

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

INCREASING PRINCIPALS' AUTONOMY IN
ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS IN LEBANESE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

by
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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There is an emerging call for new reforms in the educational system emanating from the poor quality of education. Lebanese educational system must undergo major restructuring towards decentralization by granting greater autonomy at the level of the school districts and schools. Shifting towards schools self-management requests a diminution of central government authority and an increasing of school responsibility and accountability. This latter requires a major change in the role and leadership style of school principals in developing a centrally determined framework for setting goals and accountability. This study aimed at exploring which principles of School-Based Management (SBM), related to the administrative decisions can be applied at the administrative/principalship level in the Lebanese Public Schools, from the perspectives of ministry representatives and principals of Lebanese Public schools. A qualitative interpretive study was adopted within which policies of the internal organization were reviewed and 11 semi-structural interviews were conducted with nine Lebanese basic and secondary public-school principals (PB&PS) and with two government representatives (GR) in the Greater Beirut. The findings showed that the participants were optimistic in regard to increased principals' autonomy and shared decision making, yet within certain conditions. However, a clear contradiction about reasons for the ineffectiveness of centralized system between GR of basic schools and PB was detected. Situating the study results in international literature indicated that schools operating under highly centralized system face similar challenges. As a starting point, the study's discussion implied that SBM in Lebanese Public Schools requires a reformation of Lebanese policies in terms of shifting the roles of superiors and principals under a collaborative and trustful school culture.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CERD : Center for Educational Research and Development

IRB : International Review Board

MEHE : Ministry of Education and Higher Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

For many years, there had been a growing interest to improve quality education and many scholars had been considering increasing school autonomy an essential strategy towards this improvement. They called for restructuring schools and shifting towards self-governance and decentralization in educational institutions (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Botha, 2006). Decentralization is the process of transferring powers, mainly administrative and financial, from the central government to other lower levels. The move towards decentralization came after World War I, as a result of a wave of corruption, nepotism and favoritism that spawned in the US, urging school reformers to consolidate schools' decisions solely under the authority of the government (Cotton, 1993). The resulting rigidity of the increasingly centralized school system was found to limit principals and teachers' decision making and authority power over instruction, budgeting and curriculum, and to decrease significantly students, teachers and principals' performance and outcomes (Briggs & Wohlsetter, 2003). Consequently, calls for decentralization in educational institutions emerged after recognizing the drawbacks emanating from the centralization of the bureaucratic school system. This transfer of power can take different forms (Gamage & Zajda, 2005; Ribot, 2003; Zaharia & Bilouseac, 2009). One of these forms is deconcentration, which refers to the transfer of power from central government authorities to lower-levels within it who are indeed upwardly accountable to this central government (Ribot, 2003). Indeed, by adopting the deconcentration form of decentralization, there is no real transfer of authority beyond the central level of government. On the other hand, the democratic

decentralization refers to transferring authority and decision-making power to lower levels of an organization by assigning supplementary responsibilities to lower levels in the governance structure (Ribot, 2003).

Among many models of governance reflecting significant decentralization and redistribution of decision making authority, one that gained popularity and was the centerpiece of many educational research studies in the last three decades is referred to as self-managed school or school-based management (Agasisti, Catalano & Sibiano, 2013; Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Briggs & Wohlsetter, 2003; Caldwell & Spinks, 1993; Hussein, 2010; Nandamuri & Rao, 2011; Barrera-Osorio, Fasih, Patrinos & Santibanez, 2009; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011). This latter appeared at U.S. school districts in 1960's, as an alternative to decentralization and became considered by many scholars as "an excellent antidote to bureaucracy" (Darling- Hammond, 1988, p.2), through which elected school councils, mainly principals, teachers and parents, are empowered and given the authority to take important decisions regarding their schools; yet remain accountable to the central office (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993). To support this claim, research studies, done mainly in USA, Australia, UK, and Hong Kong revealed the perceptions of principals and teachers, that were highly supportive of integrating SBM in their school system in order to effectively decentralize decision making by intensifying their participation in academic, financial and pedagogical decisions (Botha, 2006; Hon & Lai, 2011; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015).

Problem Statement

There is an emerging call for new reforms in the educational system emanating from the poor quality of education, as a result of the deterioration of the Lebanese civil war on the educational system (Shuayb, 2018). Post to the war, education was viewed as a treatment for social cohesion. The Taif agreement (Government of Lebanon, 1989) called for an urgent reform in the educational field; particularly to develop a new curriculum contributing to citizenship in 1997, and another in 2006 that called for new education strategies for education quality improvement, initiated by Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and Center of Education Research and Development (CERD) (Shuayb, 2018). Despite these initiatives, Akkary (2013) and Matar (2012) agreed that the quality of education in the Lebanese public schools remained disappointing and the school management complicated due to the highly centralized and bureaucratic educational system, where decision-making power in public schools is limited to the extent that all important decisions regarding budgeting, curriculum and staffing are firmly managed and financed by the central government. Some policy makers described it as a system of deconcentration (Kabbani, personal communication, February 26, 2017). Therefore, some Lebanese researchers recommended that the Lebanese educational system undergoes major restructuring towards decentralization by granting greater autonomy at the level of the school districts and schools (Bashshur, 2005; Akkary, 2013; Matar, 2012). Shifting schools towards self-management requested a diminution of central government authority and an increasing of school responsibility and accountability. Indeed, this required a major change in the role and leadership style of the governance bodies and school principals in

developing a centrally determined framework for setting goals and accountability (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993).

Rationale

Most of the research studies explored the importance of governmental support in educational reform and school decentralization (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Agasisti et al., 2013; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006; Hussein, 2010), but none examined decision/policy making within the bureaucratic structure. In fact, there were no studies that examined the role politics play in shaping reform policies, nor perceptions of the governing decision makers about shared decision making regarding administrative functions and readiness to devolve power to school staff, mainly principals. Indeed, Akkary (2014) described the Lebanese educational system as a ‘politicized bureaucracy’ in which reform was driven by political agendas and lacks adequate participation of professionals and experts. This study explored the current educational system governance through an exploration of the existing policies as well as talking to key decision makers to understand how decision making was practiced and authority was structured and distributed within the political context.

Although many international studies explored the factors that enhanced the integration of SBM as a mean to decentralization and shared-decision making (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Brewer, Goldman, Augustine, Zellman, Ryan, Stasz, & Constant, 2006; Kimber & Ehrich, 2011; Nandamuri & Rao, 2011; Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau [SEPEB], 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011), very few were the studies that tackled the factors that impeded this integration (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006; Hammad, 2010). Therefore, this study shed

light on the contextual factors that were perceived by key stake holders and principals to enhance or impede the decentralization of the governance system if SBM was to be implemented in the Lebanese educational context.

In addition, there is a scarcity of research on educational reforms and policies in the Arab World, specifically in Lebanon (Bashshur, 2005; Akkary, 2014; Shuayb, 2018). Very few studies were grounded in non-Western culture (Hammad, 2010). Indeed, the Lebanese literature lacked research on school-autonomy and decision-making that served at building a knowledge base grounded in the sociocultural and political realities of the Lebanese context. However, in order to address the ‘portability’ of any of the models of SBM (administrative, professional, community and balanced) and its usefulness and feasibility for conceptualizing school-autonomy and shared-decision making across different cultures and contexts, particularly where centralization and bureaucracy had prevailed (Hammad, 2010), this study generated conceptual understanding of the level of school-autonomy and shared-decision making that is practiced in the Lebanese context in order to guide practice and become the basis for further research.

Considering all of the above, this study aimed at filling these gaps by exploring the perceptions of key members at the local government, as well as principals of Lebanese public schools regarding increasing school autonomy in administrative decisions.

Purpose Statement

This study adopted the theoretical framework of SBM, defined as a model of decentralization to improve the quality of education. It required shifting the power and decision making from the central level to school level (Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006;

Hussein, 2010; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). Along with specific guidelines and support from the government, four main principles were found to underlined SBM: first, widening the range of participation in school effectiveness and management to include governing school bodies through planning and development systems, that initiated goal setting to frame schools' profiles, and developed school plans for school budgets and financial reports (Gurr, 1999; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Secondly, defining the roles and responsibilities of the school committee in managing the procedures for their participation in policy/decision making (SEPEB, 2012; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Thirdly, developing professionalism for school staff according to their local needs and annual and triennial evaluation of the reports to assess the progress of school programs and plans for follow-up actions (Bandur, 2011 SEPEB, 2012; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Lastly, ensuring an appropriate and unique school culture by adopting a designed contextual-based model of school-based management (Bandur, 2011; Hammad, 2010; Scheerens, 2000; Schein, 2010).

Based on this theoretical framework and on the fact that SBM is far from uniformity and is unique to the context, this study has two main purposes: (a) to explore the extent to which a decentralized decision-making system, guided by the principles of school-based management (SBM), can be applied in the Lebanese Public Schools, and (b) to determine the challenges and opportunities afforded to Lebanese public schools for school-based management.

Research Question

From the perspective of ministry representatives and principals of Lebanese Public schools:

1. What SBM principles related to administrative decisions can be applied at the administrative/principalship level in the Lebanese Public Schools?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities afforded to Lebanese public schools for school-based management?

Contribution to Educational Research and Practice

This study added significant contributions to both educational theory and practice. When it came to the former, it increased the understanding of the governance structure and decision-making processes at the ministry level in a non-Western context, Lebanon, by helping to reveal aspects that manifest the attempts at decentralization of decision making in the Lebanese Public Schools. By analyzing the findings through the theoretical lens of the SBM model, it also provided a more comprehensive understanding of the need and readiness within the ministry of education to implement decentralization by adopting models such as SBM to the Lebanese context.

Indeed, once completed and reported, it might stimulate and inspire other researchers to conduct further studies on the governance of the school system and examined strategies on how best to plan and implement SBM in our Lebanese Public Schools. Since this study partially replicated previous research done in some of the Eastern and Western countries (such as in UK, USA, Australia, Hong Kong, and Qatar) where SBM succeeded in reshaping the school decision making structure by increasing principals' participation and accountability in forming a centrally determined framework for their schools (Botha, 2006; Brewer et al., 2006; Hon & Lai, 2011; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015), this study might serve as a reference for scholars and researchers who are interested in comparing the results of their studies across different socio-cultural contexts.

This proposed study also offered a significant contribution for practice. The findings of this study provided information on the nature and scope of school autonomy within the Lebanese educational system from the perspectives of ministry representatives as well as principals of the basic and secondary Lebanese public schools, in light of the principles of school-based management (SBM), as a mechanism of decentralizing decision making. Revealing the challenges and opportunities afforded to Lebanese public schools for school-based management might facilitate reform attempts towards decentralization and reformulation of educational policy to adopt a realistic grounded model of SBM.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presented a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on school reform and educational quality improvement through the lens of decentralization and SBM. In order to cover what the literature said about centralization, decentralization, school-based management school, school-autonomy and shared decision-making, the researcher used google scholar and the university library to look for research articles, books, and empirical studies tackling key words, such as ‘centralization’, ‘decentralization’, ‘school-based management’, ‘school autonomy’, and ‘shared decision making in schools’.

This chapter presented the following: centralization vs decentralization and its forms, and school-based management and its components including school autonomy (and its forms of delegation) and shared-decision making (and its forms of control). Additionally, it highlighted the changes of roles and responsibilities of each of principals, deputy and assistant principals; teachers, parents and community; and ministry of education and higher education. Since school autonomy and shared decision making should be accompanied with school accountability, the researcher provided a literature review on the accountability and planning and development systems. In the next section, the factors enhancing SBM (including the four dimensions of transformational leadership- strategic, cultural, educational & responsive) and those factors impeding this implementation (mainly related to factor of people and culture) will be discussed. After reviewing the literature on the definition, components,

enhancing and impeding factors for SBM implementation, the researcher discussed what literature says about the impact of SBM on roles of principals, teachers and community, on role of school district, on leadership style adopted in schools and on students' achievement.

Centralization, Decentralization and its Forms

Centralization in educational system is a form of maintaining authority and power in the hands of governmental bodies at the top level of the hierarchy (Bray, 1991, Hammad, 2010). As proponents of decentralization, new educational reformers highly criticized the centralized nature of the educational systems. Centralization doesn't fit the current trends of participatory management and decision-making for several reasons: authority and power maintained at the top management requested bureaucratic leadership, responsibility for decision making remained at the higher level of the hierarchy caused delays in administrative work, and the minimal roles and involvement of the individuals at the bottom levels led to the lack of employees' loyalty and commitment (Bray 1991; Nurakhir, n.d.; Mohammadi, Naderi, Shariyatmadari, & Seif Naraghi, 2013; Semjén, Le, & Hermann, 2018). Despite its drawbacks, centralization offers several advantages: (a) a focused educational vision, a quick implementation of decisions and an easier coordination due to a clear unity of command; (b) an equality system due to the uniformity in decisions and policies and in curriculum regardless of students' different levels of environment and economic lives; and (c) an improved quality of work and high degree of efficiency due to the decrease of expenses and the homogeneity of school management in terms of planning, evaluation, learning development (Bray, 1991; Semjén, Le, & Hermann, 2018). However, these advantages seemed to be theoretically rather than empirically grounded. Indeed, an interesting

study about centralizing governance, control, and funding of Hungary schools under the authority of local the government after being decentralized showed that in spite of centralization's objectives to comprise for improving equality of educational opportunities and reducing resource and financial (such as teachers' salaries and drops in expenses) inequalities, results found that centralization negative effect on the quality of education remained almost the same after two-years of reform, keeping the researchers with a doubt about the main objectives of re-centralization (Semjén, Le, & Hermann, 2018).

On the other hand, decentralization is the process of reallocating and transferring powers from the central government to other lower levels. This transfer of power can take different forms. The least requested form is deconcentration, which refers to the distribution of administrative and financial power and responsibility among different lower-level authorities within the central government (Zaharia & Bilouseac, 2009; Ribot, 2003; Gamage & Zajda, 2005). According to Zaharia & Bilouseac (2009), administrative deconcentration is viewed as a midway between centralization and decentralization "characterized by some independence of local bodies in the forefront of which there are local officials who are appointed by the central bodies" (p.318). Indeed, by adopting deconcentration, there is no real transfer of authority beyond the central level of government. Another form of decentralization is known as delegation which refers to the transmission of administrative/managerial responsibilities. However, this form does not entail a shift in the locus of power since the role of local governing bodies is executive; while the final decisions resides at central government (Gamage & Zajda, 2005). The real democratic decentralization, also known as devolution refers to transferring real authority and decision-making power to quasi-autonomous bodies at

the local levels of an organization (Gamage & Zajda, 2005; Ribot, 2003). This local authority becomes autonomous and independent in nature. The process of increasing autonomy is referred to as school-based management through which elected school councils, mainly principals, teachers and parents, are empowered and given the authority to take important decisions regarding their schools (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009).

In the next section, the review shed the light on SBM, a framework that was mainly adopted in Western schools characterized by an increased school autonomy and a shared decision making.

School-Based Management

There was no agreed upon definition of school-based management, also well known as school-site management or institutional autonomy (Bandur, 2011; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011), yet it was widely concurred that SBM is central to today's view of an effective schooling (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011). Therefore, SBM is not an end to itself but rather a mean to an end; aiming at swinging the pendulum towards decentralization and school autonomy (Cotton, 1993).

The spread of school-based management varied among different countries as it began to prosper at the end of the 20th century (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Cotton, 1993). Under a monitored environment controlled by the government, SBM is introduced into governance structure as a mean for providing a 'loosely-coupled'¹ control to improve accountability, control system and productivity of the school by delegating its

¹ Loosely coupled systems are referred to organizational subsystems that are connected to each other to some degree, yet they retain their own identities and functions. Although the interaction of these subsystems is weak, it remains insignificant (Weick, 1976).

administrative and academic decisions as is the case in Canada, Malaysia, UK and Australia (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Kiragu, King' oina, & Migosi, 2013; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; SEPEB, 2012), and financial and resource allocation decisions as is the case in Honk Kong, Australia and New Zealand (Abu-Duhou, 1999; SEPEB, 2012; Yau & Cheng, 2011). In the words of Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009), SBM is a mean of making schools' management more transparent, thus more accountable. This was in line with what was mentioned by Brewer et al. (2006) who claimed that the need of SBM lies on delegating accountability for schools regarding quality of education. The autonomy offered for the schools generates a variety of visions, missions, pedagogy, and resource allocation models.

Although the purpose of SBM varied among the different continents and countries (Asia- Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, UAE, India- Europe- Italy, Africa- South Africa, and Australia), there was a fundamental commonality among these regions in their adopted definitions (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006). Mostly, SBM is conceived as a system of formal alteration in governing structures, through which devolution/democratic decentralization prospers to improve schools by shifting the power and decision making from the central level to school level including principals, teachers and community while abiding by specific guidelines and support of the government (Agasisti et al., 2013; Botha, 2006); providing schools with autonomy within a shift of structure, leadership style and culture. The introduction of SBM is also found to necessitate professional development for principals, teachers and parents to enhance their capacity to contribute to improving student achievements (Bandur, 2011; Hussein, 2010; Kiragu et al., 2013; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015).

Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) and Kiragu et al. (2013) clarified that SBM implementation is unique to each context and far from uniform as it differs in terms of ‘how much’- the authority of decision making is devolved to the school, and ‘who’- the decision makers are. These factors outlined the autonomy-participation nexus. There are two key dimensions to the devolution of power and decision making—the degree of autonomy being devolved (what) and the people to whom the decision-making authority is devolved (who). Indeed, according to David (1989) and Nandamuri & Rao (2012), SBM is viewed as the result of a high level of school autonomy and a localized and shared decision making.

School Autonomy

As an integral feature of decentralization and SBM, school autonomy referred to the authority delegation of administrative, pedagogical and financial decisions and functions to school local; it is the degree to which decision-making is devolved to school, offering this latter the opportunity to create approaches and conditions to address its needs to leverage improvement (David, 1989; Honig & Rainey, 2012; Ikenberry, 1970). According to Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009), school autonomy ranges from ‘weak’ to ‘strong’ forms of autonomy. It is defined as ‘weak’ if school councils have solely an advisory role as is in El Salvador, whereas, it is ‘strong’ if they are granted administrative (hiring/firing teachers and/or other school staff, monitoring and evaluation student learning outcomes and teachers’ performance, and infrastructure enhancement), pedagogical (curriculum development, procuring and developing textbooks and/or other educational resources) and financial (budget allocations) responsibilities as is in the Netherlands, UK, USA, Australia (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009).

Administrative Delegation

Ikenberry (1970) defined administrative autonomy as the institution's independence in managing its own administrative affairs in order to stimulate initiatives and to develop the institution and its individuals. Indeed, according to Caldwell and Spinks (1993), King & Ozler (2005) and Nicolaidou Solomou & Pashiardis (2016) administrative decisions refer to those decisions that are related to the organization identity (such as mission, vision and goals), to personnel management (such as hiring and/or firing administrative and teaching staff, teachers placement, paying staff salaries, establishing and funding incentives and professional training and development for teaching staff, supervising and evaluating school personnel) and to school maintenance and infrastructure (such as building and maintaining school, buying school materials).

Pedagogical Delegation

Pedagogical delegation consists of allocating authority to school level practitioners to influence how the curriculum is designed, taught and evaluated. Abu-Duhou (1999) declared that the process of decentralizing the curriculum includes making standards for student attainment, and offering schools the opportunity to organize classroom hours by subject and school year curriculum calendar, select textbooks, and form and construct their own programs considering their teachers and students' interests and needs within a framework of goals or curriculum established by the district or the state.

The results of the interviews done in schools adopting SBM of New South Wales- NSW- Australia with the principals indicate that there are opposite opinions regarding who should contribute to the decisions pertaining to curriculum development in a self-autonomy school within a decentralized system. Some believe that schools

should assign deputy principals and curriculum expertise within the school for expanding the subjects across curriculum and improving teaching (SEPEB, 2012). Others were supportive for establishing a flexible curriculum centrally (by the government) rather than locally (within school), yet responding to school local needs (SEPEB, 2012). A third opinion, resulting from a study done in Qatar on a school that recently adopted SBM and presented by Brewer et al. (2006), supports the idea that the major subject areas: Arabic, English, Mathematics and sciences should be centrally developed to follow the nation curriculum standards, while other subjects are locally developed.

