

# Three Culturally Sensitive Research Methods for Educational Administration and Leadership Research

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**Abstract:** The social, political, economic and cultural contexts of today's educational systems and schools are diverse in ways that require greater attention to equity, diversity, social inclusion, ethics and perspectives of school leaders and learners. In some developing countries like Cameroon in Central Africa where education leaders are not trained for leadership role. It's the duty of the educational system willing to encourage research to meet the unique needs of educators and students who represent underserved corruption, tribalism, nepotism, and cultural groups experiencing marginalization. These matters move beyond the personal and become professional, as they are further complicated by high-stakes accountability standards and the prioritization of "closing the achievement gap" in schools and the different educational systems. As such, this paper offers multicultural research considerations of three contrasting research methods used in educational leadership and administration research seeking to explore the views of school leaders in Cameroon in relation to effective school leadership preparation and management development in preparing aspiring heads for successful school leadership. This paper aims to find out, how close-end Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ), field document and standardized open-ended interviews methods are suited procedures, strategies, processes or techniques for collecting and analysing data in order to create better understanding of Leadership and Administration Development Research. The author presents a rationale and theoretical framework for the use of these three contrasting research methods often used together in a qualitative mixed method studies investigating educational method of assessing school leadership and management development models. While LMDQ can provide evidence of patterns amongst large populations, qualitative field document analysis and standardized open-ended interview research methods often gather more in-depth insights on participant attitudes, thoughts, and actions. The findings of this qualitative mixed method studies generate confirmatory results despite differences in methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

**Keywords:** Culturally Sensitive Research Methods, Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire, Field Documents, Standardized Open-ended Interview, Administration and Leadership Research

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## 1. Introduction

As the Republic of Cameroon strive to diversify educational equity to both Francophone and Anglophones, research methods for accurately design and assess views of school stakeholders in Cameroon in relation to effective school leadership preparation and management development in preparing aspiring heads for successful school leadership must evolve. Objectivist research approach for equalization of natural resources must be characterized by methods designed to test laws which explain in some universal way that reality for equity are being researched [16, 18, 17, 21]. In the case of this study the research is concerned not with

universal laws, but with understanding the way in which the individual system leaders at the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education, schools and school leaders creates, modifies and interprets leadership preparation and management development in preparing aspiring heads for successful school leadership [16, 18, 19]. In Cameroon and many other African countries, it is becoming increasingly important for researchers in developing countries to critically reflect on data collection methods that can have a positive impact on school leadership preparation outcomes of aspiring indigenous school leaders [16, 20]. Such issues are of great importance and perhaps of special relevance to researchers in Cameroon, and to the African context in which we work.

Ideas of leadership and the development of school leaders is not diverse in nature, it is suggested, a product of universally accepted laws but are cultural constructs. Even if some ideas of leadership are widely applicable we cannot say that they are universally and inevitably so, whereas we can say that many facets of leadership have changed both over time and across cultures. A leadership type that is effective in one context, therefore, may not, depending upon the attitudes prevalent in the culture, be equally successful in another context. The idea that leadership is a cultural construct is implicit in the literature we traced in this introduction. The “great man” theory was a construct of a particular cultural and historical moment, just as modern collaborative theories of transformational and distributional leadership are themselves products of modern democratic and egalitarian societies [16, 9]. For all of these reasons leadership has to be understood within a broadly subjective approach which seeks to interpret the experiences and perceptions shared by the people who form the society within which the research takes place.

The author presents a study of three contrasting research methods in educational leadership and administration development of school leaders in a developing country like Cameroon can use the cultural knowledge and experiences of local and international researchers and their participants in the design of the research as well as in the collection and interpretation of data. The overall research question of this paper is to find out, how close-end Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ), field document and standardized open-ended interviews methods are suited procedures, strategies, processes or techniques for collecting and analysing data in order to create better understanding of Leadership and Administration Development Research?

This study provides a first attempt in scholarship to employ three contrasting method of assessing school leadership and management development models is best suited to the school, educational and cultural context of Cameroon? Literature on culturally sensitive research methods are presented as a forerunner to the methodological decisions made by the researcher of actual data collection and associated data collection instruments and processes. Implications regarding the use of close-end Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ), field document and standardized open-ended interviews methods are discussed and suggestions are offered on how to avoid inadvertently communicating the notion that using western methods of collecting data in an African country is not needed to make leadership development research meaningful. Strategies for data collection such as including pertinent stakeholders are offered with special consideration for the researcher who collected data in school settings as documented by Ebot Ashu [15, 16, 18, 19]. Recruitment of participants to take part in data collection methods is discussed as it relates to trust building. Leadership, management and administrative learning programs for supporting school leader’s development in Cameroon are

considered and suggestions for reducing bias by assessing cultural variables are presented. Study interpretation is examined with particular attention to threats to validity that may arise when conducting multicultural research.

