SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ASPIRATIONS OF BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC TEACHERS

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But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.
Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgement.
Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion

—Job 32: 8 – 10 King James Version

For my wife and children

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Abstract

Studies investigating the career progression of BME teachers identify institutionalised discrimination, social inequality and unfavourable school practices as forces militating against the realisation of their school leadership aspirations. This study adds to this discourse by exploring some mediating forces, shaped by life history, beliefs, values, and workplace reactions, in the realisation of school leadership aspirations. In this regard, this research explores issues relating to the leadership roles a group of BME teachers conceive for themselves and their perceptions of success; the balance of personal, professional and situational factors, and the dynamics between personal agency and workplace structure, all in relation to leadership success. Since this study concerns aspect of life histories, values, beliefs, and workplace reactions, recognition of the utility of qualitative approach was given, and as such the semi-structured interviewing as the method to gain an authentic understanding to these research issues was employed.

What emerged from the study is that conception of leadership roles underpin personal judgements about what leadership or career success means. Real or perceived success is shaped by mediating dimensions of a personal, professional and situated nature, such that when in balance, agency exercised directly at a conceived leadership role reinforces the self-perception of school leadership success, whereas when dimensions are negatively imbalanced, the ability to pursue conceived leadership roles is inhibited, thus creating a sense of career stagnation. The sense of progression or stagnation is reinforced further with the mediating extent to which agency is exercised in concert with or against prevailing structures. These findings result in implications for both research and practice.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BME	Black and Ethnic Minority
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
EAP	Equal Access to Promotion
FE	Further Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GTTP	Graduate Teacher Training Programme
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IiD	Investing in Diversity
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RRAA	Race Relations Amendment Act
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

Background and research questions

There is a body of work[1] (e.g., Ogunbawo, 2012; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; McNamara et al, 2009; Aurora, 2005; Bush et al, 2005; McKenley & Gordon, 2002; Osler, 1997) into the leadership progression of Black and Minority Ethnic[2] (BME) teachers with issues of institutionalised discrimination, social inequality and effect on professional prospects, and unfavourable school practices at the centre of discussion. A corollary to the underlying thread of this discourse is that the career progression of BME teachers is constrained, and as such various initiatives or external mechanisms need to be implemented in order for them to gain career advancements. In this study, the main focus is not on institutional discrimination, social inequality and unfavourable school practices, and the effect on BME teachers, but on the nature of individual school leadership aspirations and how they are realised within the framework of mediating forces shaped by personal life history, belief, value, and influence of the present school environment.

[1] To be reviewed in Chapter 2

[2] The term Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) is used, and it generally denotes those whose ethnicity is neither white British nor white European (Aspinall, 2002). In this study they refer to: i) an aggregated subgroup of Black or Asian teachers born and who have spent their formative years in Africa, Britain or West Indies. This study takes 'formative years' to mean ages between 11 and 20 years, where individuals have undergone physical and psychological development that has a lasting impact in the way they interpret whatever environment they find themselves.

This framework of mediating forces may serve as the structure that either facilitates or inhibits the realisation of school leadership aspirations. It is therefore a study that investigates the individual BME teacher in relation to *how* he or she manages certain mediating forces, rather than on the militating external structural forces of institutionalised discrimination, social inequality and unfavourable school practices in relation to career progression.

To proceed with exploring such forces that either inhibit and facilitate individual school leadership aspirations, an understanding of the meaning of aspiration, through: one, a working definition of aspiration; two, school leadership as the *object* of aspiration; three, underlying basis of aspiration; and four, agency and structure as a potential mediating force shaping aspirations, are needed at this onset in order to shape the research questions – it must be noted that this exploration in the next few sections do not constitute the literature review.

1.2 MEANING OF ASPIRATION AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Working definition of aspiration

A brief definition by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2013) of aspiration is that it is 'a strong desire to achieve something high or great; an object of such desire'. In the field of psychology, one particular theoretical model dealing with motivation and aspiration, called *expectancy-value*, stressing two key cognitive influences, i.e., personal judgements about the likelihood of success towards an object and reasons for engaging or pursuing the object, will prove useful at providing a working definition of aspiration and therefore the development of this study.

The *expectancy-value* model, developed by Escalona (1940), and extended by Festinger (1942) in his *resultant valence theory*, stipulates that aspiration consists of two basic psychological components: *value*, which is subjective attraction of success in attaining an object, and a moderating component of attainment *expectation* (i.e., subjective probability judgement about the attainability of the object). Subsequent research by Starbuck (1963: 58) saw aspiration as a type of attitude and even stated that aspiration is 'functionally similar to, if not indistinguishable from attitude and sentiment, so attitude studies should bear directly upon aspiration theory'.

One such attitude study, the *theory of reasoned action*, formulated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), stipulates that constructs like aspiration are an individual's subjective probability judgements (i.e., expectation) that an object of desire has some ascribed discriminable attributes, coupled with the bipolar evaluation of these attributes (i.e., value). Put another way, what characterises an individual's school leadership aspiration towards obtaining say a hierarchical position, are some discriminable attributes like prestige, influence, and financial reward that the individual ascribes to it, coupled with personal evaluation of the ascribed attributes. This theory extends further, so that when an aspirant has behavioural intention towards an object, say a position, he or she believes that some discriminable attributes are behavioural modes that must be acquired in order to attain the object. In combination then, an individual ascribes some attributes like prestige, influence, and financial reward to a position, having of course evaluated them. He or she may then also believe that certain professional behaviours, say leadership, is needed to attain the position.

Atkinson and Feather's (1974) *achievement motivation theory* decompose further subjective value into motive and incentive. So that an individual's aspiration is now characterized by three rather than two cognitive components of aspiration: motive for success, incentive value of success and expectation of success. Motive for success is seen as anticipated the satisfaction from attaining an object; incentive value for success is seen as the modification of behaviour instrumental to the attainment of or from potential benefits of attaining an object; and expectation of success is the subjective probability judgements on the attainability of the object. The theory expounded thus far looks passé because of the dates, but it is still being applied today in various fields from finance to education, particularly as modern developments (see Wigfield & Cambria, 2010) into expectancy-value differ from the earlier theoretical formulations only in the way expectation and value have been described with respect to a variety of physiological, social and cultural determinants. For example, Pekrun (2009, 2006) expands on expectancy into three forms – situation outcome expectancies arising out of the likelihood that a situation will produce an outcome; action outcome expectancies arising out of individual beliefs about the consequences of own action; and action control expectancies arising out of individual beliefs about whether certain actions can be done. Eccles (2005), Eccles and Wigfield (1995), and Wigfield and Eccles (1992) on their part, propose four descriptions of value: attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value or usefulness of the task, and cost value.

Perhaps of greater significance here in Atkinson and Feather's (1974) decomposition of subjective value into motive and incentive is that the

underlying reasons for an individual's aspiration can be explained in terms of motive and incentive types. Deci and Ryan (2009, 2000) have dealt with this particular issue quite extensively in their *self-determination* theory as they specify that motives characterised as autonomous with incentives based on internally-contingent evaluations are prototypically intrinsic aspirations, whereas controlled motives with incentives that are contingent on external evaluations are prototypically extrinsic aspirations. The usefulness of the theoretical formulation here is that within the context of this study, internally and externally contingent incentives are loosely characterised respectively as 'intangibles' and 'tangibles', and used to describe the nature of the aspirations of a group of BME teachers in this study in Chapter 4.

To summarise briefly, a working defining of aspiration is that it is the motive and incentive value attached to an object, moderated by expectation surrounding its attainment. What this object is, now needs to be specified within the context of this study; and this is done in the next sub-section.

School leadership and career progression

'School leadership' or 'leadership' is used interchangeably and extensively in this study, and the central theme from many contesting definitions of leadership (e.g., Bass, 2000; Chemers, 1997; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995) is that it is a process of influence shaping the motivations and actions of individuals to achieve desired outcomes. Northouse (2010: 3) notices that despite the multitude of ways in which it has been conceptualised, the following components can be identified as central to the phenomenon – that leadership: (a) is a process, (b) involves

influence, (c) occurs in groups, and (d) involves common goals. Based on these components, he defines leadership as *a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal*. Leithwood et al (2006) define leadership generically as about direction and influence, so that within a group or organisation, it is establishing widely agreed upon and worthwhile directions, and doing what is necessary to facilitate members to move in those directions.

Within the context of this study therefore, school leadership is a *process* of *influence* from an individual to others in shaping their motivations and actions to achieve desired outcomes relating to some aspect of learning, teaching or school practice. The *process* of *influence* may be exercised through some form of leadership model, self-conceived leadership or externally mandated leadership role. Incentive value and outcomes from the process of influence may be in tangible things like obtaining a position, or in intangibles things like devotion to others. The exercise of influence and or realisation incentive outcomes is what this study refers to as *career* or *school leadership progression*, and this is what research participants in this study, aspire towards. The implication here is that conceptions of school leadership progression may not necessarily be in terms of 'tangible' hierarchical positions, but 'intangible' subjectives by the direction of individual aspirants – this implies a degree of agency in pursuing own directions in relation to some form of structure.

Agency and structure

Agency can be seen as 'an individual's ability to pursue own aspirations; and an action or intervention to produce a particular result' (Day el at, 2006: 48). The

strength of agency is a critical factor, and as Day et al observe in their investigation of the factors contributing to the variations in teachers' effectiveness at different phases of their careers and in different school context, it is associated with the causal relationship between the intention of an aspirant and a behaviour that will result in the successful attainment of the object. This links precisely to the deduction made from Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theoretical formulation that in an aspirant ascribing some discriminable attribute to say a hierarchical position, he or she may then believe that certain professional behaviours, i.e., leadership qualities, needs to be acquired in order to attain the position. The strength of agency in this case is the degree to which the leadership qualities are exhibited; which in turn leads to the attainment of the school leadership position.

There are various factors that may shape this strength of agency, but as specified at the beginning of this chapter, concerns in this study are not necessarily about institutional discrimination, social inequality and unfavourable school practices, serving as external structures inhibiting strength of personal agency, but in the framework of mediating forces, i.e., the balance of the personal life history, belief, value, and influence of the present school environment, in relation to the realisation of school leadership aspirations. Day et al (2006) refers to the framework as personal determinants (i.e., values, beliefs, life events and circumstances), situated determinants (i.e., school culture, relationships with colleagues and pupils) and professional determinants (i.e., influence of external policies, perception of roles) which shape the sense of agency when an individual feels able to pursue own aspirations.

In summary: a working defining of aspiration is that it is the motive and incentive value attached to an object, moderated by expectation surrounding its attainment. Given that the expectation component of aspiration is the likelihood or probability that an *object of desire* is attainable, it is influenced by sense and strength of agency in relation to certain facilitating or inhibiting mediating forces. The *object of desire* here is school leadership, which is a process of influence exercised through a form of leadership model, self-conceived, emergent and or assigned leadership role. The exercise of this process of influence and realisation of incentive outcomes from this process, such as self-defined satisfactions, power and prestige, is what this study refers to as *career* or *school leadership progression*. The underlying basis of such aspiration may be predominantly intrinsic (i.e., centred on 'intangibles' such as devotion to others), extrinsic (i.e., centred on 'tangibles', the attainment of prestige and positions) or balanced combination of tangible and intangibles. This theoretical frame therefore means that research questions focus on what type of school leadership an individual BME teacher aspires to (i.e., incentive), underlying reasons why he or she aspires toward this particular school leadership (i.e., motive), the mediating factors shaping its attainment or as the case may be non-attainment (i.e., expectancy). It is hoped then that this study provides a conceptual as well as practical framework from which further studies into the career progression of BME teachers can be undertaken.

Research questions

On the basis of this theoretical frame, the research questions are: (a) what leadership roles do BME teachers conceive for themselves and what are their

perceptions of school leadership success; (b) what is the nature of the personal, professional and situated factors facilitating or inhibiting the attainment of their school leadership aspirations; and (c) what is the nature of the dynamic relationships between personal agency, and workplace cultures and structures, in relation to the pursuit of their school leadership aspirations? The first research question deals with value component of aspiration, whilst the last two research questions deal with the expectation component. Attempts at answering these research questions takes five research routes concerning research participants': i) contextual background; ii) conception of school leadership and what type or area they aspire towards; iii) the factors sustaining such aspiration and reasons for this; iv) the extent to which they feel confident about attaining their school leadership aspiration, and the factors responsible and; v) the extent to which they think school culture and structure facilitates or inhibits them in the achievement of their school leadership aspiration.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

First part

The review of literature begins in Chapter 2 with a focus on both the entry and establishment phases in the teaching profession. At the entry phase, it is about the perceptions of BME individuals gaining access to the teaching profession and their experiences during training, and at establishment phase, it is about the experiences and leadership progression of BME teachers. The issues from literature are reviewed thematically, from social inequality, institutionalised discrimination to under-representation in relation to the career progression of BME teachers. Other related literature in the wider education field and other

professions are employed to elucidate or reinforce findings from literature. The concluding section of this chapter discusses the purpose and central research questions of this study. An account of the research design is given in Chapter 3; with the philosophical worldview underpinning the study, the methodological approach adopted, issues of validity and reliability, the research pilot to test the viability of research instruments and ethical issues encountered during pilot and main study, discussed.

Second part

Chapters 4 and 5 present as case examples the narratives of aspirants, with those having stronger intrinsic aspirational motives and incentives presented in the first – 'intangibles', i.e. those aspirants with stronger internally-contingent evaluations predominantly self-defined and predominantly centred on devotion to others, and then those with stronger extrinsic aspirational motives and incentives presented in the second – 'tangibles' -, i.e., those aspirants with stronger externally-contingent evaluations centred on gaining prestige, power, financial reward. The main findings from the narratives are evaluated with respect to the research questions in Chapter 6, with emergent propositions for research and practice discussed in three sections. Chapter 7 provides a summary of the research findings and discussion of implications to research and practice, and an overall assessment of the original contribution of this thesis. Further, limitations of research are identified, with possible directions for future research suggested and issues relating to being an insider researcher are given due regard.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Overview of discourse

A number of studies have investigated the school leadership progression of established BME teachers and experiences of BME trainee teachers, with analysis and evaluation centred on deficiencies of previous social models, the legacy from the social models, the opportunities of a multicultural environment, institutionalised discrimination, and under-representation of BME teachers in school leadership. Additionally, policy recommendations from these studies identify various external mechanisms or interventions needed in order for BME teachers to gain some form of career advancement. The intention here is to bring to light the main issues from literature which inform this study.

Chapter sections

Following this introductory section, the literature review is divided into five main sections, with the first focusing on the literature discourse of the social models and inherent inequalities seen as form of external structure that have until now limited the opportunities of BME established and trainee teachers. The second and third sections respectively focus on literature discourse on institutionalised discrimination and the school environment or culture – seen also as impinging

on the career opportunities and progression of BME established and trainee teachers. The fourth section reviews briefly the way the career progression of BME teachers is framed in the literature and the types of recommendation aimed at redressing many of the barriers faced by BME teachers. The final section discusses issues of structure and agency within the context of what is discussed in the BME school leadership literature, the reason for this study and research questions within the context of the issues highlighted from literature. In this review, studies from other fields are used to reinforce, clarify or contextualise findings from literature, research focus and questions.

2.2 SOCIAL MODELS DISCOURSE

Socio-cultural developments and inequality

In the BME school leadership literature, authors and researchers (i.e., Arora, 2005; Joppke, 1999; Osler, 1997; Mason, 1995; Troyna, 1992; Gillborn, 1990) analyse Britain's socio-cultural development in light of the changing demographics within the school environment and see the inherent inequalities from the social policies of assimilation, integration, and cultural pluralism that have hitherto inhibited opportunities for inclusive curriculum, minority attainment and school leadership advancement. They also see the challenges and opportunities the contemporary social model of multiculturalism creates for aspiring BME teachers. Arora (2005); Joppke (1999); Osler, (1997) and Gillborn (1990) all trace the history of discrimination towards BME people to the assimilation policy of Britain in the aftermath of the second world war, which required them to fit into its system, with the assumption that the characteristics (i.e., shared cultural values, belief systems) defining the identity of a nation

should be preserved against the dangers of dilution by migrants. In this regard, the task of successive British governments, right up to the 1960s, was to manage and assimilate BME migrants into an indigenous and homogenous society without losing its own sense of identity.

These authors maintain that policymakers saw education as the primary tool and schools as the environment from which migrant children can successfully be assimilated, with the view that through the process of time, assimilation will progress with the thread of migrant descendant generations. These authors nevertheless surmised that what was not envisaged were the life chances of migrants and the institutional inequalities rooted in the belief that racial discrimination can be explained in terms of white's unfamiliarity with the culture of BME people, and hence their attitudes and prejudices. In some cases, BME people were actually blamed for social disorder of whites, and within the school environment, the stagnation in progress of whites was traced to migrants themselves – a view made explicit in a DES Circular (1965: 7) which argued that the 'culture, language and religion of immigrant children not only impede their progress, it also has a negative effect on their white counterparts'. Osler (1997: 21) noted that as racism increased, white establishment identified the problem as one of black presence rather than white attitudes; and with schools as a microcosm of larger societal attitudes, this was also 'exemplified in the teachers, the curriculum and in the inadequacies of teacher education'.

The conclusion from this discourse in literature is that the assimilation model failed because it was based on an inadequate understanding of the social

psychology of group identity; and in particular the resilience of ethnic groups forming enclaves in the face of marginalisation and hostility – the downside to enclaves, was limited mobility, although groups like the Chinese and African Asians, with experience of university education, assimilated more rapidly than African, Caribbean and Bangladeshi migrants (Modood, 1998).

From the mid-1960s onward, the assimilation model began to be refined to what is now referred to as the integration model. It differed from the previous assimilation model in that it espoused a more liberal idea of limited diversity to religious beliefs, customs and language code; which was summarized by the then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, when in 1965 he stated – 'by integration, I mean not a flattening process of assimilation, but equal opportunities accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (Joppke, 1999: 225). The assumption behind this model was that diverse histories and cultures could serve to promote race relations. Thus, cultural differences as a social construct or reality should no longer be seen as a problem, but rather one that adds value and to which different sections of the society, particularly the schools must subscribe. This model is seen to have also failed because the social and education policies that were meant to ease the disparity between social classes and opportunities were not evident in practical implementations. In addition, the conceptual basis of the integration model still embraced rather than questioned the in-built inequalities of class and power. Indicative of this in relation to the school environment was the House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations' rejection in 1973 of the demands from BME parents and teachers for black studies to be introduced into the school curriculum because they viewed

its introduction as divisive, having little to offer wider education or improve race relations and in conflict with the values of indigenous citizens.

According to Aurora (2005), two models, one overlapping the other, emerged from the late 1970s onward as possible solution to the two previous models. The first was the multi-ethnic model which advocated competing but never integrating ethnic and cultural groups. She observes that the educational policies that emerged from this model were developed largely for urban and racially mixed schools (entirely ignored by rural and white inner-city schools), with policies and practices centred only on adding aspects of BME culture, like black studies, festival celebrations, cookery demonstrations and exhibits of ethnic dresses, to school curricula and activities. Thus, unlike the integration model, proponents saw the extrinsic value of utilising the services of BME teachers in professionally ethnic matters, and in using the type of curriculum that emerged out of the multi-ethnic model as a tool to improve the assumed low self-image of BME pupils, but not necessarily for its intrinsic value.

Aurora concludes that there was nothing wrong with this policy and practices *per se*, since it aimed to promote a positive self-image of BME pupils and the distinctive contribution BME teachers have to offer. However, the problem was the divisive nature of 'black studies and multi-ethnic festival celebration' and use of the term 'ethnic' in education which; became an euphemism for the disadvantaged in urban schools, channelled BME pupils away from academic subjects and reinforced the stereotype that BME teachers have nothing more to contribute other than on ethnic matters.

Multiculturalism and challenges to status quo

The second overlapping model, multiculturalism, based essentially on the perspective that differences by virtue of race, ethnicity and religion, is now part of the fabric of British society; and as such school curriculum should reflect and school leadership should be representative of, this multi-layered society. Whereas the multi-ethnic model inadvertently concentrated its curriculum in urban multi-ethnic schools, and promotional opportunities limited within schools with high concentration of BME teachers, the multicultural model penetrated both urban and non-urban white schools with promotional opportunities broadening to include both the indigenous white and BME teachers (Aurora, 2005). What in effect emerged from the assumption of this social model is a challenge to the *status quo* of a Eurocentric curriculum and the exclusion of BME teachers in senior leadership, and advocacy for an all-inclusive curriculum and school leadership equality for all teachers. As Osler (1997: 21) would note, the multicultural environment resulted in the 'growing recognition of the need to challenge racism within the education system', and the reorientation of policy and research from 'alleged underachievement or failure of black pupils towards an examination of the quality of educational provision'.

Multiculturalism is also seen to be deficient in many respects, and believed to cause certain limitations to BME people (this will be highlighted in the discussion on structure and agency at the end of this chapter). Nonetheless, it is within this socio-cultural context and the growing recognition for improvements in schools system that the then Labour government in 1997 under Tony Blair produced a White Paper titled 'Excellence in Schools' through the Department

for Education and Employment (DfEE, 1997), and subsequent Green Paper, 'Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change' (DfEE, 1998) which declared: 'Teaching must attract recruits from every section of society, bring strengths and qualities which ensure that teaching is a vibrant and diverse profession'. The paper went on to announce that the TTA would be asking all training providers 'to set targets for the number of ethnic minority trainees to whom they offer places' (DfEE 1998: 46). What emerged was a series of regional conferences titled 'Teaching in Multi-ethnic Britain', by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), aimed at boosting ethnic minority recruitment. These aims seem clear enough – borne out of recognition that BME teachers have been underrepresented and discriminated against when it came to the realisation of their aspirations to reach senior school leadership positions.

In conclusion, the social inequality discourse in the BME school leadership literature has essentially traced various social models adopted by post-war Britain, and concludes that they have in varying degrees, served as limiting structures to BME people – and that this is reflected within the school environment in the form of a Eurocentric curriculum and systematic exclusion of BME teachers from school leadership opportunities. The emergence of the multicultural model resulted in challenges to the status quo in form of strong advocacy for equal respect of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions within the society, and policies and practices to reflect this diversity in professions. In response, the British government in the late 1990s published its White and Green Papers and put forward legislation to compel institutions to

attend to these issues. The TTA and teacher training institutions responded by setting targets for recruitment trainee teachers from ethnic minority groups and designed customised leadership programmes for established BME teachers. However, the extent to which these initiatives have been successful has also been a discourse in literature by examination of discriminatory practices, various intersecting factors affecting progress of BME teachers and deficiencies in school policy and practice – the following two sections review these issues.

2.3 DISCRIMINATION DISCOURSE

Institutionalised discrimination

A well-known definition of institutionalized discrimination, given by Macpherson (1999: 39) is that it is 'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people'. Sidanius and Pratto (1999) give a more technical defining by stating that institutional discrimination occurs when the formal and informal rules and procedures of various social institutions result in the disproportionate allocation, overtly or covertly, of positive and negative value to dominant and subordinate groups respectively. They further make the distinction that overt institutional discrimination consists of rules and procedures that explicitly and openly target subordinates for negative and harmful treatment, whilst covert institutional discrimination does not target subordinate groups explicitly and openly, but arises where rules and procedures, having the appearance of fairness

and even handedness, systematically have a deleterious effect on certain groups. In the general school leadership literature, Coleman (2012) observes that in addition to the Race Relations Act of 1976 that made it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the basis of ethnicity, the 2000 Act instituted by the then Labour government under Tony Blair, in the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry places a positive duty on public authorities to promote racial equality in all spheres.

Coleman (2012) however notes that the extent to which this takes place within institutions is debatable for although discrimination may be technically unlawful, there are covert ways it is applied, with the result that 'the more subtle forms of discrimination that occur in relation to diversity that emerge when discrimination is illegal may be more insidious and difficult than the more direct forms of discrimination' (ibid: 598). Her observation is part of the backdrop to a review on diversity (ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, disability, class, and sexual orientation) and leadership topics of a leading journal, *Education Management Administration and Leadership*, since its inception in the early 1970s. At the heart of her review is the multicultural school environment ethos of how difference impacts on becoming a school leader (i.e., *leadership for diversity*, which would increase the range of people who are leaders), how that difference impacts on the practice of leadership (i.e., *leadership with diversity*, which would ensure that leadership is beneficial to everyone and organisation as a whole).

Coleman raises related discriminatory factors affecting the extent to which this leadership with and for diversity can be advanced within a multicultural

framework. In terms of leadership for diversity, she observes that the tendency is to apply stereotypes and negatively judge people on the basis of difference, and for leadership, often equated with the most dominant group (the white heterosexual male, middle- class and age), and for the tendency to appoint as gatekeepers (i.e., governors, selection panels, board members) members from their own group – homosociability. This point is echoed in Menter et al's (2003) analysis of threshold assessment, which found that BME teachers often express concern about its internal procedures and role of gatekeepers in their progression – they fare disproportionately worse in being evaluated favourably for threshold.

In terms of leadership with diversity, Coleman (2012) identifies a threefold-issue. First, the extent to which difference is valued as opposed to attempts at eliminating or smoothen it. This point is particularly important from the view that for an inclusive agenda within a leadership-with-diversity drive to intrinsically value what diversity brings, it must also understand the background to which the diverse pool of individuals emerge. Second, the extent to which positive discrimination[3] is not seen as contentious as it presupposes that BME teachers are a disadvantaged group, so specialised initiatives are needed to support them in transit towards and during leadership progression. Third, the

[3] An example that Coleman gives and prevalent in literature as a positive discrimination are customised courses designed for BME staff – One doubts whether this example can be classified as such since there are customised courses geared towards the most dominant group or specialised group. For example, courses designed to create understanding or awareness of racial issues amongst white professionals – can this then be classified as positive discrimination? The most appropriate type of positive discrimination that should have been used as an example is employment quotas set and acted upon within a private or public entity, and representative of gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation. Customised courses themselves may indeed serve as a ruse, used by the dominant group to give the impression that much is being done to create opportunities for minoritised groups, whereas actual or concrete career promotions are few and far in between – thus, customised courses, rather than being a form of 'positive discrimination', may indeed be an insidious form of covert discrimination.

extent to which school leadership takes into account various dimensions of difference – intersectionalities[4], such as racial identity, country of origin, cultural and religious background of BME teachers. The salient point here is that deficiency in recognising various intersectionalities is in itself a form of discriminatory practice that limits BME teachers.

Interrelating factors

The combinations of race, gender and workplace culture as obstacles, sometimes difficult to differentiate, for the female BME teacher is highlighted by Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010). A female leader in their study said:

> I am aware of both gender and business cultural dynamics as a head working with external agencies and governors… as, culturally, Asian women tend to 'step back', this can be interpreted as a lack of competence by men in particular. (ibid, 44)

In management literature, Davidson (1997) shares the stories of thirty BME women managers in private and public service who speak of the double negative effect of externally generated sexism experienced in the workplace and internally generated ones emerging from tension associated with earning more than their spouse, the religious and cultural gender roles regarding domestic help and child care, and in some occasions, failure to produce male heirs. Bhavnani (1994, cited in Davidson, 1997) speaks of the interrelating factors of families being both supportive and repressive to BME women, so that on the one hand, they may experience differently the operation of male dominance in the household, and on the other experience support from family whilst living in a racist society.

[4] In the much wider literature of organisational management, McCall (2005) refers to this concept as relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations. However, this concept, word and meaning is contested, and as a result the term, interrelation – mutual or reciprocal relation will be used.

Within the BME school leadership literature, Bush et al (2005) speak of black and Asian identity affected by the sense and perception of community, racism and discrimination, culture and belonging, religious affiliation and strengthened where geographical concentration occurs, therefore fundamental to potential teachers and school leaders as they attempt to establish themselves in a multi-cultural society.

Thus, community affinity and geographical concentration is linked to how the ambitions of BME teachers and potential leaders are affected by family and community reactions to career choice and ways in which lay and professional development is enabled or hindered in and beyond the schools they served (Bush et al, 2006; 2005). In the Indian community context, teachers may not necessarily be respected because legal or medical practice is seen more favourably. In new migrant BME teachers context, the extent to which they succeed depends on the ability to resolve the interrelating factors of what Rassool (1999, cited in Bush et al, 2005) refers to as the discontinuity of living behind aspects of life, reconciling differences in manner and custom, and social displacement experienced on arrival, as they rely on their community in order to function in a multi-cultural framework.

Discriminations against African teachers – intersection of identity and country of origin

Amongst many Africans, identity, the country of origin, effect on school leadership development and promotional prospects is more pronounced. Koroma's (2004) study is useful in this regard, particularly as she links African

features and assumptions about it, to discrimination. Although her study was mainly on African supply teachers in south London with large ethnic population, she presses on the fact that teachers like her, working either in a permanent or supply capacity, face peculiar difficulties that can only be attributed to marginalisation and stigmatisation because of their personal, individual and social identities as black Africans. She points to the myths and impressions about their social, professional, intellectual and physical inferiority; which have been embedded for centuries in the British psyche; which still feed subconscious assumptions about their culture, skills and training.

These experiences are common amongst African teachers in full-time position in many UK schools, with the effect that much of their school leadership prospects relative to other groups are limited. As she puts it:

> Due to our physical features and regional background, we face all forms of racial discrimination and stigmatization in London secondary schools. Our blackness, physical and visual features are not only signs of the inescapability of our West Africaness, but also a source of verbal and written racist remarks or slurs from pupils, teachers and school authorities. Pupils told me several times that I was dirty and 'stinky' like a baboon. They have also asked me question like 'do Africans live in trees in the jungle? Do they always go hungry and naked?' (ibid: 88)

Koroma singles out the media, through images of starving children, underdeveloped infrastructure and primitive lifestyle as the culprit legitimising assumptions of Africa's backwardness; which invariably feeds into the consciousness of the hegemonic group with power, status and privilege. The consequence is that African teachers face particular levels of marginalisation and discrimination relative to other BME groups; such that they suffer deeper social and psychological problems attaining their professional and leadership goals.

A combination of accent and perceived inferiority of foreign qualifications, and effect on promotional school leadership prospects, is pronounced amongst many African teachers. According to Riches and Foddy (1989), accents and foreign qualification are signatures of an individual and an embodiment of identity used either to positively or negatively evaluate performance, opportunity and influence. In studying how qualified immigrants from the developing countries progress over time in industrialised countries, career theorists (i.e., Clark & Lindley, 2006; Friedberg, 2000; Bell, 1997) found on average that black migrants performed worse, compared to both indigenous and migrant whites in terms of promotional prospects. The reasons they cite range from accents and language barrier to lack of appreciation of qualifications.

Replicated findings in the BME school leadership literature (e.g., Wilkins & Lall, 2011; McNamara et al, 2009; Bush et al, 2005; Koroma, 2004), show that teachers from sub-Sahara Africa experience significantly more difficulties gaining their teaching credentials, and gaining appointment and subsequently promoted to middle and senior leadership positions because of the negative perception of their accents and qualifications. McNamara et al's (2009) research into the magnitude of BME aspirations and varying factors affecting their school leadership progression found the career trajectories of African teachers far worse, with over sixty per cent remaining in main scale posts, compared to fifty per cent Pakistani, forty per cent Indian and thirty per cent Caribbean teachers. A contrasting pattern is that thirty per cent of Caribbean teachers, twenty per cent of Indian teachers, and eighteen per cent of Pakistani teacher, compared to just eighteen per cent of African hold senior leadership positions.

Koroma's (2004) study illustrates some of distinct problems faced by BME teachers from many commonwealth countries, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa. A participant in her study said:

> Most of the time when I teach, the children will rudely mock me by imitating my accent – this is disheartening, but you don't blame me for my inability to speak like an Englishman. It's not only the children; in fact, a head teacher had ridiculed my accent in one of the schools where I was teaching. He laughed hysterically at me when I started introducing myself in the staffroom. I felt humiliated when other members of staff burst out laughing mockingly. I felt so bad that I left school. (ibid: 89)

These experiences are not limited to cases between black African teachers and their white colleagues or students, but African teachers and BME students:

> Even though I am black, many black pupils can't identify with me owing to my African accent. Whenever I speak, they react with a sense of shame and disgust at the third worldliness of my accent. Since the black pupils born and brought up in London have internalised negative stereotypes about black people from Africa, they make life in the classroom very difficult for me. I don't think they'll behave like this to white teachers. (ibid: 89)

Koroma (2004) observation here is that since the cultural features signifying their identity (i.e., dress, tribal marks, dialects, accents) serve as source of insensitive mockery and ridicule, black pupils themselves have partly or completely rejected their African culture by adopting without question, the perceived superiority of western ones. Lipsky (1987: 11) refers to this as internalized racism, manifesting itself 'through all manner of self-invalidation, self-doubt, isolation, fear, feelings of powerlessness and despair'.

Positive self-conceptions of identity and opportunities

Positive conception of identity that emerge out of self-perception of the additionality that BME-heritaged individuals bring as well as the expectation

from their own community, also serve to facilitate the school leadership progression or opportunities of many BME teachers. McKenley and Gordon (2002) for example, in conducting a small scale appreciative inquiry into how race, ethnicity and cultural heritage impacts on BME teachers' experiences in senior leadership positions found a significant number of BME school leaders have strong desires capturing the joys of their leadership, often see themselves adding their rich cultural heritage to the common wealth of schools and in process playing unique roles transforming educational opportunities. They also see themselves as role models and pioneers, although a significant number are ambivalent or did not want to accept the task of being role models. Bush et al's (2007; 2005) studies pinpoint BME school teachers and leaders having strong ethnic, cultural, and religious ties with a community, and in turn are regarded by the community as their 'voice' because they understand their culture, speak their language and are perceived as more approachable than white teachers. Further, these studies found BME teachers see many advantages in their heritage as BME school leaders, and appreciate the fact that they can understand the religious and cultural background of pupils, by adopting a 'black to black perspective', doing things differently and being more honest when dealing with black parents.

In recognising the additionality that they bring as BME-heritaged teachers as well as being effective in their practice, opportunities do indeed arise, but there are occasions when they are not taken for various reasons. Bush et al (2007) and, Bush and Moloi (2007) speak of ethnicity and leadership bound up with the history of race, colonisation and power, and the unconscious conflict that whites have in being led by black leaders especially in a majority white institutions on

the one hand, and the uncomfortable feelings from BME leaders themselves of having to lead and exercise authority over predominantly white institution on the other hand. This, as Bush et al (2007) notice, brings into question whether to design school policy to prepare ethnic leaders to lead predominantly ethnic groups or to lead any institution. Coleman's (2012) evaluation of leadership with diversity and leadership for diversity seem to provide an answer to Bush et al's rhetoric question – by increasing the pool of school leaders to include BME individuals, they bring dimensions of experiences and understanding, unique to them as BME-heritaged persons, and which can both be essential in schools with predominant black population and schools that are not.

Covert discrimination

Covert discrimination as a social phenomenon means a dominant group constituting a community, private or public entity, allocate negative outcomes disproportionately and in an implicit manner to a subordinate group, while maintaining a veneer of fairness and equity. Katz and Moore (2004) detail a number of ways in which this can occur. For example, when senior leaders in organisations are most comfortable with people who are like themselves, and make decisions over who gets the best opportunities or singled out for recognition – for example, homosociability mentioned by Coleman (2012) in the previous sub-section. In another example, organizations that pride themselves as having meritocratic or performance-based culture apply rigorously promotional policies and procedures in the narrowest form to exclude some individuals or groups so that it adversely affects their promotion, salary increase or other remuneration packages, and layoff during downsizing.

A participant amongst other BME teachers in McNamara et al's (2009) study into the varying enablers affecting their school leadership progression said:

> Too much is decided over a drink at the pub after school and cliques exist in most schools to stop certain types of teachers getting the top jobs. ..The culture is to employ somebody who they can identify with and feel 'comfortable' around; somebody who 'looks' like them. (ibid: 75)

Allocating negative outcomes disproportionately to a subordinate group, by its nature means lack of recognition of positive attributes that would otherwise be beneficial to career outcomes. Bacon's (2006) study into how employees evaluate their career success found professional recognition (i.e., reputation), professional accomplishment (i.e., prestige), in addition to professional integrity and work-life balance, to be important evaluation criteria; and the lack thereof leads to work indifference and resentment even if those affected are competent and complicit in job requirements. McKenley and Gordon (2002) found that in spite of clear evidence from school inspectors about the quality of their leadership, commitment to innovation and ability to raise standards in challenging school, they were often not recognised for these by officials.

Issues of the high level scrutiny BME teachers are often subjected to, of having to constantly prove themselves and tendency for mistakes to be readily highlighted, are examples where procedures and rules are applied in the most stringent way (if it were applied across board, no one within the organisation would pass) to the detriment of one particular group. For example, two research participants in McKenley and Gordon's study said respectively:

> My predecessor did everything he could to stop me leaving the school. He held onto me to serve his and the schools' purpose without any care for my needs. I was asked to do one job after

> another ostensibly to 'prove myself' so in the end I resigned without a job and decided to do an MA in order to get an open reference from him. (ibid: 10)
>
> I feel as a black person I carry a lot of baggage – deep inner feelings about our ability to make mistakes. This to me is the essential dilemma for black school leaders. To create the space to be allowed to make mistakes as person not as a black person (ibid: 11).

In these examples, covert discrimination need not itself be the disproportionate allocation of negative evaluations to a group, but the absence of positive evaluations, non-recognition of positive attributes and absence of information that would otherwise be beneficial to professional prospects.

On the latter point, social capital theorists (e.g., Seibert et al, 2001) have long recognised that greater access to information is a key explanatory variable to effective career mobility and promotional opportunities, independent of the other career outcomes. Literature show links between level of information access, informal networks and professional acknowledgment – when there is deficiency in professional recognition, the likelihood of gaining from information access and informal network is limited. Harris et al (2003) speak of the subtle influence of informal networks from which ethnic minorities are excluded in a context of white interpretation of black reality; which invariably means 'behind the scenes' criteria for promotion detrimental to their prospects.

A study by Mackay and Etienne (2006) into black staff in further education (FE) seems to encapsulate many of these issues as they found the few in some form of leadership position and the rest in the mainstream often experience isolation, lack of professional acknowledgement and information. Mackay and Etienne

make a number of observations. Feelings of isolation by BME staff, leading to fewer opportunities to develop career-enhancing supportive relationships. To redress this, external relationships are sought in order to develop strong professional identity and greater ability to navigate careers. Lack of professional acceptance leading to professional mistrust, and which in turn affects efficiency and effectiveness of BME staff, and in particular, the ability to take risks that should otherwise be taken in an innovative environment for fear that they will not be supported if mistakes are made. Lack of professional acceptance from white colleagues, which invariably feeds into the black self-consciousness of their role as managers and cautiousness in their approach to managing staff and tasking risk. Extra requirements and scrutiny placed on BME staff, resulting in the belief that they have to be better and do more than their white peers. In this sense, according to Mackay and Etienne (2006), BME staff view overachievement as the only response to the unstated questions of whether or not they deserve all that came to them – they believe that it is not enough to be the best once, but have and need to prove themselves every time.

Covert discrimination may also emerge unwittingly by adopting a colour-blind approach of disregard of racial characteristics when selecting which individuals for opportunities.

Colour blindness

Aymer and Okitipki's (2010) analysis on the nature and impact discrimination within organisational management provide insight into the colour blind approach seen as a form of covert discrimination. They posit that those who

profess a colour blind approach do not necessarily believe in discrimination since they begin with the premise that all should be treated the same irrespective of their background, age, gender, and physical impairment. A further assumption is that by ignoring differences and discriminatory practices, judgements on who benefits must be based on merit and nothing else. However, Aymer and Okitipki argue that this approach does not take into account discrimination out of omission and lack of consideration – by not taking account of difference, far from guaranteeing a fair and just approach, could reinforce discriminatory practices from intent or historical legacies[5] that contribute to the way people relate to and interact with each other. Thus, a colour blind approach not only ignores the inherent differences that already exist between people (shaped by identity and individual biographies as well as pre-existing narratives that contribute to the way individuals see themselves and relate to one another), but fails to understand the ways these differences shape lives, social interactions and relationships. It in effect fails to meet Coleman's (2012) reference to leadership with diversity, where difference impacts on becoming a school leader, and recognition of various intersectionalities that may limit this.

Another variation in the colour blind approach observed by Aymer and Okitipki (2010) is where those who are discriminated against or experiencing discrimination refuse to acknowledge them. Wilkins and Lall's (2011) study into social isolation, subjection of stereotypical attitudes and instances of overt

[5] For example when white and black people meet, overhanging the relationship is the historical and contemporary realities of colonialism and racism; when men and women meet sexual politics and gender relations lace the interaction and is evident from the outset in the way language is used (Spender, 1990; Tannen, 1995).

racism experienced by BME trainee teachers illustrate this form of colour blind approach. A participant called Victoria speaks of an incident where a senior teacher tells a racist joke in a staffroom and then signals his awareness that it was inappropriate. She later comments that 'he probably shouldn't be saying it', and in stopping short of describing the incident as 'overt racism', finds a positive aspect of the incident in terms of her own professional career development. Wilkins and Lall (2011) observe that the tendency of attributing such incidents as 'unwitting prejudice or ignorance' rather than 'deliberate' racism by both recipients and perpetrators; but from a critical race perspective, it is a significant phenomenon demonstrating the manner in which, in a racialised society, much racism goes unnoticed because it is 'normalized'.

In toto, a colour blind approach, by ignoring the inherent differences between people on the assumption that evaluation of prospects should be based on merit only, fails to understand the ways these differences and the intersecting factors as a result of these differences.

Effects of perceived discrimination

Perceptions of discrimination are seen in literature as equally detrimental to the career progression of BME teachers. Wilkins and Lall (2011), Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) and Carrington et al (2001) all found that many of the difficulties faced by BME teachers are related significantly to internal fault mechanisms of anxiety about the potential exposure to discrimination rather than actual experiences – perceptions that invariably inhibit the capacity, self-efficacy and personal agency to pursue own goals, and significantly account for

the residual difference in school leadership aspiration and realisation. Coleman and Campbell-Stephens' (2010) study into how a small group of BME teachers progressed through to senior leadership position noticed that the perceptions of discrimination vary amongst the them, with the extent to which it is perceived not necessarily related to career success – those who had attained the final and acquisition stage were the ones who referred to racism during appointment and tasks, whilst those experiencing stagnation in development and advancement stages often cite personal factors like family commitment.

