Professional Development Needs for School Leaders: A Case of Lesotho Secondary School Principals

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ABSTRACT

School principals are expected to become exceptional leaders due to the rapid upsurge of transformations in the education system. Although they are regarded as agents of change, principals are not adequately equipped to handle the management roles. This qualitative study explored Lesotho secondary school principals' perceptions of their professional development and the need to enhance leadership. This study used the constructivism paradigm as a lens and was underpinned by complexity leadership theory. A multiple case study was adopted, and data was generated from five secondary school principals in five schools using semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse data. The findings revealed that principals need capacitation in the use of the latest technologies as well as the skills to manage school finances. The findings further revealed that principals need empowerment with conflict management and basic school leadership skills. This paper recommends structured capacity-building programs from the Ministry of Education and Training on different aspects of leadership and management of schools. This paper recommends that the Ministry of Education and Training continuously review school principals' professional development needs to organise structured, regular and appropriate professional development programs to assist them in their leadership roles.

KEYWORDS

Professional development; school principals; complexity leadership theory; constructivism; school effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the last decade, with various innovations and developments, there has been a pressing need for all stakeholders' professional development in education (Farrell, 2016; Muratbekovna et al., 2024; Taylor, 2022; Zorba, 2022). Simply put, professional development in the educational domain refers to an ongoing and non-linear process embedded in all stakeholders' professional lives and in which they individually and with others review, renew, and extend their attitudes, beliefs, and competencies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Day, 1997). As Mestry (2017) underlines, 21st-century principals perform many roles, making their duties more complicated and challenging. This scholar alludes to a principal's typical day being filled with various activities they perform in their management activities, such as drawing schedules, producing reports, dealing with relationships with parents and the community, and handling various unpredicted student and teacher emergencies and conflicts. Professional development of school principals plays a significant role in assisting them to enhance school leadership. Greer et al. (2020) define professional development needs as the gaps between the employees' skills and those they need to improve to perform their duties effectively and satisfactorily continuously. Mariyanah et al. (2021) state that accomplishing educational goals relies on the principal's leadership. In their study on professional development, Hayat et al. (2015) found that the professional development needs of high school principals include several key types, namely, educational, organisational, leadership, communal participation, and technology; and career advancement strategies, including participation in seminars, workshops, national and regional conferences, college courses, counselling, principal brainstorming sessions, coaching, paying visits to other schools, and placements.

In Lesotho, secondary school principals lead the schools in collaboration with the deputy principals and the Departmental Heads (DHs) (Education Act, 2010). For effective performance in their leadership role, principals need capacitation and sufficient training in leadership (Education Act, 2010). The principals must acquire the following key competencies to effectively perform their roles: leadership, organisational skills, human resource skills, vision, strategic planning, skills to manage finances, and complex information systems and information skills (Education Act, 2010). However, as expressed by Heystek and Madalińska-Michalak (2023), the education system still embraces the conventional view that appointment in the position of the school principalship requires knowledgeable and experienced teachers as well-suited candidates without equipping them with the relevant managerial skills, and Lesotho is not an exception (Mphutlane, 2018).

In Germany, most states have implemented preliminary training for school principals, which is organised before their appointment into the position of principalship and shortly after their appointment (Tulowitzki et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the recent implementation has been carried out in several programmes, and, ultimately, it would extend to many principals without any preparatory training for the principalship position (Klein & Schwanenberg, 2022). Thus, more research is necessary in principals' professional development in Germany. Providing

professional programs for principals is like a series of private and public programs not aimed at addressing their requirements (Klein & Schwanenberg, 2022). The aim of this paper was to investigate the professional development needs of school principals needed to enhance their leadership. Against this background, this paper provides the following statement of the research problem.

Statement of the problem

School principals play the most significant role in school effectiveness and achievement. Gupta and Gupta (2020) assert that school principals are responsible for equipping learners with relevant knowledge and skills. As the education field advances, there is a change in the accountabilities of school principals from duties of management to leading transformation and implementing change (Acton, 2021). However, school principals are not equipped with managerial skills, yet they expect to lead schools effectively in the face of numerous challenges and externally and internally imposed pressures (Acton, 2021). To enhance school leadership, principals must be capacitated with the skills and knowledge to handle school leadership. In Lesotho, the principal is regarded as the head teacher whose role is to ensure the overall leadership of the school (Mabeleng, 2023). Some of the regulations that refer to teachers are inclusive of the principal. However, it is unclear how principals' professional development programs should be structured to meet their needs.