## 2. Methodological Approaches

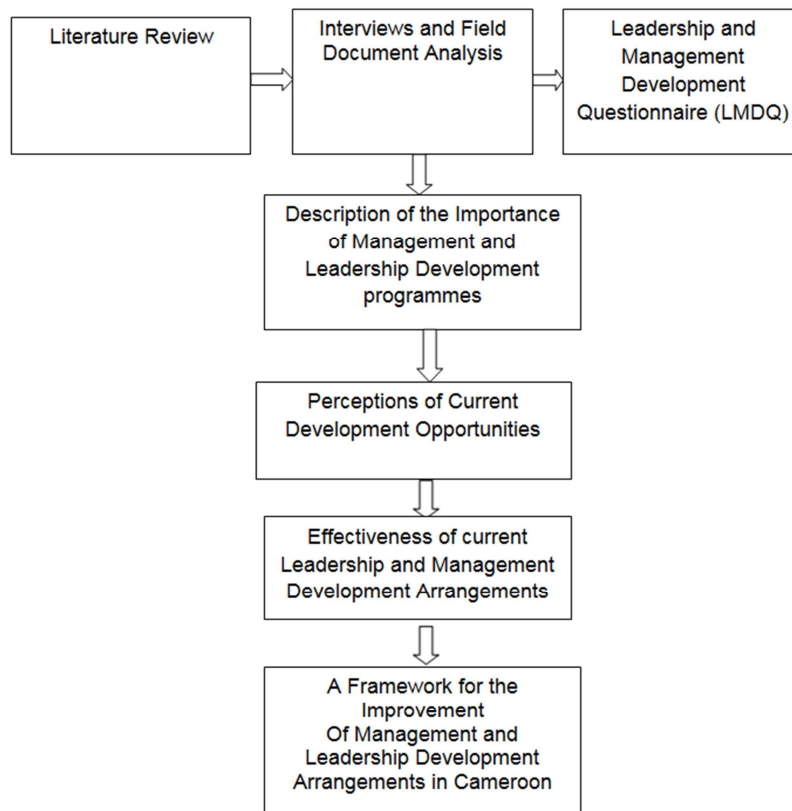
This study uses qualitative mixed methods design of leadership and management development programmes in Cameroon to seek local perceptions of the effectiveness of these programmes in preparing aspiring head teachers for successful school leadership. The qualitative mixed method research design integrated Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ), field document analysis and interviews in order to concentrate on the research questions posed in as comprehensive and appropriate a way as possible. This section explores in more detail the reasoning behind these methodological choices. Nwokah *et al.* [29] drawing on Cooper and Schindler [13], define methodology as the overall approach to the research process. In contrast to ontology and epistemology, methodology concerns the techniques and procedures through which knowledge of the phenomenon is acquired [11, 12]. In the field of educational leadership and management development most work has been broadly qualitative in its methodology. Thus, Bush and Jackson [5] essentially followed qualitative methods. Some scholars in this field, however, have combined qualitative and quantitative methods (so called, mixed methods research). The work of [16] falls into this qualitative mixed methods category. Indeed, Johnson *et al.* [26]’s agreed that qualitative mixed methods research designs can be greatly improved when they use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Following Johnson *et al.*’s classification, the current study could be labelled as qualitative mixed methods research using both qualitative and quantitative methods and adopting a broadly subjective approach. Nwokah *et al.* [29] assert that this position on the research spectrum “would fit qualitative or mixed methods researchers who consider it is significant to include quantitative data and approaches into their otherwise qualitative research projects” (p. 124). The ensuing section will explore other aspects of this qualitative mixed methods study design combining, as it does, elements of survey research and field document and interview analysis methods within a single research design.

## 3. Research Methods of the Design

The research questions for this study, as detailed in the introduction, determine the purpose of the study and establish the framework for the methodological approach. The research design, therefore, flows from the overall research question and, as also seen in the methodology of the study; a qualitative mixed method design has been chosen comprising elements of Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ), field document analysis and interviews. As we have seen in this methodology, qualitative

mixed methods research offers a comprehensive, contextual, examination of particular events resulting in the telling of a story that is fuller in detail than in purely scientific statistical analysis. In qualitative mixed method designs careful selection of cases, research tools and data collection methods

that are appropriate to addressing the theoretical proposition (s) have a significant influence on the eventual validity of the study. Figure 1 outlines the fundamental qualitative mixed method design against which decisions about the research tools and data collection methods were reached.



Source: Adapted from [16]., p. 64

*Figure 1. Study Design.*

Figure 1 shows how the study reviewed relevant literature pertaining to leadership and management development programmes and how these were integrated with a LMDQ (quantitative) study, field document analysis and interviews (qualitative evidence) to ultimately provide the material to enable the researcher to answer the research questions of the study.

### **3.1. Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ)**

Research question one aimed to bring together evaluative data concerning the compulsory leadership and management training programmes in Cameroon that enhance prospect leaders to become effective school leaders will utilize the LMDQ, which is a self-assessment form, completed by both aspiring heads and head teachers, documenting perceptions of leadership and management development attainments. For the collection of data the researcher employed a paper self-administered LMDQ in the form of checklist, semi-structured interviews and field document analysis. The LMDQ is an effective tool for aspiring head teacher's self-evaluation and development.

### **3.2. Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ) Design**

A person-to-person LMDQ with closed-ended questions was designed (See Table 4, Appendix 1 below) in order to establish valid and reliable data with which to describe teachers, aspiring head teachers' and head teachers leadership and management development in regard to their preparedness for headship.

This research method was adopted since it represents an efficient method of obtaining data from a reasonably large population. The main aim of the LMDQ was to establish data that could be probed in more detail during the course of the follow-up interviews. The LMDQ was, consequently, a starting point rather than an end in itself. There were two major sections of questions in the LMDQ and considerable attention was paid to designing the sequence of questions so as to make it easy for respondents to understand the flow of questions.

Section one comprised five questions on respondents' demographic data and background information, whilst section two comprised a further thirty questions identifying

areas of study in school leadership and management development programmes and asking for responses rating the extent to which these areas of study contributed to respondents' own perception of their leadership and management development.