A participant in their study, appointed as a head teacher, narrated what her predecessor had told her: "this is a very successful school. I hope it does not go down. We will have to manage your introduction to the parents". Implicitly, this statement suggests a risky appointment because she may not be as competent as a white counterpart, and even if it was not the case, white parents may not necessarily welcome her because of her ethnicity. Reminiscing about this episode, the interviewee said:

> After equalities work was done in the school, it came out that some of the staff tried to undermine me, and don't like taking orders from a black woman. (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010: 44)

McNamara et al's (2009) study also found that senior school leaders from BME background were more likely to say they had experienced discrimination than main scale BME teachers, and in contrast to BME middle leaders who were least likely to say they had experienced discrimination.

In concluding this section, the central theme in this discourse on discrimination is that a multicultural environment should be reflected in the extent to which the

range of people who are leaders are increased and how that increased range makes a difference that will be beneficial to all. However, this extent is seen to be affected significantly by the multifaceted nature of discrimination and related intersectionalities of factors. For instance, the tendency in applying stereotypes and negatively judging others on the basis of difference; the tendency of the most dominant group appointing members of their own racial group gatekeepers (i.e., governors, selection panels, board members) in maintaining the status quo. In another instance, discriminatory practices affecting BME teachers extending beyond the disproportionate allocation of negative evaluations and application of rigorous policies and procedures in the narrowest form, to absence of positive evaluation and efforts. In this regard, the BME school leadership literature points to lack of recognition of the professionalism of many BME teachers, their lack of access to the same level of informal networks and information deficiencies often experienced – all of which would otherwise be beneficial to their opportunities.

An overlapping topic with what has been discussed in these two last sections, and found also in the BME school leadership literature is the underrepresentation of BME teachers – the following section examines this.

2.4 UNDER-REPRESENTATION DISCOURSE

Recent statistics

The under-representation of BME individuals in the teaching profession across regions in Britain, whether in areas of relatively high BME population or not, was formally recognised in a series of government commissioned reports as far

back as the early eighties (see Commission for Racial Equality, 1986; Swann, 1985; Rampton 1981). Subsequent BME school leadership research replicates reports and other statistics of underrepresentation from governmental agencies. Wilkins and Lall (2011) notice that relatively little change happened even after the series of governmental studies until responsibility was placed on institutions by the Race Relations Amendment Act, RRAA (2000); which emerged out of Macpherson Inquiry (1999) into the death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993.

Previous race equality legislation had focused on the avoidance of direct racist harassment and discrimination, and in this regard Gillborn (2005, in Wilkins & Lall, 2011) maintains it amounted to a passive 'colour-blind' perspective that suppressed the significance of structural race inequalities. As a result of the RRAA, public bodies now faced an imposed requirement to proactively promote racial equality, including the routine review and monitoring of internal policies and practices to ensure race equality objectives are met. Expectation also shifted from passive anti-discrimination to the active promotion of race equality, and this was significant in education given the school's potential for social transformation. In this regard, the then Labour government, in producing their White Paper (DfEE, 1997), and subsequent Green Paper (DfEE, 1998) put forward a range of initiatives (i.e., funded research, BME recruitment targets, and incentive payments) designed to increase the recruitment of BME teachers and ensure their presence at all levels of school leadership.

However some recent statistics from Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009), presented in literature by Ogunbawo (2012) in her

research into the provision of customized leadership programmes and benefits in addressing barriers to the development and progression of BME teachers, show that despite the increase in BME teachers by 24.5 per cent in primary school sector, and 20.6 per cent in the secondary school sector, it still represented about 5.1 per cent of teacher workforce in England and Wales. She highlights the fact that 2.6 per cent Asians, 1.7 per cent blacks, 0.8 per cent mixed background make up this total of 5.1, while the remaining 94.3 per cent are whites – the raw numbers are 442,700 full time teachers in state schools as at January 2009, from which 417,466 or 94.3 per cent are whites, leaving the remaining 25,234 or 5.7 per cent classified as BME heritage individuals. In comparing this to the proportion of BME students, Ogunbawo calculates that the teaching workforce should at least consist of 22 per cent BME teachers, translating to 97,394 teachers among the 442,700 workforce, and thus representative of the total BME student population in state schools in England and Wales. Jessica Shepherd's (2011) article as education correspondent for *The Guardian* reasserts similar data with head teachers overwhelmingly white with about 94.7 per cent occupancy, compared to 0.7 per cent from black African and Caribbean teachers.

Similar to literature on BME teachers in the secondary sector, an earlier study by Mackay and Etienne (2006) found that despite equal opportunities policies, few further education institutions have tackled effectively the representation of black staff in their workforce or investigated how culture in their organisation contribute to the experience of discrimination. Mackay and Etienne's data from the Commission for Black Staff in further education (2002) report show BME

individuals constituting 4.9 per cent of managers overall, and only one per cent (4 out of 412 mainstream colleges in England) hold the position of college principal. In the few in leadership positions, and those still in mainstream teaching, the sense of isolation experienced, lack of professional acceptance, acknowledgement, and trust are marked.

The causes of the underrepresentation is multifaceted, ranging from the historic legacies of the social models adopted in Britain and discriminatory practices discussed earlier to policy or practice inadequacies at both entry and establishment phases of the teaching profession.

Reasons for underrepresentation – at entry point of profession

At the entry point, an early report by Carrington et al (2001) into the recruitment of BME candidates into teaching and their experiences during training and first appointment, found that BME student teachers generally have misgivings about the perceived low status, rewards and workload, and a significant number of BME graduates reject teaching altogether because of negative image. They also found that BME applicants are considerably older, have family commitments and were established in other careers before entering teacher training, so made considerable financial sacrifices – in some cases, they were forced to hold down part time positions during training. With the combination of family commitment and financial hardship, many potential BME recruits often seek teacher training opportunities near home, resulting in the risk of over-subscribed places in nearby institutions. Carrington et al (2001) noted also that BME recruits often bring with them experiences, both direct and vicarious, of racial harassment, and that

this may account for their anxiety about the possible reception they may receive in predominantly white schools, hence the hesitancy to take up career opportunities. Whereas in reality, the difficulties actually encountered by BME recruits who worked in such settings were little different from those in multi-ethnic schools.

Under-representation is exacerbated further when BME trainee teachers do not complete their training. Wilkins and Lall's (2011) study into the experiences of BME student teachers, undertaken out of concern over the disproportionate numbers (30%, as opposed to 10% white) who failed or withdrew over a three-year-period from 2002 to 2006 despite the increase in BME intake, found BME students were formally recorded as having significant difficulties in academic work or 'professional performance. Like Carrington et al (2001), they note that BME student teachers were much older, from non-traditional academic backgrounds, so face additional hurdles in completing their studies relative to their white counterparts, likely to study near home and susceptible to negative impact on performance due to economic and family commitments. In maintaining that this alone cannot account for the persistent difference in failure rate outcomes between BME and white students, Wilkins and Lall argue that whilst the school placement is widely regarded by student teachers as the most demanding element of the postgraduate teacher training irrespective of ethnicity, the tensions involved in learning to adapt to a professional culture, where the emphasis is on professional survival rather than negotiating progress are compounded by issues of race and anxiety about the *potential* for racism, particularly during placements in predominately White schools. Such anxieties,

they believe, have a particularly insidious impact on confidence, with BME students understandably reluctant to reveal insecurities that might undermine attempts at projecting a strong authoritative professional identity believed acceptable in the profession.

Wilkins and Lall (2011) notice the significant interplay between three partners; the *student teacher*, the *university* offering the training programme and the *placement school* were 'performance of teaching' is practiced and assessed. In this triplet, the structural imbalance results from two very powerful 'communities of practice', with the school as a *'professional body of expert practice'* and university as an *'academic body of expert knowledge'*, aligned on one side against the relatively powerless, low-status individual. This imbalance may not be necessarily confined to BME students, but the added dimension of race may exacerbate the desire to remain below the parapet, resulting in the under-reporting of discrimination on the basis of race (Mentor & Crozier, 1993).

Reasons for underrepresentation – at establishment phase of profession

In addition to policy and practice deficiencies at the entry phase of the teaching profession, literature also point to policy and practice problems at establishment phase for the underrepresentation of BME teachers. Bariso's (2001) desk study into why the teaching profession is unrepresentative of a multicultural population and thus predominantly white cites internal and external exclusion practices. In his analysis, internal exclusion is when BME people opt out of teaching due to their unfavourable attitude towards the profession. He lays the blame for unfavourable attitudes on low financial reward, racism, absence of

black school leaders as role models and poor promotional prospects. On the two last points, Bariso (2001) highlights that those wanting to enter the profession complain that they are often viewed as undertaking subordinate roles, even with experience and qualification, and that curriculum content does not reflect black perspective in a constructive and positive way.

External exclusion, Bariso says, are influences beyond personal preference, and linked to factors such as lack of black role models, racism, poor promotional prospects, low pay, negative stereotyping, parental influence and workload as the causes. On the issue of workload, the study by McNamara et al (2009) found workload to be a major factor inhibiting BME teachers' career progression, particularly BME female teachers dealing with the intersectionality of expectation on caring and family responsibilities.

Similar to Carrington et al (2001), McNamara et al (2009), Bush et al (2007, 2005) and Powney et al (2003) found that BME individual enter the profession late, and in addition they have lower satisfaction levels, are concentrated in cities with larger proportion of ethnic minority studies (which incidentally is not replicated in the staffroom, governing body and selection panels as it is overwhelmingly white), and are less geographically mobile, with the consequence that there is underrepresented at senior leadership levels. McNamara et al (2009) found that a significant majority, more than sixty-seven per cent BME teachers, feel they would need to change school to progress their careers, however only about half were willing to relocate, unless it is within localised regions. Their statistics show the majority of BME teachers and leaders in schools with average proportions

of BME pupils (about thirty-six per cent), compared to the remaining ten per cent and twenty per cent in respective rural and suburban contexts. The much wider literature by Singh (2002), analysing contemporary BME employment in England and Wales lists early educational choices, gender-related issues, lack of role models, low self-esteem against societal expectations and negative stereotyping by mainly white performance assessors and their misjudgement of potential and fit, as main barriers to senior professional positions; and the teaching profession is no exception.

Bush and Moloi's (2008) analysis of race and racism in leadership development and opportunity provide further reasons for under-representation. First, the issue of community and identity fosters a type of structure that limits opportunities. In this regard, it is human nature to live where one feels comfortable and a sense of affinity, and in England, this often leads to BME families forming their own communities, thus relying on tight social contacts that may inhibit community and cultural integration until the second and third generation. This is turn may lead to a BME view that is fatalistic with limited aspiration. Second, and in propinquity to community is identity, with shared values and beliefs, and a geographic location when as a migrant, one leaves a place of origin, to another place that is foreign – the conflict, contradiction and ambiguity that has to be resolved before undertaking or during careers is significant.

Third, issues of race and racism shape how opportunities are taken, so that BME teachers interested in a position in decentralised local education authority

systems may be able to 'self-nominate' by applying for available leadership posts and submit themselves to the stated or implicit criteria. This requires sufficient level of confidence and the reluctance to do so out of deficiency in positive self-belief may also contribute to underrepresentation, particularly in senior leadership. A respondent in Bush et al's (2005: 27) study says:

> Sometimes I have been reluctant to "sell" myself and push myself forward, not wanting to be seen as pushy and arrogant'.

Developing self-confidence seems to depend on having appropriate level of support as well as suitable role models; and when this is missing the ability and confidence to venture out in search of opportunities will be at best deficient and at worst absent. Fourth, Bush and Moloi (2008) pinpoint problems relating to centralised[6] system, with planned approach, leading to central determination of who should be considered for promotion (as previously mentioned gatekeepers appointing candidates with the 'appropriate' characteristics for a position, equated with the most dominant group).

In cases when education system is decentralised, local authorities retain overall responsibility for succession planning and are often perceived by BME leaders to have an important role in the 'climate setting' of leadership succession; as most BME leaders perceive negative attitudes and practices such as:

> Government policy on inclusion is actually excluding BME people, not being matched by concrete action to provide opportunities for them'. Bush et al (2005: 58)

> The LEA does little in terms of tracking BME people and promoting them. They operate under a broad umbrella of equal

[6] Recent developments in the UK where organisational trusts own and run a selection of schools as academies often lead to centralised system where a head running one of the small schools is handpicked to become the executive running a consortium of schools within the organisational trust.

> opportunity but the reality is different…There are hardly any Asian or Black heads. In terms of population statistics, diversity at the very top is non-existent. This is quite bad'. (ibid: 58)
>
> In terms of professional development this is not the Authority to be. Some of the governors lined up teachers against me and at some point; I had a psychological breakdown and employed the services of a private counsellor'. (ibid: 58)

Taking into account then the fact that the problems experienced by BME trainee teachers invariably reduce the number who emerge out of entry into established phases of teaching practice, and which in turn face a number of problem such as discrimination and issues discussed thus far, an important factor encapsulating many of these problems is the nature of school culture.

Reasons for underrepresentation – school culture

School practices, seen in terms of the culture in the school in which BME teachers have to pursue and negotiate their school leadership progression have, at least implicitly, been discussed in BME school leadership literature. The implicitness resides in the fact that discussions are often centred on the broader topic of discrimination or inadequate school policies and practices. Sailes (2008: 74 – 75) defines culture as an organised set of thoughts, beliefs, and norms for interaction and communication; and specifies that it is about how people treat and value one another, how school staff work together in a professional and personal sense, and consensus about what is important. Culture then, from BME school leadership literature's broader topic on discrimination means particular actions and attitudes of the dominant group and effect on career development and opportunities of many BME teachers. Why particular actions and attitudes of one group affect the development opportunities of another group can best

be explained with Lumby's (2012) analyses of organisational culture, and inherent power and equity. Her points are that culture can be seen as the net effect of visible and invisible rules shaping the choice options for thought and action, so remains a powerful sculptor for achievement and failure. The dominant culture is likely to be working in each school in favour of some and disadvantage others – in other words, culture is implicated in the modulation of power.

Power itself is enacted through overt coercion, mandated authority, covertly through structures, processes and agency that shape what can be thought, discussed, disputed and resisted. So when covert, power channels peoples thought so that they accept their roles in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable. When culture then is viewed as an embedded structure shaping human activity, it privileges the values and interest of one group over others by means that may not be overtly or consciously intended to dominate and fundamental disciplinary force on which organisations depend.

Given these points, Lumby (2012) observes that the effect of school culture matches the description of covert power in that it makes ways of thinking and acting seem natural and unchangeable, shapes possibilities, creates the risk of serious penalties when cultural boundaries are transgressed. It is this covert power exercised in favour of some, to the disadvantage of others that the BME school leadership literature says is the main barrier to the career progression of many BME teachers. This power ensures that most dominant group can allocate

negative outcomes disproportionately to a subordinate group, while maintaining a veneer of fairness and equity. The opposite of course, is school culture and the modulation of power brings the best out of all irrespective of ethnicity or gender – the following subsection examines what is said about this.

Addressing underrepresentation through enabling policies and practices

An empowering school culture defined by positive attitude and actions of colleagues is seen in literature as one of the most important enablers to the realisation of school leadership aspirations. Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010), Bush et al (2007, 2005), McKenley and Gordon (2002) and others in literature all point to supportive colleagues and head teachers, who are often instrumental to the school leadership progression of many BME teachers – they see sponsorship from heads or LEA staff as the critical variable in enabling them to progress into middle and more senior positions. It appears that the most successful BME leaders were the ones who recognised the value of allies in building their capacity and facilitating their leadership aspirations:

> I was fortunate enough to have had people who supported me. Other head teachers had seen my ambition and helped me, their moral support has been fantastic. (Bush el al, 2005: 54)

Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) give a portrait of thirteen BME teachers and their journey into deputy and assistant principalship, looking at some key facilitators, influences and obstacles experienced through various phases of this leadership journey.

A starting point to their analysis was the specification of the four stages of career progression: i.e., *preparation*, where the teacher is acquiring initial qualifications

and making career plans; *establishment,* where the teacher is entering teaching and lower management levels; *development and advancement*, where the teacher is gaining further qualifications and promotion to more senior levels and; *final acquisition and performance*, where the teacher is obtaining and carrying out the role of head teacher (Coleman 2002; Van Eck et al, 1996; Hall 1976). With the support of senior white colleagues, two females in the primary sector were fast-tracked; obtaining their establishment stage quickly, and then seamlessly moving to the advancement or development stage in relatively short space of time. Three others reached their current position through hard won acquisition; working in challenging schools, obtaining deputy headship and for a while obtaining headship proved difficult, but they eventually succeeded. Five others, three males and two females, all in the secondary sector, had made good progress through in establishment stage, but now recognise that their careers had stalled, believing they have left it too late and will therefore forever remain serial deputies. The three remaining leaders in the development stage had not entirely given up the possibility of becoming principals, but were not particularly active in pursuing it because they believe that their chances will remain slim – they have begun to accept the status quo.

What this illustrates is that though the journey to headship varies according to circumstances, the role of supportive colleagues is critical. Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) found that the most difficult and critical stage of the thirteen senior school leaders was securing headship, even though they had all achieved a level of career success in reaching the advancement stage in positions such as assistant or deputy principalship by being supported one way or the other

by supportive colleagues and superiors. They concluded that 'discrimination and ethnic (and gender) prejudice continues to affect the processes of selection and recruitment' of BME leaders even at the most senior school levels (ibid: 47).

Closely related to support from colleagues is the presence of suitable role models in the development of many BME teachers. An Asian primary school head teacher in Bush et al's (2005) and two senior from Coleman and Campbell-Stephens' (2010) study said respectively:

> Three head teachers whom I worked for who encouraged and supported me in developing professionally in all aspects of school life. Encouraged me to take risks in the early stages of my career and not give up when the going got tough. The second quietly offered me opportunities to develop professionally and saw that the potential was there. It ensured that I had developed the skills to take on the challenges of senior management. The third kept pushing even when there was a reluctance not to advance further. Partly by me having to take responsibility for the school when he was not present and allowing me to start and finish issues that arose without interfering. Also allowed me to represent the school on a number of courses that he felt I could lead and get my name known. This also assisted in me gaining greater skills, knowledge and understanding that I wanted to put to good use as head teacher. (Bush et al, 2005: 19)

> Another influence is my first head teacher. The school was incredibly racist, but the head challenged them, stood with me shoulder to shoulder. She supported me, and took on a bit of a mentoring role. She recognised something in me and said 'you will be a head'. (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010: 47)

> The headmistress was marvellous and was big in the NUT. I was inspired by her. She made me feel wanted. I thought this was how a head teacher should be. She was a big influence on me. (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010: 47)

The important function of role models with long years in the education field cannot be underestimated as they often bring with them valuable life experiences and insights that can help the aspiring BME teachers navigate many issues.

In addition to empowering allies, customised leadership programmes, when carefully designed and targeted, according to literature point to ways policy can be engineered to overcome many barriers. It must be noted however that it is not universally valued as it is seen as patronising, and one which may cause resentment with notions of affirmative action. Comments from some BME teachers in Bush et al's (2005) and Ogunbawo's (2012) studies attest to this view:

> We cannot say everybody is the same. Some of the NCSL programmes have modules dealing with strategies of empowerment. These need to address how to deal with diversity. Learn about black empowerment. There needs to be customising of the standard programme of leadership (Bush et al, 2005: 62)

> Why would I need customised leadership? …No positive discrimination is called for. (ibid: 62)

> Complementary sessions should be organised bringing together white and BME leaders. (ibid: 62)

> Curiosity and the desire to succeed were factors which motivated me to enrol for the EAP programme. What pearls of wisdom were going to be shared to further enlighten me? Why was this course specifically for BME teachers? Surely we should all be promoted and trained on an equal basis and not because of the colour of our skin. The cynic in me wanted to know if EAP actually deliver on its promises and makes a difference for the BME teacher and the learner in me was eager to learn and progress in my career. (Ogunbawo, 2012: 168)

Much more pertinent, as Bush et al (2007) note is the feeling amongst BME teachers that they should be seen first and foremost as effective leaders beneficial to all and not pigeonholed as black leaders attending to a narrow constituency.

Overcoming barriers through personal agency and resilience

In addition to or as an alternative to the customised leadership programmes is the view amongst many BME teachers that personal initiatives of gaining further

qualifications will serve as a means to gaining promotion. Findings from McNamara et al (2009) and Bush et al (2005) point to the fact that African teachers, most especially, place a high premium on gaining further qualifications principally as a means of overcoming many of the barriers faced as opposed to other BME subgroups. However, there seem to be a downside to this assumption as UK labour force investigations (see Lindley & Lenton, 2006) in wider literature into migrant employment found that black Africans were more likely to be over-educated in the labour market for various reasons including inability of employees to evaluate their foreign qualifications, perceived inferiority of their qualifications and downright discriminatory practices.

Whilst enablers such as support from colleagues can be seen as externally contingent, and customised programmes as externally mechanisms generated through policy initiatives, internally-generated ones like perseverance, determination, temperament and self-awareness are also evident in literature. Bush et al's (2007, 2005) studies note internal personal characteristics such as strong resilience, determination, courage and ambition as ways BME teachers have been able to overcome many barriers. And they often learn to choose to fight some battles, leaving some others in order to navigate their careers. A participant Bush et al's study said:

> There are no critical incidents as such but a series of minor ones that as a BME person you learn to live with otherwise you would be in a constant mode of challenging peoples' behaviour. You learn to let go of smaller things and try not to let it influence your outlook – the generalisations people make about you, the expectations people have of you, the way some people may treat you. You actually make this work for you, so anything you do you make sure you do to the best of your ability and cover every base so it cannot be criticised. Progression is not necessarily inhibited by things that happened to

> you but rather things that did not happen for you. (Bush et al, 2005: 26)

Probably, the subtle distinction between this and adopting a colour blind approach is that it is not entire possible to confront every questionable action or attitude and as such it does not necessarily mean that the BME teacher is oblivious – it is just that decisions are made on when to confront unfairness.

Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) speak of many BME leaders consciousness of their own agency, and expressed through desires to make an impact and improve the life chances of young people. Other self-generated mechanisms are religious faith and deeper altruism. Ellison and Levin's (1998) review of literature on religiosity and psychological well-being found that the practise of religious faith positively affect mental health outcomes and sense of purpose. Bush et al (2005), McKenley and Gordon (2002) provide evidence in support of this as they found that a significant number of BME teacher claim religious faith to be an important enabling strategy in maintaining their resilience in the face of challenging difficulties:

> For me my commitment to Christ at the age of 17 and growing up in a positive Christian environment, has given me focus to life and a clear vision and direction to lead and empower others. (Bush et al, 2005: 22)

> I was a 'born again' as a Christian in 1983. I felt God's hands upon my life and very much so when I came here as a deputy. I feel a powerful call to leadership and I have a passion to see these young women come through this school and make their mark. (McKenley & Gordon, 2002: 14)

However, whether religious or not, many BME teachers still point to deeper altruistic purpose in spite of the inhibiting conditions encountered in their daily

practice. This, according to Fullan (1993) is the moral purpose of making a difference in people's lives and bringing about improvement.

What however should be noted is that there are occasion when altruism can be taken to the extreme; such that it actually inhibits school leadership progress. One interviewee in McKenley and Gordon's study said:

> I declined offers to participate in secondments. I am not interested. My professional development has taken second place to the needs of the school. (McKenley & Gordon, 2002: 19)

This statement seems innocuous, but may actually suggest a sub-conscious tactic employed to compensate for the disappointment of career stagnation.

Closely related to altruism is the strong desire of BME teachers, as highlighted earlier in the discussion of issues relating to identity, to add the additionality of their ethnic heritage to their service to students and community (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; McNamara et al, 2009; McKenley & Gordon, 2002). In all, Bush et al (2007) observe that the weight of evidence about barriers to leadership progression for BME teachers leads to the hypothesis that those who succeed despite the barriers are 'exceptional people', rather than being representative. The exceptional features being determination, hard work and courage, drive, commitment and confidence, thorough preparation for leadership, resilience, respect for other cultures, building positive relationships and professionalism (meeting targets, dressing properly and eloquence). Bush et al (2007) note that most of these leaders have progressed despite many barriers rather than as a result of positive discrimination or any other systematic support; due to their determination, talents, professionalism and hard work.

Before concluding this section, it is important to highlight an aspect of the BME school leadership literature that warrants discussion for reasons that it serves as the one single measurement outcome from the effects of social inequality, discrimination, problems at both entry and establishment phases of the teaching profession, supportive allies and customised leadership programmes. Literature speaks of the altruism of many BME teachers, of their desire to add their rich cultural heritage in relation to professional practice, and of their service as role models to both students and colleagues, but the most important measurement of outcome is often in terms of hierarchical progression, stagnation or regression. This is not an exception as some literature (see Heslin, 2005; Hall, 2002; 1976) on organisational management and leadership have complained about the almost exclusive usage of salary, salary growth and promotions as the measurement of success, stagnation and regression in many professional and research periodicals. Reasons often cited are that data on these extrinsic measures are readily available from existing records and efficient to collect. The following section discusses briefly this as it also forms, implicitly or explicitly, part of BME school leadership discourse.

2.5 PROGRESSION MEASUREMENT DISCOURSE

Progression measurement

Introductory statements and intentions of research which make up most of the BME school leadership literature are essentially about the effects of barriers and enablers on the school leadership progression of BME teachers. School leadership progressions in many of these studies mean the extent to which BME teachers have attained hierarchical positions representative of demographics,

their skills and expertise. Osler (1997: 55) speaks of the "subjective experiences both of those teachers who encounter career blocks and of those who achieve senior management positions and 'career success". Bariso's (2001) argument on why the teaching profession is predominantly white is based on the effects of race, external and internal exclusion practices on hierarchical career progression. McKenley and Gordon (2002) speak of delivering a small scale appreciative inquiry designed to assist the National College of School Leadership increase participation from BME teachers in senior leadership positions. They highlight the benefits of their appreciative inquiry approach in affirming the pioneering achievement of BME teachers becoming heads and what it means to them personally and professionally.

From Powney et al's (2003) survey, measurement of school leadership success is in terms of who gets promoted, and with gender and ethnicity playing a major role; significantly more males than females hold senior management or promoted posts. In terms of ethnicity, their study claims that in some circumstances being black or black and female is perceived as a possible career advantage, even though over half the BME respondents are classroom teachers compared to 29 per cent and 35 per cent respectively of white males and females. The overview of Bush et al's (2005) study, and subsequent papers that emerged (i.e., Bush et al, 2007; Bush and Moloi, 2008) from it is that BME teachers are much less likely to be promoted to leadership positions than white teachers, and family and community attitudes to teaching influence whether BME people embark on a teaching career and or seek promotion. Bush et al's (2007: 289) make clear its main purpose for research is to 'examine and present evidence on

the extent and nature of the problems experienced by black and minority ethnic leaders and ways in which the participants have been able to overcome the barriers and progress to senior or middle leadership positions'.

Mackey and Etienne (2006) notice that participants in their study all aspired to progress as managers, senior managers and in two cases, to become vice-principals, in addition they want to proactively pursue personal professional goals. These researchers however complain that that the traditional view of career outcomes in research and practice, with planned and sequenced upwards movement within organizations and or within occupational groupings, needs to be are being redefined such that every employee development can be seen as a career enhancing experience.

McNamara et al (2009) conclude that BME teachers are as ambitious and committed to their jobs and careers than other teachers; nevertheless they are not confident that they are treated fairly when they apply for promotion or headship. Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) evaluate the perceptions of career progress by illustrating how thirteen BME school leaders have reached their senior positions even with many barriers, with the progression framework stages of preparation, establishment, advancement or development and acquisition and performance. Ogunbawo (2012), on the usefulness of customised leadership programs, foregrounds the underrepresentation of BME teachers in leadership positions in relation to student demographics. Carrington et al (2001), Powney et al (2003), and Wilkins and Lall (2011) and others, in voicing concern over the under-representation of ethnic minorities in teaching

in England and Wales, speak of the relative lack of opportunities for career advancement, senior leadership positions and their disproportionate concentration at lower pay scales of the profession.

In effect then, the attainment of hierarchical position is the foremost and direct measurement of the school leadership progression, stagnation or regression of BME teachers. Any other forms of measure are not evident in the BME school leadership literature.

Recommendations

Recommendations from literature are geared towards addressing the underrepresentation of BME school teacher, and eliminating barriers to hierarchical progression. Ogunbawo (2012) cautions towards prudence in delivering customised leadership programs so that they retain the same status as the mainstream courses and calls for a positive approach in re-examination of the curriculum content of leadership preparation programmes to ensure that key topics are included that assist school leaders in developing the reflective consciousness, knowledge and skills sets required to lead on issues of social justice. Wilkins and Lall (2011), in relation to entrant BME teachers call for initial training providers to design programme contents that add the value to the distinctive contribution of BME teachers, and for schools to provide a strong framework of inclusion and equality for BME student teachers. They recommend providers ensure BME students are exposed to the same range of professional development opportunities as White peers, the need to ensure programme content fully values the distinctive contribution BME teachers can

bring to the profession without narrowing the scope of their expertise to that of 'professional ethnic', and that if the increase in numbers of BME teachers is to be maintained, the profession must not only focus on recruitment, but on eliminating the disparities in completion, retention and progression rates.

In concluding that the levels of discrimination are endemic in the school system, McNamara et al (2009) call for investigations into the complex ways in which such institutionalised discrimination militates against the career progression of BME teachers, and requested for the systematic monitoring of recruitment, retention and disaggregated of BME teachers at all levels in the workforce to aid effective strategic planning of career paths and progression. Amongst other things, Bush et al (2005) emphasized the need for local education authorities and governing bodies to review their appointment procedures, panel composition and criteria for ensuring non-discriminatory practices against BME-heritaged applicants. McKenley and Gordon (2002) suggest that assistance to aspiring BME school leaders should include amongst other things, provision of early career opportunities to shadow school leaders, more opportunities for young teachers to spend time with heads who share their cultural and ethnic experience, and use a wider range of sources than just LEA link advisers to identify potential school leaders from BME backgrounds earlier in their careers. Bariso (2001) lists improvement in practical policies on race relation, gender and equity, and monitoring of such policies as a way to address the shortage of BME teachers in leadership positions. He calls on the Government, funding bodies and accrediting agencies to ensure that the teaching profession is fair in widening representation and participation of BME people. Carrington et al (2001) call for

increase resources for recruitment of BME individuals, expansion of initial teacher training provision at institutions with good track record of attracting BME trainees and attention to equity, social justice and citizenship issues.

2.6 DISCUSSION

Structure – in form of historic legacies of social models and contemporary multiculturalism

Structure can be seen as the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available (Baker, 2005: 448), and this patterned arrangement may be material in character, or in terms of norms, customs, traditions, ideologies or practices. The discourse in the BME school leadership literature essentially centres on three main areas. The first is on the historic legacies of social models, such as assimilation and integration, in response to Britain's changing demographics in relation to the school environment, as researchers such as Arora (2005), Graham (2001), Joppke (1999), Osler (1997), Gillborn (1990) and Mullard (1982) see this as limiting structures in that imposed within the school environment a Eurocentric curriculum, categorised ethnic minority children as 'special needs' and educationally inferior, thereby channelling them into non-academic areas, and classified BME teachers as professionally ethnic, thereby limited their professional opportunities to matters that where predominantly ethnic.

The contemporary social model of multiculturalism, since its inception, is also seen as form of structure limiting the opportunities of BME students and teachers. More than three decades ago, Dhondy (1978) argued that since it has

been taken over by the state, multiculturalism has in effect become a defensive strategy meant to protect the interest of the capitalist ruling class from potential BME resistance. Mullard (1982: 131), in similar vein, argued that 'as interpreted and practised by many, multicultural education has appeared to become an instrument of control and of maintaining stability rather than one of change, and of subordination rather than the freedom of blacks in schools and or society as a whole'.

Others see multiculturalism not as a structural instrument of control, but of disintegration of a once cohesive and homogenous social structure that has worked for centuries. In the mid-eighties, Scruton, a conservative, rejected the claim for a multicultural curriculum; arguing that the meaning and expression of multicultural education was vacuous because it fails to transmit either the common culture of Britain or high culture that has grown from it. He observed that since no other culture is put in the place, 'the result is nothing more than a void, existing in the child's consciousness' (Scruton, 1986: 134). Scruton's objection still resonates with current criticisms of the way multiculturalism have been misappropriated within the BME community, resulting in a form of structure that have 'ghettoized' groups into enclaves restrictive to cultural, social and professional mobility. The most widely publicised critique comes from Trevor Phillips, a BME-heritage chairperson for the then CRE (now the Equality and Human Rights Commission), who expresses the opinion that:

> Multiculturalism is out of date and no longer useful, not least because it encourages separateness between communities. ...We need to assert there is a core of Britishness. ...we are now in a different world from the Sixties and Seventies. ...what we should be talking about is how we reach an integrated society, one in which

> people are equal under the law, where there are some common values. (Balwin & Rozenberg, *Timesonline.com*: 03.04.04)

This critique became more poignant in the aftermath of the devastating impact of the 7th and 21st July, 2005 terrorist bombing in London. John Sentamu, the first member of an African community to be appointed Anglican Archbishop of York, stated:

> Multiculturalism has seemed to imply, wrongly for me, let other cultures be allowed to express themselves but do not let the majority culture at all tell us its glories, its struggles, its joys, its pains' (Gledhill, *Timesonline.com*: 22.11.05).

In conclusion therefore, what seem to emerge in this discourse is that the historic legacies of various social models is a structure that have limited the opportunities of BME teachers and students, and that whilst the emergence of the multicultural model have resulted in challenges to the status quo in form of strong advocacy for equal respect of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions within the society, and policies and practices to reflect this diversity in professions, not least teaching, it nevertheless have become a form of structure discouraging to the type of integration needed to foster greater social and career mobility of migrants – not least those who wished to enter the teaching profession.

Structure – in form of the aggregated actions, behaviours and attitudes of individuals

Structure as a recurrent patterned arrangements influencing or limiting choices and opportunities available can be in form of the consistent and aggregated actions, behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of a group against another. The second discourse on discrimination falls into this in that it relates to the disproportionate allocation, overtly or covertly, of negative evaluations from a dominant group to

a minoritised group. In a contemporary multicultural society and within the school environment, the practice of discrimination emerges out of the implicit or explicit challenge of expectation and reality of minoritised individuals making up the diverse range of those who seek leadership positions assumed to be beneficial to everyone and organisations. The nature of the discriminatory force as a structure is multifaceted. It is the tendency of the most dominant group applying stereotypes and negatively judging people on the basis of difference. It is the maintenance of gatekeepers from same group and their control of who gets promotional opportunities, and as Bush et al (2005: 5) point out – the composition of selection panels and employment policies make 'BME candidates unable to secure professional post because upward expectations are met by downward social movement'.

It is attempts at eliminating or smoothening difference rather than appreciate it for its intrinsic worth – linked is the colour-blind approach which assumes that by ignoring differences and not taking account of areas that are the causes of discriminatory practices, judgements on who benefits must be based on merit and nothing else. It is the extent to which the most dominant group see customised leadership programmes as 'positive discrimination' in a negative sense. It is the extent to which cognizance is not given to the intersecting factors affecting minoritised groups. It is the extent to which BME teachers are not recognised for their effort and are subjected to high levels of scrutiny that are otherwise not applied to their white counterparts. All of these actions, behaviours and attitudes serve as recurrent patterned arrangements, the structure, which modulate how and where resources are

to be allocated and guide subsequent decisions and behaviours of the dominant group at the expense of minoritised group.

Structure – in the form of school policies, practices and culture

On the third discourse, the general contention is that the proportion of BME teachers and those in leadership should reflect the student population demographics and a multicultural society that espouses equality of opportunity. Ogunbawo's (2012) presentation of statistics from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009) shows that despite the increase in BME teachers by 24.5 per cent in primary school sector, and 20.6 per cent in the secondary school sector, it still represented about 5.1 per cent of teacher workforce in England and Wales, compared to BME student ratio of about 24 per cent. Reasons for underrepresentation are multifaceted – from issues BME perceptions, inequality and discrimination to policy inadequacies at both entry and establishment stages in the teaching profession, all serving as systemic structures working against BME teachers and individuals

At the entry phase, some well qualified BME graduates have misgivings about the low status, rewards and workload in the teaching profession. The average age of many BME student teachers is significantly higher – and were established in other careers before entering teacher training, so the tendency of seeking part-time positions during training limits their ability to complete their teacher training course. Family commitment of the much older BME teaching recruits serves as a familial structure limiting mobility in that they try to seek training near home, resulting in the over-subscription of places. Taking these factors into

account, those who eventually enter teacher training institutions face additional huddles in terms of their disproportionate failure rate. Wilkins and Lall (2011) link this to the structural imbalance between the BME *student teacher* on the one hand, and the *university* offering the training programme and the *placement school* were 'performance of teaching' is practiced and assessed, on the other.

In the establishment stage, the concentration of many BME teachers in urban areas with larger proportion of ethnic minorities result in the double disadvantage of being crowded out of the limited opportunities available and the opportunity cost of not seeking career advancement in non-urban areas. On this latter point, literature points to direct and vicarious experiences of discrimination which accounts for anxiety about the possible reception in predominantly white schools and hesitancy in taking up career opportunities outside certain geographical areas. Further still, reinforcements of social inequality and discrimination is exemplified by particular school culture – how people treat and value one another in a professional and personal sense, and consensus about what is important. Lumby (2012) makes the point that culture can be seen as the net effect of visible and invisible rules shaping the choice options for thought and action, so remains a powerful sculptor for achievement and failure.

By implication, the dominant culture is likely to be working in each school in favour of some, to the disadvantage of others – in other words, culture is implicated in the modulation of power enacted through overt coercion and or mandated authority, or covertly through processes and agency that shape what can be thought, discussed, disputed and resisted. It is this modulation of power

at the expense of minoritised groups such as BME teachers that forms a powerful inhibiting structure working against their school leadership advancement.

Agency and navigation of careers

As discussed in the introductory chapter, agency is 'an individual's ability to pursue own conceived school leadership role; and an action or intervention to produce a particular result' (Day el at, 2006: 48). And the strength of agency is a critical factor in that it relates to the causal relationship between the intention of an aspirant and a behaviour that will result in the successful attainment of the object. Another way of seeing agency strength is that it is linked to the awareness of what and how to fulfil course of action or intervention to produce a particular result (Sosa, 2001, in Day et al, 2006). The BME school leadership literature cite the non-passivity of BME teachers, with the activity utilisation of supportive colleagues and head teachers to instrumentally enhance their career. However contentious customised leadership programmes are, a significant number of BME teachers use them, and together with many BME teachers placing a high premium on additional qualifications, these two enablers are used as a way to circumvent many barriers and gain promotion. Whilst these enablers can be seen as externally contingent mechanisms, the BME school leadership literature points (although with less emphasis) to the self-generated enablers of BME teachers such as perseverance, faith, altruism, temperament and self-awareness used to reinforce their agency in overcoming barriers. In most cases, they learn to choose their battles, with the fortitude to navigate through many testing situations for longer term goals.

Focus of study

At the core of all three BME school leadership discourses is that inherent inequality, various forms of discrimination, and policy and practice problems at both entry and established stages, on aggregate serve as structural forces militating against the leadership progression of BME teachers. In adding to this discourse, the attention in this study is not to explore these again, but some mediating factors, shaped by personal life history, belief, value, and influence of the present school environment, that serve as inhibitor or facilitators to the school leadership progression of a group of BME teachers. The first mediating factor relates to the intersection of objective and subjective leadership goals, and how this frames their perceptions of school leadership progression or stagnation. The second relates to the intersection of personal, professional and situated factors, shaped by life history, values, beliefs and workplace reactions, and the effect on the realisation of their school leadership aspirations. The third examines the intersection of structure in the form of school culture and personal agency of these group of BME teachers, and the effect of the realisation of their school leadership aspirations. This thesis therefore examines the extent to which a group of BME teachers have managed these mediating factors in relation to the realisation of their school leadership aspirations.

Theoretically, the research questions relating to these three focus areas are shaped by the *expectancy-value* formulations introduced in Chapter 1. The working definition of aspiration was given as the motive and incentive value attached to an object, moderated by expectation surrounding its attainment. So the research question attending to the first mediating factor is essentially about the *value*

component of aspiration. It asks *what school leadership roles BME teachers conceive for themselves, and what the perceptions of school leadership success are.* The very notion of how the individual BME teacher sees his or her leadership role, why they conceive of themselves this way, and the extent to which this is perceived as leadership success or failure, seem fundamental to personal agency, and as was highlighted in the introductory chapter, agency can be seen as an individual's ability to pursue own aspirations; and an action or intervention to produce a particular result (Day el at, 2006).

The second research question deals with the *expectancy* component of aspiration as the focus is on the second mediating factor of the intersecting personal, professional and situated factors that affect agency and the realisation of school leadership aspirations. It asks what *the nature of personal, professional and situated factors facilitating or inhibiting is in the attainment of the school leadership aspiration of a group of BME teachers.* Likewise, the third research question linking to the third focus area also relates to the expectation component of aspiration. It asks what is *the nature of the dynamic relationships between personal agency, and workplace cultures and structures, and how does it affect the group of BME teachers in their quest to achieve their school leadership aspirations.*

In summary then, this study is about the nature of the school leadership aspirations of a group of BME teachers, which essentially looks at why they aspire towards certain leadership areas (subjective value) and mediating forces, in terms of intersecting formations, i.e., some mediating factors working for or against their realisation (expectation).

Finally, this thesis also falls into one of Bush et al's (2005: 72) research recommendations to conduct 'research with BME teachers to establish their leadership aspirations and their experience in seeking to advance their

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

General outline

In light of what has been discussed in the last two chapters, this chapter begins in this section with the title, 'Ways of knowing', comparing two traditional philosophical perspectives; and the reasons why one of the two and hermeneutics underpins the research methodology of this study are discussed. Against this backdrop, use of narrative and case examples as the most appropriate methodological approach to unearth the subject of interest is discussed. Following this, further discussions are undertaken in three sections on methodology issues of research design and data collection, validity and reliability, and a pilot testing the viability of the research design and strategy, and the ethical issues encountered during the entire research. The chapter concludes with a summary of discussion and what is to be expected in the next two chapters.

