

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions of School Principals: Perspectives from Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper is a part of a larger international comparative study entitled "Institutional Dimensions of Professional Knowledge: Processes and Implication for School Leaders across Educational Contexts". This study explored the influence of institutional factors on Kenyan and Canadian school principals' constructions of knowledge and practice related to the principalship. A secondary purpose of the study was to develop a theory on the processes that school principals use to link institutional imperatives to their constructions of knowledge and practice. The study uses a constructivist grounded theory approach within a qualitative design. 7 principals from Kisumu County, Kenya and 5 principals from Ontario, Canada participated in the study. This paper outlines constructions of knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to school principalship by participants from Kenya. Results show that in the process of constructing knowledge for the principalship, individuals drew upon their experiences and formal knowledge gained during teacher training programs. Results also show that individuals in positions of school leadership/principalship were expected to be knowledgeable in teaching, curriculum, financial management, psychology, management, laws and regulations. Further, these knowledge ideas were based on constitutive and regulative rules, on assumptions that they are widely shared, and on individual constructions of contextual educational imperatives.

Keywords

Principalship, School Leadership, Principal Knowledge, Principal Dispositions

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1. Introduction

School leadership is a high priority issue for many people concerned with education. Increasingly, it is also recognized that effective leadership is vital if schools are to be successful in providing good learning opportunities for students (Bush, Kiggundu, & Moorosi, 2011); implementing education goals, managing resources, and ensuring student success (Jwan & Ongodo, 2011). Similarly, the principalship is embedded in a collection of patterned actions (Elmore, 2006) that draw on a set of knowledge assumptions and ideas. Implicitly, the principalship is mediated by knowledge regimes acquired from teacher training programs and through socialization. At

the same time, the principalship contributes to discursive practices by constructing and framing educational issues in ways, for example, that contribute to school success and advance particular cultural-cognitive frameworks (Scott, 2008a).

Limited studies exist that focus on how institutional contexts, realities, and structures influence the cognitive frameworks of educational leaders (Bolman & Deal, 1993; Lin & Cheng, 2010). In addition, few studies use an institutional lens to analyze education and/or processes that people use to transform institutional ideas into action (Scott, 2004; Suddaby, 2010; Udo-Akang, 2012). Where such studies exist, they focus on principals' behavior and character (Lin & Cheng, 2010) or the "externals, the behaviours of the

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individual” (Greenfield, 2009, p. vii) instead of how externals are informed by internal knowledge constructions related to the principalship.

This article is informed by results of an international comparative study entitled *"Institutional Dimensions of Professional Knowledge: Processes and Implication for School Leaders across Educational Contexts"*. Using equitable leadership as an entry point, the study explored school administrator constructions of knowledge for addressing complex educational issues as a means of illuminating how conceptions of knowledge and practice represent theoretical and ideological constructs designed to organize social life. The study uses Scott's (2013, 2008b) framework to analyze the influence of regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive institutional elements on knowledge constructions related to the principalship. This article reports on findings from Kisumu County, Kenya.

2. Review of Literature

Many knowledge regimes, such as those from the fields of psychology, sociology, political science, and organizational studies influence the knowledge of educational leaders (Gordon, 2010). The literature from psychology studies focus on the range of cognitive processes involved in understanding and acquiring knowledge (Tomic & Kingma, 1996). In this literature cluster, cognitive frameworks are represented as internal interpretive processes that assume taken-for-granted status when other actions are not conceivable. Whereas, literature from the field of sociology focus on the social construction of reality, which arises in part from the institutionalization of patterns of interaction and meaning (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). These studies provide another lens for understanding educational leadership and the construction of individual realities within educational institutions.

Literature from organizational studies show that educational leadership is shaped by institutional and theoretical worldviews, although it is unclear how the various texts authorize practice or how individual actions are constituted (Miller, 2012). Specifically, scholars argue that the body of knowledge that constitutes administrative science is mediated by theoretical preconceptions (Astley, 1985). For instance, Burrell and Morgan (1979) contend that theories of organizations are located in one or more of the four paradigms that classify existing sociological theories - “functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist” (p. 22). In other words, a systematic explanation of social phenomenon and shared beliefs about organizational life exist; visible aspects of administrative work represent enactments of taken-for-granted routines

(Wagenaar, 2004); and individuals make sense of and enact institutional life by invoking taken-for-granted practices and understandings (Dougherty, 2004). These concepts in organizational life related to knowledge not only involve intricate webs of causes, effects, and processes, but also include theoretical and institutional worldviews.

Recognizing that it is not possible to examine literature from all knowledge regimes that influence the principalship, this literature review combines the insights from institutional and organizational theory with educational leadership in order to unpack knowledge constructions and educational institutions. A second focus is on cognitive conceptions related to the principalship in order to illuminate ontological and epistemological foundations of individual knowledge.