This second section of the LMDQ adapted from [1, 31, 33], utilized a 5-point Likert scale in which respondents were asked to tick the box that on the whole precisely mirrored their judgement for each of thirty statements (option: 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree). This approach required teachers and head teachers to reflect on each of the areas of leadership and management development programmes and how much respondents had benefited from their informal on the job training. The questions were devised making sure that a number of specific issues such as the necessity to keep away from using 'leading' questions, keeping the questions brief and simple, the need to keep away from asking the same question twice in a diverse fashion, and not creating any unnecessary assumptions in the questions [14].

The LMDQ was also pilot-tested with two senior lecturers at the university of Birmingham, as well as head teachers and teachers in Cameroon, in request to acquire feedback on the subject of clarity, content validity and ease of completion. The amended version of the LMDQ, based on expert opinion and pilot testing, was administered to 190 school leaders in Cameroon. The researcher ensured on the LMDQ participant

information guide that the aim of the project was clearly articulated and that all answers were anonymous and confidential.

### 3.3. The LMDQ Inclusion Criteria and Sampling Process

'Opportunity' or, as it is sometimes called, 'convenience' [10. P. 102], sampling was employed for the LMDQ. Extensive communication with staff from the Cameroon Minister of Basic Education enabled the researcher to obtain a research permit to visit primary and nursery schools in selected regions in Cameroon to encourage broader participation. This also enabled the utilisation of school meetings with both aspiring heads and head teachers. Age, job role, experience in role and type of school were not be taken into account in the analysis since the researcher considered that, due to the nature of the research topic, school leaders' responses to the 30 units of study in leadership and management development programmes in preparing them for their headship were far more important. Indeed, it was also felt that if age, job role, experience in role and type of school were taken into consideration in the selection of the sample, then they also must be taken into account when analyzing the data and this would ultimately widen the overall focus research project. However, Table 1 shows the cross section of respondents' gender, age, experience in role and type of school.

Table 1. LMDQ Returns.

Job Role	Gender		Age			Experience in Role			Type of School		
	Male	Female	Under 30yrs	30yrs-45 yrs	45yrs+	Under 5 yrs	5 Yrs-15 yrs	15yrs +	State	Private	Faith
Aspiring Heads	48% (69)	52% (74)	28% (40)	58% (83)	14% (20)	36% (52)	56% (80)	8% (11)	37% (53)	47% (67)	16% (23)
Head Teachers	49% (23)	51% (24)	15% (7)	55% (26)	30% (14)	34% (16)	53% (25)	13% (6)	49% (23)	45% (21)	6% (3)

Table 1 shows that a total of 190 completed LMDQ were received comprising a random national sample of 143 aspiring head teachers (75%) and 47 head teachers (25%) at primary school level. The majority of the respondents were female (52%). 57% of the respondents were in the 30-45 age bracket, and there was little difference between aspiring and actual head teachers in this age distribution (58% compared to 55%). Amongst younger age groups, however, the proportion of aspiring head teachers was greater than the proportion of actual heads, whereas among older age groups the proportion of aspiring head teachers was less than the proportion of actual heads. 36% of the sample had been aspiring school leaders for under five years; 55% of the sample had been school leaders for between 5 and 15 years and 9% had been school leaders for more than 15 years. Nearly 40% of the school leaders worked in state schools, 46 per cent worked in private schools and 14 per cent worked in a faith school setting.

The initial identification of schools in which suitable participants were likely to be found was through data provided by the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education. The

size of the sample for the questionnaire was determined by the degree of accurateness required for the sample and the degree of difference in the population in respect to the key features of concentration. Based on the majority current figures obtainable to the researcher at the point in time of sampling, the total sampling frame from which the sample was drawn exceeded 250 primary school leaders listed on the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education register. This was only a fraction of the total number of registered primary school teachers on the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education register, which were almost 18,398 (6,364 male and 12,034 female) [6, 7]. It was considered that a sample size of 250 would be required to enable understating of the development of aspiring heads. To allow for non-responses and the potential problem of over representation of the largest subset and underneath representation of the lesser subsets, it was determined that an actual sample of 190 school leaders was randomly generated from the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education register.

Once target schools had been identified and contacted, participants were invited on a voluntary basis with a view to

maintaining the overall diversity of the participant cohort. Following consent from the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education, and with their support to contact regional educational delegates in each province in Cameroon, the researcher contacted the head teachers of the randomly targeted schools in the first instance, and, given the subject matter of the research it was anticipated that the head teacher, in most cases, would also be a participant in the research. The head teacher, however, was invited to advertise the research within his or her school and support the researcher in identifying further participants within the school (aiming for an average of 3-5 participants in total from each school). In particular, the researcher sought respondents from a cross-section of the school leadership team, taking in aspiring leaders across a range of school functions and levels. It was also planned that if the number returned from the initial LMDQ was deemed to be insufficient then a smaller second round of LMDQ would be sent out. In practice, the study achieved a return rate of 76%, however, which was deemed to be sufficient to meet the objectives of the project.

#### **3.4. Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ) Data Analysis**

Prior to analysing the data, completed LMDQs were checked to ensure that respondents had complied with instructions for completing each LMDQ. Each respondent was allocated a unique code that identified their gender, age, job role, experience and type of school. Each unit of study on the LMDQ was given a unique serial number for identification and entered into an excel spreadsheet.

The extent to which the aims of the leadership development programmes were met was assessed in order to gain an indication of informal on the job training outcomes. Participants' views regarding the leadership and management development programmes, and further opportunities for headship development, were analysed with the use of mostly descriptive methods (frequencies and mean). To increase confidence in research claims, differences in teachers and head teachers' views according to personal features (such as job role, gender, age, experience in role and type of school) were also analysed.