Financial Delegation

The delegation of budget and resources allocation consists of offering schools the responsibility of allocating 90% of the school budget and the accountability system to ensure its proper implementation (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Nandamuri & Rao, 2012). This can include funding for all the school's costs including the following: school staff salaries and on-costs, school maintenance and operating expenses to match the budget to the learning needs. Giving schools the flexibility to allocate resources according to their students learning needs is considered to be a key factor for school autonomy and SBM (Abu-Duhou, 1999). In fact, to better monitor, record and report administrative and financial functions, a new software is introduced at both central (government) and local (school) levels (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Nandamuri & Rao, 2012).

Financial Resources

The decentralization of the financial resources is a significant aspect of the SBM. For example, in the Victorian School in Australia, a new model of governmental funding (School Global Budget- SGB) was introduced. It consists of offering schools

the accountability to take over 90% of the school budget (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Nandamuri & Rao, 2012; Ross, Levacic & United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1999; SEPEB, 2012). This latter included funding for all the school's costs including the following: school staff salaries and on-costs, school maintenance and operating expenses (SEPEB, 2012). SGB is concerned with supporting schools to match the budget to the learning needs. The study advanced a recommendation for a "per capita core funding supplemented by needs-based allocations for students at educational risk, students with disabilities and impairments, in rural or isolated areas, students from a non-English speaking background, and priority programmes" (Abu-Duhou, 1999, p.80). These recommendations were underlined by a set of principles: pre-eminence of educational considerations (these are the result of determining what factors should be included in the SGB and what are their relative weighting), fairness (schools having similar learning needs will be receiving a similar amount of resources in SGB), transparency (SGB should be understandable and clear to all who are interested in it whereby the resource allocation for every school is publicly shared), subsidiarity (is the concept of providing decision making regarding school expenditures at the school level rather than at the central level if it is possible, unless the school does not have good control over these expenditure or this later varies dramatically on a yearly basis), accountability (schools receiving SGB are held accountable to the provided resources and the outcomes of offering necessary programs to the students with mix learning needs), strategic implementation (progressive implementation of the new funding over several years is crucial to avoid dramatic funding changes) (Ross et al., 1999).

Models of Decision Making

In an SBM context, a participative decision making constitutes a major component along with school autonomy (David, 1989). By definition, decision making refers to the determination of who is given authority and responsibility for the devolved key functions at the school (Bandur, 2011). In their review article, Leithwood & Menzies (1998) presented all the models of decisions making, shaping the different forms of control under SBM. These include administrative control, professional control, community and parent control, and balanced control.

Administrative/Principal Control

As its name indicates, the principal is empowered to make school decisions and is held accountable for school result regarding curriculum, budgeting and personnel (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). Proponents argue that the control of principal and personnel at the top hierarchal level in schools, forming the external governing bodies over resources (Agasisti et al., 2013). They found that these decisions directly serve students, since the decisions are solely made by principals who are familiar with the local needs to support the learning process (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). However, Wohlstetter, Briggs, & Van Kirk (2002) explains that concentration of the delegated decision making power to the principal alone makes the latter a ‘sole leader’, a model limits the role of teachers and parents to informal advisory and consultancy. This model was the least, if not at all, adopted in the research studies reviewed, mostly adopted in centralized and bureaucratized schools (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Wohlstetter et al., 2002).

Professional/Teacher Control

Hussein (2010) referred to this model as ‘administrative decentralization’ reporting that under this model teachers are considered the main agents of decision

making and power because they are the ones with professional expertise who are directly in contact with the students and, therefore, they are the means to successful improvement of schooling system. As experts, teachers know better about students' academic needs (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). In this model teachers are required to be professionally trained and experienced to make effective decisions regarding curriculum, budgeting and instruction to improve the teaching and learning process and student's achievement and are held accountable for their decisions (Bandur, 2011). This form of SBM calls for adopting a democratic leadership style (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Wohlstetter et al., 2002), where teachers are partners with school principals in decision making management in curriculum, budgeting and resource planning, offering them the greater power in order to efficiently and effectively increase school productivity and outcome (Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015).

Community/Parent Control

Leithwood & Menzies (1998) reported that this model is based on the involvement of parents and community members and increase their level of accountability in decision making. It is found to provide satisfaction for both the parents (connecting school to students) and the community (connecting school to society). Because parents care most about their children, scholars agree that they are to be considered the key decision makers and main actors in improving education quality and students' learning (Bandur, 2011; Hussein, 2010; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Wohlstetter et al., 2002). However, the ability to adopt this form is reported to depend on the readiness and level of participation of parents and community members in academic and non-academic school decisions (Hussein, 2010).

Balanced Control

Leithwood & Menzies (1998) claimed that this form of decentralization of decision making is the most effective model to be adopted because it sought to combine both the professional and the community models. It intends to “make better use of teachers’ knowledge for key decisions in the school, as well as to be more accountable to parents and the local community” (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998, p.333). For instance, the people involved in this form are referred to as the internal governing bodies of school (Agasisti et al., 2013) as well as site or school council (Bandur, 2011; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). The devolution of power and authority to the school council is found to empower teachers and community members and provides them with a participatory, collaborative environment (Bandur, 2011).

Factors Enhancing SBM

Dimmock (2012) viewed leadership as crucial for creating and maintaining a culture of high-performance organizations. Therefore, in this section, the researcher presented transformational leadership as a requirement for school autonomy; thus, for a successful implementation of SBM.

Leadership Style

Regardless of the cultural context differences of the studies that were explored for the literature review, the majority highlighted the centrality of leadership and revealed that leadership is connected to every characteristic of a successful implementation of SBM (principals’ role, policy, culture, and school members’ capacities and commitment). Cotton (1993) as well as Caldwell and Spinks (1993) declared that a competent and strong leadership is the catalyst for changing the school culture and thus the role of school personnel to be aligned with principles of SBM. Additionally, leadership was defined by Dimmock (2012) as “a social influence process

guided by a moral purpose with the aim of building capacity by optimizing available resources towards the achievement of shared goals” (p. 7). The form of leadership adopted by school principals and other leaders really matters. Transformational leadership, having four dimensions- strategic, cultural, educational & responsive- proved to make a substantial impact on the quality of education because according to Caldwell & Spinks (1993), it is viewed as an agent of change, of resolving major educational problems, and of creating new paradigms.

Strategic Leadership

Strategic and visionary leadership is about building school vision and setting directions towards the development of that vision (Leithwood, 1994). A pre-requisite for strategic leadership is a strong commitment to moral purpose, which according to Dimmock (2012), are “a set of personal and professional values that underpin their longer-term policies and strategies and their everyday actions, as the basis of their leadership” (p. 191). Adopting this dimension of leadership, principals have the capability to show school staff ‘the big picture’ through sharing and articulating school vision, establishing and align individual and school goals, as well as building school personnel’s capacity in establishing structures and processes to deal with the implications in their areas of interest which fosters their motivation to participate in school decisions (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

Cultural Leadership

Ensuring a flexible and supporting culture within a collaborative and positive environment was determined as a key factor for SBM (Bandur, 2011). According to Schein (2010) “we simply cannot understand organizational phenomena without

considering culture both as a cause and as a way of explaining such phenomena” (p. 311). The culture defines the school identity and functioning. More specifically, organizational culture shapes organizational management behaviors, structure and climate and is dependent on the orientation and relationship between the principal, the teachers and the parents (Hammad, 2010; Scheerens, 2000; Schein, 2010). If a trustful relationship is well established, a positive and supporting culture of trust and openness is built in order to develop a fruitful and effective SBM because and according to Hammad (2010) trust plays “a vital role in shaping relationships within schools and in determining the extent to which collaboration among school staff can take place” (Hammad, 2010, p.99).

Cultural leadership, guided by the principles of SBM, is concerned with shifting school culture from dependency and low autonomy to self-management and participatory environment, where the focus of all school staff and community is deviated towards creating a productive and democratic school culture for improving the quality of education (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Bandur, 2011). Caldwell and Spinks (1993) defined it as “a culture that accepts the need to measure and monitor achievement, to set targets and priorities, and prepare and implement plans to address these” (p. 28) in order to offer a collaborative and participative school environment for all stakeholders whose visions are brought to realization (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006). Designing such an organizational culture based on recognizing the interdependence of quality, equity, efficiency, and effectiveness promotes a culture of commitment to excellence (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993). For example, in a study done in Gauteng province in South Africa, the principals and educators, who supported the inclusion of SBM in their system, agreed on the claim that in an atmosphere of trust, and openness,

teachers are encouraged and supported to positively enlarge their participation in the decision-making process and collaborate to maximize the efficiency of their decisions (Botha, 2006). Accordingly, principals are more likely to develop a democratic leadership in a supporting environment and teachers will build a stronger sense of belonging and commitment to their schools and are more likely to positively accept and support any change in school culture (Bandur, 2011; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

Educational Leadership

The core purpose of school-based management is to delegate and devote major decision to principals, teachers and parents, who are held accountable to those decisions (Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Hussein, 2010; SEPEB, 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Leithwood (1994) and Bandur (2011) identified that for this delegation to occur, principals, teachers and parents' professional development, specifically, capacity building is recommended to strengthen their problem-solving and management skills and to increase their readiness to cope with the changes of the school's locus of control.

The educational dimension of leadership urges principals and leaders to build their capacities in addition to those people within their organizations. Caldwell and Spinks (1993) linked it to 'building a learning community' in which professional development programs related to increasing quality of education and capacity for self-management are offered. Indeed, capacity building proved to be an essential mean in helping school staff to professionally grow and apply new skills and knowledge (Dimmock, 2012). It is ubiquitously seen that instructional leadership, a dimension of educational leadership, is an essential task for principal leaders to manage the teaching and learning platform (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993). Eventually, principals are responsible

of hiring qualified teachers, who use effective teaching methods and approaches that positively influence students' learning. This was in line with what Dimmock (2012) discussed in his book *Leadership, Capacity Building and School Improvement*, in which he stressed on the importance of teaching quality and teachers' professional development, through building both human and social capitals, on school improvement and student's achievement. In fact, it is useless to have qualified and knowledgeable team if they do not develop positive interpersonal relationships and work collaboratively in a constructive environment (Dimmock, 2012).

For example, at the Victorian and NSW (New South Wales- east coast of Australia) Schools where SBM brought significant contribution to school improvement, professional development was provided for principals in order to solve the global budgeting, leadership and management issues, for administrative staff to increase their understanding of the new computerized system used at schools and the global budgeting through an in-depth training "to develop a cash flow approach to budgeting" (SEPEB, 2012, p.69), for teachers to improve their curriculum leadership skills in implementing the curriculum changes and improvements, and for school council to support the implementation and the process of the SBM (Abu- Duhou, 1999; SEPEB, 2012).

Responsive Leadership

The responsive leadership is about the 'right to know' about the performance and achievements of the school as individuals and groups in a societal organization, not just students' progress on a report. This dimension of leadership may help in developing the capacity of school and community personnel to respond to the needs that arise from this knowledge (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993). Therefore, developing an accountability system

at this advanced stage of school-based management is vital in reflecting school aims and goals.

Accountability System

International researchers state that for an effective implementation of SBM increased autonomy and shared decisions need to be accompanied by school accountability that consists of: an accountability system, and a planning and development system for the school (Gurr, 1999; Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Kimber & Ehrich, 2011; Nandamuri & Rao, 2011; SEPEB, 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

According to Gurr (1999), three elements constitute the accountability system- accountability agreement, the annual report and the triennial review and are found to be practiced in a school in which SBM had significantly brought success, as in the Victorian region, Australia.

Accountability Agreement

This agreement is produced by the school, its council and its community directed by the Office of the School Review on one hand- ‘referred to as local accountability’, and on the other hand by the school and the Ministry of Education directed by the Board of Studies- referred to as ‘systematic accountability’ (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Nandamuri & Rao, 2011). It highlights the school’s new philosophy, vision, goals, intended directions, in addition to the code of practice of principals, staff and other school personnel and the code of students’ conduct for a successful implementation of SBM (Nandamuri & Rao, 2011). It is an exclusive agreement that is unique to each school, through which the process and procedure in catering school

needs and delivering quality education to its students is specified, taking into consideration its available budgets and resources (Brewer et al., 2006; SEPEB, 2012).

Annual report and Triennial Review

The report and the review include school self-assessment and independent external verification. The former is about a document presented by the school council and its community summarizing the school performance through the annual report over 3 years of the school implementing SBM. The latter is conducted by an external verifier, contracted by the external governing bodies and carries out the verification process of the school self-assessment documents. This process is encouraging and challenging in nature, since it praises the accomplishment and progress made through the three years of implementation on one hand, and on the other hand, it leads to setting new goals and priorities for the upcoming three years. The verification process unifies the work of the school, its community and the government (Gurr, 1999; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

Planning and Development System

Various research agreed on the need to adopt a planning and development system that specifies explicitly the involved members, the process, the expectations/outcomes/goals, and the time framework as a vital step for a successful implementation of SBM (Botha, 2006; World Bank, 2007). In fact, on the basis of a research conducted in India involving 188 secondary schools, Nandamuri & Rao (2011) reported that developing a framework for planning within the school increases system's efficiency and accountability. They assert that "institutional planning provides the structure and mechanisms for the development of an institution by effective utilization of the available resources" (p. 108). This institutional planning should delineate the

roles and responsibilities of the school site council (including teachers, principals and community). Moreover, the planning system should be interactive in nature to better monitor, adjust and sustain school mission as well as respond to the dynamicity and unpredictability of the external environment (Yau & Cheng, 2011).

The aforementioned was in line with two research studies, one conducted in Hong Kong by Yau & Cheng (2011) and the other in Kuala Lumpur by Shoma Vally & Daud (2015), proclaiming that developing an ideal and active vision, mission, goals and objectives by all the school council members is vital to form a policy of SBM implementation. Yau & Cheng (2011) reveal that the development of a shared vision promotes a unique and unified culture and policy agreed upon all members, which indeed increases the interest, ownership and commitment of principals, teachers and parents in sustaining the school short and long-term goals (Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015). In other words, the establishment of a clear policy for a collaborative planning as well as development of a shared vision and goals determine school's identity and facilitate SBM implementation (Botha, 2006). Additionally, the study done by Yau & Cheng (2011) proclaims that it is worth to highlight that the internal governing bodies (principal, teachers excluding the parents), who participate in developing the school policy planning, are held accountable to report for the central authority their annual goals for approval, as they are financially funded and supported by the external governance.

Software Resources

Heyward, Cannon, & Sarjono (2011) stresses on the vital need of introducing new software at both central (government) and local (school) levels to help supporting the implementation of SBM. At the school level, several software were introduced. The

‘Computerized Administrative Systems Environment for Schools- CASES’ assists schools in monitoring their administrative, personnel and financial tasks. It stores and processes students’ records, and other human resource and financial data (Abu-Duhou, 1999). This was also stated by SEPEB (2012) who stressed on the need to provide principals with applicable and suitable financial reporting tools to manage the complexity of the budgeting process and to determine its surplus and deficits, specifically for the annual reports, in addition to facilitating the reporting process on the expenditure of the budget. This will constitute the bases of shared decision making. In addition to the CASES, another software, called the ‘CMIS- CASES Management Information System’, presents graphically a summary of the reports. A third system, Kidmap, was also introduced and locally adopted by the Victorian Schools in Australia. This system provides an assessment of the analysis and reporting of students’ needs and progress, reports for parents and an access to teaching resources, which helps in forming the annual and triennial reports discussed previously (Abu-Duhou, 1999).

At the central level, ‘Education Management Information System- EMIS’ was introduced (Abu-Duhou, 1999). It consists of CIS ‘Corporate Information System’ that contains the school profile, phone directory, diary of events, and other basic documents. This software help government personnel to keep a track of the collected analyzed data used for the verification process discussed previously, hence, ensuring accountability while implementing the SBM (Abu-Duhou, 1999).

Factors Impeding SBM

The majority of the research studies entail the factors that facilitate the implementation of SBM, yet few focused on the factors impeding this implementation. It is worth to mention that the same factor was for instance viewed as a facilitator, while

in others it was referred to as a barrier for SBM implementation (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006; Hammad, 2010).

Factor Related to People

Several studies revealed that the unwillingness of principals, teachers and parents to participate in SBM, is a barrier for its implementation (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006; Hammad, 2010). Indeed, in the study done in Gauteng State in South Africa, principals noted that their new roles in integrating SBM require them to accomplish more work and to handle more responsibility than they can (Botha, 2006). Another study, done by Hammad (2010) in Egypt's secondary schools on how school factors impede shared decision-making (SDM) from teachers' perceptions, discloses that teachers are not willing to participate in this process because they believe that SDM requires them extra time and efforts whilst they prefer to dedicate their extra time and effort to private tutoring for the need of extra money. Moreover, they believe that their participation is not authentic due to the autocratic personalities of the principals and head teachers, whose concern is about accountability rather than teachers' participation in decision making (Botha, 2006). This was in alignment with what was found in the studies conducted by Kiragu et al. (2013) showing that SBM is viewed as a burden from teachers' perceptions, as it increases their workload.

As for the parents, since SBM demands parents to be more involved in school decisions, some parents do not find enough time to participate in this process (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Kiragu et al., 2013). Based on the above, it is a challenge for principals, teachers and parents to overcome these caveats in order to maximize the positive impact of SBM.

Under a centralized system, teachers, who are accustomed to execute the instructions passed to them by their superiors without discussion, are not trained to express their opinions (Hammad, 2010; Kiragu et al., 2013). This generates a lack of familiarity to implement SDM/SBM which is detected as another impediment for its successful integration. The lack of familiarity is found to lead to a fear of involvement, which was also determined as another barrier for the implementation of SDM (Hammad, 2010). Participants in the study done in Egyptian schools shared their reservation towards implementing shared decision making citing their worries that practicing SBM can lead to chaos given the potential of conflict of opinions that might result from widening the circle of decision, especially that they are not familiar and trained for democratic type of participation (Hammad, 2010).

Factor Related to Culture

Schools are viewed as culturally-determined, thus, the prevailed cultural norms of the school determine the success or failure of SBM (Hammad, 2010). In this section, culture is referred to as a powerful impediment to an effective involvement of teachers in a shared-decision making due to several factors (Hammad, 2010). First, the lack of interpersonal trust existing among school staff and central authorities on one hand, and teachers and their head teachers on the other hand, was considered as a feature of school culture and manifested as a barrier for SDM implementation (Hammad, 2010). For example, in the Egyptian schools, school staff especially teachers held negative perceptions towards central authorities' readiness and willingness for delegating power in decision making to school level, as well as towards their head teachers who were perceived as authoritarian and unwilling to share their agendas (Hammad, 2010). This lack of trust became engraved in the school culture and thus in teachers' beliefs that

their participation in decision making is useless and meaningless (Hammad, 2010). Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) adds that mistrust might also arise between teachers if a disharmony exists which will prevent them to work cooperatively.

In some centralized schools, the factor of seniority is treated as a condition for involvement in decision making (Hammad, 2010). For example, the Egyptian school culture is built on the concept that the length of working experience and career position in the schools determines the school staff's readiness to participate in school decision making, rather than their expertise and qualifications (Hammad, 2010). Therefore, the seniority factor was viewed as a cultural barrier for SDM integration in Egyptian schools (Hammad, 2010).

Changed Roles and Responsibilities

International research attributed the changed roles and responsibilities of government and school entities, including principals, teachers, parents and community, to SBM implementation.

Role of Government Representatives

Very few researches entailed the role of the ministry of education regarding the implementation of school-site management. According to Abu-Duhou (1999) and Hussein (2010), for a successful implementation of SBM, the external governing body has to structure and plan the overall school system by which a statewide framework tackling financial policies and school education is developed. To achieve that goal, changes to the role of the government representatives need to be introduced. Some tasks and decisions remain partially held to the central office while others are devoted to school level. Abu- Duhou (1999) and Honig & Rainey (2012) add that the role of the ministry should provide a structured accountability framework at the system and school

levels, an ongoing opportunity for staff development, and rewards for the staff supporting behaviors. By transferring power to school level, the external government is losing some of its power; yet if this delegation of power violates and breaks its original intent, the central office is in a position to reboot its prior decisions. Therefore, a balance between governmental support and control for this system change is extremely desirable (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; SEPEB, 2012).