Institutional Realities: Understanding Educational Institutions The idea that institutions are social constructions produced through meaningful interactions form the foundation of institutional theory literature (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Scott, 2008c). For example, Turner (1997) describes institutions as “a complex of positions, roles, norms, and values lodged in particular types of social structures ... reproducing individuals, and sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment.” (p. 6). Whereas, Cohen and Orbech (1990) describe institutions as permanently organized systems of patterns of accepted behaviour and actions. As organized systems, the ideas that underlie institutional structure form norms from which individuals operate or from which institutional obligations are actualized.

From an institutional perspective, structures that underlie institutions form a natural starting point for understanding educational leadership. As Scott (2013: 56) posits, “varying conceptions of institutions call up somewhat different views on the nature of reality”. For example, regulative elements stress rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities. Normative elements introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life. Whereas, cultural-cognitive elements emphasize the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made (Scott, 2013). These elements offer individuals a “different rationale for claiming legitimacy, whether by virtue of being legally sanctioned, morally authorized, or culturally supported” (Scott, 2008b, p.51). Implicitly, elements that underlie institutional structure can result in diverse interpretations of educational imperatives and become real in the systems of knowledge as ruling relations (Smith, 2005), patterns of interactions, and systems of organizing and regulating dictate knowledge concepts.

In sum, educational institutions can be equated to social institutions that have attained a high degree of resilience and

which rely on varying institutional elements to provide stability and meaning (Turner, 1997). More so, from the literature on institutionalism schools are viewed as a subset of educational institutions and as social institutions that influence individual actions. For example, schools mirror “complex human organizations” (Astor, Guerra, & Acker, 2010, p. 70) and are made up of “positions, roles, norms, and values lodged in particular types of social structures.” (Turner, 1997, p. 6). The “rules, norms and meanings” arise during interactions (Scott, 2013, p.57). From an institutional perspective, how schools respond to educational issues is conceived within a structure that is guided by repetitive patterns of action by educational actors, which are manifested as rules, regulations, policies, and procedures (see Howells, 2006). Therefore, institutional structures influence patterns for organizing schooling and provide stability and meaning to individuals as they fulfil educational goals.

Cognitive Conceptions Related to the Principalship Broad conceptions of knowledge requirements for educational leaders can be gleaned from works on the origins of education as a field of study, from scholarship that examine leadership preparation programs, and from studies on principals’ perceptions of administrative knowledge. Starting with the cluster of studies on the origins of education as a field of study, literature shows that the reason for delineating a special body of knowledge, including those of educational administrators, is to “prove to those outside the profession that there exists a specialized body of information and skills, the mastery of which confers special status to the practitioners.” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 17-18). These knowledge distinctions are based on claims that individual and group practices are rooted in formal knowledge and are subsequently sanctioned through the adoption of professional norms (Scott, 2008a). As such, knowledge distinctions standardize professions and the training needed by professional groups.

Knowledge of the principalship can loosely be divided into tacit knowledge and formal knowledge. Distinguishing between these two types of knowledge, tacit knowledge refers to knowledge grounded in experience, assumed ways of reasoning that individuals use to achieve a particular goal in daily practice, or knowledge “stored in the mind in a causal way” (St. Germaine & Quinn, 2005; Wassink, Slegers, & Imants, 2003, p. 528). Whereas, formal knowledge refers to knowledge acquired in leadership preparation or professional development programs or knowledge gained through structured studies (Goldring, Huff, Spillane, & Barnes, 2009; Wassink, Slegers, & Imants, 2003). Clearly, tacit and formal knowledge are constructed discursively and influence each other in ways that link knowledge concepts to practice (Goldring, Huff, Spillane, &

Barnes, 2009). Cognitive conceptions, therefore, provide direction, and can represent institutional and individual expectations tied to knowledge for practice.

In the cluster of literature on formal knowledge promoted through educational leadership preparation programs, seven subject domains comprise the knowledge base for the principalship: 1) societal and cultural influences on education, 2) teaching and learning processes and school improvement, 3) organizational theory, 4) methodologies of organizational studies and policy analysis, 5) leadership and management processes and functions, 6) policy studies and politics of education, and 7) moral and ethical dimensions of schooling (Goldwyn, 2008; National Policy Board for Educational Administration of 1989 as cited in State University of New York). Similarly, the South African Department of Education’s policy framework of 2005 in its Standard for School Leadership (SASSL) identifies six knowledge areas for the principalship: 1) leading and managing the learning school; 2) shaping the direction and development of the school; 3) assuring quality and securing accountability; 4) developing and empowering self and others; 5) managing the school as an organization; and 6) working with and for the community (as cited in Molo, 2007). At the core of these knowledge domains lie administrator role in managing teaching and learning in ways that ensure achievement of organizational goals. Implicitly, knowledge of management functions and processes, and teaching and learning are central to the knowledge base of the principalship.