Descriptive statistics were used to identify any emerging differences between the main variables and key issues that emerged from the analysis for each of the research question were followed-up in the interview part of the study. The leadership and management learning attainments data were analysed in order to evaluate the extent to which:

School leaders were able to achieve leadership and management development targets.

The LMDQ is an effective tool for aspiring head teacher's self-evaluation and development.

For the analysis of the LMDQ data, [31 and 14], Rating Scale Model, which applies to Likert scale surveys, was used to analyse the data regarding the usefulness of the 30 units of study in the context of respondent informal on the job training. In the Likert scale, each unit of study was accompanied by a five-position scale and the respondent had

to mark a response for each item on the provided continuum in order to show its perceived degree of usefulness. Rhodes *et al.*'s and Ebot Ashu's [16], model involved transforming the count of the endorsements of the ordered Likert categories into several interval scales. Thus Rhodes *et al.*'s and Ebot Ashu's [16], model of Likert scale analysis offered a thorough mathematical opinion to additional innovative approaches of rating scale analysis that require mainly summarizing results in the form of means scores interpretations.

Whether leadership and management development was sufficiently challenging was also explored using comparisons with the data that was collected in interviews and field document analysis.

A typical finding of evaluation studies is that, as well as the overall effect of the training programmes and leadership performances and attainments, there are variances in impact between different settings and participants. To be able to explain these variances data was collected on leadership training processes occurring in 13 schools in Cameroon. Providing recommendations for possible programme developments also required the collection of qualitative data to allow the in depth study of the needs of aspiring heads and their schools.

#### **3.5. Ethical Issues in the Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ)**

As part of the commitment to confidentiality a participant information sheet within the LMDQ stated that all the questionnaires were to be returned directly to the researcher, that all the responses would be treated in the utmost confidence, and that no school leader or their school would be named in the this publication or subsequent publications.

### **4. Field Document Analysis**

This paper analyzed literature and policy documents as practical tool that can be put to valuable use by educational leaders and can also be adopted as a research method. Educational leaders are at the forefront of policy interpretation and consequently need knowledge and skills that enable them to analyze policy as part of their work in developing, implementing and reviewing organisational policy for teachers and aspiring leaders development. They need to be able to look behind the policy to know what forces brought it into being; to tap into policy history to know how it was constructed; and most importantly, evaluate the way it is working to achieve its school and educational systems goals and objectives.

#### **4.1. Field Document Analysis and Interview Design**

The field document analysis-based research was designed around the literature review, as described in the previous section. The basis of understanding provided by this background research then informed the identification of further documents from within the particular country context

of the study. In particular, the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education was identified as a resource through which to acquire background information about the educational system and general attitudes to and strategies for leadership development. In addition, information acquired through the Ministry of Basic Education enabled the identification of target educational establishments for the qualitative mixed research and a sample of school leaders; together with analyses of attainment and value added data.

These field documents enabled the selection of 13 schools judged by the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education and others to be outstandingly well managed and led. The field documents collected from these schools included: a log of field document analysis detailing strategic objectives and plans, statements of school vision, values and mission statements and documents describing school leadership development initiatives [4]. The researcher also kept a log of field document analysis was kept in each meeting with staffs at the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education and school leaders. By providing logs and summaries of meetings with system school leaders, it aims to document and tell stories as it is in the Cameroonian context [35, 24]. This fulfilled one objective of the study that is to collect and assess the effectiveness of leadership preparation and management development in preparing aspiring heads for successful school leadership in Cameroon.

#### 4.2. Field Document Analysis Process

Content analysis was employed throughout the study. Bolden et al. [3] and Yu [38], recognize content analysis as a research method for the objective, logical, and quantitative explanation of the noticeable content of communication. Although content analysis can be quantitative in nature [28], it also can be employed to join together themes and patterns of meaning.

From the content of this data, categories were developed for further interpretation. In addition, a steady comparative method was utilized to evaluate and contrast the results from the field document analysis, and the semi-structured interview questions. So, for example, selected quotations from system leaders provided a deeper insight into the key findings of the research question and the statistical findings for each of the 30 items in the LMDQ.

Each of these data-collection efforts was undertaken in order to obtain a wide range of opinions and perspectives in order to establish how effectively the leadership and management training programmes in Cameroon prepared prospective school leaders.

To develop both internal and external validity, the specific analytical technique of pattern coding was adopted. When all collected data was available in textual format, data could be methodologically analyzed. In pattern coding, aspiring heads and head teachers' words were compared with the researcher's interpretation within theoretical conceptual frameworks. Wherever possible, however, a wide range of quotations from field document analysis, semi-structured interviews with aspiring heads and head teachers were used.

Field document analysis derived from the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education and schools are presented thematically using emergent themes which are dealt with individually in turn using relevant codes e.g. CMBEMYUtt77-Utt88 or SIMUtt311-Utt318. The first part of the code identifies the organisation or school the meeting took place and the town which the quote was taken. Thus CMBEMYUtt77-Utt88 refers to field document analysis from the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education (CMBE), meeting (M) in Yaounde (Y), Utterance 77 to Utterance Utt88 and SIMUtt311-Utt318 refers to field document analysis from School I meeting (M), Utterance 311 to Utterance 318 in the field document analysis.