Roles of Principal, Deputy and Assistant Principals

The findings in Shoma Vally & Daud (2015) study asserts that for a successful implementation of SBM, principals should be knowledgeable of their role and responsibilities as managers and leaders and should incorporate delegation of decision making to teachers as part of their roles. They explained that principals should be supportive, share resources and responsibilities by taking into consideration teachers' recommendations for school improvement, monitor school programs to ensure their alignment with school vision, and encourage and support teachers' building capacity and professional development to successfully cope with the decentralized system (Bandur, 2011; De Grauwe 2005; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

Another manifestation of SBM involve creating new positions to distribute the leadership responsibilities of the school principal. SEPEB (2012) pointed at the realities of the demanding role for principals as they attempt to understand and manage the whole-school. SEPEB (2012) as well as Cotton (1993) mentioned the need for appointing a deputy principal and an assistant to the principal as a mean to overcome the stressful and overwhelming responsibilities. According to them the responsibilities to be delegated to the deputy principal should include helping in managing activities to meet school educational challenges related to literacy and numeracy, providing a safe

learning environment, engaging all students regardless of their socio-economic status, and improving curriculum capacity. Those to be delegated to an assistant principal should include supporting teaching and learning improvements as well as in leading school team in their areas of responsibility.

Roles of Teachers, Parents and Community

International studies showed that for the success of SBM, principals have to redefine the role of teachers, parents and community. This necessitate principal to establish a good relationship with parents, teachers and students (Bandur, 2011; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Because SBM is about shared decision making and improvement of school accountability, teachers and parents become in a decentralized context a major part of school internal governing bodies, where they are allocated to new roles and responsibilities such as expanding the curriculum to entail new subject areas, ensuring learning remediation for needing students and participating in managerial and financial decisions (Bandur, 2011; David, 1989; SEPEB, 2012).

In fact, their participation, partnership and support are found to be contributing for a successful SBM (Bandur, 2011; Cook, 2007). Nandamuri & Rao (2011) and Bandur (2011) agree that school quality and equality are better ensured when teachers and community members are partners and active leaders in the implementation of SBM, and not passive followers and implementers. According to Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009), working in a collegial way among stakeholders and actors at the school level ensure school effectiveness. Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) and SEPEB (2012) both agreed that the flexibility of the decision making and the authority structure is crucial in order to

deal with any emerging and unexpected events that arise during implementation of SBM.

In addition, the new roles of parents and community is found to offer greater participation in school decisions regarding planning of newly introduced strategies. This would result in building the human capital (by building new profiles and skills) and the social capital (by building a mutual relation of respect and trust between communities and schools) in communities (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; SEPEB, 2012). Within that context, researchers note that while principals won't have full control over school management, they remain accountable for the performance of their school (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Cheng, 1996).

Empirical Studies on the Impact of SBM

Various research studied the impact of SBM implementation on the school dynamics: principals, teachers and community's roles (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Kiragu et al., 2013; SEPEB, 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011), leadership style (Botha, 2006; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009), and students' achievement (Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Hussein, 2010; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009). Although a variety of research studies concur that SBM has impact at the school level, few studies pinpoints at the critical impact of SBM on the district level of the educational system (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Cotton, 1993; SEPEB, 2012). A research done in Gauteng province, South Africa, declares that there are two school of thoughts regarding the effect of SBM on school improvement: the first one views SBM as successful at improving schools, yet the second supports the idea that SBM has minimal success on school improvement (Botha, 2006).

Impact on the Role of Government and School Personnel

Under school-based management, there is a change in how the central government and school bodies operate (Cheng, 1996; David, 1989). Increasing school autonomy and widening the decision making requires changes of roles of key players (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Bandur, 2011; De Grauwe 2005; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

Barrera-Osorio et al., (2009) clarifies that by adopting SBM, there is a need to redefine “which powers are vested in which individuals or committees, and how these powers are to be coordinated to make the plan workable within both the school culture and the available resources” (p. 33). Therefore, in the following parts the redefined roles of each of the government representatives, principals (including deputy and assistant principals), and others (such as teachers, parents and community) will be presented.

Impact on the Role of the School District

SBM is found to impact the nature of the relation between the school and the central office of the ministry of education. In the US, studies report that the role of superintendents and central office staff alters from a ‘top-down’ deliverer to a ‘bottom-up’ supporter (Cotton, 1993). This calls for a shift to a two-way communication between the school district and the school unit, characterized by a mutual support and development of the emerging statewide educational platform that better serves the quality education, financing policies and the whole-school system (Abu- Duhou, 1999). A collegial atmosphere dominates, highlighting the importance of the role played by the central office staff as primary resources and facilitator in reforming schools and in designing and administering the accountability system (Cotton, 1993).

Impact on Roles of Principals, Teachers and Community

Major changes are reported as a result of implementing in the principals and educators' career structures and functions, and in the power distribution among external and internal governing bodies (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Yau & Cheng, 2011). In their literature review, Shoma Vally & Daud (2015) investigated about the role, influence and accountability of principals. SBM altered principals' roles from being a 'boss' to becoming 'chief executive officer' who caters for change in the distribution of decision-making power, where teachers, parents, politicians and students are involved (Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015). Principals were found to have an invaluable role in determining their capacities and those of teachers and parents for thinking about higher level of reforming, implementing strategic planning, evaluating and reflecting school and students' outcomes. Changing and clarifying the role of principals have been the main focus of interest for researches in Australia and US (Botha, 2006; SEPEB, 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015). Principals' role shifted from being managers to becoming leaders, who set a clear vision, mission and objectives (Rahimah & Zulkifli, 1997 as cited in Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015).

As noted previously, the role of teachers is highly affected by the integration of SBM: indeed, teachers constitute a core component and a key identity in reforming the school culture and in improving the quality of teaching and learning process (SEPEB, 2012). Therefore, instead of a passive role at the school level, teachers are active agents inside and outside their classrooms (Cotton, 1993).

As for parents and community representatives who are considered to be leaders in creating new schools, SBM provided them with the necessary training and professional development to becoming partners in the school's decision making and planning (Cotton, 1993; SEPEB, 2012).

Impact on Leadership Style

Many theorists and researchers discussed the effects of SBM in shifting principal's leadership style from an authoritarian or laissez-faire towards more participative and transformational practices. Studies reported evidence that as a result of participation in SBM, principals' behavior shifted toward transformational leadership with a focus on altering people's mind-set, attitudes, values and actions towards school vision, goals and needs in order to reach a higher level of performance. Principal's leadership style developed a focus on moral dimensions where in addition to ensuring community satisfaction, principals identify the values that shape their schools. Thus, the principals' role as moral leader lies on guiding teachers in maintaining the professional code of conduct, mentoring principals have to create opportunities for the staff development, growth, and learning from thy mistakes and from each other, and visionary leadership where principals provide inspiration and purpose to the school's accomplishments by grabbing teachers, learners and parents' attention on the vision, mission and goals of the school, which requires principals, who promote a democratic culture, to offer an open, collaborative and participative school environment for all stakeholders (Botha, 2006; Mosoge & Van der Westhuizen, 1998).

Moreover, Botha (2006) specifies that the principal leader, who has properly implemented SBM, had new leadership roles: innovator, motivator, coach, mentor, change agent, and liaison officer. Where transformational leadership has been detected, a positive atmosphere of commitment to the core values and practices of SBM has been dominated, whereby clear visions are strongly articulated and strategically implemented, resulting in boosting the quality of teaching and learning experiences (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Botha, 2006).

It is critical to mention that under SBM, ‘quality leaders’ is a description not only limited to principals; but also, it describes a good number of school staff and community members; who constitute a major part in management and decision-making processes. Consequently, their level of satisfaction is highly increased (Botha, 2006; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009). Unfortunately, studies report, that in some cases, educators, who work in schools that pretend to be implementing SBM, referred to their involvement in school decision as “fake participation” blaming the principals for not practicing the expected participative leadership style (Botha, 2006).

Impact on Student Achievement

Various studies demonstrated the positive yet indirect impact of SBM on students’ achievement (Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Hussein, 2010). If the conceptual understanding of SBM and school improvement is well developed among principals and teachers, student enrolment rates and achievement are found to be positively impacted (Botha, 2006). Additionally, Hussein (2010) as well as Bandur (2011) reveal the positive correlation between leadership management style, teaching improvement and student achievement. Additionally, community and parent’s participation in setting school policy, budgeting and resources, and commitment to school improvement and SBM process contributed to the increase of students’ outcomes and performance (Bandur, 2011; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009).

Summary

School-based management, defined as a process and a model of decentralization to improve schools by shifting the power and decision making from the central level to school level including principals, teachers and community, was viewed as the sum of a high level of school autonomy and a shared decision making. It is unique in terms of

what decisions are delegated to school level and whom are accountable for the delegated decisions, and far from uniform due to the contextual differences and needs. However, increasing autonomy and sharing decisions require an accountability system and a planning and development system. Within the need for specific guidelines and support from the government, empirical studies presented SBM as a mean of providing schools with autonomy within a shift of structure, leadership style and culture; offering professional development for principals, teachers and parents; and improving student achievements (Agasisti et al., 2013; Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Hussein, 2010; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Nandamuri & Rao, 2011; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

The synthesis of the literature review reveals the main principles underlying SBM: first, widening the range of participation in school effectiveness and management to include principals, teachers, community, and in some cases students' committees through planning and development systems, that initiate goal setting to frame schools' profiles, and develop school plans for school budgets and financial reports (Gurr, 1999; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Secondly, defining the roles and responsibilities of the school committee in managing the procedures for their participation in policy/decision making (Bandur, 2011; SEPEB, 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Thirdly, developing professionalism for school staff according to their local needs and annual and triennial evaluation of the reports to assess the progress of school programs and plans for follow-up actions (Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006; Hussein, 2010; SEPEB, 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011). Lastly, ensuring an appropriate and unique school culture by adopting a designed

contextual-based model of school-based management (Bandur, 2011; Hammad, 2010; Scheerens, 2000; Schein, 2010).

Based on the literature, three school factors, leadership style, people and culture, are found to affect the successful implementation of SBM and are needed for creating a professional environment that enhances teaching and learning (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006). In addition, two factors were also determined to be impeding this implementation: factors related to people; including unwillingness of principals, teachers and parents to participate in SBM, lack of familiarity and a fear of involvement; and factors related to culture including the lack of interpersonal trust and seniority as a condition for involvement in decision making (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006; Hammad, 2010). These factors will guide the data collection and will be used as probed to solicit data from the context of the Lebanese educational system.

In table 1, the researcher presented a small comparison between what was mentioned in centralized systems vs. in systems where SBM is/ or about to be implemented regarding few major concepts in educational system.

Table 1*Comparison between Centralized System and Systems where SBM is/ or About to Be Implemented*

	In Centralized System	Mentioned by	System where SBM is/or about to be implemented	Mentioned by
Superiors Role	Unsupportive and demotivating	Nandamuri Prabhakar & Rao (2011) & PB	Supportive and motivating	SEPEB (2012), Botha (2006) & GR
Principalship	Exercising instructed administrative duties with minimal control	PB, Brewer et al. (2006), Yau & Cheng (2011) & Kiragu et al. (2013)	Participating in taking administrative decisions	(Bandur, 2011; SEPEB, 2012; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011)
Hierarchy	One way: Top-down	Brewer et al. (2006), Yau & Cheng (2011) & Kiragu et al. (2013)	Two way: Top-down & Bottom-up	Cotton (1993)
Relation	Dilapidated and mistrustful	Hammad (2010)	Trustful	Botha (2006)
Locus of control	Semi-autonomous governance bodies	Bray 1991; Nurakhir, n.d.; Mohammadi, Naderi, Shariyatmadari, & Seif Naraghi, 2013; Semjén, Le, & Hermann, 2018	Quasi-autonomous local school bodies	(Gamage & Zajda, 2005; Ribot, 2003) Yau & Cheng (2011)
Decisions	Incompatibility between what is desired and allowed based on policies	Hammad (2010)	What is desired is implemented based on school's needs	Yau & Cheng (2011), Shoma Vally & Daud (2015)

Superiors Evaluation	evaluation as a means of administrative control and restriction	Hammad (2010) Prabhakar & Rao (2011)	As a means of administrative supervision	Yau & Cheng (2011)
Policies	Rigid and limits principals' role Unclear vision, mission and goals	Prabhakar & Rao (2011)	Developing an ideal and active vision, mission, goals and objectives clearly shared by all the school council members	Yau & Cheng (2011), Shoma Vally & Daud (2015)
Factors	Impeding: People (unwillingness, lack of familiarity & fear of involvement) Culture (mistrust & seniority)	Abu-Duhou (1999); Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009), Botha (2006), Hammad (2010)	Enhancing: Leadership Style (transformational leadership) Accountability System (accountability agreement) Planning & Development System	SEPEB (2012), Yau & Cheng (2011)
Changes Roles & Responsibilities	Government bodies/ Principals and assistants principals/ Teachers/ Parents	Abu-Duhou (1999), Honig & Rainey (2012)	Government bodies/ Principals and assistants principals/ Teachers/ Parents	Abu-Duhou (1999), Honig & Rainey (2012)
SBM has Impact on	Role of government bodies/Principals/ Leadership style/ student achievement	De Grauwe (2005); Shoma Vally & Daud (2015); Yau & Cheng (2011),	Role of government bodies/Principals/ Leadership style/ student achievement	De Grauwe (2005); Shoma Vally & Daud (2015); Yau & Cheng (2011),

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, a deep and rich literature review entailed the theoretical understanding of each of the key concepts (decentralization, SBM, school autonomy, shared decision making) and how they were practiced in several countries around the world. In this chapter, the researcher carefully considered the methodology and research paradigm adopted in this study, specifying ontological and epistemological perspectives to answer the research question. In addition, it entailed a comprehensive description of the study site, the data collection tools used, the sampling selected, and the analytical strategies employed. For this study, the researcher qualitatively explored the perceptions of each of the government representatives and school principals on the extent to which decentralization could be applied in the Lebanese Public Schools as well as the contextual factors that either contributed or suppressed the implementation of SBM principles, as a mechanism of decentralizing administrative decision making.

Interpretive Paradigm

Among the major educational research paradigms, interpretive paradigm views reality as socially constructed by individuals who participated in it (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2014; Hegde, 2015; Scotland, 2012). Interpretivist researchers tended to gain a richer and deeper understanding of the social worlds considering their complexity in their unique context by collecting what is meaningful to their research participants (Pham, 2018; Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill & Bristow, 2015; Thanh, Le Thanh, 2015). They studied the social phenomena and their meanings created from the perceptions, interpretation and actions of the lived experiences of the social actors in a historical and

cultural context (Creswell, 2003; Saunders, et. al, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Scotland, 2012). Cohen & Manion (1994) described it as “the world of human experience”. Because it focused on providing rich and multiple meanings and interpretations, interpretivist paradigm is characterized by explicit subjectivist (Saunders, et. al, 2015). It is grounded and inductively generated from data, constituting individual constructs elicited from researcher-participant interaction (Irene, 2014; Scotland, 2012). However, interpretivist researchers have to appreciate differences between people and try to avoid the bias in studying the events and people with their own interpretations (Pham, 2018; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

The interpretivist paradigm in educational research is characterized by ontological, epistemological positions that guide interpretivist researchers in developing a rationale for the methodology adopted and thus methods of data collection and analysis used (Jackson, 2013; Scotland, 2012).

Ontology

Ontology was defined by many researchers as the ‘study of being’ constituting and studying the nature of the reality of what actually exists in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Moon and Blackman, 2017; Scotland, 2012). Depending on the ontological perspective, the researcher views whether the world exists independently of the perceptions of those social actors in it or it is constructed and dependent on human conceptions of reality (Greener, 2011). Snape & Spencer (2003) identified three distinct ontological positions: idealism, materialism and realism. While realism and materialism claim that external reality is independent of people’s perceptions and that the real world is only defined by the physical world respectively, idealism, also referred to as relativism, supports the claim that reality is socially constructed via the perceptions and

actions of social actors (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Irene, 2014). In this interpretivist study, the ontology is relativist, in which reality is subjective and social actors are the one providing meaning of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Irene, 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Scotland, 2012).

Epistemology

As it is important to specify the ontological stance, it is also essential to articulate the epistemological perspective of the research. While ontology pertains to the nature and reality of the world, epistemology pertains to the knowledge of that world. It is defined as the ‘study of knowledge’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Irene, 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Scotland, 2012). The rationale for specifying the epistemological stance of the study lies on its influence on the procedure of discovering, acquiring and producing knowledge that frames the research (Moon and Blackman, 2017). Researchers talk about two main epistemological perspectives: objective/positivism and subjective/constructivism (Guba & Lincoln 1994). This latter highlights that knowledge is socially constructed; where reality is dependent of human consciousness (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Based on this definition, this study is embedded in the subjectivist epistemology where knowledge is being historically situated as well as culturally derived (Benoliel, 1996; Scotland, 2012). The subjectivist research purposefully aims at bringing into consciousness and awareness hidden social forces, and at developing a study based on natural setting (Scotland, 2012). Levers (2013) states that ‘the relative ontological stance accompanied by a subjectivist epistemology supports the researcher identifying, defining, and being part of the constituent parts and the emergent property’ (p. 5). This latter will inform the methodology, and the decisions made therein are needed to justify the way in which the

research brings about new knowledge and the strength of conviction within the research (Jackson, 2013).

When adopting a paradigm, the researcher has to be knowledgeable about its advantages and limitations (Irene, 2014). Therefore, in the figure 1 below, the researcher presents the pros and cons of using interpretivist paradigm, characterized by a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology.

Figure 1

Advantages and Limitations of Interpretivist Paradigm



Study Site

The study examined the case of Lebanon, a country in which the educational system is centralized and school autonomy and decision making are at a very limited level, if not lacking at all (Akkary, 2013; Matar, 2012; Shuayb, 2018). Characterized by its highly centralized authority, all the Lebanese Public Schools are under direct governance and overall control of the central authority, Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) located in the city of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon (Akkary,

2013; Matar, 2012; Shuayb, 2018). MEHE sets educational policies aligned with national goals, recruits and assigns school staff, supervises school functioning, manages financial and administrative decisions, develops and dictates the curriculum content and selects the textbooks to be used in schools and allocates resources. The minister of MEHE is assisted by a director general of public education (operating from the ministry head office) and a group of directors who are in charge of elementary, middle and secondary schools, are the direct superiors in the hierarchy of public-school principals. Under the policies and decrees present at the MEHE, most decisions for schools are top-down and taken by the directors of education who communicate them to principals using an internal correspondence system. The structure of the government will be presented in Appendix A.

Data Collection Tools

For data collection, the researcher used the following methods: (a) document analysis of the policies and decrees available at the Ministry of Education; and (b) individual interviews with ministry representatives and principals.

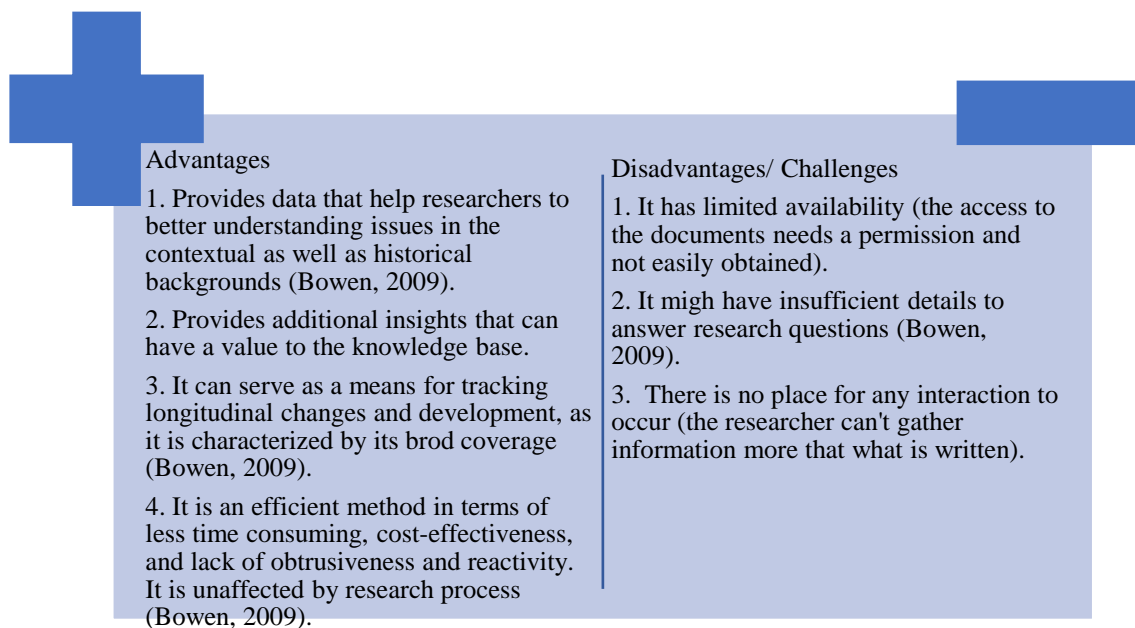
Documents Analysis

It consists of systematic process for reviewing and evaluating electronic and/or printed policy documents in order to stimulate meaning of the data and develop an empirical understanding of a topic of study under a specific context (Bowen, 2009). For this study, the researcher referred to the documents that highlighted the administrative tasks, specifically that of principals to better understand their scope of autonomy in administrative decisions. Indeed, to understand the context of the laws and decrees available at MEHE, it was important to mention the following: (a) these laws and decrees were out-of-date (they will be discussed later in the data collection chapter); (b)

a distinction should be made between the written/available and practiced policies, since the written were not necessarily enforced and implemented; and (c) these available policies were not accessible to the public. The advantages and challenges/drawbacks of the individual interview were presented in figure 2.

