



**An investigation into the role of school leadership in school improvement, including teachers' and students' development:
A case study of two Saudi Arabian high schools.**

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctoral of Philosophy

at The University of Leicester

by

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The University of Leicester

2019

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Abstract

Since Saudi Arabia began enthusiastically developing its position in the world, excellence in education has come to the fore as a key driver to the country's growth. However, school improvement has received insufficient attention from educators, policy makers, and scholars. This has resulted in Saudi schools suffering from a dearth of empirical studies designed to explore their needs in terms of the professional development of teachers to benefit students. In response, this study was conducted to fill in the current gap arising from the lack of empirical studies in this particular field, through considering the role of school leadership in school improvement and the associated requirements for the professional development of teachers and students in relation to school improvement.

The present study design relied on interpretivist qualitative methods, including documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and group interviews. The participants involved in the study were two school leaders, two school deputies, two student advisors and twelve teachers (face-to-face semi-structured interviews), and four groups of nine students (group interviews). The data was analysed using thematic analysis techniques following an interpretative coding approach.

The findings of the study reveal school leadership plays a significant role in school improvement. This is due to the authority of the school leadership team over essential factors related to the quality of teaching and learning, i.e. leadership style, school culture, inclusion, student voice, individual differences, school curriculum, school-parent relationships, PLCs, teaching effectiveness and class size. The findings also confirm that school improvement is also affected by several external factors; i.e. educational policy, the context of the school, the services available in the school district, society, lifestyle, external relationships, and the media. Although the result of this study is non-generalizable, it can be used to inform practitioners, researchers, and policy makers about how best to ensure school improvement in Saudi Arabia.

Acknowledgements

First, I want to express and extend my sincere gratitude to The Almighty God for making it possible for me to complete this thesis.

I am also enormously grateful for the immense support of my supervisor Dr. Hugh Busher, who was always there, throughout many moments of difficulty and celebration, providing me with all the necessary guidance and encouragement on my path to complete this thesis. Words are not enough to thank him.

I also wish to thank my parents. I am extremely grateful and indebted to them for the sincere and expert encouragement and inspiration they extended to me during my study trip.

I also wish to take this opportunity to communicate my deep thanks to my wife, who sacrificed everything to stand by and support me; taking on the whole responsibility of our house and children so that I would feel encouraged to keep going and successfully complete my studies. My special thanks go to my son: Rayan (9 years) and my daughters: Joanna (6 years) and Rima (2 years), who have been my primary source of delight and pleasure inspiring me during my studies; particularly my daughter Joanna who checked on my work progress every single day, especially as in the final months of my studies she was missing our extended family and her friends who live back home.

I would also like to thank all the members of my family for their continuous support; in particular my brothers and sisters. They not only motivated me to work hard but also led me to appreciate my effort and work.

I would finally like to extend my appreciation to the participants from the two case study schools, who provided me with the necessary knowledge and information to complete this research. Last but not the least, I am indebted to my department, friends and colleagues, for their continuous extension of help, enthusiasm, and encouragement to me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Research into how to achieve school improvement is a common theme within the field of educational studies (Anca, 2013; Park, 2012; Harris, 2013; Leithwood and Mascall 2008). How best to improve the quality of teaching and school culture, and thereby students' results, is widely debated in many countries (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009), as it is believed that school improvement can be connected to internal factors, such as leadership style (Harris, 2013; MacNeil et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2006; Heck and Hallinger, 2009), school culture (Given et al., 2010; Carter, 2011; Nabhani et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2012; Busher, 2006), professional learning communities (PLCs) (Allen, 2013; Vanblaere and Devos, 2016; Popp and Goldman, 2016; Woodland, 2016; Buttram and Farley-Ripple, 2016), teaching effectiveness (Dean, 1999; Richard, 2008; Heck, 2009; Cullingford, 2010), individual differences (Frederickson and Cline, 2009; Nabhani et al., 2012; Al Bahawashi, 2013; Willis, 2007), inclusion (Frederickson and Cline, 2009; Busher, 2006; Ainscow et al., 2012), school curriculum (Schmoker, 2011; MacNeil et al., 2009; Ogrinc et al., 2011), student voice (Sterrett, 2011; Ainscow et al., 2000; Kidd, 2012; Leithwood and Seashore, 2011; Busher, 2006), school-parent relationship (Nabhani et al., 2012; Busher, 2006; Frew et al., 2013), and class size (Day et al., 1996; Deutsch, 2003; Bosworth, 2011).

