed a clear picture of what leadership development looks like in participant schools and explained how learning happens. Leadership learning at principalship and headship level was mainly driven by generic

organisational outlines and programs or independent opportunities at individual levels, while senior and middle leaders engage in professional socialisation and learn alongside others. Learning 'on-the-job' was seen as important and common, while formal education and qualifications were seen as less important, reflecting less engagement with theory and more reliance on practical skills. Leadership learning was viewed from the perspectives of the adult learner and the adult educator (Joo & Kim, 2016) who guides the learning of others. The findings on leadership learning and development at different levels revealed a lack of engagement in learning about international contexts, mainly those related to their schools, which reflects a gap between leading in international school contexts and their common knowledge and preparation for this role (Calnin et al., 2018). In addition, leaders support the development of other leaders through promotion and internal opportunities and supporting teacher leadership.

Eventually, the last section responded to the last research question, and connected data from the first three categories of themes (field, leadership praxis and leadership development), in addition to direct findings related to this question. Most students and some staff noted that their identities and cultural capital were not sufficiently recognised in their schools, and not adequately represented in the curriculum, teaching, and employment. Findings from students showed that their social capital and relationships with others are vital to their learning (Riley, 2022), however, schools often marginalise this area and focus mostly on academic attainment and normative discourses of diversity. Leadership is generally disconnected from the voices and needs of students and teachers and marginalises their voices (Smyth, 2006) and cultures in response to unidimensional organisational frameworks. Contrastingly, senior leaders generally promote superficial norms of diversity and community, promote discourses of objectification of capital, internationalisation, and Britishness, while their approaches lack the sense of community representation and recognition. Conversely, two school leaders reflected a deeper understanding of multi-identity and multicultural communities and supported programs and initiatives that

responded to their students and parent communities (Khalifa et al., 2016). Despite these attempts, their schools—like the other case studies—also included a minority of international staff and a majority of international students.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The structure of this chapter is based on the main themes presented by the findings, which respond respectively to the four research questions. The first part discusses the findings related to international schools as social and cultural fields and their impact on leading and learning. This part also includes a discussion of the Covid-19 pandemic and the way it affected all aspects of schooling, including leadership, teaching, and learning (Gurr, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2022). The second part provides a discussion of the findings related to leaders' perspectives and practices while engaging with scholarship on educational leadership dimensions (Robinson, 2011; Southworth, 2009), dynamics and relationships (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1986) and current patterns of change in these specific times and spaces. The chapter also engages with literature on leadership in international schools (Bunnell, 2018, 2021; Fisher, 2021) and social and cultural justice leadership (Khalifa et al. 2016; Fraise & Brooks, 2015). Next, the chapter offers an examination of leadership development as a key area that influences leadership praxis. Leadership development is analysed through the lens of andragogy—adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1996)—with emphasis on leaders as adult learners and adult educators, who guide and support other leaders and teachers (Joo & Kim, 2016). The following part analyses the social and cultural capital of teachers and students (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992), their relationship with leadership and the implications for leading, teaching and learning. The last part addresses gaps and complexities in international school leadership research while highlighting new insights brought forward by this study. To conclude, the chapter ends with a summary of key discussion points and highlights the theoretical and methodological contributions of this thesis.

5.2 The International School Community—Schools as Social Fields

It is well established in research that one of the priorities of school leadership is responding to the organisational context and the needs of the school community, including teachers and students' needs (Ryu et al., 2022; Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2017; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Research on international schools showed that they are widely distinct (Bates, 2011, Gardner-McTaggart, 2018), which was confirmed by the unique features of participant schools, in terms of size, programs, communities and identities. Despite distinctness, the findings indicate many structural consistencies and homogenised managerialist (Eacott, 2011c) and performative approaches (Richards, 2016) across participant schools, which overlook the diversity of their communities and pose questions about the role and purpose of school leadership in these contexts. To clarify further, the following paragraphs consider the demographics and dynamics of schools within this research, then moves to a discussion of their consistent features: structure, identity, and policy.

The findings showed that social fields have significant effects on the experience of leaders and the way they lead teaching and learning (Addison, 2009; Flint, 2011). Participant schools have many elements in common as this discussion shows, however, their particularities emerge from the specific features of their communities, which heavily influenced the findings of this study. Working with communities that are characterised by social and cultural distinctness requires leaders to engage in a new journey of learning and adapt their previously learned skills to meet the needs of the new field (Schepen, 2017). The nature of the school and the needs of its community are key in setting the direction and dimensions of leadership (Leithwood et al., 2020a), and the way they lead schools, develop their leadership and support others.

International schools are generally different from other diverse schools in different contexts as their communities are characterised by frequent mobility, which embodies a sense of temporality (Sklair, 2001) and disconnection with spaces

and places (Halse, 2018; Kingston, 1993). In mobile communities, such as international schools, people lose association with specific locations or adopt fragmented connections that lack the sense of longevity, which heavily affects their relationships with the new field. In contrast, the sense of permanency or stability—in other contexts—allows students and teachers to develop a sense of belonging (Riley, 2022) and build lasting relationships with the place (Hayes & Skattebol, 2015), the community, and each other.

Understanding the unique experience of international school communities and its effect on leading, teaching and learning requires a thorough analysis within and beyond the duality of '*mobility*' (Urry, 2000) and '*immobility*' (Khan, 2022). The literature review on international school communities reflects limited attention to the significance and consequences of movement in educational contexts (Urry, 2007). Urry's argument for a new understanding of '*mobility*' beyond the sociology of migration can be useful in the study of international schools' communities. Urry (2010) analyses mobility as a discursive and historical movement that has been increasingly expanding in the 21st century. With geographical mobilities affecting education, society, human relationships, and politics, Urry suggests moving away from 'the social as society' to 'the social as mobility' (2000, p. 2). This idea is foundational to the understanding of the social field as a realm that exists beyond the traditional notion of society—as bounded by the borders of a specific nation—and legitimises the analysis of the '*social as mobility*', interculturality, internationalism, and temporality.

Research on education in the context of temporality resulting from mobility or momentary migration in educational contexts is still thin. Most of these studies have either represented communities in the context of forced displacement (Arar, 2020), or focused on higher education (Kim, 2009; Morley et al., 2018). The conceptualisation of mobility is affected by different factors in the field such as political and social perspectives and the lens through which the particular experience of internationalisation is understood. For instance, individuals who are

forcefully displaced or those who move permanently or for extended periods of time are more likely to be viewed as migrants, while others who leave their countries temporarily for political, economic, religious or cultural reasons are more likely to be viewed as international (Poore, 2005; Renaud, 1991) or transnational (Kuntz, 2016), which creates a different perspective related to understanding their needs. Educational research generally overlooks the reasons behind their mobility, the number of times they have moved, and the places they lived in, which affect their ability to engage with new fields. However, research has confirmed that mobility affects students' belonging and identities and the way they conceptualise different worlds (Pinson & Arnot, 2020).

Bourdieu's theory 'highlighted the importance of culture and identity in social transformations' (Go, 2013, p. 58) and the 'duality of social regulations' brought on by the introduction of the new culture (Bourdieu, 1959, p. 59). Students who experience mobility and migration find themselves 'alienated' and 'trapped in a duality of two social fields' (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 56-57). The process of social and cultural 'uprooting' from one context to the other can influence their identity (Bourdieu, 1959), in addition to lasting emotional and social issues that need to be addressed seriously in schools (Riley, 2022). Besides the experience of mobility and migration, the field is characterised as multi-ethnic, multireligious, multilingual (Mehmedbegović, 2016) and incorporates a complex combination of socioeconomic groups, which heavily influences the pluralistic cultural capital embedded in most schools.

The findings from interviews in England reflected a duality of 'us' and 'them', where most students were seen as 'international' but leaders and staff did not see themselves as such. Alternatively, British students and teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds were seen as diverse and locals, which implied a clear distinction between diversity and 'internationalism' (Urry, 2000, p. 141). Internationalism was only used to refer to newcomers and those who are considered temporal and referred to as 'expats'. In contrast, leaders, teachers and

many students in Qatar self-identified and were identified by others as 'international'—mainly those from Western countries or East Asia—, while students and some teachers from South West Asia and North Africa (SWANA) (Qayoumi, 2021) were referred to as Asian, Arab or locals. Nonetheless, Qatari students viewed themselves as locals and viewed everyone else as 'international'. Thus, referring to the status of permanent temporality of locals who are not Qatari; an assumption that is rooted in cultural and historical landscapes (Alshehabi, 2015; Alnuaimi, 2022).

A nuanced examination of what the term 'international' means in this social field reflects a polysemantic notion and multiple positions, where the views of the 'self' and the 'other' through the lens of internationalisation are not analogous. Furthermore, the field of international schools is not identically diverse. Based on the findings, key players in this field do not have equal symbolic capital(s). Their symbolic capital is appreciated depending on 'imagined' and ideologically 'constructed' (Holliday, 2006, p. 385-386) perceptions of the 'Other', who is not Western (Said, 1978). The interviews revealed a sense of positioning, cultural hierarchy and 'cultural centrism' inherently reflecting an 'imbalance in the geopolitics' of international education (R'boul, 2022, p. 1154). This culturally centric attitude, embodied and enacted by schools, connotes colonial legacies (Samier, 2021) and economic and symbolic power, which have social roots and implications (Calhoun, 2006). The influence of economic capital in determining this invisible hierarchy cannot be underestimated. Cultural and economic centrism act as a foundation of the hierarchical social dynamics within and beyond schools. The question of how the school community internalises and adopts this stratified 'cultural reduction' (Holliday, 2006, p. 386) and reproduces it in its daily encounters is inherently sociological. Alternatively, the question of how leadership embodies and responds to this hierarchy, and how it directs the school to a state of social and cultural equity, is a core area driven by the findings of this research.

The findings showed that students—and their multicultural capital—are generally underrepresented in their schools, with some exceptions in CS-2. Leaders, teachers, and key staff are predominantly White Anglo-phonic (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021), with a minority of people of colour in teaching, administrative or support positions (Bunnell & Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). The limited cultural representation in staff, or the lack of it, creates additional distance between students and their schools, thus, adding another layer to their ‘alienation’ (Go, 2013, p. 59). When considered besides predefined curriculum and pedagogy (Poore, 2005; hooks, 1994), it could be suggested that schools are at the risk of marginalising their students’ social, cultural, and learning needs (Kim, 2019). It can be argued that students and a minority of teachers are in a ‘status of cultural invisibility’; a term borrowed from R’boul (2020) who contended that the Global South(s) are ‘invisible’ in both professional and epistemic spaces. To build on this concept, it could be inferred that students and teachers from the Global South(s) are ‘invisible’ in their schools, not only in Qatar but also in England, where many international students are seen as an extension of the Global South(s) into the Global North(s) (R’boul, 2022). The marginalisation or invisibility of students and teachers’ capital(s) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) raise questions on how leadership relates and responds to its social field, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Research on international and multicultural school leadership—although scarce—emphasises learning about people and contexts and adapting existing approaches to meet their needs (Fisher, 2021; Clarke & O’Donoghue, 2017). However, the outcomes of this investigation showed that leaders predominantly adopted homogenised ‘Western humanist liberal packaged curricula’ (Poore, 2005, p. 352) and frameworks that respond to their organisational goals rather than their school communities. The discussion of these findings waves flags about the need for an inter-cultural philosophy within and beyond schools (Schepen, 2017), inter-cultural dialogue (R’boul, 2020), socially and culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Lopez, 2016) and leadership that is immersed

in transformative andragogy (Mezirow, 1996; Brown, 2004). However, initiating and sustaining this change are challenged by systemic and functional factors, such as the 'revolving door' (Littleford, 1999, p. 33) and other structural issues.

5.2.1 Traffic at the revolving door: The mobility of leaders and teachers

The questionnaire findings showed that the average time spent by 49 principals and senior leaders in their last school was 3.3 years. These findings are aligned with a study conducted by Benson (2011) who investigated the time spent in office by 83 principals and documented an average of 3.7 years; a figure slightly improved from 2.9 years in the 1990s when Hawley (1994, 1995) conducted their study. The question of why most leaders leave their office after such a short tenure, and why others stay longer seems to be inevitable. There was no question to leaders on the reasons for leaving their previous schools or positions; however, interviews started by asking participants to introduce themselves and their schools. During these introductions, leaders shared when they came to their last school, where they've been before, and other details about their experience. The responses of 'one', 'two', 'three' and 'four' years in each school were the most common. Moreover, the questionnaire asked leaders to list current challenges. Responses included frustration, not having sufficient assistance, financial restrictions, and stressful relationships with governors, which led to an inference on the connection between short-term tenure and common challenges. While principals did not reveal additional reasons such as contract termination or short-term contracts, document analysis and field analysis showed that in some cases principals were replaced after the school failed to meet satisfactory inspection outcomes. Short tenures not only affect schoolwork (Earley, 2013), but also leaders' confidence and professional identity (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2018). In contrast, leaders who stayed longer in their positions were more confident and comfortable discussing their practice and limitations, as revealed by the interviews.

In addition to leaders' mobility, the findings showed that many teachers move frequently from one country to another. The responses collated from teachers' interviews under the theme mobility included 'looking for better opportunities', 'chances for professional development', 'promotion', 'salary cuts', and 'lack of training related to working in international environments'. Teachers were generally positive or neutral during interviews when they explained how their social and cultural capital are responded to in their schools. Nonetheless, some responses reflected frustration resulting from an under-appreciation of their cultures, or a sense of cultural and racial discrimination. In addition, during the pandemic, both leaders and teachers described issues of 'insecurity and precarity' (Bunnell & Poole, 2023, p. 464) resulting from wage reduction and contractual changes; a situation that reflected a state of anguish. Hence, the pandemic added another reason for further traffic at the revolving door, which was confirmed in England and Qatar case studies.

As far as this discussion is concerned, understanding the reasons for frequent mobility enables a clearer explanation of its impact on leading, teaching and learning. It is inevitable that the mobility of teachers and leaders driven by short-term contracts does not serve the goals of school improvement and student learning due to the difficulty of building connections with the school community (Mancuso et al., 2010). Therefore, leaders, teachers and students in these transient contexts find difficulty developing a sense of belonging to the place, which is essential to a successful and dynamic learning experience (Riley et al., 2016). In addition, interviews with senior leaders showed that teacher and leader transience pose difficulties in developing leadership capacities since many 'leaders and teachers leave within an average of two to three years' (Principal, CS-2). Thus, the question of relating to and responding to the social field and the community could be equally difficult and critical.

Another reason for the revolving door is the cost-effective business model of most schools (Bunnell, 2018), which benefits from shorter contracts and 'fire-and-

rehire' policy (Freyssinet, 2022). This model was identified by leaders as a 'business' (Principal, CS-1) or a 'commercial school' (Principal, CS-4). Based on a neoliberal ideology, the corporate approach to education seeks maximisation of profit and reduction of cost (Gunter, 2001). While this model could be commercially successful, an educational approach that prioritises cost-effectiveness, market-ability and short-term results is problematic (Ball, 2012a, 2017). Moreover, many teachers and leaders face issues of visa restrictions and find difficulty adjusting to new locations. In conclusion, short contracts, precarity (Bunnell & Poole, 2023), corporate models, and the challenges of relocation contribute to increased rates of mobility among leaders and teachers, which deprive schools of meaningful input resulting from a stable body of staff.

Contrastingly, CS-5 is state funded, unlike the dominant corporate model in other schools. Its staff have long-term contracts, which leads to significantly low staff mobility and enables strong relationships between staff and the community. This situation allows leaders and teachers to develop within the school context and direct their professional learning toward their student and school needs (Hallinger et al., 2014; Benson, 2011). While this model is not ideal and struggles with issues of bureaucracy and 'inconvenient government decisions and regulations', it can potentially result in a sense of growth and belonging to the place, and 'an accumulation of cultural capital' (Principal, CS-5).

5.2.2 The nature of the school: Organisational structure, identity, and policy

Scholars in the field of international education linked its development to historical geographical contexts associated with the post-colonial era (1960s and 1970s) in Asia and Africa (Samier et al., 2021; Bates, 2011). This development has been associated with the movement of groups and individuals from Europe and the Americas to the rest of the world, mainly the Global South, in the pursuit of global markets (Bates, 2011). Originally, schools were established to teach the children of expatriates in their new locations (Benson, 2011; Poore, 2005). However, many

local corporations in the last two decades have invested in educational services in the form of international schools (Fisher, 2021). Bunnell and Gardener-McTaggart (2022) clarified that some international schools are largely occupied by locals whose parents are interested in international education, or serve both local and expat communities, such as case study schools examined in this research. Most schools are 'founded by Western governments or organisations' and 'accredited by Western agencies' (Poore, 2005, p. 325) that either offer a package of curriculum, assessment, and training, or authorise schools to offer a specific program under certain conditions. Therefore, the main identification of most schools originates from a business concept rather than responding to the global community's need for intercultural education (Bates, 2011; Lai et al., 2022). These schools have been massively expanding across the globe (Pearce, 2023), nonetheless, the problem is not in the expansion per se, but in the reconceptualisation and enactment of international education as a market-driven service, rooted in a neoliberal discourse (Ball, 2017) and a post-colonial perspective (Samier, 2016, 2021). Hence, any discussion of leadership praxis in these schools is challenged by these parameters. Consequently, the question of how leaders lead teaching and learning, how leadership develops and responds to the social and cultural capital of teachers and students is intrinsically influenced by these ideologies. Therefore, a combination of theoretical frameworks is essential to understand this social and educational phenomenon (Habermas, 1987) and to drive this analysis further.

The figures published annually by the ISC Research (2023) reflect massive growth in the number of international schools (12,853) and their students (5,73 million) and staff (557,723). Their expansion is largely taking place in Asia and Africa, and to some extent, in Europe and the United Kingdom (Gardner-McTaggart, 2019). These schools are undoubtedly desired and perceived as providers of good-quality educational service (Khalil & Kelly, 2020). This phenomenon was also confirmed by the findings of this study, where most participant schools were oversubscribed despite high tuition fees. Educational

investors have developed different types of schools with a range of tuition fees that make schools accessible to different middle-class levels. Khalil (2019) explained that international schools and, particularly, British international schools in the Middle East are perceived to have a high-quality education and are desired by people for no evident reasons. It could be argued that although the reasons might not be observable, they can be understood through critical and sociological analysis. Analysing the desirability of these schools through a single perspective could result in reductionism. Alternatively, a multidimensional lens might be more useful.

While scholars in the field view the desired educational outcomes by families as central to the flourishing business of international schools (Baikovitch & Yemini, 2022), this perspective does not offer clarity into why families largely desire these schools. This phenomenon was mentioned frequently by leaders during interviews, reflecting a sense of elitism and cultural supremacy (Kopsick, 2016). Gardner-McTaggart (2021) described social desirability as the ‘international gaze’ (p. 5), where people from Asia and Africa think highly of international schools, and unquestionably refer to their ‘White-privilege’ policies as opportunities for their children (McIntosh, 2008, as cited in Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). This phenomenon can be best explained through the lens of cultural centrism (Samier et al., 2022), neoliberalism (Ball, 2012b, 2017), post-colonial self-orientalism (Said, 1995) and securitisation (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018; Shanks, 2019). This multi-perspectival lens could set the foundation to a discussion of the limitations and potentials of leadership in this field and advance a reconstruction of leadership theory in the realm of internationalisation.

The notion of cultural superiority has been associated with the colonial history of European countries in Asia, Africa, and the rest of the world before the neoliberal era (Samier, 2022; Gibson & Bailey, 2023). Said’s book *Orientalism* (1995) explains that Western orientalism has ‘constructed’ the Orient (the East) as inferior regions that are in need of civilisation, where the mission of Western

colonisers is to 'educate' the 'backward' and 'uncivilized' communities of the Orient (p. 207). The orientalist perspective was driven by the belief that the West (European powers) is 'superior', more knowledgeable, and consequently, better. This perspective has been historically internalised by many in the East, who engaged in a self-orientalising discourse of cultural 'inferiority' (Said, 1995, p. 42) due to decades of oppression, marginalisation, and despair. Thus, many people within the communities of international schools have adopted this self-orientalist attitude that is both 'latent' and 'potent' (Said, 1995, p. 42-43). Some school leaders explicitly discussed the parents' desire for their children to speak with an English accent, and their schools' role in educating the community, while completely ignoring their students' local culture, language, and knowledge(s) in their curriculum, which represented an orientalist stance (Said, 1999; Holliday, 2006). In addition to a postcolonial orientalist and self-orientalist lens, employing a political economy lens can offer a clearer picture of the sophisticated neoliberal context that enable international schools to thrive.

Neoliberalism has been transformed over the last two decades from a market ideology to social and cultural perspective influencing people's ways of living (Ball, 2017). Simultaneously, ongoing political and economic issues in most of the Middle East—and the wider SWANA region—have affected the quality of local (national) education, which is inherently connected with low rates of employability (Akkari, 2004; UNICEF, 2019, 2023). Therefore, families who can afford international education generally choose to invest in their children's schooling to secure a better future. Gardener-McTaggart (2018) explained that opportunities are represented by English language skills and a recognisable social capital which could increase their chances of employability and high-quality higher education in the future. While these factors highly benefit international schools in Qatar and the SWANA region, similar schools in England and other Northern countries benefit from the diaspora of middle-class immigrants from the Global South(s) and the rest of the world (R'boul, 2021). The same perspectives underpin the desirability phenomenon in the Global North, where the desire of parents to equip

their children with globally transferable skills and a cosmopolitan social capital prevail. Nevertheless, the notion of ‘securitisation’ (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018; Shanks, 2019) helps with unpacking this phenomenon in England and the rest of the Global North. Migrant parents are keen to enrol their children in international schools because they will be positioned as ‘international’ rather than ‘immigrants’, where they could be ‘othered’ and marginalised—as in the case of most state schools, which could heavily influence their schooling experience (Student-CS1). This multi-perspective analysis helps to understand the cultural and sociological underpinnings of international school communities and explains some of the underlying reasons—past and present—behind their global desirability. Realistically, with ongoing issues of insecurity globally and rising waves of migration and internationalisation, international schools will continue to expand as a token of quality education and a better future for millions of children.

5.2.3 Structural and systemic challenges

Despite having different identities, locations, communities and organisational features, the findings showed that most participant schools operate in similar structural patterns: management systems, curriculum administration, hiring practices, professional learning, and assessment policies. The findings showed that leaders follow a predetermined path to maintaining the ‘success of their schools’ (Principal, CS-1). According to Dimmock and Walker (2016), while schools and their leadership follow similar policies, their enactment should respond to their cultural contexts, especially that they are more diverse than any other type of schools (Fisher, 2021). Interviews showed contradicting views; while some leaders and teachers in CS-2 and CS-5 stated that their schools offer elements of inclusivity and representation in their curriculum and teaching practices, leaders in CS-1 and CS-4 explained that their schools focus more on attainment and less on cultural representation. However, in schools where leaders acknowledged the importance of cultural integration (Tollefson & Magdaleno, 2016), the triangulation of data showed limited attention and intention to abolish

the dominance of a single culture, mainly in their curriculum, pedagogies, employment, and socialisation practices.

The role of principals and senior leaders in guiding the change toward more inclusivity seems to vary from one school to another. While some principals explained their contributions to directing school policies and development plans, others said that they are subject to board decisions and restricted by the requirements of their accreditation or inspection bodies. The findings also showed that schools strongly focus on implementing or delivering curriculum and assessments that are aligned with the directions of their authorising organisations. Despite the diversity of student needs and backgrounds, schools operate under unidimensional frameworks that tend to tailor student learning to meet predefined curriculum and academic approach rather than change their curriculum and approach to meet student needs (Khalifa et al., 2016). Additionally, although their teachers have distinct experiences and preparation, teachers and leaders' development follow generic and broad schemes rather than responding to their individual needs and unique contexts (Calnin et al., 2018).

5.2.4 Systemic policy and change

Eacott (2016) suggested that leaders can initiate change from within the system without necessarily going against it. Nonetheless, change and adaptation require significant theoretical understanding, preparation, and professional capital, besides cycles of work and perseverance (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2019). Changing an existing system might not always be possible. It could be challenging to disrupt the status quo when leaders find themselves fighting different battles at the same time (Earley, 2016); therefore, some leaders might choose to lead (or manage) smoothly within a working system without disrupting it. As the job primarily requires critical thinking about issues of teaching, learning, curriculum, and micro-policies (Thomson, 2017), the pressure of navigating different battles could be overwhelming and restrict any possible change.

While policy enactment and implementation could be a key feature of leadership in the public sector (Biesta, 2023), this role is aligned with meeting budgetary and strategic organisational goals in corporate international schools. The findings showed that senior leaders are generally burdened by financial restrictions that affect their ability to make the best decisions in terms of employment, training, resources, and other areas. The interviews revealed that some leaders have a significant influence on policy development in their schools, while others are less influential. The ability of leaders to lead and enact change from within requires an accumulation of efforts, time, strategy, and investment in building organisational capacity (Fullan, 2012). The barriers to change within schools could be challenging to the entire notion of leadership (Evans, 2022). When leaders work merely to support an existing status and make minor decisions rather than influencing the direction of the school (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006), they realise that their role is about managing rather than leading, which can be discouraging. While all leadership roles include managerialist aspects, managerial roles do not necessarily incorporate leadership or the prospect of influencing change. This conceptual tension between leading and managing is intellectually productive as we unpack and analyse the relationship between leadership theory and practice in this research.

The findings showed that many senior leaders feel a sense of pressure to meet organisational and financial targets, which is important to maintain school success. When leaders join an existing structure where the budget is subject to student enrolment, their margin of influence in key decisional areas could be limited, but still possible by navigating organisational restrictions and depending on enrolment rates (Principal, CS-4). Contrastingly, leaders who fail to meet financial targets could be accused of mismanagement or even replaced (Benson, 2011). In fact, CS-4 had different heads in the last few years, which could imply that failure to meet inspection expectations or organisational goals led to devastating consequences on leaders and their careers (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2022). Negative outcomes heavily affect their status, professional identity and

might also affect their self-efficacy, which was implied by the findings. However, according to Milley and Dulude (2020) failing to meet organisational targets can be associated with reasons other than poor leadership and management skills such as structural or functional issues, poor resources, less prepared or less experienced teachers, low levels of cooperation and demotivation of staff. Despite not being explicitly discussed in school leadership research, principals carry the burden of profitability in schools, which 'comes at the cost of navigating strict budgets and decisions that could restrict their support for teaching and learning' (Principal, CS-4).