Figure 2

Advantages and Disadvantages/challenges of Document Reviews



Individual Interviews

To have an access to the participants, the researcher had to take the MEHE approval for pursuing the study. This long process took around 4 months. A printed letter from the researcher's advisor was submitted to the departments of the Elementary as well as Secondary Education. This letter was approved by the Directorates of Elementary and Secondary Education to be then approved by the General Directorate of Education. Once the letter was signed, the researcher took the letter to the Educational Zone in Beirut and its suburbs (since the selected schools were in Greater Beirut) to


take their acceptance of the selected schools. Once this process is completed, the principals of the selected schools were informed and asked to be part in the study.

Conducting individual semi-structured interviews in a qualitative exploratory research aimed to contribute to a theoretical and conceptual body of knowledge by uncovering hidden information that fostered individuals' experiences and insights of a given issue (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Kvale, 2006). These were open-ended interviews that encouraged interviewees to deeply and freely share their thoughts and experiences (Bowen, 2005; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Kolb, 2012).

Additionally, the use of semi-structured interview facilitated the task of the researcher in organizing and analyzing collected data interview. It also helped readers of the research report judge the quality of the interviewing methods and instruments used (Bowen, 2005; Kvale, 2006). The advantages and challenges/drawbacks of the individual interview will be presented in figure 3.

Figure 3

Advantages and Disadvantages/Challenges of Individual Interviews



Advantages	Disadvantages and Challenges
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Researcher, having an interactive role, obtains data of the participants in their social context through in-depth interviews (Thanh, Le Thanh; 2015).2. Provides participants with the opportunity to express themselves and clarify their answers (Adams, 2010).3. Discovers unanticipated conclusions and reveals respondents logic thinking (Adams, 2010).4. Allows to delve deeply into social and personal matters from an interpretive perspective (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).5. Anonymity of participants is preserved (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It is time consuming. Collecting the data of each interview requires 45-60 minutes (Adams, 2010).2. Interview questions have to be direct and clear in order to avoid unconnected or unrelated answers (Adams, 2010).3. Requires a structural framework for conducting interview, characterized by building trust and providing a safe and comfortable environment to the participants to openly share their inner thoughts and experiences in the social context (Adams, 2010; Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Schultze & Avital, 2011; Patrick, Burke, Gwaltney, Leidy, Martin, Molsen, & Ring, 2011).

The interviews were conducted with two of the representatives of the Ministry of Education who were directly involved in decision making and with 9 principals of Lebanese public schools offering basic and secondary education in the Greater Beirut, for which she used an interview protocol presented in Appendix B. Each interview ranged between 45-60 minutes. The interviews were presented in two languages English and Arabic and asked according to the interviewee's preferences. The ones done in Arabic were then translated to English.

Sampling

As a result of practical consideration associated with the ease of accessibility and the need of delimiting the scope of the study, decisions related to study site were made prior to the field work.

This study adopted a purposive sampling that sought to address the research question to maximize the depth and richness of the data (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree,

2006). Characterized by its cost and time-effectiveness, purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method used in qualitative research where researchers base their selection of participants on personal judgements regarding who are knowledgeable about a phenomenon of interest and can best answer the research questions (Creswell, 2003). However, knowing that it has a low level of reliability and a high level of bias, the purposive sampling makes it difficult for the researcher to defend the representativeness of the sample chosen. He/she should convince the reader regarding the selection of their sample (Patton, 2002; Sharma, 2017). This sampling technique was adopted to select the two people working at the MEHE and were considered to be the communication channel between the ministry and the schools.

On the other hand, a stratified random sampling is a probability sampling technique that requires dividing the population into smaller groups (strata), which are formed based on common characteristics. A random selection of sample from each stratum is proportionally taken depending on the stratum's size, compared to the population (Sharma, 2017). This sampling technique was adopted in the research studies as it provided a low level of bias and a high level of validity. It allowed the researcher to select a highly representative sample of the population being studied, and to produce generalizable data (Sharma, 2017). For this research study, the researcher selected 12 out of 55 elementary (grades 1 to 6), middle (grades 7 to 9), elementary and middle, middle and secondary, and secondary (grades 10 to 12) public schools in the Greater Beirut area, representing approximately 22%, using stratified sampling technique and maximizing variability based on the school type and size. Since each Lebanese Public School was administered by one principal; the principals of the selected schools participated in the study through individual interviews. The size of the

school was viewed as an important selection criterion because it influenced several school variables- the quality of the curriculum, the budget expenditures, and the academic achievement, that ultimately affected school autonomy and decision making (Cotton, 1997; Shaw, 2015; Scheerens, 2000; Slate and Jones, 2005). The public schools were classified as follow in regard to their size:

- Small-sized schools serve enroll less than 300 students;
- Medium-sized schools enroll between 300 and 800 students;
- Large-sized schools serve for more than 800 students in total.

The selection of the participants for this study was based on the characteristics of a sample that provided a rich and deep understanding and findings developed by Bandur (2012) and Hegde (2015): a) goal orientated (sampling based on the objectives of the study), b) measurable (the sampling provides the data for the required analysis), c) practical (the identification and feasibility of sampling design in real situations), and economy (it is met with available resources such as financial, personal and time). Based on one of the goals of qualitative research about enriching knowledge understanding, Polkinghorne (2005) added one more characteristic: fertile exemplars (researcher should select participants who can and accept to effectively reflect and verbally describe their personal experiences).

As per the selection criteria, 12 school principals were selected based on the school type, level, and size. However, 3 school principals did not participate for different reasons, variating from not willing to participate, sickness to not replying or answering calls and emails. The remaining 11 principals and both government representatives received emails inviting them to participation.

The sampling techniques and the data collection tools used to collect data from participants were visualized in Table 2. The names and location of the selected Lebanese public schools were obtained from the website of CERD in June 2019 (CERD, 2018) and were presented in Table 3 & 4 based on their types and sizes.

To maintain confidentiality of the research participants, the researcher assigned codes to each participant. The government representatives were referred to as GRB and GRS for government representative of basic schools and government representative of secondary schools respectively; and the principals as the letter P. The school type will be coded as follow: B & S for Basic and Secondary schools respectively; as for the size: Sm is for small, M for medium and L for large. However, to make it easier for the readers to keep track, the researcher referred mainly to the principals as in terms of school type; such as, PB1, PS2.

Table 2

Participants, Sampling techniques and Data Collection Tools

Participants	Sampling Technique	Data Collection Tool
Representatives of MEHE	Purposive Sampling	Semi-structured Interviews
Principals of schools	Stratified Sampling Maximize variability based on school type and size	Semi-structured Interviews

Table 3

Demographic Data of Participating Schools

School	School Code	Acronyms	School Type	School Size	Number of Students
School #1	BM1	PB1	Basic-Kindergarten	Medium	347

School #2	BSm1	PB2	Basic-Elementary	Small	217
School #3	BM2	PB3	Basic-Elementary	Medium	414
School #4	BSm3	PB4	Basic-Elementary & Middle	Small	299
School #5	BM3	PB5	Basic-Elementary & Middle	Medium	357
School #6	BL2	PB6	Basic-Elementary & Middle	Large	1234
School #7	SSm1	PS1	Secondary	Small	158
School #8	SM	PS2	Secondary	Medium	373
School #9	SSm2	PS3	Secondary & Middle	Small	86

Table 4

Profile of the Selected School in terms of School Type and Size

School Levels		School Sizes		
Basic	Secondary	Small	Medium	Large
6	3	4	4	1

Data Analysis

Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) described the qualitative data analysis as an iterative process, whereby analysis occurs in concurrence with data collection. In consistency with this claim, Chapman, Hadfield & Chapman (2015) explained that “insights emerging from early data shape further data collection, which in turn adds to existing understanding, and so on until ‘saturation’ occurs; that is, no new insights emerge from further data collection” (p. 202).

By adopting a qualitative research methodology and a multiple data collection sources, a deep and rich data was produced yet a systematic analysis was required (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). When the study didn’t seek to prove a predetermined theory, but

rather to endorse understanding of individual perceptions, and when the codes were not predetermined, but rather generated from the collected data, the data analysis was inductive in nature (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001; Patton, 2002). Thematic analysis offers a systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data (Chapman, Hadfield & Chapman, 2015). It is not solely an approach for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data (Bazeley, 2009); yet it is an interpretational and recursive process that requires a close, focused re-reading and reviewing, whereby data is described, compared and related to form emerging themes, representing patterned meaning and responses to the research study (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Chapman, Hadfield & Chapman, 2015). Conducted within a constructionist framework², thematic analysis ‘seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85). This data-driven³ form of thematic analysis is an inductive technique that examines and groups elements in order to code those (Bazeley, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The steps of this form of analysis, developed by Braun & Clarke (2006), will be elaborated.

Step 1: Familiarize thyself with the data

The researcher is deeply engaged in the content through repetitive reading of the collected data to understand it in order to highlight and transcribe the initial ideas and patterns that were shared by the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Because ‘interviewing participants’ is the data collection tool, verbal data has to be transcribed into written data.

² Under constructionist framework, experiences and meaning are not inherited within individuals, but socially produced and reproduced (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

³ Data-driven form means that the data was collected to determine the themes that will answer the research questions, without trying to make it fit in pre-existing theories and conceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 2: Generate initial codes

The researcher gathers and produces initial, yet interesting codes from the review of documents. For this study, the researcher will code extracts using software system (mainly excel). This stage requires organizing data into meaningful code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To do so, the researcher uses open-coding to compare the data collected within the single interview in order to explore the consistency of the interview as a whole, as well as axial-coding to identify relationships between the open codes by comparing the responses and insights of the participants who share the similar or different experience (Boeije, 2002). These types of comparison help in developing categories and labeling them with appropriate codes from various perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Polkinghorne, 2005). In this study, the analysis of data includes comparing the answers of the ministry representatives (who are at the top of the school hierarchy) and with those of the principals (who are at the bottom of the hierarchy). In addition, comparing the available policies with the practiced ones might produce rich data for analysis and an essence for emerging themes.

Step 3: Search for themes

After collating and comparing codes, the researcher starts with the third step, in which codes are gathered and sorted to into potential themes (Boeije, 2002). The use of thematic map might be helpful at this stage of analysis to check if the themes provide an appropriate description of the extracted codes and of the entire data. This is an ongoing, recursive process by which the research goes back and forth to generate specifics and definitions of each theme and/or refine

it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because it is data-driven form of analysis, the development of the themes depends on the data itself.

Step 4: Review themes

The comparison within the same interview and between the homogenous and heterogeneous interviews provides an exploration of relationship between the themes and of the similarities and differences across these themes (Boeije, 2002; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Gall et al., 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Indeed, Braun and Clarke (2006) add that the themes developed should form a coherent pattern before moving forward. Therefore, the use of thematic map might be very helpful.

Step 5: Define and name themes

In this step, identification of the ‘essence’ and ‘specifics’ of each theme through ongoing analysis, with the intent to name and generate the characteristics (including the scope and content) of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 6: Produce the report

The aim of thematic analysis is to give meaning and vivid examples of the aggregated data by uncovering the story of each of the individual-participant and to present their stories in a coherent, interesting within and across the themes to yield an understanding of the people and the setting understudy (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boeije, 2002). Additionally, at this last step of analysis, the researcher relates back to the research questions and the literature review to produce a report of analysis.

In the table 5 below, the researcher summarized the features of the methodology of the study to include purpose of the study, paradigm adopted with the ontological and epistemological stances, and the analysis used.

Table 5

Features of the Methodology of the Study

Feature	Description
Purposes of the study	(a) Explore the extent to which a decentralized decision-making system, guided by the principles of school-based management (SBM), can be applied in the Lebanese Public Schools. More specifically, it provides a better understanding of the nature and scope of administrative decisions that can be shared at the school level from the perceptions of ministry representatives as well as principals of basic and secondary Lebanese public schools, and (b) to determine the challenges and opportunities afforded to Lebanese public schools for school-based management.
Methodology: Qualitative	It is an approach to qualitative research, characterized by generating theoretical insights inductively derived from the coding and analysis of the data collected from fieldwork, such as documents and interviews.
Paradigm: Interpretive	Reality is discovered and reflected by the human's experiences, views and backgrounds in their contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Scotland, 2012).
Ontology: Relativism	Social reality is explored, and constructed through human interactions. Various realities exist due to a variety of human knowledge, experiences and interpretations. Explore how people make sense of their social world in a natural setting (daily routines, and conversations) and interaction with others around them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Scotland, 2012).
Epistemology: Subjectivism	Knowledge is socially constructed by experiencing the real life or natural settings of the people who are active in the research process. Knowledge is being historically situated as well as culturally derived (Benoliel, 1996; Scotland, 2012).
Analysis: Thematic analysis	It is not solely an approach for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data (Bazeley, 2009); yet it is an interpretational and recursive process that requires a close, focused re-reading and reviewing, whereby data is described, compared and related to form emerging themes, representing patterned meaning and responses to the research study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethical Consideration

For ethical considerations, the researcher provided all the participants with (a) an information paper including some information about the researcher (contact details), the purpose of the research, the use of the results, the reason of their participation and the confidentiality of the information gathered (remain the information anonymous); and (b) a consent form that the participants were required to sign in order to make sure that they understood their participatory role in this research study and their right to withdraw from the research.

Trustworthiness

Because the knowledge created through the research data is put into practice, the research should have a legitimacy shared by the researcher, policy makers, practitioners and others. Trustworthiness is a way to provide worth attention to the research findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Guba & Lincoln (1994) talked about four criteria underlying the concept of trustworthiness:

- **Credibility:** specifies the level of congruency between the findings and the reality, between respondents' views and researcher's description of them. Member checking is adopted in this study to test the findings is a way to ensure credibility (Shenton, 2004).
- **Transferability:** it refers to generalizability of inquiry. It is ensured through thick description of site; so that others can transfer these findings to their site if they want to (Nowell et al, 2017; Shenton, 2004).
- **Dependability:** it is ensured when researcher's interpretation is logical and clearly and systematically documented. Research dependability is

ensured when a deep methodological description is provided and process is audited (Shenton, 2004).

- Confirmability: researcher's interpretation of the findings are derived from the data and they are clearly demonstrated how conclusions were reached. It is established when credibility, transferability and dependability are reached (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Adopting an interpretive paradigm with a relative ontology and subjectivist epistemology, this research, though it explored the scope of school structure and policies that might be supportive for SBM principles within the highly centralized Lebanese educational system, mainly studied the perceptions and personal experiences of the participants. The main purpose of this study was to explore which principle of School-Based Management (SBM), related to the administrative decisions could be applied at the administrative/principalship level in the Lebanese Public Schools, from the perspectives of ministry representatives and principals of Lebanese Public schools.

In this chapter, the researcher divided the findings into two main themes that were inductively extracted from the responses of the participants: ‘Ineffectiveness of the politicized and centralized nature of the educational system’ and ‘Increased Autonomy & Shared Decision Making of Principals: An Antidote to Centralization’.

Demographic Profile of Government Representatives and Principals

A total of 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 principals, 6 of the basic schools (PB) and 3 of the secondary schools (PS), and with two government representatives (GR), who were working at the Ministry level yet had a direct contact with the schools’ principals, one working under the department of the basic schools (GRB) and the other under the department of the secondary schools (GRS). The participants were given pseudonyms as specified in chapter 3 to ensure confidentiality.

In response to the lack of demographic information of the participants in the CRDP, the researcher intended to collect this information at the beginning of the interviews. Table 6 and 7 presented the demographic information of the selected government representatives and principals respectively.

Table 6

Profile of Basic and Secondary Public-School Government Representatives by Gender, Teaching and Supervisory Experiences

GRs	Gender	Teaching Experience	Supervisory Experience
GRB	Male	25 years	0 years
GRS	Male	21 years	15 years

Table 7

Profile of the Basic and Secondary Public-School Principals

	Gender		Age			Principalship Experience (years)			Teaching Experience (years)			Professional Development Related to Administrative Work	
	Male	Female	35-45	46-56	>56	<5	5-10	>10	<5	5-10	>10	Yes	No
Total	2	7	3	3	3	5	2	2	0	3	6	5	4

Ineffectiveness of Politicized and Centralized Nature of Lebanese Educational System

All participants in this study tackled the ineffectiveness of the politicized and centralized nature of the Lebanese Educational System. This theme discussed the several reasons highlighting this incompetence: exertion of political power over education, incongruence between ‘desired’ and ‘allowed’ decisions, and dilapidated relations between superiors and subordinates.

Exertion of Political Power over Education

Under this sub-theme, the researcher discussed the extent to which political interference, rooted in every school aspect, dominated the implementation of laws and policies. Participants demonstrated that political interference and favoritism generated chaos and corruption, deteriorating the educational system. They shed light on two drawbacks of the political interference: ineffective school decisions and inequality.

According to the participating principals, most of the decisions made by the Minister and the decision makers working at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) were not data driven or evidence-based. Most basic school principals articulated their suffering from these decisions that are negatively affecting education. PS1 provided an example: “Due to COVID-19, MEHE decided to go for blended learning. Principals were not supporting this decision because they know they are not qualified for offering safe return for students”. PB2 provided another example:

We were suddenly informed by our superiors that MEHE took a decision about raising all KG students to next level regardless of their academic failing average. None of the KG principals understood the basis of such a decision. Failing students will not be able to withstand the requirements of the higher levels because the curriculum is hard.

Instead, most of basic and secondary principals reported that those decisions were to serve the interest of the political parties they are affiliated with, which doesn’t

seem to have the students' best interest at heart. For instance, although policy restricted principals to enroll more students if the limited seats were reached, political influence exerted stronger power over this policy and in some cases forced principals to accept the new students.

The ineffectiveness of decisions was also related to the dependency of the Lebanese educational decisions on the Ministry and his subordinate team, who are assigned by a political party. Both principals and government representatives (GR) explained that this created a lack of continuity of administrative decisions at the top level of the MEHE. They seemed to suggest that the purpose of the education minister was to prove that the work of the predecessor was worthless and that they could save the Ministry and the public schools with their proposed plans.

The government representative of basic schools (GRB) elucidated that the centralized educational system provided equality among public schools through yearly distribution of educational and fiscal resources according to specific measures taken at the Ministry level. However, the GRS as well as the majority of principals opposed GRB's claim of equality and fairness in distribution of resources. Political figures interfered mainly in the distribution of school equipment leading to inequality, unfairness and discrimination among schools and causing tension among principals. The GRS established that this inequality to political favoritism: school principals who supported a particular political party would be provided by resources from that party.

Incongruence between 'Desired' and 'Allowed' Decisions

This sub-theme revealed the second reason for the ineffectiveness of the centralized educational system. Participants declared that formulation and outdatedness of the educational policies caused this discrepancy.

Prior to the discussion of the formulation and outdatedness of the policies, it was worth mentioning that the access to those policies was time consuming for the researcher. The fact that they are not publicly shared and easily accessed requested the researcher to go through a long-time frame process of taking approval. Post to taking the approval from the Ministry, the researcher emailed a judge, working in the judicial department of the MEHE, asking for electronic documents that can help her in collecting the data. The researcher mainly had access to three documents from which she was able to highlight most of the tasks, duties and role of principals of public school 'The Internal System of Kindergarten and Basic Education of Public Schools', 'The Internal System of Secondary Education of Public Schools' and 'Public School Principal: Tasks and Specifications'. There was no justification for keeping the policies private.

It was agreed upon principal participants that the formulation of the educational policies was rigid and too specific in nature, leaving small room for principals to take desired decisions towards wanted outcomes. PS2 stated: "principals focus on implementing what is required from them, without having enough time to exercise our educational principalship role as desired", when GRB added: "principals' role should be educational. However, due to the decree's formulation, principals focus deviate from this main role of principalship". The current internal policy specified in details the administrative tasks of principals: from those related to financial, students, teachers and other school staff, parents and community, to school programs/projects and school maintenance. In [Table 8](#) in the Appendices, the researcher presented these administrative tasks as specified in the internal organization policy and as reported by

principals, determining the decisions they are and aren't allowed to take, yet they desire to make.