However, some studies identify aspects of school improvement that can be linked to external factors such as the wealth and economic status of students' families (Burnham, 2009, cited in Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009), and national policy context (Busher, 2006).

Of interest to this study, Harris and Lambert (2003) argue that improvement in schools is entwined with school culture and school leadership. Furthermore, school

improvement appears to be directly contingent on the quality (teaching and learning) of the education that students receive in schools (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). Indisputably, school leadership has a significant influence on the quality of education, due to the impact of leaders on teachers and learners, both directly and indirectly (Engels et al., 2008; MacNeil et al., 2009).

Hence, it appears from the findings of previous studies that school leadership is one of the most important aspects to consider when investigating school improvement. However, since “school improvement is a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change...through focusing on the teaching – learning process and the conditions which support it” (Hopkins, 2008b: 2,3), it is important to consider the conditions related to learning quality and the professional development of teachers and students, such as leadership style, school culture, PLCs, teaching effectiveness, individual differences, inclusion, school curriculum, student voice, relationship environment and class size, when attempting to study school improvement, in order to have a holistic picture of the required conditions for school improvement and how to foster them.

Previous studies covered the majority of those conditions separately, however there is still a need for inclusive studies that consider all the required conditions together, evaluate the importance of each condition and discuss possible ways of implementing, maintaining and enhancing them, in order to provide a better understanding of what school improvement looks like and how it could be easily achieved.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate the role of school leadership in school improvement. It aimed to identify the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, the factors

that can affect school improvement and the most important conditions for the professional development of teachers and students and overall school improvement.

1.2 Rationale of the study

The importance of this research is evident from two angles: academic and personal rationale. The academic rationale relates to the importance of school improvement to fulfilling the main goals of the education sector, which is to maximise the quality of schooling, teaching and learning (Harris and Lambert, 2003). This means that acquiring in-depth knowledge about those aspects required for school improvement can lead to advancing the quality of learning and teaching, and consequently enhance students' success and teachers' professional development, thereby contributing to overall school improvement (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). In addition, the findings of this study could meet some of the high demands raised by many educators and policymakers around the world, particularly in Saudi Arabia, who aim to implement changes to the education system to correspond with huge changes that have occurred in the last two decades. These changes have affected sociocultural contexts and economic systems in many countries, and are caused by several factors, including globalisation, technological revolution and economical competition (Alhadi, 2013).

This research is also important to the author, as it relates to the nature of the author's job as a trainer of teachers, many of whom will later become school leaders. The author is also responsible for evaluating improvements to schools in the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. Acquiring and expanding knowledge related to school leadership to improve schools will be of practical benefit in the future for both the author and schools in Saudi Arabia.