Based on the problem statement described above, this paper answered the following question: What are Lesotho secondary school principals' perceptions of their professional development needs to enhance leadership?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Digital literacy skills

Technology has transformed the way people interact (Ugur & Koç, 2019). This change is also noticeable in education. School principals are regarded as visionary technology leaders in the digital educational era. Therefore, professional development in technology competencies must be more reachable and flexible for principals (Ugur & Koç, 2019). In the information and digital age, a principal is also supposed to become an instructional and visionary leader who can use technology for management and they need to be well acquainted with innovative technologies for teaching, learning, administration, and management (Nhlumayo, 2024a). Fullan (2016) argues that principals are not sufficiently prepared to manage transformation at their schools, making their role a complex issue. According to Blaik Hourani and Stringer (2015), schools in Abu Dhabi are undergoing an era of transformation and reform. To improve their abilities in the management and initiation of change considering the reforms, the Abu Dhabi Education Council began a plan for the professional development of principals. The study was conducted to explore how principals perceived their professional development. The results identified areas of improvement regarding design associated with content and process (Spanneut et al., 2012).

Discipline management skills

Discipline from ancient times has never been an easy task for any manager. Secondary schools inherit discipline problems from the primary school or families where the children come from. Kristiawan et al. (2017) studied the preparedness of deputy principals in discipline management. The study revealed that discipline is an essential aspect of the life of any school and that teaching and learning can only take place effectively in a disciplined environment. The principals in Nigeria indicated that one of the significant challenges they encounter in school management is dealing with the learners' disciplinary cases, including continuous dropout rates (Abdulrasheed et al., 2015). In South Africa, Van Wyk and Pelser (2014) showed that the policies on discipline are likely not to be effectively implemented due to insufficient bases, lack of obligation, and training of school principals. The authors further state that school principals should be thoroughly capacitated through training programs to develop and implement discipline policies in schools. School principals need to be actively involved in their role, especially the one involving sharing knowledge on the implementation of school disciplinary policies in collaboration with other personnel in the school administration. Many procedures were proposed to outline disciplinary policies effectively (Nhlumayo, 2024b; Van Wyk & Pelser, 2014). Fitria (2017) concurs that, as a leader, the principal performs a significant role in the expansion of the strategies meant to model discipline of learners in the school as well as to supervise the designed course or program, while the role of the teacher is the application of the strategy to the learners.

Financial management skills

According to Ekpenyong and Edokpolor (2016), financial management includes planning, organising, controlling, and managing financial resources to accomplish organisational objectives. Financial management also entails the management of resources to guarantee the elimination of fraud, ensure efficiency, and control excess spending. In secondary schools, financial management is a crucial responsibility of all principals in that they need to show the capability to increase and mobilise funds to ensure their effective and efficient use. Therefore, the principalship is regarded as the chief executive position occupied by an individual with the accountability of controlling, planning, inspiring, directing, organising, and coordinating all organisational resources, inclusive of finances, at the expense of the school to ensure the attainment of educational goals and objectives (Ofojebe & Nnebedum, 2016). This means that financial management competencies are required for principals to ensure the achievement of anticipated goals or results of education with the smallest number of obtainable resources. According to Hutton (2013), professional training is critical for principals to lead schools effectively since its primary purpose is to enhance principals' self-confidence and ability to accomplish their managerial duties with the highest confidence and willingness. In Nyamira County, Kenya, principals encounter financial challenges that prevent them from effectively executing their duties (Githinji & Ndiangui, 2024; Onderi & Makori, 2013). The authors further explain that the county's schools are financially restrained due to fewer learners because of the

free funding system in Kenya. As a result of this financial struggle, schools lack human resources, such as teachers, to guarantee that learning takes place (Onderi & Makori, 2013). This suggests that owing to the meager financial resources available to schools, principals must be equipped with prudent financial management skills to ensure the school finances can still go a long way in engendering an effective and financially viable administration.