In the literature cluster on tacit knowledge of school administrators, scholars identify specific knowledge requirements and cognitive frames that classify tacit knowledge. For example, Wassink, Slegers, and Imants’s (2003) study on tacit knowledge of school leaders reveal four cognitive clusters: structural frame which focuses on educational policy (e.g. keep direction, central outlines); political frame which is primarily concerned with the allocation of scarce resources (e.g. force decisions, allocate means, think ahead); symbolic frame which is primarily concerned school culture (e.g. foster reflection, create professional culture, indirect guidance); and human resource frame which is primarily concerned with individuals and decision-making (e.g. facilitate, provide adequate feedback, be open). Whereas, from Nestor-Baker and Hoy’s (2001) study on tacit knowledge of school superintendents, three dominant knowledge clusters emerge out of a total of 469 tacit knowledge examples – Interpersonal (influencing, controlling, and managing others); Intrapersonal (self-knowledge and self-regulation); and organizational (student achievement and instruction). While the literature reviewed is not exhaustive, the existence of cognitive frames and knowledge requirements for the principalship is indicative of

organizing systems for knowledge as well as diverse knowledge conceptions.

Studies focusing on principals' perceptions, such as, Hess and Kelly's (2006) study on leadership preparation programs identify: managing educational results and achievements, personnel, technology, external relationships, norms and values, classroom instruction, and school culture as key to effective school leadership. Athanasoula-Reppa and Lazaridou's (2008) study with principals in Greece and Cyprus reveal that "knowledge of laws and regulations, knowledge from graduate studies in educational administration, knowledge resulting from experience, and formal knowledge about leadership" (p. 78) are essential for the principalship. While informing understanding of the principalship, these two studies emphasize different knowledge requirements for the principalship. Arguably, these differences can be attributed to researcher emphasis on specific aspects of administrative knowledge.

Studies that show the interrelationships between individual practice, knowledge constructs, and institutional imperatives can be gleaned from Zembaylas and Iasonos's (2010) study on the relationship between leadership styles and approaches to social justice leadership. Results from this study indicate that leadership constructs were influenced by knowledge about the issue and the school principals' tacit knowledge. Moreover, these results indicate that prior understandings of knowledge, professional expectations, norms, and institutional parameters for action influenced how individuals interpreted social justice. Finally, according to Zembaylas and Iasonos (2010), individual knowledge related to social justice leadership depended on subjective interpretation of institutional imperatives, especially those relevant to their practice or those acquired through professional socialization. Similarly, results from a study of principals' knowledge and perceptions in relation to their leadership styles by McGlynn (2008) indicates that the ability to integrate individual understanding with knowledge of leadership styles and theories influenced their responses to school issues. Results also show that the process that individuals used to arrive at their decisions involved contemplating various leadership approaches, knowledge of the issue, and professional expectations and norms as outlined in their school's administrator handbook.

As debates continue regarding knowledge for the principalship, these cognitive clusters confirm the different ways that knowledge is understood. Additionally, while knowledge, skills, and dispositions might appear different or diverse, one can still relate them to Wassink, Sleeper, and Imants's (2003) symbolic, political, structural, and human resource cognitive frames. Finally, as this body of knowledge continues to unfold, one imagines discursive practices built

on technical rationality, but with no coherent theme. At best, these ideas represent a shopping list from which to select the knowledge and institutional imperatives of import.

3. Problem Statement and Research Purpose

School principals experience uncertainty as they face unfamiliar and complex challenges (Bengtson, Zepeda, & Parylo, 2013; Lazaridou, 2009; Leo & Wickenberg, 2013). Furthermore, as awareness of the need for equitable leadership in schools increase (Hafner, 2010; Mullen, 2008), feelings of uncertainty can be exacerbated when administrators cannot connect formal and informal knowledge to their actions or when they have to navigate complex information. Thus, ability to construct knowledge is critical for regulating how school principals adapt and apply information (Morford, 2002). Failing which, individual actions can reproduce unequal relations and contradict their beliefs (Oliva, Anderson, & Byng, 2010).

Individuals make sense of and enact institutional life by invoking taken-for-granted practices and understandings because institutions operate within guidelines which dictate acceptable knowledge, behaviours, values, and actions to be reinforced (Miller, 2012). Such guidelines legitimize knowledge conceptions, reinforce existing relationships through sanctioned practices, and dictate individual actions, choice and intentionality (Miller, 2012; Scott, 2013). Building on these ideas, knowledge for the principalship cannot be separated from how institutional life is constructed. Yet, limited research exists that connect principals' cognitive conceptions to the various elements that underlie institutional structure. Therefore, the primary purpose of this grounded theory study is to explore how institutional factors influence constructions of knowledge and practice for the principalship. Out of this understanding, it is hoped that a theory will emerge on the processes that school administrators use to link institutional imperatives to their knowledge and practice.