1.3 Research gap and questions

The research gap that the present study aims to fill relates to two main aspects, including the context of this study and the frameworks of previous studies. Regarding the context of this study, the research gap takes place at two different forms. First, the number of studies conducted in the Middle East regarding school improvement is considered small (Al Bahawashi, 2013; Alzaki, 2009; Al Hur, 2011; Algaber, 2012), particularly in Saudi Arabia, where the educational system in general, and schools in particular, suffer from a lack of empirical studies, which are highly required to meet the needs of schools and professional development of teachers and students (Mustafa, 2013; Alkhatam, 2013; Alguhani, 2013; Alghamdi, 2012). This study was conducted in response to that demand, and could contribute to filling in the gap caused by the lack of empirical studies in this particular field. Second, as far as the researcher is aware, this is the first time for the role of school leadership in school improvement to be investigated through a qualitative methodology at the context of this study. This is particularly important because in Saudi Arabia, the majority of studies carried out are based on quantitative methodology, which is the main methodology to conduct a study in the Saudi academic environment (Almunneef, 2012; Alghamdi, 2010; Alguhani, 2013). The reason behind the choice of a qualitative methodology for this research was that although a qualitative method does not enhance the ability to generalise the findings, due to the nature of this methodology and the sample size, as well as characterising qualitative data is not easy and can lead to complexities that consume more of the researchers' time (Cohen et al., 2007; Hopkins, 2008). However, a qualitative methodology can provide in-depth information and knowledge (Gillham, 2010; Shkedi, 2005). This is very essential particularly in some contexts such as Saudi

Arabia that suffers from the lack of empirical studies. This is because having in-depth understanding about an issue is the initial stage that is very important and must be achieved in order to be able to move forward to the second stage, which is the generalizability that can be enhanced through a quantitative methodology. Therefore, since I had the opportunity to conduct this research in the UK where qualitative methodologies are commonly used by the academic researchers, I decided to consider qualitative methodology as a research design to carry this research out in order to provide in-depth information and knowledge about the issue of investigation, which could contribute to fill in the gap of this research caused by the lack of empirical studies as well as to contribute to the context of this study through the application of qualitative methodology in the field of educational leadership and management.

In terms of the frameworks of previous studies, the research gap was found on the borders of the previous studies, which were limited to investigating school improvement from a particular angle, such as school culture (Fisher et al., 2012; Nabhani et al., 2012), school curriculum (MacNeil et al., 2009; Ogrinc et al., 2011), teaching effectiveness (Dean, 1999; Cullingford, 2010) and class size (Bosworth, 2011; Deutsch, 2003). Although school improvement can be studied and approached from different angles as shown above, this subject requires a combination of conditions that need to be netted together to enhance the professional development of teachers, students and overall school improvement. In addition, due to the position of authority of school leaders that allows them to have a major influence on the most important and effective factors for school improvement (directly and indirectly) (MacNeil, Prater and Busch, 2009; Atawy, 2014; Engels et al., 2008; Waldron and McLeskey, 2010; Fisher et al., 2012), this study was conducted to investigate school improvement by considering the role of school leadership in school improvement, and the associated requirements for

the development of teachers and students. The framework of the current study was designed to fill in the gap of the previous studies through a combination of the most essential aspects for school improvement, including leadership approach, school culture, professional learning communities, teaching effectiveness, individual differences, inclusion, school curriculum, student voices, school-parent relationships and class size. There are several reasons behind the choice of this framework. First, constructing the framework in such a way is likely to illuminate the most important and effective aspects for school improvement, and how to enhance them. Additionally, all the main aspects included in the framework were argued to be important for leadership success, teachers' professional development, teaching effectiveness, students' development, students' success and learning quality, which all are the main components of school improvement (Hopkins, 2008b).

Based on the aim of this study and the gaps mentioned above, this study has been conducted in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between school leadership and school improvement?
2. How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?
3. To what extent do policy and social contexts affect the processes of school improvement?
4. How can teachers' and students' professional development be constructed?

1.4 Methodology

This section aims to briefly highlight the methodology used to conduct this study, to collect and analyse its data. More details about the methodology of this study are available in the research design chapter (chapter 3).

The present study was conducted to answer research questions through a linked case study approach based at two Saudi Arabian high schools. Both schools are state and single-sex male schools (see chapter 4 for more details about the contexts of both schools). For the purpose of ensuring anonymity, the original names of the case study schools have been hidden and pseudonyms have been used throughout the case study; Mahad High School to refer to school 1 and Sultan High School to refer to school 2. The research design relied on interpretivist qualitative methods, including documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and group interviews. The participants involved in the study were two school leaders, four senior staff and twelve teachers who were involved in semi-structured interviews, and four groups of nine students who were involved in group interviews. School leaders, senior staff and teachers were interviewed separately one by one, while students were interviewed in groups. Documents were collected from the two schools. The data was analysed using thematic analysis based on an interpretative coding approach that reflects the author's belief regarding the construction of social reality that requires the author to be explicit about his role and any possible impact on the research and its data in particular.