#### 4.3. Ethical Issues in the Documental Analysis

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (2004), and the University of Birmingham ethical guidelines provided the framework for the research activity undertaken in relation to this research project. For example, in accordance with the BERA and the University of Birmingham ethical guidelines, permission was sought, from the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education body which approves and oversees any research done both by citizens of Cameroon and non-citizens from foreign organisations and institutions. The British Educational Research Association [2]. Guidelines were adhered to in order to ensure respect for each person, knowledge, democratic principles, the excellence of educational research and intellectual openness.

### 5. Interviews

The interview data collection contributed to the overall research question that address the effectiveness of school leadership preparation and management development in preparing aspiring heads for successful school leadership in Cameroon.

#### 5.1. Interview Design and Process

The interview element of the research design represented the key part of the study. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about aspiring heads' perspectives of leadership and management development [30, 23]. The interviews were informed by the Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ) and represented a discrete aspect of the study addressed from a qualitative (interpretivist) perspective.

Cohen *et al.* [11, 12] consider interviews as: an intersection of point of views connecting two or more individuals on a topic of mutual interest (that) sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production and emphasis the social situatedness of research data.

Meanwhile, [11, 12] refers to interviews as conversations with a purpose.

Holstein and Gubrium [25] asserted that an interview is 'active' in the sense that all interviews are "reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions, whether recognised

or not” (p. 4).

Denscombe [14] suggests that interviews are appropriate for research when the desired outcome is depth rather than breadth for a particular issue. He further asserts that the justification for choosing the interview method is likely to reference, amongst other things, data based on experiences, perceptions and feelings, as well as data based on privileged information.

A typology of interviews can be represented on a continuum that runs from highly structured to entirely unstructured. The nature and sensitivity of the data collected here meant that from an early stage it was evident that semi-structured interviews would be necessary, because the use of open-ended questions made it more likely that the data obtained would “challenge the prevailing paradigm or ... shed light on something previous researchers have missed altogether” [30].

Patton [30] proposes the use of a semi-structured approach encouraging relatively open-ended responses in qualitative-mixed evaluation studies since these are seen as being the best way to capture the understanding of the respondents. For this reason this study encouraged an open-ended responses approach through a semi-structured interview format, since this combination was felt to provide access to the most in-depth and nuanced understanding of the respondents’ perceptions regarding their experience of leadership and management development programmes. The study also adopted the self-reported evidence approach which was successfully used by [31, 33] in their initial study of the impact of the NCTL.

The ‘participant information interview guide approach’ was used to put the interview questions in order for ease of analysis [30, 14]. An interview guide lists the questions or issues that the researcher aims to explore in the course of the interview. Patton [30] asserts that one advantage of an interview guide is that it helps the researcher to make best use of the limited time available in an interview situation. Furthermore, the guide makes the interviewing process more systematic and inclusive by setting the limits in advance the issues to be explored. Whilst an interview guide provides an element of structure it is not so rigid as to prevent interviewees from developing ideas and “speaking” more widely on issues raised by the interviewer” [30, p. 167]. Each interview was scheduled to last 45 minutes and all were transcribed. The interview questions were based on issues identified from the literature. They were formulated around the following questions, based on the research question:

Q1: Tell me about your overall view of the leadership and management training programmes in Cameroon in preparing you as an effective primary school leader supporting school effectiveness?

Q2: What are the key strengths of your leadership and management training programmes that enhanced your performance as an effective primary school leader

*Probe:*

What about the particular areas of studies that enhance a primary school leaders’ knowledge;

What particular areas of studies enhanced your expertise/behaviours as an effective primary school leader?

What do you perceive as the weakness of the Cameroon educational system in supporting aspiring head teachers to become effective leaders, with reference to your own leadership development?

Q3: In your view, how does your training relate to specific contextual factors associated to your school?

Q4: Can you tell me how your leadership and management skills have improved from the time you graduated to the time you assumed headship in the following context

*Probe:*

Please specify specific management and leadership learning you have received in school, outside school and outside the professional setting?

Q5: What have you learned about leadership and management from your colleagues in respect to its relevance for your headship (professional and non-professional sources)?

Q6: If you could give any advice to the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education about school leadership and management development, what suggestions can you recommend to further improve the leadership and management training skills of Cameroon aspiring head teachers? The participant information interview guide and interview schedule was piloted to two primary school head teachers and two aspiring heads in Cameroon and verification of the instrument was also sought from two senior university lecturers who were involved in this research project.

## 5.2. Interview Selection

Thirteen well-managed and led primary schools were selected in different geographical and social settings across English and French Cameroon, based on the following purposive sampling criteria:

Excellent learners’ achievements: Selection was based on data provided by the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education.

High quality school leadership: In order to be able to study high quality leadership development practices, the researcher selected providers with high leadership grades on statutory inspections.

Locality of school: Selection was based on the number of well managed and led schools located in different geographical and social setting in English and French Cameroon provinces.

A detailed breakdown of the sample is given in Table 2. The samples were considered to be information-rich cases which provided in-depth information on the perceived effectiveness of leadership and management training supporting aspiring head teachers’ transition to headship.

Table 2. Interview Sample.