Management and Leadership skills

Leadership is a process of manipulating employees in an organisation with numerous methods that have been determined to accomplish the goals by using all accessible resources proficiently (Kristiawan et al., 2017). According to Lian (2020), the school principal is one of the factors that inspires success in all education efforts and is the most influential in creating quality education processes and outcomes. The principal is accountable for encouraging, directing, guiding, and stirring the learners, teachers, parents, and stakeholders to work together and participate in achieving goals (Kristiawan et al., 2017). The principal's leadership pattern strongly influences the school's achievement and development. It is crucial, therefore, for principals to have the ability to undertake their duties with a complete sense of responsibility in their role as leaders and to understand that the school is an organisation comprising numerous elements dependent on the principal's achievement as a school leader. According to literature, in countries such as Portugal, there is a scarcity of research undertaken regarding the training needs of principals from their perspectives (Serrao Cunha et al., 2020). Literature shows that principals need capacitation with the skills to effectively lead schools and be granted opportunities for training programs to develop their personal, interpersonal, and socio-emotional skills.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by the complexity leadership theory, which views leadership as influenced by co-dependent connections in a complex system (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2002). The theory was recently revised by Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) to incorporate three elements: operational, entrepreneurial, and enabling leadership. Complexity leadership theory considers leadership a collective development process in which individuals and groups network and acquire knowledge to produce innovation and adaptive capability (Avolio et al., 2009; Hanson & Ford, 2010; Hazy and Uhl-Bien, 2014). In this paper, principals' leadership is seen as a complex phenomenon during the 21st century, during which many transformations occur in the education system. This theory stresses creating organisational conditions enabling effective, but primarily undetermined, imminent adaptive conditions. The theory suggests that controlling organisational dynamics is not solely the responsibility of the prescribed leaders but also that the co-employees are empowered and motivated to acquire knowledge cooperatively and apply current explanations (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Complexity Leadership theory assists in understanding how school principals should respond to the pressures they face in their leadership and how they should find ways of surviving such pressures. The theory contributes

to the investigation of the current settings of schools as knowledge-grounded organisations, where school principals play many roles in facilitating the effective functioning of the school.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used a qualitative interpretive paradigm to understand secondary school principals' perceptions of Lesotho secondary school principals on their professional development needs to enhance leadership. This research design was phenomenology as it sought to understand the lived experience of the school principals in their leadership domain. Semi-structured interviews were used with five purposively selected individual principals from five secondary schools from one selected district in Lesotho, who provided their perceptions of their professional development needs. Data was generated using face-to-face interviews with each of the five participants, who provided their constructions of reality regarding their professional development needs. We used thematic data analysis to identify patterns and themes within the qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). We applied for and obtained ethical clearance and permission from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training. The circuit manager permitted us to conduct interviews with school principals. We observed triangulation in this paper by interviewing different participants at different times (Denzin, 2012). To observe trustworthiness, we did member-checking by soliciting feedback from the participants about the data we had generated,

Table 1.

Research Sites and Participants

Participant and school	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Experience as a school principal	Number of Teachers	Number of Learners
Principal School 1	1 F	52	M.Ed.	6	16	340
Principal School 2	2 M	61	PhD	15	35	687
Principal School 3	3 M	42	M.Ed.	5	32	490
Principal School 4	4 F	52	M.Ed.	11	63	1314
Principal School 5	5 F	55	PhD in progress	14	35	675

M.Ed. – Master of Education, PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

Table 1 provides an outlook on the participants and the research sites. The five schools are situated in one selected education district. The following pseudonyms are used in this paper to identify participants.

Principal 1 to Principal 5 – P1 to P5

School 1 to School 5 – S1 to S5

FINDINGS

When establishing perceptions of principals regarding their professional development needs, the following needs emerged as themes from the data. School principals indicated that they needed to be empowered in technological skills, financial management skills, handling legal issues, and management and leadership skills. The themes are presented as verbatim quotes from the participants.