5.2.4 Economic capital, corporate culture, and the leadership identity

The findings revealed that economic capital is central to school operations. Their public image, fees, corporate business models and the focus on profitability strongly prioritise economic capital. However, this area is not sufficiently addressed in educational leadership and management research (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2022). Furthermore, educational leaders are rarely trained to deal with business management (Courtney, 2015), but it could be argued that economic capital is crucial to the work of leaders as it influences important areas. Economic capital is vital in schools that identify as commercial, corporate, or private businesses, especially when leaders are responsible for budget management and fiscal outcomes. The integrated findings showed that many schools have restricted budgets for different reasons, which were revealed in three case-studies and in the questionnaire's short-answer questions. Based on these findings, facing a restricted budget results in additional challenges for leaders and affects their ability to make suitable decisions related to employment, resources, or influencing teachers' work. It also affects the leaders' scope of work where middle leaders and teachers could be allocated additional leadership duties on top of theirs. Similarly, principals in some schools struggle with limited support and work in different directions with limited facilities, which could be frustrating.

Besides frustrating working conditions, leaders experience 'self-blame' and 'guilt feelings' (Principal, CS-4) toward their team members when they are unable to meet their expectations due to financial shortages. The constant pressure of meeting financial targets can heavily influence leaders' sense of agency and professional identity (Thomson, 2017, Biesta, 2010). Whether this influence was overt or implied during interviews, it was clear that leaders were not comfortably navigating this corporate-educational role. Perceiving themselves as ineffective, unable to meet governors' budgetary targets or secure a minimum enrolment size affects leaders' self-perception and the evaluation of their work by governors (Benson, 2011). Corporate and managerialist factors can heavily affect leaders' sense of self-efficacy because it is not aligned with their professional identity as educators (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2022). The sense of inefficiency due to not meeting budgetary targets can be dehumanising and draining for leaders (Thompson, 2017). Conversely, senior leaders who self-identify as business directors or executive managers can comfortably endorse their role. Some leaders struggle with embodying this edu-business identity, while others adopt it unapologetically.

Understanding international schools as social fields allows an exploration of the context in which leadership takes place, and an analysis of the mutual influence between leadership and the field (Evans, 2021). The concept of field incorporates a sense of positioning—social and relational—between different players in the larger field and allows the analysis of the relationship between case-study schools and the wider community. The findings showed that the field is governed by competitive relationships between international schools and between them and other types of schools. Schools in Qatar share their 'best practice' with other schools in response to requests from the Ministry, while schools in England have no similar expectation. Relationships with community organisations in both countries are generally superficial and driven by market competition and symbolic power rather than reciprocity, with the exception of CS-5 that is a comprehensive school with strong ties to its local authority. The rest of the case studies are mostly

disconnected from their surroundings, with rare and limited encounters. However, while schools are disconnected from their local communities, they engage in relationships with other schools in global contexts, virtually or through travels. Kim (2019) described this disconnection from the local field as an example of students' disjuncture from their societies and local issues while connecting with wider global issues. Lautrette (2008) noted that international schools 'exist mainly in a sort of bubble, floating free of the local cultural context within which they are geographically situated' (as cited in Bates, 2011, p. 7). Such disconnection forms a social and cultural rupture (Bourdieu, 1961) between students and their surroundings and results in a sense of alienation (Said, 1999).

5.2.5 The pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic that started in February 2020 was not only a health crisis, but also a social, economic, and educational one that disrupted the whole social order. It affected how people lived and worked and changed the way schools have been working for decades (Gurr, 2021). Schools that lacked the needed technological foundation were deeply challenged (Fullan et al., 2020). Case study schools were equipped with technological tools to different extents and all of them moved into hybrid or online modes for specific periods in 2020. Students and staff were mostly capable of using digital platforms. The impact of the pandemic, nonetheless, was socially and academically enormous.

The findings reflected challenges in schools due to the disruption and lack of preparation. Despite having technological platforms and capacities, the level of responsiveness to the change varied from one school to another (Doll et al., 2020). The shift from routine classroom instruction to virtual spaces happened while everyone was undergoing high levels of stress and concerns for their own and their families' safety (Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2021). Leaders led school operations with no clarity or certainty, especially in areas of teaching and learning (Harris & Johnson, 2022). There was an unusual sense of lost control. Schools were managerially challenged with changing directions from the government in

both countries and went from operating normally to complete lockdown and hybrid modes. Reduced timetables and minimised lessons were introduced in most schools due to rising cases of infection among staff, Zoom fatigue, and parental demands. In addition, social distancing affected everyone, including leaders, teachers, and students. The findings showed that students were generally demotivated and distressed, particularly those preparing for high stakes exams and university admissions. Teachers, simultaneously, were affected by overwhelming pressure, the unpredictability of their work, exhaustion, and anxiety, in addition to reduced job security in some schools. Nevertheless, teacher learning continued to take place, with changing priorities and methods.

Leaders who would usually offer guidance to others in times of turbulence, found themselves helpless during a global pandemic (Gurr, 2021). They struggled to meet changing guidelines, and to deal with concerned parents and unsatisfied governors or corporate managers due to additional expenses and unexpected losses. While dealing with these challenges, leaders were also concerned about their students and the disrupted course of teaching and learning. The findings of teachers and leaders' interviews showed that parents suddenly got involved in their child's school life and education (Harris & Jones, 2022), and many of them were unsatisfied. Moreover, leaders worked under the risk of contracting the virus and harming their family members. In brief, the pandemic shook the very foundation of what school leadership meant and raised difficult questions about the role, purpose, and future of school leadership (Barnett, 2021; Evans, 2022).

Despite difficulties and negative influences, the pandemic also yielded positive outcomes (Goode et al., 2021). Like other historical crises, the pandemic enabled people to raise questions about previously normalised aspects of education and schools. A new discourse emerged reflecting and unpacking the identity of the school as a social and community organisation rather than an isolated entity behind closed walls. Parents-school relationship moved beyond traditional approaches of hierarchy, appointments, security checks and waiting rooms to

examining directly, without mediation, their children's education, and communicating virtually with school leaders and teachers. Concurrently, leaders and teachers felt a greater need to involve families in the conversation around children's learning and needs (Harris & Jones, 2022). In addition, the question of well-being in schools became strongly present in daily conversations besides the usual discussions of learning and attainment.

In addition to improved communication with parents, the pandemic brought forward an appreciation of the role played by different professionals in schools such as technology support staff, health and counselling, security, logistics and communication staff. Most importantly, there was an acknowledgement that new norms of leading and managing are needed. Findings from middle leaders revealed that they were consulted with regards to redesigning modified programs. Principals and senior leaders unusually relinquished the invisible barriers between themselves and others and rescinded the notions of full control. Contrastingly, in some schools, technology enabled leaders to gain additional accessibility to teaching spaces or virtual recordings of lessons and meetings, which were made a requirement under the guise of adequate documentation. Hence, some schools used the pandemic as an opportunity to subject teachers and staff to further surveillance, in addition to existing accountability and performative norms (Niesche, 2021; Ball, 2017), which raised additional questions about the notion of relational trust claimed to underpin leading and teaching in these schools.

The lack of preparedness and vulnerability of the social and educational system raised important moral questions about the role of schools and leaders in developing an educational space that centres health and wellbeing (Fullan et al., 2020). This thesis is particularly interested in examining leadership response to the crisis in a field where social capital was terribly hit by isolation and cultural capital was marginalised by changing orders of priority. The findings showed that it was difficult for leadership to remain unchanged (Torrance et al., 2023) in an unusual space and time when learning is limited to compensating the loss (Harris

& Jones, 2022). The challenge is to transform these changes from reactionary measures to long term structural changes that are flexible and sustainable, which could be useful in future crises. At the time of writing this thesis, the health pandemic is no longer present, but the shadows of the health, social and economic pandemic have prevailed.

5.3 Leadership praxis

This research examined leadership in international schools through the lens of student-centred leadership (Robinson, 2011), learning-centred leadership (Southworth, 2002, 2009), and Bourdieu's social theory (1977, 1986) in addition to benefiting from the empirical evidence developed over the last 40 years by important studies in the field (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020a, 2020b). This study starts with the firm assumption that the work of school leaders is important for student learning (Day et al., 2011; Goddard et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020b), thus, drawing on existing evidence while examining leadership in international school contexts. The focus on educational leadership in this research includes two main areas that are thoroughly discussed by the literature review: leadership of teaching and learning and leadership development. Additionally, this research utilises Bourdieu's theory to analyse the relationship of leadership with the cultural and social capital of teachers and students. Based on the conceptualisation of leadership provided by the literature review, the discussion of the findings offers an analysis and a reconstruction of leadership in these specific fields.

The integrated findings of this research revealed multiple facets of leadership in international schools, not only in terms of 'how' and 'why' but also 'what' and 'who' (Evans, 2021). The dominant leadership models in participant schools were consistently represented in a principal, senior and middle leaders. In line with existing research, the findings show that principals do not individually lead schools and the teaching and learning process, but leadership is largely shared among a team of senior and middle leaders (Hallinger, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al.,

2022). Principals oversee the direction of the whole school while being supported by a leadership team. However, despite evidence of shared leadership, principals are still in positions of power due to a combination of executive and educational responsibilities in almost all schools (Moreno, 2020; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

5.3.1 Leadership Theory

The findings revealed that leaders' knowledge and practice of leadership are largely influenced by the learning they engage in, and the organisational guidance related to the position they occupy. Principals generally perceive their roles as drivers of accomplishments and focus on accountability, attainment, and organisational outcomes within and beyond the school. They prioritise relationships with authorities and parents, besides focusing on organisational growth. Principals oversee and guide the broader academic goals and expectations but leave the depth of teaching and learning to senior (deputies) and middle leaders. Instructional leadership, therefore, is centred in the hands of senior and middle leaders who focus on the supervision of teaching and the curriculum and the coordination of teaching activities and monitoring learning (Harris et al., 2019). The findings in this area were consistent across all case studies in England and Qatar, regardless of the size and circumstances of the school. While some heads observe lessons and share feedback, the focus on managing the school curriculum is predominantly a part of the role of other leaders, mainly deputies and middle leaders.

The findings reflect limited engagement with educational leadership theory among principals revealing that their focus is largely operational and organisational, besides overseeing the instructional process. Middle leaders, in contrast, are heavily involved in instructional practices both formally and informally, which is in line with a review of middle leadership research conducted by Ford and Kerrigan (2022). These findings imply that the perspectives informing principals' actions are generally driven by their prior experiences, organisational guidance, and the

relevant training they have engaged with. Some leaders had atheoretical positions believing that 'skills are more important than knowledge' (Principal, CS-1), while others saw theory as an abstract form of knowledge which does not offer specific guidance (Hallinger, 2010). Based on these findings, senior leaders are overwhelmed with organisational and managerial responsibilities, such as responding to accountability measures from the managing company, authorising or accrediting bodies and local authorities. In 1988, Cuban argued that principals are bound to focus on political, managerial, organisational, and instructional areas, as focusing only on one or two could be seen as failing the organisation. The findings of this research confirmed the same old findings regarding the multiple focus of principals and senior leaders. Besides, contemporary leadership heavily focuses on multi-accountability processes, parental involvement, financial and corporate responsibilities, and the public (and digital) image of the school.

Most leaders mentioned that they do not have an educational leadership qualification, but relevant training and experience. Thus, implying that academic engagement with leadership and learning theories have not been an important area in their preparation for principalship. These findings from case studies were confirmed by questionnaire outcomes where leaders mentioned that educational leadership qualifications were not a part of their employment requirements. Instead, requirements included working in relevant contexts with emphasis on accountability, student attainment and community partnerships, which could be the reason behind leaders' heavy focus on practice and outcomes. In addition to practice, interviews revealed that leaders' understanding of leadership theory includes a strong focus on relational aspects, shared leadership, and collaboration, which were stronger in primary schools (Southworth, 2011), unlike secondary schools where leaders prioritise instruction and attainment. Relational aspects were discussed as key elements of leaders' work with other leaders and between leaders and teachers or teachers and teachers (Leithwood, 2020b). Relationships were seen as foundational and essential, according to most interviews and questionnaire responses (Appendix I, Figure 18). Relatedly,

relationships are an important component of leadership theories (Robinson, 2011; Southworth, 2009), leadership development theories (Mezirow, 1996; Brown, 2004; Joo & Kim, 2016) and Bourdieu's theory (1977, 1986). Moreover, this discussion is informed by social and cultural justice leadership theories, mainly Ladson-Billings (1995a; 1995b), Fraise and Brooks (2015) and Khalifa et al. (2016).

5.3.2 Robinson's student-centred leadership theory

Hallinger (2010) suggested that Robinson and colleagues' meta-analytic review (2008) provides 'specific guidance on school leadership practice that has greater impact on student learning than abstract leadership theories' (p.9). The framework was based on Robinson's research (2007) with a team of researchers who examined leadership studies focusing on academic and non-academic outcomes. Their framework is used in this study because it offers valid evidence on the important role played by leaders—in different positions—in improving student learning, including academic and social experiences. Therefore, this study benefited from this framework and the work of other researchers, whose work was included in Robinson et al.'s (2008) meta-analytic review. Robinson and Timperley (2007) examined different leadership dimensions but only reported the effect-size of the most effective ones. Their framework—later titled student-centred leadership (Robinson, 2011)—offers practical guidance with regards to effective leadership dimensions and how they can be implemented. The findings of this study coincided with Robinson's leadership dimensions; however, they showed additional important areas of practice that are particularly essential for international schools, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Setting goals and expectations

The findings show that one of the most consistent areas across all participant schools was 'setting goals and expectations', which is also consistent with key research in the field since the 1990s. Hallinger (1992) used the term 'managing

the school vision', Leithwood (2006) used the term 'setting the direction', while Robinson et al. (2008) used a more specific term 'setting goals and expectations'. The findings showed that leaders generally dedicate significant time and effort to setting goals and expectations, share them with the school community and establish a kind of legitimacy around them (Leithwood et al., 2020b). Spreading goals and expectations take place in different ways including meetings, morning assemblies, newsletters, school walls and events. Making goals visible is important to schools, but it is not the purpose. The purpose is to enable people to act upon goals and fulfil them, which takes time and consistent efforts (Robinson, 2011). The major challenge for most schools is that many people leave within an average of three years, which makes it challenging for school leaders to build a community that commits to unique goals and develops the capacity to fulfil them.

Setting goals and expectations is common to all schools, but the way in which this dimension is enacted differs from one school to another (Day et al., 2016). Motivating other leaders in the school to embody and enact goals and expectations requires concerted efforts and planning. Therefore, relationships of trust between principals and other leaders can be seen as a key factor in sharing and sustaining school goals (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), which was evident in all case-studies. Principals cannot build legitimacy and acceptance around school goals and expectations without shared leadership (Hallinger 2010). The challenge produced by constant mobility requires leaders to persistently reinvest in these efforts. In the absence of leaders who understand the complexities, challenges and strengths of the school, new members might take a long time to learn and embody school goals. Thus, investing in leader and teacher retention and in growing relational trust should be prioritised (Mancuso et al., 2010). Building an environment where people accept and implement school goals and expectations, requires a sense of belonging to the place (Riley et al., 2016). Belonging allows people to align their own goals and practise with organisational goals or simply identify with them rather than merely implement them in response to school policy. Fostering a sense of belonging requires a culture of common

identity that people identify with, or belong to, not only as a place where they come to work or learn (Riley, 2022; Halse, 2018). It is difficult for people to belong to a place where they don't feel included or recognised, or where their voices do not matter (Smyth, 2006). While this condition could apply to any school, it is more critical in international schools, where the community is largely multicultural.

Strategic resourcing

The findings showed that most schools are well equipped with physical and technological resources. Resourcing, according to Robinson (2011), is about finding and maintaining what serves school goals rather than just securing resources. The challenge to senior leaders is related to planning and arranging resources that are compatible with the school and ensuring that they are used wisely and strategically to help the school meet its goals. While most schools had no shortages in resources, the school with the least number of students (CS-4) had limited devices and limited staff spaces and facilities, as revealed by interviews and document reviews. This shortage suggests limited funding, which could imply low quality of learning resources and a sense of frustration and disappointment resulting from 'failing their teachers and students' (Principal, CS-4). This dimension suggests a problematic link between decision making related to the choice of learning resources and the findings related to the dominant culture through textbooks and other resources (Kopsick, 2018). This connection suggests that the lack of representation of students' cultures, identities and languages in most schools is a matter of conscious decision made or facilitated by leaders, rather than an oversight of internationalised (multicultural) resources.

On another level, most schools struggled with retaining their human resources, which affected their long-term effectiveness strategies. Although schools train their staff to effectively engage with resources, the process is regularly interrupted by transient leaders and teachers (Caffyn, 2018; Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). Field analysis of case study schools showed that significant time and effort are dedicated to recruitment fairs and orientation of new staff. Mitgang (2012)

confirms that 'investing in better leadership training can pay off in higher student performance and lower principal turnover' (p. 25). In line with Mitgang's findings (2012), a study by the Teachers Development Trust in the United Kingdom showed that schools spend on average, less than 2% of their budget on staff and teacher development (Westen, 2016, 2018). However, it is difficult to have an independent figure on this aspect in international schools as there is no single body of governance that could be referred to for similar data. Some international school educators contended that spending on staff development is significantly low (Pelonis, 2017 in Free, 2017), but this information could not be confirmed. It could be inferred that schools would benefit from a redirection of the resources spent on recruitment fairs and orientation programs to professional learning and retention of existing staff.

Ensuring quality teaching and supervising the curriculum

Leading teaching and learning is central to the work of school leaders. Previous research confirmed that when leaders focus on teaching and learning or instructional practice, the impact on academic and non-academic outcomes is increased (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Robinson, 2011). Instructional leadership was known to be the most effective approach in the 1980s and early 1990s, due to the direct and indirect influence of principals on teachers' work (Hallinger et al., 2010). It was proven in the research following that era that principals do not have the time or capacity to individually lead teaching and learning due to increased areas of responsibility, especially in the last two decades (Hochbein et al., 2021; Grissom et al., 2015).

Robinson et al. (2008) focused on ensuring quality teaching, which includes supervision of the curriculum, the teaching process and student learning. While Robinson's dimensions are key in this research and informed the analysis of the findings within the social fields in which leadership is exercised, an additional analytical lens such as Evans (2022) was useful to unpack the influence of leadership on teaching and learning. The question of what leaders do, and which

activity is considered leading is important, especially if we think of leading as influencing (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2020b). Evans (2021) suggested shifting the lens from leading to influence and from the how and why to who does the influence. Thinking of leadership as an epistemic object, which is worthy of analysis, might lead us to refocus on the key role of leaders and then to evaluate whether leadership is still indeed serving the purpose it originally existed for (Evans, 2022). Such a nuanced discussion might lead to a reconstruction of the construct of leadership and contribute to existing scholarship in the field. This thesis focuses on understanding school leadership, including what it means and how it influences teaching and learning, and how or whether it relates to students and teachers. Thus, the discussion of findings works toward a deconstruction of the construct of leadership (its exercise and development) and a construction of how it interacts with this specific field. It is in this process of deconstruction and reconstruction where the advancement of scholarship in the field takes place.

The findings showed that all leaders are 'fundamentally focused on teaching and learning' (Principal, CS-5). However, leaders engage differently with teaching and learning depending on their scope of work and their prior knowledge and experience. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, senior leaders, including principals, direct teaching and curriculum strategy and guide middle leaders. They manage and support teaching through resourcing and protection of teaching time (Robinson, 2011), and offer guidance on key goals and expectations, while middle leaders facilitate and ensure the expectations are implemented in departments and classrooms. Senior leaders influence the work of teachers in different ways despite not constantly engaging with teachers (Dimmock, 1995). It is well documented that leaders influence teaching and student learning (Gurr, 2015, Grissom et al., 2021), however, scholars called for a review of the type of evidence that generates influence on teaching and how it is implemented (Leithwood et al., 2020a; Evans, 2022). By examining these micro-level activities that take place on a daily or weekly basis through questionnaire findings, this study gained a broader perspective of how influence happens at the macro-level.

The findings show that both senior and middle leaders interact with teachers through different types of activities. 79% of senior leaders reported influencing teachers both directly and indirectly, 14% said they influence teachers' work only indirectly, and only 7% said they influence their work through direct interactions (Table 10). During interviews, senior leaders mentioned that they plan and offer strategic guidance, manage resources and recruitment, negotiate with governors, and join meetings with staff and teachers. These were most of the activities they engage in to influence teachers' work indirectly, while the direct activities were classroom observation and feedback sessions which take place often or sometimes. Additionally, reviewing student assessments was consistently performed by senior leaders and was seen as a way of familiarising themselves with the performance and achievements of their students. Middle leaders, besides engaging with some senior leadership tasks such as planning and resources management, have a direct interaction with teachers (Forde & Kerrigan, 2022). Additionally, they work alongside teachers on curriculum planning and teaching activities, discuss learning problems, academic plans, and assessment outcomes (Kruger, 2003; Bryant, 2018). This direct relationship is key to generating consistent and effective influence on teaching and learning.

Shared and distributed leadership

The findings showed that the most effective elements influencing teachers' work are collaborative relations based on trust, in-school training, guidance by leaders and fellow teachers and organisational culture. Except for principals, senior and middle leaders work in groups and collaboratively engage in driving the teaching process. Therefore, collaborative relations and teamwork are essential to leading the work in schools (Mitgang, 2012). Leading teaching and learning is not exclusively linked to individual principals but takes place through a team of leaders (Lampert et al., 2002; Grissom et al., 2015). Thus, leaders invest in creating teacher leadership and group relations that enable this shared and distributed

leadership (Harris, 2013; Goksoy, 2019), which has been confirmed—although in different forms—by the findings of this research.

To understand shared and distributed leadership as a process of influence on teaching and learning in schools, it would be useful to explore and analyse the acts which constitute this form of leadership individually at first, then in liaison with the rest of the team. Understanding what individuals do as influencers of teaching and learning and how they collate their actions with the actions of others, is at the core of developing our conceptualisation of shared and distributed leadership as interchangeable concepts that could fall under Goksoy's notion of 'collective leadership' (2019, p. 305). What this discussion is aiming at is to construct a detailed understanding of leadership as a canon of influence regardless of position or assignment. This was a key reason behind the study's methodological design, which collated data from leaders in different positions. The findings showed that it is the concerted actions—and agency—of the actors (leaders) in different positions that matter in generating teaching and learning in schools (Gronn, 2003; Evans, 2021). The other purpose of this examination of actions and influence is to provide substantial evidence of what actions would enable leadership to respond to the unique social and cultural fields, which is a key area in this research.

Leading teaching and learning

Robinson (2011) explained that leaders' focus on quality teaching leads to quality learning or improved learning. The literature connecting leadership and learning is plenty (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Day et al., 2011, 2016), but this study specifically examined what activities helped leaders focus on and improve student learning. The findings collected from principals and senior leaders showed that they influence student learning through recruiting the best teachers, supporting teachers' work through administrative decisions and processes, providing resources, and promoting parental engagement. Thus, senior leaders affect student learning at a macro-level (Evans, 2022), while middle leaders affect it

through both macro and micro-level influence. Besides their input and contribution to the macro administrative decision-making process, their direct and micro-influence on student learning includes working with teachers, teaching and interacting with students, ensuring that academic plans are in place and that students are progressing and that teachers are equally learning. Middle leaders also engage in school events and activities, and interact directly with parents, which makes them closer to the community they serve, and allows them to understand the social values and phenomena influencing students. While this understanding of middle leaders' role is important and useful, it raises questions about their limited input in decision making (Busher et al., 2007), as the executive power is centralised in the hands of seniors, and specifically, principals.

The findings also showed that influencing student learning is a result of leaders' perspectives of what the best approach to learning is, which is another reminder of why leadership learning matters for student learning; a dimension that will be discussed later in the chapter. Leaders and teachers understood student learning differently; their descriptions ranged from meta-cognition to collaboration, creativity, and inquiry-based learning. Leaders' perceptions of how learning happens affect how they enact their school's guidelines for teaching and assessment (Gurr, 2015). In some cases, it affects how they prioritise teacher professional development. Aligning learning goals and teaching with assessment outcomes and school evaluation guidelines is another way through which senior leaders influence learning (Day et al., 2016). However, the findings showed that leadership of teaching and learning is institutionally driven and strictly aligned with organisational frameworks, which leaves limited space for bottom-up input and renders the outcomes of student learning—academic and non-academic—less important in shaping policy and the direction of the school. Middle leaders explained that they lead through classroom tours, feedback and building confidence and support, where they focus mostly on student engagement. This is another indicator that senior and middle leaders in different schools lead in different directions or understand learning differently.

The findings suggest that senior leaders, while they undertake different types of activities to influence teachers' work, still make decisions that are in line with policies made by the decision maker, who is often the executive management office that prescribes the school's curriculum policy, resources packages and assessment guidelines. Thus, the main leadership of learning takes place beyond the scope of school leaders, whose work is more about enacting policies rather than initiating and changing the status-quo (Habermas, 1987). This discussion shows that the influence on teaching and learning is clearly shaped by different levels of input, ranging from middle, senior, executive and policy making levels. Bringing these levels closer to each other in terms of understanding school needs, is an important policy direction that takes skilled leadership, and a significant amount of time and effort. It is about developing a common sense of purpose not only within the school, but bringing on board the actual decision makers, which could be difficult when the main body of power directing the school has different priorities. Senior leaders generally focus on assessment and exam preparation through the lens of attainment and accountability, while middle leaders and teachers focus on improving learning in addition to meeting exam expectations. Nonetheless, some senior leaders critiqued these exams as the stringent commitment to exam results restricts flexibility or criticality in teaching and constrains their responsiveness to student needs. Thus, it could be argued that the decision about what students learn and how they are assessed are made outside the school walls.

Internationalism in teaching and learning

The overarching finding related to teaching and the curriculum in this research is that schools offer rigid and pre-designed programs. Flexibility and responsiveness were limited to early-years and primary schools where teachers and leaders have more space for adaptation. Contrastingly, secondary school leaders and teachers were restricted under the auspices of accountability, competitiveness, and attainment. As a result, aspects of internationalisation within the curriculum and

teaching practices were thin and narrow. When leaders and teachers were prompted to discuss how they respond to their students' internationalism during interviews, almost all of them spoke about international days, events, and food. They described their schools as international and highly diverse. However, their curriculum and teaching reflected limited representation of students' cultural capital in their classrooms.