Ways of knowing

It has long been argued and generally recognised in the research community that there are different ways of knowing. Given the successes of natural sciences in the nineteenth century, many sought to adopt its method to the study of the

social world on the assumption that if social inquiry were to achieve the explanatory and predictive power of the natural sciences, it could help solve vexing social problems. Its epistemological[7] assumption rests on empiricism, which maintains that knowledge of the social world must be grounded on experience and observation with the sole purpose of producing causal laws of its nature. The ontological[8] root to this approach can be traced to the philosophical contentions of Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) who maintained that the conduct and perspective of the social sciences must be in the same way as that of the natural sciences:

> Now that the human mind has founded astronomy, and terrestrial physics, both mechanical and chemical – and organic physics, both botanical and biological – it remains to finalise the system of the sciences by founding social physics. Such is, in several capital respects, the greatest and the most pressing intellectual need today. (Comte, 1896: 21)

He thus essentially argued that all theories that are incapable of being verified empirically must be purged from scientific explanations and conduct.

An alternative worldview, drawing on what they believe is the true nature of the social maintains that the aim of social inquiry should be to enhance understanding and provide *meaning* of social phenomenon, rather than produce causal laws explaining uniformities of social phenomenon. Gorton (2010) illustrates what this *meaning* is about with an example on voting. A population votes for a particular proposal, and this act entails more than statistical numbers; it extends to what the voting means to that population. It is a type of meaning

[7] A Philosophical study of the nature and scope of knowledge, so it deals with questions such as what knowledge and how says social reality is to be acquired.
[8] A philosophical study of what reality is; so it deals with questions such as whether the 'social' is an external or internal reality, or a combination of both.

markedly different from the one ascribed to the natural world – which are not created or constituted by the meanings that humans attribute to them, for they and the laws that govern them exist independent of our beliefs. In the social world, what constitutes voting is created and governed by the *beliefs* and *values* that we hold about it, and it is this *meaning* that the alternative worldview say is the purpose of the social sciences. And there are various advocates of this, from descriptivism, hermeneutics, critical theory, to postmodernists.

Hermeneutics

Palmer (1969) gives a comprehensive analysis of hermeneutics and it begins with the understanding that it is the process of interpretation, and entails both manifest and latent meaning. Two schools of thought primarily influenced hermeneutics – the Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Wilhelm Dilthey School, which see hermeneutics in epistemological terms, and Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer School, which see it in ontological terms. For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics aims to understand oral as well as the written language through a *systematic* interpretation involving grammatical inferences from actual use of actor's (i.e., respondent) words and psychological inferences from the distinctiveness of the actor. For Schleiermacher, the importance of the interpreter understanding the text (i.e., narrative) as a necessary stage to interpreting it, does not simply come from reading the text, but involves knowledge of the historical context of the text and the psychology of the author. Similarly for Dilthey, hermeneutics is about gaining *objectively* valid understanding and interpretations of another person's inner life through one's own lived experiences, social and historical context.

Under the influence of Heidegger, hermeneutics moves into the philosophical exercise of the *existential* understanding of human life itself. In this respect, Heidegger describes the hermeneutic circle where a social phenomenon first presented in a nebulous unstructured form is combined with past knowledge and experience (i.e., forestructures) to create an enlightened understanding of the phenomenon. Gadamer (1960) builds on this by suggesting that understanding could emerge only through 'fusion of horizon'. In this, the actor (i.e., research participant) self-interpret experiences; thereby engaging in a process to understand what is important and real with respect to the phenomenon. The researcher brings his or her own meaning based on personal forestructures to the phenomenon, and what emerges are hermeneutic interpretations. In the case of this study, aspirants self-interpret the nature of their own school leadership aspirations and conditions, and consistent with the hermeneutic tradition, my importance as a BME insider researcher is in my shared experience also (foreclosure) as a BME-heritaged teacher.

3.2 METHODOLOGY – NARRATIVE AND CASE EXAMPLES

Narrative as the analytical approach

This research adopts a narrative approach, as the story that each participant has to tell is presented in such a way that it is true to the original data. The objective is to present a picture of the actor, the individual aspirant, for the inquirer and reader to assimilate and engage with – to tell their story that they themselves have expressed such that it is inherently informative and valuable. A particular form of narrative, amongst at least three basic types, is chosen for this study. According to Riessman and Quinney (2005), the question and answer format is

generally found amongst sociolinguistic scholars as narratives are presented in discrete units of discourse, with an answer to a single question, topically-centred and temporally-organized. At the other end of the spectrum are narratives amongst social historian and anthropologists, with entire life histories, woven from threads of interviews, observations and documents, forming a story.

In between the discrete question-answer and non-discrete question-life story formats, are narratives from the psychology and sociology tradition, where the story encompasses sections, and extended account of lives in context, developed over the course of single or multiple interviews. In this narrative form, the discrete story that is the unit of analysis in sociolinguistics gives way to an evolving series of stories that are framed in and through interaction with the inquirer. This is the form adopted here – life histories, located at particular episodes, values and beliefs shaped by past and present experiences, and reactions to what is happening in the school environment, presented as case examples in five evolving series representing the five research areas stipulated in the first chapter, with the aim of answering the three basic research questions. Narratives in this form can be held out as stories alone, because they have intrinsic value in providing insight into issues relating to individual aspirations. It moves beyond this though as it also provide instrumental value to meaning and interpretation of research questions.

Meaning and interpretation: which position?

Polkinghorne (2007) observes that the general purpose of an interpretative or hermeneutical analysis of storied texts is to deepen understanding of the

meaning conveyed. It is not simply a précis of a storied text, but a commentary which emerges from the recognition of patterns, similarities and contrast, to uncover and clarify meaning and implication attached to the story. To achieve this, two different positions, according to Schwandt (2000), can be adopted – in the first, the interpreter who is the inquirer transcends his or her own historical circumstances in order to reproduce the meaning or intention of the originator of the story – in the second position, the interpreter cannot transcend their own historical and situated embeddedness, so that the textual interpretations are always perspectival. I take the second position in that the aspirants who share with me their stories are themselves BME individuals, having both unique and collective experiences – and this links directly to Gadamer's (1960) hermeneutical philosophy that understanding could emerge through 'fusion of horizon'. In this regard, research participants self-interpret their experiences, thereby engaging in a process to understand what is important and real with respect to their school leadership aspirations. In turn, I as the researcher bring my own meaning based on personal forestructures to this topic, and what emerges are hermeneutic interpretations.

Case example rather than case study

In this study, narratives are presented as case examples rather than case studies. Reasons for reside in the precise definition and meaning of case study. Yin (2009: 18) defines case study as empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, and especially when, the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. Creswell (2009) defines case study as research into a particular person, group, or

situation, the *individual unit*, over a sustained period of time. Another definition cited in Flyvbjerg's (2011) analysis of case study, which is useful here is that it is an *intensive* analysis of an *individual unit* stressing *developmental factors* in relation to *environment*. Accordingly, case study as *intensive* analysis means detail, richness, completeness and variance (depth), with the *individual unit* meaning 'any individual persons, organisations, communities, or societies' (Stoecker, 1991: 88), which may be studied in a number of ways, qualitatively, quantitatively or by mixed methods, over time, and often as a string of concrete and interrelated events, the *developmental factors*, that is situated and in context, i.e., in *relation to environment*.

For this study, the *individual unit* are participants, their narrated experiences and perceptions about their aspirations; and although interviews and discussions continued throughout the course of this research, there is no claim that this individual unit have been investigated over a sustained period of time, as data was collected at specific periods in time. In this regard, the case example rather than case study is a safer claim to make in that an 'example' signifies 'one of a number of things taken to show the character of the whole' (*Dictionary.com*). With respect then to this study, the 'number of things' are the specific verbal responses, the narratives, of an individual participant shaped by personal life history, belief, value, and influence of the present school environment with regards to school leadership aspirations. The 'whole' in this regard entails the research focus of this thesis – an investigation into the nature of the school leadership aspirations of a group of BME teachers. The case examples presented in this study is taken to show the character of the nature of aspirations.

3.3 METHODOLOGY – SAMPLE, DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

Sampling criteria, type, size and research participants.

Sampling criteria is a list of characteristics determined beforehand and essential to the purpose of this study and therefore maximising data richness. They were the first criterion and at least one from the second and third:

- Subjects are African-, Caribbean- and British- born black or south-Asians;
- Subjects are at various leadership levels in their profession (e.g., key stage coordinators, department or year heads, senior portfolio holders);
- Subjects have completed, currently attending or intending to attend a career-enhancement course, lasting a significant amount of time.

The sampling in this study is not probabilistic, so does not represent a cross-section of the larger population of BME teachers, but it is purposeful in that it uncovers features specific to the subject of interest (Ritchie et al, 2003). It utilised snowball non-probability sampling as initial contacts with three BME teachers from three different schools during a professional training course resulted in the participation of nine others introduced by the three BME teachers. Since they met the sampling criteria, they were contacted via a letter and then a face-to-face meeting where I introduced myself and the research – two subsequently pulled out for a variety of reasons.

In determining the adequacy of sample size, it is ultimately a matter of personal judgment and experience in evaluating information quality against the uses to which it will be put (Sandelowski, 1995), and in this regard a sample size of ten participants was chosen for reasons of data quality, and not quantity. Thus, in ten participants (with their anonymized names) interviewed for the main study, seven teach in London – Adama, Dwain, Omono, Rox and Tami in a

comprehensive mixed School X, and Kathy and Rod in comprehensive School Y for boys. The other three participants, Bodun, Kuban and Lavesh teach in Essex, in a mixed comprehensive School Z. In addition to this, three colleagues from my school where involved in the pilot as they provided valuable feedback that improved the research instrument.

Illustrated research design and method of data analysis

Research designs are procedures for collecting, analysing and reporting data in research studies (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007), and the one illustrated, with four stages, in Figure 3.1 serves this purpose into written text. In the first stage,

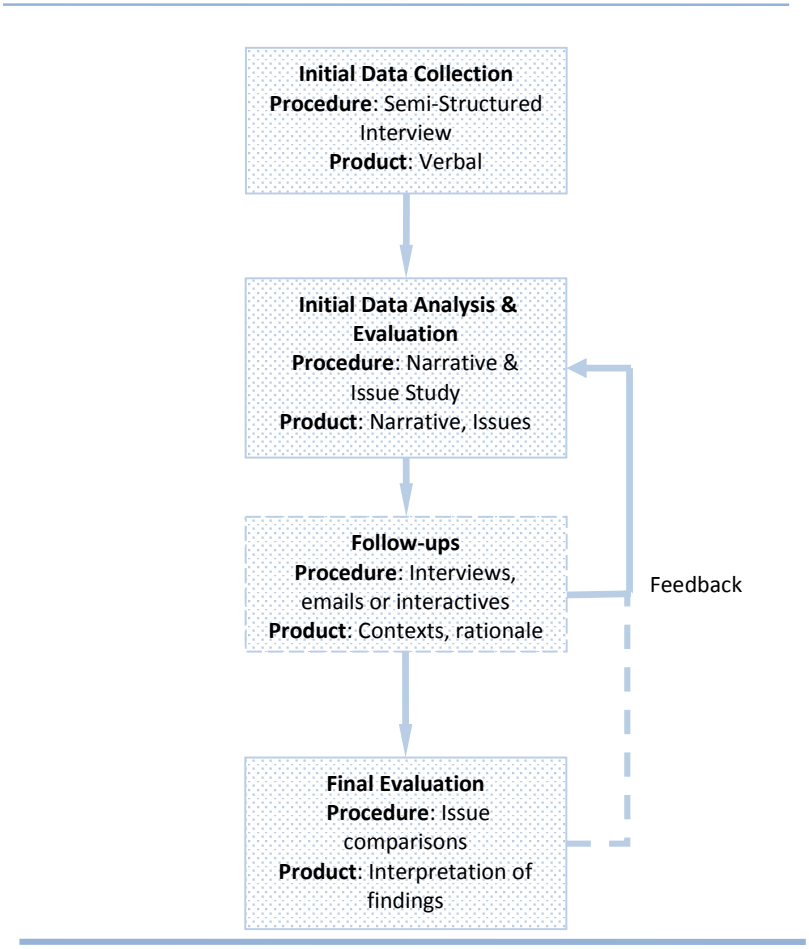

Figure 3.1 Illustration of research design

semi-structured interviews were used to elicit verbal responses from ten research participants; and this was recorded in audio and then subsequently transcribed in their entirety. Interview was not conducted in the schools of participants for a variety of reason (discussed in the ethics section of this chapter), but at weekends and in the most convenient place chosen by participants – local library and at their homes. In this initial data collection stage, to ensure consistency, interview questions[9] facilitating the three research questions were asked as this provided the advantage of addressing specifically the research questions, whilst ensuring a degree of flexibility in allowing for the freedom to discuss other issues that participants felt important.

In the second stage, initial data analysis and evaluation was undertaken and this subsequently informed the type follow-up interviews and discussions in the third stage of final evaluation that clarified particular points and resolve contradictions. The iterative process between the stages of initial analysis, follow-ups, and final evaluation continued during the entire research, and this was done against the five routes of i) contextual background of participants; ii) conception of school leadership and type or area of aspiration; iii) sustaining factors of and reasons for such aspiration; iv) extent to which confidence is felt about the attainability of such leadership aspiration, and factors responsible this confidence and; v) extent to which school culture and structure is seen to facilitate or inhibit the attainability of school leadership aspirations. The task during this iterative process involved reading and rereading each participant's

[9] This must not be confused with the central research questions posed in Chapter 1. They were the set of questions asked during the interview. See Appendix 1

narratives and checking whether interview questions relating to any part of the five research route were answered, and if not, follow-up discussions with participants were undertaken. The rereading of transcribed interviews and the listening of audio interviews after transcription ensured greater understanding of the meaning attached to each responses – but when it was not the case, follow-up discussions provided the opportunity to improve understanding. The second task in tandem with the first was to create a matrix listing the five research routes against all participants, and then identifying key statements, issues and quotations from narratives in response to interview questions linked to the five research routes, as illustrated in Table 3.1 (see also Table 4.1 and Table 5.1).

Table 3.1 Format used in the analysis and evaluation of transcribed verbal data

Participant	Contextual Background	Subjective value (motive and incentive) component		Expectation component of aspiration		**Case Example**
		Conception of roles	Factors sustaining success perception	Confidence towards role attainment	Role of school culture & Structure	
Tami	*Unit 1.1*	*Unit 1.2*	*Unit 1.3*	*Unit 1.4*	*Unit 1.5*	One
Rod	*Unit 2.1*	*Unit 2.2*	*Unit 2.3*	*Unit 2.4*	*Unit 2.5*	Two
Omono	*Unit 3.1*	*Unit 3.2*	*Unit 3.3*	*Unit 3.4*	*Unit 3.5*	Three
Kathy	*Unit 4.1*	*Unit 4.2*	*Unit 4.3*	*Unit 4.4*	*Unit 4.5*	Four
Kuban	*Unit 5.1*	*Unit 5.2*	*Unit 5.3*	*Unit 5.4*	*Unit 5.5*	Five
Adama	*Unit 6.1*	*Unit 6.2*	*Unit 6.3*	*Unit 6.4*	*Unit 6.5*	Six
Dwain	*Unit 7.1*	*Unit 7.2*	*Unit 7.3*	*Unit 7.4*	*Unit 7.5*	Seven
Rox	*Unit 8.1*	*Unit 8.2*	*Unit 8.3*	*Unit 8.4*	*Unit 8.5*	Eight
Bodun	*Unit 9.1*	*Unit 9.2*	*Unit 9.3*	*Unit 9.4*	*Unit 9.5*	Nine
Lavesh	*Unit 10.1*	*Unit 10.2*	*Unit 10.3*	*Unit 10.4*	*Unit 10.5*	Ten
	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	**Evaluate**

In this table, participants are placed vertically and their narratives represented by key points raised, emphasis made, and quotations reinforcing emphasis or key points, were placed horizontally in five sections corresponding to the five research routes, called Section 1.1, Section 1.2, Section1.3, Section 1.4 and Section 1.5. This process is repeated for all other nine participants, with their designated sections as shown in the table. Joined together, they form the

individual and complete narratives of each ten BME teacher, the 'Case Example', presented in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively. For example, for Tami, sub-sections 1.1 to 1.5, combined together, serve as a case example characteristic to the nature of her school leadership aspiration.

Evaluation of individual narratives with respect to each other was carried out vertically by making comparisons between *contextual backgrounds*, i.e., sub-section 1.1 to sub-section 10.1. This process was repeated for the research route of *conception of roles*, i.e., sub-sections 1.2 to 10.2, and right up to the fifth research route of *role of school culture and structure in facilitating or inhibiting the attainability of individual school leadership aspirations*, i.e., sub-sections 1.5 to 10.5. The comparisons consist of identifying similarities and differences in participants' narratives and meanings attached to them, and underpinned by literature – this is what is presented in Chapter 6.

In concluding this description on how data was analysed, it must be acknowledged that a full embodied experience of the analysis and evaluation process is not necessarily in its entirety principally because of my own subjective experiences during this endeavour is not confined to this rational, stepwise process. This subjective experience as a member of the BME group (the implication of this is discussed in Chapter 7) and a mutual understanding between participants' self-interpretation of their experiences, of what is important and real with respect to their school leadership aspirations, and what I as the researcher bring to this study, based on my personal forestructures of this topic also shape interpretations of data.

3.4 METHODOLOGY – VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity of narrative inquiry

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), validity refers to the degree to which a research instrument measures what it is designed to measure or solicits the response it is intended to address, and by implication from constant errors (i.e., response and instrument bias). With reference to narrative study, a useful analysis of the nature of its validity is provided by Polkinghorne (2007), and it begins with what he refers to as the *believability* of a knowledge claim – that validity is not necessarily inherent in a claim but a characteristic given to a claim by the community to whom the claim is addressed. In some instances, it is granted simply because of the authority of the person who makes it, and in other instances, it is based on the *weight of the evidence* and *argument* offered in support of the knowledge claim. From this standpoint, a knowledge claim is not intrinsically valid, but rather its validity is a function of intersubjective judgment – a consensus within a community about the weight of evidence and argument. For narratives, evidence is gathered not to determine if events actually happened to the nth degree of accuracy, but for meaning experienced by people about the event, and the "truths" sought are "narrative truths," not necessarily "historical truths" (Spence, 1982).

They are, according to Polkinghorne, evidence for personal meaning found in stories, not for the factual occurrence of the events reported in the stories – personal meanings in stories are responses to life events, whose descriptions need not be discounted wholesale as they serve as the best evidence available to the investigator about the realm of research participant's experience.

Polkinghorne (2007) rightly advises that one must guard against the threat of the differences in experienced meaning, stories told about this meaning, and interpretations of the stories. This disjoint he says, has four sources: limits of language to capture the complexity and depth of experienced meaning; limits of reflection to bring notice to layers of meaning present outside awareness; resistance to revealing what is truly felt for desirability reasons; and complexity caused by the fact that texts or narratives are often a co-creation of originator and inquirer. Given these circumstances, the general advice he gives is that the inquirer should not argue for a level of validity beyond that which is possible to conclude from, in the type of evidence or data gathered about the subject of interest. On the basis of these general commentary of limitations of making claims of validity, certain guidelines followed are:

- Carefully attend to the unexpected and unusual responses, as they can assist in ensuring that the participant's own voice is heard – they are the only ones who have access to their experienced meaning.

- Adopt the iterative process of returning to participants to gain clarification and further exploration of questions that arise as their narratives are interpreted – it means allowing participants to check texts on whether descriptions capture the essential features of what they mean, and if it does not, they can make alterations or expansions where necessary.

- Present the ensemble stories so as not to distort participants' meaning – this also means to provide progression of evidence in form of quotations from the collected text, and implicitly or explicitly defend the appropriateness of meaning attributed to text phrases by providing the context they were made.

- If possible or where necessary, provide explanations of why other interpretations are not as adequate as the presented interpretative claims – but one need not assert that the interpretation proposed therein is the only one possible, but a viable interpretation grounded in the assembled texts.

Concomitant with validity are issues of reliability, and as there are various interpretations of what it means, the following arguments inform this research.

Reliability of narrative inquiry

Reliability, according to Bryman (2008: 31) is the extent to which the 'measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences are consistent'. It is the degree to which findings can be replicated, with the same methods, and arrive at same results, and according to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the replication of findings, with the same methods indicates that data must be independent of random factors such as participant's mood, weather conditions, or testing situations. In effect then, reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results. In the present context, one cannot necessarily get the same responses from consistently applied interview protocol and technique, particularly as interviewee conditions and environment vary over time. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 316) state that, 'since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]'. Silverman (2006: 280) makes the same point by saying that reliability is inherent in a work that 'becomes scientific by adopting methods of the study appropriate to its subject matter'. On the basis of these statements, reliability, within the context of this study is about the methodology – whether, and how and to what extent methods and procedures have been consistently utilised or applied.

In this study therefore, the research design, data collection, analysis and evaluation method, and measures to ensure a level of validity, have all been employed consistently, and in addition, interviews were conducted in locations most convenient to the interviewees to minimise variable errors resulting from student and or potential interruptions. Further, a pilot was undertaken to

evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed research method and instruments (van Teijlingen & Hindley, 2001) – this is now discussed in the following section.

3.5 METHODOLOGY – PILOT AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Dead ends

Prior to the pilot, the intention was to conduct a larger survey with a quantitative questionnaire. But preliminary administration of the instrument soon showed that it was patently inadequate at producing the type of data needed in addressing research questions. With the belief that some form of quantitative data is needed, two separate instruments – a quantitative questionnaire and semi-structured interview, with the view that it must be a mixed-method study, were devised. The quantitative instrument (see Appendix 2: 255) was designed with a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the strength of individual aspirations. After some trial administration the decision not to proceed further with it was based on the issue of validity – whether it is reasonable to infer the strength of aspirations from such instrument. As a result, the need to adopt the narrative approach began to inform and shape this research.

Development of semi-structured qualitative instrument

A semi-structured interview was deemed the most appropriate way to collect the qualitative data, and after incremental improvements from trials, it was administered in the pilot. The first part improved upon after piloting was to introduce some preliminary interview questions relating to aspirant's background. The second part improved upon were a second set of interview questions dealing with expectation – during the pilot, interview questions were:

- to what extent is your organisation supporting your school leadership aspiration;
- does your organisation have the capacity for you to fulfil your school leadership aspiration;
- what time frame are you looking at, in terms of reaching your school leadership aspiration and;
- Have you mapped out other leadership roles, as an alternative to your school leadership aspiration?

From analysis of pilot data, the last two questions did not build on the first two, and more importantly if the intent was to further explore aspirants' workplace reactions and expectations with regards to the attainment of their school leadership aspirations, then the last two interview questions should reflect this – it was changed to the ones in Appendix 1 (page 254).

Pilot study participants

Three school colleagues volunteered to take part in the pilot, and which would be considered an opportunity sample on the basis of strict availability (Cohen et al, 2000). The first participant, a female and anonymised as Olan, is of mixed heritage with a Nigerian father and an English mother. Her father came to Britain prior to Nigeria gaining its independence in 1960, spent a considerable number of years here, before relocating to the eastern part of Nigeria with his family in the early 1970s. Olan came back to the UK in the late 1980s, and she is a senior school leader in charge of the extended schools programme. The second participant, a female of Indian heritage was born in Kenya, settled first in the Midlands in the early 1970s before relocating permanently to southeast England. Anonymized as Saban, she works in the special needs department. The third participant, anonymized as Lewis holds a middle leadership position. He is

one of the new wave of migrant Nigerians who came to Britain in significant numbers in 1980s following the collapse of the Nigerian economy.

Evaluation of piloted data

During the pilot, participants engaged with the interview, producing responses, sufficient in depth and variation, to address the piloted questions. For example, when asked what their conceptions of school leadership are, what type of school leadership they aspire towards and reasons for this aspiration, Olan for example said school leadership is about role modelling and that she wants influence in the social development of students in order to:

> Nurture them and sometimes come away from the academic so that you can build up trust and then bring that back to the academic side.

Students, to Olan, feel a sense of affinity to leaders who listen to their concerns and fears – those who are more socially minded:

> Just imagine a child coming late or really rough in their uniform. Now, you shouting at them, you don't know that the day before they may have hidden their little brother or sister in the bedroom because their mother is drunk and was going to beat them. And they have not eaten breakfast, and somehow they had the energy to come to school, and then you are shouting at them – they are between two rocks. Of course, this might not be the problem, this child might just be a difficult person, but you need to be able to understand where they are coming from, and then try to influence them so that they can aspire to other things by working with them at their level, before it goes far as not listening to you at all and thereby become worse.

Saban on the other hand conceptualised school leadership as the ability to synergise diverse abilities to effect potential and maximise fulfilment of potential, and uses a metaphor to encapsulate this view:

> School leadership is about collecting the scattered pearls and making a necklace. As scattered pearls, no matter how good or skilled staff members are, if the leadership is not there to put all those abilities in order, you cannot achieve the right set of results.

The process of bringing about synergy, according to her, must lie in spiritual and mental balance, and wholeness of self. She does not think in terms of obtaining a position but in her capacity helping others see their potential:

> If you mean levels or in terms of positions, this is immaterial, what matters is your ability to be there to guide people towards balance in their lives.

Lewis conceptualised school leadership in terms of influence in key matters of policy review and analysis, and school statistics, because he believes well intentioned programmes fail for lack of detail focus:

> We have not been able to pay attention to the on-going process of analysis, whether it is examination predictions or grades, or the changing dynamics of the school environment. So in general, constantly looking and analysing various aspects of the school system - be it the examination past grades against future projections, be it current teaching practices against expected teaching practices, all systems in the school are my interest.

The latter part of his comment was the area he was interested in – that of essentially improving systems. These responses indicated that individual aspirations may not necessarily be in terms of the attainment of conventional positions, but some other dimensions aspirants envisage and find fulfilling. As the instrument has since been improved upon, it was utilised in the main study.

Ethical issues

The first ethical issue that arose during the pilot was that conducting the main interviews with the aspirants in the school premises required a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) clearance for each three schools. Although this was waived during

the pilot interviews, it was needed for the main data collection phase. To avoid this level of bureaucracy, a CRB was obtained from the university and then data was not collected at schools, but during weekends and in locations most convenient for the participants – three of the interviews were conducted in the local library close to the residences of the aspirants and others conducted at homes. One of the benefits of this is that it eliminated or reduced interruptions from students and staff, as encountered during the pilot.

The second ethical issue during the pilot and of concern in the main study was to present research findings so as not to cause harm or distress to participants or other third parties (i.e., the school or colleagues). Onus was therefore placed on putting into practice the British Educational Research Association (2004) standards of anonymity, confidentiality, right to comment and data protection during the pilot. A *Statement of Research Ethics Form* (see Appendix 3: 259) was submitted to the University of Nottingham Research Ethics Committee, having read and discussed various ethical issues contained in three ethical documents[10] with research supervisors. Considerable effort was also placed on becoming familiar with the Data Protection Act, 1998, which came into effect in March 2000, by understanding and adhering to the rules governing the processing, accuracy and security of personal information in written and electronic forms.

Ethical approval was granted in April 2010, and all potential participants were sought orally, and two letters given to them. The first was *Participant Information*

[10] British Educational Research Association *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2004); the *Research Code of Conduct* of the University of Nottingham; and relevant sections of *Data Protection Act* 1998.

Sheet (see Appendix 4: 262) providing information about my background, research aim and objectives, and the second was *Participant Consent Form* listing participant rights such as data access and security, and guarantees anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix 5: 263). In ensuring that their response could not be traced back, names, schools and locations were all anonymized. In ensuring that interpretations were true to the originality and intent of data, participants were consulted throughout the research process for verification and amendments (where necessary) of interpretation.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Summary of chapter

In this chapter the philosophical perspectives of two research traditions were briefly discussed, and from this the hermeneutic worldview underpinning this narrative study as the most appropriate methodological approach to unearthing the issues of concern were also discussed. Other methodological issues such as validity and reliability as it applies to this study, and the pilot undertaken and lessons learnt from the pilot eventually allowed improvements to be made on the qualitative instrument and the research in general, were all discussed. The ethical issues discussed have guided the development of this study.

Arrangement for the next two chapters

The next two chapters present as case example narratives of ten aspirants. They fall into two groups based on analysis of how participants framed their school leadership aspirations. Since the first research question relates to conception of school leadership role and perception of success, and it was found that the

school leadership aspirations of at least four aspirants could not readily be defined in terms of aspirational motives centred on hierarchical leadership positions or other extrinsic measures, but on such things as fulfilling purpose, the wholeness and transcendence of others – this is what this study classifies as 'intangibles'. In such instances, criteria or aspirational incentive for school leadership success seemed to reflect self-referent standards and preferences. In the case of at least five other aspirants, aspirational motives centre of hierarchical leadership positions, system improvements and in some instances gaining prestige – this is what this study classifies as 'tangibles'. Criteria or aspirational incentives reflect self-referent standards and preferences in addition to the evaluation from others. It is however important to note that the difference with the groups of aspirants presented as case examples in Chapter 4 and those in Chapter 5 is one of *emphasis* as they all exhibit in varying degrees aspirational motives and incentives that are 'intangibles' and 'tangibles'.

CHAPTER 4

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ASPIRATIONS DEFINED BY INTANGIBLE CRITERIA OF SUCCESS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Synopsis of theoretical frame and chapter outline

From the theoretical formulation in the first chapter, aspiration is the motive and incentive value attached to an *object*, moderated by the expectation of attainment. The *object* in this case is school leadership; which is a process of influence shaping motivations and actions. The exercise or realisation of the process of influence is what this study refers to as *career* or *school leadership progression*. On this basis, research questions focus on what school leadership an individual BME teacher aspires to (i.e., incentive), underlying reasons why he or she aspires toward this particular school leadership (i.e., motive), and the expectancy shaping attainment or non-attainment. In this respect, narratives presented here as case examples are responses to research questions, with the style keeping fidelity with the way the aspirants explain themselves. The BME teachers in this chapter seem to have aspirational motives centred on gaining or maintaining influence from self-conceived roles, with aspirational incentives centred on what can be classified as intangibles – this means greater emphasis is centred on transcendence of others, spiritual balance, wholeness rather than tangibles such as positions, hard data results and system improvements.

School characteristics

School X, a mixed comprehensive, has come a long way since it was classified as 'failing' in the autumn of 2002. From very serious challenging circumstances, when less than nineteen per cent of its students achieved five A - C grades including Mathematics and English in their GCSE, the school has trebled its attainment level to more than fifty-five per cent in the last five years. In line with increasing attainment grades, the school roll steadily increased from a lowly three hundred to over seven hundred, with a small but successful Sixth Form. The school has a very high proportion of ethnically diverse students from local council estates, and students with special education needs and free school meals are about twenty-four per cent. Throughout the arduous process of improvement, the school leaders sought to appoint practitioners that can best meet the school's focus and objectives. Towards the end of the decade, the school was presented with a Healthy Schools Award for its meals, sporting and health campaign for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

School Y used to be a grammar school that served the community for decades before it eventually became is a comprehensive school for boys, with a mixed Sixth Form. After experiencing major problems in the eighties and nineties, its attainment level at GCSE steadily improved to over fifty-five per cent, and this have been maintained ever since. It serves a community with a large ethnic minority population of about twenty-seven per cent and recent migrants from eastern European. The significant majority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and over half speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and or disabilities, and

those known to be eligible for free school meals is over twenty-two per cent. A large proportion of its teachers, particularly the most senior, have been in the school for more than two decades, so staff turnover rate is relatively low.

School Z was formed out of the amalgamation of two schools classified as 'failing', and in special measures for a considerable number of years, and serves a large working class white community that have been experiencing a large influx of migrant groups in recent years. Whilst many traditional industries have not been replaced, new housing developments have occupied these cites, hence a larger influx of migrants, with an easy commute to economically active regions in the south east. The socio-economic circumstances of families attending the school are less than the national average, and those eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs have consistently been higher than the national average. The attainment level of A – C grade at GCSE including Mathematics and English in the school did not exceed seventeen per cent in the first few years, but it has since begun to improve, and recently it went over forty per cent. It has undergone a relatively large number of staff turnover – out of staff attrition and arrival of a new senior leadership team.

4.2 CASE EXAMPLE ONE – Tami

Contextual background

Tami teaches in School X, and as a 35-year old black person she is passionate about literature and history, particularly black history and things spiritual – Christianity, Buddhism, alternative philosophies and understanding life:

> I am reading a lot to understand myself as a spiritual being and as an individual. I think I have found lots of revelations for me – I have learnt about

> my behaviour and how it affects others – it is more about who we are as spiritual beings, where we come from as individuals, the lineage, the ancestors, and what they have given us.

Tami is physically active too for various reasons, not least because it is a way to relief work-related stress. In the morning she goes out for a jog and in two or three evenings a week goes to the local gym:

> I find it quite stressful and the outlet for me is exercise. I let the stress go, by either going for a run in the morning before I go to work – hit the streets about 5.30 for half an hour and I will come back from work and meditate. I also do that after I have gone to the gym – they have a relaxation area, which is a darkened room, very quiet with tiny little light. I relax; I pray and allow negative thoughts to dissipate.

She is prayerful and very reflective, 'putting things out there' by saying – "I will or I am going to have a good day, today". This is important to her, and as someone who spends a lot of her time with colleagues, students and parents, she seeks for opportunities to reflect, regain her energy and balance.

To Tami, it is imperative to be listened to and listen to others, so dislikes 'those who feel that it is only their voice that needs to be heard'. When she was in secondary school, she thought of no other profession than to be in one where she could be of benefit to others. Unsure of what would eventually unfold, she opted for a degree in social science with a view to doing some form of social advocacy work. When she secured a part-time position as a youth probation officer in south west of London, she 'wondered aimlessly by not knowing what to do'. After a few years she eventually 'stumbled' into education by applying for learning mentor position with a brief to overcome barriers to learning. Tami took up this position because it gave her the much-needed focus in directing her energy towards helping young people steer away from offending, rather than trying to guide them as a probation officer after they had already committed

offence. Her persona attracted many, not least the head teacher who encouraged her to gain a teaching qualification – 'he forced my hand and one day said, "Right, you are starting your training in September"'. Tami eventually qualified as a teacher in the school through the Graduate Teacher Training Programme (GTTP).

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

To Tami, school leadership is about steering the collective effort of members towards realising school aims – it is about taking an entity from one place to another, through the process of visioning, encouragement and implementation. She says she is not necessarily interested in positional titles, but in the impact of her actions on superiors, subordinates and students; so those who can commission themselves roles beneficial to others are real leaders:

> Reals leadership is about transformation – it is about encouraging people to think outside the box, steering them away from the norm.

Tami's attraction to this form of school leadership is based on the conviction that education in general has become stale, and that professionals must evolve, adapt and innovate by looking at attractive models of instruction – and to do this requires a transformational approach. For her, one area in need of evolution is school league tables – where students are seen 'in terms of statistics, numbers and money'. Another area in need of change is the curriculum of personal social health and economic education (PSHE) where the 'one-size-fits-all approach' is forcing students to learn topics that do not have meaning to their view of and approach to life – some students from strong religious or cultural upbringing see discussions such as sex education as sometimes opposed to their worldview on life.

Tami believes that school leaders should begin to view the wholeness of the pupil, adopt holistic methods and amalgamate curriculum to reflect life, place, history, spirituality and social productivity. She visited South Australia, and in observing how an alternative learning model empower pupils reinforced her view of what school leaders should be engaged in:

> Rather than study maths on its own, what the kids were doing is that they were building their own farms, sourcing their animals, materials, budget, and working out how much money they would get from selling their animals. They had to work out their profit, and had to do this or that, and I was amazed at the skills they had to bring out for this type of project. And it wasn't only about maths, but other difficult subjects. They even had to design a scaled-down model of their farm and animals. And I thought, this is amazing because it taught them skills about finance, budgeting and something productive, and they fully enjoyed it, because it was theirs and they owned it. They came to school, they sat down, and it was not as if the teacher is telling them, "sit down, and blah, blah, you got half an hour to do this, and to do that", they just spent their time doing their sums, field trips, etc. These students enjoyed it, because learning is about enjoyment. I was always opposed to maths until I started as a teacher because of the person that taught me. I said, 'look at me, I have an aversion to this subject because of this individual, so the need to take the onus away from the teacher and give to students enable them to take ownership of their own learning.

Tami sees herself more as a transformational leader – trying to give others the imaginative tools to learn differently – trying to empower others to see beyond quick gratification to the inward purpose to life. To her, colleagues often assume that they have to be in certain leadership positions to make an impact, but the reverse is the case, for it is all about impact irrespective of position:

> When asked, students will say the frontline teacher has had the most impact in their personal and educational life, rather than senior 'leaders'. To me, it is impact and legacy – what you can leave behind and what impact have you had upon the lives of individual students, not on having a title.
>
> We recently had an Ofsted inspection, and I saw those individuals that were supposed to be leaders losing their minds – they are supposed to be leading the way, they were really losing it. Staff members were asking them for solutions, and they could not give any direction – they were giving conflicting signals – if they were leading the way and had faith in their leadership why should they change things at the eleventh hour for the sake of a HMI inspection, and do anything different from what has been normally done – it is a totally forced economy.

She places great emphasis on the contrast between those who just occupy leadership positions and those who are transformational leaders:

> I am a teacher inside and outside of work. I know that in my profession, I have far more influence – people come to me for guidance and advice than those who are supposedly senior to me. I have far more influence amongst the staff, and I have far more influence with students than the senior staff.

This encapsulates what she believes her leadership role is all about – someone who can influence, whether socially or professionally.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

Being a transformational leader, for Tami, means having the ability to inspire and motivate people to reach new heights and balance in life. It means having the personal and spiritual balance to be able to manage her relationships with others. She actually believes that it is by divine design that she is a magnet to people, and for this reason that she has been called for an altruistic professional purpose:

> On a spiritual level, I had no desire to become a teacher. I didn't understand the power I had. I didn't know that I needed to get into a profession where I can start understanding my purpose. So what keeps me is really about understanding my purpose, and I know I need to fulfil my purpose. Once I feel and I am comfortable that I have fulfilled that purpose, I will move on to the next level. I feel spiritually that there is a purpose for being there. At the beginning of our conversation, you asked me why I became a teacher, and I said to you that I didn't necessarily want to be a teacher, but I just wanted to help people – teaching happens to be one of the vehicles. I didn't know I have been chosen, but I understand that there are certain qualities about me that attract people to me – and I need to use those qualities for good.

What she therefore feels sustains her aspiration, knowing that she is fulfilling purpose, with transformation leadership serving as the vehicle.

Reflecting on her past, she feels she would have arrived at this much earlier – meaning knowing herself, her role and be even more dynamic:

> I just wish that when I was growing up, when I was being raised, that I had someone like me in school. Undoubtedly I had my grandmother with me that made me what I am today – but I never had someone like me in school, when I was getting my education, I feel I would have gotten here sooner. So, if I had a professional that looked at me, could see and realise my potential and help me to get to where I needed to go, I would be far more dynamic that what I am today. I have no regrets, my path is my path, and I need to learn those lessons. I had two of my year group students yesterday who came to see me at the end of the day. I gave them a poem, and said they need to read it. I said to them, "I want you to possess it, to digest it, I want you to dissect it and I want you to try and understand it. I am not going to do it for you; you need to do it yourself. If you could possess the qualities and attributes that this man is talking about in this poem, it is for you, and you will blow, you will go, and no one will be able to touch you". I said to them, "If I at 15 had your grace, your panache, your intelligence, and your class, whao".

Tami speaks from deep personal experience. After she was born, her African-American military personnel father left for the United States. It was not until her late teens that her relationship with him began to improve. At home, she had other siblings from her stepfather, and her relationship with her mother was tenuous. She was not rebellious at all, but it was essentially about the way she saw herself; which was different from the way her mother saw her. She would cry and seek refuge with her maternal grandmother – staying with her when things became unbearable at home and going back when things improve.

Tami feels these experiences have made her better prepared against the harsher winds. She has learnt to persevere, for even mundane things like not finishing a book nags on her until she has completed it. As a pastoral head, she expected herself to at least see her year group through to their finals. She had a meeting with her head teacher, and told him she wanted to leave, he replied by saying he will support whatever decision she eventually made. She got home, reflected about the group she has been nurturing, and concluded she was only making the decision because of anxiety over some close colleagues leaving:

> I said, "Hold on a minute, you started this and you need to finish it". If you think about everything in your life as a circle, the two ends need to meet – otherwise you have a gaping hole. In my life, I think that there are many chapters that were left incomplete, and this leaves you with a sense of, "what if". It is a fruitless way to think because you will never know, but it leaves you with a sense of, "well, okay, I know I will never know, but if I'd finished this or did that or stayed here, maybe". It just makes you look at things differently, and just feel that I don't want to live my life wondering "what if". "What if I stayed, and finished with those kids, would it have made any difference, where would they have been? What if I stayed in that relationship?" There needs to be a definitive line, nothing left unanswered. Just draw the line, when it needs to be done, when the relationship is over or job finished, draw the line, otherwise you cannot move to the next level. There are lessons within my job that I will need to learn.

Having started a journey with her students, and to then not finish with them is failure to her – it would not make any sense and a personal and professional dereliction of duty:

> I attribute the fact that I want to complete and see things to the end. If you are having a disagreement with a person and that disagreement turns into an argument, some people say that you should walk away – the moment you walk away, you are quitting, you lose – you do not need to face the challenge by being in a certain way, but you stay and finish what you have to say, and you find a way at resolving the issue. The same with challenges, and I have heard people say in my professional life say, "I am leaving here because I cannot take it anymore".

She feels then that the factors sustaining her school leadership aspiration are a firm belief in fulfilling purpose. A corollary to this is to have the perseverance to remain focused such that any journey started must be completed, whether with students, school colleagues or in a private capacity.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

Tami's confidence that she is realising her school leadership aspiration is based on the belief that she has the ability, no matter the challenges, to prevail. Past experiences in overcoming many obstacles comes into play here. Growing up as a teenager without a father to hold on to was a challenge – it was not a happy time. She would run to her grandmother in tears and her grandmother would

encourage her with words such as, "you will get there at the end". Tami remembers 'coasting through school' because nobody ever told her she had the potential. Inwardly, she knew she had more to offer – she told herself she will go to university, even when her peers and family members only thought in terms of securing a job as soon as they left secondary school. Her family never celebrated education and actually thought of it as something for others – nobody got more than a few school leaving certificates and after that, a "good job" was classified as one that is stable. Her family never once owned a vehicle, but she remembers telling herself that one day she will get one, and she did – driving a brand new one out of the showroom soon after she secured her first position as a probation officer.