Technological skills empowerment

When the participants were asked about their professional development needs to enhance their leadership, they exposed the need for capacity building on the use of the latest technologies for them to fit in the changing world. They also indicated that being equipped with technological skills would assist them in blending well with 21st-century learners and teachers. P1 shared:

> *I should be refreshed because we are working in a changing world. The people we manage are knowledgeable in the latest technologies, so the leadership styles should merge these transformations that we see in the education system.* **P1**

From P2, it emerged that the use of technology is a challenge. Similarly, P2 emphasised the need for capacitation in technology, and this is what she shared:

> *Technology is also a great challenge to me because I am not experienced in its use. I try to use it, but when I encounter challenges, I ask for assistance from other people who are good at it.* **P2**

P3 alluded to the fact that they needed all the help to learn about technology. This was their view:

> *I have an administration clerk who does everything related to technology and ICT in the school, such that when I go for presentations, I have to take her with me so she can help me.* **P3**

The participants revealed that among the professional development needs, they wish to be provided with the technological skills to enable them to lead schools in the 21st century. Leading schools in the 21st century require school leaders who are knowledgeable in the latest technologies, as most of the activities they perform are undertaken online. Lack of capacitation in this area denotes inefficiency in the management of the overall running of the school. The 21st-century teachers are exposed to new ways of dealing with learners. Therefore, principals need to become instructional and technological leaders to manage 21st-century teaching and learning. As opined by Ugur and Koç (2019), technology has transformed people's lives, from the utilisation of the internet to how they interconnect with written messages and through e-mails. This change is also evident in the education system. The 21st century has brought about a new educational revolution, impacting school leadership.

Further, the authors assert that the era has been characterised by continuous changes that have affected the role of leadership in contemporary organisations, including schools. According to Fry and Egel (2021), the current global changes advocate for advanced leadership capacity to lead a sustainable system. Due to these changes, school principals are confronted with the latest demands in the education system, complicated decisions, and supplementary accountabilities, which are more than they used to be (Mestry, 2017). To lead the implementation of the ever-changing digital period, school principals are entrusted with the responsibility of playing the role of technology leaders (Mullen, 2010). Complexity leadership theory has been used to assist in understanding how school principals should respond to the pressures they face in their leadership and how to find ways of surviving them (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

Complexity leadership theory may be a panacea for modern organisations to continue working in a changeable, competitive, chaotic environment influenced by information technology.

Financial management skills

Financial management is one of the skills participants mentioned as their professional development needs. Participants were school principals who were supposed to be accounting officers in using school funds. They revealed that they must be equipped with skills to manage the schools' finances. They indicated that empowerment in financial management will enable effective school administration. This is what P4 shared:

> *I need to be equipped with financial management skills, especially in budgeting. I have an idea, although I have not done any accounting. As a leader, I need skills to manage the school's finances according to government standards as my employer.* **P4**

P5 also indicated the same need as expressed in the subsequent excerpt:

> *In terms of budgeting and maintaining records accordingly, I think we all need continuous professional development because there are always changes when it comes to handling school finances, and there should not be a single mistake in accountability for every cent spent.* **P5**

P1 shared similar sentiments regarding professional development that is continuous; this was the view:

> *You know, the issue of finances is a very sensitive one because when we get employed in these positions of leadership, we may not have the necessary knowledge and skills, therefore, the department has to consistently provide us with all the skills they expect us to have.* **P1**

From the verbatim quotes above, the participants revealed that they need continuous training in financial management skills. Participants revealed that they experience challenges with budgeting the school funds. Since principals are the chief accounting officers, they must ensure proper use of funds to avoid mismanagement. This means running the school as an organisation requires a school leader who is financially literate to be able to budget correctly

and monitor the use of school funds. Therefore, their professional development in finance will enhance school leadership practice. Financial management encompasses planning and monitoring financial resources to accomplish organisational objectives (Ekpenyong & Edokpolor, 2016). The position of the principal is the chief executive occupied by an individual with the responsibility of controlling, planning, stimulating, directing, organising, and coordinating numerous resources, such as the finances, at the expense of the school to foster the achievement of educational goals (Ofojebe & Nnebedum, 2016). This, therefore, means that financial management skills are required for principals to enable them to achieve the desired goals or outcomes of education with the minimum number of available resources. In line with complexity leadership theory, principals need to be equipped with skills to support those they already possess as school leadership is one of the most complex phenomena with transformations taking place in the education system.