The findings also showed that leaders and teachers prioritise student learning and focus on student engagement in the classroom, as well as inquiry-based learning, relationships between students and teachers, and student attainment. The centrality of student learning (Robinson, 2011; Southworth, 2009) was frequently mentioned in all data sets, in addition to following standards and quality teaching guidelines. However, there was no reference to students' cultural and social needs or whether teaching and the curriculum respond to these needs. Similarly, student diversity and internationalism were mentioned frequently in all interviews with significant enthusiasm. Nevertheless, when the discussion moved from describing the school and its community to leading teaching and learning, the notions of internationalism and diversity disappeared, and the narrative changed: The distinct features of students were minimised—and sometimes nullified—and the discussion turned toward homogenised guidelines, quality, rigour, and outcomes.

Exceptionally, two leaders in different schools focused on internationalism during their discussion of curriculum and teaching. In Qatar, an early-years leader explained how they incorporate student cultural capital in their curriculum by building teaching units around the diversity of students using a story-telling approach, in partnership with parents. This approach shows that flexibility in teaching and curriculum leadership creates space for teachers to respond to the cultural capital of their students (hooks, 1994; Khalifa et al., 2016). In another school (in England), the principal explained that their school recognises internationalism and multiculturalism (Ofsted, 2006) as assets and core parts of

their community and introduces different activities to expand international learning opportunities. Contrastingly, other schools had different perceptions of internationalism. A principal in England shared that student diversity causes 'clashes', as students have different social and cultural backgrounds, which means different behavioural patterns. Therefore, they tried to solve the problem by creating a whole-school personal and social development program, which teaches students how to behave. They viewed student differences as a troublesome phenomenon, which needs to be changed, rather than an area they need to be learning about and responding to (Khalifa et al., 2016). Alternatively, a few leaders in Qatar explained that their curriculum does not recognise internationalism and that students use British and Anglo-phonic names in their writing based on what they have been taught. Their curriculum does not include elements from international cultures. According to one of their middle leaders, 'the absence of cultural integration reflects negatively on student learning and self-perceptions, and this should be reconsidered in the future' (ML, CS-1).

The above discussion shows that students are immersed in 'uni-dimensional' learning environments (Dimmock, 2000, p. 51) in addition to poor representation of their cultures among teachers and leaders (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). Student-centeredness is perceived as a matter of engaging students in the curriculum instead of adapting the curriculum to relate and respond to student experiences (Khalifa et al., 2016). In general, when students' socio-cultural needs were acknowledged and integrated in teaching, it was either incidental or an attempt by individual teachers (Brown, 2004), rather than a whole-school approach. Leaders and teachers focused on building collaborative and social skills in the classroom while mostly mis-recognising their students' social and cultural capital. This could be attributed to the lack of training on teaching in international contexts (Fisher, 2021; Calnin et al., 2018), as some interviewees explained. These findings undoubtedly call for a reflection on the role of curriculum and pedagogy in developing student learning in response to contextual needs.

Leading the Curriculum

Curriculum leadership represents policies and processes related to the choice, management, and implementation of different curriculum components such as texts, resources, and teaching activities (DeMathews, 2014). Bernstein defined the curriculum as the interaction of ‘official knowledge’ that is determined by formal structures and ‘unofficial knowledge’ that takes place beyond the formal course of study, through pedagogical engagements between teachers, students, resources, and the school community (Bernstein, 2000, as cited in Smyth et al., 2014, p. 113). The findings showed surface-level attention to international mindedness in schools and limited—or absent—cultural responsiveness. The field analysis revealed a discourse of ‘global inter-connectedness’ (Wiley, 2008, p. 11) through the repetitive use of ‘international’, ‘international mindedness’ and ‘global citizenship’ in school websites, which was largely supported by interviews. Besides, document analysis showed that schools strictly follow organisational frameworks, such as the IBO, the English Curriculum, Cambridge framework, or an American curriculum, while many schools offer a mixture of programs (Pearce, 2023). None of these schools offered English as a second language, but language support was available in most schools, mainly for newcomers (Mehmedbegović, 2017). The engagement of leaders with the curriculum takes place at senior and middle leadership levels in smaller schools and at middle levels in larger schools. Curriculum change and adaptation are limited unless enabled by senior leadership. In general, some middle leaders and teachers could initiate curriculum adaptations and incorporate relevant teaching material, but these attempts were limited to individual efforts and less capable of making significant impact.

Since the start of 2022, a wide-scale movement has taken place within international schools’ communities to raise awareness about issues of diversity, inclusion, equity and justice (DIEJ) (ISS, 2022). The movement was initiated by individuals in the field who shared their experience and worked together to develop justice and equity in schools. Additionally, the ISS International Schools

Services (2022) has initiated a series of DIEJ workshops for teachers and leaders. While this is helpful and can initiate awareness about the need to change the narrative in international schools, it remains limited as workshops with basic models have not yet touched the roots of the problem.

This thesis argues that the notions of pluralism, inclusivity and engagement in teaching and the curriculum should be at the foundation of school leadership rather than an additive. Banks (2013) argued that the curriculum in multicultural schools should go beyond the 'contribution' where heroes, events and occasions are added to the curriculum or celebrated on specific days (p. 193). Banks suggested 'content integration' and 'knowledge construction' (p. 17) that includes adding key concepts, facts and perspectives representing the diversity of student cultures to the curriculum, which he described as the 'additive approach'. While this is important, it might not be sufficient. Banks explained that a 'transformation' approach is needed in multicultural schools, in which 'basic goals, structure and nature of the curriculum are changed to enable students to view concepts, events, issues and themes from the perspectives of diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial groups' (2013, p. 194). However, a more pedagogically equitable approach that fosters sustainable social and cultural justice in multicultural schools is 'the social action' approach to curriculum development. In the social action approach, 'students identify important social problems and issues, gather pertinent data, clarify their values [...] make decisions, and take reflective actions to help resolve these issues' (Banks, 2013, p. 194).

To draw on Banks theory, leading the curriculum in multicultural international schools, requires engaging in open discussions about 'the neglected questions' of unidimensional curriculum and pedagogy, which are 'sensitive and difficult' (Schepen, 2017, p. 98). Schepen (2017) argued that open conversations help to re-imagine schools beyond 'pluralist viewpoints' (p. 98), where schools are designed based on pluralistic social, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, which enable engagement and reciprocity of knowledge. The challenge facing school

leaders is not only to explore what a multicultural curriculum looks like, but to examine their current school curriculum—and its structure, discourse, and content—and reflect on the dominant narrative. A multicultural curriculum that is aligned with relevant pedagogical approaches could yield collective benefits and prepare students for long term societal change (Smyth et al., 2014).

Leading teacher learning and development

This dimension has the highest effect size on student outcomes in Robinson's framework. It refers to leaders' role in planning for teachers' professional learning, encouraging them to join, and participate in these sessions (Robinson et al., 2008). Participation is useful because leaders listen and learn about the problems encountered by teachers in the classroom, learn about their skills, share input and perspectives, and join them in new learning or the application of previous learning. The findings showed that leaders recognise this dimension as important, support teacher learning and offer opportunities based on the school's budget and priorities. The questionnaire revealed that leaders generally believe that their contribution to the professional development sessions in their schools can be very effective, especially engaging in professional discussions and conversations around major issues in the school (see Appendix I, Figure 19).

In addition to senior leaders' support and engagement in teacher learning, their role includes creating a space and making arrangements that enable teachers to engage in learning. Middle leaders, alternatively, are fully immersed in developing teacher learning. The findings present evidence of middle leaders' support to teachers during shared planning, lesson observation and feedback, peer-teaching, co-design and discussion of ongoing assessments and learning outcomes. Furthermore, middle leaders play the role of a mediator between teachers and senior leaders, and voice out teachers' needs by opening channels for support, motivation and sharing best practice through online or physical platforms, as in the case of CS-1. This communal space for teacher learning and the ongoing support from senior leadership were seen as exemplary, particularly

as teachers were trusted to drive their learning. The findings in this area showed that teacher learning is a priority to school leaders at different levels, which responds broadly to school needs and expectations, but informally and inconsistently focuses on individual teacher needs (Hallinger, 2010; Fisher, 2021). It is more focused on the process and action of learning than content or understanding of research (Bush, 2009). Alternatively, the findings showed that relationships and conversations with teachers help leaders learn about their school and teachers' needs (Robinson, 2011), and have a powerful impact on teacher performance.

Teacher leadership

Discussing teacher leadership is related to the analysis of influence and impact in the school. While it is established by research that teachers are leaders in their classrooms and within their schools, in formal and informal ways (Nguyen et al., 2019). The findings showed that leadership is not restricted to positional assignments. Senior leaders in all case studies—regardless of top management's strategy—could create a supportive space for teachers to practise their influence on others (peers and students). Some teachers influence other teachers and leaders, especially when there are opportunities for direct interaction (Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2021). They also influence their classroom curriculum through adjustments and adaptations to the pre-set curriculum whenever possible, which influence student learning (DeMathews, 2014). Based on the findings, when teachers embody a sense of ownership and autonomy in their work, they develop the confidence to engage in creative and reflective practice (Lumpkin et al., 2021). Teachers' autonomy, however, is challenged by accountability measures and performativity at their schools despite having a 'free' space to lead their learning and exchange ideas. However, teacher leadership and influence are possible when senior leaders' support is in place.

According to the findings, leaders support teacher leadership by offering opportunities for meaningful professional development, which fosters a sense of

confidence and efficacy. This includes formal courses, workshops, conferences, in-service peer-support and occasional mentoring by colleagues or leaders. In addition, the findings showed that opportunities for collaboration between middle leaders and teachers enable their agency and influence in the form of contributing to the learning of others and the school (Evans, 2022). The findings also confirmed that relational trust, recognition, and appreciation nourish teachers' sense of belonging to the place, self-efficacy and accountability to their team and students. Thus, when seniors recognise teachers' capabilities and efforts, protect their time, secure fair contracts, and create supportive spaces that incorporate freedom and agency, teachers are more willing to embrace and enact a sense of leadership regardless of position or assignment (Nadelson, et al., 2021). The findings showed that trust, collaboration, and relationships are central to successful teaching and learning and to effective leadership across all participant schools (Day, 2009). However, some schools acknowledged restrictions by the management regarding teachers' contracts in terms of duration and work-wage compatibility. In some cases, racialisation and 'unfair treatment' of teachers were normalised (ML, CS-3). The lack of appreciation for teachers, whether driven by financial, social, cultural, or racial discrimination, affects teachers' well-being and their professional identity, which could be another reason for the traffic at the revolving door in schools.

Developing student leadership: Gen Z's unconventional notion of leadership

Student leadership was mentioned in interviews as a process and a desired learning outcome, which represents independent thinking and the ability to influence others and take accountability for actions. Leaders advocated for student leadership in different ways, within and beyond classroom activities. Middle leaders described student leadership in the classroom as independence of thought, self-help and contribution to group learning or influencing peers (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Some principals, alternatively, focused on developing

student leadership through defined roles, such as councils, prefects, and house leaders, which was seen as a contribution to their objectified cultural capital. Nonetheless, students didn't use the word 'leadership' in their interviews, but they demonstrated a powerful sense of independence and critiqued their own learning experience and their schools' policies. In the book 'Generation Z leads', Seemiller and Grace (2017), explained that students' independence, critique and refusal of unsustainable or unfair conduct is common among Generation Z. The authors explained that students could evaluate the direction they are put in and decide for themselves. While generational theory is critiqued for making sweeping conclusions on generational features and marginalising societal, cultural, and individual differences, the findings reveal common attributes among students in both countries despite contextual and cultural differences. The findings strongly align with Seemiller and Grace's research (2017) and with Mannheim's generational theory (1999) that attribute common dispositions and behavioural patterns to the similar experiences lived by certain age groups within specific times and circumstances.

Ensuring an orderly and safe environment

According to Robinson et al. (2008), order and safety in schools are related to supporting teachers and protecting their time from distraction and interruption. In orderly and safe environments, students feel emotionally and academically supported and focused (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). This dimension cannot be fully separated from the previous one where the sense of alignment with school goals is nurtured by a sense of belonging that is influenced by safety and order (Leithwood et al., 2020b). However, there is a very thin line to differentiate between order to which people adhere out of respect for safety and order that is imposed by regulations and surveillance, which was the case in some schools. Order and safety in a school can be some of the most important attractions to families (ISC Research, 2021). The findings of document analysis and interviews showed that parents have an impact on how the school is evaluated through

inspection surveys and sometimes interviews. Leaders and teachers also mentioned that parents expect the school to show understanding and cater to their needs and their children's (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005), and this aspect could influence their perception of the school and the extent to which they trust its system and staff.

The findings showed that order and safety are prioritised by leaders and viewed as essential to an uninterrupted program of learning. All case study schools have counsellors or pastoral care staff and are keen to comply with expectations of order and safety as evidenced by school evaluation reports. These reports highlighted physical safety and order as key requirements in school operation, while the emotional safety of leaders, teachers and students were not recognised as equally important. The interviews reflected concerns about the social and emotional issues resulting from cultural differences or 'clashes' (Principal, CS-4), due to frequent mobility and diversity, where students come from different backgrounds and have different cultural and behavioural values.

Schools generally have behaviour management programs in place; however, engaging in friendly relations requires time and mutual understanding. This also applies to teachers and leaders who come from different backgrounds with multiple social and cultural norms and have different interpretations of student behaviour (Fisher, 2021). For example, behaviour that is seen as disruptive by one teacher could be described as enthusiastic by another, whereas a student described as obedient by one teacher, might be seen by another as passive and negligent. Thus, schools and their staff need to learn the norms and values of the cultures they host (Ladson-Billings, 2021). This process requires consistent efforts, which could be challenging due to frequent staff and student mobility.

Some schools adopted a character (re)building approach where they targeted emotional and social skills (Mahfouz & Anthony-Stevens, 2020), others had a strict behaviour policy in place, or programs that support leadership skills and positive peer relationships. Simultaneously, students complained from a strict

focus on attainment and high levels of stress, while their social and emotional needs were marginalised. Exam pressure, paralleled with competitive university admission processes, were seen by students as 'excessive', especially during the pandemic. Students had concerns regarding the limited—or lack of—cultural representation in their schools and the inadequate appreciation for who they are and where they come from. Thus, the findings reflected the students' sense of discontent, 'unbelonging' (Healy, 2020, p. 131) or 'not-belonging' (Vincent, 2021, p. 2) to the school or under-recognition by the school, in addition to frequently losing friends and having difficulties making new ones. These findings show that many students are struggling emotionally. Ryan and Deci's research (2019) confirms that relatedness to others within schools can underpin students' sense of belonging to the place. Additionally, Riley (2022), confirmed that belonging is essential to student learning and a crucial part of what leaders and other adults in schools should be working on.

Teachers and middle leaders' interviews revealed concerns about the low representation of students' cultures and identities in the curriculum and in staffing. The lack of or underrepresentation of students' cultures could be seen as a source of 'cultural ruptures' or 'alienation' (Bourdieu, 1961, p. 177) within their school environment. Such feelings result from a sense of incompatibility between their habitus and the new field, which could leave students captured in the duality of social transformation between the two spaces (Bourdieu, 1967). The sense of poor belonging and under-representation was also experienced by minority teachers and middle leaders. The interviews showed that their sense of not being culturally 'fit' for the place, treated differently, paid less than others or being marginalised, have negatively influenced their sense of belonging and well-being.

The pandemic caused additional challenges in schools. The findings showed that leaders continued to lead teaching and learning despite these challenges (Harris & Jones, 2022) and their vulnerable positions. Their efforts to improve safety and order in schools were terribly affected due to the disruption of daily routines.

Leaders were concerned for everyone's safety besides their own (Huber, 2021). When the data-collection started, leaders and teachers had worked in a state of reaction to the crisis for seven months. They had limited chances to plan due to changing circumstances and guidance, which left them in a state of uncertainty. Leaders and teachers were working at home or in schools—with social-distancing measures—to prepare resources and manage the online and teaching process (Gurr, 2021). Students were also working at home or attending school in separate bubbles, in both countries, which led to isolation and frustration. Everyone in the school community was at a certain kind of risk, with no clarity on how to work best in similar situations.

Uncertainty and health risks affected schools and the whole population in England and Qatar, not only in terms of safety, but also economically. Some schools were more affected than others, which added to their pre-existing situation of precarity (Bunnell & Poole, 2023). The findings showed that some schools introduced sudden changes to their contracts and withheld portions of staff wages due to emerging financial restrictions, which led to escalating a previously precarious situation. This sense of economic and professional uncertainty did not only affect their sense of safety and belonging but also their motivation to teach and focus on student learning (Principal, CS-4; ML, CS-3). The findings reflected a serious gap in this dimension, which calls for a more specific focus on safety and belonging in international schools. This problem should not be treated as an individual issue where individuals are referred to counsellors, but as a general area of concern that should be reviewed and addressed at leadership and policy levels.

5.3.3 'How' leaders lead: What activities count as leading?

Robinson's framework (2011) offers practical guidelines and insights on how the dimensions can be implemented. For leaders to lead effectively, Robinson et al. (2008) suggest that they need specific capabilities: experience, knowledge, trust relationships and problem-solving skills. The findings showed general

commonalities across all schools that are aligned with Robinson's framework. Besides Robinson's capabilities, this research explores the concepts of monitoring, modelling—including visibility and presence—and dialogue as they represent key leadership actions (Southworth, 2002, 2009). These actions are confirmed by the data to different extents, in addition to other concepts and actions through which leaders lead and meet their school goals.

Leaders as authority figures

Despite the growing mode of shared and distributed leadership, principals are still seen as powerful authority figures (Gurr & Drysdale, 2016; Moreno, 2020). The findings showed that principals are viewed by the school community as 'the main source of leadership' as their 'leadership practices shape the internal processes' (Chapman et al., 2011, p. 3), and they act as 'key decision makers' (Mulford, 2007) and mediators between the school and authority bodies: the board, local authorities, and authorising bodies. Despite the growing complexity in schools and the natural distribution of leadership into teams and individuals (Harris, 2004; Lee et al., 2012b), principals influence their schools and teachers through their actions, values, knowledge, and experiences.

Leaders as administrators

Leaders are seen as administrators who implement and develop structures and processes through which policies are implemented. The findings show different examples where leaders contribute to 'redesigning their schools and restructuring roles and responsibilities' (Chapman et al., 2011, p. 4). Case-study schools have different administrative models, and they all work with larger bodies that develop policies or influence decisions. Leaders work with policy makers, authorities, and inspectors to ensure policy implementation and enactment of school programs according to specific expectations. In order to comply with expectations, principals develop internal structures and administrative processes (Grissom et al., 2020), which could ensure proper implementation of policies.

Some of these structures and procedures include monitoring regimes that enable leaders to learn what is going on inside the school, evaluate and correct ineffective performance. Monitoring is seen as an effective mechanism by leaders at different levels of the school (Southworth, 2009), and is undertaken by administrators who monitor different areas, such as safety, order, parental engagement, and resources. While monitoring is viewed as necessary for improvement and for keeping track of schoolwork, the findings showed that monitoring is sometimes transformed into excessive mechanisms of control and surveillance (Perryman et al, 2018; Proudfoot, 2021). Thus, transforming teachers, staff and students into subjects who are policed and governed by power mechanisms that focus on control and order more than influence (Ball, 2003, 2017). Some students said that they are 'policed by their teachers' (Students, CS-1), which makes them feel untrustworthy (Student, CS-2). The increased focus on monitoring, meeting standards, goals and expectations has become a core area of international school leaders' practice.

Knowledge and experience

Knowledge and experience are key areas in determining school leadership capabilities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). Robinson et al.'s framework (2008) explained that leaders build their knowledge of school leadership through learning in preparation programs and through experience. The framework also suggests that effective leaders solve complex problems and develop their skills by engaging in daily school situations. The findings showed that most leaders attributed their capabilities to previous experiences, mainly 'having a record as a successful teacher' (Bush & Oduro, 2006, p. 362) and a middle leader. A few leaders attributed their knowledge to formal qualifications and preparation programs, while the majority mentioned general training courses. With the rising demands of leadership, the need for preparation and continuous learning are becoming more evident (Bubb & Earley, 2010). While experience is important and essential, it does not serve the complexity of the role unless accompanied by knowledge

(theory) and critical reflection that enable leaders to unpack existing challenges and construct new perspectives (Mezirow, 1996).

Bush (2009) noted that there has been a trend in twenty-first century schools, where the shift from theoretical knowledge (content) in leadership to 'how' the work is done (the process) is becoming widespread in different countries. However, content and process are not entirely independent in adult learning (Knowles, 1975). They supplement and enhance each other. Understanding theory and research related to effective practice in leadership and teaching can make a difference in leaders' practice. Formal qualifications mainly offer a content-based approach (Bush, 2009), which focuses on essential knowledge. Experience and 'relevant knowledge' enhance leaders' ability to 'solve complex problems' (Robinson, 2011, p. 26-27), especially in international contexts where social norms, political and historical contexts are different from the common knowledge of most leaders and teachers.

Modelling problematised

Modelling is one way through which staff learn from their leaders (Southworth 2009, 2011). Modelling includes setting good examples in different areas of practice, such as visibility at the school venue, punctuality, managing meetings and discussions, negotiations and problem solving (Kruger, 2003, Day et al, 2011). The interviews showed that modelling is one of the strongest ways through which some leaders affect young people and fellow staff. However, despite being seen as effective by leaders, modelling was challenged by the younger generation of teachers and high school students (Gen Zs), who questioned the implicit messages spread across the school. Students were critical of the normalisation of common school norms (Seemiller and Grace, 2017), such as the implicit assumption of cultural superiority or hierarchy, and the poor recognition and representation (Wang, 2015, 2016) of their social and cultural capital. While some principals portrayed their school culture as open to diversity and internationalisation, students critiqued these claims and presented counter

perspectives. In addition to students, young leaders, and teachers (millennials) questioned strict hierarchical structures, poor cultural responsiveness, and the pressure of attainment and precarity. Both millennials and Gen Zs saw the model provided by older leaders as non-applicable to current times, and assertively demanded future change.

Dialogue

Dialogue is an ‘active process of inquiry’ (Knowles, 1975) through which learners are engaged in a ‘mutually respectful and conscious interaction’ (Freire, 1973). The term dialogue has been central in the work of educational leadership researchers, such as Southworth (2002), Robinson et al. (2008) and Leithwood et al. (2020a, 2020b), who viewed dialogue as a key method through which leaders interact with the school community, listen, share, and exchange ideas. The role of dialogue in the practice of leaders has particular significance due to its centrality in the theories employed in this analysis. Dialogue is also relevant to leadership in multicultural international contexts, where intercultural communication is particularly important. Mezirow’s transformative learning theory (1996) suggested that dialogic discourse is essential for leaders and teachers to be able to negotiate their ideas and values, rather than simply accepting the ideas of others. Habermas—whose theory (1984, 1987) has influenced Mezirow’s research—explained that dialogic interactions are key to the learning processes of adults. Additionally, the social discourses that are rooted in cultural and historic contexts can limit or affect critical reflection and determine whose voices can be listened to and acknowledged. These specific conceptualisations of dialogue and dialogic encounters are important to this study that explores leading and learning in culturally and socially hierarchical fields, as the following section explains.

The words dialogue and conversation are used interchangeably in the thesis, where dialogue is used to represent more formal and intentional conversations. Both words represent a sense of equality, mutual respect, and reciprocal engagement with each other rather than a top-down directive approach

(Robinson, 2011). The findings showed that leaders viewed dialogue and conversations as the most effective form of professional development in their schools (Table 15). Leaders used 'dialogue' to offer feedback, listen to other people's input and solve problems, while teachers referred to 'conversations' as a sign of respect and appreciation and a way to learn from others. Leaders viewed conversations as central to developing a professional culture and building trust relationships with their school community.

Building Trust relationship

According to Robinson (2011), building trust relationships is key to making an impact in schools as they are 'essential to a positive school ethos and improved teaching and learning conditions' (p. 17). The findings showed that relational trust is key in the interactions of leaders with others and between teachers and students. Trust relationships were seen as more effective than any other mechanism for school-community interactions. Findings from leaders and teachers showed that collaborative relations based on trust enabled a more productive work environment. The notion of trust in most schools is inherent in safe professional relations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), which are incorporated in the sense of safety and belonging to the place (Riley, 2022). Trust fosters professional confidence and risk taking, where teachers and leaders embrace failing and feel comfortable asking questions and sharing concerns. Additionally, the findings included references to the notion of trusting the organisation (Handford & Leithwood, 2013), which cannot always be possible given their precarious work conditions.

Trust relationships can be hard to develop and maintain in international schools (Gilbert, 2022) where mobility and multiculturalism are the norm, and where relationships and connections don't always have the chance to emerge naturally. Fisher (2021) suggested that leaders in international school contexts 'need to adapt their actions, communication styles and behaviours' and incorporate 'methods of building collaboration and trust [...] in response to the cultures of their

staff (p. 134). Walker and Lee (2018) also contended that leadership is influenced by culture, mainly in relation to communication, trust relationship and decision making. Despite the rising literature on multicultural schools, there is limited guidance on how leaders can adapt and develop their trust relationship mechanism to culturally diverse communities. The findings of this study confirmed, through multi-methodological analysis, that relational trust and dialogue are important to leaders and teachers' work and professional learning. However, the notion of trust relationship is used tokenistically—in most cases—rather than entrenched into the relationship with students and teachers of minority groups. The need to build trust in response to societal and cultural diversity was only mentioned twice by middle leaders. In both cases, these leaders explained that they were not trained to work with culturally diverse communities and suggested that their schools need to develop new ways to enhance trust relationships.

5.3.4 Examining leadership impact

Evidence on leaders' impact in schools is well documented in research, especially on academic outcomes (Day et al., 2016), nonetheless, there is less attention to leaders' impact on non-academic areas (Robinson et al., 2008). The findings offer an analysis of this impact from the perspectives of leaders, teachers, and students. Principals and senior leaders believe that their work has a significant impact on middle leaders and teachers' practice, which in turn, influences students. Besides influencing their schools, leaders are simultaneously influenced by internal and external school conditions. The findings showed that leaders collate evidence on their impact through qualitative and quantitative methods related to their work with teachers and students, such as reviews and reflections. When teachers were asked about leaders' impact on their work, they explained that leaders provide opportunities for professional learning, engage in conversations, and share feedback on their work. Some teachers added that leaders are open to feedback. It was evident that teachers and middle leaders

were generally less critical in their interviews. This is probably due to the limitation of group interviews where interviewees prefer to be neutral, except for a few instances when they felt comfortable and shared their concerns. This could be limited by the dynamics of the interviews, or due to professional values where teachers choose not to critique their school leadership in a research interview context.