This study is driven by a desire to understand how institutional factors influence school principals' knowledge and practice in diverse educational contexts. This study is relevant and beneficial to educational leaders, students, policy makers, and the community in general because it will address this gap in the literature, will contribute to deepening knowledge of self for school principals when constructing knowledge for the principalship, and will generate a better understanding of how institutional factors influence constructions of knowledge and practice of school principals. This research also contributes towards a global understanding of the principalship and will generate data that leads to the development of plans, culturally nuanced theories, and

inform the professional development of school principals.

4. Research Question

Knowledge that influences administrative practice is often abstracted from daily actions (Lazaridou, 2009) and mediated by dominant knowledge (Scott, 2013; Smith, 2005) and sanctioned practices that solidify unequal relations. The overarching question for this study is:

How do regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutional factors influence school administrators' constructions of knowledge and practice related to equitable leadership?

5. Conceptual Framework

Institutional structures provide a framework within which individuals act inside institutions. To elucidate, Scott (2008b, 2013) identifies three elements that underlie institutional structure: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that influence individual actions. These elements vary considerably in their definitions of the nature of reality. I draw upon these elements in my conceptual framework to illustrate institutional factors that influence constructions of knowledge and practice. The regulative pillar will be used to assess rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities; the normative pillar to assess prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory institutional norms; and the cultural-cognitive pillar to assess common schemas, frames, and other shared symbolic representations (Scott, 2008b, 2013). The assumption is that institutional elements dictate knowledge truths and the processes for transforming ideas into action. Therefore, Scott's framework is ideal for a theory-informed analysis of the principalship.

6. Methodology

The study uses a constructivist grounded theory approach within a qualitative design (Charmaz, 2011). The study employed purposeful sampling procedure (Creswell, 2012). Data was collected through two sixty-minute semi-structured interviews with 12 school principals (7 from Kenya and 5 from Canada). Data was also be collected through a review of relevant public documents (minutes from meetings, official memos, and records) from websites (government, district offices, schools, and professional associations). Data analysis consisted of various steps, as outlined in grounded theory approaches and incorporated the process of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2006, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

7. Findings

Participants identified specific knowledge and practices needed for equitable leadership. These included knowledge of the teaching profession, knowledge of strategies for ensuring that school administrator decisions are inclusive, and strategies for ensuring compliance with institutional obligations. This section on knowledge constructions is presented in two parts. Part 1 outlines the sources of knowledge for the principalship. Part two outlines the knowledge that participants identified as crucial for the principalship in general and for equitable leadership.

Sources of Knowledge for the Principalship In the absence of administrator preparation programs or formalized training to anchor knowledge requirements for the principalship in Kenya, individuals rely on tacit knowledge or what they believe are key knowledge and skills requirements for the principalship. For example, results show that individuals primarily drew from their experience and training as teachers. Individuals also inferred knowledge requirements after participating in informal learning activities organized by the school, Ministry of Education, and the Teachers Service Commission.

Starting from knowledge and skills drawn from teacher training programs, study findings reveal that while not focused solely on educational leadership, teacher training prepared participants to undertake their role as instructional leaders and for the principalship. For example, participants noted that because they are teachers, they are able to "provide support to teachers and to effectively supervise teaching activities" (Patrick). Similar sentiments were expressed by three other participants. The knowledge from teacher training programs were classified into knowledge of subject areas, knowledge of educational institutions, and knowledge of teaching methodologies. These knowledge aspects were deemed crucial for the principalship. However, it was also noted that "one cannot depend on old knowledge that we learned in college, things have changed a lot...by using such old information you can become misplaced and irrelevant in the current administration" (Mercy). Instead, "people in leadership positions, which includes teachers as leaders, should read a lot especially things to do with leadership, current trends in leadership to keep abreast of information" (Mercy).

Similarly, results show that experiential knowledge was gained through working with students, fellow teachers, and the community. According to participants, experiential placed individuals in a better position to understand stakeholder needs and leadership requirements. Experiential leadership was drawn from prior leadership roles such as, head of department, deputy principal, and from mentoring activities

they participated before becoming principals. Linking sources of knowledge for the principalship to individual practice, a participant noted that “we rely on our experience having implemented national guidelines...our knowledge of specific guidelines, then make decisions that are supported by the institution” (John).

Finally, workshop and seminar contents provided another source of knowledge for the principalship. These professional development activities were offered by the local head teachers association, the Teachers Service Commission, and/or Ministry of Education. Results show that workshops helped individuals to understand “knowledge requirements for their respective positions and were useful for building the skills of persons such as deputies, heads of departments, teachers, subject teachers, and even student leaders.” (Martha). The “seminars and workshops is where you benefit a lot. If you do not attend them, you miss a lot in terms of knowledge required for your role” (Mercy).