Conflict management skills

The data revealed that participants needed empowerment to deal with school conflict issues. They indicated that capacitation in this area will enable them to handle conflict management issues, and learner indiscipline, which sometimes escalates to legal matters.

These competencies will assist participants in managing and controlling matters related to conflict resolution. P2 shared this perspective:

> *Teachers' conflicts and learners' indiscipline are a problem here, so I need the skills to handle it. That means I must approach everything legally, so it becomes difficult to deal with legal issues when I am not capacitated.* **P2**

P3 also shared similar views on her professional development needs and emphasised that:

> *This work is stressful. While trying to manage conflict among colleagues, you find that serious issues also require your attention among learners. I end up being stressed as a school principal as, at times, I do not know how to deal with such a situation. Empowerment here is essential.* **P3**

> *As a female principal, I end up combining motherly advice with policy to control or handle any sort of conflict, whether among learners or colleagues, and I know that is not conventional, but it works for me because right now, I do not have the skills to deal with serious conflict issues.* **P5**

The data suggests a need to empower school principals in conflict management. Principals deal with many discipline issues in the daily running of the schools, involving teachers and learners. This means that to handle these issues effectively, they need to be provided with appropriate skills. The principal plays a critical role in developing strategies to shape learners' discipline in the school and overseeing the program's course that is designed to manage it (Fitria, 2017). According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2019), social constructivism states that individuals socially relate with one another to reach an agreement on their observations. Complexity leadership theory emphasises that adaptability, which improves performance and invention, occurs in the daily exchanges between individuals responding to pressures and probabilities in

their local settings (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). Therefore, this reality suggests the dynamics at play in schools and which school principals need to be able to manage with relevant skills.

Management and Leadership skills

Participants indicated their need for capacitation in all areas of leadership and management. School principals are appointed to their positions without any orientation or training, and more often than not, this affects their performance in the early years of leading schools. Participants suggested training opportunities that included induction and mentoring for novice and experienced school principals. This is what P3 shared:

> *I only have five years as a school principal, but I have never been inducted. I just have a friend who is an experienced principal who assists me, I call him my mentor. We need mentoring and induction from the department as the employer.* **P3**

They further emphasised the need for both the new and old principals to be provided with training opportunities on management to enhance their school leadership. The participants also emphasised that they would need capacitation in the form of refresher courses.

> *I need a refresher course on school leadership and management. I have been in this position for a while, but things have changed, so we also need to be equipped with current and trending ways of managing these young educators who are technology savvy.* **P2**

Sharing sentiments similar to those of P2, another participant revealed that as much as there are workshops and seminars, there is a need for coaching and mentoring on basic management and leadership. This is what they said:

> *I would be glad if the department could provide formal coaching, mentoring, and induction for principals, especially novice ones so that at least one gets into the position from a footing of some empowerment.* **P4**

Similar sentiments were shared by P5 who emphasised that:

> *As a school leader, I need a refresher course at the beginning of every year and mid-year to improve my management and leadership skills.* **P5**

The data indicate that for effective administration of the schools, principals, particularly those who are new in the positions, need to be equipped with management and leadership skills. School principals are entrusted with a huge responsibility to support learners and teachers in achieving the institution's goals. The principals are further accountable for the overall management of the schools. That means if they lack management skills, this could negatively impact the performance and effectiveness of their schools. Thus, to ensure efficient performance in their leadership roles, capacitation is needed to enhance school leadership. According to Lian (2020), the principal is a factor that influences the achievement of all educational efforts and is considered the most powerful individual in producing high-quality education procedures and results. The principal is accountable for directing, encouraging, influencing, supervising, and stirring the learners, teachers, parents, and other educational stakeholders to collaborate and contribute to achieving the objectives (Kristiawan et al., 2017). Principals must have the ability to carry out their duties with a complete sense of responsibility