Unlike teachers and middle leaders, students were critical and open about their concerns. They disagreed that leaders, and to some extent teachers, have an impact on their school experience beyond academic attainment. Although teachers and leaders mentioned that students' sense of safety and social skills in the classrooms are key to learning, students thought that their social relationships and wellbeing were generally under-recognised by teachers and leaders. They believed that their voices were not sufficiently heard and criticised the intense focus on attainment. The link between the findings and generational theory (Mannheim, 1952) was confirmed again when the notion of students' rights was brought up in student interviews. Students were aware that they deserve better representation in school events and the curriculum and demanded a stronger acknowledgement of their social and emotional rights, which supported the findings by Seemiller and Grace's research (2017). Students were keen to share their voices, criticise what they deemed incorrect and demand alternatives. Their perspectives contradicted the traditional views of leaders, who perceived students as a collective that works within the parameters set by the school. When leaders spoke about students, a sense of distance and unfamiliarity was prevalent, whereas students' interviews showed that they think and speak for themselves using a completely different discourse. This contrast has strong implications for how schools and leaders perceive students and highlights the need for reflection and a reconstruction of what works best for this generation and future ones. Nonetheless, students clearly stated that they 'deserve more than high scores' (Student, CS-2), particularly, social, and cultural recognition, appreciation, and a rewarding social experience in their schools (Banks, 2013).

The discussion of leadership dimensions and key activities provided by Robinson et al. (2008) and Southworth's (2002) research offer a useful tool to analyse and understand some of the most important areas of leaders' work and how this takes place. Both frameworks—Robinson et al. (2008) and Southworth (2009)— could apply to different types of schools with diverse and multicultural communities, as they call for a contextualisation of leadership. However, the discussion of findings in this study revealed the need for an additional set of conceptual tools to explain and analyse the practice and development of leaders within these sophisticated contexts. The frameworks helped to understand the dimensions and direction of leaders' work and unpack their influence on teaching and learning. Although Robinson's framework is commended by different scholars for being comprehensive and effective (Hallinger, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2016, Cravens, 2018), it did not sufficiently serve the purpose of understanding leadership in international schools due to their complexity and did not include a specific focus on leadership development, which is discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Due to multiculturalism, high rates of turnover and the commercial nature of international schools, it was difficult for students to build a sense of belonging and connection, especially that teachers are also transient. The analysis of case-study findings showed that schools acknowledge the importance of trust, but do not demonstrate relational trust in action. The discussion revealed limited attention to pluralistic and responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2012, 2018) and culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa, 2016; Lopez, 2016, 2021), which could lead not only to high attainment, but a rewarding learning experience.

The notion of cultural responsiveness was largely marginalised in the discourse of school leaders throughout the study, however, some of the findings demonstrated new approaches to leadership that could open channels for change through the engagement of critical reflection and action. The potential for change appeared in some interviews, which enabled reflection on practice (ML, CS-1;

Principal, CS-5). While principals and senior leaders showed less openness to change, except for a few, there was a stronger sense of critical reflection during interviews with the younger generation of leaders and teachers, who were discontent with current practices in their schools. They were closer to students and engaged with their needs, views, and concerns. They were sensitive to social justice and equity issues driven by global movements, such as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement (2021) and the latest uprisings in the SWANA region, where many of these students come from. In addition to understanding students' perspectives and needs, these young educators were hopeful about future change and expressed their concerns about poor multicultural representation and responsiveness in their schools. They were reflective, open to discussing future change and called for a redirection of their schools' policies and practices. Leaders who are immersed in teachers and students' voices and ideas view the paths of their schools differently from those who spent years in offices and corporate responsibilities.

It was evident that the pandemic elevated unusual approaches in how teachers and leaders worked and supported each other (Gurr, 2021). The pandemic shattered the ceiling of hierarchies in schools and encouraged shared and distributed leadership (Harris & Jones, 2022). Thus, there was a growing appreciation for relationships, trust, dialogue, and social capital in educational environments and new patterns of change in leadership circles. The below section on leadership development and response to the social and cultural capital of teachers and students drives this discussion further and presents the main contributions of this thesis.

5.4 Leadership development

Leadership development is used in this thesis interchangeably with leadership learning, mainly when referring to specific learning experiences. Research on leadership development provides sufficient evidence that professional learning is essential for the development of leaders as it enhances their knowledge and skills

and prepares them for leadership roles (Mitgang, 2012; Bush, 2009; Huber, 2004). This research conducted a thorough examination of leadership development. The findings showed a limited connection between leading teaching and learning and the contexts of schools. Despite frequent references to internationalisation, international-mindedness, and diversity to describe leadership experiences in international schools, these have not been sufficiently reflected in the work and professional learning of leaders. In contrast, the findings showed that most leadership development is determined outside the school through governing organisations and lacks relevance to contextual needs (Calnin et al., 2018). This thesis argues against the homogenisation in school leadership theory and practice, and calls for a thorough contextualisation (Bush, 2009; Calnin et al., 2018) and internationalisation in leadership development theory.

The outcome of literature review and data analysis reveals a gap between what leaders know and do, what they engage in as leadership preparation and development, and the multicultural social fields in which they work. The below model (Figure 8) represents this gap, where the three areas are not fully connected. Based on the findings, this discussion introduces a more connected multi-theoretical approach (Figure 9) where leadership development theory is interlinked with leadership theory and social theory, and where learning about the social field is essential for leading schools.

Figure 8

Theoretical and practical gaps in international school leadership

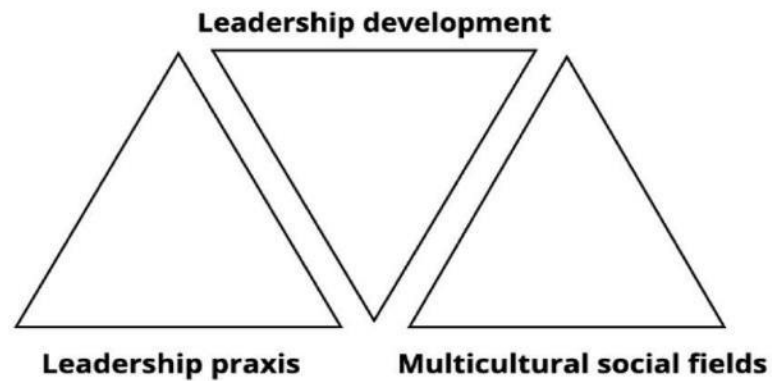
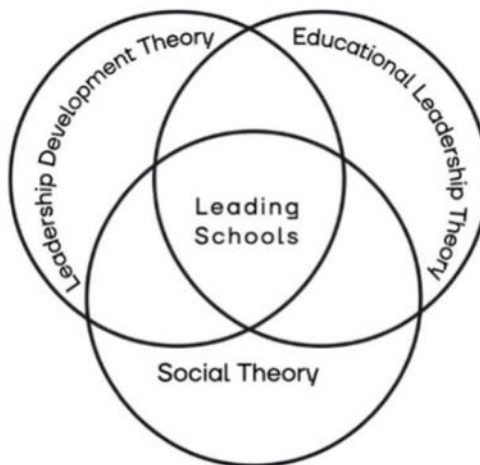


Figure 9

The multi-theoretical framework used by this research



5.4.1 Leaders as adult learners

In order to understand how leadership development takes place, it is important to find out what participants perceive as learning, what activities they engage in that lead to learning within their schools and the wider organisational context. According to adult learning theory, leaders are adult learners who learn independently and develop their leadership through self-directed channels (Knowles, 1980). While in their positions, leaders learn through shared learning

opportunities, professional socialisation, reflection, self-directed and contextualised manner (Hallinger, 1992). The findings showed that leaders learn on the job as they engage in 'situated learning experiences', where they interact with others through 'discourse' (conversations) (Mezirow, 1996, p. 8). They also engage in 'critical reflection' while solving problems and exchanging ideas and feedback with others (Mezirow, 1996, p. 7).

Furthermore, learning takes place outside the school through networking and professional socialisation during organisational events and meetings with leaders from other schools. The findings showed that participation in these events was powerful as leaders got the chance to listen to other leaders' stories and share their own (Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992). While leaders do not get specific and contextually relevant feedback in these meetings (Calnin et al., 2018), they view them as opportunities to hear from others where they deconstruct the problem and reconstruct as they try to apply it to their own context (Joo & Kim, 2016). Bush et al. (2007) suggested that the most effective professional development for leaders is the one where 'there is a link between the learning situation and the work situation' (as cited in Bush 2009, p. 386). While some of these meetings were seen as 'insightful and interesting' (Principal, CS-4), they might not be useful due to the contextual difference and lack of applicability. Hallinger and Wimpelberg (1992) warned from external professional development events where leaders hear about the accomplishments and successes achieved by other leaders and schools. While these events could inspire leaders, they can also demotivate them as they return to their schools and see that their reality is different, and the time spent outside to learn was taken from the time they could have spent solving their own school problems.

The social dimension is central to adult learning as they engage with the social and cultural discourses around them and the social experiences of others (Mezirow, 2012). Learning with others and from others in this thesis is defined as shared learning (Lambert, 2002; Wu & Cormican, 2021), and it takes place

through group discussion and collaboration on tasks and projects. Shared learning through 'collaboration and interaction can create an environment where adults engage in creating shared meanings', [through which] 'they begin to discern their relationship to a larger pattern of collective experience' (Isaacs, 1993, p. 26). Wenger (2006) described this collective learning experience as 'communities of practice' where a group of professionals engage in group learning based on common passion or concern. The findings confirmed that collective or shared learning is an effective leadership learning approach; however, this applies more to senior and middle leaders who work in teams or in pairs, not to principals who mostly work and learn alone (Furman, 2012). In order to engage in shared learning opportunities, principals join external events and training sessions where they can engage with others. While this reflects agency and initiative, principals mostly end up in generic programs that are designed through a top-bottom approach, thus, the intended self-initiated and independent learning might not be applicable. Findings from principals showed that they reflect on their work, plan for their learning, and initiate their formal and informal learning opportunities, but engage less in contextualised and group learning. Despite often working alone, principals cherish their professional interactions with other leaders and teachers, viewing these opportunities as the most effective form of professional learning.

Reflection in this thesis is seen as a form of examination of ideas, perspectives, and practice. The goal of reflection, according to Mezirow (1996) is not only to critically examine and challenge one's ideas and meaning schemes, but to construct new meanings which lead to action based on this reflection. Reflection was mentioned in interviews when leaders described how they set their learning goals and how they target what matters most to their current school needs. Contrastingly, the questionnaire showed that leaders chose reflection as one of the activities they perform on a daily or weekly basis. Thus, reflection as a concept is embedded in their practice as a form of thinking about their work but is not a part of their discourse.

Formal learning was limited to four leaders who mentioned they had postgraduate degrees in educational leadership, the rest had professional leadership certifications or training by external providers that were described as 'reputable providers' or 'educational brands' (Principal, CS-1). As a result, interviews mainly reflected exposure to leadership models introduced by organisational affiliates, and limited engagement with leadership theory and concepts. These programs focus on learning for action and process rather than content (Bush, 2009). Principals and senior leaders are mainly involved in learning about effective leadership practices, accountability measures, partnerships, and sustainability (Calnin et al., 2018), while middle leaders generally train in behaviour management, teaching methods, curriculum, and assessment. Current professional development is generally predetermined by the organisation and does not necessarily reflect response to leaders' individual needs of skills (Fisher, 2021). These findings are not consistent with scholarship in the field, such as Bubb and Earley (2010) and Bush (2009), who suggested that leadership development that is driven by needs and informed by research is more effective and can guide understanding and action. Bush (2009) asserted that no single form or style has been exceptionally effective in leadership development. The only confirmed element by research is that leadership development and preparation makes a difference in leaders' work and impact (Huber, 2004). The focus on the learning environment, guidance and support to leaders is widely evidenced by research (Darling-Hammond, 2022), but these factors vary depending on leaders' needs and context. According to the findings, both individualisation and contextualisation should be taken into consideration when planning for leadership learning.

The findings showed that leaders' engagement and conversation with teachers during and with regards to professional development are effective because they allow leaders to learn about key problems in their schools (Robinson, 2011). When senior leaders join middle leaders and teachers' learning discussions, they tend to collectively focus on finding better outcomes, consistency, and impact.

Findings from interviews showed that middle leaders are strongly engaged in new learning opportunities ~~by middle leaders~~. Senior leaders, however, are more focused on their past professional learning but less willing to engage in new learning whilst in their current positions. They were generally more enthusiastic to discuss their contributions to conferences and their social capital, rather than a need for further development. This approach was also reflected in the quantitative findings where 49 senior leaders averaged 3.1 on a scale of 1-10 when asked about their need for professional development whilst in their current positions (Figure 8). This could be due to the positional and professional capital they embody, and the high position ascribed to them by their school community as the top of the school hierarchy. Nonetheless, this could also be a result of their overwork and limited capacity to spare time for their own learning (Earley, 2013; Thomson, 2017).

Leaders believe they can effectively contribute to the learning of other leaders and teachers through conversations, direct training, and presentations within the school. According to Robinson et al. (2008), engaging, participating, and promoting teacher learning has the highest impact on student learning. These engagements enable leaders to listen to teachers' concerns and questions and learn more closely about their areas of strengths and weaknesses. Participation and engagement encourage dialogic and trustful relationships (Leithwood et al., 2020a) as leaders join others in learning conditions rather than through a supervisory authoritative position (Wu & Cormican, 2021). As a conclusion, senior leaders focus more on their role as adult educators than adult learners, while simultaneously engaging in learning through professional interactions, reflection, formal and informal learning.

5.4.2 Leaders as adult educators

In addition to examining leaders as learners, Joo and Kim (2016) examined leaders as educators who are responsible for the professional learning of others. The findings showed that leaders inherently viewed themselves as educators of

other leaders and teachers. Professional learning inside the school was important and manifested in two forms. First, informal, and casual conversations inside the school strongly contribute to leader and teacher development. This form takes place through engaging in meetings with teachers and other leaders, listening and sharing ideas through which they learn about teachers' work, support them in solving problems or developing practice. Second, leaders directly contribute to the learning of other adults in the school through participating in didactic sessions, workshops, and other forms of training. This direct and formal act of educating others allows engagement in focused discussions about school problems while enabling leaders to model the educator figure, which was seen as effective.

The findings also showed that senior leaders identify learning opportunities for others, guide them directly and indirectly (Leithwood et al., 2020b), and offer means of support. Leaders enable leader and teacher learning by allocating or negotiating for budget and creating suitable time and space. Promotion is also seen as a form of leadership development for teachers and middle leaders (Earley, 2017). However, when there is no budget allocated for promotion, teachers are offered opportunities to practise leadership through mentoring others or taking part in specific tasks. Additionally, conversations, feedback and the recognition of other leaders and teachers' work was seen as important and effective. Leaders generally benefit from working with experienced professionals who could formally or informally act as mentors (Barnett & O' Mahony, 2008). The findings showed that mentoring was only informally provided by a few middle leaders or teachers. The lack of budget or remuneration to mentors or the inability to reduce their workload could be a factor behind not officially benefiting from mentoring (Bush, 2009). Mentoring requires deliberate planning and careful matching of mentor and mentee, time, support, and an understanding of the emotional process involved in this support, which were not available in schools (Bush & Glover, 2004).

The findings showed that leaders can guide other adults in the school in different ways, however, due to the overwhelming nature of senior leaders' work and the increasing accountability and corporate pressure (Gurr, 2020), their availability to offer training or lead discussion groups is limited. However, middle leaders, based on the nature of their work, offer a wide range of direct and indirect education and guidance for colleagues and teachers (Harris et al., 2019). The findings confirmed that middle leaders influence teachers' work directly while senior leaders influence teachers both directly and indirectly. Although schools invest in providing need-based development for leaders and teachers, this is still seen as a privilege and generally affected by organisational boundaries, mainly money and availability of opportunities. Despite evidence that professional learning has the highest effect size on student outcomes (Robinson, 2010, 2011), there is no confirmed evidence that international schools invest adequately in staff professional development (Free, 2017). Although professional learning was described as important in all interviews, its direct impact on student learning was not deeply unpacked and could not be firmly established. In contrast, its link to meeting accreditation requirements or policies was more obvious.

The role of leaders as educators also involves supporting teachers as leaders, regardless of position or assignment (Carter, 2016; King & Holland, 2022). Teacher leadership is nurtured through professional learning opportunities or joining leadership groups and enacting leadership responsibilities despite being partial or temporary. These opportunities enable teachers to have their voices heard and practice guiding others. The findings showed that some of the effective ways to develop teacher leadership are entrusting teachers to take ownership of their work and lead their classrooms autonomously (Lumpkin et al., 2014). This type of teacher leadership takes place through a mechanism of shared learning and practice in the form of discussion. The findings showed that some schools have a more established practice of developing teacher leadership and encourage teachers to exchange ideas and initiate changes across the school. Teachers' freedom to lead pedagogical development through action research or

through initiating pedagogical discussions can encompass a sense of agency and generate influence (Nadelson et al., 2020). Embracing leadership identity and actions regardless of appointment can be an exemplary practice, however, it requires recognition, trust, and support by senior leadership in order to be sustained and developed.

Creating professional learning communities (PLC)s is another outcome of leadership development across participant schools, where leaders and teachers view themselves as professionals learning together and contributing to the development of their community (Stoll & Louis, 2007; Lin et al., 2018). Perceiving their school as a PLC and identifying as professionals enhances the accumulation of professional capital for leaders and teachers, which could be exchangeable into other forms of capital, such as promotion, knowledge, and skills. Professional capital results from the accumulation of social and decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), as individuals grow their professional learning and network, which could be considered as a resource in their field. Although professional capital does not necessarily entitle individuals to leadership positions, it contributes to their feeling of belonging to a professional body where their presence and contributions are valued (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

5.4.3 The missing perspective: Preparing leaders to lead internationally

Leadership development findings demonstrated effective practices that are recommended by research; however, they also showed several gaps. International schools, like other types of schools, are increasingly growing in complexity and expectations throughout the world (Fisher, 2019; Hayden & Thompson, 2016). Nevertheless, most of the literature on educational leadership and leadership development emerges from national systems of education, with a largely Western set of norms and assumptions' (Calnin et al., 2018, p. 99). The extent to which this body of research addresses the needs of international and multicultural contexts is ambiguous (Bryant et al., 2018). The IBO recently developed an 'access and inclusion policy' that includes guidance for IB schools

working towards ‘improving practice’ and ‘reducing barriers to inclusion’ (IBO, 2022, p. 1) and relevant training for school leaders. However, this policy is still optional and focuses on IB school environments without clarity on creating ‘cultural connectors’ that recognise the complexity and diversity of their local communities, including staff, students, and families (Walker & Lee, 2018, p. 482). The findings showed that training for principals rarely involves learning about their school communities. Contrastingly, most of their training is provided through their organisational affiliation and focuses on organisational goals and identity (Evans, 2022). Fisher’s work with international school leaders has also confirmed that there is no training for leading in international contexts (2019, 2021). Her findings were confirmed by the outcomes of this study where leaders had no relevant preparation or training. The lack of contextual leadership development and the minimal attention to pluralistic pedagog(ies) and responsive curricula—as revealed by the findings—are not entirely unrelated.

Research and empirical evidence show that there is no unique model of leadership development that works universally (Bush, 2009). Organisational context, individual needs, content, and process are important elements in leadership development programs (Harris, 2020a). The findings revealed a strong focus on organisational ‘branding’, normative perspectives through which professional development programs are chosen and limited attention to consistency and impact. Furthermore, the minimal connection with the context and the marginal input from the theory can lead to the inference that leaders’ knowledge and experience do not prepare them to respond to the needs of their multicultural communities. While generic patterns of learning can be useful (Robinson, 2011), they cannot help leaders to transform themselves or the people they lead (Furman, 2012; Toure, 2008).

Contextual learning relates to the interaction with the communal spaces in which leaders work—within and beyond schools (Brown, 2004, 2006). In addition, contextualisation refers to the influence of social, cultural, and historic dimensions

which can limit or affect leaders' meaning schemes (Mezirow, 2012). Leaders can be fully immersed in their prior knowledge and experience, which limits their interaction with new social and cultural discourses and the construction of new meanings (Mezirow, 1996), especially when they follow culturally centric or dominant knowledge (Samier et al., 2021). According to Mezirow (1996), 'critical reflection' allows leaders to examine their previous knowledge, and immerse in 'disorienting dilemmas', which lead to a perspective shift as leaders engage with theory and create new 'meaning schemes' (pp. 13-14). Besides theory, dialogic interactions with others can lead to deconstructing previous knowledge and reconstructing new meanings (Joo & Kim, 2016). Transformative adult learning theory—or critical andragogy—can enable responsive leadership due to the engagement and the interaction between leaders and their social and cultural field (Furman, 2012; Khalifa et al, 2016). As a consequence, leadership learning does not only take place at the individual level but also collectively (Smyth, 1985, 1989), as leaders work toward transforming themselves and their communities (Shields et al., 2002).

While different programs can be useful to different people and contexts, the challenge for a meaningful leadership development is to tailor learning opportunities that are theory-informed, 'purpose-specific and context-related' (Bush et al., 2004). The influence of professional learning on leadership is well-documented in research (Calnin et al., 2018; Bush 2009), but measuring the effect of development on teaching and learning is hard to establish, especially in a transient context such as international schools. The field is affected by a revolving door, privatisation, high accountability pressure, transience of teachers and parents (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018), thus, leadership development that is not particularly tailored to the need can be less effective. The findings confirmed that direct engagement of leaders in teacher training sessions in their schools, collaboration with other leaders, trust relationships and acknowledging social and cultural capital can be effective contributions to the role of leaders as adult educators.

Empirical evidence in this research shows that schools—and their organisations—do not offer leadership development that is relevant to the contexts of international schools. Accordingly, leadership development does not inform socially and culturally responsive leadership that would support responsive curricula and pedagogies (Gay, 2010; Lopez, 2016). The current state of leadership development is characterised by monolithic professional learning models, which might not sufficiently serve the context (Fisher, 2020). Based on the findings and the theoretical investigation of leadership development through an adult learning approach, this thesis introduces a model of leadership development driven by response to the context of internationalisation in schools. This model recognises the need for a transformative learning approach that helps leaders to critically reflect on—and transform—their own practice and leadership development. The proposed theoretical model centres students and teachers' needs and enables leading through dialogue, relational trust, and recognition of the social and cultural capital. This approach is driven by the principles of critical andragogy (Mezirow, 1996) and Bourdieu's social theory (1977, 1986) that centralises the social and cultural fields in the praxis and development of school leadership.

Through dialogic interactions and engagement with theory, leaders can confront their assumptions and engage with the ideas of others (Mezirow, 2012; Brown, 2004; Freire, 1970). This perspective shift requires recognition of the cultural and social capital of other leaders, teachers, students, and community members. A perspective shift allows leaders to learn the narratives and histories of the others and develop a sense of solidarity and respect (Habermas, 1984). The acknowledgement and adaptation to new discourses would encourage leaders to centre the communal—social and cultural fields— as inherent elements in their own leadership and learning (Smyth, 2014a). However, while recognising the knowledge and values (Novelli et al., 2017) brought by leaders, teachers and students to their schools is important, it is not sufficient unless accompanied by action and actual change (Freire, 1994). The thesis calls for leadership praxis—

the shift from knowledge to action— based on the principles of social and cultural justice, where the social and cultural capital of teachers and students are recognised, represented, and embedded in the schooling system.

This discussion draws on Fraser's (2000) concepts of social justice: 'recognition, representation and redistribution' (p. 74-75), while applying them in the contexts of multicultural international schools. Accordingly, this thesis calls for the recognition of multicultural capital(s)—including needs and identities—and for the representation of students' cultures in the curriculum and the pedagogical approaches adopted by teachers (Sleeter, 2018; Banks, 2013), as well as staffing and general school activities. In addition, the thesis calls for shared leadership as a form of 'redistribution' of influence and decision making, which secures recognition and representation (Fraser, 2000; Novelli et al., 2017). Brown (2004) and Furman (2012) suggested that entrusting teachers and leaders to develop pedagogical approaches and a responsive curriculum can be described as a phenomenon of shared leadership (Goksoy, 2016), where change is driven by the knowledge of the many rather than the few. The centrality of the social and the cultural in leadership learning and development is foundational to socially and culturally responsive leadership in international schools. Responsiveness in international schools refers to the integration of multiple forms of knowledge(s) and pedagog[ies] that represent the school communities: students, families, teachers, and leaders.

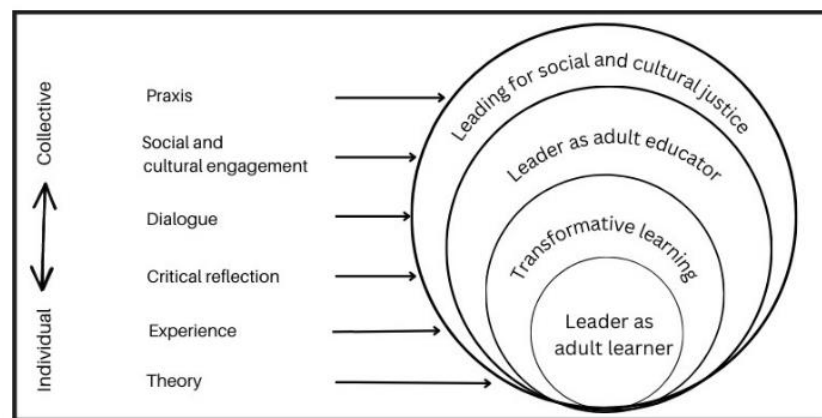
5.4.4 A theoretical framework for leadership learning and development in international schools

This discussion suggests that the role of senior leaders as adult educators requires critical reflection, engagement with relevant theoretical knowledge and dialogic interactions with the social and cultural field. Transformative leadership learning—as conceptualised by this thesis—involves the recognition of people's knowledge(s), enabling representation and shared learning, and contributing to the transformative learning of other adults in the school. The field in this case, is

a space where influence is shared, and the voices of leaders, teachers and students are represented in the programs of teaching and learning (Smyth, 2006). Based on this discussion and the missing perspectives in leadership learning that are revealed by the findings, this thesis suggests a theoretical framework for transformative leadership learning that is relevant to international schools, based on adult learning theory and the transformative theory.