Study findings also suggest the availability of professional development activities varied. It was noted that individual access depended on one’s ability to source out training and/or secure an invitation to participate in training. As an alternative, some schools organized in-house training workshops geared to address specific school contexts or emerging school issues. These school-based training activities helped to, Develop the staff within their institution so that they are skilled to cope with the heavy demands on their jobs and roles...it is at the institutional level where you decide what kind of skills that you need. Then you plan with the board and organize the course. (Diane).

In sum, individuals constructed their knowledge of the principalship as well as knowledge for equitable leadership from these varied sources of knowledge.

Ideas, Assumptions, and Knowledge for the Principalship
When constructing key knowledge requirements for the principalship, various knowledge ideas emerged. These included teaching, education laws and regulations, financial management, educational leadership and management, and educational psychology. In particular, knowledge of the teaching was constructed as an overarching requirement for individuals in school administration positions. They argued that prior to assuming a leadership role, it is important to demonstrate knowledge of the teaching profession through teacher certification because “school administrators are expected to be involved in all aspects of school administration including supervising teacher performance therefore one must first meet professional expectations and ensure a certain standard of operation of schools” (John). Patrick echoed similar sentiments. All participants noted that individuals should not only be certified as teachers, but

should demonstrate excellence in their area of expertise (teaching subjects) and content expertise before getting into an administrative position. Content expertise was expressed as both subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge, both of which are acquired in teacher training programs.

Specific teaching knowledge that were identified as useful in administrative practice were as follows: 1). Curriculum knowledge, including fundamental concepts, structures, and enquiry processes that enable administrators to support teachers (Benson); 2). Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and their values which support teacher ability to make subject content meaningful and relevant (Diane & Patrick); 3). Knowledge of educational contexts which includes group dynamics, government/institutional imperatives, financing, communities, and cultures (Diane and John); and 4). Pedagogical knowledge (Mercy). For example, being knowledgeable about teaching and pedagogy enables “administrators to support their teachers in developing strategies for low-performing students” (Benson). In particular, pedagogical knowledge bridged “the gap between the practice of teaching and other administrative imperative that arise on a daily basis” (Patrick). Implicitly, teaching knowledge led to better “comprehension, reasoning, and reflection” related to students and teachers (Diane).

Knowledge of education laws and regulations was deemed crucial for equitable leadership. This knowledge cluster included knowledge about the legal bodies and regulations that govern the management of educational institutions. For example, participants expressed the importance of being knowledgeable about student and teacher Code of Conduct, educational Codes and Regulations, the Constitution, and Human Rights law in their roles as individuals expected to demonstrate equitable leadership. For example, Patrick spoke of the importance of being knowledgeable about the Code of Regulations, the Education Act, the Children’s Act, among other legislative pieces in order to effectively deliver on expectations of the principalship. Additionally, other participants spoke about the need to be knowledgeable about the Children’s Act, Children’s Rights, as well as various educational guidelines to ensure equitable outcomes when dealing with issues of student discipline. Simply put, knowledge about laws and regulations ensured “my decisions fall within the law and do not contribute to inequity” (Diane).

Knowledge in financial management was also identified as a requirement for “school heads, deputy principals, and the staff in the accounts office” (Martha and Mercy). This knowledge requirement was stipulated by the Ministry of Education since “most school decisions have financial implications” (Patrick). Furthermore, “individuals could and should not be an administrator if they mismanaged finances” (Benson, John, Patrick, & Diane). Those who mismanaged

finances risked “becoming failures or being fired to pave the way for other competent people” (Diane). In other words, financial knowledge enabled participants to “meet institutional expectations and to be good custodians of school resources” (Diane).

Results also show that general knowledge of educational leadership and management was important for the principalship if “one wants to be effective as an administrator” (Patrick). In Knowledge of leadership and management “allows one to clearly identify what approaches lead to equitable outcomes and those that benefit students or their educational community” (Patrick). Knowledge of leadership and management “is important if one wants positive exam results, good team spirit among teachers, and positive relationships with students, parents, teachers, and BOM” (John). Management was key to “managing schools and students, discipline.” (Martha).

In matters of student management, “knowledge of educational psychology is important... You have to know the student psychology or the state of their mind. For example, you have to know what makes them learn or listen... that way, your actions can be tailored to individual and collective needs” (John). For a female student returning to school after a pregnancy, “knowledge of psychology enables administrators to look at the issue from a psychological perspective or how it affects the student’s education” (Mercy). Subsequently, support strategies can be tailored to both meet the needs of the school while considering the impact on the student. Knowledge of psychology also enabled the administrator to “understand what the student is going through, how those feelings can affect her education, and how her return affects other students and the school” (Martha). From these examples, knowledge of psychology resulted in equitable actions where individual needs were considered.