in their role as leaders and understand that the school is an organisation comprising various elements that depend on the achievement of the principal as a leader. The complexity leadership theory offers a leadership framework for improving the quality of organisations as complicated adaptive systems that are exposed to originality, learning, and information production.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings revealed that principals need capacitation to use the latest technology. As stated by Ugur and Koç (2019), technology has changed how people live, from the use of the internet to the way they communicate through text messages. To avert school principals' apprehension about technology, they must be skilled and enabled to perform their duties as digital leaders. The lack of ICT integration in the leadership of schools renders the work of the principals difficult. To ease their apprehension, principals need to change their thinking about how ICT can be integrated into their leadership practice. Professional development in technology skills needs to be more available and flexible for principals to become more visionary technology-driven leaders in the 21st-century digital educational environment. Thus, principals need to be open to learning new things in their familiar settings. In line with constructivism, the learning process is an active process that involves all sensory inputs to construct meaning. This implies that principals can be skilled in using technology in their schools. This would allow them to be actively involved in their learning and development in their environment. The complexity leadership theory emphasises that learning occurs throughout the interaction among agents and their functions. It can be regarded as a collective process of reflection and action, branded by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of the action.

The findings further revealed that one of the professional development needs of school principals is the management of school finances. Financial management in the school includes, but is not limited to, activities that include budgeting, maintaining records, computer literacy, and financial reporting. Principals believe it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Training to equip them with the skills to handle school finances. Among some skills, principals must demonstrate the ability to raise funds and ensure they are used effectively and efficiently. Thus, it is crucial for the principals to encourage the spirit of self-driven learning in schools as organisations, and they too should be part of it. In support of the data findings, constructivism asserts that expertise is not outside and does not transfer by itself; instead, it can be discovered and gain new meaning through conversation, discussion, collaboration, and construction. Complexity theory further indicates that learning occurs only when individuals make sense of situations, and the knowledge created allows individuals to adapt to complex situations.

Conflict management is another skill that school principals need to be empowered on through continuous professional development. School principals deal with conflict and disciplinary issues regularly, and as much as there are legislative frameworks to guide the

implementation of policies, there is a need to continuously empower them on how to implement such policies. Principals are responsible for maintaining proper order and discipline in the schools. This means principals need to find effective ways to enforce discipline in the schools, and as they interact with their environment and deal with the sometimes chaotic situations in their schools, the principals need to accumulate experience in dealing with such situations. The motivation to learn on their own and through networking with other principals could improve school leadership. Through learning and constructing meaning instead of acquiring it, principals can build personal interpretations of the world from input from experiences and interactions. Corroborating the data findings is the complexity leadership theory, which assists in understanding how school principals should respond to the pressures they face in their leadership and how they should survive them.

The evidence on the professional development needs of school principals indicates a need for structured, regular, and formal coaching, mentoring, and induction processes to ensure that they are prepared to cope with the different aspects that frame school leadership and management. Collaborative practice can also be perceived as a panacea for realising that the professional development needs of school principals are met. Through collaboration, school principals could gain valuable insights from the best leadership practices observable in other schools. Participating in clusters could bring constructive effects on the improvement of school leadership. Constructivism theory suggests that knowledge construction can be formed from both existing knowledge and the social interaction process with the surrounding environment (Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020). Further, social constructivism perceives the origin of knowledge construction as the social connection of individuals, interactions that involve communicating, comparing, and debating among learners and mentors.

Implications for practice and conclusion

Against the findings, this paper recommends capacity building for school principals to be empowered with technological, financial, conflict management, and primary school leadership and management skills. Professional development is learning on the job, intending to develop and enhance school leadership, and teaching practice, and this should lead to improved learning outcomes for learners in the school. Therefore, this paper recommends structured on-the-job training, mentoring, and induction sessions for school principals to capacitate them. Further, the Ministry of Education and Training must conduct a regular needs analysis to determine school principals' professional development needs. This will enable the Ministry of Education and Training to design relevant and appropriate programs to empower school principals.

Essential school leadership and management programs could benefit school principals on a broader scale and in different aspects of leadership. This paper concludes that school leadership is paramount to school effectiveness, and thus, school principals require regular and continuous professional development in all matters of school leadership.

This research study was limited to a single education district in Lesotho and the findings could not be generalised to other districts in the wider population. Building on the limitations,

we recommend further research on professional development needs, activities and programmes for school leaders in multiple education districts, thus enabling future researchers to explore a more comparative approach.

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