Figure 10

A theoretical framework for leadership learning and development in international schools



5.4.5 The pandemic influence

The pandemic affected leadership development as well as other areas in schools. When leaders were faced with unusual circumstances, they generally focused on reacting to the crisis and limiting negative outcomes (Gurr, 2021). During the pandemic, professional learning was less prioritised as leaders avoided allocating specific times for workshops and training. Instead, the focus was on new learning and managing the emerging challenges through meeting with their teams and other stakeholders. Leaders were learning through the crisis while adopting a reactive approach (Fotohabadi & Kelly, 2018). As the pandemic continued, when schools started the academic year 2021, online communication with staff became mainstream and leaders' work in schools was also succumbing to a new normality (Harris & Jones, 2022).

The findings showed that leaders became more focused on leading their school through the crisis, while trying to support their community, teachers, and students (Doll et al., 2021). Communication was more focused on action with limited time for research, discussion, and reflection (Appendix I, Table 20). Questionnaire findings showed that leaders became flexible and approachable and spent more time speaking to others. Findings from case-studies showed that new staff were invited to the leadership front-line, mainly technology, communication, counselling, security and health professionals, whose help was mostly needed in response to the crisis. Thus, leading was driven by the situation and supported by teamwork, while leaders and their team members were learning through the crisis.

Furthermore, findings from interviews across all case studies showed that leaders and teachers were spontaneously helping each other to learn new approaches or use new platforms. Learning became embedded in the school day, informal, non-positional and multidimensional as the hierarchical barriers between leaders and teachers were reduced. The findings showed that leaders were reflecting on their prior experience to construct new knowledge and skills that would enable them to cope with the crisis with no time, no external support, and no preparation (Huber, 2021; Gurr, 2021).

The crisis resulted in the development of emerging leaders, with and without assignment, who responded to their colleagues' needs and offered technological and pedagogical help. Thus, the pandemic brought forward horizontal, collaborative, adaptive and flexible forms of leadership (Goode et al., 2021). According to Harris and Jones (2022), 'the pandemic changed the practice of leadership into a distributed, tech-supported and more networked one' (p. 107). In addition, the pandemic called for a re-connection with values such as empathy, reflection, responsiveness, and relational trust as leaders found out that these values were more central than any other time. Trusting other leaders and teachers to make decisions was inevitable; most leaders mentioned that the most valuable feature of leadership is 'building trusting relationships with and among staff,

students, and parents' (Leithwood et al., 2020a, p. 8). Amidst the pandemic, 'interactions [were] not just determined by the contingent intentions [...].' (Go, 2013, p. 57) of leaders but by the wider context. Leadership learning, as a result, grew more relationally (Eacott, 2017) with a stronger focus on social and professional capital.

The discussion of the findings engaged with an analysis of leadership development and learning and a construction of the role of leaders as adult learners and educators. The outcome of this analysis highlighted the limited attention to multicultural learning in schools and in leadership learning, suggesting that the notions of internationalisation were minimal and surface-level. However, the pandemic changed the path of leadership development in schools. Despite difficulties and complex experiences (Doll et al., 2021), the pandemic provided opportunities for leaders to refocus on learning through the school and its surrounding, and to prioritise what matters most to their communities.

5.5 The social and cultural capital of students and teachers

5.5.1 The student capital

One of the main stances of this thesis is examining leadership theory and practise through a Bourdieusian social lens. Thus, it is inevitable for this research to focus on the social and cultural field and its input into the conceptualisation of leadership. While Bourdieu's notions of the field, the social and the cultural capital are inherently sociological or theoretical in nature, it is important to acknowledge that they are not virtual and not abstract concepts. Although Bourdieu defined the field as an 'epistemological and methodological heuristic—which helps researchers to make sense of the world' (Bourdieu & Passeron, p. 104), the field and the forms of capital it embodies are deeply rooted in geography, history, society, culture, time and the cross-border movement of individuals and groups (Calhoun, 2006; Go, 2013), which are—indeed—observable, actual and real (Alderson, 2021)

A thorough understanding of Bourdieu's sociological work traces its roots to his early anthropological investigation in Algeria. Ever since his first field investigation (Bourdieu, 1961), Bourdieu's work grew to immerse in sociological and socio-cultural enquiry using multi-methodological ways, and he developed intellectual tools that enable the understanding of the field's influence on people's lives and the evolution of habitus within the changes of the field and in new fields (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu's notion of habitus, which is the production of an individual's social, cultural, and economic capital is outstandingly relevant to the study of international schools as social fields. A thorough analysis of the findings from different methods leads to the inference that the social and the cultural, supported by the economic capital, are deeply inherent in the experience of leading, teaching and learning in these schools. The analysis of the economic and the cultural in Bourdieu's work is inherently social or, more precisely, societal, and sociological (Calhoun, 2006). This was confirmed by Calhoun (2006), Go (2013) and Swartz (1997) who worked with Bourdieu and published on him after his passing. A further expansion of this line of enquiry is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the work of the above-mentioned scholars, has informed the inferences made in this discussion, creating further connections of Bourdieu's theory to the examination of the social and the cultural in the leadership of international schools.

In his lecture *Le choc des civilisations* (1959), Bourdieu clearly explained that what is acquired through lived experience—the habitus—cannot be unacquired. The experiences of leaders, teachers and students is a part of who they are and how they interact with the world. The habitus becomes a 'second nature'; a 'structuring structure' which affects how people learn, work, or interact with others (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 53). The findings confirmed that the habitus, which encompasses the social and the cultural capital, continues to influence individuals' 'ways of learning and doing things', while being shaped by the interaction with the new field (Bourdieu, 2021). Thus, the assumption that leadership should respond to the social and cultural needs of its community (Leithwood et al., 2020a; Khalifa et al., 2016) is foundational in this study. In fact, the association of leadership with the

social field is a natural and essential continuation of the inquiry of leadership praxis and development.

The notion of social capital, as conceptualised by this study, incorporates a sense of identifying with and belonging to a group or a space—or a place—and the ability to engage in trust relationships and embody shared values, norms, and expectations. Social capital is connected to and exchangeable with other forms of capital, which together encompass the habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, the identity of individuals is inherent to who they recognise, connect, and identify with as their social capital (Atkinson, 2016). The findings confirmed that social capital is crucial to the lives of students, teachers, and leaders, and affects the way they learn and work. Most international school communities in this study identified as ‘international’ or ‘expats’, which implies frequent mobility (Kunz, 2016). People in international schools encounter difficulties in building strong and long-term connections (Hayes & Skattebol, 2015), but because they self-identify as ‘international’, they can relate to others with the same identity (Student, CS-1). Additionally, students often connect with people who share similar cultural or linguistic backgrounds, or identical values and interests (Student, CS-3). The limited response to the social and cultural needs of students and the limited recognition of their past and present experiences associated with issues of mobility (Kunz, 2016), identity and belonging (Halse, 2018; Pinson & Arnot, 2015) call for urgent action and a reconsideration of the role and purpose of leadership in these schools.

5.5.2 The teacher capital

Robinson (2011) explained that trust is an important factor in school leadership, which allows leaders to generate the needed influence. The findings showed that professional conversations and relationships which reflect trust and respect are among the key pillars of professional learning communities (Gilbert, 2022; Parlar & Cansoy, 2020). When teachers feel trusted, they take risks and persevere without the fear of being judged. Middle leaders in all case studies showed

understanding, respect and engagement with teachers' work and their cultural and social capital; they understood their needs, concerns, and uncertainties.

Teachers' social, cultural, and professional capital are closely interrelated and cannot be compartmentalised despite a common performative discourse in schools (Ball, 2012, 2017) that de-identifies them as professionals and social agents (Smyth, 1989; Biesta, 2020). The findings showed that teachers embody their cultural identity and capital as a part of their habitus, while teaching and fulfilling their work-related duties. Therefore, it is important for leaders and schools to draw meaningful connections between teachers' social, cultural, and professional capital. Sharing common cultural and social norms with others contributes to growing one's social capital. Nonetheless, interacting with the field—and with others—shapes people's habitus and dispositions, and contributes to the evolution of their capital—social and cultural (Addison, 2009). The findings collected from senior leaders showed that they valued their students and teachers' social capital and prioritised building trust relationships. These findings were confirmed across all datasets and demonstrated a strong alignment with the theoretical framework. However, the in-depth interviews with senior leaders showed that their understanding of the social and cultural capital, including the notions of belonging, trust relationships, common identities and norms are peripheral and contentious. They explained that trust is an important element to lead effectively, that is vital in their relationship with all stakeholders (Riehl, 2012). Nevertheless, most leaders did not recognise that developing and maintaining these relationships require representation of teachers' knowledge, voices and cultural capital in teaching and the curriculum.

The findings showed that leaders have a narrow understanding of trust, social and cultural capital, and their relationship to teachers' sense of belonging and professional identity, which could significantly affect their schools. Two principals—one in England and one in Qatar—exceptionally, had a deeper understanding of how trust and teachers' capital influence the development of

student learning and the school environment. In their interviews, they focused on creating an environment where teachers feel safe and empowered despite ethnic and religious diversity. They considered integrating multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual elements into their schools to enhance its collective cultural capital. Nonetheless, in these same schools, teachers had difficult conversations about the 'dominant culture' (Said, 1995, p. 27) and the communal 'misrecognition' (Fraser, 2000, p. 110) of their own social and cultural capital. Thus, leaders' recognition was not sufficient to combat the phenomenon of 'othering' in schools. As a result, this thesis argues that a transformative andragogy is needed, where leaders and teachers engage in critical conversations and reflection about their perception of the 'other' and the attitude embedded in 'othering' (Schepen, 2017) and the actions needed to create an inclusive environment. A transformative and conscious process of adult learning includes a deconstruction of current and previous knowledge and experiences and a reconstruction of new ones (Mezirow, 1996; Freire, 2021), while maintaining a focus on the social interests of the community (Habermas, 1984).

Leaders generally focused on creating and maintaining a unique school identity that everyone in the school would embody. While a common identity is helpful to develop a sense of belonging to the place and the group, the under-recognition of someone's identity as an individual or a member of a social and cultural group can be discouraging (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Riley, 2022). Students' interviews showed that students are disappointed as they believe their identities are marginalised in their schools. Using generic terms to represent students, such as Asian, African, Arab, or British, was recurrent in principals' interviews. The plurality of the school community was heavily reflected in students and teachers' interviews. However, the findings showed that a minority of teachers and majority of students from multicultural backgrounds were under-recognised and under-represented. Middle leaders were generally conscious of the plurality of their students and teachers' identities and acknowledged the connection between recognition and a successful learning experience. They suggested a

reconsideration of future recruitment plans to ensure multicultural representation and an adaptation of their curriculum to ensure responsiveness and engagement. Most senior leaders, in contrast, did not establish this connection.

Despite a sense of insecurity among teachers—triggered by the pandemic and precarious contracts (Bunnell & Poole, 2023), teachers continued to prioritise their work and their students. Interviews with teachers showed that they appreciate being trusted, supported, and respected as professionals and individuals (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999); when this was not the case, teachers struggled to hide their sense of harm. According to teachers, trust and respect in the workplace are inseparable from the cultural, social, and professional capital.

5.5.3 Responding to the social and cultural capital: Is leadership informed by this capital?

The importance of responding to and acting upon students' social needs is well documented in research (Riehl, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2020b; Riley, 2022). Findings from leaders, teachers and students showed that students can learn better when their schools respect and enable their social relations. Furthermore, due to the transient status of students (Bailey & Gibson, 2020), and because they embody an accumulation of social and cultural capital across different times and places, acknowledging their capital within their school becomes sensitive and essential. When leaders and teachers show understanding, respect and acknowledgement to social and cultural capital, students develop a sense of belonging and trust relationships (Khalifa et al., 2016; Fraise & Brooks, 2015). When schools offer a relevant curriculum and teaching context that respond to and engage students, the sense of belonging improves, and students will thrive accordingly (Banks, 2013, Ladson-Billings, 2021). Contrastingly, marginalising students' social and cultural capital by offering and normalising a 'uni-dimensional' teaching approach and a homogenised learning environment (Dimmock, 2000, p. 50), could leave students in a sense of 'anguish' (Bourdieu, 1961, in Go, 2013, p.

60) and disengagement, which can impact their learning and well-being (Baroutsis & Mills, 2018).

5.5.4 The importance of societal and cultural engagements

It is inevitable that leaders who work in an international context develop forms of awareness of what these new societies look like and learn how to communicate with them (Fisher, 2019) besides learning about their social norms, events, traditions, and culture. The immersion in new situations is essential to leaders who need this knowledge to adapt their learning approach and behaviour to the new context (Furman, 2012). While the findings showed some aspects of engagement with context, they also revealed in many ways a sense of isolation of schools and their leaders from the context in which they operate (Pearson, 2022). According to Kim (2019), many international school leaders live in sheltered contexts and hardly know anything about the rest of the country and its local communities. An additional location on their resumes increases their objectified cultural capital, but its impact on their learning is limited due to minimal interaction (Kim, 2019). This isolation could be attributed to a two-way cultural barrier, which restricts interactions. Due to a shortage of intercultural capital, interactions between parents and local teachers and expat leaders and teachers are generally dazzled by invisible cultural hierarchies (R'boul, 2021; Samier et al., 2021) and inherent power dynamics, which keep conversations trivial.

In both countries (England and Qatar) there is a cultural gap between leaders and the community, which is consistent with previous studies on international schools (Fisher, 2019; Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2017). England schools are predominantly local and familiar with the context, while international students are seen as 'newcomers' (Russell & Mantilla-Blanco, 2022; Norozi, 2023). In contrast, staff, leaders, and the majority of parents in Qatar are expats, who come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Parents initiate activities that are facilitated by the school, but this is still viewed as an outsider effort. A few leaders in Qatar believe that—through their role—they are educating the community, and that 'parents are

overwhelmingly happy that their children speak English like school staff (Principal, CS-1). This quote shows that parents have internalised cultural and 'linguistic hierarchies' (Mehmedbegović, 2017) and a deficit perspective related to their own languages or the ways 'other Englishes' are spoken (Holliday, 2006). Most leaders had limited cultural knowledge and a narrow—or no—understanding of students' social and cultural capital beyond school walls. Others didn't not see the need to know anything about the community. Their interviews reflected a 'culturally superior position' that falls within the chauvinistic narrative of [Said's, (1995)] Orientalism' (Holliday, 2006, p. 386). These outcomes strongly suggest that leaders need to engage in a reciprocal learning process in their social fields, which could reduce their prejudice (Banks, 2013) and help them reconstruct a new perspective of the communities they serve.

When leaders described their school's direction and success, they discussed success in terms of accreditation reports, budget, procedures, enrolment rates and student attainment. According to the findings, leaders' work is heavily influenced by a managerialist and commercial culture that focuses on performative norms and compliance with the frameworks and expectations of accrediting or authorising bodies. This culture leaves limited space for change and autonomy and reduces leadership to managerialism (Eacott, 2015b; Gunter, 1997, 2001; Thomson, 2017). The findings revealed a busy environment in which leadership has no time to reflect and review deep socio-cultural issues despite their importance. In addition, international schools are structured and governed by normative narratives of internationalism that normalise cultural hierarchies (Samier, 2016; Holliday, 2006) and the homogenisation of education programs (Calnin et al., 2018) as tenets of quality education. These narratives were criticised by some middle leaders and students, who regarded their social and cultural capital as key in their learning experience. However, when leaders discussed student learning and capital, they focused on attainment and events; it was difficult for most leaders to recognise the presence of 'culture' in students' cultural capital. Their responses ranged between 'they [school] have no capital'

and 'we make their capital'. A part of this controversial narrative is driven by the limited multicultural—and intercultural—training that leaders receive, or the lack of it (Fisher, 2019). This could be attributed to the absence of multi- or interculturality as a school evaluation requirement, or its marginalisation in educational leadership qualifications.

5.5.5 The relevance of social and cultural capital

The embodied form of cultural capital in this study is reflected through the different forms of knowledge (cultural and academic), languages, ways of expression, and worldviews. The objectified and the institutional cultural capital, alternatively, refer to school reports, accreditation records, technology tools and platforms and other materialistic representations. In addition, speaking English with a certain accent was recognised as a 'remarkable' form of objectified capital (Principal, CS-1). While language is generally perceived as embodied, certain English accents are viewed as objectified and potentially exchangeable into other forms of capital in specific fields. In contrast, other accents or 'Englishes' might be denied value or suppressed as a form of cultural capital because they represent 'peripheric' knowledge(s) and identities rather than 'centric' English (Pennycook, 2007, 2017). The findings showed that schools influenced the embodied cultural capital of staff and students through dominant narratives and discourses, which were evident in their curriculum and staffing. In addition, students' embodied cultural capital is shaped by their interactions with their peers, classroom environment and daily social encounters, including previous experiences. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the common disposition, across all case-study schools, to glorify the objectified cultural capital as an essential component of institutional and student habitus.

The rising waves of neoliberal culture dominating the field of international schools—and other schools in general—have changed the purpose and priorities of educational leaders and influenced their work for the past two decades (Bates, 2011; Ball, 2017). The excessive focus on the accumulation of objectified capital

in schools occupied a significant space in leaders' timetables and attention. Leadership development and other areas of praxis have succumbed to the neoliberal narrative with overwhelming interest in 'branded' and generic top-down programs. There is a tremendous focus on objectified, quantified, and competitive outputs. The outweighing of the embodied by the objectified capital and the extent to which this is legitimised in schools and societies, although inherently sociological and cultural, remains heavily affected by economic capital. The forms of capital within schools are strongly connected and influence the habitus of those in the field (Bourdieu, 1986, 2021), including the leadership habitus. This firm assumption—while does not offer solutions to the above challenges—allows conceptual and theoretical clarity and creates potentials for a shift in perspective and practice.

This neoliberal culture challenges the core of what teaching and leading is by reducing teacher professionalism to quantified performance and delivery of pre-designed curriculum and exams, and reducing leading to managing (Thompson, 2017). In neoliberally driven schools, leaders hardly find the space and time to focus on understanding and responding to the social and cultural dimensions of their schools. This culture also affects teachers who do not have the space to practise their professionalism and engage in thinking and reflecting about students and curriculum (Biesta, 2016). The time needed for the intellectual labour in leading and teaching in this corporate environment is scarce (Earley, 2012), and the endless performative pressure limits leaders' freedom to reflect and act accordingly.

The act of leading conscientiously involves a process of deconstructing prior knowledge, learning the socio-cultural context, reconstructing a relevant vision, and enacting responsive leadership (Lopez, 2016; Fraise & Brooks, 2015). The cultural capital of leaders is not only a personal possession, but a process of embodiment of the present and future of a whole school, and its community, by understanding their histories and needs (Spillane et al., 2003). Leaders develop

new ways of leading while interacting with their school's social and cultural elements that would become—with time—an inherent part of their habitus: a 'structuring structure' or a way through which they learn to do things (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Their habitus nourishes their inner voice, which is a part of their professional identity, and their engagement with the teaching team and the community. As a result, their habitus guides their actions in relevance to the field, which is inseparable from the social and cultural capital of their students.

According to Fisher (2021), leadership should respond to the cultural diversity in the school, not just attempt to influence it. The interaction between leaders and the cultural diversity of their schools, based on trust and recognition, is central to leading international schools toward a better future. Leading international schools is a complex job that requires deliberate thinking, agency, and compassion (Riley, 2022). While no international school looks exactly like the other, leaders and policy makers have the ethical responsibility of pushing back against neoliberal schooling norms and culturally centric patterns (Van dermijnsbrugge, 2023), while working towards social and cultural justice and centralising intercultural trust relationships.

5.5.6 Patterns of change

The recent global and regional movements for justice helped young people to develop critical consciousness about their own issues and the courage to discuss them openly. Social movements such as the BLM movement (2021) and uprisings for justice in the Middle East stimulated social and political awareness (Heydemann, 2020). Additionally, the global discussion around well-being during the pandemic propelled open conversations in new directions. Students and teachers became more aware of their right to be socially and emotionally supported, and criticised organisational norms such as overwork, discrimination, and competitiveness. Teachers were exposed to surveillance while working under risk and in stressful situations, and students were learning in isolation. Millennials and Gen Zs were generally more articulate in expressing concerns about their

well-being than older generations and normalised the discussion about their discomfort (Seemiller & Grace, 2020). Students centred their needs and perspectives—cultural, social, and emotional—and adopted narratives of change and justice. In addition, teachers and middle leaders realised this pattern of change, and engaged in a process of reflection and an imagination of change where schools could be spaces for more equitable practice.

The diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice movement (DIEJ)

Acknowledging bias and discrimination against people from non-Western and non-dominant cultural groups was a sensitive issue that a few leaders acknowledged, while the others completely ignored. A pattern of bottom-up changes was presented by the findings, which started with the younger middle leaders, teachers, and students. However, the resistance at the top was difficult and protected by rigid barriers of corporate norms and interests, and embodied legacies of ‘cultural centrism’ (Wimmer, 2007, p. 83) and privilege. During the time of processing the findings, the International Schools Services (ISS, 2022) introduced a series of DIEJ workshops that were delivered by invited people of colour with international school experience. Soon after this initiative by ISS, the IBO released its ‘education in conflict’ and ‘education for equity and justice’ model and report (Moosung et al., 2022). Moreover, the IBO established an ‘Anti-discrimination Task Force’ for international school leaders, which aims to raise awareness about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (IBO, 2022). More recently, current staff and alumni of international schools started difficult conversations around issues of cultural dominance and racism, calling for a critical reflection and significant change in schools (Tanu, 2021, 2022; Sheblack, 2023).

The emerging DIEJ movement in international schools can still be seen as a tokenistic top-down initiative that has not yet connected with emerging voices from the field. While it could be described as a useful response to grassroots community movement, students and teachers’ voices are still widely unheard, as the findings

of this study suggest. Additionally, policy changes initiated or endorsed by the IBO or other commercial international organisations cannot not create significant impact in the absence of structural change. Likewise, organisational workshops promoting DIEJ models are important to raise awareness but cannot be effective unless deeper and consistent structural solutions are in place. Enabling DIEJ values and practice in schools requires a shift in perspective and consistent efforts to reconstruct inclusive cultures and responsive pedagogy and curriculum in international schools. Leaders can set the momentum of change based on their dual-role and interaction with the school community on one side and policy makers on the other. It is through leadership—its agency and influence—that change can shift from responding to a situation to developing sustainable and systemic social change.

5.5.7 The leadership imperative: What can leaders do?

A perspective shift in leading and managing schools is needed to normalise pluralism, not only regarding staff and students' nationalities—which is widely advertised—but in curriculum and pedagogy. International schools are pluralistic and multicultural communities where a philosophy of interculturalism can lead to more equitable educational approaches and outcomes in schools. An intercultural approach does not only acknowledge multiculturality but enables students and adults to learn about each other's cultures instead of internalising a homogenous narrative (Mehmedbegović, 2012). Interculturality in schools 'stimulates reflection about different ways of educating students' (Schepen, 2017, p. 96) and adults, which eventually benefits the whole community (Banks, 2013; Brown, 2004). The findings of this study assert that social and cultural justice in international schools can be galvanised by leadership that is reflective, responsive, and willing to engage in reciprocal intercultural learning.

Due to the sensitive nature of international schools, this thesis suggests that leadership for social and cultural justice is not possible by only learning about and from other cultures. The thesis calls leaders to critically reflect on their current and

prior knowledge and dispositions so they can embrace 'the other' and unpack 'how the other is related to [...] [their] own thinking' (Schepen, 2017, p. 96). Interculturality and justice cannot be simply achieved by learning about everybody else in the school (Banks, 2013), but through confronting the engraved prejudices, assumptions and attitudes accompanying their perception of the 'other'. It also requires acknowledging the emotions of 'the others' that have historically shaped their experiences as a result of being 'othered'. First, the question of why international schools are uni-dimensionally Western and why they marginalised other cultures in their programs and policies is a highly important one. The 'Otherness' of global communities (Said, 1995, p. 97), mainly in Asia and Africa, is accompanied by an 'orientalizing' (p. 167) perspective, where those making decisions about knowledge (what and how) inherently assume that the 'other' is less or simply 'inferior' (p. 72). The attitude of 'othering' other cultures and the difficult confrontation about their worthiness of being represented and responded to in the curriculum, pedagogy and policy is a key one. Second, the question of why it is imperative that leaders 'examine their perspective' and engage in developing new 'meaning schemes' is crucial (Mezirow, 1996). Schepen (2017) affirmed that schools and classrooms can 'be a reflection of [anticipated peace] and prepare students for a society in which they will deal with different and sometimes conflicting worldviews' (p. 96.). In this sense, international education can be seen as a cannon for peace and harmony, and justice worldwide.

5.5.8 A framework for leadership praxis in international schools

This thesis suggests that school leadership is more than practice, but a journey in epistemic spaces, learning about where and who they lead, challenging themselves to step into new learning milestones, and confronting existing biases and pre-learned assumptions about the 'other'. A responsive curriculum and a pedagogy of social and cultural justice require 'emphasis on the knowledge(s)' (R'boul, 2022) and cultural contexts of their students. Responsiveness entails immersion in elements of internationalisation, within these contexts, as a process

of intercultural exchange rather than transmission. This pedagogy requires learning the historical narratives of different social groups, understanding existing tensions around local and regional knowledge, religions, values, and other intersectional social and political issues (Samier et al., 2021). It calls for a 'recognition of power, inequality and division in the world' (Bourn, 2014, p. 25), an acknowledgement of the influence of colonialism—past and present—and a view of education beyond skills, credentials, and market economy (Bennabi, 1984). As this is a sophisticated process, policymakers, leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders should be deeply willing to engage in critical reflection about their knowledge of these contexts (Furman, 2012, Sleeter, 2018), and what they can unlearn and relearn, in addition to what they can teach and do.

A successful leadership endeavour in new social fields happens through a commitment to reflection and dialogue with others to understand different perspectives (Mezirow, 1996). Dialogue that is based on respect and recognition of the other (Freire, 1973) can lead to a mutual learning process where leaders learn from the school community, while leading adult and student learning. According to Schepen (2017), 'classrooms should become spaces of encounter, collaboration and recognition' where the voices of other social groups and traditions are heard, and the aspects denied in one's own thinking or tradition are revealed' (p. 99).