In consistency with what was mentioned in Article 14 of basic school policy and Article 17 of that of the secondary schools, the majority of the PB reported that their financial autonomy level is limited to spending their yearly budgets distributed by the MEHE at the beginning of the year, yet they had to report their expenditures to MEHE at the end of each year, for accountability purposes. Although they had autonomy on spending the yearly budget, principals claimed that their level of autonomy over financial decisions is limited. The internal policy forbidden them from accepting any external grant or donation without prior approval of the MEHE, which was viewed by the principals as taking a long time when it is a need for overcoming the financial challenges. Indeed, they stated that 3-4 million Lebanese pounds was a very small amount to provide schools with the needed resources, especially that Lebanon was facing an economic crisis with the change of the currency rate.

With respect to decisions related to students, internal policy showed that principals were allowed to make decisions pertaining either to dismiss students from schools due to misbehaving attitudes or to transfer of students between schools due to students' high enrollment. This was acknowledged only by two PS, while five PB are unaware of this authority. The latter stated that they wanted to take actions according to misbehaving students who are viewed to negatively affecting another students' behavior. In addition, two principals of basic schools (PB6 & PB3) brought up the issue of the high enrollment of students in their schools, especially when the schools compromise for two levels, basic and secondary, or for two foreign languages, English and French. PB6 clarified:

We are 2 schools managed by 2 principals under 2 internal systems. The coordination of both schools is not easy: a lot of delays because we are two schools (basic and secondary), chaos because we are sharing same resources (water, motor, entrance...). Merging two school levels in one compound increases by default the number of students. I believe this is very harmful for students, especially when grouping students with a gap in age and interests.

Even though principals didn't bring up much about decisions related to students, the internal policies entail more than this. They specify that principals can register new or old students, organize and nominate students' examination entrance and official exams, monitor students' health, etc...

As for those decisions related to teachers and other school staff, it is important to recognize that principals mainly mentioned those decisions related to granting absences and leaves for school staff, organizing and monitoring teachers work, moving teachers within the school, and hiring and firing teachers; when the internal policies entailed more supervisory and office duties such as attending teaching lessons, presenting teachers' reports, treating school staff with spirit of justice and respect, etc. The internal policy and PB declared the low level of principals' autonomy regarding the above-mentioned decisions. Indeed, principals are unable to hire and/or fire teachers or other school staff. One of the basic school principals (PB3) elucidated the need to hire a larger team of assistant principals and supervisors due to the overload of daily administrative work. When GR explained the refusal of the MEHE to assign more staff as a pretext of ensuring equality among public schools: hiring staff based on an equation specifying the number of school staff according to number of classes, PB described it as MEHE's way of thinking quantitatively rather than qualitatively.

The focus of principals when talking about the decisions related to the school programs and projects was in line with what was presented in the policies. This

included participating in activities inside and outside the school with prior approval from the MEHE and organizing educational programs through the distribution of the subjects and activities. As for the inability to use any external educational resources, one of the basic public schools' principals, PB2, explained: "due to the tight centralization, we are not allowed to refer to any book other than the ones assigned by the Educational District, even though it may help us a lot in the curriculum". This was mentioned by the GR who established it with the unification of educational resources among schools. Similarly, is the case for changing the number of subject sessions. Principals specified that they were not allowed to add or reduce any subject. For example, one of the basic school principal PB5 specified that she was unable to add 1 session of teaching technology in replacement of 1 out of the 4 sessions of arts, as she believed that technology is important in students' lives. However, MEHE flatly refused under the pretext of the regulations and policy.

Last but not least, principals talked about ordering supplies and materials as the only decisions that can be made by them under those decisions related to maintenance and equipment; whereas, the internal policies entail more to include guarding school maintenance without prior permission from superiors, preserving furniture, ensuring cleanliness, etc...

The fact that every school is unique in its needs and circumstances required a flexible and supportive policy system. Therefore, principals called urgently for a process of reviewing and modifying the content of the policies in accordance to school's required demands. Principals shed light on three main issues that were not raised by the internal policy, yet are affecting the Lebanese educational system. The first one, discussed by two basic school principals, was linked to the concern of sharing

same buildings and facilities by two schools. They questioned: “which principal will be sued by the law if two principals with two management skills of two different schools are sharing one building and one source of facilities, such as electricity, fuels, etc.?” As for the second issue related ‘tenured’ and ‘contracted’ teachers, a clear contradiction between basic school principals was revealed. On one hand, PB6 declared that the laws and policies did not support ‘contracted teachers’ who are talented and an adding value to the subject they are teaching. Due to the austerity policy adopted at the MEHE, these ‘contracted teachers’ were being substituted by untalented ‘tenured teachers’. On the other hand, PB3 declared that laws did not set the limit of the hired number of ‘contracted teachers’ neither do they hold them accountable for suspending the school year by calling several strikes.

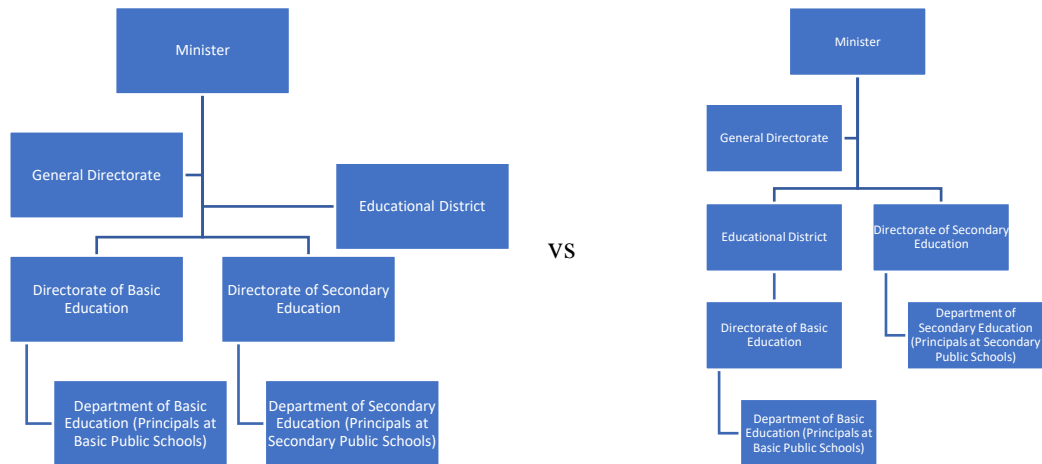
The last issue discussed by the participants throughout the interviews was associated with the lack of a policy supporting the adoption a clear mechanism of action between the MEHE and the public schools. GR attributed the absence of this policy to the lack of infrastructure (such as bad internet and constant cut-off of the electricity) at the Ministry as well as at the schools, making it hard to create a real time management system to save time, synchronize and facilitate the work and cooperation between schools and the Ministry. In addition, it was viewed to reduce principals’ paperwork and diminish some expenses such as ink, pencils, pens, papers, etc. However, principal participants seemed to attribute the absence of such a policy to the centralized nature of the system. They supported this claim by assuming that adopting a clear mechanism of action required decision makers working at the MEHE to transparently share the process and procedure of taking decisions, which was not the case. PB3 stated: “It is not in the interest of the MEHE to reveal how decisions are taken, but to limit them at the

top level. Indeed, they prefer to instruct the decisions to principals rather than explaining how these decisions were taken”. However, once implemented correctly, it was expected to effectively add positive changes for the educational system. It might provide optimization and standardization of administrative work by providing a guidance (ex. Manuals) for principals and school staff to do their job at the upmost with the least of time.

According to the GR, the modification of the policy formulation and content requires time and a long process to go through within a centralized system due to the hierarchical structure adopted at the MEHE. Prior to the presentation of this hierarchy, it was worth mentioning the inconsistency between the structure presented by the Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP, 2018) that required both basic and secondary public schools to refer to the Educational Districts, and what was implemented. Only the Basic Public Schools referred and reported to the Educational District within their district. The Secondary Public Schools reported directly to the Directorate of Secondary Education as specified by the GRS. When asked about the reason for that, the participants had no answer other than “this is how things go”. The research presented in Figure 1 below, the hierarchical structure as presented on the Website versus how it is implemented in reality.

Figure 4

Hierarchical Structure as Presented on the Website vs In Reality



The majority of the participants associated the delay in responding to principals' administrative requests to the hierarchical structure adopted. They reported that it may take months for the request to go through the bottom to the top, and then back to the bottom of the hierarchy. Most of the principals explained that the delay of responding was one of the major problems they faced with school staff and with financial matters. When principals were 'handcuffed', 'contracted teachers' blamed them for the delay in paying their salaries. PS1 provided another example of a financial difficulty:

Procedure of having approvals takes so long, and this is a major problem that I am facing especially that nowadays the dollar does not have a fixed rate. When I requested for taking an approval on buying a school material, the dollar rated 10 000 L.L., when I took the approval and went to buy what I needed, the dollar was worth 15 000 L.L. I don't know what to do.

GR were fully aware and sympathized with principals' regarding the delay for reply to administrative requests. However, they mentioned that their 'hands were tied': they could not change the system and they seem to attribute this helplessness to a lack of authority.

In respect to the outdatedness of the policies, the internal system decrees were lastly updated in 2000-2001. Though GRB stated that the articles within the decrees were regularly updated, principal participants sensed that this was not enough to keep up with the continuous evolution of the educational sector.

Dilapidated Relationships between Superiors and Subordinates

Under a centralized system, dilapidated relationships between superiors and subordinates were developed. The majority of the principals attributed this type of relationship to several elements: the range of trust, professional and emotional support, and range of participation.

The interview results with principals and GR revealed a culture of mutual mistrust, demotivation, lack of commitment and fear causing the weak and dilapidated relationship between principals and their superiors. Basic school principals questioned the continuous monitoring of superiors for their work and linked it to principals' lack of trust. For them, working within this culture of mistrust, initiated principals' fear of being mistaken. PB4 elucidated: "I don't know why I always feel this tension and lack of trust from our superiors. If they don't have trust in us, why do they hire us?" GRS recognized the mutual mistrust between the superiors and their subordinates and its demotivating aspect for developing a strong relationship. However, GR justified their mistrust in principals as a result of two factors. The first one related to assigning principals based on political favoritism rather than qualifications. Though more than the half of the principals are productive and motivated, the remaining ones, who were politically assigned and protected, are not productive and committed to their schools: even laws do not hold them accountable. The second one was allied to principals' level of subjectivism and bias in taking decision. GRB stated: "How can we, as direct

superiors, be able to decrease our supervision without having the trust that principals can take best decisions without being subjective?”

There was a clear contradiction between GR and principals’ responses regarding the emotional and professional support offered by superiors to facilitate principals’ administrative work. GR defined their role as supportive: not only they adopt an open-door system to ensure that principals are always welcomed, but also offer continuous training and workshops on ways, solutions and guides to facilitate principals’ administrative work and overcome the administrative challenges they face. GRB added: “I regularly ask my principals and school staff about the professional development they wish to attend in order to help them in their administrative work”. This required them to work cooperatively with principals for the sake of improving public schools. However, the responses of the basic school principals opposed the GRB’s perception of their role as supporters and motivators. Indeed, PB clarified that learning about principalship, for new principals, required personal effort rather than superiors’ professional guidance and support to learn. PB4 elaborated that when she was assigned as a principal, she learned from her personal effort and the support of her principals-colleagues and other school staff rather than from scientific and professional practices offered by the MEHE. Professional and emotional support don’t only come from the guidance and technical support, but also from the recognition of the competencies and good work of the individuals. Instead of feeling motivated and rewarded, some PB expressed their feeling as unappreciated for the work they are accomplishing. However, GRB disagreed with those principals stating that superiors were always thankful for principals. He said: “I always share with my principals how thankful I am for the work they are doing. They are the reason for school’s success. I am nothing without them.” Yet, he blamed MEHE

stakeholders for that because they don't give credits for the accomplishments and achievements of principals and their superiors. GRB exemplified this claim by giving the following example:

Last year we worked on exhibitions that were presented in the center of Beirut. We presented several one: arts, health, etc... In addition, we worked on Spring Festival that took place in the greater Beirut. Once more, we prepared a theatrical play that was prepared by public school principals, teachers, students, staff and others. Every single detail was the work of these people from decoration to choreography, scene, and music. However, all these were set under the MEHE achievements without giving us not the principals any kind of reward. We were deceived by their action.

Principals suggested that limiting their range of participation was another cause for the dilapidated relationship with their superiors. However, the participants' responses regarding the reasons behind limiting their participation in decisions varied. The GR and several basic school principals viewed that principals' participation was correlated with three factors: the personality and leadership of their superior, the level of autonomy of their superior and principals' willingness to participate. The personality and leadership style of superiors affect principals' participation. PB4 claimed: "The easier he/she is, the higher our participation will be". However, according to the GRs, giving principals' independency to a high extent and then limiting it created a tense relationship between principals and their superiors. Indeed, GRB, known for his systematic way of thinking, highlighted the fact that some previous superiors were known for adopting a 'laissez-faire' leadership style and had a weak personality when dealing with their subordinates, allowing them to take decisions, act independently without supervision and monitoring, despite that their job description requests systematic and continuous supervision over principals' work. A distinction between 'restricting' principals from taking initiatives and 'supervising' their work to limit chaos and ensure the implementation of the rules and regulations was provided. This

distinction was not clear and understood by most of the principals. Many conflicts occurred between superiors and principals, who conveyed their unwillingness to work with a superior who is closely monitoring school functions. GRB explained: “I really don’t know why they lose their motivation when it comes to participate in decisions collaboratively taken by them and their superiors. I feel that they want either to take decisions solely at their school or they lose initiative”. The supporters of the second view stated that the superiors should be given more autonomy. The higher superiors’ level of restriction, the higher the pressure on the principals to abide by the rules and implement the requests of the Minister would be. Despite the rules and regulations constraints, GRs kept the lines of communication open with principals to ensure a collaborative atmosphere for them to share their suggestions and perspectives regarding many decisions. GRS articulated:

I try to ask about their perspectives in many decisions in order to create a common ideology and vision and about their complaints to work cooperatively on solving them as a mean to build trust among principals and school staff to motivate them to work in a participative environment. I keep on providing them with moral motivation to participate and take initiatives because I am not in a position to offer any financial motivation.

Although that GRB agreed with GRS that adopting an open-door system motivated principal to participate and share their thoughts and perspectives, he correlated the range of principals’ participation with their willingness to participate. From his perspective, he offered many opportunities for principals to take part in school decisions related to their schools’ needs, but very few principals appreciated that. He expanded: “Principals have a high level of autonomy but they don’t understand how and when they are able to take decisions. Autonomy is there, what is missing is their willingness to take initiatives”. However, PB and PS opposed the GRB’s. They elucidated that it is not about the willingness of the principals as it is about calling them

for participation. One of the secondary school principals, PS2 explained: “There is no call for principals’ consultation. The decisions taken by the superiors are being forced on the principal for implementation”. Regardless of the reason behind it, limiting principals’ range of participation kept them with confrontations with teachers and parents. While the promises made by the MEHE to solve some issues at the school levels were kept verbal, principals with ‘tied-hands’ were the one blamed. Some of these concerns were related to ‘contracted teachers’, ‘blended and online learning’, and ‘school equipment distribution’.

Theme Summary

Three main issues were tackled under the theme of ‘Ineffectiveness of Politicized and Centralized Nature of Lebanese Educational System’: Exertion of Political Power over Education, Incongruence between ‘Desired’ and ‘Allowed’ Decisions and Dilapidated Relations in a Mistrustful School Culture. Under the first sub-theme, the dominance of the political interference over educational system was a major point of discussion. Laws and policies usually serve the organization in a way that it facilitates the work of its individuals, yet, this was not the case with the Lebanese case. Although the GR viewed that the centralized system in its structure and policies unifies the school work, a presentation of the devastating effects of this system were discussed in detail: ineffectiveness of school decisions and inequality. The majority of the participants declared the need to enucleate political intervention from its roots. The second sub-theme explained to what extent incongruence between ‘allowed’ and ‘desired’ administrative decisions exists. Despite their privacy, the formulation and outdatedness of the policies were discussed as the pretext of this incongruence. In this part, the researcher revealed the limited level of principals’ autonomy by presenting

principals' administrative tasks as stated in the internal policies and as reported by the principals. The third sub-theme declared the dilapidated nature of the relationship between superiors and subordinates as the result of the centralized system and bureaucratic structure.

Increased Autonomy & Shared Decision Making of Principals: An Antidote to Centralization

The second inductive theme presented the perceptions of participants towards increasing principals' autonomy and shared decision making as a mean to overcome the ineffective effects of politicized and centralized public schools' system. Two sub-themes were elaborated. The first one presented principals' characteristic that might foster and/or hinder the increased autonomy and participation in decision making. The second sub-theme elaborated the potential impacts of increased autonomy on principalship and school culture.

Principals Characteristics

Increasing principals' autonomy required leveraging their participation level in decision making. Principals suggested that their characteristics, including: principal's knowledge in terms of seniority and professional development, age, and leadership style and personality as shown in T9, can either foster or suppress their participation in decision making.

Table 9

Principals Characteristics as stated by Principals and GRs

Principals' Characteristics	Frequencies of Basic School Principals (N=)	Frequencies of Secondary School Principals (N=)	GRs (N=)
Principal's knowledge=	1 (PS1)	0	0
Seniority & experience+	3 (PB1, PB2, PB6) 2 (PB1, PB6)	1 (PS3) 2 (PS1, PS2)	0 2

Professional Development			
Principal's Age	2 (PB3, PB4)	0	0
Principal's Leadership Style and Personality	4 (PB1, PB4, PB5, PB6)	3 (PS1, PS2, PS3)	2

Results/Findings

Having enough knowledge allowed principals to take decisions based on logical, evidence-based reasoning. Throughout the interviews with principals and government representatives, two features determined principal's knowledge: seniority and professional development. Half of the principals believed that seniority is an advantage for principals' participation in decision making. The number of years of experience mattered: the longer a principal occupied this position, the more he/she was able to take the right decisions. Experience generated knowledge; thus, it would be challenging to take the right decision without having real-life experience and enough knowledge about the situation. Two PB and two PS discussed how the lack of principals' experience in schools hindered their participation in decision making: there was a need for practical experience in addition to theoretical understanding. PB6 elaborated: "I am in my position for less than a year, and I believe that I am not eligible for taking decisions because I still don't know the school unique identity and needs". PS3 supported PB6 in his claim and she added: "I can't make decisions that serve the school when I need at least 2 years to understand how it is functioning?" Moreover, professional development was another factor of principals' characteristics that affect principals' level of knowledge. Almost half of the participating principals and both GR agreed that developing professionalism through continuous training and follow-ups increased

principals' knowledge. On one hand, principals should develop themselves regularly because school improvement was viewed to be correlated with the development of its individuals. Simultaneously, superiors were urged to offer public school principals continuous training. Both GRs viewed professional development as one form of capacity building allowing principals to take the best decisions based on the richness of their knowledge.

Relevance

One basic school principal, PB4, viewed that the factor of principals' age was relevant to their participation in decision making. She mentioned that the youngest the principals were, the faster they were able to learn new things (such as technology implementation) and the more effective their participation in decision making might be. In contrast, PB3 declared that principals' capability of learning new things for a better participation in decisions was not based on principals' age: "I am 63 and I keep on learning new stuff to improve my school. I know everything about technology, when I have young teachers who don't know how to use the computer".

Leadership Style and Personality

Leadership style and personality of the principals were the most agreed upon factors affecting their level of participation. Two schools of principal's leadership were deliberated during the interviews. The first one, declared by majority of the participants, was the transformational leader who shared their willingness to participate in decision making for the improvement of students' achievement and school's performance. With their energetic and committed personality, transformational leaders are viewed to inspire others to change their perceptions and expectations. PB2 supported this claim from her personal experience with 'contracted teachers': "when they wanted to declare

a strike I convinced them to suspend it by talking to them and making them feel that they have all the right to do so, but our students remain our priority”. PB5 gave an example on how she was able to indirectly make her superior take a major decision by convincing him to move the kindergarten classes from an elementary to a kindergarten school. In addition, most PB suggested that transformational leaders, fostering supportive and trustful relationships, kept communication lines open allowing teachers, school staff, parents and students free to share their concerns, thoughts and ideas. PB4 elaborated:

By increasing my autonomy, the trust of my school staff in me grows. Though I am one of the youngest school staff, teachers see me as their leader, role model and listener, and believe in my capabilities in improving their school. Parents will trust me even more than they do right now because they can sense my hard work for bringing the best for the sake of their children.