Province/City	School	Aspiring Head		Head Teacher		Total	
		Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
South West Province Limbe	School A	1	0	1	2	2	2
	School B	1	0	1	1	2	1
	School C	1	0	1	2	2	2
	School D	1	1	1	1	2	2
Buea	School E	1	1	1	0	2	1
	School F	1	1	1	1	2	2
	School G	1	2	1	2	2	4
Central Province Yaounde	School H	1	1	1	1	2	2
	School I	1	1	1	1	2	2
	School J	1	1	1	1	2	2
North West Province Bamenda	School K	1	0	1	2	2	2
	School L	1	1	1	1	2	2
	School M	1	1	1	0	2	1

As detailed in Table 2 the face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted at 13 schools in three major provinces in Cameroon (Southwest Province (Limbe and Buea), Northwest Province (Bamenda) and Central Province (Yaounde) and comprised of a total of 25 participants (11 aspiring head teachers and 14 head teachers).

The interviews were designed to capture respondents' perceptions of their leadership and management learning from the time they graduated to the time they assumed their leadership position. This meant that it was important that respondents provided information on the additional support that they had received and which they considered useful for their progress towards headship (from both professional and non-professional sources) and also to provide recommendations to further improve the leadership and management training skills of prospective head teachers in Cameroon.

The eligibility criteria for inclusion in interviews was that respondents should be a primary school leader, be employed directly by the state, by a private voluntary body or faith institution, and be working in a primary school as an aspiring head or head teacher. The interviewees were as diverse as practicable: females and males, various ages, job role, level of experience and so on. All those interviewed had previously completed the questionnaire. The researcher was not acquainted with any of the respondents personally and the participants were contacted to ensure their consent to participate in the study.

### 5.3. Interview Structure

Pre-interview material was sent to all interviewees, detailing the time and place of the interview, together with a copy of the Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire materials for them to complete and bring to the interview. In order to achieve consistency, an interview schedule was used detailing the structure of the interviews. In

practice, however, the interview centred around the individual responses to each of the questionnaire questions, but also reflected both the individual themes identified during the literature review and/or the data from the questionnaires.

Indeed, the decision to use semi-structured interviews (in order to allow the interviewee as much freedom to express their views as possible) meant that in each interview there was a degree of freedom to explore the answers given by the interviewees. This meant that the interviews covered the intended themes but also developed in different directions. It was felt that this was necessary in order to improve the richness of the data gained from the interview process.

The standardized, open-ended approach provided the opportunity to adhere to a strict script, and there was no flexibility in the wording or order of questions. The standardized, open-ended questions were asked to all interviewees; this approach facilitated faster interviews that could be more easily analysed and compared, as [30, 14] described.

Like the conversational interview, the guided interview with open-ended questions requires an interviewer who is reasonably qualified and skillful, since he or she needs to understand when to probe for additional in-depth responses or guide the discussion making sure that all subject matter on the strict script are covered. A possible drawback that was noted was that sticking to the outlined topics prevented full discussion of other important topics that might be raised by the respondent. Also, while this format is more systematic than the conversational interview it was still difficult to compare or analyse data because different interviewees responded differently to the same questions.

When employing the general interview guide approach for interviewing, a basic checklist was provided to each respondent to make sure that all relevant topics were covered, as [30, 36, 37] suggested. The participant information guide definitely provided a good structure for the topics covered



and it did not really appear to make the respondent feel uneasy while being asked the questions. The interviewer was still free to explore, probe and ask questions as issues arose that were deemed interesting. In other words, the decision about which issue to pursue in greater depth lay with the interviewer, based on the participants' prior responses. For this reason, Patton's [30] and Yin's [36, 37] concept of a general interview guide approach was useful as it allowed for in-depth probing while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study.

The standardized, open-ended approach used in these interviews is even now measured a qualitative interview to a certain extent than a quantitative interview for the reason that the responses are open-ended. This is the most structured and well-organized of the qualitative interviewing techniques and can be useful for reducing bias when it is important to be able to compare the responses of different respondents. While this interviewing method may be the best choice for analysing data, the major drawback is that the interviewer has slight flexibility to take action to the specific worries of the individual, and there is no assurance that the questions asked tap into the subjects that are important to this particular respondent.

The 25 interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis with each lasting approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted mainly through appointments secured during the school day and were largely sited in the interviewees' office where he/she could speak freely. The interviews were recorded using a Handy Recorder H4n and then transcribed. Participants had an opportunity to view the final transcript to check the accuracy of what had been recorded.

For the interpretation of the interviews alphabetical codes were assigned to each school (A-M) as a descriptor for where the interviews were collected; respondents were not referred to using their real names but were assigned an alpha-numerical code based on their job role (e.g. HAH2 or IHT1) so as to maintain anonymity as (Chambers, 2009) described.

The second part of the code identifies the relevant part of the interview transcript from which the quote was taken. Thus Transcript HAH2Utt23 (see Appendix 11) refers to School H, Aspiring Head 2, Utterance 23 and Transcript IHT1Utt67 (see Appendix 12) refers to School I, Head Teacher 1, Utterance 67 in the interview transcript.

#### 5.4. Interview Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the transcripts were then analysed manually by decoding the responses into the themes questioned and any others which emerged. This was done manually on grounds of convenience, following [27, 32]. This strategy allows me to check hypotheses as they emerge from data analysis and thereby to refine data collection strategies as the study progresses. Analysis included evaluation of policy documents, which were meant to annotate the field document analysis processes in order to give a richer meaning to the spoken words of the respondents. Bolden *et al.* [3] demonstrate how leadership and

management interventions can be evaluated using this kind of content analytic framework [28]. The responses were compared systematically in order to look for any commonalities, remarkable differences and recurring patterns. This strategy allowed the researcher to check out hypotheses as they emerged from data analysis and therefore to process data collection strategies as the study move forwards.