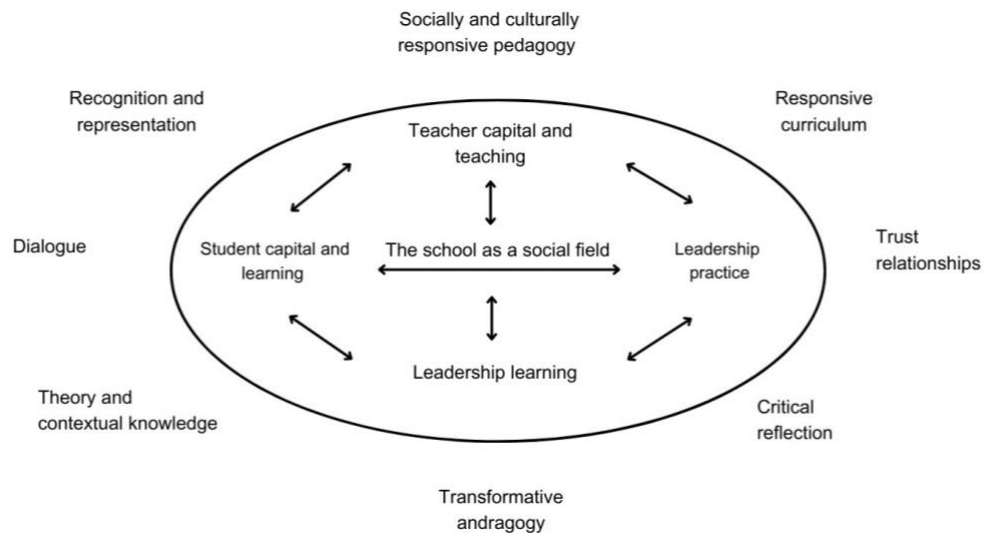
The thesis acknowledges the complex role of schools in reproducing cultural and social inequalities and offers—based on this discussion—a reconstruction of a leadership framework that is relevant to international schools' contexts. This framework incorporates the notions of social and cultural justice rooted in the principles of representation and recognition (Fraser, 2000, 2005) and centralises the social and the cultural field, including the capital(s), identities, needs and voices of students and teachers. Cultural justice in leadership practice means recognising and acting on the different histories, identities and the knowledge paradigms of the social groups constituting the school community, in addition to

equitable, inclusive, and socially just practice. 'The essence of culture is not its artefacts, tools or other tangible cultural elements, but how a group of people interpret, use and perceive them' (Banks, 2013, p. 6). Culture represents the collective narratives, values, symbols and means of communication that are associated with ways of thinking, behaving, and learning (Fraise and Brooks, 2015; Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, the connection of the social and the cultural is inevitable and indispensable, and strongly relevant to leadership in international schools. Culture is lived, practised, embodied, and transmitted across borders and generations; therefore, it is inseparable from the sociological understanding of international schools and their communities.

The outcomes of the above discussion lead to a (re)conceptualisation of leadership praxis in international schools, represented by the theoretical framework in Figure 11. Leadership praxis refers to the theoretical (knowledge) and contextual engagement that shifts into practice (action) through transformative learning (andragogy) (see Figure 10). This praxis embodies a relational—and reciprocal—approach at different levels, professional, pedagogical, social, and cultural, that are central to how leaders generate influence. Relationships based on dialogue and trust are key for leading and learning, where leadership—collectively with other leaders and teachers—engages with the social field and develops responsive pedagogies and curriculum that recognise and represent the needs and knowledge(s) of their students and teachers.

Figure 11

A framework of leadership praxis in international schools



As the world continues to reproduce injustices and violence, a new perspective of international education is needed. This thesis encourages intercultural recognition and a broader and deeper social capital within and across cultures. This research revealed an emerging process of reflection on current practice and future possibilities in international schools. Based on its outcomes, the thesis suggests a curriculum that reflects different identities, histories and ‘pedagog[ies] that centre rather than marginalise the ‘other’ (Schepen, 2017, p. 104), and a transformative approach in leading and learning that enables this necessary change. The enthusiasm and the courage of students showed that the youth are demanding more socially and culturally just spaces where this new perspective of international education is possible.

6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This research was conducted during unprecedented times, when societies and educational systems worldwide were hit by a health pandemic causing a form of social and educational ‘hysteresis’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 160) that was evidenced by the data collected in both countries. Additionally, the world witnessed important events during the research period, such as the BLM movement and ongoing crises and uprisings in the SWANA region and more recently in Europe. While these events might seem independent from the context of this research, they influenced the perspectives of many students, teachers, and leaders in multiple ways.

Schools cannot be isolated from world events, which not only affect how they function but raise questions on the purpose and future of international education (Räsänen, 2016). Although international schools did not only emerge out of crises, the role of conflicts, inequality, and oppression in driving millions of people from their homes in search of a better life cannot be ignored. The development and desirability of international schools across the world is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by multiple factors, including colonial and post-colonial influences (Samier et al., 2021), neoliberalism (Bates, 2011; Samier, 2022), migration and mobility (Urry, 2000). About 60 years of modern international education are associated with increasing turbulences and inequalities, which call for a critical reflection on the role of education and educational leadership in shaping the futures of individuals and societies. This conclusion recapitulates the critical realist grounds of this contextualised research that views education, schools and leadership as interwoven into the wider social context. Inevitably, leadership praxis is inseparable from the fields of power and the dominant ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu, 1986). However, leaders influence their fields—directly and indirectly—through engagement with others and learning from their context.

Correspondingly, the influence of teacher and student capital within this field should be recognised and embedded in all aspects of schooling. Where this is not the case, a critical examination of the reasons behind its marginalisation becomes valid and essential.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

This thesis offers powerful insights into leading international schools and the role of leadership development in preparing leaders for this field, in addition to the centrality of the social and cultural capital of teachers and students in leadership praxis. The thesis offers a reconceptualisation of leadership—at senior and middle levels—that acknowledges the power of leading with others and calls for the development of policy and practice in schools based on the social and cultural fields. This chapter summarises the contributions of this thesis to the theorisation of international school leadership and the sociology of international schools.

The conceptualisation of the international student as the migrant and the transient allows educators (leaders and teachers) to respond differently to the needs of their students. This conceptualisation involves the core attributes of international school students that represent their experiences of mobility, temporality, disconnection with previous spaces and communities, and the longing for a sense of connection and belonging in the new location. Students' experiences and the multiple reasons behind their mobility influence how they view the world and connect with others, and shape their social, emotional and academic lives. Conflicts, political fragility, social and economic insecurities are not uncommon in the lives of international school students. Notwithstanding, many students experience cross-border mobility due to their parental professional commitments, which also affects their sense of connection with place and space.

Migrant—or transient—international school students, especially those with multiple experiences of relocation, develop different forms of individual and collective identities, in addition to multicultural, and multisocial capital(s) that are entrenched with their cross-contextual experiences. Therefore, the particular and complex needs of these students—academic and non-academic—should be prioritised and should underpin all leadership and teaching activities and approaches. This thesis calls for a sociological conceptualisation of the student as the migrant and the transient. This conceptualisation centres the social and cultural needs and life experiences of students, in addition to their linguistic backgrounds and communication methods. Such needs and experiences are inseparable from student learning and academic experiences and should be critically addressed and represented in responsive pedagogies that offer support, care and recognition within schools. Additionally, this conceptualisation calls for a critical curriculum development where leaders and teachers reflect on the relevance of curriculum content and narrative and ensure students' identities and histories are not suppressed by hegemonic discourses and practices.

Second, this thesis provides a new definition of student-centredness and argues against generic notions of student-centredness that are more focused on teachers and leaders' knowledge and practice. Theories focusing on student-centredness generally reflect leadership and pedagogic practices that aim to engage students in the learning activities provided by their teachers and the prescribed curriculum (see Robinson, 2011 and Southworth, 2009). These theories provide teachers and leaders with ideas and tools that would facilitate changing students' learning behaviors, skills and attitudes in order to learn the curriculum and adapt to the school environment. Nonetheless, the theoretical and empirical evidence presented by this thesis showed that these theories lack the student perspective and marginalise students' cultural and social needs and capital(s). The thesis argues that schools should change their curriculum, pedagogy and culture to meet students' diverse needs, and respond to their voices and perspectives instead of

changing students to adapt to the curriculum, pedagogical approaches and culture. Therefore, this thesis redefines student-centredness as an approach that promotes designing and developing relevant pluralistic curriculum and pedagogical approaches that respond to students' cultural and social capital(s) and needs, including ways of learning and communicating. This new definition of student-centredness reflects, embodies and responds to students' social, cultural and academic needs, incorporating identities, linguistic backgrounds and social experiences.

Third, the outcomes of this thesis affirm that a sociological understanding of the notions of relationships, recognition, trust and belonging is essential to the praxis of leadership in international schools. Creating a space for these notions in leadership knowledge (preparation and development) and practice can lead to enhancing the representation and engagement of students and teachers. Dialogue and trust relationships (Robinson, 2011) are based on mutual respect and recognition (Freire, 1970), and require meaningful interactions that purposefully aim at reciprocal learning (hooks, 1994). Interactions driven by respect and recognition can ease the experiences of mobility and temporality experienced by individuals and groups and enhance their sense of belonging. Accordingly, a deep understanding of the social experience of mobility and internationalisation, which most students and many teachers encounter, can be reinforced by dialogue and relational trust, and can help leaders to lead more effectively.

Fourth, this thesis suggests that understanding the micro-components of leading in a team or leading along others in schools enables the reconstruction and application of distributed and shared leadership. Distributed and shared leadership refers to formal and informal leadership roles (Spillane, 2008), where leaders work and lead with others (Southworth, 2009). The thesis confirms that the process of teaching and learning takes place through the concerted efforts

and acts of leadership at different levels and through multiple perspectives, which collectively make the difference in student learning.

Fifth, the thesis proposes a theoretical model of leadership learning in international schools (Figure 10), based on andragogical principles (Knowles, 1975) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2012), where learning from the field is central and essential. This model incorporates the role of leaders as adult learners and adult educators (Joo & Kim, 2016), who learn through theory, experience and reflection while engaging in social and cultural dialogues that inform their practice. This transformative learning process enables leadership for social and cultural justice and the recognition of teachers and students' social and cultural capital, and the collective capital(s) of the school communities. This framework involves social and cultural contextual learning, dialogic interactions with the school community, immersion in relevant literature (theory), professional socialisation—or shared professional learning—with fellow practitioners within and beyond schools, and critical reflection that is interlinked with action. This form of learning requires relevant methods such as contextual case studies (learning scenarios), cultural autobiographies, and analytical reflective journals (Brown, 2004). These methods will help leaders to learn about the contexts in which they lead, critically analyse their own assumptions, challenge dominant perceptions, and develop their discursive and practical awareness.

Sixth, the outcomes of this thesis present a theoretical framework of leadership praxis in the context of international schools (Figure 11), which incorporates socially and culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum. Leadership in multicultural international schools requires developing a curriculum that incorporates different forms of knowledge and ways of learning. Simultaneously, this framework involves multiple pedagogies representing teachers and students' knowledge(s) and communication methods, which foster intercultural and reciprocal learning (hooks, 1994; Biesta, 2023). Leadership in contexts of internationalisation—based on the outcomes of this thesis—centralises the social

and cultural capital of students and teachers, including their voices, identities, and cultures, and leads curriculum and teaching accordingly.

Seventh, the employment of Bourdieu's concepts field, capital, and habitus—in addition to their conceptual interdependence—provided an intellectual mechanism to develop a sociological reconfiguration of leadership in international schools. The relational aspects of the theory laid the foundation of an epistemological connection between leadership praxis and the *what, who, where* and *why* of leadership. Based on this sociological lens, there can be no leadership without a social space to lead and a direction to lead to. Thus, the field and the capital(s) it embodies are central to the understanding and practice of leadership, which makes it conceptually incomprehensible for leadership to build educational programs uni-dimensionally. This thesis shows that the relationship between educational leadership and the social field is theoretically reciprocal and practically inevitable.

Lastly, the thesis contributes to the theorisation of leadership in international schools, which informs leading, teaching and learning. The findings of this research collated from different types of international schools in England and Qatar, offer empirical and theoretical evidence of the dominant patterns and challenges of leadership in these times and spaces. The findings showed that organisational identities, goals, and contexts influence leadership practice and the outcomes of their work, which consequently influence teachers and students' experiences. The thesis suggests that leading should be driven by the needs of the school communities rather than merely by organisational frameworks. Accordingly, leadership preparation and development programs should primarily prepare leaders to lead in contexts of internationalisation through engaging in a transformative learning process. Leadership in international schools requires immersion in relevant contextual knowledge, and a shift from knowledge to action through a process of critical reflection, which can be defined as 'praxis'.

The above contributions—combined—constitute a theory of internationalisation in educational leadership that informs scholarship and practice. This thesis, while examining schools and leadership, questions the undisputed legitimacy and hegemony by which they present themselves in the field of international education. A productive critique of the discourse of diversity in international schools that draws on Bourdieu's critique of globalisation (1998b) could be very useful to articulate concluding remarks. The thesis 'unpacks the realities' and 'challenge(s) the myths and deceptions' of normative and uni-dimensional international schools 'without becoming the enemy of the hopes they offer' (Calhoun, 2006, p. 10). A reconceptualisation of leadership and international schools allows imaginable possibilities of a less fragmented world that combats the sense of otherness and marginalisation.

This thesis does not adopt a stance against international schools due to its deep recognition of the need for pluralistic multicultural schools. While the world is strongly polarised and torn by multiple forms of violence (Galtung, 1996), there is an urgent need for a reconceptualisation of international education, which focuses on recognition, representation, belonging, and social and cultural justice. This approach is foundational for a new theory of internationalisation in educational leadership that could be aligned with policy and system changes and prepare leaders to lead intercultural education in international schools. This thesis invites scholars in the field to advance knowledge that produces narratives of recognition and belonging instead of narratives of privilege and marginalisation, which underlie the realities of many international schools.

6.3 Methodological contributions

The multi-methodical approach was beneficial for the examination of the sophisticated role of leadership in international schools. The findings showed powerful and meaningful connections across and within methods, and across different groups of participants. The use of mixed-method and multi-level data collection enabled a deep examination and a reconceptualisation of leadership

practice in specific times and spaces. This methodology helped to unpack the complexity of leadership and its relationship with the field by featuring students and teachers' voices on vital issues related to their learning.

The study provides evidence that leadership in schools is heavily influenced by organisational structures and expectations and the demands of business management, besides leading education (Bailey, 2021). However, despite similar structures and frameworks, the way leaders interact with their contexts can widely vary. Different contexts of preparation, experience and backgrounds influence the habitus of leaders in multiple ways. The thesis shows that leadership is conceptualised as a combination of action, influence, and agency, which occurs through relational dynamics. Additionally, this thesis provides evidence that leadership takes place collectively, formally, informally, vertically, and horizontally. This influence is driven by traditional structures but also incorporates new mechanisms and nonconventional agency and influence across the school. The intersection of input from different groups of participants and different methods offers significant insights into leadership in international schools, which could be useful not only to leaders in England and Qatar but to leaders in other international schools. The findings can also be significant to other stakeholders involved in the fields of international schools.

Through its theoretical and methodological contributions, the thesis creates an additional foundation to the study of leadership. Utilising social theory in alignment with leadership and learning theories, supported by a methodological triangulation, allow further understanding of leadership and context. The theoretical combination of leadership and learning theories with Bourdieu's theory is meaningful and productive; it unravels the complexity of the social field, centralises the social and cultural capital of students and teachers in leadership praxis, enables understanding the situation 'as a social whole' (Bourdieu, 1963, p. 30) and reconceptualising leadership as social transformation.

This thesis examines educational leadership through a Bourdieusian and a critical realist methodology, that are both underpinned by mechanisms of social relationality. Understanding international school leadership as a relational engagement with the field braces the interrogation of social and cultural elements and brings forward a balanced focus on the key agents in schools: leaders, teachers, and students. Additionally, the critical realist approach enabled three levels of analysis of the findings by looking at the observable, the actual and the real (Bashkar, 1979, Alderson, 2021). The ‘observable’ (what was seen and measured) was captured through responses to the questionnaire, and the mechanisms of learning about the school through field analysis and document reviews. The ‘actual’ was perceived through analysing data from different methods, case studies and participants. The common threads underpinning participants’ perspectives across different schools and in both countries—while not directly observed or measured—were inferred through cross-case analyses. The ‘actual’ relationships revealed patterns and contradictions between different groups within the same field. At a deeper level, the ‘real’, allows the interrogation of complex situations and reasons behind specific phenomena and establishes causal relationships (Fryer, 2022) between perceptions, practices and dispositional or structural outcomes. The ‘real’ can explain why things are the way they are in schools, what ‘actual’ events or actions led to what was observed and learned as ‘real’, who did the influence (Evans, 2021), why things happen or do not happen, and what this means for the future of schools and international communities (Alderson, 2021). This multileveled analysis driven by mixed methods and the multi-theoretical framework is useful and allows a robust examination of the practice and development of leaders and the way they respond to or marginalise the social and cultural needs of students and teachers.

6.4 Implications for policy makers

This research offers several implications for policy makers, mainly at an organisational level. Most international schools are private or corporate

institutions that are not only overseen by government bodies but fall under the jurisdiction of different entities. While the study acknowledges the complexity of this context due to the intersection of economic and political factors, it highlights the role of social and cultural capital in student learning, which should be considered in policy development and program design. This applies to the cultural diversification of leaders and staff employment and encouraging a flexible teaching and curriculum framework, where leaders and teachers have the autonomy to adapt and redesign.

Leadership preparation and development providers can benefit from the evidence provided by this thesis that emphasises the need for relevant and research-based programs. The thesis revealed that most of these programs are minimally relevant (Fisher, 2021) and do not sufficiently prepare leaders to lead in complex international school environments (Calnin et al., 2018). Despite existing for more than 50 years, leadership development programs in international schools have not been sufficiently examined (Lai et al., 2022), which suggests the need for further research to unpack their complexity. The outcomes of this research offer insights related to international schools' programs and practices, which can be useful to policy makers. In addition, the thesis offers a leadership learning framework (see Figure 10), which includes evidence-based components that are particularly useful for —current and aspiring—international school leaders. This framework incorporates the guiding principles, relevant knowledge resources and key learning skills that could be transferred into special qualifications for international school leadership. This leadership learning framework specifically targets leaders who work in international schools or those preparing to lead in this context. Nonetheless, it can also be useful to leaders working in other contexts, particularly ones characterised by cultural and social diversity and transience.

6.5 Implications for the practice of leadership

This research offers guidance for current and aspiring leaders who work through the complexity of international schools. While this guidance cannot be fully aligned

to every context, the core ideas can help leaders reflect on their contexts and adopt a more responsive approach. This thesis suggests that leaders need to learn the social and cultural components of their schools, including the detailed demographics of their staff and students. Listening to people's stories and learning their historical narratives, reflecting on this knowledge, and examining a leader's own perspective could be a useful exercise. This cognitive engagement enables leaders to focus on identifying their assumptions about these histories and the attitude accompanying previously misidentified issues (Schepen, 2017), leading to a perspective shift. The transformative leadership learning framework offered by this thesis can be useful to unpack the leadership experience, engage in social and cultural discourses and develop recognition and appreciation of new contexts. Learning about the history, geography and cultural norms of their school can help leaders to understand the complexity of their context and work toward aligning school priorities with the goals of its communities (Hurley, 2022).

Multicultural representation in leadership and administrative roles can make a difference and reflect the school's response to internationalisation. In societies with historical roots of colonialism, the role of educational leaders to combat layers of colonial influences and its related tensions can be crucial (Samier et al., 2021). Difficult historical narratives can embody painful intergenerational emotions that cannot be suppressed by school rules (Khalifa et al., 2016) or remedied by normative discourses of diversity. In international contexts or in schools with migrants from multicultural backgrounds, understanding the reasons and experiences of migration can be a starting point to reconstructing schools as places of well-being and belonging (Riley et al., 2018). As these responsibilities could heavily burden school leaders, a shared—and collective—leadership approach can be helpful, particularly when schools embrace cultures of recognition and respect to individual and group experiences.

Middle leaders and teachers are in direct interaction with students and more familiar with their perspectives and experiences than senior leaders, which

enables them to effectively address their social and cultural needs. Therefore, the school can largely benefit from their role by providing a larger space for their contribution in curriculum and pedagogic leadership. Building on the ideas and expertise of teachers and middle leaders in developing a living curriculum and responsive pedagog(ies) requires time, space, preparation (hooks, 1994) and leadership that is willing to make a difference.

Navigating organisational and structural policies can be a difficult path for novice leaders, particularly principals who work along organisational agendas and budget requirements on one side and the school community on the other. A balanced middle position requires the trust of both sides (Eacott, 2015b), which could be empowered as leaders gain their communities' trust and support, which eventually strengthens their schools' financial position. Changes from within the system could be possible, especially when schools are organisationally and academically developed and financially stable.

Leadership learning in international schools lacks contextual relevance and is largely designed by organisational bodies where leaders have no input into the content or the design (Calnin et al., 2018). Additionally, most of these programs focus on processes and skills rather than relevant leadership knowledge. Moreover, social, and cultural discourses can be fully or partially absent in mainstream leadership knowledge and practice. This thesis encourages leaders to weave their learning journeys into the needs of their school fields and learn from leaders in similar contexts, while learning from their school communities. Learning from theory and existing research in relevant contexts can be empowering and offer robust intellectual grounds for leading and learning amidst complexities and turbulences—pandemics and otherwise.

6.6 Implications for future research

This research has deeply engaged with leading, learning and responsiveness to the social and cultural capital as theoretical concepts, using Bourdieu's theory as

an epistemological tenet to understand leadership in contexts of internationalisation. First, this thesis calls for future research that considers the impact of migration and mobility on belongingness, changing identities, and the future trajectories of individuals, which can investigate the long-term influence of international schools in the lives of students. Second, a Bourdieusian critique of the neoliberal mono-globalised culture (Samier, 2022) in international schools can be useful to explore the experiences and perspectives of teachers as professionals and public intellectuals, and students as active (not passive) agents in their own learning. This examination could lead to a productive conceptualisation of relevant pedagogies in schools (Freire, 1993; Brown, 2004). Third, further examination of leadership development in international contexts is needed to build a body of knowledge that responds to the needs of leaders and schools in multiple social fields. While previous research on leadership development is well-documented (Walker et al., 2013), the body of literature on leadership development in international schools' context is still limited (Calnin et al., 2018). Additional research, particularly case-study investigation, could be useful to learn about the needs of practising and aspiring leaders serving different types of communities. Fourth, multi-methodological and multi-theoretical research on international school leadership is important to capture the complexity of the field. In addition, a sociological examination of leadership in diverse and internationalised contexts—such as London and Doha—is needed for additional insights on this growing field. Last, researching leadership amidst the pandemic reflected gaps in theory and practice with regards to situations of crises. Models such as adaptive and horizontal leadership can be explored further, not only during health pandemics, but also in contexts of fragility where mainstream leadership theory might not be sufficient.

The recommendations driven by the outcomes of this thesis and discussed in the above paragraph outline a research agenda that would enhance knowledge in the field of educational leadership and international schools'. Furthermore, the outcomes and the theoretical and methodological contributions of this thesis will

result in a series of publications that will contribute to leading peer-reviewed journals in the field of international schools and leadership research, such as the 'Journal of Research in International Education', 'Education, Management, Administration & Leadership', 'International Journal of Leadership in education'. Moreover, an article on leadership learning and development in international schools will be submitted to a relevant journal, which could help to disseminate the leadership learning framework resulting from this thesis. In addition, the sociological discussions and outcomes related to students and international school communities will be disseminated through journals focusing on the sociology of education or the sociology of international schools.

6.7 Limitations

The research had its theoretical and methodological limitations that could be referred to the times and spaces in which it was conducted, the decisions I have made as a researcher, and the boundaries inherently set by my research participants. Researching international schools and their leadership, including speaking to leaders, teachers and students was a difficult and lengthy process that has been discussed thoroughly in the methodology chapter, let alone doing research during an unprecedented global pandemic. These difficulties have affected the balance of the sample size in both countries and the variation in the number of participants in different case studies. Moreover, this study could have benefitted from examining systemic and policy influences on leadership as well as exploring the perspectives of parents on how the school responds to the social and cultural capital of their children. However, while these areas are important, it could not have been possible to explore them given the limitations of time and resources available for a doctoral project.

6.8 Concluding remarks

I started this thesis with a background in international school leadership and a significant amount of practical knowledge. Little did I know of the distance

separating the starting point and the finish-line. While the focus of my investigation was leadership and international schools, this research journey has taken me into new worlds that I cannot now unsee. In a world where multiplicity and plurality prevail, the recognition of capital is deeply influenced by history, geography, and power. The key concepts of my research—'the social', 'the cultural', and 'the international'—are contentious, and socially—and culturally—constructed. In sophisticated contexts such as international schools, the notions of leading, teaching and learning are deeply and potently historicised and politicised. Such realisations have become inherent in my research perspective and will be interwoven into the rest of my research career in educational leadership and international education.

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Appendix A

Research Impact and public engagement

Conference presentations

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2023). Leadership and learning in contexts of internationalisation, CIES

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2022). Leadership learning: The leader as a learner and an educator, LfPL, UCL, Dublin

Al Haj Sleiman, N. (2022). Leadership development and preparation for international contexts, BELMAS

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2021). Leadership learning: An interdisciplinary approach”, ICSEI – ELN

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2021). Researching leadership in international contexts: Reflections on the doctoral journey, Belmas, Postgraduate Research RIG

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2019). Contemporary learning-centred leadership in international schools,” Waseda University, Japan, Nov. 24-29, BESETO Symposium, pp. 47-50.

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2019). Leading international schools: A Bourdieusian lens”, 7th BNU-IOE, Beijing, China

Journal articles

Sleiman, N., (2022). Educative leadership: Problematizing the role of Educational Leadership (Ar.), Manhajiyat.com, Issue 7(1). 8-13. Retrieved from <https://www.manhajiyat.com/ar/node/2480>

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2021). Leading international schools: The questions of cultural and social justice. ACCESS: *Contemporary Issues in Education*, 41(2), 16-21. <https://doi.org/10.46786/ac21.1881>

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2020), Manifestations of neoliberalism and politically incapacitated societies: Educational response to the pandemic in the Arab region, *ISEA – CCEAM*, 48(1), p28-35.