Skill and Dispositions for the Principalship Conceptions of skill sets needed for administrative practice varied. The skills identified as important included: communication, supervision, entrepreneurial, public relations, curriculum implementation, counselling, and motivational skills. From a management point of view, school principals need to be skilled in, “communication, motivating your team, implementing curriculum... staff supervision and evaluation, and keeping of stores/inventory” (Martha), and tendering and supplies” (Mercy). Similarly, motivational skills was useful for rallying students, staff, and other stakeholders and to stay motivated. For instance, given that “normally a small percentage is ready to work with you, one must find ways to motivate others it takes courage, determination and skill to be successful so we take steps to ensure that we can motivate our teams. (John). Furthermore “you achieve your results if

people buy into your vision and contribute to the goals” (John). Finally, “the job is challenging and you can easily give up you have to be self-motivated” (Mercy). Of import was the ability to motivate and to be motivated.

Entrepreneurial skills were needed to “fundraise... those of us who are good entrepreneurs and who are fast enough in developing proposals get funds and our schools are better. (Diane). Similarly, counselling skills were needed when dealing with students (Diane, Martha, and Mercy), teachers (Benson, John, Diane, and Patrick), parents, and other administrators (John, Diane, and Patrick) who were experiencing challenges. Giving an example related to TSC delegated authority, “you double up as a counsellor for the teacher when they have performance or personal problems... you have to take time to listen and counsel them” (Diane). Finally, participants spoke of mentoring teachers and heads of departments aspiring to become school principals and mentoring deputy principals who were new to the principalship.

Dispositions such as commitment, empathy, tolerance, honesty, inclusivity, and being accommodative were identified as important in administrative practice. Specific qualities such as “commitment to duty, time commitment, and honesty” (John, Patrick) were important dispositions to look for in individuals aspiring for the principalship. Elaborating on concepts such as empathy and tolerance, “if you are so rigid, there are people who just fear you, you instil that fear and then the performance of the teacher will be so low... you must be tolerant before you react because that can affect the whole system” (Benson). These dispositions were also tied to “individual performance in assigned tasks” (Patrick) and knowledge for the principalship.

In summary, various cognitive domains are implicated in school leadership. Knowledge, skills and dispositions identified, such as psychology, management, finances, and teaching were rooted in tacit and formal knowledge, in professional norms related to the principalship, and drawn from different disciplines. These findings confirm the existence of a body of knowledge which confers a level of expertise needed by school principals to deliver educational goals.

8. Discussion

Individuals in school administration positions are expected to have knowledge and skills related to the principalship that can enable them to deliver on organizational aims and goals. These knowledge requirements are nested in intersecting and interlocking network of relationships and expectations that individuals operate within. These expectations create institutionally sanctioned “ways to do leading and leadership,

to be a leader” that are driven by “knowledge producers and popularizers located in private companies, universities, and schools” (Thomson, Gunter, & Blackmore, 2013, p. viii). Accordingly, the use of institutional theory to analyse study findings helps to unravel resilient aspects of the principalship by considering ruling relations (Smith, 1990; 2005) and “processes by which structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and routines, become established as guidelines” for knowledge (Scott, 2004, p. 2).

Cognitive Domains Related to the Principalship Knowledge for the principalship represent distinct fields of study. Results from this study identify the following fields: management, finance, psychology, law and public administration, and teaching. These distinct fields of study point to the existence of knowledge regimes that possibly regulate and sanction professional practices (Foucault, 1980, Scott, 2008a). For example, when ideas from these cognitive domains are put to use within everyday educational settings they assume normative status or are used to organize institutional life. In other words, cognitive domains contribute to the establishment of professional obligations, to the extent that individuals are forced to acquire specific knowledge based on scrutiny or expectations from external parties. Additionally, acquisition of knowledge confers knowledge power on individuals and can be used as a mechanism for delegation and control. Both “obligation” and “delegation” are value dimensions in the formalization of rules and are key elements of the regulative pillar (Scott, 2013, p. 60). As a result, cognitive domains reflect institutional discourses and normalizing powers, which in turn produces subjects and/or influence knowledge construction (Foucault, 1980).

Knowledge of teaching is viewed as a core requirement for the principalship because it ensures compliance with “professional expectations and a certain standard of operation of schools” (John). Even where there are no formal training requirements and/or where principals develop their understanding of the principalship on the job (Bush & Oduro, 2006), a successful record as a teacher or knowledge of teaching coupled with institutional texts and normative practices are deemed sufficient for transmitting knowledge for the principalship. Arguably, with knowledge of teaching as a core requirement, the implicit assumption is that the principalship requires interpersonal skills in order to teach, influence, control, and manage others; and organizational knowledge in order to manage student achievement and instruction (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001). Implicitly, teaching knowledge is tied to outcome expectations. Furthermore, teaching knowledge, with its assumed normative and regulative dimensions, serve the needs of educational institutions through instructional leadership.