Using mixed approaches to gather data on school leaders' leadership and management development enables the researcher to validate the effectiveness of leadership and management development interventions using observations from a sub-sample of school leaders. This mixing of data is a unique aspect of the proposed research design. By mixing the datasets, the researcher will be able to present a healthier understanding of the setback than if either dataset had been used alone.

#### 5.5. Issues of Validity and Reliability

Since validity and reliability are vital issues for any research, it is important to explain how they have been addressed in the design of the study.

Patton [30], whilst accepting that concepts of validity and reliability were originally developed in the context of quantitative studies, argue that they remain applicable to qualitative and mixed research. Since reliability and validity are rooted in a positivist perspective, however, they have to be redefined for use in an interpretive framework. For Yin [37] and Carmines and Zeller [8] such a redefinition suggests that in qualitative investigation, "validity" signifies the extent to which a study precisely reflects or assesses the exact concept that the investigator is trying to measure, while "reliability" is alarmed with the correctness of the actual measuring instrument or procedure.

In the context of this study various strategies were used to attempt to ensure that it provided a valid picture of the topic of enquiry. At the initial exploratory stage the researcher undertook a process of construct validity checking in order to ensure agreement between theoretical concepts and the specific measuring procedures that were to be employed (following [8]). Construct validity is alarmed with developing appropriate operational measures of the concepts being studied. This issue was addressed in a number of ways:

- By specifying as clearly as possible the research aims and questions prior to designing the research instruments;

- By considering approaches used in similar studies;

- By drawing on design advice from research colleagues.

To verify whether this research has construct validity, three further steps were followed. First, the theoretical relationships were specified. Second, the empirical relationships between the measures of the concepts were examined. Third, the empirical evidence was interpreted in terms of how it illuminates the construct validity of the exact measure being tested [8].

Content validity was then verified through the choice of field documents and the design of interviews and the LMDQ. This process ensured that the main issues relating to the

leadership development of school leaders in Cameroon were included in the data collection instruments. Content validity was assessed by asking school leaders and researchers with experience in the field of enquiry to evaluate them. By adopting this approach it was hoped to maximize the capture of accurate and relevant information whilst minimizing the extent to which that data was influenced by the interests and preconceptions of the researcher.

Another important strategy was the use of triangulation. This is described by [22] as the use of two or more methods of data collection (evaluative multiple methods) in the study as “*the major means of validating some aspect of human behaviour.*”

In this study triangulation involved the cross-checking of responses from a random selection of primary and secondary documents, and policies from the Cameroonian Ministry of Basic Education with data from the 13 schools. Respondent triangulation was also used, whereby different respondents were invited to answer the same questions on the LMDQ and interviews with aspiring heads and head teachers.

As [22, p. 199] suggest: what is involved in triangulation is not the combination of different kinds of data *per se*, but rather an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of our analysis (p. 199).

In accepting Hammersley and Atkinson's view it is clear that in trying to establish a valid and accurate picture of the leadership development of primary school leaders in Cameroon, there is a need to cross check the perspectives given in the field documents with those given by interviewees in the LMDQ. Using different sources of data clearly enables the researcher to confirm data from a particular source by comparing them with results from another source. If the findings are mutually consistent, this increases the researcher's confidence that a valid picture has been achieved, and *vice versa*. In the case of this research, however, the fundamental aim was to consider the views of a reasonably large number of aspiring school leaders, and, as such, there are inevitably multiple perspectives. Where the data from the questionnaires and interviews suggest a particular aspect of the leadership and management learning of aspiring school leaders was an issue, then further questions in pursuit of validity were asked.

Although the term ‘Reliability’ is a concept most often used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the idea can be used in all kinds of research. Reliability is whether the research instruments are neutral in their effect, and would measure similar result when used on other occasions with the same ‘objects’ [8, 14]. Without the agreement of independent observers able to imitate research procedures, or the capability to use research tools and events that produce coherent measurements, the investigators would be not capable to draw satisfactory conclusions, formulate theories, or make claims about the generalisation of their research [8].

In the case of qualitative mixed research using multiple methods, which has as its integral part the researcher's self, the key question in terms of reliability might be argued to be

whether the same results and conclusions would be arrived at had another researcher conducted the research or the same researcher had undertaken it at another time. This kind of reliability, according to Denscombe [14], can be demonstrated if the aims of the research and its basic premises, the conduct of the research, and the reasoning behind key decisions, are provided explicitly in the study.

Reliability of the research instruments has been enhanced by using internal consistency reliability to examine the extent to which the LMDQ and interviews assess the same leadership and management learning skills and performance of both aspiring heads and head teachers [8, 34]. This is a measure of the precision of the measuring instruments used in a study which will reveal the extent to which items on the qualitative (field document analysis and interviews and quantitative (LMDQ) focus precisely on the issue in questions - in this case on the leadership development of Cameroon school leaders [34].

### 5.6. Ethical Issues in the Interviews

Another important foundation of research ethics is the idea of informed consent for *personal* and *sensitive* data (as defined by the Data Protection Act, 1998). Interviewees were therefore provided with a summary of the research and its purpose and a description of how the interviewees would be conducted, recorded and transcribed. They were also provided with a description of the opportunities to verify their input into the research an explanation of who might see the raw data from the research (the researcher, supervisor and examiners) and a guarantee of personal confidentiality beyond these individuals. Each interviewee was also offered the right to withdraw at any time during the interview and within a stipulated time thereafter. With this information, having been made available, interviewees were then asked to sign an informed consent form.

As it happened, all of those interviewed were very positive and none asked to withdraw at any part of the interview process, or subsequently.