She recently completed a master's degree, which was not something she necessarily thought of, but seeing others gain theirs forced her to say to herself: "maybe I can do this also". Looking back, she feels that she has always prevailed from many challenges and that something within her always made her not settle for less:

> Before I moved here [new apartment], I was in a different situation where I was living with somebody, and was extremely unhappy, so was looking for an opening to get out – what kept me sane was the faith that the opening will arise, knowing that one way or the other I will not go down in defeat.

Her half-sister told their aunt that certain goals in her own life were as a result of the achievement of her older sister, Tami. Her uncle in the Caribbean sat her down one day and said,

> You are such an important person in the family, and I don't think you realise it, all others who come after you look up to you – you are the one they all look up to, you are the one they all respect, you are the one they all follow, and I know it is a burden, but keep doing what you are doing.

With such endorsements, she does not envisage any challenge that would adversely impact on her confidence: 'there is not a lot that will knock me because I think my strength from within will withstand them'. Her aspirational expectation therefore is positive and grounded on belief in her purpose to the things she is doing.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

In her landscape, since many individuals simply exercise authority by virtue of the portfolio they hold, only few 'leaders' in her school can 'encourage others to become real leaders not managers'. This is in contrast to the way she sees her role – one that is not about positions, but in how to motivate individuals so that they reach their potential and achieve personal, spiritual, social and academic progress – a transformational role that she believes cannot be impeded:

> My aspiration is transient – whatever the environment, it does not impede my aspiration to make an impact on the lives of people. My aspiration does not depend on external approval – not in the slightest bit.

Her conception of her role was recently reinforced by her recent appointment to senior leadership, line-managing the special education needs, mentoring, and extended school departments. It is a task she likes because it identifies potential, finds pathways, and changes expectations. And it is ironic that her empowering spirit and motive allows others like her principal to see something in her:

> I will speak of myself, and not for others in the organisation. I am fortunate enough to know that my head teacher continues to see and knows that there is something in me. So I have the privilege that others may not have – this may not be right or unfair for others. There is nothing wrong in that – in all organisations you have that and the way individuals are managed.

In spite of this privilege, she nevertheless thinks the dearth of real leadership is such that capacity is not utilised for the benefit of all for reasons that:

> There are individuals in the school who have huge potential, but are not pushed because of negative aspects to their professional behaviour. Tell them about these negatives so they can mend their ways instead of complaining about them behind their backs. People use this as weapons; my argument is they should be made aware, so that they will have the chance to fulfil potential. It is like the managers are scare to tell people, that you have done this or that, and you need to eliminate this or that. They are scared of confrontation – it does not have to be. If we are all eternal students and there is something that someone needs to know about their character, you need to tell them – I have never been afraid to do so.

This, she feels encapsulate the culture of School X – where it is facilitating to those individuals who can commission themselves and flourish as a result of the type of support they will receive, and she is one of them. For others deemed to have negative personalities, it does not facilitate them and as a result their potentials are not realised or developed. The reason she cites is that senior leaders, who she believes lack the transformational leadership skills, use these negative personalities as weapons to limit expectations. In this respect, she believes that a leader, whether self-defined or mandated through appointment, must have an intrinsic desire to enhance the motivation, morale, and performance of others, whether colleagues or students, through a variety of mechanisms, and the absence of this makes them position holders only.

4.3 CASE EXAMPLE TWO – Rod

Contextual background

Rod was born in 1947 in Sierra Leone, to a Ghanaian father and Spanish-heritage mother from the island of Fernando Po[11]. His parents immigrated to the UK in 1951, and in 1957 he together with his six sisters and two brothers joined them. After a brief year in primary school, he enrolled in a local Grammar school as a

[11] An island developed for sugarcane crops, ceded to Spain under the Treaty of El Pardo in 1778, which is 32 Kilometres off the coast of the West African state of Equatorial Guinea.

boarding student, and seven years later completed his secondary education with few certificates to write home about. His decision to become a teacher about twenty years later was after a long period working as a school laboratory technician and community youth worker. As a technician, he would get involve in lessons by helping students solve problems, demonstrating how to use laboratory equipment and conducting practical experiments. In fact, Rod became a *de facto* science teacher as other teachers referred students to him for additional tutorials. In his other role as a youth worker in a children discovery centre called *Bookspread*, he says,

> I would run scientific workshops, chess workshops for them, and I enjoyed doing it, and a friend of mine [who would continually challenge him] said, "Why don't you go into proper teaching".

After much soul-searching, he eventually left laboratory work to qualify as a science teacher in his late thirties to early forties, and in the last twenty years have taught in School Y.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

To Rod, school leadership is such a broad concept that all members in a school are leaders of some sort because they exercise some influence, be it with other colleagues or in the classroom. However, he conceptualizes it as a group of individuals who allocate responsibilities, set targets, provide the means to achieve targets, and ensure targets are met. At an age close to 60, the nature of his school leadership aspiration is primarily about his ability and capacity to work with and positively influence young people. He sees himself as an educator in the broadest sense; instructing outside his subject area. His favourite refrain is that school is where everyone can succeed – he tells students that they should

believe in what is possible, that limits exist only in the mind, and if they are afraid to get things wrong, they are in effect afraid to get things right:

> Working with some Year 7 children, they were asked some questions, and they were afraid to answer them because they were afraid to get them wrong for fear of being laughed at. So I said to them, "I will laugh at you if you give me an outrageous answer, but I will laugh with you because you enable me to be able to teach and teach well. How do you do that, if I am teaching and you don't understand, you ask questions and it helps me to see where I can perhaps make adjustments in my teaching to enable you to understand. If you sit there, and don't ask questions, I don't know, so never be afraid to get something wrong. Because it signals to me that you are afraid to get it right".

At the heart of Rod's preoccupation is his passion for developing young people and finding solutions to their social, cultural and spiritual problems.

He does not see passing examinations as the main issue, but how young people can integrate various aspects of their life, and interact constructively with others, the community and society at large.

> When they come to my office, whatever they have done, I would listen and find a solution. You see, it is not about passing exams; you take the child as a whole, and you are developing that child not just to pass exams, but to be able to interact in our society in a positive way and make a positive contribution – that for me is where perhaps my idea of leadership slightly differs from others people's idea of school leadership – what they are worried about is what OFSTED inspectors are going to say, so their main thrust is teaching and learning, whereas for me, it is about the quality of the perception of the whole child, the whole person and where to take them.

This is one reason why he wants to remain an educator and a frontline teacher. He of course, is a board of studies[12] member and school governor, but seventy per cent of his timetable is allocated to disaffected pupils because it is widely recognised they interact well with him, and he has high expectations of them. He has found innovative ways to engage with students socially, culturally and religiously, and it is recognised as highly effective at this:

[12] The board of studies consist of two principles, vice principals, four assistant principals, four senior teachers and one bursar.

> I try to bring people, former students who were not always academic, but nevertheless successful in business or medical doctors later on in life to the school to address the students. My school despite being a state school has produced doctors, lawyers, business people – the local MP is from my school. All these people went there. It is about social education – the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development – that the holistic and that's the way I work with young people. I have taught 3 or 4 subjects in foundation year and of course, with the diversities we have to deal with religious and so on. I taught RE, so I made a point in understanding about Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and so on, and trying to draw the things that are different. In essence I am a bit of Confucian, because what Confucius said is "human nature is the same worldwide, it is their habits that differ".

This is in essence the self-conceived school leadership role that he is attracted towards. He even sees his impending 'retirement' as full of activity; orienting himself to influencing those who matter – the local business people, principals, education administrators, councillors and members of parliament, on youth-related issue.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

The main factor sustaining Rod's school leadership aspiration is the enthusiasm for and innate satisfaction gained from the productivity of young people. His philosophy is to allow them express their opinions, but to also understand that it must be cushioned with responsibility and respect for the opinions of others. An encounter with a student exemplifies his belief and message:

> A difficult student sent to me said, "You all teachers are all the same". I asked him, "Why are you always in trouble?" He said, "Teachers don't like me". And I asked him, "Why do you think teachers don't like you?" And I said, "Don't you think teachers are just like your parents, with kids like you?". He said, "They are teachers, aren't they?" and I said, "So you think they don't have children?". And he said, "Some of them do", and I said, "Okay some of them do, but do you think those teachers don't think about the way other people would treat their own children, and that they need to work in a similar way with you?". And he said, "I never thought of it like that", so I said, "Think about it, come back to me in a few days' time and let me know why you think teachers don't like you". He did, and a few days later, he said, "Maybe they don't like me because of the way I behave", and I said, "That's a start, do you think you behave badly or do you behave badly, so you can you change your behaviour". He said, "I suppose I actually behave badly, but I have been like this for a while and it is hard". So I said, "Suppose you come and see me; we

> look at some targets and how you can talk to your teachers and see how you can start working with your tutor, and go to your tutor and say that you are having a bit of problem and you want to be helped out and so on".

Rod's experience through the years dealing with young people like this generates tangible results, for he sees himself as an artist who starts off with a raw canvas, begins to paint and eventually the end product emerges.

The analogy here is that in his encounter with a young person labelled as "a failure; will never work", he somehow gets involved by trying to work on the pupil, and then the school and parent begin to notice changes in pupil's demeanour, so much that student begins to fulfil potential and interact constructively with others. This is his satisfaction, and fuel to his aspiration:

> Let's take a walk in the locality, and see the interaction between young people and me. It is mostly positive, and only at odd times I do get something negative. Ninety-five per cent of the time, when I meet the young people who attended or are still attending my school, the interaction is always positive – "Hello sir, how are you, this that and the other". Young people who have got businesses and things, they come to me and show appreciation.

To Rod, the end does not justify the means, so how he contributes to the young person's development matters to him. How a journey is taken ~~is~~ requires the right method and vehicle employed. This is why he is dismissive of those who worry about what inspectors have to say. For him, when the right means are employed, outcomes are not only evident, but assured and sustainable:

> If you don't use the right method, people may get there, but they may find themselves floundering. I tell you, to see how I have impacted the lives of young people, the satisfaction it gives me, and the feeling that I have used the right method is more important, it is what also sustains me to continue to be an inspiration to young people.

Rod has much to tell, for his life experiences, particularly when he was growing up, to a large extent have shaped his conviction about how the young person must be developed.

Many years ago, Rod told his father he did not want to become part of the 'rat race', so he 'went into a mode of escapism'. His father, being a disciplinarian did not find it amusing at all. When he eventually decided to go into teaching, his father said to him, "I thought you did not want to be part of the 'rat race'?". They laughed about it, and his father said pointedly, "Why do you suddenly want to do this?". Rod replied, "At last, I am motivated and I see the end to something". He had initially turned his attention to community work and a laboratory technician, seeing them as ways to do something meaningful. However he felt the formalised setting of the teaching profession is infinitely better – life and purpose now appealed to him the more. Now in his later years, he sees the young person as more or less the way he was as a teenager, sometimes wayward, sometimes frustrating, but generally intelligent and energetic.

In Rod's escapism, he did not have to care about the issues of the world, of being black or having to be accepted – a reaction to his bitter experiences. When he arrived with his siblings from Sierra Leone to join his parents in 1957, he registered in a local Grammar school as a boarding student (he was the only black student in the school for a few years). He was called "black bastard", "big nose samba", and teachers slapped him for the things that he felt he was not responsible for – they were stereotypical in the way they treated him. They said things like, "O, you haven't got the brain, you should be running like zebra".

The school then channelled him into things non-academic, but deep within was a person whose strengths were more academic. In his form of escapism, he did not have to study or compare himself against other people. He was restless, and

he had to somehow prove himself capable intellectually by taking a *Mensa* (the high IQ society) test, and he passed to become a member. Rod recalls only a housemaster[13], a senior and junior teacher, who tried to help him overcome many of the problems encountered in school.

The situation at home was not favourable either, for as disciplinarians, his parents naturally wanted all their children to be in respectable professionals. He was asked what he wanted to become, and he said a lawyer, but his parents felt the medical profession – this confused him because what he really wanted was not good enough for them. Torn between his own desires, the expectation from his parents and bitter experiences from his school, he gave up and sought refuge in his 'escapism'. It was a form of defence mechanism to counter the accusation that he is underachieving – the pressure not to disappoint his parents, followed by the mental anguish from his troubles in school had a strong effect on his mind, and to exacerbate things further his own brother was studying for a medical degree.

Rod eventually left school with only one or two school-leaving certificates, and to maintain his sanity he enrolled for a City and Guilds laboratory technician's course, and even then, he only attended college two and a half days a week:

> I had a conversation with my dad, and I decided to opt out of this too. But people were still challenging me. I met one member of aristocracy who became a friend and we played squash together. He said to me, "You are frustrated, don't you feel frustrated?", and I said, "I am", and he said, "You are so intelligent, why have you not done anything with your life?", "Life is about fulfilment, you have something that is begging to be fulfilled, so you should do something about it, otherwise things are going to get worse". He more or less hounded me, whenever we played squash and so on. He said,

[13] The housemaster wrote in his report, "Rodney is one of the brightest kids I have ever worked with and he could do anything he chooses to be".

> "Even the way you play squash shows that you think; so what the hell are you doing?". So he kept on at me, but he became my very good friend, so consequently, I did decide to do my teaching degree towards my late 30s.

These life experiences cause that strong affinity with the energetic but sometimes misguided youth. The pull to devote much energy to their development, knowing from deep-rooted past experiences how dreams fade and potentials remain unfulfilled is what drives him – hence his devotion, and to which gives him the sense of fulfilment about his school leadership aspiration.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

It is perfectly understandable that in getting close to 60, Rod winds down, but this is not the case because he believes that as long as he still has his faculties and is physically able, his school leadership aspirations remains undiminished. This means that he will continue to commission himself on initiatives to develop young people. He is orienting himself into the local educational youth advocacy and advisory groups, and he has recently registered for a law degree to enable him agitate on behalf excluded pupils:

> I have done so much with young people, as a parent governor, a parent and a local magistrate. As a magistrate I have covered so many grounds in working with young people that I think that I have reached and attained a level of fulfilment that makes me feel satisfied. So if I retire or change my job as I am thinking of doing, I am going to still work with young people. I want to still work with them in the community.

Recently, some local community members persuaded him to become a local councillor, and he is aware though of what is happening in the community, communicating with those with considerable influence on behalf <u>of</u> the young student:

> I write letters of complaint, sign passports, lobby for people, so that they can at least get respite. So my aspiration is to continue to do that. I have even gone to other schools to take appeals for students who want to go to other school, things like that – so I wish to continue in this area.

An aura of self-belief that nothing can make him unmoveable anymore and pride in the fact that he overcame his 'demons' by qualifying as a teacher is what sustains his confidence – he really does not envisage challenges greater than what he has already faced in life. With a supportive Caribbean spouse and three married and educated children who he is proud of for attending 'red brick' universities and in good professions. With his grandchildren occupying his spare time, African extended family and Caribbean in-laws, and he indeed does not envisage challenges so great that he cannot overcome.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

At one stage, Rod held five[14] leadership positions. In 2000, School Y could not recruit enough science teachers, and it was himself and Mrs SD, his acting deputy, 'that then managed to keep the department going, supporting all the full-time and supply teachers'. They had the idea to organise science weeks by inviting scholars from universities, and officers from London Electricity Board, Fire Brigade and Armed Forces. Their initiative became very successful at lifting moral and science work, and their science department and school eventually grew from strength to strength:

> I mean, people forget now the rights of passage we went through, me and this female colleague of mine. When recently she applied for the job, and she is a black woman by the way, obviously they gave it to a young white man, totally inexperienced. In all the things that she has done, they gave the job to the young white man who is not going to be good at it, but they are going to make ensure that he doesn't fail. They did not give it to this woman, so it brings back memories and it pains me with great sadness that we are now back to the things that I thought as an Equal Opportunities Officer that I fought hard to eradicate. I am pretty upset, so is this woman. This is why my association with the school is about to come to an end anyway; even if they will offer me things, I don't want to have anything to do with them because I have no faith in them.

[14] Acting Head of Science Faculty, Head of Year, Equal Opportunities Officer, and Acting Head of Physics.

Rod now wants to sever all ties with the school, and as he puts it, there is lack of recognition for the efforts of many who sacrificed a lot when the school was experiencing severe problems.

To him, what is most important is that BME teachers have the assurance that they too will have the same acclaim for their efforts. He will say to colleagues that equality is not about treating people the same, but fairly, and that leadership is about 'managing all denominations so that everyone feel being they have been fairly treated; given same kudos'. Rod is a reluctant man in many respects and at the beginning of the conversation about the nature of his school leadership aspiration he was unwilling to point to any dislikes in the character of people. He tries not to be critical of situations that others would say is discriminatory, but sometimes he is forced to bite the bullet:

> Whatever we do at any leadership level, young people may not understand, but will observe what's going on, and sometimes, they feel a certain amount of trepidation, antipathy and resistance. Lots of young people say, 'well, we work very hard, but we don't get the right rewards for what we do'.

The point he is making here is that BME pupils see what is happening in their school, and are wise enough to know when the efforts of some teachers that they have some form of affinity to and see as role models are not recognised – so they in turn begin to question whether it is worthwhile to even try to listen to instruction or intervention.

4.4 CASE EXAMPLE THREE – Omono

Contextual background

Omono graduated with a degree in science and geography in 1985 in Kenya, and taught mainly science in Kenya as he gradually rose from the ranks to eventually

become a head teacher. Since his arrival in 2002, he has taught science in School X. In his early 50s, he is a committed Christian and dislikes anything that he feels is diametrically opposed to his faith:

> The bottom-line is, as long as everything is good, in terms of being in agreement with what I believe in – in terms of Christian principles and doctrines, it is fine. This is what governs my life. I grew up in a Christian home, my parents were pastors and these are where I got my moral values, and it has been the pillar of my life and so that has been the metre and guide for me to judge things in my life.

As a family person, his decision to leave his native Kenya as a principal to become a teacher in the UK was not difficult in one respect – the financial pressures of a shrinking middle class, and the opportunity to reverse that trend.

On the other hand, having to leave extended families behind, and as in the Kenyan culture, the family is not just the spouse and children, but uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces as well, was a difficult decision. He eventually migrated because of the net return to both his immediate and extended family. He knew that there will be difficulties at first, particularly in adapting to a new environment, the material costs of leaving (which he managed by first leaving ahead of his spouse and children, and having settled he sent for them), and the psychological cost of cutting old ties and forging new ones (he found a church for Kenyans in London, and that helped him). With strong Christian values, a spouse, son and daughter recently admitted to two UK universities, he believes the decision have been altogether worthwhile.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

As a former head teacher in Kenya, Omono speaks from personal experience when he says that school leadership is about managerial operation directed at

student attainment and behaviour, and effective communication with parents or guardians:

> The management direction is about a pointer situation where you have to show people where they have to go. You are the pointer – you start from point A, and then tell them how to get to point B. You have to show them how you are getting there, and what the strategies are to get there – to achieve the objectives that you have set. So I think in terms of leadership, it is showing them direction, where to go and how to get there.

Omono is appreciative to God for the type professionalism in the UK because it is mostly 'well laid out, and easy to understand' for teachers. It is a type of professionalism he was not accustomed in Kenya – after teacher training in the UK, graduate teachers are mentored, and established teachers learn leadership theories as they progress. He observes that as soon as UK teachers qualify, they become aware of what to do, where to go and what strategies to employ, whereas in his native country, they have to learn in an *ad hoc* way:

> Teachers are just told to teach a class, and they don't even know how to begin, so you have to learn the ropes in any way you can. The bottom-line is that when you have been given the tools and strategies of how to get there, I mean there are principles that have been laid by research; there are leadership theories that govern on how to get there, then you have the opportunity to develop.

He knows how he began, learning through tradition laid down by others, and in some cases, not questioning whether they were indeed appropriate.

When Omono began teaching in the UK some few years ago, he gradually realised that even as a former principal, there are things he had not learnt at all in Kenya. For example, the view that the pastoral school leadership is equally as important as the academic. During his time in Kenya, academic attainment was the be-all and end-all, irrespective of the background of the student – no such things as social exclusion, attention deficit syndrome and all other learning difficulty issues. The onus was on the student to learn, be accountable and

studious. In contrast, teachers in Britain are held responsible for the learning of students. The language in well-publicized reports is of schools failing students, rather than emphasis on students' responsibility for passing.

He is now forced to re-evaluate assumptions held for years – one of which is the view that he must be a disciplinarian and matter-of-fact person. The type of discipline he is used to in Kenya is quite different, and he now places much emphasis on developing the pastoral side:

> At the end of the day, education is how to deal eventually with the person, how you get the person from level B to level A. Not necessarily academic, but building the totality of the person, and so pastoral aspect brings in the other dimension of the person that may not be academic, but something that will trigger the academic aspect to come up.

It is now necessary to examine and unearth student background, so that he can contextualise their performances against accountability demands of his practice. Omono now views the pastoral as the dimension that transcends the academic, and one which 'allows the academic area to bloom'. He now sees himself as a social worker, psychologist, mediator and surrogate parent to disaffected pupils:

> You may be dealing with students who have good academic prowess, but nevertheless backgrounds are not good. The voice from the background that I am a pastor's son, and the perspectives from home in me, does not allow me to ignore a man who is not doing well. I take the story from home, of a man not doing well and maybe he left work, and after some pastoral care, you see the person doing well, turning to be a very responsible person going to work, etc. So I thought if this could be brought to my classroom setting, then you can deal with the situation of a student is not doing well.

His self-conceived role gives him the satisfaction that students can be reached where 'the academic cannot touch'.

In his new thinking, the academic is grade-oriented, but the pastoral deals with totality of the person. He tells of the story of Jesus who, 'instead of telling

someone who was sick, "now you have been healed", he said, "now be whole", and the sick man was made whole'. In other words, the sickness was just a small part to the whole malaise to which only the pastoral can penetrate:

> The wholeness – and that's why I look at the wholeness, the sum total of the student. 'O, he is behaving badly, but this kid has something'. You deal with the child, and try to find out the background of that child, when you fix those parts like an MOT, then that vehicle will move to greater heights and that brings satisfaction to me.

Having been a head teacher Kenya, it takes a lot of professional humility on his part to admit this, and discard many assumptions and adopt new ones in a different environment. He is learning to adapt and in the process carve out a way to gain some degree of influence in his school by advocating totality of a student in his class and across the department.

In fact, he recently completed an action research, focusing on the social development of a group of disaffected Somali and Ethiopian students. He wanted to understand their background, and how his department could use this information to tailor a curriculum that could best engage them socially and then academically. He is also realistic about positions, and in considering a number of factors, not least his age, he instead is focusing on the self-conceived role of developing the totality of students. He sees a possibility of becoming a pastoral leader, and one day a university dean dealing with student welfare. As he puts it:

> The same sickness is there in the primary, secondary and university, it is just that it is only more complex for older students in the university, so they still need that same help.

But for now, he is content with trying to increase his leadership influence in his school through his focus in the classroom on what he sees as the 'totality' of the student.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

Omono's concern for the 'totality of students' makes him look introspectively at himself, how and whether he has engaged well with students – in this respect he tries to find reasons why some respond well and others do not to his intervention:

> The other factor sustaining me is the students that I have taught – I have met a few of them who have succeeded and gone to the university. I have met a few of them who have not gone for that matter – any further than their GCSE. I recently met a former student who sells some fruit somewhere which really kept him busy. But then, I consider another student, who did very well in the same class and has gone straight to university now. When I consider both, I often wonder if I had done this and that, perhaps I will have been able to help this child – the fruit seller. So I often consider maybe I should have tried more praise, more motivational talk, so at the end of the day, I can see the other person succeed. So this factor keeps me going – wanting to do more.

A deep concern of what he could have done with his students, whether he could have done more, and how he can get better when faced with similar situations are at the forefront of his deliberation about his leadership influence and this is what sustains his school leadership aspiration. As he says further:

> They are a type of fuel that urges me to go to school, that propels me to want to see others excel, so what I did not do successful in a student's life, I always want to do well again in another person's life. Currently there are some students that I am having one-to-one with at the moment, I have seen their weaknesses. You kind of teach them, but eventually you pull one aside, tailor to their needs and get going. And you try to see how they develop and the impact it has on the student. You find out it is working very positively, and you find that that keeps you well sustained, especially when you see that what you have done comes out positive, then you want to do some more. These kinds of things is like planting a seed and harvesting. You put in some seeds like skills, and attitude, and then you watch it germinate – if they come out positive you tell yourself that it was a nice thing to do, that it was a right strategy to use, so you will learn and continue, and you get the experience, then you know how to deal with another similar case.

Omono believes that as long as he is true to himself, and objectively evaluates his practice, issues concerning his leadership aspiration for more influence will remain sustained. His professional introspection has also made him aware of how he should interact with parents.

In Kenya, parents were often from the same locality, having more or less the same custom – it was not difficult for him. But in the UK, 'parents from different countries, with different children, and different behaviour' have helped him learn how to handle children in different ways – 'you say, "O, this people from this particular country deal with their children in this particular way, and in their particular aspect". Thus, a deep concern for and reflection on what he had said or what he could have said in his conversations with parents is now paramount to the way he has to unearth the problems of his students. As a disciplinarian and matter-of-fact principal in Kenya, he would not mince his words – "your son has failed his examinations and is badly behaved". He knows from tradition how parents will react – they were on his side and they would discipline their children for being 'irresponsible'. His task now, as a teaching practitioner in the UK, is to adopt a diplomatic language. When a student is truanting for example, he would subtly tell the parent – "you know, your child is not very consistent in terms of attendance, but if consistency can be improved, then your child will really perform well". He now has to 'coat' his language by highlighting as much as possible the positives and minimising the negatives, with the view that it serves as a motivational tool to win over disaffected students.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

Recently, Omono became one of the candidates for the assistant head of year position, and after the interview, he could understand when one of the interviewers told him, "we have given [MN] the job", and he replied by saying, "that's okay, that's really nice". He more or less understood what they meant when they said he needed to have demonstrated his ability to a wider audience

– to essentially convince others, not least them of his competence as a pastoral leader, And as he says, 'I needed to have gone out, demonstrated a few things that I really needed the job, and then they would have given me an option'. So his confidence that he is realising his school leadership aspiration resides in the belief that he is acquiring the skills and behaviours necessary to addressing the 'totality' of students. Conversely, if he is not, then he has no legitimate right to be confident about his leadership aspiration:

> My confidence lay in the fact that given time, if I prove my worth and improve my skills, then when opportunities come, I will be able to get it. I have therefore not equipped myself to achieve what is expected and certainly I will not be able to deliver and if I can't deliver, then I do not think my confidence will be any high. If I equip myself, I am able and therefore no barrier that will stop me.

Omono's circumspection is critical, whether in terms of how he can best communicate effectively with their parents or where best his influence can be felt amongst students. By critically examining himself first rather than the conditions of his work environment, he is placing the onus on himself as the precipitant of his confidence about his leadership aspiration. The sense that his own actions will ultimately affect his desired outcome seems to correlate strongly with his view that his school has a non-discriminatory culture.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

Since Omono's arrival in the UK he has taught in School X, and as far as he is concerned, it is in an environment where promotion is based on merit. If an internal candidate is seen to have the capability, he or she will most likely be successful at being appointed for a position. To him, individuals in any organisation naturally carve out niches for themselves, advance their interest and

try to exert some form of influence, sometimes evident in outright disagreements between competing interest groups. He understands this:

> When you know how the power plays, you will be able to discern where the pillars are. Like in every organisation, there are some decisions made within some quarters – so it does not matter what others think, the decisions have already been made. This is something you can't see or know, but you only see the results. You can only infer later. This is what is on the system, in the background, but it is there. So I think that defines an aspect of my school culture.

For Omono, his school is one in which decision-making and authority can function in various guises – from the top, the bottom or interest groups. When it emanates from the top, the impact is felt by all, when it emerge from the bottom, its impact is also felt because 'people are given the opportunity to put something in, be recognised for it and to which the inputs is of benefit to all', and when derived from interests, it is not readily recognised by a great majority. He believes he has learnt a lot in the school – from challenging his assumptions in teaching to approaching things in differently.

He has read much about what a learning organisation is, particularly the work of Peter Senge (1990), who argues that a learning organisation is one where members continually expand their capacity to create results desired; and where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured. He believes the school has been that environment and as he says:

> This school is a learning organisation, and through the years, it has learnt positive things, and it has interpreted a lot of things, such as leadership, etc. So it is a learning organisation.

He feels he has been supported in learning new ways, and he now regards himself as an individual adapting to a different kind of professional standard in a new environment. He is positive about his school, seeing it as a learning environment

where he is realising his school leadership aspiration to influence matters relating to the 'totality of students'.

4.5 CASE EXAMPLE FOUR – Kathy

Contextual background

Kathy, in her mid-30s, is a first generation British-born BME teacher of Caribbean heritage, whose parents settled in south west London in the 1960s. She attended local schools and university, and although she has travelled widely around the UK and overseas, she still lives there. Her parents live around the locality as well and she maintains a very strong relationship with them, seeking their advice and encouragement when the need arises. Growing up, her parents often told her that hard work and good education is the key to breaking many barriers, key to success and earning a decent standard of living. To her, this is one motivation to succeed and what she tries to instil into her students in School Y, irrespective of academic ability, and as she says, 'it is what drives my success and aspirations of success in my personal and professional life'.

She has had many disappointments in life, but the most felt are dishonesty and unfairness of individuals, and those who maintain their silence when they see others being treated unfairly – those colleagues who become complicit in unfair practices or not objective and therefore inconsistency in their evaluation. As such, she dislikes unfairness and injustice, whether personally or professionally, and as she says:

> You have to confront them [unfairness or dishonesty] in such a way that it is not hindering people. You have got to be subtle about it, but direct. You need to have a direct approach, but also you have to know the strategies too, so that the implication which are made and then proven provides a resolution at

> the end. ...You have to ensure that you don't upset anybody. Of course you will still upset people by what you say, and I am happy to let people know how I feel within a diplomatic manner, but sometimes, you have to pinch people at the back of the heels to make them understand you mean business.

To her, there are things worth fighting for, and it boils down to how much energy she has and timing to confront what she believes are injustices, or when to sometimes "turn the other cheek" for self-preservation reasons.

Her decision to become a teacher more than ten years ago was soon after she completed a module in her music degree in which she prepared and taught a music lesson to a group of highly energetic set of pupils. This experience made her seriously consider teaching – what eventually tipped the balance in favour of the decision to enter into the profession was an advert in her university department's board about the benefits of teaching.

> I then thought that I can really take this fully. I thoroughly enjoyed it – the actual module itself. And when seeing the advertisement in the university board of how to become a teacher, I thought, whao, this firmly confirms my decision to become a teacher.

Coming into the profession, teaching music and citizenship, she takes the view that education is the key to success, and this shapes who she is today.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

Kathy conceptualises school leadership as a process where the talents and energies of teachers, parents and pupils are enlisted to achieve common educational goals. In essence, those who enlist others have specific weights of influence more than others, so have final veto over all decisions:

> In terms of school leadership, I will look at the big pins of the school, but within those big pins, you have got various fabrics around to make it all together, which includes the parents and pupils; they underpin the school, for without them, the school would not run.

Kathy likens her relationship between pupils and parents to a triangle with each positioned at a vertex, 'flowing smoothly like a three-way street traffic more often, but not all of the time', and sees the pastoral as the vehicle for influence:

> I thoroughly and still enjoy the challenge as well as the rewards of being in the pastoral side of school leadership. This means working with parents and pupils, being the gel between the parents and pupils, ensuring that they are at ease discussing issues, which may be negative or news of joy – looking after pupils' wellbeing whilst at the same time reassuring parents at home.

Her emphasis is not necessarily in terms of position, but how she can enhance her pastoral influence, which in turn serves as fulfilment of service to others:

> I am selfless; to be honest with you. It is not for me – I am not doing this job because I want to do my job. I am doing it for the kids, the parents. In terms of how I make a difference, a child comes in at Year 7, and you can still talk to the child all the way to 6th Form – building those blocks, having respect, having that professional relationship where they are happy to come to you if they have a problem, sharing their joys and woes. Parents coming to you, "Could you please speak to my son about this and this, because I am having difficulties with him" It is you being an additional aid more than just helping the parents along. Sometimes, the parents are at their wit's end and sometimes the students are – we have to act as the go-between, helping them. I get a personal inner satisfaction in helping people, it warms my heart. The ones that I like to help the most are those that do not come to you straight away – the ones that are quite defiant to show that they rule you. I like to break them down slowly but surely, in a nice way.

She 'breaks' down the most difficult by 'tapping' into them; which means getting to 'their level' and letting them know she understands their concerns, whilst at the same time remaining a teacher 'to ensure respect'. By 'their level', she means talking on a range of issues so that her satisfaction is no further than the 'reward of seeing pupils pass their examination, develop socially and become honourable individuals to their families and that they are exciting to their community'.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

One factor sustaining Kathy's school leadership aspiration is the level of support she gets from her mentors, students and parents. She sees the achievements of

her BME-heritage mentors as a barometer, and their presence gives her opportunities to discuss issues of 'common denominators':

> One of the things that sustain me is seeing my mentors succeed in their role, striving, surviving and achieving. Learning how they have overcome. Like a mirror to me, they are able to allow me see myself properly, giving me the key to finish the race. There is the opportunity to gel together as a group, cushion each other and be a bridge between various things that may go wrong or right, and like a buffer, strengthening each other.

She also values the positive feedback from pupils, and from parents particularly in her involvement in the critical stages of their children's development:

> It is encouragement from students, the backing of parents and some staff [mentors] in the establishment; so that your aspiration can be built – where your aspiration is underpinned by pupils and parents. The students are a source of strength for me, even with the most difficult ones. I am their vehicle taking them through the journey of learning, whether it is a piece of music or an aspect of drama. The pupils are my driving force. I am like an ambassador for these pupils who doubt themselves, who don't feel they can achieve, ye. Just having discussions with them, it shows you they want to do well, and are proud of what they want to do and offer to the teacher. Just look at a Year 7 boy, when they first come into the school, the first thing they do, is everyone putting their hand up, wanting to show that they can do it, even if they cannot answer it. All these things make me feel good when I finish my full day. It gives me the encouragement, motivation and drive to understand that I am doing something for a purpose.

Occasions do however arise when she feels discouraged because of the actions of some pupils, but 'a battle of laughter takes place in order to overturn the most negative comments directed into positives'.

Sometimes she tries to counteract the negativity of students against her well-meaning efforts by using what she calls 'reverse psychology':

> If a child would not want to let you sit down, I get the rest of the class to stand, or if he does not want to leave the classroom, I get the rest of the class to leave, and leave him there. So we change the whole factor – he will understand that while he is standing, everyone is standing together doing our lesson. And then I ask him, "Would you want to sit down now? He will say, "yes please". We all sit back down. You have got to know how to get round these kids. You can't bully these kids to learn; they are individuals as we are. And first and foremost, we have got to understand that we are there for the children – that's the main purpose.

There are other occasions when her 'three-way traffic is not running smoothly', and often they relate to communication breakdown where pupils make false statements about teachers, when parents do not fully verify these statements and when teachers make premature decisions about students without the contextual information to support such decisions. She often stress the double-checking of facts so that 'as a consortium, they all work together'.

However the most felt impact on her confidence is the evaluation of senior school leaders. As alluded to earlier, how she reacts depends on whether it is worth fighting for. In one particular episode, she was observed by a consultant inspector who classified her lesson as *unsatisfactory*. She was clearly not happy about it because of what transpired during the lesson observation – the inspector was making a lengthy telephone conversation during the lesson, and in so doing startled and disrupted the pupils, not least Kathy. She felt that the inspector's attention was diverted for such a long time that any report would not be a fair reflection of her lesson. One student in observing what was happening and knowing the rules concerning the use of mobile phones in school took up the courage and asked Kathy:

> "Miss, how come you are allowing this to happen and just carrying on as if nothing is going on?". And as I said in the beginning of the interview, I do not like injustice and unfairness.

To exacerbate things further, she was supposed to be given feedback soon after the lesson, but it came days later. Kathy eventually secured a meeting with her curriculum leader and the consultant inspector in question; wanting to know why she had not been debriefed sooner and in any case why her lesson was graded as 'unsatisfactory'. Displeased with their explanation, she was forced to mention

the telephone incident, and the consultant inspector first denied it, but later admitted after students produced statements to the contrary. An apology was made and lesson subsequently upgraded to 'good'.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

Kathy's confidence about realising her school leadership aspiration depends largely on the support from various constituents – students, parents, mentors and senior school leaders. In one particular episode during her action research into how students through peer mentoring can improve themselves, when it became evident that the study was proving to be effective and that a leading financial institution was showing interest in her work, she was subtly side-lined as someone else more senior took over.

Initially unhappy, she eventually came to the conclusion that she did not have to spearhead the programme so long as it served the interest of the students. So to her, it no longer mattered whether she got the credit or acknowledgement because she understood the underlying school culture:

> They monitor you, they know it is you doing a good lesson, and they know how you are getting on. If someone said you are brilliant, you are brilliant. You get the praise every now and then, but it is like they get all the praise and I think it is quite unfair – I think it should be equally distributed and acknowledgement should be given to all. Sometimes it slips under the carpet, but it is like a deliberate way they go about doing these things.

She has come to expect that positive evaluations from senior leaders are not consistent, and she would rather not remonstrate too much about it. As she says:

> Where I am, if you pop your head up too often, you get knocked back. You've got to know when and how to go for certain things, when and how to speak to people. You have got to know when to play a strategic game to win properly. My quiet confidence is borne out of the politics within my organisation.

In these situations when recognition is not forthcoming from senior leaders, she relies on and is motivated by positive feedbacks from her mentors. In a recent reference written for her, she was not surprised at the way she was positively evaluated, and it was so impressive that she showed it to her parents, who in turn felt honoured and proud of her, and as she says, it 'this helps to keep me driven and motivated'. She gets support from three key constituents on the one hand, and on the other, support from senior leaders is inconsistent – so she threads this tight rope in order to maintain her quiet and cautious confidence towards her aspiration.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

To Kathy, the culture in School Y is one in which from the outside it is as if there is strong staff morale with an accommodating environment where anyone feels welcomed, but beneath this veneer is a stark undertone:

> The fact that if you are new, they will bend over backwards to keep you, but when you are further on your teaching, it is that you have got to show them your work, time and time again, and constantly try to prove something to them. From that point of view, your face has to fit. If you do not have a certain look or requirement for a certain position, it is not yours. Your personality and you are kind of conditioned to be a certain way to get a certain job.

In occasions when her own face fits, she has some strong factors which senior school leaders know will work well for the establishment or be of benefit to their own self-interest, and this puts her in a quandary:

> In a way is good, and in another way it is a hindrance because you have more work to do and you are not always supported. So those are the things and it is both ways, and as I have said to you, your face has to fit, and that's how I feel. It is like a baby in a womb, you feel warm, and when you start to come out now, the areas could change. It facilitates and impede, it is a bit of both. The reason being, if your face fits one month, all goes for you, and if it doesn't next month, you have to put yourself in the shell. So you have to, as I said before, keep the bubbling going to a simmer.

During the episodes where the school leaders feel she is useful, she makes the most of it, and in other times she finds ways to remain confident about herself and leadership aspiration – she tries to generate her sense of self-worth.

Kathy also notices that a number of senior leaders are now reaching their retirement age, but 'they are kind of training up and trading up young models for those positions'. The metaphor of 'trading up' means promoting some individuals at the expense of those generally acknowledged to be more deserving. She is circumspect for a variety of reasons:

> This is where you have to have to think about your actual economical pocket, if you have things that you have to do, you have to sit tight and let things flow past, and then start your actual point of view – of challenging things slowly. Do not attempt things at the beginning, let things warm up first, and let it cool down, then you know when you are ready to tackle certain issues. Sometimes you are curtailed and put back in your box when you come out and say a few things. When they close ranks on you, it has happened to others – it can be detrimental to the self; and the end of a person's career.

Kathy is somewhere in the middle ground, and she is aware it is an environment that leaves her in a conundrum – whether to remain silent or speak out against what she sees as unfair preference for particular colleagues, or to at least maintain good relationships in the expectation of achieving her goals – more often, she errs on caution. To her, School Y has the capacity for her leadership aspiration to be realised, whether or not it is being utilised for all is exemplified by the current school culture of partial recognition towards certain individuals.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Emergent issues

Aspiration is the motive and incentive value attached to an *object*, moderated by the expectation of attainment; with the *object* being some form of self-conceived

role or mandated hierarchical position. The aspirants here seek to exercise or realise influence in their self-conceived roles, with greater emphasis on the intrinsic or what this study refers to as 'intangibles', and they do so within an environment that some deem facilitating. Thus, the nature of their school leadership aspiration seem to reside in self-conceived leadership roles – whether in fulfilling purpose or in the transcendence of others, and notions of leadership success not necessarily in terms of hierarchical positions. It may also be the case that hierarchical success is not necessarily available, as Omono alludes to, and as such the mode of school leadership progression or success is framed from individual perspectives. Table 4.1 summarises these motive and incentive values, and expectations.

Table 4.1 Summary of subjective value and expectation within respective aspirations

	Subjective (motive and incentive) value		Expectation	
	Role conception	**Perception of success**	**Confidence**	**Environment**
Tami	Transformational leadership role	Extent to which purpose is fulfilling	Contingent on ability to transform others	Agency exercised in enabling culture
Rod	Educator	Satisfaction in finding innovative ways to engage students	Contingent on ability to commission himself	Agency exercised in both enabling and inhibiting culture
Omono	Pastoral role in classroom	Extent to which pastoral efforts in class is successful	Contingent on self-evaluation of efforts in class	Agency not necessarily exercise in an enabling culture
Kathy	Mentoring role between parents and students	Satisfaction in seeing pupils develop	Function of feedback and support from others	Agency not necessarily exercise in both enabling and inhibiting culture

The expectancy of attaining some form of influence seems to be shaped by converging and or conflicting forces, from personal background and the way these aspirants see themselves professionally, and reactions to various issues in the situated environment, and which in turn shape their real or perceived school

leadership success. It is to be noticed also that these aspirants have varying degrees of autonomy, so the dynamic nature of their agency exercised in concert with or against structure have proved important to leadership success. In this respect, some of them have been able to commission themselves and feel that they are fortunate to be in a facilitating environment, whilst Kathy for example tries to thread that careful balance between an environment sometimes facilitating to her school leadership aspirations (when her face fits), and sometimes inhibiting (being put back into her shell again).