Positioning teaching as a core leadership requirement for the

principalship is akin to saying that in order to “improve student learning, then you should have to focus on how teachers and classroom practices can deliver higher outcomes” (Thompson, Gunter, & Blackmore, 2013, p. xi). Clearly, a relationship exists between knowledge (Foucault, 1980) and ruling relations, simply by looking at the power differentials between school principals, teachers, and students. Teaching as a cognitive conception for the principalship also represent characteristic form of co-ordinating work processes, equated to sanctioning activities of the regulative and normative pillar (Scott, 2013) where individuals conform to knowledge requirements in order to gain professional acceptance. Consequently, knowledge for the principalship is “located in the textual traces” (Smith, 1990, p. 220) of the educational world and are intended to ensure educational enterprises realize established educational outcomes.

Moreover, other constructions of knowledge for the principalship, such as management and knowledge of laws and regulations qualify as ideas that are driven by prevailing ruling relations and discursive practices (Smith, 2005). According to Smith (1990), ruling relations “provide organization, control, and initiative. They are those forms that we know as bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organization...” (Smith, 1990, p. 6). Arguably, at the core of these knowledge constructions are social relations that help to manage “teaching and learning” (John) and “people and resources” (Diane). Additionally, at the heart of these ruling relations lie the integration of power and knowledge since, the exercise of power constantly creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power.... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power. (Foucault, 1980, p.52) One can see, therefore, that the integration of power and knowledge coalesce around ruling relations, especially those that connect individual practices to discursive practices in their field of practice. Arguably, the mandates of stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission integrate “each particular local setting to a larger generalized complex of social relations” (Smith 1987, p.156). As such, ruling relations determine the roles, responsibilities and knowledge requirements for the principalship. Additionally, ruling relations integrate power and knowledge by establishing “constitutive rules...which operate at a deeper level of reality creation” and involve the “construction of typifications” (Scott, 2013, p. 77), norms, and regulations based on assumptions of what is professionally acceptable.

Common Schemas and Shared Symbolic Representations Symbolic systems and common schemas relate to both substance and affect by stimulating interpretive and

emotional reactions (Scott, 2013). These symbolic systems and schemas, according to D'Andrade, "work in representational, constructive, and directive ways – providing cognitive guidance and direction" (as cited in Scott, 2013, p. 63). In education, prevailing discursive practices also stimulate interpretive and emotional reactions that ensure schools operate within certain behaviour and practice norms. For example, when participants identify specific knowledge, skills and dispositions, they are in essence confirming the existence of meaning systems that represent the principalship, how the principalship is constructed, and ways of directing individual practice. Specifically, schemas and meaning systems associated with concepts such as management not only reflect role constructs but also abstract knowledge components for the principalship, such as standardization, specialization, synchronization, concentration, maximization, and centralization (Thomson, Gunter, & Blackmore, 2013).

Skills and dispositions as cognitive conceptions are also influenced by factors such as constitutive and regulative rules. According to Scott (2013), constitutive rules result in the "social construction of actors and associated capacities and roles" whereas regulative rules define how the principalship can be enacted and "penalties associated with what rule infractions" (p. 77). In essence, constitutive and regulative rules operate at a deeper level of reality creation, involve the devising of categories, and are socially constructed based on historical experiences as well as individual interpretations of institutional expectations, values, and norms. Therefore, skills and dispositions borne out of prevailing constitutive and regulative rules reify assumptions tied to the basic structure of education. They also reify schemas and symbolic representations, are predicated on structure (Minsky, 1975), and reflect externally managed systems of knowledge that help to organize prior experience and to interpret new situations.

Foucault (1980) argues that individual impetus for action is constituted discursively in a way that represents the structure that creates, validates, and enforces specific norms and discourses. From the knowledge, skill and dispositions identified by study participants, aspects of cognitive guidance and direction as well as discursive practices can be gleaned from processes by which these ideas become established as guidelines for behaviour. Specifically, Scott (2013) argues that ideas are transformed into schemas and shared symbolic representations when individuals create, adopt, and adapt prevailing discourses. Arguably perhaps, participant ideas related to knowledge, skills, and dispositions are born out of the ways that information assumes representational, constructive, and directive status when the interaction is between individuals that have different levels of power, such as Ministry of Education, principals, or even teachers.