All data recordings (voice and text) were stored without names, using unique numbers as identifiers for analysis purposes. As no personal data were to be retained on an electronic data base, or in hard copy, there were no implications under the Data Protection Act 1998 for data collection, analysis or thesis preparation.

## 6. Conclusion

This study will help educational administration and leadership researchers better understand the ins and outs of conducting multicultural research using close-end Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDQ), field document and standardized open-ended interviews methods are suited procedures, strategies, processes or techniques for collecting and analyzing data in order to create better understanding of Leadership and Administration Development Research. Overall, the field document and standardized open-ended interview approach

was a far more personal form of research than the LMDQ. The field document and standardized open-ended interviews methods works directly with the respondent to explore personal perspectives of leadership and management development programs that enhance preparedness for headship. The semi-structured interviews are generally easier for the respondent, especially if what are sought, opinions or impressions in depth rather than in breadth, as described by Denscombe. Unlike with the LMDQ, the interviewer has the opportunity to probe or ask follow up questions. Interviews are time consuming and they are resource intensive. The interviewer is considered a part of the measurement instrument and interviewer has to be well trained in how to respond to any contingency. The close ended LMDQ was used to describe the leadership and management development programs supporting school leader's development in Cameroon. The LMDQ can be used to test hypotheses through quantitative analysis, identifying numerical differences between variables using large or small groups as long as each respondent's answer remains anonymous. The sampling for the interview was approximately 24 participants from six case study schools. The LMDQ can be used for many schools, but also to give feedback to leaders regarding their consideration and initiating tasks. Additional notable studies include Ebot Ashu use LMDQ in his leadership and management development studies as identified by Rhodes et al that LMDQ is ideally suited to revealing experienced based learning.

## Appendix

*Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire*  
(LMDQ)

This LMDQ asks you to provide some questions about your demographic data, background and leadership and management development area of studies that offered a good preparation with respect to your transition to become an effective primary school leader. The LMDQ is part of a research project being carried out at a number of primary schools in Cameroon to determine the effectiveness of school leadership and management development of aspiring heads in Cameroon. The items in the LMDQ were categorised into two main sections and should take you less than 10 min to complete.

Your answers are anonymous and confidential. The completed questionnaire will be held securely and used only for research purposes. The researcher will combine your answers with those from others in the schools to produce an overall system for Cameroon aspiring school leaders. This will help the researcher to learn about your school and help develop a national leadership framework for aspiring heads in Cameroon.

If you have any questions about the survey or have any technical problems, please contact (ebotashu87@gmail.com) or university supervisor contact details.

### Section 1

Can you please confirm your gender, age, job role, experience in role, and type of school by ticking the relevant box(s) below:

**Table 3. Demographic Data**

[illegible]

## Section 2

Below are 30 units of studies related to leadership and management development of head teachers? Based on your perceptions since being appointed as a primary school leader, please answer by choosing a number from 1 to 5 that shows

how much you agree or disagree with how well these leadership and management development interventions prepared you to become an effective school leader supporting school effectiveness?

**Table 4.** Leadership and Management Development Questionnaire (LMDO)

RESPONSE OPTIONS									
1					2	3	4	5	
Strong Disagree					Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Scale					No.	This leadership and management development areas of studies offered a good preparation with respect to my transition to become an effective school leader			
1	2	3	4	5	A1.	Introduction to Public Policy in Cameroon			
1	2	3	4	5	A2.	History of Education in Cameroon			
1	2	3	4	5	A3.	Function of Headship in Education			
1	2	3	4	5	A4.	Sharing Vision			
1	2	3	4	5	A5.	Strategic Management			
1	2	3	4	5	A6.	Change Management			
1	2	3	4	5	A7.	Improving Teaching			
1	2	3	4	5	A8.	Improving Learning			
1	2	3	4	5	A9.	Using Data to Raise Achievements			
1	2	3	4	5	A10.	Managing Interpersonal Relationships			

RESPONSE OPTIONS												
1					2	3	4			5		
Strong Disagree					Disagree	Neutral		Agree			Strongly Agree	
Scale					No.	This leadership and management development areas of studies offered a good preparation with respect to my transition to become an effective school leader						
1	2	3	4	5	A11.	Managing Professional Development						
1	2	3	4	5	A12.	Distribution Leadership						
1	2	3	4	5	A13.	Health and Safety in Schools						
1	2	3	4	5	A14.	Policy Creation						
1	2	3	4	5	A15.	Human Resource Management						
1	2	3	4	5	A16.	Financial Management						
1	2	3	4	5	A17.	Legal Aspects in School Management						
1	2	3	4	5	A18.	Leadership in Organisation						
1	2	3	4	5	A19.	ICT Management						
1	2	3	4	5	A20.	Accountability						
1	2	3	4	5	A21.	Quality Management in Education						
1	2	3	4	5	A22.	School Community Relationship Management						
1	2	3	4	5	A23.	Learning and Assessment						
1	2	3	4	5	A24.	Learning Development						
1	2	3	4	5	A25.	Performance Management						
1	2	3	4	5	A26.	Research in Education						
1	2	3	4	5	A27.	Working with other Agencies						
1	2	3	4	5	A28.	Career and Counselling Management						
1	2	3	4	5	A29.	Strategic Management in School						
1	2	3	4	5	A30.	Self-Development of Leaders						

Please write down below if there are any leadership and management areas of studies that are worth to mention on the current curriculum.

Thank you for your honest contribution towards enabling aspiring heads to be more effective school leader.

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