Quotations were translated from the original language (Arabic) into English, and the accuracy of the translation was checked by two PhD Saudi Arabian students who were provided with multi-translated sections with original transcripts to test the accuracy of the translation. Both PhD students are colleagues studying in the UK and speak Arabic

and English fluently. One of them is a specialist in educational leadership, while the other is working in E-learning.

1.5 Research context

The specific context of this research is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), as will be explored in detail in this section, which makes particular reference to the Kingdom's educational policies and practices. The first part of the chapter offers an overview of the KSA, and considers the nature of its geography, and its population as well as its culture and economy. In the second section of this chapter, the educational system is scrutinised, to clarify aspects including the general background to the Saudi education system, the current Saudi education system, the aims and objectives of Saudi high schools, the development process at Saudi schools, the challenges of the Saudi educational system and influential factors informing the Saudi educational policy.

As one of the wealthiest and largest countries in the Middle East by area, Baki (2004) asserts that the KSA has a very significant role to play regionally, exerting substantial religious, economic and political influence. Its role is far-reaching and pivotal in the Arabic and Islamic worlds, as well as within the Cooperation Council for the Arabic States of the Gulf (GCC) (which includes Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Azazi, 2012). The economic influence of the KSA is linked to the wealth it enjoys as a result of its gas and oil resources (The Council of Saudi Chambers, 2014). Meanwhile, its religious influence is attributed to its geographical position and theological status as central to the Islamic World. Two of the world's holiest Islamic cities, Medina and Makah are situated in the KSA.

The KSA first coalesced into its current form in 1932 under King Abdulaziz Al Saud. At this time illiteracy was seen as a notable barrier to the country's development, an issue that remained a problem until the early 1970s (Alsonble et al., 2008), at which time six out of ten people were still unable to read or write (Azazi, 2012). Consequently, during the reigns of King Saud and his sons education was prioritised, leading to significant advances in the national education framework (Nasir, AlthobianiandAlaithy, 2010).

1.5.1 The country and the people

The KSA covers 2,250,000 square kilometres, which is more than four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula's land mass. It is located at the heart of the Middle East in the south west of Asia; it borders Jordan and Iraq to the north and Oman and Yemen to the south. To the east lies the Persian Gulf, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, and the west borders the Red Sea coastline (see Figure 1.1, below).

Figure 1.1: Map of the KSA



(All images are Google images copyrights)

Prior to the establishment of KSA, the governors who ruled the Arabian Peninsula in the late 1700s and 1800s were loyal to different nations. The British held sway in the eastern regions, and the Ottoman rulers in the north and west. There was a tribal system in place in the central part of the Arabian Peninsula, which combined to create two states, which later formed the core of the modern KSA, while the area to the south of modern-day KSA was part of the Yemen. The Al Saud family (the present-day royal family in KSA), governed the two central Saudi States, the first from 1744-1818 and the second from 1824-1891(Al-Fozan, 1997). Al-Zaydi (2004) advises that both these states were subsequently taken over by the Ottoman empire.

King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud united the disparate regions into a single vast country, drawing on his family name to usurp tribal governments and consolidate the loyalties of

the tribes. As the modern kingdom formed, people in the area welcomed an end to tribal wars (Al-Fozan, 1997). It was not a simple process however, taking place over a thirty-year period from 1902, the uniting of the Kingdom involved delicate negotiations on the one hand and conflict on the other. After the death in 1953 of King Abdul-Aziz, his sons inherited his title: Saud, Faisal, Khalid, Fahad and Abdullah, followed by the current King, Salman (Al-Zaydi, 2004).