Barker, N., Pervez, A., Wahome, M., McKinlay, A., Al Haj Sleiman, N., Harniess, P., Puskás, N., Mac, D., Almazrouei, M., Ezenwajaku, C., Isiwele, A., Tan, N., D’Aprix, M., Petsou, A., & Love Soper, J. A Collaborative Research Manifesto! An Early Career response to uncertainties. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*

Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2022). Educative leadership: Problematizing the role of Educational Leadership (Ar.), Manhajiyat.com, Issue 7(1)
BenGiaber, R., Al Haj Sleiman, N., Al-Waeli, J., (2023). Home-making in the internationalised university: A theoretical and personal encounter through SWANA Forum for Social Justice. <i>The London Review of Education</i> .
Blogs
Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2023). Deconstructing 'Educational Leadership' in non-Western Contexts. HERG. Retrieved from: https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/higher_education_research_group/2023/01/23/deconstructing-educational-leadership-in-non-western-contexts/
Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2020). Leadership in international schools, Belmas Blog
Al Haj Sleiman, N., (2020). Inequity and inaccessibility: What COVID-19 revealed about the Gulf Education System, Gulf International Forum
Workshops, Roundtable discussions and webinars
Leadership learning in international schools. Making Stuff Better, Nov, 2022
Leadership of teaching and learning. STOCHOS, April, 2020
The Pandemic influence on Schools in Qatar and the Arab Region, May 2021
International schools as social fields: Pluralistic Communities, SWANA Forum for Social Justice, May 2022

Appendix B

Invitation letter to senior leaders (Heads of schools and principals)

Dear Head of School/Principal,

You are invited to participate in a research study on international school leadership in England and Qatar. This information sheet includes details and expectations related to your participation.

Who is carrying out this research?

Nidal Al Haj Sleiman, a doctoral student at the Department of Learning and Leadership, Institute of Education, UCL London.

Why are we doing this research?

This research aims to learn how learning-centred leadership takes place in international schools and to understand the interchangeability of influence between leaders and schools. The study explores the practice of principals and the leaders of teaching and learning, leadership development, and the relationship with the social capital of teachers and students.

What would I expect to gain from participating in this research?

The outcomes of this study will show us how leading teaching and learning takes place in international schools and what the common practices are, how leadership development looks like and how relationships and social capital influence and mobilise learning for all. The study should also provide insights on contextually influenced practice particularly in England and Qatar international schools. The outcomes of the study will be shared with you and your school once the project is finalised.

Why am I being invited to take part?

As a leader of teaching and learning in an international school in England/Qatar, you are invited to take part in an online questionnaire and an online interview. The role of leaders is important in shaping the culture of the school and improving teaching and learning, and I look forward to learning more about your experience and practice in this specific context. The study will be commencing in September 2020 and will include around 60 schools in an online questionnaire, and six schools in the case-study design (3 case studies in Qatar and 3 case studies in England).

What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be invited to participate in an anonymous questionnaire and an online interview. You will sign a consent form before the interview and receive a copy of the interview guide beforehand.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

Your participation is confidential, and your data will be collected anonymously. Data will be collected and analysed to help me understand the depth and quality of your practice

within your context. The data collected will be processed and stored in UCL protected platforms and storage spaces.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

There should be no problems at all due to the confidentiality and anonymity of the data collection process. However, you are free to leave the study at any time before or during the process.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The data collected will be strictly protected, then analysed and shared with the supervisors at the IOE. After the study is finalised, the recordings will be deleted and only the transcription files (with no personal data) will be stored in UCL Research Repository for research purposes.

Results will be shared with the academic and professional community and will be published in relevant journals.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you choose to take part or not. If you choose to be involved, I hope you will find it a valuable experience. If you choose not to take part, there will be no negative implications of any kind.

Data protection privacy notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL research activities and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. Further information at how UCL uses participant information can be found here: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project.

We are committed to anonymisation and pseudonymisation of the personal data you provide. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed or about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This project is bound to the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee and the GDPR and DPA 2018 regulations.

If you have any question for me before you take part, you can email me at: n.alhajsleiman.18@ucl.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Nidal Al Haj Sleiman

Appendix C

Interview guides and questions (Principals and senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, and students)

Dear Principal/Head of School,

This interview aims to explore the principal's views on key areas of their work that are related to my research. It consists of 4 themes and a few supporting questions for each theme. The supporting questions are meant to guide your answers but not necessarily direct them.

The interview is designed to last 40-45 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed. The recording and the transcription are fully confidential and compliant with the GDPR and UCL Ethics and Integrity Guidelines. There is no restriction to what and how you answer, and you have the right to leave the session at any time.

Key definitions

Learning-centred leadership: Leadership that is focussed on managing, developing and supporting teaching and learning in the school; leadership that is focussed on learning for all.

Social capital: The relationships/networks that individuals form with others in their school or community based on trust, shared values, shared sense of identity, and shared norms and expectations.

Themes and Interview questions

Theme 1- The relationship of context and leadership (10 minutes)

- (1) Would you like to share a brief introduction about the nature of your school?
- (2) How is your role perceived and demonstrated in this school?
- (3) To what extent has your leadership been influenced/shaped by this school/context?
- (4) How did the pandemic influence your work?

Theme 2 - Learning-centred leadership (15 minutes)

- (1) How would you describe your learning-centred practice (how you lead teaching and learning). What do you do? How? Why?
- (2) Would you like to briefly describe the challenges you encountered (in leading teaching and learning) before and during the pandemic?

Theme 3 - Relationship with the social capital of teachers and students (10 minutes)

- (1) How important is social capital for your school?

- (2) Would you like to comment on some of the key characteristics of teachers' social capital at your school?
- (3) Would you like to comment on some of the key characteristics of students' social capital at your school?
- (4) As a leader, how do you interact with/respond to these elements? How did your leadership (perspectives and practice) influence teaching and learning and the social capital of teachers and students? Can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with teachers and students?

Theme 4 - Leadership development (10 minutes)

- (1) Would you like to share with me your professional development as a principal?
- (2) What does the professional development of leaders look like in your school? What about teachers' professional development?
- (3) What role do relationships play in this process?
- (4) Would you like to briefly describe any sort of obstacles or challenges to leadership development at your school including this pandemic?

Dear leader/head of department,

This session includes 2-3 middle leaders (leaders of teaching and learning) and is expected to last 30 minutes. The purpose is to learn and find out more about the key areas of your work that are related to my research. There are 3 themes and a few guiding questions within each theme. Please feel free to answer comfortably. There is no restriction to what or how you answer. You have the right to leave the session at any time with no consequences. The session will be recorded and transcribed. The recording and the transcription are fully confidential and protected by the GDPR and UCL Ethics and Integrity Guidelines.

Key definitions

Learning-centred leadership: Leadership that is focussed on managing, developing and supporting teaching and learning in the school; leadership that is focussed on learning for all. Social capital: The relationships/networks that individuals form with others in their community or school based on trust, shared sense of identity, belonging to a group, shared norms, and expectations.

Themes and interview questions

Theme 1: Learning-centred leadership:

- 1- How would you describe your learning-centred practice (how you lead teaching and learning). What do you do? How? Why? (10 minutes)

- 2- What are the key challenges facing learning-centred leaders?
- 3- How did the pandemic influence your work in leading teaching and learning?

Theme 2: Relationship and interaction with the social capital of teachers and students, given their experiences as members of an international school (10 minutes)

- 1- What does the social capital of teachers at your school look like?
- 2- What does the social capital of your students look like?
- 3- As a leader, how do you interact with/respond to teachers and students' social capital? Do you think your leadership (practice and approach) influences it in any way?

Theme 3: Leadership development and professional learning (10 minutes)

- 1- Would you like to describe your professional development as leaders of teaching and learning?
- 2- How do you feel about teachers' leadership development at your school?
- 3- What roles do relationships and conversations play in this process and why?
- 4- How did the pandemic influence professional development?

Dear teachers,

This group interview includes 2-3 teachers and will last 30 minutes. It aims to find out more about your work in the key areas (below) that are related to my research.

There are 3 key areas and some supporting questions that should guide your answers but not necessarily restrict them. There is no obligation to answer in a specific way. You have the right to leave the session at any time with no consequences. The session will be recorded and transcribed. The recording and the transcription are fully confidential and protected by the GDPR and UCL Ethics and Integrity Guidelines.

Key definitions

Leadership development: professional learning; developing leadership skills and abilities; developing confidence as leaders in your work and school.

Social capital: The relationships/networks that individuals form with others in their school or community based on trust, shared values, shared sense of identity and shared norms and expectations.

Main themes and questions:

- 1) Professional learning/Leadership development (10 m)

- a) How do you feel about the opportunities for professional learning and leadership development offered at your school before and during the pandemic? And what does this look like?
 - b) How do you feel about the existing patterns of relationships and conversations at your school and how do they influence your professional learning?
- 2) Social capital of teachers (15 m)
- a) How would you describe your social capital/network within the school?
 - b) To what extent does it influence your work?
 - c) How do leaders in your school interact with/respond to your social capital?
 - d) How did the pandemic influence your social capital?
- 3) Theme: Social capital of students (5 m)
- a) Would you like to comment on some of the key elements of your students' social capital? (What does it look like?)
 - b) Do you think their social capital could influence their learning?

Dear student,

This group interview session includes 3-5 students and will last 30/35 minutes. It aims to learn about your relationships with friends in the school which is an important area in my research. There is no obligation to answer in a specific way. You have the right to leave the session at any time with no consequences. The session will be recorded and transcribed. The recording and the transcription are fully confidential and protected by the GDPR and UCL Ethics and Integrity Guidelines.

Social capital in this study is defined as the relationships/networks that individuals form with others in their school based on trust, shared sense of identity, belonging to a group, shared values and shared norms and expectations, such as the bonds that connect you to your social circle or friends group.

Questions

1. What does your network or friend group look like within the school?
2. How are these relationships formed and to what extent are they important?
3. How do these relationships influence your learning and school experience?
4. Do you think that teachers and school leaders can influence or support your relationships and connection with friends and social circle?
5. How did the pandemic influence your relationship with your friends?

Appendix D

Information sheets to parents of high school students

Dear parent,

Your child is invited to take part in a research study conducted at UCL Institute of Education which targets leaders, teachers and high school students in England and Qatar international schools. He/she will participate in a 20-30 minute-online group interview via zoom. They will answer questions related to their social capital, how this influences their learning, and the impact of the pandemic on their schooling experience. Social capital is defined as the way they engage in a trust relationship with friends, have shared values, and belong to a group which has common norms and expectations. This is particularly important in international schools where students come from diverse environments and learn to cope and create their own learning networks. We would also like to know how the pandemic has impacted their learning experience.

The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes, and the recordings will be deleted after the study is finalised. There will be no identification of names or school names and their participation is completely anonymous and confidential. Your child will have a short introduction to gain understanding about the purpose of this study and why social capital and learning networks are important. There will be no consequences for your child if you do not approve of your child's participation, but if you do, we will be very grateful to have the opportunity to listen to your child's voice.

If you have any questions before or after the interview, please email Nidal at n.alhajsleiman.18@ucl.ac.uk.

حضرة ولي الأمر الكريم، يسعدنا دعوة ابنكم/ابنتكم للمشاركة في مقابلة إلكترونية لدراسة بحثية تقوم بها كلية لندن الجامعية يشارك بها قادة ومعلمون وطلاب من عدة مدارس دولية في قطر وإنجلترا. تستغرق المقابلة 2-30 دقيقة وتجرى عبر برنامج زوم. الأسئلة تتناول الرصيد الاجتماعي للطلاب في المجتمع المدرسي وتحديد القدرة على بناء علاقات الثقة وإيجاد قيم وتوقعات مشتركة والشعور بالانتماء للفريق وكيف يؤثر هذا على تجربة التعلم. يعتبر الرصيد الاجتماعي مهما لتعلم الطلاب خصوصا في المدارس الدولية التي تضم طلابا من ثقافات مختلفة ويتعلمون كيفية بناء شبكات التعلم الخاصة بهم. سيتم تسجيل المقابلة بهدف التدوين والتحليل ثم تتلف بعد انتهاء الدراسة. لن يتم ذكر اسم المشارك أو اسم المدرسة بناتا بهدف الحماية والحفاظ على الخصوصية. سنقوم بتهيئة قصيرة لتعريف الطلاب بالدراسة وهدفها قبل البدء بالمقابلة. يمكن لكم أو للطلاب رفض المشاركة دون أية انعكاسات. إذا وافقتم على مشاركة الطالب/ة نرجو منكم تعبئة النموذج أدناه. يمكنكم التواصل مع الباحثة نضال سليمان لمزيد من المعلومات على الإيميل المدرج أدناه.

Appendix E

Consent form

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and return to Nidal Al Haj Sleiman at the email address n.alhajslleiman.18@ucl.ac.uk.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| I have read and understood the information sheet about the research. | Yes | No |
| I agree to be recorded during the interview sessions. | Yes | No |
| I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me. | Yes | No |
| I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used. | Yes | No |
| I understand that I can contact Nidal Al Haj Sleiman at any time and request for my data to be removed for the project database. | Yes | No |
| I understand that results will be shared in research publications and/or presentations. | Yes | No |
| I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publication reports, webpages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | Yes | No |
| I understand that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to participate. | Yes | No |

Name _____ Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix F

Table of themes and subthemes

The school as a social field	Leadership Praxis (theory to practice)	Leadership development	The social and cultural capital of teacher and students
Understanding the field 1. Relationships with other agents in the field 2. School culture 3. Challenges 4. Mobility 5. Community 6. Diversity 7. Inclusivity 8. Competitiveness 9. Cultural superiority School structure 1. Accountability 2. Autonomy 3. Governance 4. Business model School identity 1. International mindedness 2. Accreditation School policy 1. Educational policy 2. Curriculum 3. Language policy 4. Communication policy 5. PD policy 6. Recruitment policy	Defining/understanding leadership 1. Theories and approaches 2. The head/principal role a) Supporting the staff b) Supporting parents c) Supporting teaching and learning Learning-centred leadership 1. Monitoring 2. Modelling 3. Dialogue Student-centred leadership/dimensions of practice 1. Establishing goals and expectations 2. Ensuring orderly and safe environment 3. Leading teacher learning and development 4. Ensuring quality teaching and supervising the curriculum 5. Strategic resourcing How do leaders lead 1- Administrative areas	Leaders' development 1. Knowledge 2. Learning 3. Development 4. Habitus 5. Professional capital 6. Principal development Developing others 1. Supporting other leaders 2. Developing middle leaders 3. Developing teachers 4. Promotion 5. Autonomy/ownership	Social capital 1. Belonging 2. Connections 3. Isolation 4. Common interests 5. Common norms & expectations 6. Shared values 7. Recognition 8. Misrecognition 9. Trust relationships Cultural capital 1. Habitus 2. Identit(ies) 3. Respect to individual and group culture 4. knowledge Economic capital Symbolic capital Social status

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2- Building trust relationships 3- Experience 4- Knowledge 5- Skills (solving problems) <p>Leadership impact</p> <p>Leading in a pandemic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change 2. Precautionary measures 3. New forms of leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Adaptive leadership b) Teacher leadership c) Ethical leadership/values d) Technology expertise <p>Modern leadership approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participatory approaches 2. Collaborative approaches 3. Future perspectives 		
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Appendix G

Field analysis form and document analysis forms

Field Analysis Form (Field/Context/Space)

Theme	Sub-theme	Notes
School history	Date founded – founders – story -context, initial community - changing narrative and partnerships	
Hierarchy	Top management - senior and middle positions – teachers	
Leaders-staff relationship dynamics	Direct, indirect - with mediation – flexible - bottom-up - vertical – other	
School governance and structure	Type of governance – sponsorship – chain – partnership – private ownership – family	
Leadership and management team	Model – structure - number – positions – relationships -policy influence	
Resources/Technology	Budget – technology – training- medium – partnership – learning platforms	
Teachers' collaborative spaces	Collaborative spaces – professional development – relationship dynamics -conversations – time - shared experience	
Student demographics - student life – activities - events	Clubs – social connections – social platforms- classroom grouping – students-led groups	
School community-relationships (including main stakeholders)	One-way vs 2-way communication – representation - trust - partnership and collaboration - engagement- responsiveness - (in)formal channels	
Curriculum type and dominant narrative	How the school introduces its curriculum Resources - affiliation – main exams	

Document Analysis Form (1)

Document name: The Guiding Statement/ Strategic Goals Statement					
Developed by:					
Addressed to:					
Strength	Well supported	Somehow supported	Hardly addressed	Not mentioned	Comments
Areas	4	3	2	1	
The focus on teaching and learning					
The learning outcomes					
The focus on professional development of teachers and leaders					
The focus on students' social and cultural needs					
Emphasizing relationships					
Responding to the school community					

Document Analysis Form (2)

Document name: School Evaluation Report					
Developed by:					
Addressed to:					
Strength Areas	Well supported 4	Somehow supported 3	Hardly addressed 2	Not mentioned 1	Comments
Leadership and management of teaching and learning processes					
Management of teaching and learning resources					
Teachers' professional learning					
Leadership development					
Responding to the community (needs and priorities)					
Supporting collaborative work relationship between teachers (teamwork, team planning)					

Appendix H

Principals' questionnaire

Confidential

Page 1 of 9

Principal Questionnaire

Introduction

This survey is a part of a research study designed for a PhD degree in learning and leadership at the Institute of Education/UCL London. Sixty international schools are participating in this study in Qatar and England. Your input into this questionnaire is highly important and your participation is strictly anonymous. The study is conducted under the guidelines of the Ethics Committee of UCL-IOE and GDPR.

This survey is addressed to the Principal/Director/Headteacher; the person who is at the top of the school hierarchy and who leads this specific school, not a chain of schools. If this is not possible, then the acting director, deputy, associate principal or the senior leader of the school can answer the questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enrich academic and professional knowledge about contemporary principalship in international schools, their practice in leading teaching and learning, their relationship with the context/structure/social space in which they work, leadership development, and their interaction with the social capital of teachers and students.

Please answer as many questions as you can, preferably all of them. If you do not wish to answer a specific question, you can still proceed with the questionnaire. This questionnaire consists of 45 questions and is supposed to take around 25 minutes of your time.

Thank you!

Information about the school

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) The total number of your students: | <input type="radio"/> 250-500
<input type="radio"/> 501-750
<input type="radio"/> 751-1000
<input type="radio"/> More than 1000 |
| 2) The school offers the following curriculum: | <input type="checkbox"/> IB curriculum
<input type="checkbox"/> The National Curriculum for England and Wales
<input type="checkbox"/> CIE
<input type="checkbox"/> Field Work Education
<input type="checkbox"/> A National Curriculum
<input type="checkbox"/> A mixed program |
| 3) The school is located in: | <input type="radio"/> Qatar
<input type="radio"/> England |
| 4) Your staff are mostly: | <input type="radio"/> International
<input type="radio"/> Local
<input type="radio"/> A combination of both |
| 5) Your students are mostly : | <input type="radio"/> International
<input type="radio"/> Local
<input type="radio"/> A combination of both |
| 6) The school is: | <input type="checkbox"/> Privately owned
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporately owned
<input type="checkbox"/> Family business
<input type="checkbox"/> A member of a global chain |

07/19/2020 9:36am

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-
- 7) The school governor/s are: Owners or partners
 Sponsors
 An embassy
-
- 8) The annual tuition fee per student is: _____
-
- 9) The leadership team consists of : Director/head, principal, deputy(ies), middle managers Principal, deputy, middle managers CEO/Chairman, principal, middle managers A different model

The Principal Role

- 10) How many years have you spent in your last position as a principal (in this school)?
- 1 5 10
-
- (Place a mark on the scale above)
-
- 11) Upon recruitment and selection, what were the qualities/dispositions that were mostly highlighted in your job description, the scope of work or performance policy? (please use 15 or fewer words)
-
-
- 12) Upon appointment, your leadership role was:
- Clearly defined Slightly defined; I had to develop it while in the position
-
- 13) Would you like to mention the main features/qualities of your leadership?
-
-
- 14) How would you describe your role?
- Confusing Flexible
 Rewarding Draining
 Pleasant You have a fair work load
 You have the needed assistance at school
-
- 15) Can you estimate the time you spend on managerial/administrative work every day (other than managing teaching and learning)?
- 1 3 6
-
- (Place a mark on the scale above)
-
- 16) Can you estimate the number of hours you dedicate to leading managing and learning?
- 1 3 6
-
- (Place a mark on the scale above)
-
- 17) Can you think of the most common activities that you do on a daily or weekly basis (before the pandemic)?
- Teachers/staff meetings
 Seeing parents
 Budgetary/finance work or meetings
 Lesson observation & feedback to teachers
 A tour around the school
 Office work
 Teaching/mentoring
 Planning
 Reflecting
 Discussing/managing resources
 Sorting out problems
 Speaking to students
 Governors meeting, emails, or phone calls
-
- 18) How do you know/evaluate the outcomes of your work?
- Feedback from superiors
 Feedback from the community
 Feedback from staff and teachers
 Evaluation reports from official or accrediting bodies
 Personal/professional reflection
 Formal appraisal process
 Revenues growth
 Students enrolment rates
 Students exam results

Learning-centred & Instructional Practice

- 19) Can you describe your relationship with teachers in one sentence? _____
-
- 20) Your influence on teachers' work is:
- Direct
 - Indirect (with mediation)
 - Through direct and indirect channels
-
- 21) Please choose only 5 factors influencing teachers performance at your school:
- In-service training
 - External training
 - Collaborative relationship inside the school (teacher-teacher, teacher-mentor or teacher-leaders relationship)
 - Extrinsic motivation such as rewards or annual bonus
 - Salary
 - Student behaviour
 - Organisational culture
 - Flexible timetable
 - Availability of resources
 - Having a clear set of norms and expectations

In what ways do you influence student learning?				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Not at all
22) Through influencing teachers work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23) Through administrative meetings and guidance to coordinators and HODs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24) Through making the right organisational decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25) Through influencing parents and fostering parental engagement in student learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26) Through resources management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27) Through recruiting the best teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which of the following methods are used to evaluate student learning at your school?					
	Almost all the time	Frequently	Sometimes	only in some cases	Not at all
28) Summative exam scores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29) Formative/ongoing assessment scores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30) Competency/proficiency-based reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31) Observing and analysing student work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32) International examinations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33) Extra curricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Leadership Development


- 34) Do you see any need for development programs while in your current position? A great deal A moderate amount Not at all

(Place a mark on the scale above)
- 35) If you have participated in professional development programs in the last year, please list three of these programs.

- 36) What professional development activities have your leadership team members participated in over the last year?

- 37) Which professional development activities are more effective in your opinion?
 Networking in local events
 Networking in international events
 Professional courses
 Discussion with leaders/leaders and teachers
 Presentations or training sessions that you run for your school groups
 Formal learning opportunities
- 38) How do professional learning conversations look like at your school?
 Spontaneous
 Modelled
 Formal
 Informal
 Encouraged
 Planned
- 39) How do you view the role of relationships in the professional development process at your school?
 Informal
 Important
 Essential
 Flexible
 Formal and well structured
- 40) How did leadership development look like at your school during the pandemic?

The influence of the context on school leadership

- 41) To what extent do you believe that your leadership abilities/skills have been influenced by your current school?
- No significance Somehow A great Deal
- 

 (Place a mark on the scale above)
-
- 42) Do you think you have impacted the school life/culture or were impacted by it?
- I was strongly impacted by the school
 I have made a significant impact
 Haven't realised any exchange of impact
 There is a mutual impact
-
- 43) How would you describe the influence of the governing company/body on your decisions and goals as a leader of teaching and learning?
- Fully supportive Somehow supportive
 Neutral - neither supportive nor restrictive
 A little restrictive restrictive
-
- 44) Which has a stronger influence on your practice?
- Internal school factors such as budget, salaries, staff background, parents, organisational policies, board decisions,...
 External factors such as the social and economic structure of the country, history, culture and traditions, policies,...
 Both have the same influence
-
- 45) How did the pandemic change your priorities in leading teaching and learning?
- _____

Leadership and Social capital

Definition of social capital:

Social capital refers to the network-level resources where a child or an adult establishes connections with a certain group of peers to whom they can refer as resources. This network is only established when trust relationships exist, and when there is a shared sense of identity, common values, and shared normed and expectations.

- 46) Can you describe your relationship with people in the school in a few words? _____
-
- 47) Do you think you have made a difference in people's performance/abilities/skills during your service period?
- Probably but not sure Somehow Absolutely
-
- (Place a mark on the scale above)*
-
- 48) Which social aspects are more important for your school?
- Collaborative relationship
 Trust relationship Shared norms and expectations Classroom learning
 Shared vision Shared identity
 All the above
-
- 49) Why is social capital important for your school (or for international schools in general)?
- High turnover of staff and learners
 Creating a shared identity
 Accepting and acknowledging diversity as a strength Enables students to seek social, emotional and academic support from peers
 Enables teachers to get support from colleagues Promotes feelings of belonging All of the above
-
- 50) Do you think social capital influences teaching and learning at your school?
- Strongly disagree Neutral Strongly agree
-
- (Place a mark on the scale above)*
-
- 51) How do you respond to/interact with the social capital of teachers in your school?
- Celebrate and encourage
 Support or maintain I think social capital should be fully independent (no interference or response)
 Neutral - It is not within my scope of work
-
- 52) To what extent do you think your leadership practice has influenced the social capital of teachers and students at your school?
- Very likely Likely
 Somehow Very unlikely

Appendix I

Questionnaire findings

The figure and tables included in Appendix I represent descriptive statistics extracted from the questionnaire response analysis (See Appendix J for questionnaire details).