The other leadership school viewed leadership as ‘the follower leader’: those were the principals who believed that their leadership deviated from its real function. Few principals expressed their inability to take any action towards improving school and its individuals if it wasn’t requested by superiors. One of the basic school principal (PB2) stated: “I can do nothing... I am a government employee... I have to subdue and implement the decisions taken by the superiors”. Those principals who sorted their leadership as followers, were detected to have a weak and opinionated personality that might have a hindering effect on their level of participation and a declining influence on school’s performance.

Impact of Increased Autonomy on Principals and School Culture

Post to the discussion about the principals’ characteristics that might foster their participation, 8 out of 9 principals, 3 from secondary and 5 from basic schools, declared that the increase of autonomy and participation in decision making required a shift in

the role of principals' leaders. All the 8 principals agreed that suitable school decisions were best made with the participation and collaboration of principals, whom are knowledgeable about their schools' needs and circumstances; and thus, were able to create common visions and unified decisions. This participatory role of principals required a high level of autonomy, allowing principals to take major decisions within a wide range of freedom; a need for a collaborative and safe environment, allowing them to feel safe to get mistaken; and a development of a trustful relationship with the superiors as well as subordinates.

Aware of the increased responsibility and workload, all participant principals shared their readiness and willingness to take initiatives for increasing their autonomous administrative work. However, a key question remained regarding GRs willingness to delegate autonomy for principals in administrative decisions. Both government representatives supported the need for increasing principals' autonomy and urged them for taking initiatives. However, they insisted that enlarging principals' authority mainly in administrative decisions should be implemented step by step and to a certain extent, under the MEHE supervision. GRB gave an example: "principals should be allowed to give maternity leave, signing retirements, etc. under the supervision of the direct superiors. Some administrative papers don't need to go through all superiors. Indeed, this track should be minimized".

During the interviews, principals highlighted several reasons for the need for participatory role of principals in decision making. One of these was the unification of decisions between school principals and their superiors to decrease problems they face regularly, and increase the success of their schools significantly as reported by 8 out of the 9 principals. Another reason lied on implementing what served best the schools

since principals know schools' needs, demands and circumstances. They elucidated few examples:

- Decisions for separating school levels, because the gap in students' ages is a major issue that they are facing as a result of sharing the same resources and buildings.
- Decision for lowering enrollment of students by moving the foreign students to afternoon schedules in order to keep morning schedule for the Lebanese students.
- Decisions for converting contracts of 'contracted teachers' to 'tenured teachers'.
- Decisions for increasing yearly budgeting to provide schools with the best materials and resources.

Additionally, few principals suggested that activating decision making role of principals permitted them to make spontaneous decisions that are needed to be taken without direct referral to the superiors. PB5 explained that principals face many situations that required their direct action. In addition to taking spontaneous decisions, participatory leadership allowed principals to expand the circle of participation to include school staff and parents, who were according to principals, the most reliable source for making the best decisions. According to some principals this enlargement on one hand allowed them to share decisions with school community to faster solve their complaints without going back to superiors in every single issue; and on the other hand, to understand and be knowledgeable about decisions taken at the top level of the MEHE. This viewed to bring positive enhancement for school performance and of its individuals.

Last but not least, one of the elementary school principals talked about the correlation between her participatory leadership and the increase of her self-esteem. She stated that increasing principals' participatory role in taking decisions would indeed increase their willingness to cooperate and take initiatives. This might increase their feeling of appreciation and motivation, especially when success of the decision was result of their personal effort and those of their school members.

Participatory role of public-school principals was viewed to be best practiced in a culture of cooperation, appreciation and motivation. Working under such an atmosphere motivated principal to take initiatives even when getting mistaken. PB4 stated: "I would be constantly giving the upmost for improving my school, without being judged by superiors". A more dynamic relationship between superiors and their subordinates requested superiors to shift their roles and functions towards a more supporting and motivating leadership; while principals' role should be altered from passive to active executor. Stated differently, a shift in the culture of one 'man show' to a 'group of people acting in one show' was proposed by PBs. Without that shift, lack of cooperation and team work within the school would dominate.

Several basic school principals shed the light on trustworthiness as being the asset of a participatory culture. Even though school staff and parents already believed in principals' capabilities to improving the school, increasing principals' autonomy would enlarge the trust of school staff in principals. This culture of collaboration and trust elucidating a strong relationship of principals with their subordinates as well as their superiors, brings positive effect to school and its individuals. PB3 stated: "having a strong relationship with school staff and students is essential for solving problems that principals and school staff face". PB5 added: "I believe that we, the principals, school

staff and parents together we can complete the mission of raising successful, educated students with good behavior”. When talking about the trustful relationship, it isn’t limited to the relationship between the principal and his/her school staff, yet it includes the relationship of these principals with their superiors. GRS and GRB explained that regardless of the level of centralization of school system, an environment of cooperation and team work, fostering a good relationship between the principals and their superiors, helps a lot in dealing with the complaints and obstacles principals face. Therefore, their participation in consecutive meeting allow them to share their experiences and knowledge about their schools’ needs and demands.

Theme Summary

Under the theme of ‘Increased Autonomy & Shared Decision Making of Principals: An Antidote to Centralization’, a detailed discussion about the extent to which increased autonomy and participation of principals in school administrative decisions was presented. Firstly, principals’ characteristics that fostered or hindered the increased autonomy and shared decision making were discussed. Principals’ participation was viewed to be dependent on three factors: their level of knowledge- in terms seniority and professional development, age, and leadership style and personality. In the second part, the findings highlighted the potential impact of this increased autonomy and shared decision making on principals’ leadership role and on school culture. The findings assumed that participatory leadership role of principals would be best practiced under a supportive, collaborative and trustful culture. Increasing principals’ opportunities to make decisions in collaboration with their superiors were expected to bring effective changes to the public schools and its individuals.

The researcher summarized participants responses in table 10 below, and the themes and sub-themes in Appendix F.

Table 10

Participants Responses Regarding Themes Discussed

	GRB	GRS	PB	PS
Centralized system	Unification of decisions and equality	Unification of decisions and equality	Inequality	Inequality
Superiors role	Supportive	Supportive	Unsupportive for some and supportive for others	Mainly supportive
Superiors' evaluation	As a mean of administrative supervision	As a mean of administrative supervision	As a mean of administrative control & restriction	As a mean of administrative control & restriction
Decisions mainly based on	Laws and policies	Laws and policies	Political interventions	Policies with the intervention of Political preferences
Policies are	Rigid but if well understood by they don't limit principals' role and function, providing principals with good autonomy level	Rigid and outdated	Rigid and limits principals' role and function, keeping principals' with too little autonomy level	Rigid and limits principals' role and function, keeping principals with little autonomy level (PS are more aware of their administrative functions)
Willingness	Most principals are not willing to participate, though superiors encourage them to take initiatives	Most principals are willing to participate while rest are not willing to	Superiors are not willing to delegate authority and power to principals	Superiors are not willing to delegate authority and power to principals
Decision making	Principals opinions and perspectives are taken into consideration	Principals opinions and perspectives are taken into consideration	Fake participation, with the exception of the response of one principal	Fake participation
Widening the circle of participation	Leads to chaos if principals are not professionally trained to participate in decision making	Leads to chaos if principals are not professionally trained to participate in decision making	Leads to positive outcomes if GR were open to conflict of opinions	Leads to positive outcomes if GR were open to conflict of opinions
Autonomy	With increasing autonomy to a certain extent	With increasing autonomy to a certain extent	With increasing autonomy to a high extent	With increasing autonomy to a high extent

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which a decentralized decision-making system, guided by the principles of school-based management (SBM), can be applied in the Lebanese Public Schools as well as the challenges and opportunities afforded to Lebanese public schools for school-based management. Guided by the theme divisions of the aggregated data in Chapter 4, an ‘in literature grounded’ interpretation of the findings was discussed under two main sections: ‘Ineffectiveness of the politicized and centralized nature of the educational system’ and ‘Increased Autonomy & Shared Decision Making of Principals: An Antidote to Centralization’. Also discussed was the implications for practice and recommendation for future research that might be valuable for application of SBM model in the Lebanese context. Lastly is the presentation of study limitations.

The discussion of the findings of this study help in answering the following research questions:

3. From the perspective of ministry representatives and principals of Lebanese Public schools: (a) What SBM principles related to administrative decisions can be applied at the administrative/principalship level in the Lebanese Public Schools? And (b) What are the challenges and opportunities afforded to Lebanese public schools for school-based management?

In chapter IV, the researcher presented the results of the study under two main themes: (a) Ineffectiveness of Politicized and Centralized Nature of Lebanese Educational System, & (b) Increased Autonomy & Shared Decision Making of

Principals: An Antidote to Centralization. Under the first theme, a presentation of the current nature of the educational system was defined as politicized and centralized. The dominance of the political interference over educational system was a major point of discussion. The majority of the participants declared the need to enucleate political intervention from its roots due to its devastating effects of the educational system in terms of ineffectiveness of school decisions and inequality.

The centralization of the educational system explained to what extent incongruence between ‘allowed’ and ‘desired’ administrative decisions existed. Despite their privacy, the formulation and outdatedness of the policies were discussed as the pretext of this incongruence. In this part, the researcher revealed the limited level of principals’ autonomy by presenting principals’ administrative tasks as stated in the internal policies and as reported by the principals. Resulted from the centralized system and bureaucratic structure, a dilapidated nature of the relationship between superiors and subordinates arose. Under the second theme, a detailed discussion about the effect of principals’ characteristics, level of knowledge- in terms of seniority and professional development, age, and leadership style and personality, on the increased autonomy and participation of principals in school administrative decisions. Additionally, the findings highlighted the potential impact of this increased autonomy and shared decision making on principals’ leadership role and on school culture. The findings of this study assumed that participatory leadership role of principals would be best practiced under a supportive, collaborative and trustful culture. Increasing principals’ opportunities to make decisions in collaboration with their superiors were sought to bring effective changes to the public schools and its individuals.

Ineffectiveness of the Politicized and Centralized Nature of the Educational System

In centralized educational systems, political perspectives were found to have a great impact over school decisions to achieve their own policy objectives (Bush, 2003). In the Lebanese context, indeed, the dominance of the political power and authority over Education kept the educational system weak, in terms of ineffectiveness of school decisions and inequality among public schools. Principals of Lebanese basic and secondary schools assumed that school decisions taken by decisions makers at the MEHE were not being evidence-based or data-driven; instead, they were dependent on the political agenda of Minister's political party he is affiliated with. Additionally, the findings of the study showed that political interference was viewed as a pretext of inequality among public schools, specifically in regard to equipment distribution and selection of school principals and other school staff. Another example was the case of Cyprus, Trimikliniotis (2004) claimed the effects of the political dynamics on the curriculum, which was very related to the cultural, religious, historical, and political life of Cyprus.

Similar to the case in Kenya, Cyprus, Qatar and Egypt, Lebanese educational system was characterized by its highly centralized system, keeping little room for principals' autonomy over their administrative tasks. Lessening centralization of the school system and increasing autonomy of principals could be much more beneficial since high centralization was proven to affect the system negatively. Therefore, an ideal system of education could be an equilibrium between centralization and decentralization as proposed by several international studies as well as by the participants of this study (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Nicolaidou Solomou & Pashiardis, 2016; SEPEB, 2012). At this level, it was found that it would be difficult to switch Lebanese educational

system towards high level of decentralization. Aware of the political influence and the strength of the laws over politics, the central government should remain responsible for some decisions in order to avoid the risk of educational inequality and financial issues: government should keep on funding schools, when principals should be the ones managing school purchases such as equipment and educational materials as they know best their schools' needs. In this way more opportunities for immediate request and for innovation could be taken by principals (Theodorou, 2004).

In accordance with the findings of this study, it had been also argued that not all forms of educational planning can become decentralized (Bush, 2003). More specifically, to retain some equality among public schools and objectivity of decisions, some administrative, financial and pedagogical decisions were viewed best to be remained mainly in the hands of the local government, but discussed with the school principals. This was relevant to the fact that principals didn't acquire enough professional knowledge and skills to make the best decisions. Therefore, there were an urgent need for training principals to become real leaders in order to best exercise their new roles in order to handle this new pressure.

The findings of this study showed that centralized system caused incompatibility between principals' 'desired' and 'allowed' decisions. Indeed, the formulation of the policies in highly centralized educational system retains decision making in the hands of semi-autonomous governance bodies: District Education Board. In accordance of what Brewer et al. (2006), Yau & Cheng (2011) & Kiragu et al. (2013) stated in their studies in Qatar, China and Kenya respectively, findings of this study defined principalship as exercising instructed administrative duties with minimal control over school decisions, caused by the application of a top-down control to all aspects of this system: financial

(management of fiscal resources), administrative (related to teachers, other school staff, students, projects and maintenance) and pedagogical (curriculum, programs, textbooks...). Consequently, the hierarchical structure in the highly centralized systems resulted in long responding delay, even on the smallest matters as reported by the Lebanese participants (GR, PB & PS) as well as by Cotton (1992).

Educational management and policies are continuously evolving to cater for the changes of the external environment. This was not the case in the Lebanese context, where Lebanese policies were lastly updated around 20 years ago. Some of the decisions based on the outdated policies were found to be unclear, invalid or missing.

Lebanese principals viewed that the centralized system of education was also creating a dilapidated relation between superiors and their subordinates. Three factors triggered this weak relationship: range of trust, professional and emotional support, and participation. The results of this study revealed a mistrustful relation between GR and principals. While principals, mainly of basic schools, attributed the mistrust of their superiors towards their work and decisions to superiors' continuous supervision, the government representatives linked it to either the incompetency of principals, who were politically assigned to their position, or to the principals' level of subjectivism in taking decisions. Lebanese public-school principals viewed superiors' evaluation as a means of administrative control and restriction, as opposed to Yau & Cheng (2011) who viewed superiors' evaluation as a means of administrative supervision. In regard to the professional and emotional support, a clear contradiction between principals and GR's responses. Although GR explained their role as a supportive and professional guide, basic school principals viewed that superiors' role as unsupportive and demotivating. As for the range of participation, each blamed the other. Lebanese public-school

principals accused GR for not having the will to invite them for participation, leaving them with a lack of knowledge regarding school decisions and operations. This was in consistence with what was mentioned by Nandamuri Prabhakar & Rao (2011) regarding centralized governmental departments which have an ‘inherent inertia’ impeding change, leaving school principals with far too little power and responsibility for their services they are supposed to deliver. Developing decisions at the top level of the hierarchy, it is challenging to make school members accept and be committed and work for their implementation (Yau & Cheng, 2011). In contrast, Lebanese GR blamed principals for not having the will and initiative to participate. SEPEB (2012) supported the Lebanese GR by stating that some principals, who might have room for authority, don’t take enough advantage of that opportunity, believing that it adds workload and requires extra effort. Indeed, in the study done in Gauteng State in South Africa, principals noted that increasing their range of participation requires them to accomplish more work and to handle more responsibility than they can (Botha, 2006). In centralized school systems where autonomy exists at a very limited level, there is a need to study the existing context in which change, if it has to occur, promotes effective and fruitful results to the educational sector.

Increased Autonomy & Shared Decision Making of Principals: An Antidote to Centralization

Despite the mainstream of decentralization, it is undeniable that both centralization and decentralization are connected and that each by itself was viewed to be dysfunctional. Lebanon- similar to Cyprus, Egypt, Kenya, Iran- presented a good example of how centralization functioned in an educational system; yet had been criticized and disputed. Therefore, there was a crucial need for restructuring the

educational system in a way that ensures a balance between centralization and decentralization by swinging the pendulum more towards decentralization. If Lebanese educational system decided to shift the locus of control away from the central government, several changes were needed to take place, and external and internal governing entities in Lebanese educational system needed to cooperatively work for the success of the education.

Post to studying the context in which educational system operated and school individuals worked, the researcher investigated participants' perspectives in regard to increasing autonomy and decision making of principals as a means of altering the nature of the educational system. Throughout the conducted interviews, individual actors within the system, whether at the top or bottom of the hierarchy, shared their willingness to adopt this change. International research stated that school-based management (SBM), serving as one of the strategies to achieve educational change, compiles for a high level of autonomy and wide range of participation (Nandamuri Prabhakar & Rao, 2011; Solomou & Pashiardis, 2015). However, SBM needs time and should be implemented gradually (Cotton, 1992). Aware of the vital changes on school aspects, all participants were optimistic towards SBM impacts on effective school management and performance; thus, on the quality of education.

The synthesis of the literature review, in parallel with the findings of the results of this study, revealed three main principles underlying SBM: first, redefining the roles and responsibilities of the school principals in managing the procedures for their participation in policy/decision making and of those of the governmental bodies in delegating the needed support for principals (Bandur, 2011; SEPEB, 2012). The findings of this study, in consistency with several researches, suggested that, under a

tight centralized system, locus of authority was primarily best moved to the administrative/principalship level: range of participation in school management widened and areas of authority and power in decision making moved from governmental to school level to a certain extent (Gurr, 1999; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Yau & Cheng, 2011). The work of Bandur (2011) and Yau & Cheng (2011) supported the findings in this research study by indicating that creation and articulation of school vision, missions and goals with all school entities, especially principals, who were defined as “*chief in creating positive organizational change and building capacity in regards to centralization and successful implementation of site-based governance*” (Boudreaux, 2017, p. 11). Essentially, Lebanese participants declared that sharing vision, mission and goals with principals motivated them to take initiatives in participating in decision making and be committed towards achieving the school’s objectives and values, and providing ideas and suggestions for educational improvement. A balance between governmental support and control for this system change would be extremely desirable (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; SEPEB, 2012). This new form of devolution of authority requested the governmental ministry to create partnership in decision making at the school level; specifically, in administrative decisions related to teachers, school staff, students, programs and projects, and maintenance and buildings (Bandur, 2011; Heyward et al, 2011). Therefore, support from the governmental superiors was suggested to facilitate principals’ managerial and administrative tasks, which, under the centralized system, used to occupy massive amount of principals’ time and distracting them from their main instructional and educational role (Rodriguez & Hovde, 2002; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015). Although Lebanese GR defined their role as supportive and motivators in terms of offering

professional and emotional support for principals, basic schools principals, mainly, disagreed with GR statement. Based upon the results of this study, principals viewed that their participation is not authentic due to the autocratic personalities of their superiors, whose concern was about their accountability rather than the effectiveness of principals' participation in decision making. The role of the external governing bodies didn't lie solely on offering support, but also on structuring and planning the overall school system by which a statewide framework entailing financial policies and school education would be developed. Abu-Duhou (1999) and Honig & Rainey (2012) suggested that the role of the ministry remained on providing a structured accountability framework at the system and school levels, an ongoing opportunity for staff development, and rewards for the staff supporting behaviors.

Aware of their new responsibilities, principals would be able to carry out their administrative tasks effectively (Heyward et al, 2011). Examples of administrative duties that were reported by the principals implied managing schools and staff in terms of giving them the privilege to employ a diversity of personnel and to reallocate educational resources to meet school's local needs: school staffing, programs, projects, maintenance, etc.

The responses of the participants in this study were in consistency with various empirical studies done in countries where educational system was mainly centralized, in regard to shifting leadership role and functions of individual actors within the educational system (Heyward et al, 2011; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; Solomou & Pashiardis, 2015). Principals in this study suggested that the need for superiors to adopt a transformational leadership style, while government representatives proposed that it would be critical for principals to show initiative, interest and commitment to

improve schools. In support of these claims, studies done in countries where SBM was implemented, leadership role of superiors and principals, was found to have direct impact on people's mindset and culture, and would be needed for creating a professional environment enhancing teaching and learning (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006).

Developing professionalism for school staff according to their local needs and based on annual report evaluation formed the second principle of SBM. Empirical studies, conducted in centralized educational systems such in Cyprus, Egypt and South Africa, supported the findings of this study research in regard to the need for developing principals professionally. It might help principals to overcome the hindering factors for their participation: principals' unwillingness to participate due to the lack of familiarity about SBM, and a fear of getting mistaken (Abu- Duhou, 1999; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Botha, 2006; Hammad, 2010). In fact, having more managerial and administrative responsibilities at school level would imply that schools must be accountable to local authorities (SABER, 2016; Kiragu et al., 2013). Therefore, developing principals professionally was important: a study done in Gauteng- South Africa by Botha, 2006 and another done in Kuala Lumpur by Shoma Vally & Daud (2015), proved that principals, who were trained on their new roles defined by the principles of SBM and provided with the needed professional development, were more eligible to take school decisions (Botha, 2006). This was in consistency with the responses of the Lebanese principals and GR: knowledge as a result of professional development was viewed to foster principals' participatory leadership role. Based upon the results of this study, developing school leaders professionally to exercise their participatory leadership role comprised what Harris (2004) referred to as knowledge of

“a high degree of flexibility and diversity to meet the needs of different types of students in different types of schools” (p. 702).