The key issues are ways aspirants frame their school leadership role and perceive success; and which have not necessarily been operationalised in literature outside an emphasis on objective outcomes such as the attainment of hierarchical positions. Literature highlights various intersections, from religious and familial expectations that limit opportunities to attitudes and actions of individuals within the school environment. We find here that real or perceived sense that aspirations are being attained is further reinforced in part by the intersection the personal, professional and situated factors, and in another, by the consequential ability to exercise agency to within either an enabling or inhibiting school culture. These issues are discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 6.

Concluding remark

This chapter presented narratives of four aspirants in response to the research areas of contextual background, conception and school leadership attraction, sustaining factors and confidence towards school leadership aspiration, and culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration. In the next

chapter, aspirants with greater emphasis on 'tangibles' such as hierarchical position, improvement of systems, prestige or other extrinsic outcomes, are presented.

CHAPTER 5

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ASPIRATIONS DEFINED BY TANGIBLE CRITERIA OF SUCCESS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

The narratives presented here are from the six other BME teachers with aspirational incentives centred more on what this study refers to as 'tangibles' or extrinsic outcomes such as attainment of hierarchical positions, prestige, attainment grades and system improvement. These outcomes seem to be satisfying to their sense of fulfilment or influence, and or serve as instrumental values to other desires – hence they form the basis of their aspirational motives.

Chapter outline

Similar to the previous chapter, this is divided into six other sections presenting in six evolving series the contextual background of aspirants, their individual conception of school leadership and reasons for aspiring towards particular leadership role, the factors sustaining such leadership aspiration, confidence in attaining leadership aspiration, and assessment of the culture in school and whether it is facilitating or inhibiting to school leadership aspiration. All of these aimed at answering the three basic research questions stipulated in Chapter 1.

5.2 CASE EXAMPLE FIVE – Kuban

Contextual background

Kuban is South African of south Asian descent. He is interested in history, cultural differences and commonalities, and how they evolve over time. His current interest is in how the Indian subcontinent (Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India), once a single entity, eventually disintegrated; and why there is a chasm between China and Japan, even with cultures rooted in similar history:

> I enjoy matching what I have learnt in history; being in places and matching what have been in place – what happened at certain times. I am very fascinated by people's different cultures, and how it has developed over time, and how across our culture, we have commonalities, and in our different ways we aim to achieve. Take the Indian subcontinent, when India was at the top, Afghanistan, India and Bangladesh were one, and how they broke away fascinates me – why they eventually breakdown. Again, you look at China and Japan, I could never understand why there is a chasm between these two – why a Chinese or Japanese takes offence when a Chinese is referred to as Japanese and Japanese take offence when they are called Chinese. Their culture is rooted in history – look at what happened in the 2nd World War – how the Japanese took advantage of the Chinese – it takes itself across the globe on how cultures are string amongst peoples.

Kuban feels he is a principled man, setting his 'stall rightly or wrongly with the word'. His late father instilled in him the principle that if there is something that cannot be taken, it is saying what he means and meaning what he says.

He likes individuals who are open to suggestion, and who may not necessarily agree with him, but at least they would listen and take on-board what he has to say. Conversely, he dislikes dishonesty, duplicitous school leaders. It is not to say they will not make mistakes or change course, but it should be conveyed clearly for others to respond accordingly and not to subtly change mutual agreements:

> If you said to me that at some point, you have changed your mind, you need to inform me, rather than trying to subtly change the conditions of our original understanding – don't be limping to different opinions. Don't be someone who is indecisive, be strong and believe in who you are and what you can do. I like people who are open to suggestions, they may not

> necessarily agree with everything you say, but at least they may agree to disagree. I might not agree with everything that you are saying, but I listen and take on-board everything you are saying, so that I know where you are coming from. I respect people who are not yes-men, who say, 'I agree with you because of so and so', because then we all know who is at the party. Above all, I like to be a team player and in any situation – no man is an island. You might have your own selfish wants and if you are not going to take people along, then eventually that is going to fall out.

When growing up he was taught to always 'respect people irrespective of skin colour, age and not to treat people otherwise', and that to get angry is okay insofar as he knows who he is addressing. He respects elders and as he says:

> I enjoy spending time with the older folks, as they are far wiser. I enjoy their stories, them telling you about the salient things that they have done makes you think twice before you do something. You always know that there is someone with experience that you can go to, and that has allowed me deal with young people. You know sometimes, you want to just jump in and tell them to change that and this – sometimes you have just got to take a step back and allow them to do and learn things. Then you give them support.

Kuban took the offer from the South African government to complete a postgraduate teaching qualification, having previously graduated as a computer scientist. He taught for a while in South Africa before relocating to the UK more than a decade ago, and in the last two years has taught in School Z.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

Kuban conceptualises school leadership as influence exercised in guiding a community of children by a community of adults working together in concert, from an academic or behavioural perspective. For Kuban, it is about directing 'two separate entities, as in children and adults to work together' to form a community in whole unit, not parts, for common purpose. A school leader must understand how the constituent parts interact as a whole entity to achieve common goals. A leader must understand the strength and weaknesses of its members, and try to negate weaknesses through individual strengths, as well as

the type of resources needed to manage effectively within a professional environment.

His main emphasis is how to energize students in the classroom, and colleagues to work in concert to this end. He thus sees hierarchical positions as useful insofar as he can use the power vested to influence the classroom. He was recently appointed as an assistant principal in a new school, but says eventually becoming a principal must fit the phase of his professional development and service to others. Senior leadership, to him, is about leading students through developmental stages from arrival at 11 and exit at 16, and taking responsibility for the developmental journeys of staff, so that they constructively contribute to school and are fit for other outside roles. Irrespective of whatever position he finds himself, whether as a frontline teacher or a senior school leader, the crux of his aspiration is about influence in the classroom.

> Yes inclusion is important, timetabling is important, site management and accommodation in the school are all important, but the heartbeat of the school is teaching and learning. I remember when I went for an interview for as a head of ICT and the head teacher said to me, "for the first 6 months, the only thing I want you to focus on is to get it right in the classroom and if you get it right in the classroom everything else will follow". You know what, my hats off to her, because it works. By getting it right in the classroom, not just to teach the material, but to understand the social background of where you are, what the context is, being able to get amongst them and knowing where they are, so that when you get to a point when you begin to express your influence, it is not just accepted, but believed because you are one of them.

This emphasis on getting to know context is exemplified in his observation about what parents often tell their children – "you must go to school, you must have an education", without giving them reasons for being there.

He attributes this to their mental picture of the school as where children are meant to be, rather than a place to learn and unearth potential. This, to him, is

where the teacher must become proactive by making the child understand where they are now and are meant to be tomorrow. And the vehicle to do this is teaching and learning – which is not just curricula, but seeing the need to go play football and expend energy. As he puts it:

> When a child who has been given homework comes to you, having not done it, you are not straight away going to stick them in detention – believe you me, I am all for discipline, but you are also trying to unearth why this student cannot do homework. Is it possible that the child cannot do their homework because they have to take care of siblings? That for me is the reason why teaching and learning is the key, because this is where all these things get unearthed. The fact that you are enquiring and providing help or that you have a listening ear, they know that you are there for them. You are observing lessons, not just formally, but walking around, noticing that there is a student outside, and you support the teacher by saying, "so and so has been misbehaving in the class, let me take him for 20 minutes, and have a word". Then the message gets sent that this teacher is important. As a leader, you are not undermining a teacher by putting your head through the door and bollocking the whole class. You are not pointing out that he cannot do his job; they know that you are supporting a colleague, and that if 'you mess around with this teacher; you are messing around with me'.

This is how Kuban sees his role, and this frames his school leadership aspiration, so that any quest for positions is instrumental to a much greater emphasis on exercising influence in, and being part of the decision-making process on what is happening in the classroom. As he sees it, there is nothing as bad as when his suggestions are diluted on its way to the top, so the closer he is to the top of the school hierarchy, the greater the impact he can make in the classroom.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

One main factor sustaining Kuban's leadership aspiration, particularly when he has been faced with self-doubt about its realisation is what he calls the 'light bulb moment' of when a student suddenly understands what he has been teaching:

> I tell you of recent, meeting former students have taught me a bigger lesson because in the last few years there are quite a few times that I have doubted why I am teaching. Mind you, every time I have bumped into former students, it has just revitalised me and reaffirmed why I am teaching – one former

> student came up to me, hugged me, and saying, "you have changed my life". And I looked up and said, "What do you mean, all I did was to teach". The reply was, "O you are willing to listen to me and look at me now, I am working'". And then you look and say, "it is all worth it".
>
> A kid wrote me, "thank you for being a friend and dad to me". And then you realise, "hang on a second, I need to be also careful those impressionable mind are not be affected negatively". That's what I am saying about not giving too much, but allowing them to develop – they are not depending on you all the time – that they learn to be interdependent and independent. That they can go out. You do not serve a recipe all the time.

To Kuban, teaching and learning is more than curriculum content but how to nurse students to see life differently. Indeed 'cliché such as life-long learning are just meaningless words', if he cannot make pupils know and appreciate themselves.

Another factor which sustains him is balance, and which to him means one who has the mind-set to know where things should be and what approaches to take when faced with a myriad of initiatives. In other words, one who can embrace change by analytically taking things in and manipulating them to own circumstances:

> You see, there was a stage where you had the ICT thing, the inclusion and every-child matters thing, the special needs education thing, prior to all of this, you had the key stage strategy thing, all of these. Now there are loads of all these initiatives, and as an aspiring school leader, you have got to keep abreast of all of these, but you have got to see how it fits into the big picture for yourself and how you are going to take that forward. As you develop, you are able to embrace change and besides that, in having the analytical mind of not just taking things verbatim, but manipulate them to your own circumstances. You ask yourself how it works for you, which elements work for you. For sometimes assimilating things wholesale can have a negative impact because you have not taken account of the circumstances or certain elements. It is like listening to a song and getting the point – you ask yourself what the thrust of the initiative – the ability to do this sustains me.

An episode brings into focus his point – as head of a 'non-existent' information and communication technology (ICT) department, he had to lead a team that included a 'difficult' member and two non-ICT specialists. The 'difficult' ICT

colleague injured her wrist in an accident shortly before he took over the department. There were 150 course-works to be marked, and the head teacher told him to send to the teacher her own portion, but having evaluated the whole situation decided to mark the papers himself because he felt that if he were to be in the same situation, he would not appreciate being sent papers to mark.

> You know what; before the lady left the school she sent me an appreciation card. The head teacher remarked, "I do know what you've done, but none of us got a thank-you card from her".

Two mathematics teachers were not familiar with the ICT curriculum, and Kuban did not really expect them to deliver the same amount of paperwork needed. He prepared materials for them – schemes of work, lesson plans and so on, and in doing so broke the barriers that they would otherwise have faced as non-specialist ICT teachers – the department's attainment level shot up from sixteen to seventy-six per cent A – C grade within two years.

In his next appointment as the head of mathematics department 'which at that stage was failing in all respect', he was expected to lead a new team which the senior school leaders had made a lot of promises to concerning their career progression and to which he was not made aware of. He thus found himself dealing with these colleagues who felt that the senior leaders were duplicitous. He managed to lead this team because they all felt they were in the same boat, so to speak, when it came to broken promises. They adopted a common approach, and learnt from their strengths and weaknesses – those skilled at data analysis flourished; those skilled at classroom management and organisation informed others. They were willing to fight for each other and seven months later, they managed to achieve the best Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) result

the school ever had. The point is that he is able to balance himself by understanding the circumstances confronting him, knowing what information to assimilate out of a myriad of directives, and exercising his right not to make quick decisions.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

Kuban is very confident that he is realising his school leadership aspiration. One reason for this is that he has always been taught 'to do time' – this means that at every professional level, he has to spend enough time learning and experiencing. He believes that as an effective leader, one must be able to do the job of subordinates. This is one reason why he is very sceptical about the individuals who are fast-tracked to senior leadership, and without what he sees as 'doing time':

> To me, you must go through the process. I am a firm believer in leading by example. When I tell you to write a report, you have got to be able to do it. I must be in full knowledge as a leader to know how a report is written because I have done it, and know how long it takes. So when you come to me, I can offer good advice, whereas today it is not the case. I know for a fact some institutions, which I don't want to name, if you have a pretty face; you are more than likely to move up the ladder. God knows why, but it is the truth. When you are an analyst in just one aspect, you are suddenly taken up the chain of leadership – it is not just one aspect, it is got to be global because you are involving and responsible for more people. I was offered a position as an ICT consultant for some schools by the regional coordinator in one borough, but did not accept it because I said to myself; "before I go to a school and tell someone else this is how you do it, I need to be long enough in a school environment to be able to tell that person, this is how it is and what works". For trust to develop and be mutual, senior leaders must show to subordinates they were once in their positions, can do the work and lead by example.

On Kuban's part, he has taught core subjects and led teams in two core departments, so has every reason to be very confident that he is realising his leadership aspiration of greater influence in the area of teaching and learning in the classroom.

He says someone with passive experiences would assert, "I have been teaching for 10 years so I am qualified", but someone with active experience understands fully what he or she has done and what lessons were learnt:

> How it hooks on to becoming a leader later on. You are looking from a broader leadership perspective even as you are developing. Which is a big difference – as you are now see things quicker and develop that mind-set where you are looking at the curriculum as well as the social aspect. You are looking at your journey and then you reflect as a person and you understand fully that you are not the only person in this journey. Too many senior leaders are far too much interested in their own journey and they don't think of others and realise so many careers have been crushed, how they have jumped on others to get there. You can't take advantage of the friendship of someone to advance your own journey. I don't try and cash in on the friendship and efficiency of others to get to where I am going.

Active experience to him also takes the form of a listening ear. In his previous school as the ICT head, one senior leader had the patience to listen to him 'no matter what stupid things' he dreamt up. For him, it was amazing how this propelled his confidence to the point where he could reflect on his strengths and discuss his weaknesses with her.

This, to him is the essence of leadership – someone who has been there, and has the wherewithal to listen and give sound advice. Conversely, the essence of bad leadership is one in which authority is exercised to the detriment of others, and this is exemplified in the culture that he is currently facing in his school:

> You being a specialist; you have been asked to give your views as a specialist, and once you have done it, they are then dismissed – it begs belief that if I am a specialist and I am being employed, and not to take on board what I said. I remember when I made a call on some exam entries, the head teacher, yes, the head teacher has the right to challenge, but surely there comes a line where you as the specialist is granted the call – but he blatantly rejected my call even before the facts.

To Kuban, not being granted the autonomy to make the call as a specialist, and then being micro-managed, so much so that the person hired for a task is no longer given the freedom to make informed calls and be held accountable is not

leadership – having been hired for that purpose and not allowed to function is tantamount to authoritarianism. To him, the true skill of a leader is to create the capacity for others to reach their potential, and do what they have been trained or hired for, and be held accountable for their brief and be rewarded accordingly.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

Kuban will soon take up appointment as an assistant principal in a new school about 20 miles from his present school. He decided to leave his current position almost as soon as he arrived, but wanted to complete what he was appointed for – to transform a department, and in reiterating some of the further some of the problems, he says:

> If you don't share an opinion then you are made for senior leadership. It is not just my opinion, too many people know it, and even the cleaner knows it. And I think it is one of distrust that has developed – this chasm between senior leadership and members of staff, and then thinking that you can laugh it off by throwing a party and everything is okay – it does not work. We could all laugh and do the dancing thing, when it comes to the day-to-day things, if people are not happy, it does not work. The staff turnover is quite high now; this summer, 15. The number of the staff that has turned over is almost 40% over the last two years and why are there people being snapped up by other organisations? It says something else. You have to ask yourself why? To me, the culture is privy to one person.

To Kuban, the head came in with preconceived ideas, brought in a handpicked deputy and they both decided to rule without regard to the feelings of others:

> If you treat people the way you do, then it is going to hit home. The site manager is retiring, whilst still in his office, the head and deputy takes a tape to measure his office as he is sitting. He looks at them, and asks, "What is going on?", and they replied by saying they will be using the office in September. No dignity. The site manager said to me, "my body is not even cold yet, they want to take over"; where is the dignity and respect. What stops them coming when he is not around. There must be a way of treating people – they have the accorded power and they want to do their own thing. How do you defend decisions that are one-sided?

Episodes like these are the norm, and thus exemplify the culture of School Z. So in terms of moving up the school leadership ladder, just as how his colleagues

in his mathematics department were promised advancement opportunities, he feels that the head teacher and other very senior leaders have not lived up to their promises.

However, because of what he believes is his self-belief that he will ultimately succeed, he has been able to make his mark in the classroom, and as have ~~as~~ been indicated, he recently was rewarded with an appointment in another school as assistant principal in charge of teaching and learning. He was not actually surprised that he was appointed – in fact he had more than one school who valued his experience and expertise:

> What you cannot beat is hard cold data, if you had taken a school from one position to another through what you have done? If you have not been given the promises when you were first appointed then professionally you have been lied to. I was called to the office and been told that I will be offered a compromise – the principal telling me, "At the end of academic year, you finish off and then I will give me an extra 2 months' salary". How does this inspire confidence? That tells you of the culture, but I am glad I have been valued rightly by other organisations.

For him, the School Z has the capacity for him and others to fulfil their school leadership aspirations; however these episodes and his view that certain actions are skewed against BME individuals or those who are not favoured, all serve to limit many. He observes that when he first arrived, non-white appointments were made, but somehow he felt that it was not a whole-hearted exercise:

> When in the space of 18 months, a new head and his deputy has systematically dismantled this group and when as you are about to leave, there is only one non-white in a form of leadership in the school from about 15, then you got to realise that there has been a hidden agenda. It is not possible that all had altercation with other members to have been dismissed or they were bad teachers. When there was an opportunity for non-white members to go overseas to represent the school, and then the only teachers that get to go are whites, this is the icing on the cake. If the whole thrust of the initiative was to engender better relationship between these groups, how credible is it that the minority teachers were excluded. It is not rocket science that the culture hampers progress in a nutshell.

The culture then, in his school is one that impedes the progress of many teachers, particularly from, as he observes, many non-white colleagues. In spite of this, he believes he is realising his school leadership aspiration – meaning; increasing influence on matters related to teaching and learning in the classroom, and that positions happen to be a corollary of this conceived school leadership role.

5.3 CASE EXAMPLE SIX – Adama

Contextual background

Adama first started 'teaching' during his secondary education in Ghana when he organised tutorials to raise additional funds for his schooling. By the time he completed secondary education, he decided he wanted to become a quantity surveyor – he later graduated from University of Accra with a building technology degree. His decision to become a teacher came after he immigrated to the UK; when he worked as a supply teacher. After a number of weeks assisting in mathematics lessons, he decided to apply for the Graduate Teacher Training Programme (GTTP), and in qualifying a year later, he has taught in School X. Adama is most satisfied when he challenges students academically, and when in return they respond positively to his challenge. His traditional upbringing of hard work, fending for oneself, responsibility for own actions and independent learning, are values he prefers to inculcate into his students. In this respect, he dislikes disruptive students who 'create a mess for themselves and others who want to learn'. He does not see any reason why, with resources at their disposal compared to the few he grew up with, they should not want to learn. His own experience is particularly poignant – he farmed to pay for his

tuition, and in one particular year he had a good harvest, which enabled him to purchase vital school provisions.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

Adama conceptualizes school leadership as the exercise of influence in building the most conducive learning environment and experience for students, and in providing the necessary tools for teachers to facilitate this. To him, school leadership is about eliminating as much as possible barriers to learning and academic achievement. If a teacher can do this, he does not see any reason why students should still to be disruptive or be given more attention:

> I want them to be streamlined so that they don't disturb the learning of others. So if people know that there are consequences for every action they take, then they would not come to mess about.

Adama's main attraction is grades because he enjoys the expectation placed on him to achieve attainment targets. He does recognise the pastoral side of school leadership in developing the student, after-all a well-rounded student may increase the likelihood of higher academic attainment, but for him:

> It is the academic side, for I will never be a head of year – it does not attract me, and you will have to deal with a lot of parents. I do not see this as an objective good enough for me. What I want are targets; so by targets I mean having numbers of students, and I want to get 70% A – C grade, and I work towards them, and I am happy when I get that. So there are tangible things that you can do – I like that. You could say that the pastoral aspect is a target itself, but for me it is not good enough. You could say it is a target by stipulating only two exclusions per year or "I want only fifty referrals" – things like that are targets, but they are not tangible enough for me. I am not saying that the pastoral aspect is not important for students to be educated. It must be a whole. So I am not saying it is only the academic, as they are other aspects they have to learn, but I simply like the academic.

Adama thus finds it satisfying to meet academic targets, and enjoys the fact that he can analyse baseline student data, teach and then predict what they will attain at the exit point of their secondary education.

To him it is a question of accountability and what can be done to ensure students develop academically and achieve their grades – it is about tangible rather than intangible evidence.

> As I said before, everybody is happy when they achieve something. I am happy when I achieve my targets, and I like the fact that I can sit down, and look at a student list and look at this background and say that, "based on these factors, by the end of KS4 we should have or must be targeting 80% 'A star' to 'C'. We must be targeting 'A' and 'A star'", I things like that, I like that, and it is well measured for me – something quantifiable. However, I recognise other types of measures which are subjective or holistic. It is just a question of, "have you achieved that or not". In the case of the subjective measurements, one person can say this or that, when someone is a good pastoral leader, it comes across, but people might have different views, but whenever a person passes or fails, you cannot argue against that.

He sees himself increasing his influence and effectiveness in this area through making the most out of the opportunities at his disposal – skills acquisition and leadership advancement.

When he started six or seven years ago as a qualified teacher, his main aspiration was to become a key stage coordinator. Having been successful at this level and recently been appointed as the head of mathematics in the same school he completed his induction year, his intermediate goal is to acquire more skills and become effective as a middle leader, with the aim of progressing further to higher levels in future. His long-term aspiration however is to build a school in Ghana. Adama's other passion is farming, and as he says, 'seeing plants germinant and grow' is something rewarding to him. He told his spouse that when the time is right, simultaneously as he establishes a school he will begin large scale farming. At first glance this does not align with his teaching profession, but to him farming and teaching are intrinsically linked because they are respectively, basic human needs for survival and understanding of environment in which humans have to survive.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

The main factor sustaining Adama's school leadership aspiration is working in a supportive environment where colleagues help each other. He is appreciative of a deputy principal and the head of English who continue to encourage and support him – 'these two individuals have made me feel confident about myself and my ability'. A supportive environment also means resources at his disposal, which in some cases are tangibles, such as equipments or books, and in some other cases, the capacity to demonstrate his skills and implement ideas:

> When I see that resource is not there, after a while I back off, as you will see that you need to be challenging yourself all the time when things are the same for a considerable number of times. In our department, we now have A-levels mathematics; we now have early entries for GCSE and additional mathematics. This year the top set Year 10 took their exams as the Year 11s. We spend much more time at our work places than we do with our families and therefore if you are not happy at your workplace, you might think people are against you. Then your life will become miserable, so it is good to have people you can work together with. Nice people who appreciate your work, what you are doing, and your suggestions.

A supportive environment also entails the trust bestowed on subordinates by senior leaders.

During one feedback session from an unsuccessful first interview for the internal vacancy as head of mathematics department, an interviewer told him that they were surprised at the answers he gave to some difficult questions, but they felt that he was not ready:

> "We know you can teach and all that, but the question we have is, can you actually motivate people, can you inspire people, can you actually inspire people?". From what that person was saying, it sounded as if I was not cut out to be a leader. …When you put one or two of their comments together, you conclude that they are working against your progress.

Adama expects criticisms, provided they are justified and constructive. What he dislikes are those who give the outward impression that they want him to

progress, but inwardly do not. Only the deputy head teacher was constructive by advising him to first align his performance management needs with his leadership aspiration, and then acquire the skills necessary and seek to demonstrate his ability at every opportunity:

> One of the things that I did after the failed interview was to do a whole-school assembly, and after that I got a note from the head teacher. It was during the maths focus week, and the department head did not want to do it, and so wanted another department to do something, and I said "no, and I will step in" and I did it.

In volunteering to take up this challenge, the once sceptical senior leadership team began to see Adama in a new light, and as he says:

> It makes me have a good outlook. I am somebody who wants to succeed in whatever I am doing, so when you go up in leadership, your income may go higher a bit, but what people remember you by is how much you were able to contribute to their lives and society. So if I can see in three years when I may be leaving the profession that I have been able to raise the achievement of GCSE maths to 70% or 80%, then that's an achievement that I will put in my CV and to which I have been able to do. It is true that financial consideration comes in, but the way I see life is that, at the end of the day, it is what you have been able to contribute that matters.

In overcoming many challenges on the way, the ultimate criteria for him and to which he feels he must be judged on is how well he has been able to contribute to school attainment level, so that when he eventually decides to leave for Ghana to establish his school, he would be secured in the knowledge that he has built his reputation as an effective leader in the area of student attainment.

On a much more personal dimension, he has been faced with issues related to his family and how unhappiness at work may affect his life in general. With the arrival of his first child, and the need for both parents to remain employed whilst childcare and schooling is administered, they managed some challenges:

> One constraining factor that I have is my travelling to school – the time and distance – I would prefer a school close by. I have been able to overcome this by driving basically. I wanted to actually try the train, but now I have been

> unable to because I have to take my son to the nursery. We all go together, I drop my wife, my son and then I go to work. Maybe an increased family size will be an even more constraining factor in the future. We spend much more time at our work places than we do with our families and therefore if you are not happy at your workplace, you might think people are against you. Then your whole life will become miserable, so it is good to have people you can work together with. Nice people who appreciate your work, what you are doing, and your suggestions – that you work together and can have a joke. It is good to realise that you have students that you think you can mould to achieve well for them to go on to be successful citizens in whatever they are doing – that is also very good.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

To Adama, his confidence comes from lessons in overcoming obstacles, and in the belief in divine providence. His father was a vehicle upholstery man, so the expectation was for him to follow in his father's footsteps. He was sent to a vocational college to do some apprenticeship, but he did not like it at all, so told his parents that what he really wanted to do was more academic work. They were not really interested, but within himself he felt a strong need to fulfil his aspiration. So at fourteen, he walked into a secondary school and asked for the opportunity to join other students. The school administrators told him, "You must take an entrance examination". So determined, he requested for the examination date, syllabus and the type of textbooks required. He bought them, studied with the aid of the syllabus, and when the time came for the entrance examinations, he sat and passed them all, and was admitted the following year. Transportation became a problem because his village to the secondary school was about four miles, so he sold the pigs he reared in his farm to buy his first bicycle. He grew maize, cassava, garden-eggs and tomatoes to buy books and materials for his schooling. During harvest he would fill a pickup vehicle called *Oran*, send it to the market, sell the produce wholesale to retailers, and then use the proceeds to support himself.

After a year in the school, he won a scholarship to become a boarding student. He took this opportunity because it eliminated the need for the daily four-mile commute. He won another scholarship and subsequently went to a Sixth Form college in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, and when he completed his Higher School Certificate (HSC). He taught and still farmed for a while to raise more money before going to university.

> I have passed through a lot. If when I was a child, someone had told me I will travel, come to a place like this and teach, I would not have believed. When I was a child, all they wanted of me was a car upholstery man.

Adama is also religious, believing in the serendipity that Jehovah will always provide him with his needs, but not necessarily what he wants:

> The most important thing in my life, nothing comes across that is my meeting days I must be there, even if it clashes with any other professional activity. I go to my preaching on Saturdays and go to my meeting on Sunday. So that's the basis – if I don't get it, I know that prayers are answered in three ways – "yes", "no" or "not yet". So if it is "yes", that's fine, if it "no", that's fine also, but if it is "not yet", then maybe in the future, that's the most basic thing that impacts my confidence.

His experience in overcoming hardships as well as strong religious conviction prevents him from envisaging a challenge so overpowering that he will totally lose confidence to realise his school leadership aspiration. He takes a lot of biblical stories to heart, for example, how the curses of the Moabites against the Israelites were turned into blessings because the Israelites were faithful to Jehovah – but when they were not, Jehovah's favour departed from them, and their enemies were able to attack and subdue them.

This type of story shapes his view on the role of divine providence in overcoming many of his challenges:

> So what I see is that as long as I have Jehovah's favour, there is no challenge that I cannot overcome. It is when I don't do His will and that protection is gone, that things become challenging and heavy – so that's the spiritual side.

> When we go to the current situation and my professional side, it would be a challenge if you are not able to put a team together and work together, and if the team does not like one's style of leadership. So I envisage my immediate challenge as putting a team together as the new head of department, if the team do not like my style of leadership, and also, I need to let the senior leadership know what I am doing, or else it becomes a challenge. Especially as I have senior members in my department. I also see contribution as valuable as I lead this team – the whole is always better than the sum of the parts.

And as he alludes to here, since his recent appointment as the head of mathematics department, he feels one main challenge is to manage in his team comprising of senior school leaders.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

As far as Adama is concerned, learning from own experiences, belief in own ability and God's divine providence are what sustains his confidence, so he does not entertain the notion that the culture within his school is one that impedes his school leadership aspiration:

> I don't think that the culture affects me; it will neither improve nor discourage me. I am outside it, I am transparent, and so it does not impact me at all. I do not recognise it as an impediment to my school goals.

In school, he likes to spend much of his spare time in his classroom or the department's office shying away from large social gatherings because he is working on things related to the school or of a personal nature, such as preparing messages as a senior leader in his fellowship.

> I think for me, it would be good to go to the staffroom, and I always seem to have other things to do, also I do not have anything against those who go there. I see going to the staffroom or pub as time wasting – I have other things to do. When I go for my religious meetings, I sometimes have to do the teaching, so I use the time to prepare.

Since his belief is that there is no underlying culture that impedes him, School X has the capacity for him to fulfil his school leadership aspiration – after all, they just appointed him as the head of mathematics.

He points to many examples where it has facilitated him – prior to this appointment, when the deputy head teacher advised him to realign his performance targets to his career aspiration, he requested for a one-day course. The deputy said, "this is not a good course, we will rather put you in this one" – a three and a half day course, paid for in full. It was a massive boost to Adama, and an indication to him that in spite of some scepticism about not cut out to be a leader, there are others who believe in his potential. In another instance, he went to the computer office and requested for a new laptop, and he was given one. Last year, departments were told that they could bid for some extra funds to carry them forward, and his department won £10000 to buy additional resources. So from Adama's perspective, the school's underlying culture is one that is supportive and therefore conducive to realising his school leadership aspiration.

5.4 CASE EXAMPLE SEVEN – Dwain

Contextual background

In Jamaica, where Dwain was born and spent his formative years, he took part in various performances, and his teachers saw his potential, and encouraged him to develop his acting skills. When he eventually completed his secondary education, he applied to study drama in an elite dramatic arts school. During his application process, he was cautioned about the limited opportunities for actors in Jamaica and advised to enrol for a joint degree programme with teaching component. He eventually took this advice because it made sense if he wanted to remain employed after graduation. Dwain's academic aptitude eventually resulted in completing his final year in State University of New York. He went

back to Jamaica after graduation, and as he feared he never realised his acting career, so:

> I defaulted into teaching. Deep down, I wanted to do performances, but now found myself teaching drama. The degree training nevertheless has given me both the teaching and acting skills.

After teaching in Jamaica for 3 years, he migrated to the UK more than ten years ago and since then worked as examination secretary, gifted and talented coordinator, extended schools manager and head of year in School X. In his mid-30s, he likes committed, vision-oriented and organised people because he 'love(s) to be perfect and to be right'.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

Dwain conceptualizes school leadership as a group of individuals steering a school through strategic visioning from one position to another in order to achieve certain targets. He says as a leader:

> You must know where you want to go, and reasons for going to certain direction. Again, it depends on where you are, and the kind of people helping you to run the organisation, and where you want to take them.

Dwain is attracted to the pastoral side of school leadership, and he feels that it is through this route that he has been able to advance his school leadership aspiration of becoming an effective change agent and an important person professionally:

> I am currently the head of year, I see the pastoral route – but I have recently taken up a new position this September as an assistant principal. Though I have taken up a new position, I still have some curriculum experience, but the pastoral is major and therefore more than the curriculum one. I want to make changes – I think the higher up you are the better you are able to make changes. I have been able to make changes within my classroom, my year group, and I think I need to make bigger changes, so that's the reason why I am heading towards headship. However, that's not where I hope to stay for I see that as a route to even bigger and greater things. I want to go into policy writing – I want to be an advisor, I want to be someone who works with the government that would direct education. I am not sure of the specific title,

> but I think I need to pass through headship going to maybe a government advisory role or policy making – so I want to make national changes, not just in a school or locally.

Dwain believes the realisation of his school leadership aspiration is incremental – moving up positional hierarchy, until he can influence policy and make meaningful changes in a much wider scale.

However, he is reticent about what particular future changes he has in mind, and as he says,

> We should be changing things that are not working. At this moment, I can't say specifically what I will like to change. I am not sure what the context is like before I make change. I am not fully aware of the context of the new job I am going into, but if I could effect change, I would want to make sure that schools become more inclusive and that there is equal, not disparity amongst people. When I say disparity, I mean not just colour, but ability, choices and opportunities, and about getting parents on-board. It is about getting more stakeholders involved. Change should happen if you understand the context, and one cannot just go in and change without knowing whether the current practices and processes are not working, and assessment of impact changes.

Understanding context is important as a change agent – as a pastoral head and in the environment in which School X serves, he could see one area in need of change, and that was in the way parents should be educated about the value of instruction from teachers. He could not understand why parents were so antagonistic toward teachers, and from his communication with them, he has come to realise that they have had bitter experiences of schooling themselves, and as such they seem to somehow translate their cynicism from own experiences of schooling to their children:

> I think a lot of problems we have in school today is that the parents are contributing as well. A lot of them have had poor schooling, and so they become quite defensive and defiant when concerns are raised about their children. I think we need to educate parents and I think it is one of the missing links and I know that the government is trying to do more to have extended schools and get parents in. I think that's just one of the missing links – parents need to understand what school is about and be more on side. Because if you try to instil certain values, by the time they go home, if it is not consistent, the change will not have an impact.

He firmly believes that their efforts can only be supported only when parents understand through education the value of what they put in as pastoral heads, otherwise it will be undone.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

For Dwain, a lot of things are unexplainable in life, one of which is his inner drive to become somebody of note – the need to be successful, to be an important person in life, and build a professional reputation as an effective change agent is what drives him. He believes it is not just for him, but for others. So if he fails, he will forever remain an unfulfilled person:

> A lot of the things that I go through in life comes from my inside intrinsic internal drive to do things because some of the things that is giving me this energy to want to reach a certain position is a desire to make change. I think it is about self-fulfilment, and knowing that I can get there. I am from a deprived part of Jamaica and one of those areas that if I can attain a level of success – it will be a message to others that they could attain as well. I am making a statement to my family as well. Telling them that when we have the opportunity, we can be whatever we want to be. I want others to see and realise that there is potential in all of us.

Concomitant with this inner drive to be somebody of note is the value he places on his religious faith (to which he wants to remain private about) and support from significant others. He is quite reluctant dwelling on faith because it is often not taken seriously in academic circles, and so he feels it would not be of any value to his narrative:

> Another important factor which sustains me is my religious faith. I believe in a greater Being, and I think He has empowered me – I just want to move this. I am not sure this will add anything to our discussion, but the main thing is that it sustains my ambition. I mean, I know in academic research, when you make reference to religious beliefs, and because of the situation with religious beliefs, academic people and assessors, because they are not of religious persuasions tend to frown upon us – if I say that God is going to help me, that's fine for me, but that might not add quality or fact to some research findings as yours to some extent, so I am not going to bring up my religious faith in this conversation.

He believes his faith does have a part in moulding him through certain things he is able to impact on others – but he does not want to discuss this further.

As an outgoing head of year, Dwain conducted his last assembly in School X and many of the students were crying because he was leaving to take up his new position as an assistant principal. They told him how he enabled them:

> I think because of these small things, comments here, the compliments there, are what affect me in a positive way and thinking within myself, 'you are helping pupils on a small scale, just imagine the amount you can do on a larger scale? Just imagine what you can do if you have greater influence as a principal and a very senior leader?'

Situations where students show their appreciation often strengthen his conviction and provide the type of 'tangible evidence' that his leadership aspiration is worthwhile and being realised. Closely linked to appreciations are his positive relationships with school leaders who occupy senior positions:

> I think I have had support from my line manager as well – all my line managers have been pushing me and this has helped to sustain my aspiration. Lastly, I have always wanted to become an important person in life. So I think that is also helping me sustain my career aspirations.

Four things then sustain his school leadership aspiration, and they are – innate drive to build his reputation, faith, student appreciation and leaders' support.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

Dwain's confidence that he is realising his school leadership aspiration is based on planning his course of action and past experiences. To him, planning properly is about understanding job specifications of desired role, knowing what skills are needed, and the route to take and acquire them in the least amount of time:

> I am very confident that I will get there because of my experiences, and how I am going about aligning myself to the skills and experiences that is required to get there. In addition, I believe that if you have a strategic plan to your

> career, you know what tools to get there; you should be able to get to that position.

For example, when he wanted to become an assistant principal three years ago, he researched what the position entails, worked closely with senior school leaders in his school to gain valuable experience and skills to meet the job specification and descriptions. Having done this, he applied for two jobs, one matching what he really wanted and the other slightly lower. A colleague or two suggested that he should go for the lesser one – "that's a very big job; you are better off going for a lesser one". He organised some trial interviews, reviewed his practice and achievements, and told himself, "okay, this bigger job is a practise, and I will use it to get the second one". Fortunately, he was successful as he was appointed as an assistant principal at another school.

It has not been plain sailing for him though, for on one or two occasions, his enthusiasm was met by opposition. In one episode, he offered extra tutorials on production and drama techniques to some students during lunch time (he told them that that they could have their lunch in the classroom, so long as they tidy up before leaving). A particular senior leader who always looked for opportunities to challenge him saw it as just one more occasion to do so. During one of the tutorial sessions the senior leader ordered the students to leave the classroom at once, even though he knew that they were being supervised. Dwain felt that his efforts in trying to do something beyond his call of duty were being undermined, but he persevered, believing that his efforts would eventually pay off. Success experiences invariably reinforce his conviction that he is achieving his leadership aspiration, so long as he prepares himself properly, objectively evaluates his chances and capabilities, and works toward skills required:

> I have experienced failure before, but because I am a perfectionist. I like to get things right. I always beat myself, "Why did you not do it that way?". I think if I fail at something it may knock my confidence for a while, but to avoid such situations, I plan, and that's my strategy really.

Failure also serve its purpose of evaluating whether he had prepared properly, believing that he is ultimately responsible, and not on issues like discrimination.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

Dwain believes that the culture of School X is a supportive one because individual who put themselves forward are giving the opportunity to do so:

> You may have people who will say it is not, but I think support will be given if you are seen to be willing to want to try things. They gave me the opportunity to do the practice interview; they have always giving me the opportunity beyond my call of duty. I don't think I would be able to get this job [new assistant principal position] if I was not allowed to do a whole lot of things that is not within my job description because I wanted to gain the experience. So a lot of things that I wrote in my personal statement were not directly related to my job as a head of year, but were directly related to the assistant principalship position. And so I think because I went to them and said, "Listen, I need to move on, give me something to do", and so they gave me things to do. On the other hand, some might say, it is not supportive – but they have not asked, and maybe they have not put themselves forward. I remember doing Saturday detention, I am not supposed to be doing something done by senior managers – I was able to add that, and it gives me the flavour.

In a culture that is supportive, he understands that the onus is on an individual to come up with initiatives that school leaders will be impressed with. So to him, 'the culture is supportive and not a biased one – they give it to the best ability candidate', and he strongly believe this to be the case.

5.5 CASE EXAMPLE EIGHT – Rox

Contextual background

Rox, a mother and wife, and born in British Guyana, migrated to the UK more than ten years ago. She believes her teaching career started thirty-eight years ago in church Sunday school, and from there on she worked as a young unqualified

assistant teacher, then a qualified home economics teacher, and then finally as a senior school leader and principal:

> I started professional teaching at the age of 16, but I was teaching from the age of 9. I got my experience from my Christian up-bringing. My parents were both involved in the church by the time I arrived. I was baptised to the Lord when I was very young, and have always been instructed towards Christian principles. We were taught to respect elders, friends and love and pray for our enemies. We were taught that we should treat others as we would want them to treat us. My parents punished bad behaviour, and just as they loved and cared for us, they would also quote Proverbs 13: 24, which says, "spare the rod, spoil the child". I was generally a good kid and had little problems with discipline, and as I said earlier I was the one who often assisted in Sunday school even at an early age.

Growing up in a home where her mother was an assistant pastor, Rox was expected to live up to family values. At an early age, she helped Sunday school teachers in their instructions and was the one who always corrected others of similar age.

When she was thirteen years old, there was a prophecy relating to her future by a visiting evangelist – the evangelist pointed her out during a service and told her that she will train young people. At the time, Rox never took notice, but when her career began to unfold, first as a home economics teacher and ~~as~~ then headteacher, she began to believe that it was the fulfilment of prophesy on her life. As she says,

> It is this that has taken me through my teaching career; the belief that it is God's will that I am in the teaching profession; and that it is through his grace that I have a clear understanding of my purpose in whatever challenges that I come across, be it personal or professional, and this is the attitude that I take to any situation.

Deeply religious, Rox believes that her every professional journey was not by chance, but by divine grace of God – right from starting out in Sunday school, to when she became a teaching assistant, right through her headship. With the economic problems facing many developing countries from the late eighties

onward, Rox sought ways to redress the shrinking standard of living faced by many middle class families like hers. One solution was to immigrate to the UK, take up the opportunity by continuing at least a teaching career by securing a head of department position in School X. It was however a culture shock stepping down from her headship position in her country to a new position in another country:

> Without any moaning or complaining, but of course, you come into a new setting or different education setting, and you are expected to be different. So with my humility, I think it was not too bad a transformation for me. Yes, I was at the top of my profession in my school, but now, you are just at a different level. However, it has put me in a position to see professionalism in a different light. Even trying to compare were I was and what I was doing, and where I am now, and what others are doing. And I use it as an experience sometimes to subtly say to people, and this time referring to line-managers – "you know, things can be done this way, and on other ways, things can be done".