Figure 12 Types of curricula offered by participant schools

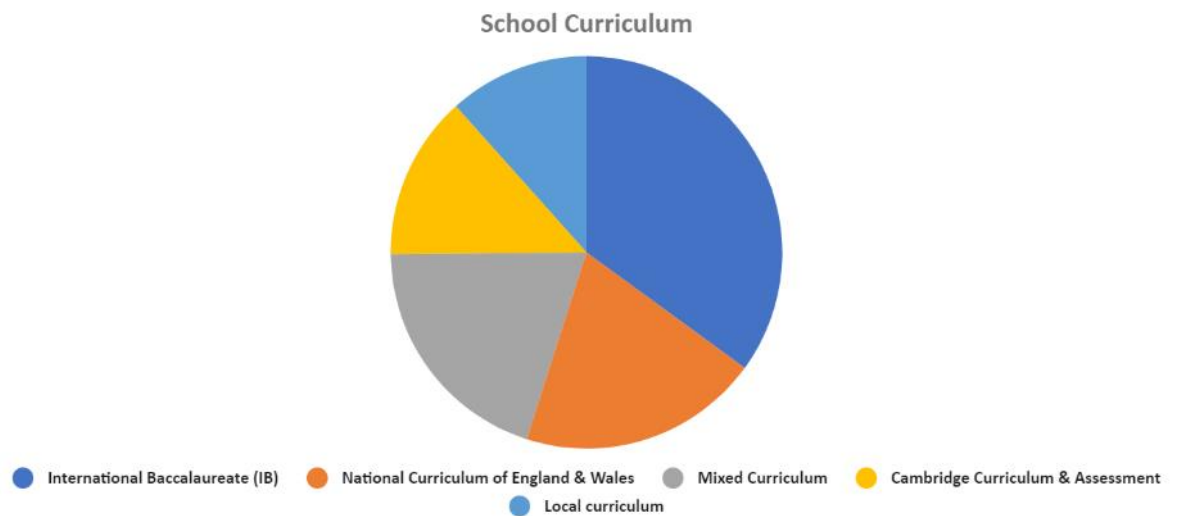


Figure 13 Principals' perceptions of school governors' influence

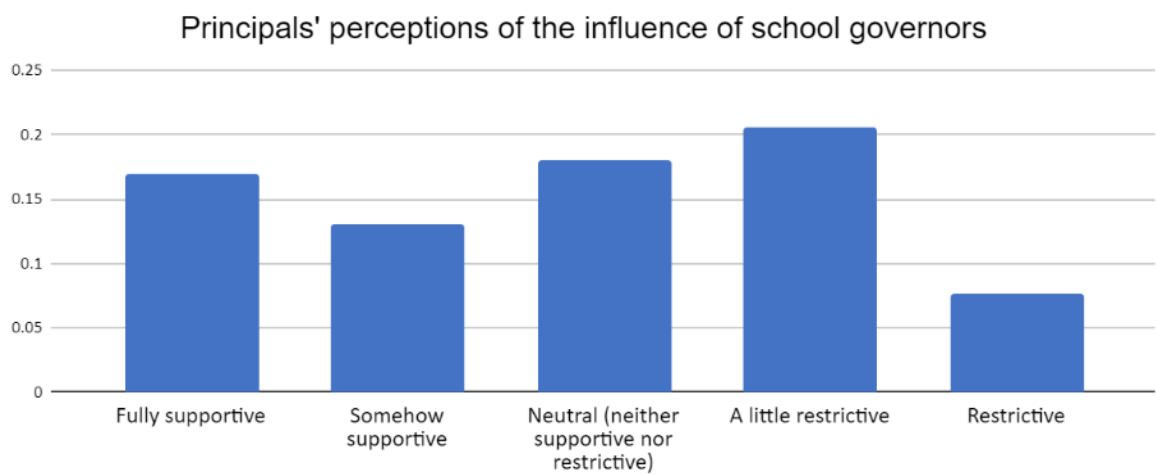


Figure 14 Principals and other senior leaders' perceptions of their influence on student learning

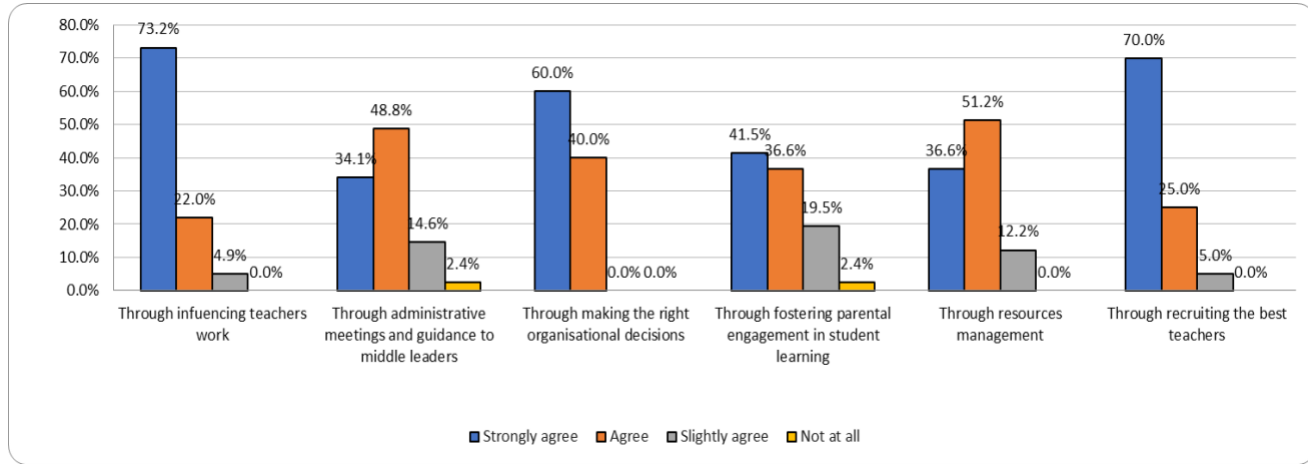


Figure 15 Principals (and other senior leaders) perceptions of the ways through which they influence teachers' work

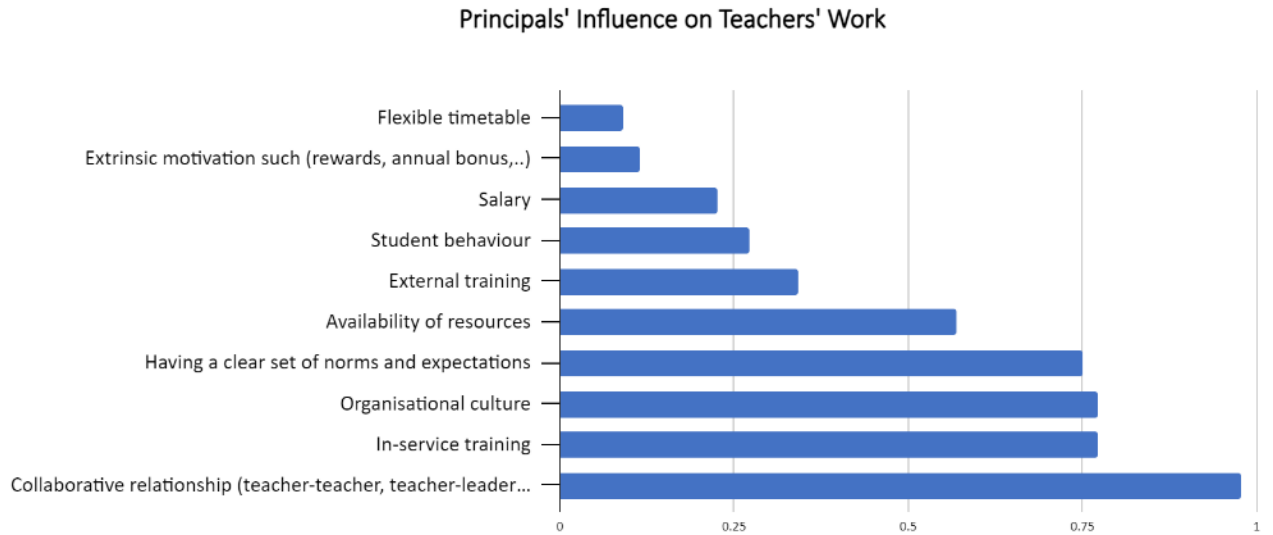


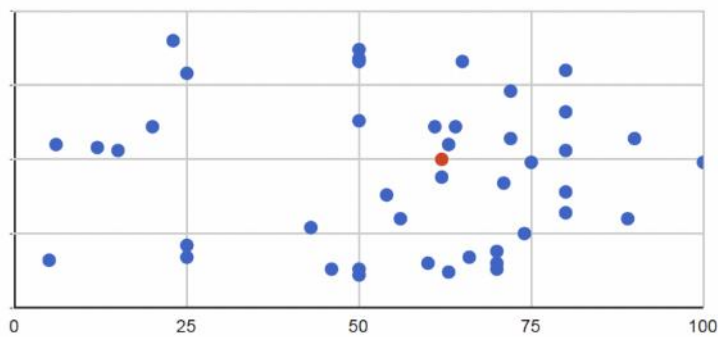
Figure 16 An estimate of the time spent by principals on administrative/managerial work (other than managing teaching and learning).

Can you estimate the time you spend on managerial/administrative work every day (other than managing teaching and learning)? *(managerial_time)*

Total Count (N)	Missing*	Unique	Min	Max	Mean	StDev	Sum	Percentile						
								0.05	0.10	0.25	0.50 Median	0.75	0.90	0.95
43	8 (15.7%)	28	5	100	56.09	23.89	2,412	12.30	20.60	48	62	72	80	88.10

Lowest values: 5, 6, 12, 15, 20

Highest values: 80, 80, 89, 90, 100



[Download image](#)

Figure 17 Principals influence on teaching and learning

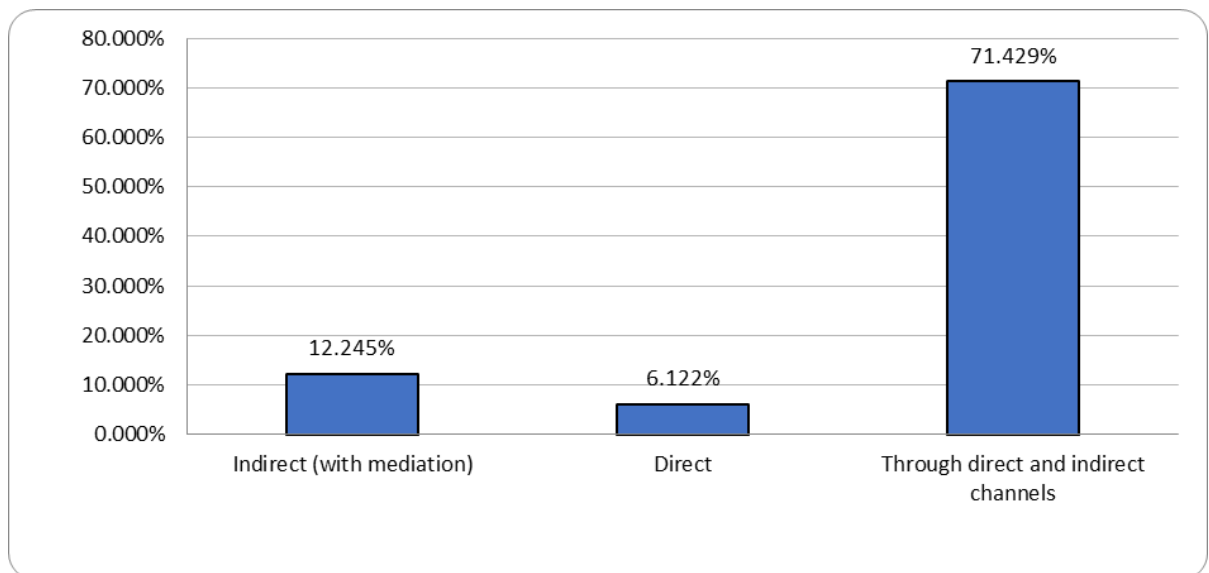


Figure 18 The role of relationships in professional development

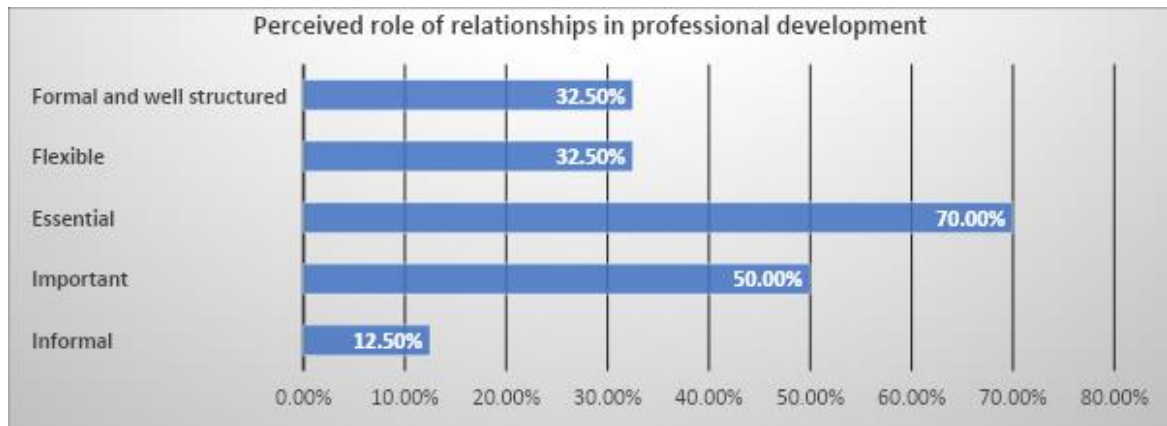


Figure 19 The most effective professional development activities

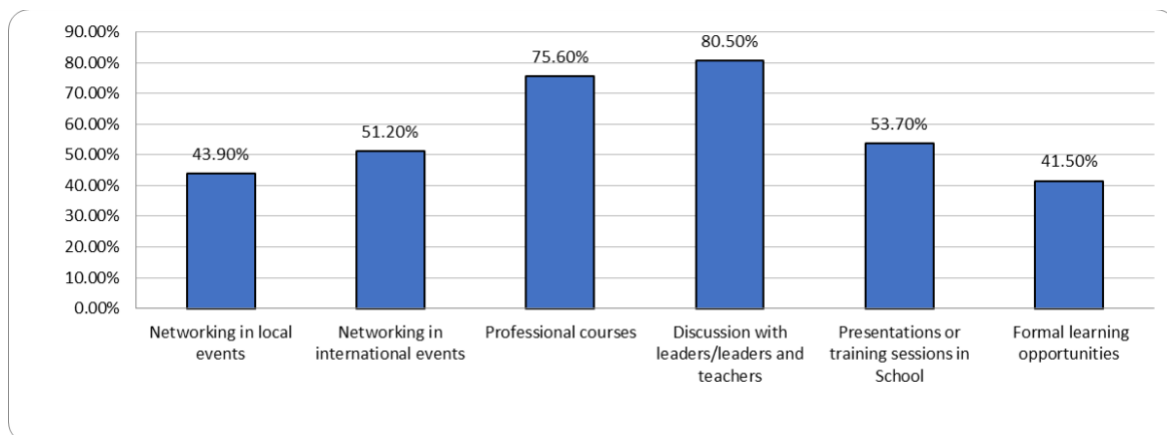


Figure 20 How principals (and other senior leaders) respond to/interact with the social capital of teachers

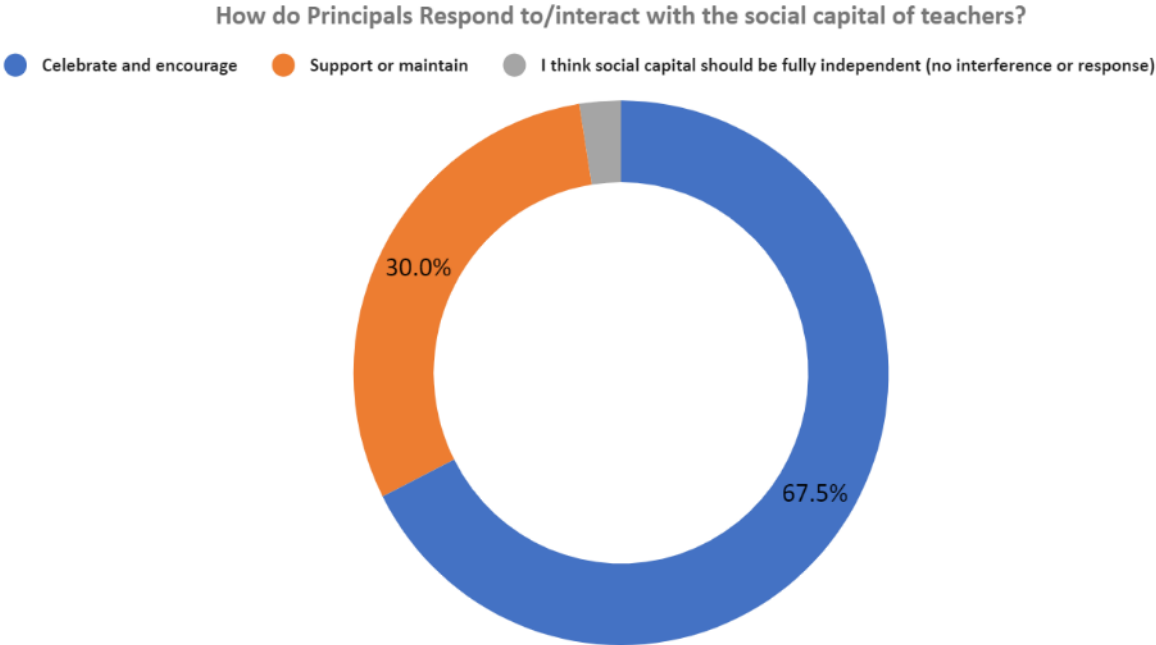


Figure 21 Principal perceptions of the most important social aspects of their schools

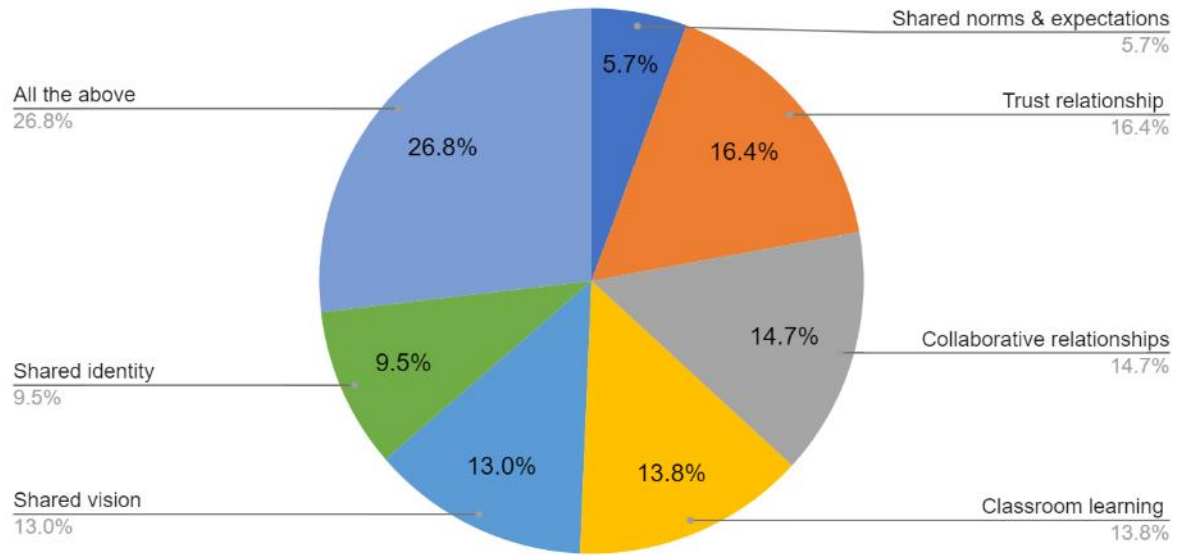


Figure 22 Principals' responses to why is social capital important for their schools

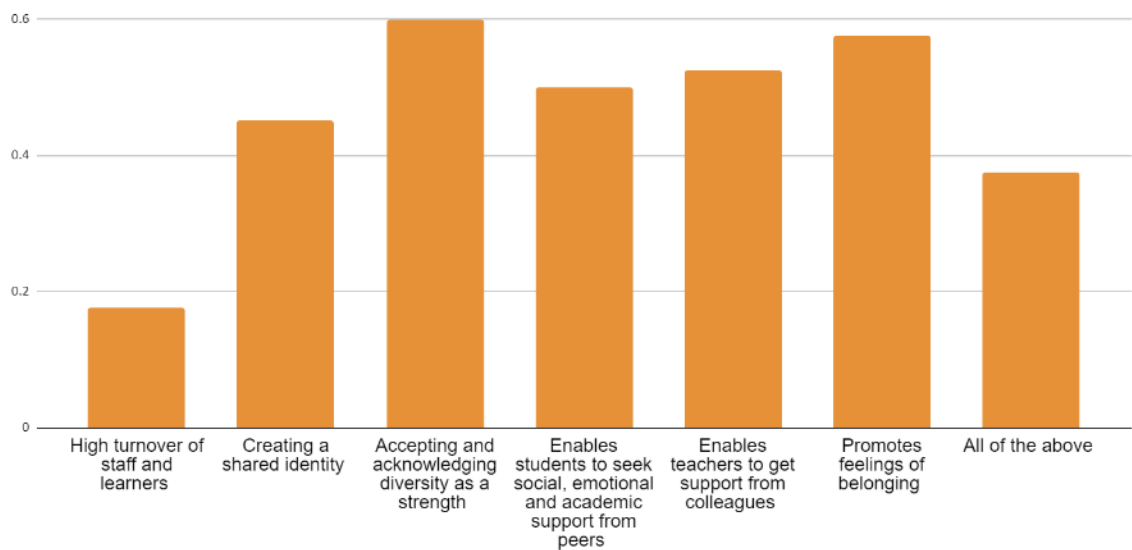


Figure 23 How principals (and other senior leaders) described their work

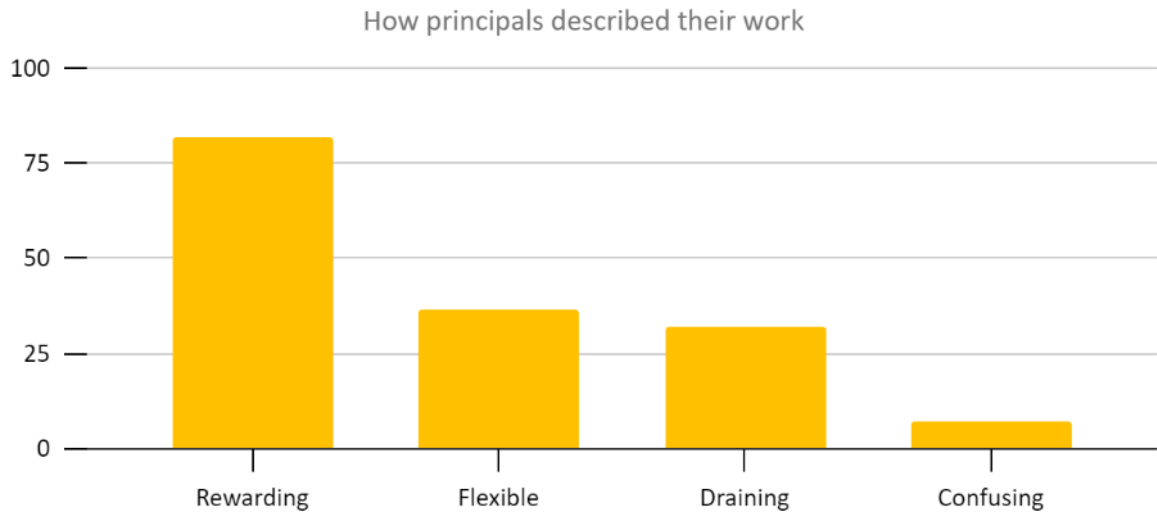


Table 18 Samples of senior leaders' comments on the interchangeability of impact between them and their schools

Principal 1	The impact was mutual as I brought new experiences from a different Country and the IB programme which wasn't known by most of the staff. I was also influenced by the local culture and ways of running business.
Principal 2	The impact was mutual; I brought new experiences from a different country and the IB programme, which wasn't known by most of the staff. I was also influenced by the local culture and the ways of running the business.
Principal 3	This was measured through the feedback given by stakeholders, students' performance, and outside school community. On the other hand, the school's impact was obvious during two different eras.
Principal 4	I have transformed the school culture. The school now has happy and engaged learners, staff who embrace lifelong learning, programs of learning that are authentic and challenging.
Principal 5	This school has developed me as a manager, and I have begun to influence the pedagogical paradigm of the whole school by highlighting those teachers

	who successfully build students' critical thinking in a student-centred classroom environment.
Principal 6	I received feedback that I rebuilt damaged relationships at the school. As a leader I was able to positively influence the achievements of students, staff, and other school related matters.
Principal 7	I have made a significant impact by raising teacher voice in the school through 1-1 meetings with all staff, staff surveys, etc. I have also influenced the school by being highly visible and developing positive relationships
Principal 8	Professional relationships with staff, students, and parents, and by having high consistent standards for all school leaders
Principal 9	I have brought my own experience and expertise, but this has been further shaped by the experience I have had here.
Principal 10	It has been reported to me that since my arrival at school there is a feeling of positivity and staff feel valued and trusted. At the same time, I have been impacted by the culture of leadership and involvement from the Head Office and the Ministry of Education.

Table 19 Samples of senior leaders' descriptions of their relationships with teachers

Principal 1	As a team working together, we have a strong bond built on trust and mutual respect for each other's roles.
Principal 2	We collaborate on areas that impact their role, and we discuss ways to improve.
Principal 3	I see myself as a mentor.
Principal 4	Trusting, collaborative and supportive
Principal 5	Relationship with people: we have built a culture of trust and respect among each other.

Principal 6	I have a cordial relationship with my staff. My doors are always open for any concerns they might have to discuss.
Principal 7	Positive, friendly, respectful trusting, supportive open, supportive, respectful
Principal 8	Generally positive friendly and respectful

Table 20 Senior leaders' description of pandemic influence on leaders' professional learning

Principal 1	It was a shared responsibility with all key players and all members were involved in supporting the system.
Principal 2	During the pandemic, online leadership development programs have been greatly enhanced to cover the gap of lacking face to face conversations.
Principal 3	Leadership development took a back seat as we all developed skills in adapting to lockdown and an online methodology of teaching and learning.
Principal 4	Learning mainly happened on the job and through online training.
Principal 5	We did not have the time for formal training. However, weekly support meetings to address concerns were made regularly.
Principal 6	We were focused on collaboration and communication as a team, which became excellent team building activity, but there was no additional formal work.
Principal 7	The leadership team was involved mainly in learning about distance and online learning to support teachers during the pandemic and the closure of schools.