Last but not least, ensuring an appropriate and unique school culture for adopting a designed contextual-based model of SBM formed the third principle. In correspondence with the findings of the studies conducted by Scheerens (2000), Hammad (2010), Schein (2010) & Bandur (2011), Kiragu et al. (2013), Lebanese participants suggested that the modification occurring on the role and functions of the superiors and subordinates under SBM assumed to have a direct impact upon the school’s culture: SBM requires an open, trusting and collegial environment for principals to actively & effectively participate in the process of administrative decision making (SABER, 2016). Indeed, the concern was about shifting school culture from dependency and low autonomy to self-management and participatory environment, where the focus of all school staff and community would be deviated towards creating a productive and democratic school culture for improving the quality of education (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Bandur, 2011). Caldwell and Spinks (1993) defined it as “a culture that accepts the need to measure and monitor achievement, to set targets and priorities, and prepare and implement plans to address these” (p. 28) in order to offer a collaborative and participative school environment for all stakeholders whose visions would be brought to realization (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Bandur, 2011; Botha, 2006). Designing such an organizational culture based on recognizing the interdependence of quality, equity, efficiency, and effectiveness was attributed to a culture of commitment to excellence (Caldwell & Spinks, 1993). For example, in a study done in Gauteng province in South Africa, the principals and educators, who supported the inclusion of SBM in their system, agreed on the claim that in an atmosphere of trust, and openness, principals are

encouraged and supported to positively enlarge their participation in the decision-making process and collaborate to maximize the efficiency of their decisions (Botha, 2006). Accordingly, superiors are more likely to develop a democratic leadership in a supporting environment and principals and other school members will build a stronger sense of belonging and commitment to their schools and are more likely to positively accept and support any change in school culture (Bandur, 2011; Yau & Cheng, 2011).

In table 11 below, an ‘in literature grounded’ interpretation was provided: the researcher compared this study with international literature to see whether it confirmed, contradicted or added new concepts to administrative autonomy and shared decision making.

Table 11

A Brief Comparison between This study and International Research

Confirms	Contradicts	Adds
In centralized system, the hierarchy is: Top down. It creates delay in responses	Dependency of decisions are not on laws and policies, but rather on political affiliations	Dominance of political power and authority over educational policies: ineffectiveness of decisions and inequality.
Uncleared vision, mission and goals for principals	Principals’ showed willingness to participate (unlike in Egypt, a centralized system).	Incompatibility between what is desired and what is allowed
The need for the development of policies specifying explicitly the involved members, the process, vision, mission, the expectations/outcomes/goals, and the time framework as a vital step for a successful implementation of SBM	Professional development was not viewed to be based on schools’ needs and principals’ preferences	Rigid policies limiting the role and work of principals
Development of a shared vision promotes a unique and unified culture and policy agreed upon all members, which indeed increases the interest, ownership and commitment of principals	Policies are not publicly shared and don’t cover all school aspects due to its outdatedness	Adoption of a Mechanism of actions as an enhancing factor for SBM implementation
Dilapidated & Mistrustful relationship: attributed to range of trust and participation	Interest of education serves political parties rather students	What is brought in the internal policies are not always practiced and implemented

Unsupportive and demotivating role of superiors	Annual report is worthless (Vs. annual report is used to improve school as reported in the literature)	GR showed their willingness to delegate authority to a certain extent and under specific conditions
Superiors' evaluation as a mean of administrative control & restriction (in centralized system) Vs. Superiors' evaluation as a mean of administrative supervision (in decentralized system)		Dilapidated relationship is also attributed to range of emotional and professional support
In centralized system, conflict of opinions resulted from widening the circle of decision might lead to chaos		A study in a non-Western, specifically in Lebanon
Governmental support is highly needed for SBM implementation		
Major changes in roles and responsibilities of external as well as internal bodies are needed for SBM implementation		
There is a need for mutual support and trust between school district and school unit		
There is a need for delegating administrative decisions		
Enhancing Factors: Principals' knowledge (in terms of professional development & seniority) & Leadership style		
Impeding Factors: People's unwillingness, unfamiliarity, and fear of involvement Culture of mistrust		
SBM requires time to be implemented		

Conclusion

In summary, SBM, a type of school management reforms, is challenging to the conventional educational governance structure aiming at increasing autonomy and sharing decision making. Two interacting constituents determined the possibility of adopting change at the Lebanese public schools: school policies and the school individuals. Previously to practices and conditions of school reform, it was important to present the structural context in which change might have to occur as well as the

defined roles and functions of people who are intending to integrate that change. Characterized by a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology, reality was socially constructed and knowledge that framed this research was acquired and produced via the perceptions and actions of social actors: principals and government representatives' perceptions of SBM prospects, accrued benefits and possible challenges schools would experience if SBM was introduced in the Lebanese public schools. Indeed, the findings of this study make a significant contribution to the literature by adding the perceptions of superiors, who are key actors for change. Although the challenges pertaining to administrative principal work is many and complex, the findings of this study proved the readiness and willingness of participants to initiate ways to improve the management of their schools. Principals are important in that they are able to see the school as a whole, and to adopt a leadership style conveying either for the success of school-level reforms. In consistency with several research done in centralized and decentralized schools, the findings of this study had established that principals' actions and characteristics can strongly influence their superiors and subordinates, and can support in shaping the overall culture of the school, including school policies and decisions. Knowledge, in terms of seniority and professional development, as well as the leadership style of principals were mostly viewed to affect any change that might occur at school level.

The researcher selected schools based on two variables: type (basic and secondary) and size (small, medium and large). The type of schools did record several differences in the responses among principals. However, the size of the school record major difference among the answers of the principals.

Implications for Practice

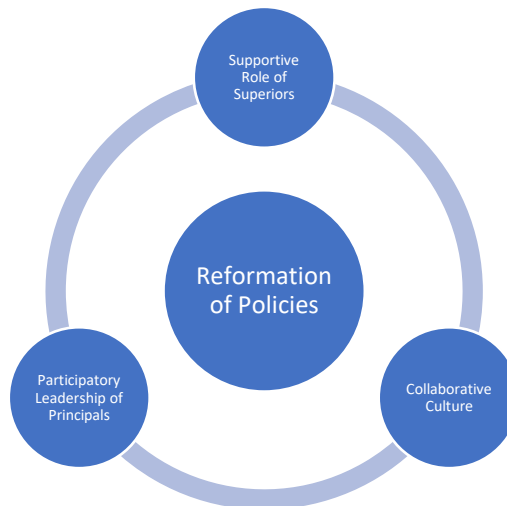
In this study, the researcher explored the policies shaping school functions as well as the perceptions of individuals working at two different levels (school and ministry levels) in order to better understand the extent to which decentralization of administrative decisions, guided by the principles of SBM, could be implemented at the principalship level.

The results of this study showed that one of the major issues in the Lebanese Educational System was correlated with the formulation of the Lebanese policies. It is hoped that the participants' responses will be considered by policy and decision makers in the development of administrative policies. Therefore, as a starting point, the researcher suggested the reformation of the policies in a way that it embraces the assets of SBM: it should occur at different levels of authority and should clearly pronounce school visions and policy, which are regularly subject for change. Apart from any political interference and aware of the main effect of SBM, policy and decision makers are to reconsider the purpose of the educational policies. A guide for MEHE wanting to move to SBM is to structure the overall educational system and provide a governmental framework within which schools manage their administrative, pedagogical and financial policies (Abu-Duhou, 1999). In turn, the integration of such a framework requires 'clear-cut' laws and policies limiting any external power over educational decisions and supporting the creation of new leadership styles, new roles & professional development to clarify these new powers and roles. Based on the literature review, analysis and discussion of the study findings, the researcher synthesized a culturally grounded model of school-based management that could be adopted by the MEHE and implemented in the Lebanese public schools as a start. This model requires: (a) an accountability system

encompassing a local and systematic accountability agreement, specified in chapter II; and (b) the adoption of a planning and development system that specifies explicitly the involved members, the process, the expectations/outcomes/goals, and the time framework (Botha, 2006; World Bank, 2007). Illustrated below in Figure 4, the readjustment of policies discusses three aspects: supportive role of superiors, participatory role of principals and a collaborative culture.

Figure 5

The Three Aspects for Policy Reformation



Supportive Role of Superiors

In the Lebanese centralized system, superiors are viewed to be key factors for introducing any change. Their role is to be defined in a way that creates the required support to embrace educational reform. Therefore, superiors are to be assigned to their positions based on specific measures: competency and transformational leadership style in order to be bring improving results for the schools and students. With their supportive role, superiors articulate and share the goals and objectives of educational with school members, who in turn, will work on implementing them.

Participatory Role of Principals

Principals have to change their traditional roles to fit the decentralized nature of school-based management. With a shift in their role from employees to partners in school decisions, principals developed a greater sense of belonging to the school promoting job satisfaction and school effectiveness. Policies defining the role of principals are to be reshaped, in a way that allows principals to take major actions and decisions regarding their schools. Although we are talking about public school principals who will remain accountable for their local and nation entities, they should be given autonomy over administrative school decisions. For this to occur, policies are to support the new participatory roles of principals, whom should be eligible to take part in decision making process and share those decisions with their school members. When current policies are focusing on the daily tasks of principals, updated ones should be focusing on more educational and instructional tasks.

Collaborative Culture

School culture defines school individuals and their functions. Thus, any critical change in school requires an alteration in its culture. SBM in Lebanese public schools is best integrated under a culture of collaboration and trust. Collaboration among individuals generates trust: a key factor for the success of SBM. Therefore, policies have to ensure that the line of communication between schools and the MEHE are to be kept open. To exert their new roles and functions under an altered culture, superiors as well as principals are to attend regularly professional development, entailing qualifications to carry out the extensive responsibilities on one hand, and developing group process skills, such as problem solving and conflict resolution skills.

Recommendations for Future Research

One of the recommendations for further research would be the study of the perceptions of, in regard to increasing principals' autonomy in administrative decisions in Lebanese Public Schools: (a) public school principals in other areas of Greater Beirut; (b) teachers, other school staff, parents and students; and (c) other decision makers working at the top level of the hierarchy. Another point of interest would be the focus on developing an action plan for SBM implementation at the principalship level of administrative decisions.

It would be great if Lebanese schools adopts SBM model, principals have greater autonomy over managerial, financial and pedagogical decisions, and the educational government offers the needed support for a participatory and collaborative culture.

However, the Lebanese educational status quo is different from this idealistic approach towards decentralization. Based on the research findings of this study, one of the main issues, brought up during the interviews with the government representatives, was their mistrust in principals decision making. Therefore, the researcher suggests a more realistic point of change towards SBM implementation: developing principals professionally to cope with their participatory role in decision making as a starting point. However, taking into consideration the financial crisis Lebanon is going through, one way of offering professional development might be 'collegial coaching'. This type of professional development caters for peer coaching/mentoring, through which principals can present, discuss, find a solution for any administrative issue they are facing. Principals' experience, knowledge, previous attendance of professional development, etc... might add value to the discussion.

Study Limitations

The researcher revealed multiple challenges she faced while conducting this research study. Firstly, the process of taking approvals to conduct the study was time consuming: it took around 4 months for the MEHE to approve the conduction of the study. Though all the papers were submitted, they were lost between the different levels of the hierarchy. The researcher had to go to the MEHE regularly to check the procedure of the approval. She was lucky that she lives nearby the Ministry. Post to taking approvals, the researcher sent emails for the individual participants inviting them to participate in the study and to set a date for the interview. The majority of the principals did not respond to the emails until the researcher called them many times and asked them to reply.

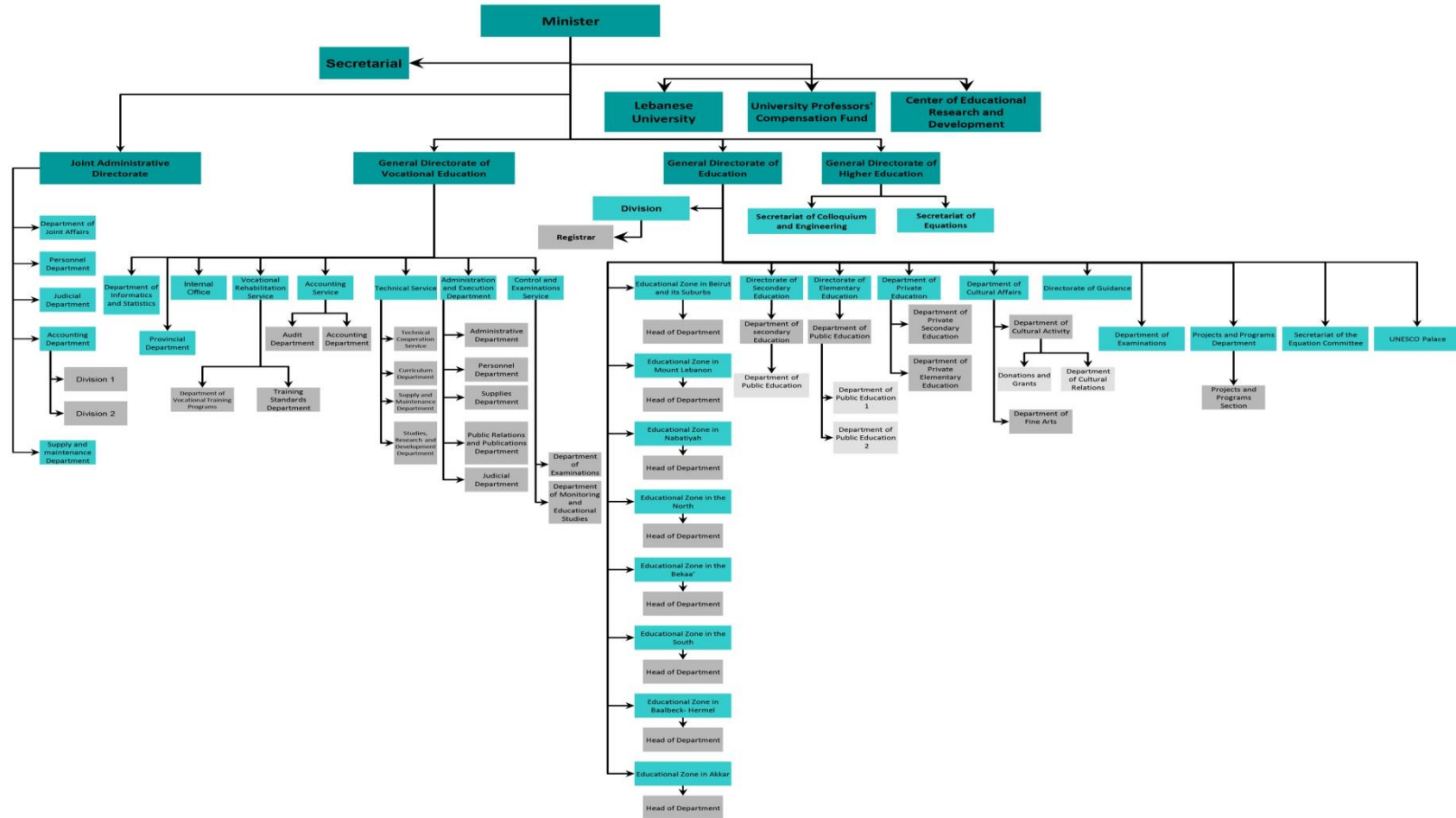
Secondly, and due to the Lebanese Revolution of November and COVID-19, the researcher had to suspend her data collection process for a while because the MEHE and the public schools were closed. After being able to contact the principals and GR, she conducted online interviews. It was challenging for her to break the ice with the interviewees, to understand their body language and to transcribe their responses, especially that none of the participants accepted to audio-record the interview.

Thirdly, Lebanon was facing an exceptional economic and financial crisis. Continuous cut-offs of electricity and internet was putting the researcher in a critical situation, especially that she had a deadline for submitting her work. Other than the infrastructural issues, the blast of August 5, 2020 in the Beirut Port put the researcher under emotional challenges. Although it made her lost hope and stop working on her study for a while, she was able to stand up stronger and work harder to bring a change to continue and enhance her country by any mean.

Lastly, this study had other limitation in regard to the generalization of the data. Although it has rich information allowing public school decision makers to benefit from the aggregated data, this study was limited to those schools located in Greater Beirut and to only two government representatives. The responses of other decision makers and of principals in schools located at the suburbs might differ.

APPENDIX A

Hierarchical Structure of the MEHE as presented in CERD (2018)



APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Ministry Representatives

Hello (Interviewee's name). My name is Razan. I am currently pursuing my thesis for my Masters at the American University of Beirut. The title of my thesis is "School-based management principles related to administrative decision –making in the Lebanese Public Schools". The study intends to explore to what extent a decentralized decision-making system, guided by the principles of school-based management (SBM), can be applied in the Lebanese Public Schools from the perspectives of ministry representatives as well as principals of basic and secondary Lebanese public schools. The interview will be recorded.

Note: To remain confidentiality:

- *All information discussed is kept confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone.*
- *Kindly, refrain from stating any sensitive information or any information that may identify specific incidents/individuals.*

1. From your experience, what are the major strengths of the school system in terms of its centralization? What are its major weaknesses?
2. Do you receive any complaint from principals about the bureaucratic school system? How do you deal with these complaints?
3. How do you define your role as a decision maker?
4. *In many Western countries, improving school quality was proved to be related to the form of decentralization adopted in the system. It depends on the level of autonomy and decision-making power delegated to people at the school levels, mainly principals and teachers (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Gamage & Zajda, 2005). For example, the schools in Canada, Malaysia, UK and Australia urged for the need to increase the scope of participation to include principals in administrative school decisions, such as administrative management (hiring/firing, professional training and development for teaching staff, supervising and evaluating school personnel, etc.) and school maintenance (school infrastructure, and buying materials for schools) (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; & SEPEB, 2012).*
 - a. Are you with or against delegating power to school principals over administrative decisions? Why?
 - b. What are the factors that might foster principal's participation? And those that might hinder it?
Prompt: factors related to leadership style adopted, to capacity building, to culture, etc.

Interview Protocol for Principals

Hello (Interviewee's name). My name is Razan. I am currently pursuing my thesis for my Masters at the American University of Beirut. The title of my thesis is "School-based management principles related to administrative decision –making in the Lebanese Public Schools". The study intends to explore to what extent a decentralized decision-making system, guided by the principles of school-based management (SBM), can be applied in the Lebanese Public Schools from the perspectives of ministry representatives as well as principals of basic and secondary Lebanese public schools. The interview will be recorded. For confidentiality, everything you share will remain anonymous.

1. On a scale 1 to 10, where do place your level of autonomy as the principal of the school?
2. As a school principal, what sort of decisions are you able to make? Kindly, provide us with examples.
3. What sort of decisions that you are not able to make? What would change if you had a say in these decisions?
4. What are the main challenges that you face from the current school system?
Prompt: bureaucratic system.
5. What can be done to overcome these challenges?
6. *For the institution's independence in managing its own administrative affairs, administrative autonomy was adopted to stimulate initiatives and develop the institution and its individuals (Ikenberry, 1970). For example, the schools in Canada, Malaysia, UK and Australia urged for the need to increase the scope of participation to include principals in administrative school decisions, such as administrative management (hiring/firing, professional training and development for teaching staff, supervising and evaluating school personnel, etc.) and school maintenance (school infrastructure, and buying materials for schools) (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Shoma Vally & Daud, 2015; & SEPEB, 2012).*
 - a. Are you with or against increasing administrative autonomy that requires your participation, as principals, in administrative decisions? Why?
 - b. How would this participation impact your role?
 - c. What are the factors that might foster your participation in administrative decision making? And those that might hinder it?
Prompt: factors related to leadership style adopted, to capacity building, to culture, etc.
7. Did you participate in any professional development related to capacity building for shared decision making? If yes, please share your experience. If not, would it be important to attend this kind of professional development as a principal? Why?