Rox, in her late 40s, looks for opportunities to bring her years of experience to bear. She is fastidious about the style of leadership that one employs in tackling problematic issues, believing that ultimately mode of leadership really matters to achieving goals – she elaborates on this in her conception of what school leadership is all about.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

Having been a principal in her native country Guyana, Rox knows one or two things about leading, so when she sees school leadership as the exercise of responsibility and accountability for specific areas such as curriculum, strategic development and pastoral care in a school, she is speaking from experience. Although not a word she says she prefers to use, she believes school leadership also 'has a little bit of dictatorship in it'. It means power and decision-making is centralised with a single person or a small group of individuals, and they in turn

sometimes have to take the whole team with them irrespective of opposition. Her experience of socialism in her native country has also made her aware of the dangers of dictatorship and dictators who 'just pounding down stuff to you, and one having to do it their way, or no other way', when there may be better ways of doing things.

Rox is attracted to a type school leadership which she calls leadership-by-objective. By this she means an individual directs others to achieve tangible goals, evidenced through clear and unambiguous outcomes that all can subscribe to even when the leader is no longer available:

> Yes, even when you look at the political system that operates, if you are leading by objective, whatever political persuasion, or whether you change parties, it should not affect what needs to be achieved because the objective is already there. This is the way I like leadership, leadership by objectives – so in the school setting, you can change principal, assistant principal, but the objective is to move from 39% A – C to 49% A – C, or from comprehensive to other school status. How you get these depends in your style as a leader when you come in. My style as a leader matters, whether I am going to have these intervention activities, whether I am going to have my teachers do – leadership-by-objective, I prefer this. This contrast with leadership for personal gain, leadership for vain glory where you just want praise for yourself only, being narrow minded – the person just seeing a 3-year time-frame, and how much they can gain get – people who are leaders by virtue of their position, and those who narrow praise to themselves.

She believes that this form of leadership can only be successful when it is an open or flat field, where members at any level can subscribe to. As she sees it, leadership-by-objective is one where the aims and objectives of a school are laid out democratically – 'just have the objectives there and anyone at any level can do the job for capable members to run with it and be rewarded accordingly'. She understands that unless others have a stake in the outcome of something, they will not have that incentive to be part of the team, particularly when change is part of the requirements to reach the outcome.

Having occupied many positions and gained a lot of experience, she feels her final destination is school consultancy; providing forensic professional and expert advice:

> I have been a principal in a post-secondary school in Guyana, but there is still another level that puts you outside the four walls of the school, into managing what is going on within the school. Personally, that was one of my visions in Guyana, but even now I still would like to see myself in this area as a consultant working with senior management and other layers of education – all for meeting a better deliverance in the schools. So I would like in my life time to work as an education consultant.

She understands this to be a viable proposition for the future, but for now she has to build her reputation through competence measures.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

As a newly-appointed principal in Guyana, there was a problem in the school as it had only four curriculum areas, which did not cater for the changing environment. The sewing curriculum was extended from household to commercial in order to offer students new opportunities sewing uniforms for nurses and hotel staff. The cooking and cleaning curriculum were merged and relabelled consumer education tourism, and the hospitality curriculum was added to cater for the tourism sector. The fast-food and beverage curriculum were added to cater for city workers. As she says, 'when the need arises, I adapt, and the gap is there, I fill it'. She did face many challenges, not least from her sceptical staff who initially did not subscribe to her ideas:

> I did a number of things to win them over. I set clear objectives, for all to see, and allowed them to freely move with it and be rewarded accordingly. When that was easily seen, and because there was an end-product and objectives they could look at, that bit of opposition was overcome. And quickly you can let them see that it is 'our-thing', and the 'our-ship', if there is such a word. Our-ship comes in, so if you buy into it, you want to move with it also. So when that was achieved, you can see the differences in people – attitude, the way they go off to things, and even care for what they have been giving as responsibilities.

These experiences are what she took into her new role in School X as she told herself that she was going to put her 'signature into the department'.

Prior to her arrival, the department was no more than a place where students jumped around with disjointed plates and pans, so the instruction given to supply-teachers was to secure the cooking utensils and prevent them for being used as instruments. Rox was faced with an uphill battle, but she had three clear objectives – to change the expectations of her students, to reorganise the department, and to promote the department. During her reorganisation, she requested for some computers and someone joked, "You don't need computers up there, you need pots and pans", but she persevered. To promote the department, she organised student 'foodspread' where they would display for teachers and parents samples of various foods. She would organise 'teacherspread' where teachers prepared foods representing their cultural, ethnic or religious background. Many teachers were enthused, and African, Caribbean, European and Indian meals and calories were displayed. These took place during school Open Days and festive periods. She engaged in active awareness on healthy eating, and this coincided with Jamie Oliver's healthy schools campaign (BBC News, 2006). It was like a 'God-send', because her department's input to school health became more significant. Some colleagues said sarcastically, "O, we didn't realise you did these kind of things there".

Rox also wanted to send the message that food technology did not just exist in pots and pans, but life itself, for it was about: nutrition and science through knowing the chemicals that we all put into our bodies and in relation to living

much longer; geography through knowing where food produce come from; mathematics through ratios and proportions needed to calculate the calories and rations in our daily diet; literacy through recipe and information on packaging. She shares these to emphasize what sustains her school leadership aspiration as mainly about having clear objectives of what needs to be done, and taking responsibility through 'actions that speak louder than words'.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

One of the most important things to Rox is to be comfortable in who she is as a capable person:

> Personally, I am very confident because I am comfortable with myself, my knowledge – not that I am a working encyclopaedia, but every day you can gain new knowledge. I keep my readings updated.

This confidence is reinforced by her experiences and by the fact that she has now been entrusted with improving a problematic special needs department, so to her it is about trust and support from superiors and subordinates:

> As a leader, you cannot lead if you don't have followers, and so support you get from your followers will shine forth. The people around you, the support you get from them and experiences as you carry out your responsibilities, you get experiences all the time, and it may not go the way you are envisioning the way things should go – that has the most impact on my confidence.

She visited her former school in her home country, Guyana, and reflected on how she eventually won over the once sceptical staff by making them see the objectives and end-product clearly. She met some teachers who were part of her team, and she says:

> The people who were there when I was administering said to me, "Things have changed here, you remember when you used to do so", and I remember saying to them, "Did I really do that, did I?"

They reminisced about what has transpired over the years and they laughed. But her experience was essentially positive, and it reinforced her conviction even

further about her capabilities and ability to adapt in a new environment that demands a different kind of professionalism.

Rox is also very much aware that one of the biggest challenges to her confidence is allowing the opinion of others to adversely affect her, particularly when she is convinced of the worthwhileness of an initiative she wants to implement:

> When people will not want to jump into the wagon that you are on, and instead of helping you move on, they are helping you to regress. For example, you get funding for something, the person responsible for allocating it will say, "that will not work, we can only give you 50% to fund the project".... I am an open-minded person, so I do not get too withdrawn or turned away when someone critiques or makes negative comments toward what might have been seen differently – the kinds of comments like, "if it was me, I would not have done it this way", I do not bow to those things.

In such instances, she has learnt to believe in her judgements and convictions as she tries to carry others along, persevering until she wins them over by making them understand that a project or an objective is not necessarily hers, but "our-thing" and "our-ship". As she says, 'if there is such a word, our-ship comes in, so if you buy into it, you want to move with it also'.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

To Rox, the culture of School X is one that is an 'open door' for members who are seen as likeable in the certain ways and a 'closed door' for those who are not.

> If your area is seen as likeable, you have a chance of flourishing, but if it is not or maybe it is not seen as priority, then there is a problem. I can say that because when I was in food technology, as opposed to where I am now, and when I started I was able to triple the budget because I had the justification. But where I am now, because of maybe the previous leadership, it was like, you know, just seen as it is, it's down to nothing.

For those with an open door, 'they have free enterprise to do things that ultimately increase their status, resulting in influence that seems to exceed others'. She readily admits that there is somewhat of an open door for her. It did

not come out of being favoured, but out of hard work in making improvements to a department that colleagues thought was essentially useless. She recalls the surprise she got from colleagues on her display of different types of foods, and how school leaders began to take her message seriously particularly during the healthy foods campaign for schools – to her, this is earned access. In framing her view of the culture as both as 'open door' and 'closed door', Rox nevertheless points the existence of 'pockets of imbalances':

> A minority of teachers are impeded because of their style of doing things. That's another reason why sometimes you are not seen as the in-person, because if you are thinking outside what leadership thinks, they think that you are going to get in there and make them feel insignificant. So they think you are a threat. Sometimes I think of XXX: if he was moving to a better position in my organisation, they will think he is too bright, so that's just it.

In concluding that the culture of School X does not impede her school leadership aspiration because she has earned an 'open door' with leaders, Rox inevitably implies that whose personalities do not fit face a 'closed door'.

5.6 CASE EXAMPLE NINE – Bodun

Contextual background

Bodun, a qualified teacher for 20 years was born in the UK, but immigrated to Nigeria with her parents in the early 70s. Throughout this period and right up to the eighties, she 'commuted' to the UK so often that she lived in 'both worlds'. Bodun remembers being told in Nigeria, "O, you can be a teacher, you are very bossy and you can talk". She hated such comments, so tried to do the very opposite because she thought teaching was not really the most-valued profession in Nigeria. As she grew older, she began to realise that teaching was indeed a profession worth considering, so enrolled for an undergraduate education degree:

> I just carried on. I did other jobs, but eventually I told myself to be real – that teaching is for me. Eventually it became a conscious decision to get into teaching because the more I thought about it; the more I was drawn to it. In fact I was already doing it with my siblings and peers, so when I eventually got into teaching it was something I already knew and I enjoyed doing.

Soon after graduation in 1990, Bodun settled back in the UK where she eventually met her husband. In her mid-40s, she is now at a stage in her life where she wants to make something out of her career, whilst at the same time maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

> Generally my likes is having a good time, not being unhappy, stressed and the opposite is what I don't like – which is being stressed, which explains why at some point I did come out of teaching and I went to become an education welfare officer and an outreach worker. So I was still working with children, but not teaching because of the stress and paperwork, and the general pressure that comes with the job.

To her, there is no compromise if conflict emerges between work-life balance and career achievement – she would rather choose the former rather than the latter.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

School leadership to Bodun, is about teams working together, valuing and listening to each other. It is about the staff, students and parents all involved in decision-making processes. To her, the more democratic the decision-making process is, the more ownership and outcomes are shared – 'the more people that are involved, I think they more ownership of it, and it works better than if it just cascades down'. In highlighting the problems in schools today, she observes that the lack of student and parental involvement in decision-making processes have resulted in schools 'getting very clever at manipulating policies and embarking on practices usually different from those written for school inspectors'. She notices for example that in School Z, those who work in special education have

their own personal unwritten biases influencing daily practice, and not readily seen in written policy statements:

> You have to be there physically to notice these activities and they don't always work hand-in-hand with what's written on the paper as a policy. And usually it is not every single member of staff that follows guidelines – there is one or two who still don't think what's on paper is what should be done. For example, if you have a pupil with special needs and they are at school, you are expected to give them the same treatment that everyone has, which include participating in sports day. But you might find out that in a school, that doesn't happen because they feel that the disabled child is unable to either do what they expect or to behave in how they expect them to behave, so they will probably not participate at all.

Being an expert in finding out such discrepancies between policy and practice is what she likes to do and her most attractive leadership proposition:

> Well my personal preference; what I am aiming to do is to be an inspector of schools. How schools are run, and report fairly to the governing body and parents how schools are run. Yea, this is my overall aspiration. I still have this goal and I know it will take a lot of work – which I have started doing…I think that is classified as an intensive work with head teachers and at par with senior leadership – mind you some inspectors were once head teachers I think that the role of inspector of school is quite a high position.

She however has a number of intermediate goals to achieve in order to realise this. First, her recent registration for a postgraduate degree in education administration and second, her recent re-orientation of teaching duties in the special education needs department. She believes these two goals, together with experiences gained in primary school, education welfare and outreach work will serve her in good stead for the role to eventually become a school inspector.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

Bodun is anxious professionally, because she needs to see her 'achievement for what it is worth and move up the professional ladder for prestige'. This strong need to crown her career is the one factor sustaining her leadership aspiration:

> I just feel that since I have been in this field for a number of years, and you think, "What next can I do – I need to move up the professional ladder". The personal bit will be what I aspire to do will fit in with being a family person; it

> will be good in terms that I am not stuck in a job for hours and hours, and the fact that in one's decision on a career path, there are those who are close to you, your parents, spouse and even children, who would want to see you achieve something – there is a lot of home-working from there, and that will be the personal bit. As Nigerians, parents would want to, at least, see that you achieve more than they did. You have got a Nigerian parentage, and you know the type of value were parents praying for their children to reach where they themselves could not. It is also a prestigious role, and I will like to be honest and say that people aspire just as I, to leadership roles for the prestige of it. I am inherently dissatisfied with one position. I think for me, I will feel as if I have done less than I can achieve if I remain in the same position for years, and I think for me, I need to progress and get more out of what I am doing for now and the future.

It is this desire to see the fruition of her years in the education field that seems to drive her and what sustains her aspiration.

In evaluating her chances, she feels that her experience, knowledge working with children, and the fact that she is driven, are all that count. She left primary school teaching, had a career break, and in the process reassessed her professional situation, and opted for the role as an education welfare role, believing that it was an extension of being able to work with families, learn caseworks and produce reports for the courts:

> These experiences are very valuable and they have brought me closer to where I want to be. In fact, I am very grateful for doing them, and at the time, there were generally less well-paid than teaching jobs. However, less stressful, since I did not have my planning, and all I had was my cases to do. Some of them involved taking families to court, and the other side is actually visiting families, finding out what the barriers are and that really helped me. I then returned to teaching by accident – in my present role, I went there as an outreach worker, and I was then asked to take on some teaching, and I felt ready to do it again, and also in the special needs department, which also has given me more experience to become an inspector, having been in the mainstream, to come out into the SEN department.

In evaluating where she is now and where she needs to be in future, she again reiterates that her years of experience and work over the years must not be for wasted:

> I think I owe it to myself, because at the end of the day you have got to realise that you want something, you have got to get it, and there is no point giving

> up when you are half way there. I think that I am more than a half-way person, so I just as well carry on, and achieve what I need to achieve. So I don't want to feel as if I disappoint myself and my family – it is all about fulfilment for all the years, I mean the good, the bad and the ugly. All the times I have been stressed doing my job. When I am at the top of my career, which means where I aspire to reach, I feel fulfilled and say that all these years of labour have been worth it.

Therein lay her anxiety, for after the last twenty years in education, to see her career crowned with a 'prestigious role' is satisfying, and what sustains her school leadership aspiration. She has to somehow find a way to achieve this, and until now her attempts in her current work place has not been successful.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

Bodun cares about how others perceive her and the effects on her confidence and this is illustrated in one particular episode working in a primary school. She had a job share with a white colleague. As issues arose, some white parents waited for times when her colleague was on duty to discuss them – in essence side-lining her. She felt they were subtly telling her that she could not deal with their queries effectively or simply that they did not feel comfortable talking to her:

> I could imagine that will kill anyone's confidence – if you are made to feel you can't do it, or you are not good at it, that you should not be there in the first place or you should not be doing it – that would impact on your confidence. Sometimes it is not necessarily that you can't do it, but that you are not provided with the opportunity to do it or the resources to do it – I think they would definitely knock someone's confidence about your work and self-belief.

She felt undervalued, and her white colleague felt the same as well. They both decided they could not condone such a situation, so clarified their position to the parents concerned by insisting that if issues were to be resolved in future it should and would be with both of them or otherwise they will not be dealt with at all.

Until recently, she felt her promotion was contingent on gaining recognition from leaders at her school, but more often they overlooked what she could offer. Having realised this, she has had to reorient her leadership aspiration:

> Can I just say that before I decided to work towards my school leadership goals, I was not confident about other senior leadership roles – having realised that there are other respectable roles that one can occupy, such as my decision to work towards being an inspector, it feels more within my reach. You know, being an inspector is a role that will take me outside, so it is not on the say-so of my present employer. Basically it is not something that I will get with my present employer. So it feels more achievable and the constraints that I would otherwise have had if I wanted to climb up the ladder in this school are not there because the leadership role is outside.

She is no longer worried that she is ignored or side-lined, having redefined her goals, and in addition, she is now learning to generate her own sense of self-worth by trying to acquire some key skills and keeping positive mental images.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

In evaluating School Z, Bodun observes that there was once a significant number of BME middle school leaders, but for 'various reasons, they were told directly or indirectly that they are not needed, so they had to leave'. To her, this is symptomatic of a school whose culture is in essence exclusive to a selected few – where patronage is bestowed and limited to a selected group:

> Personally, there is a lot of social interaction within and outside the school, and if you are not part of it, you are made to feel like an outsider, and things don't work for you. A lot see each other outside, and this forges their close relationship, and you can easily be an outsider if you are not part of it. If I want to achieve my aspiration here, I think it would be pretty much impossible. If I am seeking a position in the school, it will be constrained. I have not got any role model; no one of my own culture that I can look forward to and have done it before – someone that I can use as a yard. The social barriers are very obvious and difficult to crack. I personally would not want to worry with again; rather concentrate on my professional development. I do not want to waste time cracking – when I say cracking, I am saying it as an adjective to mean something that is hard, and I have to make an effort to get in. Right now, there are families working in the school, and whilst sometimes it just happens, I feel like in this instance they are probably actively sought. Some people go out and recommend roles to their friends and family, and so it makes the social interaction such that you are instantly an outsider. It

> makes you feel that you are not coming from the same starting point. The people seem to be colleagues who have worked in previous schools. I mean whilst I know that you can tell someone that there is a role in your organisation, I think the amount just upsets and eats into the social and professional structure.

A combination of all these is one reason why she came to the conclusion that her leadership advancement in the school is impossible to attain, so had to re-orient her aspiration towards something outside the school structure. Consequently, the question she has had to face is not whether it is worth remaining in the school but when to leave – for now she has decided to remain until she gains more experience as a special education needs teacher and completes her postgraduate degree.

5.7 CASE EXAMPLE TEN – Lavesh

Contextual background

Lavesh's teaching profession began more than 12 years ago when she took up the opportunity by the South African government to train as a teacher – she taught there for a number of years before relocating to the UK. She says growing up with African, south Asian and Afrikaans influences and against the backdrop of fighting apartheid have instilled in her a strong sense for justice; which she constantly measures her life and expectations against.

> I think it is important to know that what you practice in your personal life is also shown professionally – that you are not two-faced and the duality of your personality is not going to conflict with what you do professional life. I think it is important in terms of integrity, so I demand integrity from everybody around me because that's how I portray myself, so what I think what is good for me, and what I expect from me, I will expect from others around. So naturally, when I find that someone is not displaying this kind of character, I tend to keep my distance and stay a very long way from them, because sooner or later you will be bitterly disappointed.

Lavesh dislikes hidden agenda of colleagues who make it difficult for her to know what to do or where to go – it puts her under pressure, and makes her

unable to do work properly. She has a disinclination for those who simply give her token gestures and false impression that she is being listened to; and this seems to be her experience thus far in School Z.

Conception of school leadership and area of attraction

School leadership to Lavesh, is about being a custodian of the partnership between parents, teachers and learners, overseeing its dynamics, and facilitating and regulating the teaching and learning environment. Being a custodian means to create and maintain this partnership so that pupils can sustain their development and interest. To her, it requires an acknowledgement that what works best in teaching and learning for a particular group may not necessarily work for another group. These beliefs shape her attraction to:

> What mechanism work; what is good practice; what don't work; looking at methodology in teaching. Looking at diversity and how you are going to bring that into culture of learning. Pedagogy is of particular importance to me – it is a key inspiration of mine. There are other facets, data management, intervention, etc. But for me, the teaching and learning component, and how that is managed itself is important especially with reference to what works, what is best practice, the methodology of teaching used to deliver a lesson.

Her emphasis on the mechanisms that work in the classroom is informed by her own experience teaching in South Africa – she taught mainly class sizes of about 55, with relatively fewer resources, and student behaviour to her assessment, were far better and manageable. In contrast, students in the UK, with relatively smaller classes and better resources seem to be less manageable and disciplined. She attributes this to the fact that the children of post-apartheid era are more receptive to teaching:

> They are more eager to stay in the classroom rather than run out, so they are not disrupting a lesson or some other behavioural issues that are going to cause some other low level disruption. You are able to then sum that what works in South Africa does not work in the UK. You design your teaching differently there and here – looking at different methodologies that will

> sustain learning in different environment. What I have noticed in the teaching and learning environment of both countries is that bridging the gap in learning is very important thing and how we do it. In Africa, there is a constraint – the rural and urban environment, the gap is quite large. In contrast, in the UK, this is not the case, but there are other issues, such as behaviour problems that contribute to your classroom environment – so one of your problems is how to manage behaviour so that it is behaviour for learning rather than a disruptive environment.

Lavesh observes that pupils in the UK see coming to school as what parents or society have instructed them to do, rather than for the intrinsic value of it. In this respect, most behaviour issue stems from the fact that UK students have not really understood the value of education or the need to learn. In contrast, she feels that in her home country of South Africa; because learners come from disadvantaged background, where running water and electricity are more a luxury rather than commodity, education is seen as a prime asset to acquire in order to gain a good standard of living.

To Lavesh, the assumptions behind many teaching practices must change. For example; that greater resources can foster greater interest in pupils, when countries with far less resources seem to have students who value education more. She finds the challenge of breaking down barriers to learning, sustaining the learner through what works best, and 'knowing what intrinsically and extrinsically motivates the learner', as the fulfilling aspect to her leadership aspiration. She sees herself ultimately becoming a consultant in this area where she is liaising with:

> …different schools and other school leadership teams in driving across the curriculum in different ways so as to promote learning, raise achievement, and break barriers between the boys and girls. I will say consulting headship or deputy headship in teaching, or even senior role in driving forward teaching and learning in the borough. I am looking outside and within the box for common thread of barriers – so I am looking at the broad spectrum.

Lavesh uses a metaphor to explain her journey at realising her school leadership aspiration – it is like a train journeying through multiple stations to a particular destination – the particular destination being her leadership aspiration at any given period in her professional life. In the first station, she obtains a position by leading in areas such as diagnostic analysis within a department. In the second station, she leads and manages a mathematics department, and in the third station, she holds a whole-school portfolio, with subsequent stations leading ultimately to education consultancy. In this train journey, there are also different carriages from low class, middle and first class, and they all signify upgrading herself professionally from one class to the other. She recently enrolled for a postgraduate degree on international development in education, and hopes that together with improving her classroom effectiveness, she will move up in class level.

Factors sustaining school leadership aspiration

On a personal level, Lavesh says that the message and wisdom from her father have been very valuable to sustaining her life goals. Her father instilled in her the value that one should constantly strive for knowledge to empower oneself, and that at every level, she should always strive to learn something new and something different – necessarily not for the sake of it, but for self-growth and sustainability in the pursuit of life goals:

> I think that's one of the foundations from which I base my aspirations – it is this need to constantly empower myself academically, and learn new things and new ways, and progress up the ladder of knowledge, and in doing that, interrelate it to my job. By going up the ladder, you are going through a transition and metamorphosis; where you are growing stronger and bigger in terms of your knowledge and skills. So these factors essentially make you keep your goal in mind, so you don't lose sight that this is where you are aspiring to go.

Empowering herself, learning new things, and ways to progress up the ladder of knowledge also serve the immediate purpose of dealing with many of the difficulties faced in her work environment.

> One thing that people cannot dispute is your credentials – in black and white, which can stand out. And I think it is about aggressively looking for, and how I can achieve that and getting those qualifications for the job and then no one can dispute that. When you present your credentials for a job, you can easily eliminate the fact that you are not qualified, and it is therefore very frustrating when you are overlooked blatantly because of the colour of your skin and nobody wants to say it. And yet with the qualifications, this is an equaliser because if you have got it, nobody can say, "hang on, you don't have the qualification" – nobody can argue with you. And you say, "hang on, I have got the qualification, don't look at the colour of my skin, just give me the opportunity". It is about out-shinning and being a cut above the rest so as to intimidate those who practice industrial racism.

Recently, Lavesh and three other BME colleagues where overlooked for an international development opportunity, with ethnic diversity as the theme. She searched for reasons why this was the case, but ultimately came to the conclusion that it was blatant discrimination.

> Being an ethnic minority, you constantly have to work double hard, to sustain yourself in an environment where you are overlooked for opportunities. I have experience where I and my BME colleagues where overlooked for international research development on ethnic diversity. So obviously I meet the criteria in terms of my ethnicity and professional credentials. We were overlooked for this opportunity to go in an international level so that we could come back and imbibe those skills that we would have gotten from this trip. So for me how am I supposed to promote diversity in learning and imbibe those skills in the school when I am being overlooked? So being overlooked, you question yourself about why, and yes as much as many people will not admit, industrial racism exist, and it is a silent partner, people don't mention it and they don't talk about it. It has been practised inadvertently so one way I have overcome this challenge was to become the best as I can in my field.

This is one reason why at the onset of Lavesh's conversation, she said she disliked hidden agenda; which she believes some School Z leaders are guilty of.

She is unhappy about the fact that she is not allowed to voice her opinion or speak out on matters affecting frontline teachers like her, and is often criticised

for attempting to do so, even though she feels it is her basic right to be able to air her views:

> For me, I say, "Hang on, how on earth, how am I going to now overcome this challenge", because I am not allowed to think for myself, you are not allowed to have your opinion. And I think my background and my religious upbringing was the major driving force in my life, where biblically, we are told to fight for justice and righteousness believing for what is right and that's what I have learnt. You know what, either you like it, or you lump it. So tough, I am going to say it, and this is my opinion. I am best informed because of my knowledge, qualification and experience, and I am giving you a professional opinion, you either take it or leave it. It is your choice, and at the end of the day, I do not feel guilty because I have not held back, and I have said what I have said.

Her aspiration to 'lead in methodologies of teaching, in curriculum delivering and some sort of consulting', seems to serve two main purpose – on the one hand is her interest~~ed~~ in what works best in teaching and learning, informed by her experiences in both South Africa and the UK, and on the other hand and equally as significant is the fight against what she feels is 'unfairness and industrial racism' in her work place.

To illustrate the latter point, Lavesh likens her situation to early biblical missionaries, whose experiences though far outweigh what she is going through now, mirror hers – they were persecuted for their beliefs, and in spite of this were not passive for they spoke out, preached what they believed and by so doing saved souls. To her, it is about living up to this principle of not remaining passive, but to speak out against injustice and unfairness:

> For me, I draw strength from these kinds of examples in the bible and all of these men had a great message to breach and they relentlessly fought for the truth, and I think for me that is important. And this challenge; overcoming a hidden agenda, and often, hidden agenda equates to deceit. So that is something that goes against integrity, and for me, I said here is a challenge, I am not allowed to speak my opinion and stand up for truth, and not allowed to speak out, so what do I do, I was guided by my values and principles, by my upbringing, and I overcame those challenges by saying how I felt, and tough if I was not liked. Like those men in the bible, who suffered persecution for what is just, I will also face the same.

What then sustains her leadership aspiration is learning new things – what sustains her in her environment is the process of credentialing – seeing it as an equalizer to fight 'industrial racism' whilst progressing up the career ladder.

Confidence towards school leadership aspiration

Lavesh's confidence that she will realise her school leadership aspiration rests on credentialing, and life experiences. She says she has the drive to go out and achieve something satisfying no matter how long or hard it takes, and is convinced that her credentialing in 'black and white' (i.e., 'acquiring the necessary qualifications, expertise and the database of knowledge') will propel her towards her school leadership aspiration. She points to her experience of segregation and ensuing struggle over institutional discrimination in South Africa as having helped her believe that: she will eventually prevail – 'to be patient and contain my anger and I think that helps me cope a lot from blatant favouritism. I am able to tone down my feelings'. It is this experience that has instilled in her a sense for justice, and to which she constantly measures her professional life and expectations against.

There is also something that she is perturbed about, and that is the distinct lack of leadership skills amongst some senior leaders in her school:

> There is a lack of interpersonal skills from some leaders, and it is a dying act and it begs the question of how they manage to reach such key positions. You are in a people's business, and you wonder how they manage to reach such key roles. Without interpersonal skills, how did they manage to occupy those roles? You soon realise that a lot of them have had a very short time span in the junior levels, so they did not have the experience to mould and shape their interpersonal skills to become stronger, so I think experience is the greatest teacher and the lack thereof, will always show up. And this is one of the ways it has showed up – to me this is one of the challenges, you will have to deal with those who do not have the interpersonal skill.

Overall then, her confidence about her school leadership aspiration is contingent on two opposing forces – on the one hand are her experiences which informs her worldview about what pedagogy is and value on what she calls credentialing, and on the other hand is the tenuous relationship with school leaders – it seems then that the stronger of these two, at any given period will more likely shape the way she feels about her leadership aspiration and whether it is being realised.

Culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration

Lavesh believes that the culture within School Z constitutes a 'narrow tunnel' way of thinking amongst senior leaders – an environment of indifference towards those not in the inner circle, such that frontline teachers like her are not allowed to voice their opinions and must 'go with the flow'. It is thus the case that the school has:

> A culture where decisions are thrust upon us and not an active decision-making process with all stakeholders involved, but it is for a one-person way of thinking.
>
> It is almost like a shut door. It is something that sort of makes me alienated, and sort of pigeon-holed thinking, and I have got no room to develop, and I have got to know my place, and stay in it. A very pigeon-holed way of thinking and as an individual; I am impeded because I want to have the diversity of opinions and ideas, and in my thinking – to collaborate with others. For me, the management style is dogmatically biased, designed for the very top and the way they think. My desire is to share good practice and what works, and if you are required to dogmatically follow one type or method of teaching, even if you know it is not working and not allowed to change, it is not helping me – because I am not allow to increment my own way of thinking or implement my own decisive way of thinking.
>
> Groups who do not hold their own opinion are quite content to tag along like a blind sheep because they want to curry favour. So unfortunately, for my aspiration, it is not there [capacity]; for it is there only privy to elitist few that hold opinion.

She knows that there are deficiencies in the school, and ideas can be solicited from frontline teachers about how improvements can be made, but she feels

that the likes of her are not taken seriously because of the dogmatism of senior school leaders who think they know much about what is best for frontline teachers like her.

It is against this background that she feels 'trapped, restricted and clamped down', and as such her school leadership aspiration is being impeded.

> They do have the capacity for me to fulfil my school leadership aspiration – but whether I would be given the opportunity to fulfil it, I would say no. Because of the backdrop of the way decisions are made, the thinking, the culture that exist there and the management style – it is not one that promotes distributed leadership, it is not one that promotes sharing and collaboration. It is very one-sided, autocratic, and a very dominant style of leadership, where all decisions are made and controlled by one person. I mean, the current model of school leadership demands a distributed one, but it is not practised in here.

School Z therefore has the capacity for many like Lavesh to realise their school leadership aspiration, but only a small group seems to have the monopoly and levers of opportunity. It is within this context that she has decided to leave the school in order to realise her leadership aspiration and imbibe her skills.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Emergent issues

The school leadership aspirations of the aspirants in this chapter, whether in terms of obtaining a position or prestige, of being known as very competent in improving systems, or meeting attainment targets, all seem to be shaped by various desires, from self-fulfilment, meeting the internalised expectation of others, to reacting to what is perceived as inhibiting environment, as illustrated in table 5.1. It is the case then that various factors from personal background, professional perspectives and the situated environment, serve as mediating

factors that either facilitate or inhibit the school leadership aspirations of these aspirants. The extent to which these factors can be aligned has a significant bearing on the realisation of their school leadership aspirations. Some aspirants seem to expend their agency in directly pursuing their school leadership aspirations because the environment is a facilitating one, whereas some others are forced to focus on trying to minimize the forces inhibiting their aspirations – which in effect requires much of their time and effort that would otherwise have been spent directly pursuing their aspirations.

Table 5.1 Summary of subjective value and expectation within respective aspirations

	Subjective (motive and incentive) value		Expectation	
	Role conception	**Perception of success**	**Confidence**	**Environment**
Kuban	Greater classroom influence	Sense of satisfaction in exercising influence, through hierarchical progression	Contingent on past success in balancing competing issues in workplace	Agency exercised in inhibiting culture
Adama	Predict and meet attainment grades	Increasing reputation and attainment of hierarchical positions	Contingent on external evaluation and balance of integrated factors	Agency exercised in enabling culture.
Dwain	Change agent	Attaining positions as instrumental to innate desire to be somebody of note – reputation	Contingent on ability to prepare and past successes	Agency exercised in an enabling culture
Rox	Improving systems	Satisfaction gained in achieving high levels of competence	Function of past successes and ability to balance various factors	Agency exercised in an enabling culture
Bodun	Prestigious position	Sense of satisfaction a function of meeting prestigious position	Function of resolving competing factors, from personal to the situated.	Strength of agency not necessarily strong in an inhibiting culture
Lavesh	Influence applying best teaching methods	Sense of satisfaction a function of proving competence	Function of resolving competing identity dimensions from personal to situated	Strength of agency not necessarily strong, in an inhibiting culture

The key issues here are similar to those highlighted in the previous chapter in that aspirants frame their school leadership role and perceive success based on a multiplicity of factors that is not adequately captured in literature with greater emphasis placed on objective outcomes such as the attainment of hierarchical

positions. Literature highlights various intersections, from religious and familial expectations that limit opportunities to attitudes and actions of individuals within the school environment. What emerges here is the intersection of the personal (i.e., religious, cultural, familial), professional (i.e., role conception, expectation) and situated (workplace reactions, feedback and evaluation), and the consequential ability to exercise agency to within either an enabling or inhibiting school culture. All of which serve as mediating factors enabling or inhibiting the aspirations of these teachers. These issues are discussed in much greater detail in the next chapter.

Summary

The aim of this chapter is to present narratives from aspirants, following research areas of the contextual background of aspirants, their conception and school leadership attraction, sustaining factors and confidence towards school leadership aspiration, and culture as inhibitor or facilitator of school leadership aspiration. The following chapter evaluate narratives from this chapter and the previous in greater detail.

CHAPTER 6

MEDIATING FORCES AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SUCCESS

6.1 INTROUCTION

Overview

By drawing on research on organisational behaviour (Gunz & Heslin, 2005; Heslin, 2005; Sturges, 1999), this chapter first evaluates how the group of ten BME teachers see their roles and the extent to which this is perceived as career success or failure. At the heart of this conception and perception is personal agency – the ability to pursue individually conceived roles and the degree to which it is perceived as success. The strength of this agency is seen from the narratives to be shaped by various factors, from the personal, to the situated and professional; and Day et al's (2006) comprehensive study into the variations in real and perceived effectiveness of teachers underpins much of the evaluation in this area. The final evaluation, centred on the dynamics of individual agency exercised in concert with or against structure inherent within the culture of the school, is undertaken from the social perspective theorised by Giddens (1991) and Archer (1996). At the heart of these three research foci is to understand the aspirational nature of a group of BME teachers and some intersecting formations that serve as mediating factors working for or against realisations; with the theoretical formulation based on value (first research question) and expectancy (second and third research questions).

Chapter outline

In the next section, the issues relating to conception of school leadership roles and perception of success are evaluated. Section 6.3 deals with the synthesis of the personal, professional and situational dimensions. In section 6.4, issues of personal agency and structure are addressed. Section 6.5 concludes this chapter by summarizing findings.

6.2 CONCEPTION OF ROLES AND PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS

Conception domains

The school leadership aspirations of the ten aspirants presented in the last two chapters, and summarised in Tables 4.1 and 5.1 fall broadly into two categories, intangible (or subjective) and tangible (or objective). Intangibles are aspirational motives centred on gaining or maintaining influence from self-conceived roles such as devotion to the transcendence of others; coupled with aspirational incentives that are predominantly about spiritual balance and fulfilling purpose. Tangibles are aspirational motives centred on objective outcomes satisfying to sense of fulfilment or serving some instrumental value, with aspirational incentives centred on the attainment of hierarchical positions, prestige and system improvement. Each of which can be divided further into the success criteria (i.e., perception of success) that are either self-referent or other-referent, resulting in four domains, as shown in Table 6.1 (adapted from Heslin, 2005: 121). Intangible and tangible aspirations that are self-referent essentially means success criteria based on self-standards and preferences, whereas intangible and tangible aspirations that are other-referent essentially means success criteria based on others' achievements or expectations.

Table 6.1 Criteria of school leadership success – examples

	Intangibles	Tangibles
Self-referent	My quest is for work-life balance, or autonomy, or sense of purpose; I need to be fulfilled. I need to devote myself to the wholeness of others.	I need to gain promotions and reach this position at this time frame; I need to gain this degree of influence and power.
Other-referent	What is my fulfilment relative to others; I need to gain more informal access just like some other colleagues; My achievements will be a spur to others.	I need to be promoted to that level just like my white counterpart; I need recognition for my efforts; I need to build my reputation or credentials in black and white for others to see.

The four aspirational domains of intangible–self-referent, intangible–self-referent, tangible–self-referent, and tangible–self-referent, as illustrated in Table 6.1 help in the conceptualisation of school leadership roles and perceptions of school leadership success.

In literature, the predominant categorisation of the school leadership aspiration of BME teachers is in the tangible–other-referent domain, as their career progression is often evaluated in terms of hierarchical advancement relative to whites and student demographics. In Mackey and Etienne (2006) observing that BME FE staff often counteract many barriers in their quest to become managers, senior managers and vice-principals by proactively pursuing personal professional goals, thereby redefining what career progression means to them, led these researchers to argue that the traditional view of planned and sequenced upwards career movement within organizations and or within occupational groupings must be redefined such that every employee development can be seen as career or leadership advancement. This argument aligns with the theoretical development in this study that school leadership is a *process* of *influence* from an

individual to others in shaping their motivations and actions to achieve desired outcomes relating to some aspect of learning, teaching or school practice. And that this *process* of *influence* may be exercise through self-conceived and or mandated leadership role, and which may in turn be classified as *career* or *school leadership progression*. The narratives from the aspirants here present the case for this.

Aspirants with intangible self-referent prominence

The school leadership aspirations of Tami, Rod, Omono and Kathy are mainly 'intangibles', with success criteria that are self-referent. Tami speaks of fulfilling purpose and wanting from an early age to do something for the service of others. She says her criterion for leadership success is the extent to which she is able to transform the lives of others, and further it is not contingent on the external evaluation of others, so cannot be impeded. Rod, on his part, sees himself primarily as an educator, encouraging students to believe in what is possible. He documents his devotion to this – his role as a community worker, laboratory technician, science teacher and educationalist. His criteria for leadership success is principally in finding innovative ways to engage with and develop students socially, culturally and religiously, independent of external evaluative standards – he makes the point that he is not much concerned with what inspectors have to say, but in the quality of the perception of the whole pupil and where to take the pupil. For Omono, curriculum is not necessarily attainment, but building the 'totality' of the person, and in this respect the pastoral is his vehicle that allows the academic area of the student to 'bloom'. His criteria for leadership success and one which gives him that innate satisfaction is the extent to which he can

implement some form of intervention, praise, motivational talk and emotional support in his classroom.

As for Kathy, greater emphasis is placed on her satisfaction of being 'the bridge between the parents and pupils', seeing her leadership role like a vehicle taking students through the journey of learning; and as an ambassador to pupils with self-doubts. Her sense of fulfilment, and thus criteria for leadership success are in part seeing pupils develop socially to become honourable individuals in the community, and in another, dependent on positive feedback from students, parents, mentors and senior school leaders.

Aspirants with tangible self-referent or other-referent prominence

Kuban's primary concern is greater influence in the classroom (with emphasis on understanding contextual factors of students) through the attainment of senior leadership positions. His criteria for leadership success are outcomes from influence in the classroom – he speaks of 'those light bulb moments' when students suddenly understand what he has been trying to put across for a considerable time, and when former students show appreciation for his efforts, which in turn gives him the sense of fulfilment that he is realising his school leadership aspiration. At the core of Adama's conception of leadership role is his satisfaction in meeting the expectation placed on him to achieve attainment targets – analysing baseline data, teaching and predicting student attainment at exit point of secondary education. He believes that the ultimate success criteria from which he must be judged professionally is how well he has contributed to school attainment level. He sees his hierarchical trajectory; first was his role as a

key stage coordinator, now as the head of mathematics, and in future a senior school leader and school proprietor in Ghana, as the means to building his legacy.

As for Dwain, he conceptualises himself as a change agent, seeing various positions that he will eventually occupy as a means to making meaningful changes to key constituents – students, school practice, national education policy and his kinspeople in Jamaica. His criteria for success is self-defined in that attaining hierarchical positions serves the purpose of providing that sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that he is indeed somebody of note – otherwise, he says, he will forever remain dissatisfied.

In the case of Rox, the conception of her school leadership role is more in terms of making improvements to systems or departments through the principle of leading-by-objective. Her criteria for leadership success seems to be grounded on achieving high levels of competence at a given task, being recognised as an effective practitioner, and winning the respect of colleagues. This was recently reinforced by her brief to transform the special education needs department that is failing to meet student needs. On her part, Bodun sees herself becoming a school inspector, with a focus on evaluating school policy and practice. However, this alone does not necessarily explain why she seeks this type of position. More importantly, she feels that her long years of service must culminate with a prestigious role because she does not want to disappoint herself and family – this seems to be her success criteria. Her sense of not wanting to disappoint herself and her family on the one hand, and maintaining a strong

work-life balance on the other, whilst at the same time trying to attain a prestigious role is characteristic of what literature (e.g., Bush et al, 2005) refers to as the intersection of family expectation, sense and perception of belonging within community, and the effect on BME teachers' attempt at establishing themselves in a multi-cultural environment.

In the case of Lavesh, the challenge of being able to break barriers to learning, sustain learning through what works best, and knowing what intrinsically and extrinsically motivates the learner, is attractive to her, so she wants in future to become a consultant in this area. For now, she sees herself leading in diagnostic analysis within a department, then department head, and later holding a whole-school post. She feels 'trapped, restricted and clamped down' in her current environment, hence her desire to 'prove to those who practice industrial racism' that she is more than competent. This seem for now to be her criteria for leadership success – and this depends on the extent to which she can fight for professional autonomy in an environment she believes autocratic.