Similarly, ideas related to knowledge, skills, and dispositions can arise from informal sense-making processes as individuals interpret a social phenomenon (Scott, 2013). Confirming, Gioia and Chittipeddi indicate that schemas and symbolic representations include sense-giving processes or frames that contain fixed structural relationships between different attributes (as cited in Scott, 2013). Consequently, because schemas and symbolic representations include "rules, norms, and cultural-cognitive beliefs" they are central to how individuals "produce and reproduce social life" (Scott, 2013, p. 57).

One can see, therefore, assumptions that the principalship requires individuals who are committed, empathetic, tolerant, honest, inclusive, and accommodative reflect sense-giving and sense-making processes. These assumptions are also socially constructed based on historical experiences and are related to constitutive and regulative rules anchored in outcomes, effectiveness, and socializing roles tied to education. Similarly, cognitive domains identified such as: teaching, law, finance, management, and public administration confirm discursive practices that position school leadership as an endeavour that draws from many cognitive domains. Simply put, by drawing from diverse fields, school principals are able to educate individuals for diverse fields as well as have the ability to establish, improve, and maintain high-quality education (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

Clearly then, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for the principalship and the various means of identifying or addressing them are either emphasized or deemphasized (a) based on constitutive and regulative rules, (b) based on assumptions that they are widely shared, and (c) based on individual constructions of contextual educational imperatives. As a result knowledge concepts reflect the realm of possibilities, images, beliefs, and values for the principalship that are anchored in regulative and constitutive elements of educational institutions.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The knowledge that individuals draw upon are themselves cognitive schemas or models of rationality that represent appropriate ways to pursue educational ends. Like rules, the knowledge that individuals draw upon depend for their efficacy on the fact that they are widely shared, or have been promulgated by those granted the right to determine their regulative and constitutive status (Scott, 2013). As a result, attempts to understand how the knowledge base for the principalship is constructed only fuels the debate about the required knowledge or leads to more questions why

practitioners and scholars consistently emphasize different aspects of the principalship when articulating knowledge for the principalship. One possibility for this quandary is the likelihood that the constantly changing demands on the principalship contributes to the persistent difficulty in articulating the knowledge base. Another possibility is that these discursive practices represent structures that create, validate, and enforce knowledge (Foucault, 1980). As a result and different knowledge ideas for the principalship arise out of contextual constitutive and regulative rules (Scott, 2013).

Confirming that institutional imperatives, specifically constitutive and regulative rules, are implicated in how individuals construct their understanding of knowledge, skills and dispositions for the principalship in one thing. However, questions of agency, knowledge typifications, and frameworks that individuals use still persist. Therefore, in order to understand individual cognitive domain specificity, further studies need to be carried out to understand cognitive frameworks that individuals use, the basis for using specific cognitive frameworks, and the contextual factors that trigger the use of specific cognitive frameworks.

Finally, the perennial challenges to delineating knowledge for the principalship and the emphasis placed on different cognitive elements underscore the importance of training for the principalship and clarity in regards to knowledge for the principalship. Hence, echoing Lazaridou (2009), it is suggested that teacher training institutions should develop specialized and comprehensive training program for school principals. This recommendation is threefold.

First, institutions of higher learning in Kenya should take a leadership role in the development of post graduate and graduate programs in order to prepare individuals for the principalship in Kenya. It is important for proposed programs to build on management and administration courses offered at teacher training levels.

Second, given the complexity of the principalship and possible contextual differences, training programs for school principals must not focus only on technical-rational approaches to the principalship, but should help individuals to develop critical thinking and reflection skills. A possible approach towards this end is to help individuals problematize current understanding of the principalship in order to inculcate a critical approach to leadership since “traditional kinds of leadership” is incongruent with the “practical challenges that principals face in schools” (Jwan & Ongodo, 2011, p. 409-410).

Third, prior to and during the development of formal training for the principalship, it is important to identify, reconfirm, and delineate knowledge requirements. Implicitly, the process of identifying, reconfirming, and delineating

knowledge requirements will elucidate knowledge needs for the principalship including contextual (constitutive and regulative) knowledge, and contribute to quality standards of education in Kenya (Ibrahim, 2011). Similar sentiments are echoed by other scholars (see Sang, 2010).

In summary, cognitive schemas provide direction and represent institutional knowledge expectations. Similarly, diverse ideas related to knowledge for the principalship and ways of acquiring requisite knowledge for the principalship influence how individuals define and enact their practice. As a result, implications for the principalship entail a commitment to engage in a robust debate of how individuals could be or can be prepared for school principalship in Kenya. The debate should incorporate processes for delineating knowledge requirements for the principalship. Furthermore, because institutions are implicated in knowledge for the principalship, individuals must challenge the very knowledge assumptions that undergird the principalship; pay attention to how regulative and constitute rules affect their understanding of the principalship; and question the knowledge power relations that are embedded within various cognitive domains implicated in educational leadership.

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