APPENDIX C

Coding and Generating Inductive Themes

Themes	Description of themes	Categories	Codes	Description of codes	Interview Excerpts
Ineffectiveness of Politicized and Centralized Nature of Lebanese Educational System	The causes and effects of political power over the laws and policies as well as of the centralized nature over administrative work.	Exertion of political Power over Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ineffectiveness of school decisions 2. Inequality 	<p>Most of the decisions made by the Minister and the decision makers working at the MEHE were not data driven or evidence-based. They are also related to the dependency of the Lebanese educational decisions on the Ministry and his subordinate team, who are assigned by a political party. Inequality in hiring the right person to the right position and in distributing school equipment.</p>	<p>PS1: “Due to COVID-19, MEHE decided to go for blended learning...schools are not qualified for offering safe return for students”.</p> <p>PB2: “MEHE took a decision about raising all KG students to next level regardless of their academic failing average... Failing students will not be able to withstand the requirements of the higher levels because the curriculum is hard”.</p> <p>PB2: “our superiors force us to enroll new students due to political favoritism, regardless whether the added number of students might affect the whole class or not”</p> <p>While PB3 elucidated inequality in terms of hiring principals: “Some principals are assigned to principalship position as per political intervention rather than specific qualifications specified by the MEHE”.GRS stated that: “There is inequality in distributing equipment among schools... decisions were taken according to how much your political party has power to influence decisions taken at the MEHE”.</p>

		<p>Incongruence between 'Desired' and 'Allowed' Decisions.</p>	<p>Formulation and outdatedness of the policies</p>	<p>Educational policies were rigid and too specific in nature, leaving small room for principals to take desired decisions towards wanted outcomes and disrupting their work.</p>	<p>PS2 stated: "principals focus on implementing what is required from them, without having enough time to exercise our educational principalship role as desired", when GRB added: "principals' role should be educational. However, due to the decrees formulation, principals focus deviate from this main role of principalship". PB4: "The delay for superiors to respond is due to the hierarchical structure of public schools Example: delay in paying the 'contracted teachers' salaries due to the delay of the superiors' approval..." PS1: "Procedure of having approvals takes so long, and this is a major problem that I am facing especially that nowadays the dollar does not have a fixed rate".</p>
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		<p>Dilapidated Relationships between Superiors and Subordinates</p>	<p>Principals' participation was correlated with three factors: the personality and leadership of their superior, the level of autonomy of their superior and principals' willingness to participate.</p>	<p>Lack of trust: GR explained their mistrust as a result of assigning principals based on political favoritism rather than qualifications & principals' level of subjectivism and bias in taking decision. Contradiction in perspectives between GR and principals regarding the range of professional and emotional support, as well as the reasons for limiting principals' invitation for participation.</p>	<p>PB4: "I don't know why I always feel this tension and lack of trust from our superiors. If they don't have trust in us, why do they hire us?" PS1: "To act as a decision maker in my school, I, as a principal, needs stability... Stability of the decisions made by the superiors as well as stability of the school staff". GRS: "principals are assigned based on political favoritism, they don't feel accountable for the failure of their schools". GRB: "How can we, as direct superiors, be able to decrease our supervision without having the trust that principals can take best decisions without being subjective?" GRB: "I regularly ask my principals and school staff about the professional development they wish to attend in order to help them in their administrative work" VS. PB4: "when I was assigned as a principal, I learned from my personal effort and the support of her principals-colleagues and other school staff rather than from scientific and professional practices offered by the MEHE". PB4: "The easier GRB is, the higher our participation will be". GRB: "I really don't know why they lose their motivation when it comes to participate in decisions collaboratively taken by them and their superiors..." GRS: "I regularly ask about their perspectives in many decisions in order to create a common ideology and vision and about their complaints to work cooperatively</p>
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					<p>on solving them... I keep on providing them with moral motivation to participate and take initiatives because I am not in a position to offer any financial motivation".</p> <p>GRB: "Principals have a high level of autonomy but they don't understand how and when they are able to take decisions. Autonomy is there, what is missing is their willingness to take initiatives" VS. PS2: "There is no call for principals' consultation. The decisions taken by the superiors are being forced on the principal for implementation"</p>
<p>Increased Autonomy & Shared Decision Making of Principals: An Antidote to Centralization</p>	<p>The second inductive theme presented the perceptions of participants towards increasing principals' autonomy and shared decision making as a mean to overcome the ineffective effects of politicized and centralized public schools system</p>	<p>Levering principals' participation level in decision making</p>	<p>A relation between principals participation and characteristics in terms of: Knowledge (seniority, experience & professional development), age, and leadership style & personality</p>	<p>Principals' Knowledge. Having enough knowledge allow principals to take decisions based on logical, evidence-based reasoning. Developing professionalism through continuous training and follow-ups increased principals' knowledge.</p> <p>Principals' Age. Two opposing principals' perspectives were detected regarding the correlation between principals' age and participation in decision making.</p>	<p>PB6: "I am in my position for less than a year... I am not eligible for taking decisions... I still don't know the school unique identity and needs". PS3: "How can't I make decisions that serve the school when I need at least 2 years to understand how it is functioning?"</p> <p>GRS: "I am with offering public school principals continuous training... it is not a one-time thing... professional development as one form of capacity building that will allow principals to take decisions based on their rich knowledge they will receive".</p> <p>PB4: young principals can effectively participation in decision making which necessitated them to learn new things –like technology implementation and others, VS. PB3: "I am 63 and I keep on learning new stuff to improve my school. I know everything about technology, when I have young teachers who don't know how to use the computer".</p>

				Leadership style & personality. Transformational leader Vs. Follower leader	PB2: "With their energetic and committed personality, transformational leaders are viewed to inspire others to change their perceptions and expectations" Vs. "I can do nothing... I am a government employee... I have to subdue and implement the decisions taken by the superiors".
		Impact of Increased Autonomy on Principalship and School Culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Principals' participatory Role: The participatory role of public school principals is best practiced in an environment of cooperation, appreciation and motivation 2. A culture of collaboration and trustworthiness: The asset of a participatory culture is trustworthiness. The increase in principals' participation in decision making rises a trustful relationship between the principal and his/her school staff and parents 	<p>Suitable school decisions are best made with the participation and collaboration of principals, who know best their schools' needs and circumstances.</p> <p>This participatory role of principals requires a high level of autonomy, allowing principals to take administrative decisions within a wide range of freedom; a need for a collaborative and safe environment, allowing them to feel safe to get mistaken; and a development of a trustful relationship with the superiors as well as subordinates.</p>	<p>PB6: "When we work in a supportive and cooperative culture, we are motivated to increase our participation in effective activities that will be reflected on the students' achievements. In such an atmosphere, the principal does feel comfortable to take initiatives even when getting mistaken... People working under such a culture understand that there is room for successful as well as failing decisions..."</p> <p>PS1: "My participation in taking decisions will redefine my principalship role... It will allow me to solve these complaints and to come up with the best decisions in cooperation with school members..."</p> <p>PB1: "The increase of cooperation with other schools and with the superiors will bring positive change in school performance and students achievements..."</p> <p>PB4: "increasing my participation in taking decisions will allow me to share more with them because I believe they are the most reliable source for making the best decisions..."</p> <p>PS1: "The increase of our participatory role in decision making allows us to be more knowledgeable about decisions taken at the superior level and to share our perspectives</p>

					<p>with the superiors as well as with the subordinates.</p> <p>PB1: “Increasing principal autonomy requires a shift in the culture of one man show to a group of people acting in one show... I will raise a culture of appreciation and self-proving... principal as well as other school members will work actively to prove their best, instead of being passive implementers... I am in full support for inducing the participatory culture in my school”.</p> <p>PB2: “Although I already share with my staff the decisions I want to make, but increasing my participatory role in taking decisions will indeed increase my willingness to cooperate and take initiatives... This will make them feel more appreciated and listened to...”</p> <p>PB5: “The higher is my level of autonomy and decision making, the more teachers, school staff, parents and students believe and trust in me as their leader, their support and their listener...”</p> <p>PB4: “By increasing my autonomy, the trust of my school staff in me grows...”</p> <p>PB6: “this trust is translated into working under a transparent and accountable system, allowing principals to work within a wider range of autonomy, yet under the supervision of the superiors whom he/she is held accountable for”.</p>
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APPENDIX D

MEHE and IRB's Approval

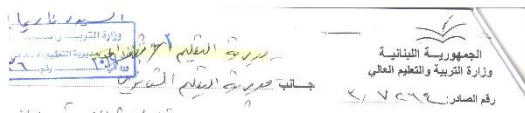


الجمهورية اللبنانية
وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي
لمنطقة التربوية لبيروت وضواحيها

عدد: ٢٨٦ / ٢٠١٩
تاريخ: ٨ / ١٠ / ٢٠١٩

السيد: السيد مدير العام للتربية رقم ٤٠٧٤٦٤
تاريخ: ١٩ / ١٠ / ٢٠١٩ على ما تضمنه طلبكم، لإبراز وتسليم هذه الموافقة الى من يلزم، للعمل بموجبها على ان يتم ذلك بعد التنسيق مع ادارة المدارس الرسمية المعنية، والعمل بموجب الشروط الواردة فيها %

رئيس المنطقة التربوية لبيروت وضواحيها
محمد الحمصي



الجمهورية اللبنانية
وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي
رقم الملف: ٤٠٧٤٦٤
بيروت في: / /

الموضوع: تعيين لجنة الأطباء للتربية


الرجوع:

بعد الاطلاع على الملف المقدم على إثر طلبكم من اجل تعيين لجنة الأطباء في المنطقة التربوية لبيروت وضواحيها والاطلاع على ما تضمنه طلبكم، لإبراز وتسليم هذه الموافقة الى من يلزم، للعمل بموجبها على ان يتم ذلك بعد التنسيق مع ادارة المدارس الرسمية المعنية، والعمل بموجب الشروط الواردة فيها %

تسليم الطلب وما يخصه من الوثائق الى السيد مدير العام للتربية لبيروت وضواحيها

السيد: السيد مدير العام للتربية رقم ٤٠٧٤٦٤
تاريخ: ١٩ / ١٠ / ٢٠١٩ على ما تضمنه طلبكم، لإبراز وتسليم هذه الموافقة الى من يلزم، للعمل بموجبها على ان يتم ذلك بعد التنسيق مع ادارة المدارس الرسمية المعنية، والعمل بموجب الشروط الواردة فيها %

رئيس المنطقة التربوية لبيروت وضواحيها
محمد الحمصي



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

March 11, 2021
Lina Khalil, PhD
American University of Beirut
01-350600 ext. 3977
lk80@aub.edu.lb

Dear Dr. Khalil,

On March 11, 2021, the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial, Exempt/Limited
Project Title:	Increasing Principals' Autonomy in Administrative Decisions in Lebanese Public Schools.
Investigator:	Lina Khalil
IRB ID:	SBS-2021-0072
Funding Agency:	None
Documents reviewed:	Received March 9, 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRB Application • Proposal (Abstract) • Email Invitation (English and Arabic versions) • Consent Documents (English and Arabic versions) • Interview Protocol (English and Arabic versions)


The IRB approved the protocol from March 11, 2021 to March 10, 2022 inclusive. Before January 2, 2022 or within 30 days of study close, whichever is earlier, you are to submit a completed "FORM: Continuing Review Progress Report" and required attachments to request continuing approval or study closure. If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of March 3, 2022 approval of this research expires on that date.

Please find attached the stamped approved documents:

- Proposal (received March 11, 2021),
- Email Invitation (English and Arabic, received March 11, 2021),
- Consent Documents (English and Arabic, received March 11, 2021),
- Interview Protocol (English and Arabic, received March 11, 2021).

Only these IRB approved documents and consent forms can be used for this research study.

Thank you.



The American University of Beirut and its Institutional Review Board, under the Institution's Federal Wide Assurance with OHRP, comply with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Code of Federal Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (The Common Rule) 45CFR46, subparts A, B, C, and D, with 21CFR56, and operate in a manner consistent with the Belmont report, FDA guidance, Good Clinical Practices under the ICH guidelines, and applicable national/local regulations.

Sincerely,

Lina El-Onsi Daouk, MSc, CIM
SBS IRB administrator

Cc: Michael Clinton, PhD
Co-Chairperson IRB Social & Behavioral Sciences

Fuad Ziyadeh, MD, FACP, FRCP
Professor of Medicine and Biochemistry
Chairperson of the IRB

Ali K. Abu-Alfa, MD, FASN, FAHA
Professor of Medicine
Director, Human Research Protection Program
Director for Research Affairs (AUBMC)

APPENDIX E

Table 8

Principals Tasks as written in the Internal Policy and as Specified by Principals

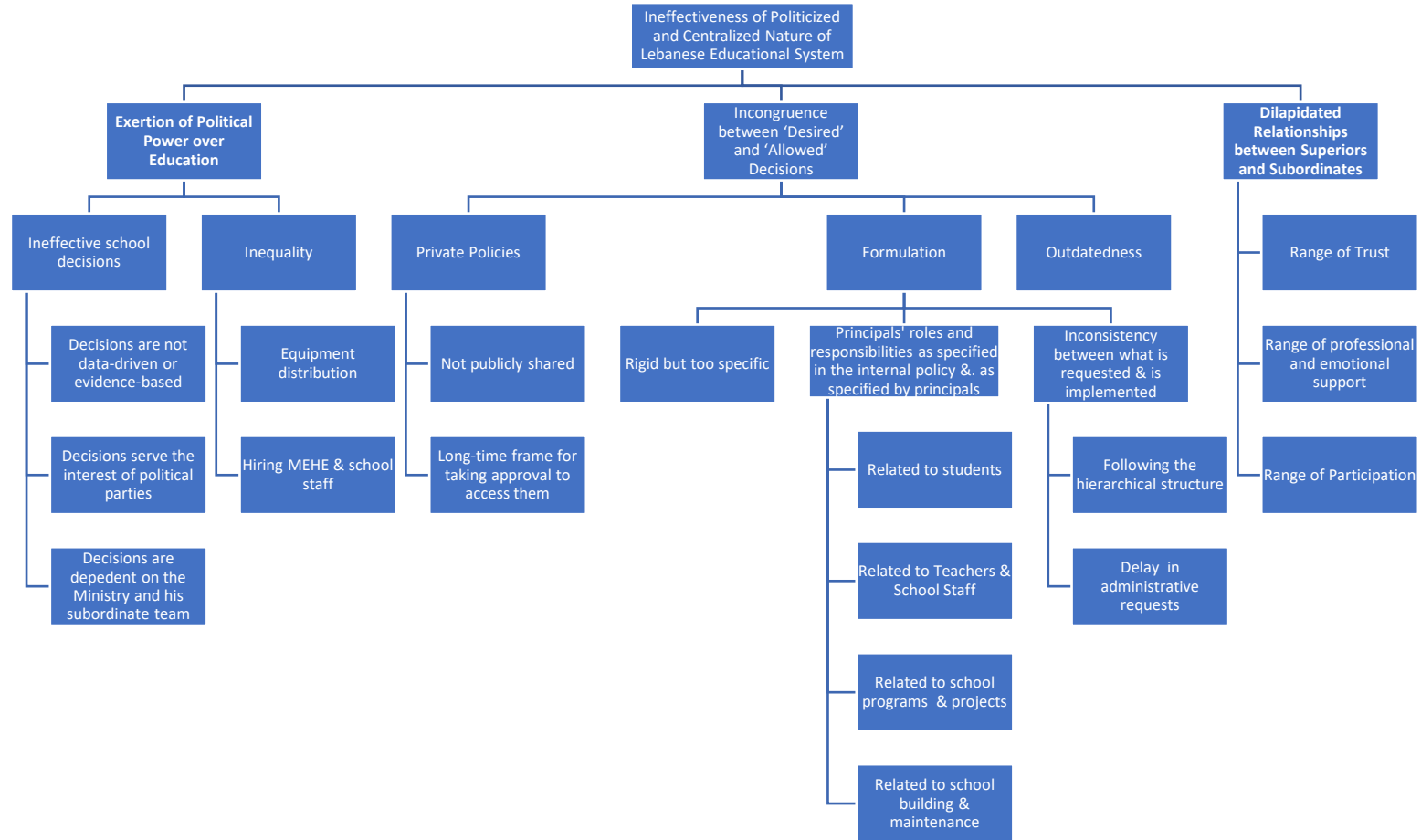
Principals tasks		As specified in the Internal Organization Policies		As specified by Principals	
		Of Basic Schools	Of Secondary Schools	Can	Can't
Financial Decisions	Disbursing a certain amount of money determined by the MEHE without prior approval	Yes, Article 2	Yes, Article 49	PS1, PB5, PB1, PB2, PB6	
	Collecting and paying financial funds	Yes, Article 8			
	Chairing financial committee	Yes, Article 13			
	Collecting or participating in collecting funds/grants/donations without MEHE approval	No, Article 2			PB4 & PS2
	Reporting of the expenses on yearly basis	Yes, Article 14	Yes, Article 17	PB5	
	Taking prior approvals for financial needs exceeding yearly budget			PS1, PB5, PB1, PB2, PB6	
Decisions related to students	Accepting students according to specific conditions	Yes, Articles 3, 4, 5 & 6		PS2	
	Transferring students from schools after taking superiors approval	Yes, Article 3	Yes, under certain conditions- Article 9	PB5 & PS2	PB3, PB1, PB2, PB4, PB6, & PS3
	Registering new & old students	Yes, Article 8			
	Organizing students examination entrance	Yes, Articles 9 & 10			
	Nominating students for official exams	Yes, Article 70			
	Saving documents of students	Yes, Articles 3 & 9			
	Monitoring health of students	Yes, Articles 12 & 98	Yes, Article 17		
	Imposing penalties; such as, dismissing students or forbidding them from	Yes, Article 68 & Article 70		PS3	PS2

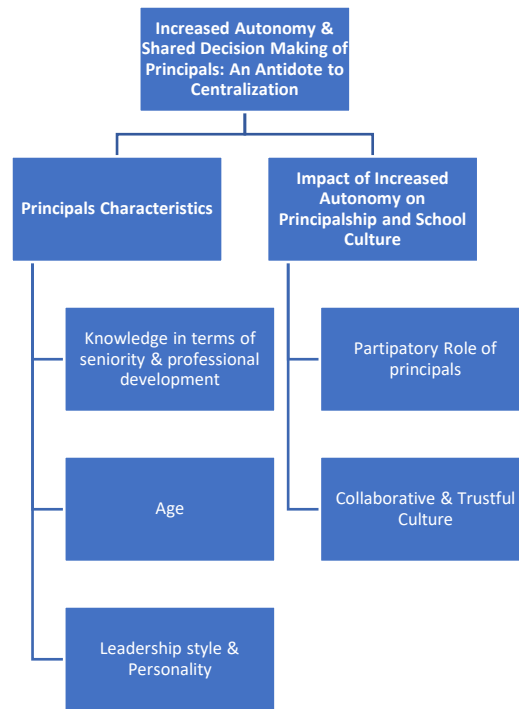
	official exams, or giving them a zero				
	Prepares students' reports about achievement, attendance and performance		Yes, Article 17	PB6	
	Giving certificates for students				PS2
Decisions related to teachers and other school staff	Chairing committees	Yes, Article 21	Yes, Article 17		
	Transferring employees file	Yes, Article 12			
	Assigning more staff	Yes, depending on specific measures (such as number of students enrollment)- Article 27			
	Granting absences within a period of time without taking superiors approvals	Article 59	Yes, Article 17	PB6, PS2, PS3	PS3
	Organizing and monitoring teachers school work	Article 18	Yes, Article 17	PB5, PB6	
	Moving teachers within school	Yes, after taking the approval of the superiors- Article 27		PB5, PB1, PB2, PB4, & PS2	
	Hiring teachers & school staff	No, but must inform superiors about any shortage- Article 23			PB5, PB3 & PS2
	Firing teachers & school staff				PB5, PB3 & PS2
	Attending teaching lessons	Article 18	Yes, Article 17		
	Presenting teachers' reports	Article 18	Yes, Article 17	PB6	
	Treating teachers in spirit of respect and justice	Article 17			
	Adding or reducing teachers sessions				PB5, PB1, PB2 & PS2
Decisions related to school programs	Suggesting to the superiors the use of external educational resources		Yes, Article 17		PB2

and projects	Participating in activities inside and outside the school with prior approval from the MEHE	Article 23		PB4 & PS3	
	Organizing educational programs through distribution of the subjects and activities	Article 43, 45		PB3, PB5, PB1, PB2, PB6	
	Implementing technology				PB3, PB2
	Presenting projects			PS1	PB4
	Taking students outings				PS3
Decisions related to maintenance and equipment	Guarding school maintenance without prior permission from superiors	Yes, Article 84			
	Preserving furniture	Article 17			
	Ordering supplies and materials			PB3, PB1, PB6 & PS2	
	Ensuring cleanliness	Article 17			

APPENDIX F

Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes





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