Perception of success

What is equally significant in relation to the conception of their roles are the various ways these aspirants perceive success for themselves – thus how they judge whether or not they have made leadership or career progress. In the case of Tami, Rod, Omono and Kathy, their self-conceived roles of fulfilling purpose, efficacy in the classroom, and the transcendence of others are what matter, and hierarchy seems to be secondary to this. Judgements of career progression are thus based mainly on self-standards as the tendency is to look inward rather than

outward for reasons why they have not made leadership progress – Tami maintains that her school leadership aspiration is 'transient', meaning, it cannot be impeded because it does not depend on the external evaluation of others; Rod says that as long as he has the ability to commission himself on matters relating to the development of young people, he is not impeded; Omono reflects on the fact that if he cannot adapt and learn new ways of attending to the problems of his students, then he has no right to believe that he is realising his school leadership aspiration; Kathy seems to be the exception, and reason for this may be due to the fact that she is overly dependent on receiving support and positive feedbacks from key constituents – with the consequence that she sometimes run the risk of being negatively evaluated or receiving inconsistent appreciations, and which in turn affects her confidence about whether she is realising her school leadership aspiration.

In the cases of Kuban, Adama, Dwain, Rox, Bodun and Lavesh, their self-conceived leadership roles, generally in terms of obtaining positions, hard data outcomes, and prestige, all serve as satisfying mechanisms to some self-referent standard and or instrumental value to some other-referent standard. Kuban believes that since he has spent much time learning and gaining experience, his leadership aspiration cannot be impeded irrespective of what is happening in his school; Adama speaks of establishing a legacy as an effective school leader of student attainment through the positions he occupies, and that so far he has been successful at this; with his recent appointment as the head of mathematics. Dwain wants to be somebody of note and be recognised as an effective change agent through his positions and effect on others, and believes that through

preparation his has so far been successful. To Rox, her experiences of improving systems and achieving tangible results in both Guyana and now in UK is the basis of her belief that she is attaining her leadership aspiration.

For Bodun and Lavesh, objective career success is of primary importance for various reasons, but the likelihood (expectation) of success is curtailed due to what they believe respectively as the unequal social structure of the school and 'industrial racism'. Bodun's perception or experience of senior leaders appointing family members or colleagues from previous schools into key positions is similar to homosociability that Coleman (2012) refers to and which links to the experiences of many BME teachers in literature. One in McNamara et al's (2009: 75) study said, 'too much is decided over a drink at the pub after school and cliques exist in most schools to stop certain types of teachers getting the top jobs. …the culture is to employ somebody who they can identify with and feel 'comfortable' around; somebody who 'looks' like them. In literature, perceptions, let alone real experience, of discrimination is seen as detrimental to the career progression of BME teachers. Wilkins and Lall (2011) and Carrington et al (2001) found some difficulties many BME teachers face are related significantly to internal fault mechanisms of concern about the potential exposure to discrimination rather than actual experiences – perceptions that invariably inhibit the capacity, self-efficacy and personal agency to pursue own goals, and significantly account for the residual difference in school leadership aspiration and realisation. Lavesh's belief then that there is 'industrial racism' practiced in her school, whether real or perceived, invariably affects negatively the pursuit of her leadership aspiration.

In these six cases where greater emphasis is placed on objective outcomes, Kuban, Adama, Dwain and Rox seem to be more satisfied with their leadership progression, and this may be attributed to the fact that their leadership success criteria depends largely on their own personal standards and self-efficacy; whereas in the case Bodun and Lavesh, they are less satisfied because their success criteria is shaped respectively by internalised expectations of family and negative evaluations of others.

Discussion – role conception and perception of success

What emerges from the narratives of these aspirants is that conceptions of school leadership progression are not necessarily framed in terms of hierarchical positions, but protean in nature and subject to the direction of individual aspirants. Perceptions of success are in part based on self-standards, self-efficacy, internalised expectations of family and evaluations of others. Gunz and Heslin's (2005) editorial analysis in a special edition of the *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* of how career success in many professional fields has been measured highlights three approaches and is useful to this discussion. They note that by far the most common is the 'objectivist' approach, which often focus on outcome questions such as job satisfaction, intention to quit, job involvement, satisfaction with hierarchical career progression to date, and anticipated career progress. Less common but important is the subjectivist approach focusing on individuals' definitions of what success means.

In literature, concerns over the career progression of BME teachers; are predominantly framed from the objective criteria of attaining hierarchical

positions; although subjective satisfactions are identified and in most cases *scaffolded* within problems of attaining hierarchical positions. Osler (1997) for example speaks of BME teachers appreciating the difference they make in the lives of students, which often motivates them to remain in teaching, despite encountering career blocks into senior management positions. Headship and pioneering achievements of BME individuals who reach that position was the focus for McKenley and Gordon (2002) as they highlight that BME head teachers have strong desires to capture the joys of their leadership and add their rich cultural heritage to the common wealth of school. Similarly, BME teachers as pioneering agents and role models to their community, the students they serve and their colleagues, is highlighted in Bush et al's (2005) study as subjective satisfactions, but scaffolded within an investigation of barriers to objective career advancement and ways in which many BME teachers have overcome them to reach middle and senior leadership positions. In pointing briefly to strong element of individual agency and altruism amongst a group of BME school leaders, Coleman and Campbell-Stephens' (2011) emphasis is how they have reached their senior leadership positions despite barriers faced.

Some studies are almost exclusively about objective criteria of success. One main attention given by Powney et al (2003) is who gets promoted, with gender and ethnicity playing a major role in the decisions of the gatekeepers of the most dominant group. McNamara et al's (2009) concern is that BME teachers are more ambitious and committed to moving up the career ladder than others, whilst not confident of being treated fairly when applying for promotion or headship. The evaluation of the usefulness of customised leadership

programmes by Ogunbawo (2012) is carried out within the context of addressing the underrepresentation of BME teachers in leadership positions. Similarly, Carrington et al (2001), Wilkins and Lall's (2011) concerns centre on the relative lack of career advancement opportunities, senior leadership positions and their disproportionate concentration at lower pay scales.

What the narratives from these aspirants show is that scaffolding of 'intangibles' or subjective outcomes inside 'tangible' or objective outcomes such as hierarchical attainments limits analysis and evaluation, and in such a way that it does not take into account the fact that leadership progression can be exercised through self-conceived and or mandated leadership roles. Hall and Chandler (2005) in Gunz and Heslin's (2005) editorial analysis in a special edition of the *Journal of Organisational Behaviour* argue from the subjectivist perspective that individuals fundamentally have the choice about the extent to which subjective success criteria takes primacy over what is classified as objective success, because success is most felt when career is a calling and in what is perceived as purpose in life.

Cautioning against this, Nicholson and de Waal-Andrews (2005) from an objectivist perspective, argue the primacy of the objective career focus principally because of the obfuscating ideologies that present subjective success as a substitute of equal value and functionality to objective success. They observe that although individuals may have low objective success and high subjective success, and others high objective success, with deficiencies in subjective success, contentment in high subjective-low objective success may indeed spring

from self-regulation defence mechanism rationalising relative failure or lack of objective success. This latter point concurs with some findings in literature. A BME teacher in McKenley and Gordon's (2002: 19) study said, 'I declined offers to participate in secondments. I am not interested. My professional development has taken second place to the needs of the school'. Bush et al (2005) highlight the reluctance of many otherwise capable BME teachers making applications out of positive self-belief deficiency. A BME teacher in their study already quoted said, 'sometimes I have been reluctant to "sell" myself and push myself forward, not wanting to be seen as pushy and arrogant' (ibid: 27). In this study, Omono seem to acknowledge that he may not necessarily be in place for a position for various reasons, and what he then classifies as school leadership success is in respect to his ability to employ various interventions for the 'totality' of his students.

In-between the objective and subjective perspectives, Arthur et al (2005) in the same special edition of the *Journal of Organisational Behaviour* propose the examination of the intersection between subjective and objective career focus, with the career-holder's ability to define simultaneously and importantly subjective and objective career success, with one serving as a catalyst for the other and fundamental to an encompassing definition of what career success means. From what has emerged in this study, Arthur et al's point is more pertinent in that the aspirations do not necessarily follow that path where hierarchical attainment is paramount – it is protean, self-defined ('intangible' – subjective) and intersects with externally mandated ('tangible' – objective) ones. Stronger emphasis of one in relation to the other is often the case; leading to

success perceptions that are self-referent and or other-referent, which are further reinforced by mediating factors.

The narratives of these aspirants provide opportunity to construct a conceptual field as shown in figure 6.1 with four basic dimensions: high objective-high subjective focus, high objective-low subjective focus, high subjective-low objective focus, and low subjective-low objective focus. The balance of objective and subjective focus, the effect of one against the other, and how this frames to some extent real or perceived school leadership success may indeed become a rich area to explore in literature so as to design effective career strategies for practice.

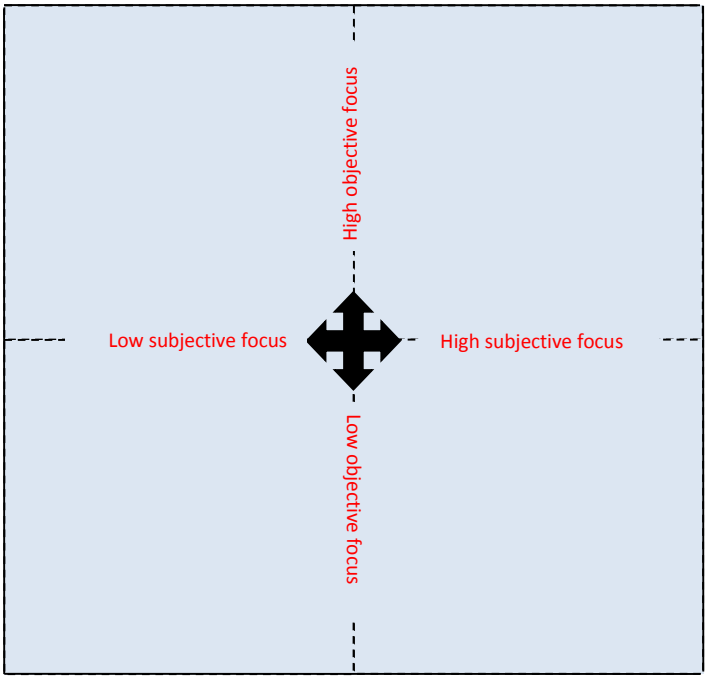

Figure 6.1: A Conceptual field of subjective-objective attainment

As previous commented, the sense of school leadership success, whilst based on self-standards, self-efficacy, internalised expectations of family and negative

evaluations of others, is also shaped by some mediating factors – two mediating formations, the synthesis of identity dimensions and agency-structure intersection explored in this study are discussed in the next two section – they relate to the second and third research questions in the next two sections and linked to the expectation component of aspirations.

6.3 SYNTHESIS OF IDENTITIES AND REALISATION OF ASPIRATIONS

Identity dimensions and synthesis

Day et al (2006: 142 – 187) made a comprehensive study on the variation in work, life and effectiveness of teachers and found that their well-being, perceived effectiveness, agency, commitment and resilience are functions of personal, professional and situated factors or identity dimensions. The personal is shaped by life outside school, and could have competing elements such as how the teacher sees himself or herself in a nuclear and extended family, personally, socially, spiritually and ethnically. The professional is shaped by the influence of long term policy and trends as to what constitutes a good teacher, and the competing elements of policy initiatives, professional development, roles and responsibilities. The situated is shaped by relationship with pupils, support and feedback loops from the immediate working context of the school, department or classroom.

In noticing that various competing elements shaping each three dimensions may become source of tension, thereby destabilizing the work, life, perceived effectiveness, agency, commitment and resilience of the teacher, Day at al

provide four basic scenarios to this: one, with occasional mild fluctuations and tensions, the three dimensions are held in positive balance due to internal and or external factors such as self-efficacy, support from home or colleagues; two, one dominant dimension distorts two others; three, two dominant dimensions distort the remaining one – fluctuations in the second and third scenarios may be managed in the short term, depending on type of internal and or external factors at the disposal of the individual; four, all three identity dimensions are conflicting, leading to extreme fluctuations that may be managed depending on the strength of support from internal and or external factors. Extrapolating from Day et al's (2006: 150) analysis, it follows that the agency to pursue leadership aspiration resides in: fulfilment of each three dimensions; their reconstructions where necessary; management of critical incidents and trends which may threaten the ability to balance or reconstruct these identities; and the extent to which the teacher can live with contradictions and tensions within the various dimensions, and continue to be committed and resilient towards own leadership aspirations – evidence of any four scenarios are explored from the narratives in relation to realisation of school leadership aspirations.

Aspirants with intangible and self-referent prominence

Personally, Tami identifies strongly with her ethnic heritage and spirituality, with emphasis on meaning and purpose to her life. Family members recognise her role in motivating them, and professionally she sees this transformational role as about delivering curriculum that must reflect life, place, history, spirituality, social productivity and potential. What, to her, constitutes a good school leader is someone who can empower others to look inward and realise themselves. To

encapsulate this, she narrates an episode where she gives a poem to three students, telling them to digest and understand it, and that if they can possess the qualities and attributes of what the poem means, they will begin to unearth their dynamism. The way she personally sees herself and her professional role seem to be reinforced in the situated condition of support, particularly from the principal who recently rewarded her with a senior leadership position line-managing the special education needs, extended schools and mentoring departments. The fact that all three dimensions are in balance explains to an extent her sense of fulfilment that her school leadership aspiration is being realised – it does not however mean that there have not been occasional fluctuations and tensions. Tami recently was anxious about the departure of some of her colleagues. And in another episode, she had to resolve an unhappy personal relationship. Faced with these fluctuations, what, she said kept her sane was perseverance, knowing that an opening would emerge, and drawing a definitive line in order to move forward, with nothing left unanswered.

Rod's own life history is an example of early conflicts in various identity dimensions present at that stage of his life. In school, he found himself having to overcome the psychological turmoil of being stigmatised and stereotyped with comments that he was not good enough academically. At home, he faced similar problems with him not meeting parental expectations. He gave up academically by telling his father he did not want to become part of the 'rat race'; calling this episode 'mode of escapism'. Feeling challenged by others, he became a member of an IQ society in order to at least prove himself intelligent. He eventually responded to a friend who challenged him constructively, by started a teaching

degree in his late 30s. These early conflicts have invariably shaped him, and this is what he brings into the professional and situated domain. Professionally then, what he thinks make him a good leader is not necessarily academic results, and as he says, he is 'not concerned with what school inspectors have to say, but in the quality of the perception of the whole individual and where to take them'. He sees himself as Confucian, drawing from sages and many religious principles, to engage students socially, morally, culturally and spiritually. He brings these into his situated environment, where he engages the most difficult pupils who others say are "a failure; will never work". He narrates an episode where he had to channel a student who blames his predicament on teachers to reflecting inward and agreeing on some targets. He is recognised, appreciated and utilised as an educationist within his community, and innovative in employing successful people and uniformed officers to motivate students. All three dimensions seem to be in balance, thus shape his sense of realising his leadership school aspiration.

In the case of Omono, he had to first resolve leaving Kenya with strong extended family ties to the UK in order to sufficiently provide for his nuclear family; and as he said, it was a decision that had to be taken with of course the conflicts of leaving his close-knit relatives. Bush and Moloi (2008) point to link between shared values, beliefs and a geographic location in a migrant leaving a place of origin to another that is foreign; resulting in conflict, contradiction and ambiguity that has to be resolved at the onset of or during careers. In the case of Omono, conflicts extends from such personal considerations to the professional, where he dislikes anything diametrically opposed to his Christian principles and doctrines. In this regard, he once adopted the professionally

attitude of a disciplinarian who held students solely accountable academically, communicating in clear and unambiguous language to Kenyan parents about whether their children failed or passed their examinations. Clearly he has found this persona not conducive in a new environment where teacher accountability is paramount. As Day et al (2006) point out, the resolve to pursue own goals (in this case, school leadership aspirations) include the ability to reconstruct where necessary, the personal, professional and situated dimensions.

This is what Omono seems to have done, as the same Christian principles that have shaped his disciplinarian attitude in Kenya becomes the voice from his background shaping a more caring attitude as a surrogate parent, social worker, psychologist and mediator to the disaffected, and one dealing with the whole malaise as in the case of Jesus, rather than the sickness, in building the 'totality of the person', in order to bring out dimensions of the student that may not be academic, but trigger it to develop. Faced with the situation of a difficult student, he plants 'some seeds like skills, and attitude, and watching it germinate', and if the student responds positively, he tells himself that it is the right strategy and continues, and if he does not, he evaluates his performance and looks for alternatives. The extent then to which Omono have been able to reconstruct his professional identity, shaped of course by his Christian principle, and realign himself in a new environment is related to his confidence that he is realising his school leadership aspiration.

Kathy, in growing up as a first-generation Caribbean in south west London, says the value that informs her professionally is the value that irrespective of

academic ability, hard work and a good education is the key to success. She has strong affinity with her BME colleagues, who through their experiences provide the opportunity to discuss issues of 'common denominators'. Professionally, she sees herself as a vehicle taking students through the journey of learning and a motivational ambassador instilling belief. In many ways, her Caribbean background and growing up in south west London gives her the added advantage to 'break down' the most difficult students by 'tapping' into them. It is a street language of saying she is getting to their level, knows where they come from and understands issues that concern them. In the class, she uses 'reverse psychology' to counteract students' negativity, and when discouraged, 'a battle of laughter takes place in order to overturn the most negative comments directed into positives'.

Critical incidents and trends such as negative evaluations and inconsistent recognition of her efforts from some colleagues have threatened this. For example, she was particularly aggrieved when a consultant inspector classified her lesson as *unsatisfactory*, but through the support of her pupils got an apology and subsequent upgrade in the evaluation of her lesson. In another incident, she felt she was not given due credit in initiating the student peer mentoring program. To the extent that she can overcome inconsistencies in appreciation from senior leaders about her efforts on the one hand, and rely on support and appreciation from pupils, parents and mentors on the other, is crucial to ensuring that her situated conditions are not at variance with her personal and professional identities. This seems to be important to maintaining an undiminished confidence that she is realising her school leadership aspiration.

Aspirants with tangible self-referent or other-referent prominence

Personally, Kuban identifies himself as a principled person and a man of integrity, and as such his upbringing in South Africa with an admixture of South Asian, African and Afrikaan traditions, have instilled in him the value of the spoken word, characterised by clear intentions and respect. He enjoys spending time with the older folks because their shared experiences of life informs him of how to deal with many situations, particularly in school where sometimes colleagues may 'want to just jump in and tell them [students] to change that and this', and when what is really needed is to step back and allow students to do and learn a few things. In this respect, he sees himself professionally as a judicious and balanced individual who can sift through as myriad of initiatives to know which will work or is right for him, whilst taking into account the prevailing circumstances that he is faced with.

He brings this professional perspective into his situated environment, where it is not just curriculum content that he is concerned with, but in understanding the context of students, so that when he begins to exert his influence in the classroom, he is not just accepted but believed. Faced with varying and difficult situations with a student, he tries to understand various underlying factors before making decisions. Faced with a situation when a teacher is experiencing problems in the class, he does not undermine his or her authority, but stands in solidarity. The episodes of how he dealt with the hundred and fifty unmarked coursework, two non-ICT specialist and unhappy colleagues in his mathematics department, all put into context what he believes is his judiciousness and professional balance.

It is not that he has not experienced some incidents that would have destabilized him, but he has somehow managed it. For example, he felt that occasions when he has been asked to give his own professional opinions as a specialist, they often were dismissed. He remembers when he made a call on some examination entries, and the head teacher challenged it even with clear baseline evidence. He saw the discrepancy between senior leaders spending too much time micro-managing and those hired for specific tasks not given the freedom to make informed decisions, and being held accountable as a consequence. In spite of this difficulty, he managed and fought for the right to make his decisions and be held accountable. He said he has been able to maintain his school leadership aspiration because of a strong sense of self-efficacy and 'active experience', which means learning from his past experiences, his ability to complete task and meet goals is undiminished.

From an early age, Adama felt that the path defined for him was not the one he has to take, and as such his agency was the courage to go into a secondary school, request to be enrolled, and when he was told that he must pass an entrance examination, he devoted much of his spare time studying and when he eventually passed, he was admitted. To support his education, he grew yams, vegetables and fruits. All of these suggest agency against the constraining structures of familial expectations and financial hardship. He is also religious, believing that Jehovah is the final arbiter of his destiny; providing him with his needs, but not necessarily what he wants; and as a result, so long as he is responsible and showing himself approved to Jehovah through his religious duties, his agency will not be in vain.

His life experiences and religious faith invariably shape his professional and situated outlook, so that he finds it satisfying to analyse and predict baseline student data, so that what he thinks define him as a good teacher is a question of academic responsibility, accountability and appreciation of things quantifiable and tangible, rather than the unquantifiable and subjective. Faced with the situated condition of disruptive pupils who 'create a mess for themselves and others who want to learn', he wants them to take responsibility for their actions without making excuses, and failing that, they should be streamlined so that he can concentrate on those who want to learn. What then runs through his personal, professional and situated dimensions as a form of thread that binds them together is responsibility for own actions and accountability demanded of him.

Adama sees potential challenges ahead as the new head of mathematics leading a team of key portfolio holders. Undoubtedly, he has experienced setbacks, but he been able to bounce back from them. During a feedback session from an interview, a panellist asked whether he can motivate and inspire people – essentially implying that he was 'not cut out to be a leader'. With advice from another senior leader, he aligned his performance management needs to his leadership goals and sought for opportunities to demonstrate his competence. One such came in form of conducting a whole-school assembly, and after this, the perception of him amongst senior school leaders changed. Other forces that potentially could be destabilising are more personal such as the time and distance it takes him to travel to work, as he has to first take his spouse to the train station and his son to day-care. He is managing this carefully as he makes clear aspects

of life, from the personal to the professional affect each other, and so he has to ensure good relationships with colleagues at work, in order to make his whole life worthwhile.

On a personal note, Dwain is very private about his religious convictions, but says his faith in a greater Being empowers and sustains his inner ambition to succeed. In this respect, he wants his professional achievements to serve as motivation to his kinspeople that they too can attain the same level of success as well. As a teacher and pastoral head, he believes an effective school leader is someone who understands when change is necessary, and can therefore make effective changes whilst account is taken of the context of the environment. He feels he has done so as teacher, as a pastoral leader, and he now wants to do the same at the most senior school levels and nationally as an adviser and policy maker. He sees change necessary in many areas – in examining the situated environment as a pastoral head, he observes that parents become quite defensive of their children and cynical about schooling because of their own bitter experiences, so advocates educating them so that they fully appreciate what leaders like him are doing on behalf of their children.

Situationally, he understands the motivational power of appreciation and positive feedback – and in conducting his last assembly as the outgoing head of year, many of the students were crying mainly because of how he impacted their lives. Reflecting on this, he tells himself that if he can help these pupils on this small scale, how much more of an impact he can make as a principal or very senior leader. The central theme that seems to run through and thus encapsulates

his identity dimensions is the need to be an effective change agent, whether in terms of using his hierarchical successes as a way of motivating members of his community, or as a means of making meaningful changes to the situated work environment he finds himself. This seems to be in balance, even though he has experienced setbacks, which he says, is often short-lived because he learns from them.

Raised a Christian, Rox believes it is by divine direction that she is in the teaching profession – an evangelist pointed her out during a service, and as her teaching career began to unfold, her belief in this divine prophecy was reinforced. Through the years, she has come to the conclusion that leadership styles, interventions to implement, and assignment of tasks within a team, all matter. At the heart of this is her notion of leadership-by-objective, which she believes can only be successful when it is an open or flat field within which members at any level can subscribe because the aims, objectives and potential rewards are laid out democratically. This is how she sees her professional practice and her principle in work-related situated tasks.

Problems in maintaining a certain standard of living in Guyana eventually led her to migrate to the UK. She however found it a 'culture shock' adapting to a new type of professionalism in the UK. According to Rassool (1999, cited in Bush et al, 2005), the extent to which a new migrant BME teacher succeed depends on the ability to resolve the intersectionality between the discontinuity of living behind aspects of life, reconciling differences in manner and custom, and social displacement experienced on arrival. Similar to Omono, Rox found

that she no longer lead the whole team, instead she was part of a team that was lead in a type of leadership custom that she had to adapt to. There were therefore conflicts between identity dimensions, but as Day et al (2006) analysed, instability as a result of conflicts in the three identity dimensions, may not necessarily be negative, as it can stimulate a re-evaluation of current thinking and practices which may no longer be the most effective in the work situation. This seems to be the case, for 'without moaning or complaining', Rox had to adapt, and 'ultimately, it was not too bad a transformation'. She understands now with humility that she was once at the top of her profession in Guyana, but at a lower level now. It has thus put her in a position to see things differently, and to subtly tell colleagues in positions that things can be done a little differently. She recently visiting her former school in Guyana, and colleagues began to remind her about the positive things she did as a principal – an experience which reinforced her conviction about her role and efficacy. She seems to have adapted to a new situation in a positive way, such that her personal, professional and situated identity dimensions are in balance.

On Bodun's part, the family seem to permeate every aspect of her life. Now in her mid-40s, maintaining the balance of the personal, family and work commitment is paramount. She once resigned from a position because changing her terms of contract would affect her carefully calibrated work-life balance. In leaving and reassessing her professional situation, she opted for the 'less stressful' role as an education welfare officer in order to work at her own pace from home. Family considerations are at the forefront of how she sees her professional future in terms of prestigious role that she seeks – which must fit

in with being a family person because she does not want to be 'stuck in a job for hours and hours'. Relating to this and quite significant is her internalisation of familial expectations of parents, spouse and children, who she feels want to see that her career choice have indeed been worthwhile – she feels she owes herself and her family that through the 'good, the bad and the ugly' years, she must attain a prestigious position. However, the situated conditions of school do not seem to align with this, as she finds the social barriers very difficult to crack. She feels this imbalance as personal and professional considerations are constrained; such that her leadership aspiration is 'pretty much impossible' to achieve in the school. She is remedying this by gaining promotion elsewhere, acquiring more experience and qualifications.

Lavesh believes that her South African heritage, with strong influences from African, South Asian and Afrikaans culture, and against the backdrop of experiences fighting an apartheid regime, have instilled in her a strong sense for justice and equality. She sees no difference between personal and professional integrity, and as such demands integrity from everybody because it is how she feels she acts herself. Professionally, the diversity of views on what is good practice, what mechanism work best and how to bring these into a learning culture, are important to her. But situationally, the autonomy to do so is constrained. She feels that her experience teaching in large, but relatively disciplined classes in South Africa compared to relatively small but less disciplined classes in the UK, gives her a better insight into issues of student behaviour and intrinsic value of education in these two cultures. In this regard, she feels that senior school leaders do not understand this context, and in any

case, they lack the interpersonal skills that would enable them to communicate, listen and understand her views. She thinks there is a hidden agenda from senior school leaders who make it difficult for her to know what to do and where to go, with the effect that she finds it difficult to work properly. She concludes from this backdrop of lack of autonomy, and of being 'trapped, restricted and clamped down', that her school leadership aspiration is being impeded – it is therefore the case that her personal and professional identities are at variance with her situated environment.

Discussion – identity dimensions and perception of success

The BME school leadership discourse rightly identify problems that BME teachers face, with various intersectional formations working against the realisation of their leadership progression. Bush et al (2005) highlight the intersection of family and community reactions to career choice and ways in which their lay and professional development is enabled or hindered in and beyond the schools they served. Cultural or religious supportiveness is seen to intersect with repressiveness within the family, so that in the case of the female BME teacher, they may on the one hand, experience differently the operation of male dominance in the household, and on the other, experience support from family in the wider racial environment (Bhavnani, 1994). Similarly, Davidson (1997) points to the double negative effect of externally generated sexism experienced in the workplace and internally generated ones emerging from spousal, religious and cultural tensions. In addition, the country of origin has an effect on promotional prospects which is much more pronounced amongst many teachers from commonwealth nations.

In this respect, a combination of accent and perceived inferiority of foreign qualifications is seen by Wilkins & Lall (2011); McNamara et al (2009); Bush et al (2005) and Koroma (2004) as a negative influence on promotional school leadership prospects, particularly amongst many African teachers.

Rassool (1999, cited in Bush et al, 2005) highlights the relationship between migrant teachers' ability to resolve the discontinuity of living behind aspects of life, reconciling differences in manner and custom and social displacement upon arrival, and reliance on own community, to their success as they navigate their career trajectory. With regards to this latter point, we see from a professional context Omono reconstructing his identity based on his Christian principle to a new environment in order to realize his school leadership aspiration. Likewise, Rox is having to adjust to the culture shock of leaving her position where she led whole school team as a principal in Guyana, to a new school in the UK as a middle leader, with new professional expectations and situated conditions. In these two cases, the particular professional manner and or assumptions once adopted have to reconcile with the new expectation demanded in a new environment. As Day et al (2006) analysed, professional conflicts need to be re-evaluated in order to find the effective professional behaviour in a new environment and or different work situation.

In contrast however, there is a disconnect between how Lavesh sees her professional practice in a new situated environment and her experiences in South Africa and what she feels are the particular behaviours and expectations of senior leaders. Likewise for Bodun, a Nigerian-heritaged teacher, there is a dissonance

between meeting her anxiety and familial expectations, maintaining work-life balance and situated social structures inhibiting her leadership aspiration.

The BME school leadership discourse also identify enabling formations, such as positive self-image, additionality of being a BME-heritaged person, and positive expectation from own community linked to school leadership progression or opportunity. In McKenley and Gordon's (2002) study, BME teachers and leaders express strong desires to capture the joys of their leadership, often see themselves adding their rich cultural heritage to schools they serve and in the process play unique roles transforming opportunities within the community. Being a 'voice' to their own community for the BME teacher is linked to understanding of own culture, language, religion or culture, 'black to black perspective' with black parents and greater approachability relative to white teachers (Bush et al, 2007; 2005). In literature, BME teachers are shown to appreciate many advantages they believe is as a result of their heritage – for example, that they understand the religious and cultural background of pupils, particularly from similar background as themselves; that they can adopt a 'black to black perspective' and as such do things differently and; that they can be more honest dealing with black parents.

In this study, Kathy speaks of having strong affinity with her BME colleagues and her Caribbean and south west London background giving her the added advantage to 'break down' the most difficult students so that she can get to their level. Rod speaks of the recognition he receives within his community, and how he is expected to represent their interests, whether in terms of pupil expulsion

appeals or other pertinent issues. Dwain's affinity with his birthplace of Jamaica, however far-flung, is in using his achievements as a motivational tool for his kinspeople to believe that they too can succeed as well. Tami speaks of recognition from her uncle and half-sister, and how her achievements and transformational role continue to be a spur for her family.

An encompassing typology that takes into account various formations, and one which can prove useful for future research, particularly when linked to the *balancing* of various intersectionalities and relationships used in this study is Day et al's (2006) identity dimensions of personal (i.e., the cultural, religious, family, ethnicity and community), professional (i.e., policy effects, external evaluations, roles and responsibility) and situated (i.e., pupil relationship, workplace attitudes and feedback, workplace reactions and culture). An important aspect of this typology in this study and to literature is the extent to which the three dimensions can be *balanced* serve as a critical mediating factor in the realisation of school leadership aspirations, and which in turn is linked to what Day et al describe as sense of agency developed when an individual feels able to pursue their own goals from the context of positive and negative interactions within and between personal, situated and professional dimensions. In the case of aspirants such as Bodun and Lavesh who feel constrained and as such are not realising their leadership aspirations, agency that may be expended in time and effort is directed towards remedying the imbalance of dimensions. Where aspirants are experiencing some form of balance to these intersecting forces, agency is exercised directly at pursuing their own school leadership aspirations. This particular point provides an opportunity to explore the extent to which agency

has been exercised in relation to school culture[15]; which as a form of structure either inhibits or facilitates school leadership aspirations – this is the third research question dealing with the expectation component of aspiration discussed in the introductory chapter.

6.4 AGENCY, STRUCTURE AND REALISATION OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ASPIRATIONS

School culture

The school culture in which BME teachers have to pursue and negotiate their careers has been discussed in BME school leadership literature – at least implicitly in literature's broader topic on the actions and attitudes of the most dominant group and the effect on career opportunities of many BME teachers. Lumby (2012) makes the point that culture through the modulation of power is as an embedded structure shaping activity, privileging the interest of one group over another, and as such serves as a disciplinary force. School culture is also both the medium and outcome of agency, so that it is not necessarily antagonistic to agency, but interrelated (Archer, 1996; Giddens, 1991; 1986). In this sense, structure characterized by rules, custom, practices and embedded activities, facilitate or constrain agency; and agency in turn, through its actions and interactions force the reconstitution or overcoming of structure. The aspirants through reactions in their workplace seem to exercise in varying degrees agency against or in concert with the underlying culture in their schools in pursuit of their school leadership aspirations.

[15] Sailes (2008: 74 – 75) defines culture as an organised set of thoughts, beliefs, and norms for interaction and communication; and specifies that it is about how people treat and value one another, how school staff work together in a professional and personal sense, and consensus about what is important.

A discussion of this is undertaken in this section, as the aspirants are grouped according to their respective Schools X, Y and Z in order to evaluate their perceptions of school culture and how this as a form of structure is negotiated through the extent of which agency is exercised in order to realise their leadership aspirations. As presented previously, Tami, Omono, Adama, Dwain and Rox all teach in School X, where administrators have sought to appoint practitioners that would best meet the school's new focus and objectives. Rod and Kathy teach in School Y, with a large proportion of its most senior leaders, the longest serving staff members. Kuban, Bodun and Lavesh teach in School Z, which has experienced a relatively large number of staff turnovers out of attrition and the arrival of a new senior leadership team.

Culture of School X

The culture in School X, according to Adama, is one that facilitates his school leadership aspiration, and even if it were not the case, he does not think the culture would impede him because he is 'transparent' – meaning it will neither improve nor discourage his resilience toward reaching his destination. Echoing this sentiment is Dwain's view that the school has a culture that will accommodate anyone so long as they can be imaginative. He makes the point that individuals who are more likely to be supported in the school are those who can put themselves forward and take risks – those who can exercise agency. Adama's own life story points to strong personal agency. Earlier in his life, the constraining forces of familial expectations and limited opportunities dictated that he must remain a car upholstery man. In asking a school administrator to be admitted, studying as required and passing his entrance examination, he

worked against this force. After observing for a while as a mathematics teaching assistant that he could do a better job, he enrolled as a student teacher. When doubts were raised during his interview about his ability to lead, he re-evaluated and realigned his training needs to his school leadership aspiration. He took up the challenge to conduct an assembly when no one else in his department was willing, and in doing so, the perception of the senior school leaders who first doubted his ability to lead began to change in his favour.

He is also aware that in all his endeavours, he has a higher power by his side so long as he does His will. It is this higher power, Jehovah, that he must work with so that his agency with or against any prevailing structure can help him meet his goals. Similar in assessment, Dwight makes the point that others may say that the School X's culture is one that does not facilitate, but they have not put themselves forward by trying out things. He feels he would not have secured his assistant principalship position if it were not for the fact that he was allowed to do a lot of things outside his job specification. He had a conversation with the principal and said, "Listen, I need to move on, give me something to do". He put himself forward to do things like Saturday detention, reserved for senior teachers, and that gave him 'the flavour'. Similarly, Omono thinks that the culture of School X is one where decision-making and authority emanating from the top is felt by all, and initiatives emerging from the bottom are allowed and generally accepted by the top. A case in point is when as a frontline teacher, he was given the supported to conduct an action research into how Somali and Ethiopian students could be assisted pastorally within the science department. He makes this subtle distinction though between initiatives from the top and

bottom, with ones from the top felt more forcefully, and those from the bottom defined by parameters imposed from top – with the implied analysis that structure sets boundaries to which agency must be exercised, and therefore constrained.

To him, the culture of School X is an enabling one because it is 'a learning organisation' as it accommodates those who want to make improvements. It is a culture that promotes individuals based on merit as any internal candidate seen as having the capability, irrespective of ethnicity or gender, will more likely be appointed for any position. However the extent to which he feels his agency has been exercised is evident in his admission that he has not commissioned himself enough, and that if he had done so, the interview panel would have had an option to appoint him as a pastoral leader. Rox's evaluation of the culture of School X is similar in many respects to the previous three aspirants, as she sees it as facilitating to individuals who can exercise agency. However there are subtle differences. She feels that those who have been able to exercise their agency seem to have a disproportionate influence over others; principally because it is an 'open door' for them, and a 'closed door' for the rest. She acknowledges that she is one of those who have an 'open door', and as such is able to exercise influence, due mainly to hard earned work in demonstrating competence. These 'open door' and 'closed door' have created what she also refers to as 'pockets of imbalances in the school'. She attributes this to the fact that individuals facing 'closed door' situations seem to think outside what school leaders think, and they have their own style of doing things, and as such they are not encouraged further because leaders feel professionally threatened.

Tami in similar vein feels that she is fortunate enough to have access to the principal and therefore have a degree of autonomy to work on many initiatives. She provides a more nuanced insight into the 'pockets of imbalances' that Rox alludes to, by observing that the reason why some individuals do not commission themselves is because there is a dearth of transformational leaders in the school – the essence of Tami's conception of her role is challenging others to discover their potential, and by so doing achievers. In this respect, the focus for her is not necessarily on those teachers already exercising agency or fulfilling potential, but in those who cannot for a variety of reasons. She contrasts this type of transformational role to the practices of some senior school leaders who use the negative personalities and perceptions of those who cannot commission themselves (i.e., what Rox refers to as the inability of some teachers to commission themselves because of their style of doing things) as weapons to limit their expectations.

The central theme that runs through the observations of Adama, Dwain, Omono, Rox and Tami is that the culture of School X is one facilitating to those who can exercise agency, and not necessarily accommodating to some because of their personalities. These observations link to analysis in literature review that an empowering school culture defined by positive attitude and actions of colleagues is one of the most important enablers to the realisation of school leadership aspirations. They parallel Bush and Moloi's (2008) analysis that BME teachers interested in positions have to 'self-nominate' themselves by applying for available leadership posts and submit themselves to explicit or implicit criteria. To do this requires sufficient level of confidence and positive self-belief,

and the absence of which contribute to their underrepresentation in many layers of senior leadership. A respondent in Bush et al's (2005: 27) study said, "sometimes I have been reluctant to "sell" myself and push myself forward, not wanting to be seen as pushy and arrogant'.

Adama, Dwain, Rox and Tami had to exercise agency through self-belief and many actions that include pro-actively soliciting the assistance of senior leaders. The BME school leadership literature point to supportive colleagues and head teachers instrumental to the school leadership progression of many BME teachers, and that the most successful BME school leaders were the ones who recognised the value of allies in building their capacity and leadership aspirations. Bush and Moloi (2008) observe that developing self-confidence seems to depend on having appropriate level of support as well as suitable role models; and when this is missing the ability and confidence to venture out in search of opportunities will be at best deficient and at worst absent. A BME leader in Bush et al's (2005: 54) study said: 'I was fortunate enough to have had people who supported me. Other head teachers had seen my ambition and helped me, their moral support has been fantastic'. Another in Coleman and Campbell-Stephens' (2010: 46) study said: 'Working in the close-knit London borough has been important. The people are approachable. I have worked with very strong heads who have guided and supported me. I have learnt from people, working with them and asking for advice'. These BME leaders in literature reflect what aspirants in School X say is an environment where the instrumental value of the principal or other senior leaders has been evident or instrumental in the realisation their school leadership aspirations.

Culture of School Y

The culture of School Y, according to Kathy, is one in which on the surface there is a strong morale amongst staff, but beneath this veneer is its stark undertone of tension resulting from selective recognition of the effects of many teachers. She believes that her aspiration is both facilitated and hindered – at times when her face fits, she makes the most of the opportunity by exercising some degree of agency and on other occasions, she is put back into a shell. To be consistently accepted, she has to display some 'strong factors'. Her grievance therefore resides in the fact that recognition tends to be selective to a few and inconsistent towards her, and as such her capacity to exercise much agency is limited. A typical example cited was her action research into student-peer mentoring, and when it became clear that an outside financial agency was interested in sponsoring what emerged from her research as part of their community initiative, she was side-lined. This parallels what was reviewed in the second chapter regarding the allocation of negative outcomes disproportionately to a subordinate group, and which means lack of recognition of positive attributes that would otherwise be beneficial to career outcomes. It also highlights what McKenley and Gordon (2002) notice is the discrepancy between the evidence provided by school inspectors about the school leadership qualities of many BME teachers, their commitment to innovation and ability to raise standards in challenging school and the lack of recognition of these facts by local education official and school colleagues.

Kathy feels that she has to be very careful complaining because of the potential impact on her economic pocket and professional life. She would rather 'sit tight

and let things warm up first, and let it cool down', and then speak out – this she says is also fraught with danger in that school leaders suddenly close ranks and curtail those who dare to speak out. T~~he cultu~~re of School Y, as a form of structure, seems to place boundaries on the extent to which her agency can be exercised, thus paralleling what Lumby (2012) refers to as power modulation which channels many in accepting the status quo in the existing order of things for risk of serious penalties when boundaries are transgressed.

Rod in the same School Y as Kathy, encapsulates her sentiments by mentioning an episode where someone in his department, and in whom he believes is more qualified because of her role with him in transforming a failing department during the most difficult years, was rejected in favour of someone less qualified. He laments the fact that it brings back memories, and that it is with great sadness that a type of culture, and which he fought hard to eradicate as an Equal Opportunities Officer is re-emerging – he fought to implement measures that would ensure that black and white teachers would get the same acclaim for the effort they put in. Rod's comments parallel what Coleman (2012) refers to as the tendency of applying stereotypes and negatively judging people on the basis of difference, and for leadership, often equated with the most dominant group appointing as gatekeepers members from their own group. This point is echoed in Menter et al's (2003) analysis of threshold assessment, which found that BME teachers often express concern about internal procedures and role of gatekeepers in their progression – they fare disproportionately worse in being evaluated favourably for threshold. When it came to the crux of making appointment, Rod found that the most deserving, a BME colleague is

overlooked for a less experienced white individual. His observation essentially falls into how, according to Bush and Moloi (2008), in centralised systems where hierarchical progression is controlled, gatekeepers serve as the centralised force determining who is considered for promotion. And in decentralised cases, gatekeepers still play a crucial role in the 'climate setting' of leadership succession, and therefore retain overall responsibility for future succession planning.

His own life story tells of a struggle for personal agency in the face of constraining expectations of people. At an early age, what he really wanted to become was hindered by the expectations of his parents who thought his career choice was not good enough. In school, teachers told him he did not have the brains, and they channelled his potential away from the academic – it was only three teachers, a housemaster who wrote in his report, "Rodney is one of the brightest kids I have ever worked with and he could do anything he chooses to be", and a senior and a junior teacher, who tried to help him overcome the problems he was facing. He did what he felt was necessary in trying to break free by saying he did not want to be part of the 'rat race'. He gradually gained his sense of fulfilment by devoting himself to the development of young people, first as a youth worker, then a laboratory technician and finally as a science teacher. So when he finds that some of his colleagues are not fairly treated, he understands how it permeates down to BME students who observe what is happening and begin to question why they need to work hard when those they admire and respect are not being rewarded – they begin to question whether it is worthwhile to even listen, least of all to white teachers. Osler (1997b: 55)

alludes to this when she says that 'the very position of black teachers in a school, their roles, positions in the management structure or their invisibility gives out a message to both black children and to whites about their importance'. In spite of these experiences, his belief is still in his ability to commission himself on projects attending to disaffected pupils.

Culture of School Z

To Bodun, the culture of School Z is one that limits many school leadership aspirations, for only certain individuals are favoured at the expense of many others. She finds the social fabric of the school detrimental, particularly when teachers like her feel like outsiders. She feels that the social barriers are very obvious and difficult to crack, and so she no longer wants to waste time trying to get in. She observes that there are families working in the school who have been actively sought, and as such it has created in imbalance that upsets the social and professional structure. Similar experiences can be found in literature, where a BME teacher in Bush et al's (2005: 75) study said, 'too much is decided over a drink at the pub after school and cliques exist in most schools to stop certain types of teachers getting the top jobs. …the culture is to employ somebody who they can identify with and feel comfortable around; somebody who 'looks' like them'. Bodun's reference to the social barriers that are very obvious and difficult to crack, also means that she does not have access to information decided in social-professional circles. Seibert et al (2001) point to the fact that greater access to information is a key explanatory variable to effective career mobility and promotional opportunities, independent of the other career outcomes. This informal network, however subtle its nature,

invariable means 'behind the scenes' criteria for promotion detrimental to the leadership prospects of many ethnic minorities (Harris et al, 2003).

Bodun's observation is the type of homosociability that Coleman (2012) refers to, in that senior leaders in organisations are most comfortable with people who are like themselves, and make decisions over who gets the best opportunities or singled out for recognition. A combination of all these is one reason why her desire to gain promotion within the school was discarded in favour of trying something outside the school. The question for her now is not whether it is worth remaining but when to leave – for now she has decided to complete her postgraduate degree and gain more experience in the special education needs department. Her recent actions then; in re-orienting her leadership aspirations, and then to gain experience and qualifications, are attempts at exercising personal agency against the constraining culture of exclusion – but the extent to which she will be successful is not yet known.

Similar in observation to Bodun, Lavesh paints a picture of a culture in School Z where leaders have a 'narrow tunnel' way of thinking, and where those without a voice often 'tag along like blind sheep'. She complains of a 'one-person way of thinking', a 'pigeon-holed thinking', and as a result, she feels alienated, trapped, restricted and clamped down. Citing an occasion when she and other BME colleagues were rejected in favour of white colleagues in an international programme to promote ethnic inclusion, she raises questions about discrimination. She feels that she is not recognised for any distinctive contribution that she wants to offer, and this is in effect characteristic to the fact

that allocating negative outcomes disproportionately to a subordinate group, by its nature means lack of recognition of positive attributes that would otherwise be beneficial to career outcomes. Findings from literature mirror this experience, for example, in McKenley and Gordon's (2002) study, despite clear evidence from school inspectors about the quality of BME teachers' leadership, commitment to innovation and ability to raise standards in challenging school, they were often not recognised by education officials.

Within the further education (FE) sector, Mackay and Etienne (2006) observe that lack of professional acceptance of BME staff often lead to professional mistrust, and which in turn affects their efficiency and effectiveness, and in particular, the ability to take risks that should otherwise be taken in an innovative environment for fear that they will not be supported if mistakes are made. Further, lack of professional acceptance from white colleagues invariably feeds into the black self-consciousness of their role as managers and cautiousness in their approach to managing staff and tasking risk. In this sense, BME staff view overachievement as the only response to the unstated questions of whether or not they deserve all that came to them – they believe that it is not enough to be the best once, but have to prove themselves every time. This observation is reflected in Lavesh's determination to break free from the inhibiting structure and exercise her autonomy[16] by fighting against those who practice 'industrial racism'. The means gaining more qualifications, in 'black and white', so that no one can query her credentials and expertise. She sees speaking out as another

[16] In Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory, the need for autonomy refers to the universal urge to be causal agents of own destiny. This need does not in itself mean independence from others, but the freedom to make informed (or as the case may be uninformed) decisions.

way, and says senior leaders 'either like it or lump it', she nevertheless is going to express her opinion regardless of the consequences because of her expertise and experiences. To her then, there are various ways to fight this culture – gaining qualifications in 'black and white' and speaking out forcefully; however the extent to which this form of agency is going to be successful is not yet known.

Similar to the description of Bodun and Lavesh, Kuban sees a school with a culture of authoritarianism. For him, many of the senior leaders are far too interested in their own journeys that they do not think of the many careers that are being crushed on the way. He observes that these leaders often take advantage of the friendship and efficiency of others to advance their interest. He complains of not being given the autonomy to make decisions as an expert and of being micro-managed – he made a prediction on the likely grades of some of his students based on evidence and it was blatantly rejected. Kuban's experiences of being micro-managed parallel what literature says about the high level scrutiny BME teachers are often subjected to, of having to constantly prove themselves and tendency for mistakes to be readily highlighted. A participants in McKenley and Gordon's (2002: 10) study said, 'I was asked to do one job after another ostensibly to 'prove myself' so in the end I resigned without a job and decided to do an MA in order to get an open reference from him'. Another said, 'I feel as a black person I carry a lot of baggage – deep inner feelings about our ability to make mistakes. This to me is the essential dilemma for black school leaders. To create the space to be allowed to make mistakes as person rather than as a black person (ibid: 11).

Like Lavesh, Kuban said he and some BME colleagues were supposed to attend an international programme to promote ethnic inclusion, and they were all rejected in favour of white applicants for reasons to which they could not fathom. He observes that in the space of eighteen months, senior leadership systematically dismantled the sizeable BME teachers in middle management through various evaluative procedures. The experiences of Kuban, as well as Lavesh and Bodun seem to fall into Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) characterisation of covert discrimination extending beyond the disproportionate allocation of negative evaluations to a particular group and rigorous application of promotional policies and procedures in the narrowest form to exclude certain individuals, towards the absence of positive evaluations, non-recognition of positive attributes and absence of information that would otherwise be beneficial to their professional prospects.

In spite of these experiences, Kuban nonetheless maintains that his experiences, where he has been 'active', rather than 'passive' and skills acquired over the years gives him the self-efficacy belief and ability to fight for his right to exercise his professional judgement on matters he was appointed for, and as a result his is realising his leadership aspiration. According to Bandura (1991, 1989), Locke and Latham (2002, 1990), aspirations (i.e., goals) influenced and sustained by self-appraisal of capabilities is stronger, yield firmer commitment and lead to higher likelihood or expectancy of success even when the environment is a constraining one – this seems to be case for Kuban as his self-efficacy beliefs makes him feel his school leadership aspirations are not contingent on the attitude of others.

Discussion – theorization of dynamic nature of agency and structure

The BME school literature reviewed essentially uphold ~~is~~ that the aggregated effects of the negative attitudes and action of individuals within schools, the customs and practices, in form of institutional culture maintaining these attitudes and actions, are structures which more than often inhibit the school leadership progression of many BME teachers. These attitudes and actions manifest itself in various ways. Koroma (2004: 87) for example, cites the preconceived notions that whites have about black African teachers, which in turn adversely affect their self-esteem and ability as teaching professionals. Bush et al (2005: 5) note the composition of selection panels and employment policies in making the 'BME candidates unable to secure professional post because upward expectations are met by downward social movement'. Entrenched cultural problems and institutional racism is seen by McNamara et al (2009) as limiting the equally ambitious BME teachers who are committed to their careers and professionalism. Social injustice, inequity, systematic discrimination, ethnic and gender prejudice, by Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010), still affect the selection and recruitment of BME leaders even at the most senior school levels. The inter-related strictures of social exclusion, overt racism, recruitment policies, attitude of senior colleagues, and informal networks are identified by Ogunbawo (2012) as responsible for the underrepresentation of BME teachers in layers of school leadership.

These structures extend, as recognised by Bush et al (2006), to the intersecting forces of religious and familial customs that limit opportunities and choice for aspiring BME teachers. Bush et al make the telling point that 'family and

community attitudes to teaching influence whether BME people embark on teaching careers or seek promotion – [so that] in a community where BME women are first seen in terms of motherhood, this may conflict with career development' (ibid, 292). Linked to this, in Bush and Moloi's (2008) analysis of race and racism in leadership development, is the issue of community and identity, and a type of constraining structure formed out of overly reliance on tight social contacts that invariably inhibit interaction and social capital, thus leading to fatalistic aspirations until the second and third generation. At the entry point of teaching, problems associated with the imbalance of powerful 'communities of practice' of the school as 'professional body of expert practice' and teacher training institutions as an 'academic body of expert knowledge', both aligned on one side against the relatively powerless, low-status BME student (Wilkins & Lall, 2011) also serve to limit the number who pass initial stages of training. These structures summarised more than two decades ago by Siraj-Blatchford (1991: 37) represent the 'interpersonal, institutional, structural and cultural racism' faced by many BME teachers.

In literature explicitly or implicitly highlighting these structures, it has not however explored the dynamic relationship of agency and structure, although references are sometimes made about the agency of BME teachers. From what has emerged in this study, it is possible to theorize this relationship by stating that the extent to which the aspirants have exercised agency with respect to their school leadership aspirations, in concert with or against situated structural forces, is proportional to the extent to which they are realised. This dynamic can best be explained in terms of four basic scenarios illustrated in a conceptual map

of Figure 6.2, where the horizontal axis of 'agency' is a continuum from very weak to very strong, and on the vertical axis, 'structure' is a continuum from the most inhibiting to the most facilitating.

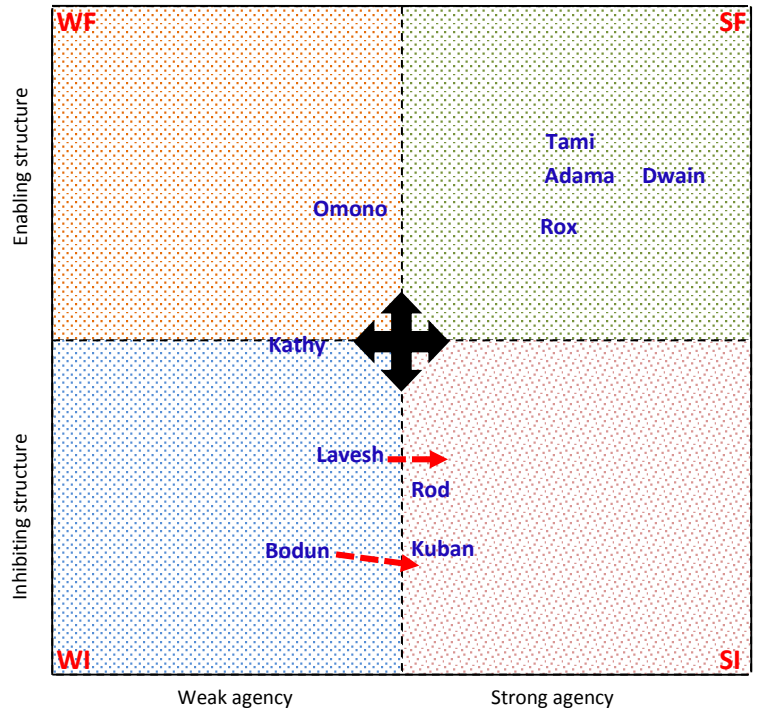

Figure 6.2: A conceptual field of agency and structure

All of which are separated by hypothetical permeable or transition lines. On this graph are four quadrants with relationships between – weak agency and inhibiting structure (WI), weak agency and facilitating structure (WF), strong agency and inhibiting structure (SI), and strong agency and facilitating structure (SF). Theoretically, the most desirable quadrant would be the fourth (SF), because it represents situations where individuals exercise strong agency in a structure that facilitates rather than inhibits.

The least desirable quadrant would be the first (WI), because it represents situations where individuals exercise little or weak agency, exacerbated further

by an inhibiting structure. Two things may be evident in these two hypothetical quadrants: one, in SF, there is no incentive to change the culture (i.e., rules, custom and practices) characteristic of the structure because it is facilitating; two, in WI, there may be a need to change the culture because it is inhibiting, but the agency to do so is relatively weak or non-existent. In between these two quadrants are the second quadrant (WF), representing situations where individuals exercise weak agency, even though the environment is facilitating, and the third quadrant (SI) representing situations where individuals exercise strong agency, even in an inhibiting environment. Two things may also be evident in these two hypothetical quadrants: one, in WF, there is little or no incentive to change the culture characteristic of the structure because it is facilitating, and in any case, personal agency is weak; and two, in SI, there is an incentive to change the inhibiting culture characteristic of structure because agency is strong to do so.

In Figure 6.2, aspirants exercising a greater degree of agency have been placed in the third (SI) and fourth (SF) quadrants respectively. Adama, Dwain, Tami and Rox have all been placed in the fourth quadrant because of the facilitating environment which rewards those who can exercise agency, resulting in the perception that aspirations are being realised. Rod and Kuban are placed in the third quadrant because although their two environments, School Y and Z, is seen respectively as parochial and authoritative, they nevertheless exercise personal agency – Rod in terms of his ability to commission himself on projects that impact young people and Kuban on his fight to exercise his professional judgement, all resulting in the satisfaction that their school leadership aspirations

are being realised. Some others have in varying degrees exercised weak agency in the past, and are in either a facilitating or inhibiting environment, so placed in the first and second quadrants respectively.

To Lavesh and Bodun, their environment is one that is both nepotistic and authoritative, therefore inhibiting to their school leadership aspirations. Although they have been placed in first quadrant (WI), they nevertheless have begun to exercise a degree of agency, so their position is not necessarily fixed – hence the arrows in the figure to illustrate potential movement. Omono on the other hand is placed in the second quadrant (WF) because he believes that the environment is one that facilitates, however he recognises that if he exercised strong agency, he would have given his senior leaders another option when they appointed someone else for a pastoral position. Kathy has been placed on the permeable line between an inhibiting and facilitating environment of WF and WI as she believes that she is sometimes given the opportunity and sometimes not, and although she has exercised a degree of agency, particularly in relation to her action research project into peer mentoring, the extent to which this has been transferred into recognition, greater influence and promotion is not readily evident, and partial to say the least.

This theorization potentially widens the scope of analysis in the BME school leadership discourse from structures impinging on BME teachers toward the dynamic nature of personal agency and structure. In concluding this section, it must be recognised that although these aspirants have been placed in respective quadrants, their positions are not necessarily fixed but dynamic because of the

strength and their exercise (or lack) of agency at any given time and changing culture of their respective schools.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Research questions

On the basis of the theoretical frame that aspiration consist of the components of value and expectation, the three research questions centred on: first, the leadership roles a group of BME teachers conceive for themselves and their perception of school leadership success; second, the relationships between personal, professional and situated factors and the attainment, whether real or perceived, of their school leadership aspiration; and third, the dynamic relationships between their personal agency and workplace structure, and effect on real or perceived attainment of their school leadership aspiration.

With respect to the first research question, findings emerge showing that conceptions of school leadership progression are not necessarily in terms of hierarchical positions, but protean in nature and subject to the direction of individual aspirants. Perceptions of success are in part based on self-referent criteria from self-standards, self-efficacy and other-referent criteria of internalised expectations of family, significant others and external regulations or evaluations.

With respect to the second research question, findings here suggest that the balance of the personal, professional and situated factors serve as a critical mediating determinant to perceptions of school leadership success that fulfil

sense of purpose, sense of satisfaction or some other instrumental value. The reason for this is because any imbalance in dimensions requires additional time and effort to accommodate or redress, and which would otherwise have been spent on the direct exercise of personal agency towards the attainment of purpose, internal or instrumental goals. In the case of some aspirants, fluctuations or tensions between the three identity dimensions do indeed emerge to cause some initial instability, but they have through self-efficacy, strong internal locus of control and support been able to manage it, and stabilize themselves, resulting in the belief that their school leadership aspirations are being realised. As Day et al (2006) noted, and linked to findings from this study, there were some occasions when instability itself was positive, and in such cases it stimulated re-evaluation of current thinking and practices which some aspirants found no longer the most effective way to work in a new environment. Omono and Rox most especially, seem to have done this in light of challenges they were forced to face in a new environment – one in terms of changing professional and situated perspective, and the other in terms of adapting to a new role with less power she once had as a principal in Guyana.

As for Kathy, Bodun and Lavesh, the three composite dimensions are *not necessarily* in balance, with the situated dimension as the most unstable negative factor, which in turn seem to have created a sense that the attainment of their school leadership aspirations are being impeded. However the strength of the impediment differs, with Kathy the weakest of the three because she maintains that sometimes she feels she is realising her school leadership aspiration, and in other occasions not. Bodun seems to have a strong family emphasis, and this

she feels is not met by the situated conditions that she finds herself. It seems therefore that an important issue is the ability to manage by aligning and balancing three competing forces of the personal, professional and situated; which in turn serves as a key mediating determinant to the sense of school leadership success.

In the case of the third research question dealing with the dynamics of personal agency and structure and effect on school leadership success, four scenarios present itself: one, individuals with strong agency, operating in concert with favourable structures; two, individuals with strong agency, operating against antagonistic structures; three, individuals with weak agency, in structures that are favourable and; four, individuals with weak agency operating in structures that are inhibiting. Findings here suggest that the exercise of agency either in concert with a facilitating structure or against an inhibiting structure have been a critical to the leadership progression of aspirants, and conversely, weak agency irrespective of whether or not the structure has been facilitating, serve as a significant personal and professional barrier to leadership progression. These dynamic relationships between personal agency and structure serve as critical mediating determinants towards the realisation of leadership aspirations, with the implication that it is not so much the structure that matters, but its relationship with the exercise and strength of personal agency – i.e.*, to what extent have BME teachers been able to exercise their personal agency in concert with or against structural forces, and what is the strength of agency?* This seems the most pertinent question rather than what barriers work against their school leadership progression.

Relationship between all three research questions

Personal conceptions of school leadership role matter amongst these aspirants, in that they represent what they value and therefore provide a useful starting point from which personal judgements are made about their school leadership success. Following; what these aspirants value personally must converge with professional and situated factors, for a sense of career satisfaction to emerge. This sense of satisfaction is further reinforced by whether or not they have the ability to pursue directly own goals (i.e., exercise agency) based on self-defined or externally mandated criteria – if all dimensions are in balance, agency exercised directly at the conceived leadership role reinforces self-perception of leadership success, or on the other hand, when dimensions are negatively imbalanced, the ability to pursue the conceived leadership roles is inhibited, and on occasions when agency is exercised, it is directed towards trying to reconstruct and manage the imbalance, rather than directly on the conceived roles.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING REMARKS

7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

Theoretical formulation

With the aim of contributing to empirical BME school leadership literature, this study investigated the school leadership progression of a group of BME teachers from the perspective of understanding the nature of their aspirations and how they are realised within the framework of mediating forces shaped by personal life history, belief, value and influence of present school environment. It began with the theoretical formulation from the expectancy-value model that aspiration is the motive and incentive value attached to an object, moderated by expectation surrounding object attainment. The object in this case was stipulated to be a process of influence in the school environment exercised through the form of a leadership model, self-conceived, emergent and or assigned leadership role which shapes motivations and actions of others to achieve desired outcomes relating to some aspect of learning, teaching or school practice. The exercise of this influence and resultant incentive outcomes such as satisfaction in fulfilling purpose, in the transcendence of others, improvement of the school system, meeting external evaluations and expectations, gaining some form of reputation and prestige, are what is classified as school leadership progression.

First research question

The definition of aspiration and school leadership progression thus widened the scope of analysis by moving away from progression measurement predominantly in terms of hierarchical attainment of positions relative to white teachers and demographics; often found in literature. In this regard, the first research question about how a group of BME teachers conceptualise their school leadership role and perceive their success dealt with the motive and incentive value component of aspiration. In contributing to literature, findings from this study illuminate further our understanding of the nature of the non-linearity of school leadership role conceptions; defined in more complex ways than the attainment of hierarchical positions. Some aspirants placed greater emphasis on intangibles like the transcendence of others and spiritual balance, whilst some others on tangibles like attainment of positions, which either serve as instrumental value to some self-defined satisfactions or as a culmination of prestige or reputation.

Since the criteria for leadership success extended beyond tangible-objective outcomes to intangible-subjective ones, a suggestion was given that the interrelations between high objective-high subjective focus, high objective-low subjective focus, high subjective-low objective focus, and low subjective-low objective focus, and how they frame satisfactions and conceptions of success is worth exploration in the BME school leadership literature. The implication for research and practice is that progression measurement and how BME teachers evaluate their school leadership role and success needs to be remodelled, for reasons that it may lead to better understanding of the kind of school

environment from which they and others can gain personal and professional motivation, commitment and fulfilment.

Teaching practice has much to gain from such research endeavours because a better understanding of how BME teachers conceive of their school leadership aspiration and perceive of their success and the multiplicity of factors affecting such conceptions and perceptions would potentially lead to construction of alternative pathways or models of leadership progression in an environment accentuated with a strong competitive emphasis – a competitive emphasis reinforced by the fact of hierarchical positions not necessarily available to a large number of teachers, so research need not look exclusively at institutionalised discrimination, inequalities and other external deficiencies as mainly the fault-mechanism for the lack of BME school leadership progression. It may indeed be the case that too many teachers are pursuing too few traditional hierarchical positions and as such, the focus on self-defined subjective leadership roles and career trajectories fulfilling to a sense of purpose must be modelled in equal stature to the attainment of hierarchical positions.

Second research question

In literature, barriers from the intersection of discriminatory practices, ethnic identity and policy or practice deficiencies, and enablers such as customised leadership programmes, all serve as inputs affecting the school leadership trajectory of BME teachers, whilst hierarchical progression serves as the output measurement. What this study has instead focused on and thus made a contribution to literature is the question of what the relationship between

personal, professional and situated factors are in relation to real or perceived school leadership success. It was found that the ability to align the personal, professional and situated factors serve as a critical mediating determinant affecting real and perceived school leadership success. Aspirants' sense that they are realising their school leadership aspiration is reinforced by positive balance of their personal (i.e., life histories, values, beliefs), professional (i.e., conception of school leadership role within the context of policies and practices) and situated (i.e., school culture and personal reactions). Any one or more of these three dimensions may, at a particular occasion, become dominant and negative, but the extent to which aspirants can shape or realign them in the process of realising their school leadership aspirations matter. The implication for literature is that discrimination, school practice and social inequality may forever remain an existing social reality, but the *synthesis* of personal, professional and situated factors serve as the critical mediating force between school leadership aspiration and actual realisation (progression).

Third research question

The discourse in literature is that the constraining barriers from the intersection of discriminatory practices, ethnic identity and community strictures, and policy or practice deficiencies, mitigated to some extent by enablers such as customised leadership programmes, serve as structures affecting the leadership trajectory of BME teachers. Discussions about the agency of BME teachers and leaders are in most cases subsumed within this greater emphasis. The amount and depth of analysis on the agency of BME teachers is considerably less, in some cases mentioned in passing. What this study has instead done and therefore serve as

contribution to the BME school leadership literature is to explore the relationship between agency and structure, in particular, the extent to which agency is exercised in concert with enabling or against inhibiting structure – put in another way, how far conception of roles have been realised and successes perceived within the framework of exercised agency in concert with or against localised forces inherent within a school

This question eventually led to four scenarios: individuals with strong agency, operating in concert with favourable structures; individuals with strong agency, operating against antagonistic structures; individuals with weak agency, in favourable structures and; individuals with weak agency, in inhibiting structures. On this basis, findings suggest that the exercise of agency either in concert with facilitating structure or against inhibiting structure is critical to the leadership progression of many aspirants; whereas weak agency irrespective of whether or not the structure has been facilitating, serve as a significant internal and personal barrier to leadership progression. The question that invariably emerge from this finding and thus the implication for literature is not what structural forces work against the leadership progression of BME teachers, but the extent to which personal agency is exercised in concert with or against the structural forces, and what the strength of agency (i.e., awareness of what action to take and how it will lead to the attainment of the aspiration) is. Conceptually, this new focus contributes to the BME school leadership literature in that it widens the scope of inquiry to the inter-dependent relationship between agency and structure, and the modelling of ways in which personal agency can be exercised irrespective of the type of structure in a school environment.

7.2 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Research choice

Clearly this study is inherently limited by choice of research methodology, and therefore alternatives into the same subject matter would most likely yield other insights. The limitation of this study is also reflected in areas that could have been explored: firstly, it would have been useful to explore in greater depth the role of the family, in the leadership aspirations of aspirants; secondly, some aspirants discussed in detail their life history as it relates to their leadership aspirations, whilst others focused more on beliefs and values, but it would have been beneficial if questions were asked on all three areas rather than use generic background questions (see Appendix 1: 254); thirdly, by focusing on life histories, beliefs, values, and workplace reactions, potentially other influences were not taken into account; and finally, analysis focusing on conception of role, identity dimensions and relationship between agency and structure, potentially left other areas unexplored.

Reflections on opportunities accorded and problems as an insider researcher

In qualitative research, much have been written about the position of the researcher; whether as an 'insider', or an 'outsider', with their challenges and benefits. I classify myself as an insider researcher in that I am a black person just like the research participants, sharing many characteristics and experiences as BME individuals working in the same environment. However, this classification is qualified in that although certain characteristics and experiences are shared, each individual situation, temperament and responses may be unique.

One of the implications of being an insider is that the researcher can engage more easily and use shared experiences with the actors to gather a richer set of data (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Rooney (2005) calls it tacit knowledge based on familiarity with the group being research which informs the research and a greater understanding, and Corbin, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) refers to this as mutuality between the actor and insider researcher resulting in the generation of greater depth of data. Although not necessarily unique to being a BME person, I nevertheless found myself understanding the spirituality of many of the participants and how it shapes to some extent the nature of their aspirations. Tami often goes into a darkened room to pray, putting things out there; Adama referencing Jehovah as the final arbiter of his destiny if His will is done; and Rox expressing her strong belief in divine direction, revealed by a visiting evangelist, into the teaching profession, are all not far-fetched from my own perspective of the role of the supernatural as an African into professional and cultural life.

Culturally, I did see myself immediately linking my own experiences were my father made it known that subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics, leading to a medical degree, are the ones I must take at sixteen, even though my interest were in other subjects like Commerce, Economics, Religious Knowledge and Fine Art, to Rod's own experiences of not meeting the expectations of his parents, and in a contrasting way, Adama's own experience of the expectation of parents being at variance with his own desires for more academic work. This, as Kanuha (2000) notices is one of the issues the insider researcher must be cognizant of – the difficulty in separating personal experiences from those of research participants.

Being a BME person interviewing other BME teachers, there was the understanding that we were of equal footing and through experiences that were similar, greater intimacy was established which promoted both the story telling and the judgement of what needs to be told (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). However, responses to the interview question had to be subconsciously monitored during the interview process in that my position as an insider researcher influences what can be told. In this regard, the risk of collecting and analysing data that is one-sided is ever-present as an insider researcher (Serrant-Green, 2002). For example, Lavesh greater emphasis on 'industrial racism' had to be carefully handled, and even though there was mutual understanding of what it means, interview questions were directed at the appropriate opportunity to others issues of importance in order for our discussion not to be about racism, discrimination, and about 'us, the victims' against 'they, the oppressors'.

In interviewing Rod, he first stated that he is reluctant to find faults in others, and being mindful of this we continued with the interview discussing other relevant issues until he began to voluntarily speak of a colleague, Mrs SD, his acting deputy, who he said worked with him to 'keep the department going', and who was eventually side-lined for position through discriminatory practices, and. his reference to black students observing and questioning, and seeing how their BME teacher mentors are not being rewarded was insightful through his deeper reflection that probably would not have emerged if I had probed him at the onset. The mere fact that this was done is a reflection of how the researcher can influence heavily the direction of the research though the selection of questions, the probing and interjections during interview.

The strategies that were employed to ensure the minimisation of these risks included the guidelines offered by Polkinghorne (2007) and discussed in Chapter 3. It involved carefully attention to the unexpected and unusual responses, as they assisted in ensuring that the participant's own voice is heard; adopting the iterative process of returning to participants to gain clarification and further exploration of questions that arise as their narratives were interpreted; presenting the ensemble stories so as not to distort participants' meaning; and providing a viable interpretation grounded in the assembled texts. In addition to this, there was a degree of reflexivity on my part in terms of an awareness of my subjectivity in relation to the research – the choice of probing further and balancing with the carefully laid out interview questions in order to ensure a degree of flexibility have proved valuable to this research endeavour.

Directions for future research

There are a number of potential extensions to this study, and some relate to its limitations. Firstly, it would be desirable to conduct similar investigations with additional questions relating to the role of the family and cultural upbringing in shaping the school leadership aspirations of research participants. Secondly, it would be desirable to explore further the four agency-structure scenarios with a wider sample of participants using various research methods, in order to understand further the critical role of personal agency in school leadership progressions models needed irrespective of situated structural conditions. Thirdly, it would be desirable to investigate whether there are any differences in the underlying conception of leadership roles and perception of success between BME males and female teachers, and whether they relate to differences (if any)

in their school leadership progression rate. Finally, it would indeed be desirable to know through longitudinal studies how the school leadership aspirations and success of the aspirants have changed over time, taking into consideration fluctuations in life experiences, values, beliefs, age, gender and reactions to work environment. It is hoped that these recommendations opens up the BME school leadership discourse to that approach adopted in this study.

Personal reflection to research

What underlies one's school leadership aspiration are important – an individual who can understand this will be a fulfilled person, and if not, he or she will remain restless, with the tendency to blame external agencies. As an insider, being a BME person, I know that social inequalities, discrimination and policies and practices that are found wanting, will always exist and cannot be totally eradicated, so the key issues for me are the things that I do to reach my destination. How I conceive of my career goals becomes of paramount importance: are they self-conceived standards or depended on the evaluation of others, what is the quality of this conception. How I achieve them and the circumstances to which it can be done is also of primary importance: to what extent can I balance my personal, situated and professional dimensions and exercise personal agency in concert with facilitating structure or against inhibiting structure? The stories that these BME teachers have told with regards to aspects of the nature of their school leadership aspirations have been of intrinsic value to me and instrumental value to my research questions.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured Qualitative Instrument

Interview Guide: questions relating to individual's school leadership aspiration

---

Background questions to help provide some form of context.

Tell me about yourself.

What are your likes and dislikes?

How did you get into teaching?

RO1: Views on school leadership, particular attraction types or areas and why.

Question 1a: What do you understand school leadership to be?

Question 1b: Which particular school leadership type or area are you attracted towards?

Question 1c: Why are you attracted to this particular type or area of school leadership?

Question 1d: At what level of school leadership do you aspire to reach?

RO2: Factors that sustains school leadership aspiration, how and why.

Question 2a: What factor(s) sustain your school leadership aspiration?

Question 2b: How do the factor(s) sustain your school leadership aspiration?

Question 2c: Why do the factor(s) sustain your school leadership aspiration?

Question 2d: What challenges have you overcome, and to which you can attribute the factor(s)?

RO3: Extent of personal confidence in reaching school leadership aspiration.

Question 3a: How confident are you in reaching your school leadership aspiration?

Question 3b: What do you attribute to this level of confidence?

Question 3c: What, in the past, has had the most impact on your confidence?

Question 3d: What do you envisage as a challenge to your confidence?

RO4: Extent current organisation facilitates school leadership aspiration.

Question 4a: What is the culture of your organisation?

Question 4b: Does this culture facilitate or impede your school leadership aspiration?

Question 4c: Does your school have the capacity for you to fulfil your leadership aspiration?

Question 4d: If there is capacity, do you think it is being utilised for the benefit of all?

Conclusion: Any other issues that you may wish to discuss? (**10 – 15 mins**)

Appendix 2: Structured Quantitative Instrument

Focus*:* attitude evaluation towards some opinion items in relation to personal subjective value and expectation of school leadership.

Notice: questions here are designed to ascertain the reasons for choosing a school leadership type or area.

1a: Please specify the leadership area(s) or type(s) you aspire towards

---

1b: What is the strength of your aspiration towards your chosen school leadership area or type?

Very low Low Moderate High Very high

1c: To what degree do you associate some of these attributes to your preferred school leadership type?

	Very weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very strong
Professional Prestige	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Moral Purpose	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Power	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Accountability	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Role Modelling	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Financial Reward	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Community Service	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 1	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 2	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Please specify 'Other 1':

Please specify 'Other 2':

1d: Evaluate them – how much do the attributes you listed mean to you personally?

	Very little	Little	Moderate	Much	Very much
Professional Prestige	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Moral Purpose	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Power	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Accountability	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Role Modelling	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Financial Reward	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Community Service	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 1	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 2	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Note: Questions designed to know the factors influencing your level of school leadership aspiration

2a: To what degree do you classify some of these attributes as the factors sustaining your school leadership aspiration?

	Very weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very strong
Career Networking	---	---	---	---	---
Religious Faith	---	---	---	---	---
Controlling Environment	---	---	---	---	---
Self-efficacy Beliefs	---	---	---	---	---
Positive Discrimination	---	---	---	---	---
Personal Temperament	---	---	---	---	---
Political Activity	---	---	---	---	---
Union Activity	---	---	---	---	---
Customised Training	---	---	---	---	---
Peer Support	---	---	---	---	---
Head Support	---	---	---	---	---
Professional Autonomy	---	---	---	---	---
Family Support	---	---	---	---	---
Ethnic Heritage	---	---	---	---	---
Other 1	---	---	---	---	---
Other 2	---	---	---	---	---

Please specify 'Other 1':

Please specify 'Other 2':

2b: Evaluate them – how much do the attributes you listed mean to you personally?

	Very little	Little	Moderate	Much	Very much
Career Networking	---	---	---	---	---
Religious Faith	---	---	---	---	---
Controlling Environment	---	---	---	---	---
Self-efficacy Beliefs	---	---	---	---	---
Positive Discrimination	---	---	---	---	---
Personal Temperament	---	---	---	---	---
Political Activity	---	---	---	---	---
Union Activity	---	---	---	---	---
Customised Training	---	---	---	---	---
Peer Support	---	---	---	---	---
Head Support	---	---	---	---	---
Professional Autonomy	---	---	---	---	---

Family Support	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Ethnic Heritage	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 1	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 2	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Note: Questions designed to ascertain your level of confidence in reaching your school leadership aspiration.

3a: What is your expectation at reaching your school leadership aspiration?

Very low Low Moderate High Very high

If your rating is 'Very high' or 'High' go to 3b. If your rating is 'Moderate', go to 3b and or 3c.

If your rating is 'Very low' or 'Low', go to 3c.

3b: To what degree do you associate some of these attributes below as reason(s) for your rating?

	Very weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very strong
Religious Faith	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Self-efficacy beliefs	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Failure experiences	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Career Goal Specificity	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Further Qualification	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Personal Temperament	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Access to Information	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Head Support	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Peer Support	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Family Support	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 1	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 2	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Please specify 'Other 1':

Please specify 'Other 2':

3c: To what degree do you associate some of these attributes below as reason(s) for your rating?

	Very weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very strong
Non-British Accent	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Covert Discrimination	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Family Immobility	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Glass Ceiling	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Ethnic Heritage	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Head Disapproval	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Peer Disapproval	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Family Disapproval	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Internalised Racism	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Non-British Qualifications	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Family Support	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 1	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 2	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Please specify 'Other 1':

Please specify 'Other 2':

Note: Questions designed to ascertain whether your organisation facilitates your school leadership aspiration

4a: To what degree do you identify some of these attributes as a characteristic of the culture within your organisation?

	Very weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very strong
Collegial Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Individualistic Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Controlling Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Innovative Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Discriminatory Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Supportive Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Hierarchical Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Empowering Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Accusatory Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Inclusive Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Distrusting Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Creative Environment	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 1	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------
Other 2	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Please specify 'Other 1':

Please specify 'Other 2':

4b: Do these cultures facilitate your school leadership aspiration? Yes_____ No____ Both____

Background information								
Age Range:		21 – 25		26 – 30		31 – 35		36 – 40
		41 – 45		46 – 50		51 – 55		56 – 60

Gender: Female Male

Country of Birth (to which you have spent your formative years):

Years of teaching:

Career Level: Lower Middle Middle Upper Middle Senior

I thank you for completing this questionnaire and for also taking part in the interview.

Do you have queries about any aspect of the questionnaire, or any other issues that you may wish to raise?

The University of Nottingham

Student Name: Edosa Ulamé Eweka Supervisors: Professor Christopher Day and Associate Professor Andrew Hobson
Course of Study: Ed.D Education Leadership
Title of Research Project: An inquiry into the nature and determinants of BME school leadership aspiration
Date received in Research Office: Is this a resubmission? **No**

	Tick where appropriate
1. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the British Educational Research Association's *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2004).	√
2. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the *Research Code of Conduct and Research Ethics* of the University of Nottingham: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ris/local/research-strategy-and policy /Code_of_Conduct.	√
3. I am aware of and have discussed with my supervisor(s) the relevant sections of the *Data Protection Act* (1998): http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980029_en_1	√
4. Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorized representative, and after adequate notice has been given.	√
5. The purpose and procedures of the research, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective research participants at the outset (see BERA, 2004, paras 10, 11, 12, 21).	√
6. My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.	√
7. Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity (see BERA, 2004, paras 27-28).	√
8. All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant.	√
9. In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role' (BERA, 2004, para 14-16).	√
10. Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in research activities.	√
11. The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.	√

12. I will provide participants with my contact details (and those of my supervisor), in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the research, should they wish to do so.	√
13. Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice (see BERA, 2004, para 13).	√
14. Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants (see BERA, 2004, para 19).	√
15. At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.	√
16. The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research (see BERA, 2004, para 18).	√
17. The views of all participants in the research will be respected.	√
18. Special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.	√
19. Data generated by the research (e.g. transcripts of research interviews) will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected.	√
20. Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them (see BERA, 2004, para 24).	√
21. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants, in any written reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.	√
22. Where possible, research participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research (BERA, 2004, para 29).	√
23. I have received Advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure.	√

Please provide further information below in relation to any of the above statements which you have not been able to tick, explaining in each case why the suggested course of action is not appropriate (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

None

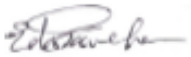
Please outline any areas of risk, which have not been referred to above, associated with your research, and how you intend to deal with these (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

Checklist:

Please check that you have attached the following and return with the form to the Postgraduate Research Students Office

(1)	a brief statement of my research aims or questions and proposed methods of data generation (maximum 200 words);	√
(2)	a brief statement of how I plan to gain access to prospective research participants;	√
(3)	a draft information sheet to be provided to prospective participants;	√
(4)	a draft consent form to be used with prospective participants.	√

NB Please do NOT include copies of research instruments (e.g. questionnaires).

Signed (student):  Print Name: Edosa Ulamé Eweka Date: 08 June 2010

Signed (supervisor 1): Print Name (supervisor 1): Date:

Signed (supervisor 2): Print Name (supervisor 2): Date:
where appropriate) where appropriate)

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION TO THE RESEARCH OFFICE (A81)

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

Edosa Ulamén Eweka
Postgraduate research student
School of Education
University of Nottingham

Date:

Dear:

Re: Research into the basis of the school leadership aspiration of Black and Minority Ethnic teachers.

I am a postgraduate research student in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, and I am conducting a doctoral research on *the nature and determinants of Black and Minority Ethnic school leadership aspiration*, and to accomplish this, I seek to meet the following four research objectives:

i. Establish the view of BME teachers on school leadership, what type or area in particular attracts them, and why;
ii. Explore the factor(s) that sustain(s) BME teachers' school leadership aspiration and why;
iii. Examine the extent to which the BME teachers feel confident about reaching their school leadership aspiration and;
iv. Ascertain the extent to which BME teachers think their current organisation and its culture facilitates their school leadership aspiration.

The main instrument administered is a semi-structured qualitative interview with you using audio equipment to record your verbal responses. There is also the possibility that a questionnaire will be administered afterwards, and in addition, to be invited to take part in a follow-up interview in response to the preliminary analysis of your data.

The data collected will be stored securely and in accordance with Data Protection Act, 1998. The answers that you give will be treated in the strictest confidence and all findings will be anonymised so that your responses cannot be traced to you. In addition, all interpretations of your responses will be sent to you in advance for your verification. I would like to stress that you have the right to review the interview transcript and questionnaire, and make amendments or delete altogether.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. If you have any queries, please contact me: ttxee@nottingham.ac.uk or 07534916521

Yours sincerely,

Edosa Eweka

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form

Project title: An inquiry into the basis of school leadership aspiration of Black and Minority Ethnic teachers.

Researcher: Edosa Eweka

Supervisors: Professor Christopher Day & Associate Professor Andrew Hobson

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

- I understand that I will be audio-taped during the interview, stored securely and in accordance with Data Protection Act, 1998.

- I understand that the qualitative data will be collected via audiotapes and subsequently transcribed to written text. I understand that quantitative data will be collected via an administered questionnaire.

- I understand that I have access to both data by means of a copy. I understand that I have the right to request all or sections of the data to be omitted at any time.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Contact details

Researcher: *ttxee@nottingham.ac.uk or edosa.eweka@hotmail.com or 07534916521*

Supervisors Contact: *christopher.day@nottingham .ac.uk and andrew.hobson@nottingham.ac.uk*

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator*: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk*

Signed..... (Research participant)

Print name.....