By 2012, the KSA's population was 28 million, the vast majority being Arab Muslims, according to Al-Fozan (1997); the World Bank (2013) notes that over 95% of these are Sunni Muslims.

1.5.2 Culture

In this section, the cultural norms of modern day KSA will be discussed; since they are not widely documented, they will be presented drawing on the author's personal experiences of growing up and living there. Some of the issues relating to Islamic customs and traditions will also be explored. This is pertinent, as Islam is the KSA's dominant religion. The author's subsequent nine-year residency in the UK contributes an additional reflective element, while supporting data sources will also be referenced.

Generosity, hospitality, magnanimity, solidarity and unity are arguably at the root of many of the KSA's traditions and customs. Baki (2004) suggests that the source of many of these traditions is Islam, and that they have become integrated into the fabric of Saudi society as a result of the religion's dominance. This argument has certain weaknesses however, as the religion of Islam is present in more than 200 countries worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2009) and practised by 1.57 billion people, many of whom observe notably different customs and practices, suggesting religion is not

necessarily the determining factor. The Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology's (2017) opine that the heritage of the native Bedouin desert settlers combined with the religious teachings of Islam to produce the customs and traditions present in the KSA today.

The traditions of generosity and hospitality are fundamental in Saudi society, and generosity greatly enhances a person's social status. Conversely, if someone appears miserly, this is poorly regarded, and may even be considered as grounds for divorce. The desire to help others, or magnanimity, is widely revered by Saudi society and becomes more important when related to those most in need of help. This is a quality seen as less significant in large cities than in small towns and desert cities today.

Unity and solidarity are highly valued traditions, and the focus on family loyalty extends beyond a person's immediate family to their extended family and tribe. Observers have commented that the strong family ties witnessed in Saudi society developed from the ancient tribal system, as people relied on these for protection (Al-Fozan, 1997). Although the tribal system has declined since the Kingdom was formed, the sense of belonging and pride it conveys remain. Indeed, extended families have largely retained their emphasis on strong ties (Alaqeel, 2013). For example, tribal heritage did, until very recently, influence marriage choices. The two parties were expected to be from tribes that were evenly matched in terms of social standing; it was feared that divorce would be more likely to occur if this was not the case.

The Islamic religion has exerted a profound influence on Saudi society, and the fact that two key locations in the Islamic world are in the KSA has certainly influenced this. The city of Medina in the KSA is where the prophet Mohammed is said to have developed the religion in the 6th century, while Makah is not only the birthplace of Islam, but also

the location that all Muslims worldwide face when praying five times each day (Baki, 2004). Makah also plays host to more than six million pilgrims annually, two million of whom visit for the Hajj during the last month of the Islamic calendar. These pilgrims have made the KSA a unique focal point for the Islamic world (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). Meanwhile, Baki (2004) advises that Muslims believe the Saudi King is the keeper of Islam, and the country's laws and governance are rooted in both the Hadith, or sayings of the prophet, and the teachings of the Holy Book, the Quran.

Islamic beliefs and values drive the behaviour of the Saudi community (Baki, 2004), and the associated values are implicit in the personal and professional lives of Saudi citizens, creating behaviours and relationships that are recognised as societal norms. The emphasis placed on family in Islam is mirrored by the strong family bonds that characterise the community in the KSA.

1.5.3 Economy

According to Baki (2004), the Saudi economy was weak at its inception, but the nation's fortunes were fundamentally changed by the discovery of oil in 1938. The subsequent advances in mass production in the 1970s further enhanced the nation's fortune, leading the KSA to grow into one of the world's richest countries. The KSA now plays a notable economic and political role on the world stage, as mentioned by Alsonble et al. (2008). This economic growth generated a number of social consequences, including large-scale migration from the desert to urban areas, and the gradual decline of the tribal system. Both Al-Fozan (1997) and Baki (2004) note that this resulted in the creation of new jobs in the government and private sectors, while rural occupations, such as animal husbandry sharply declined.

The Council of Saudi Chambers advised that in 2014 the KSA owned roughly 20% of the world's oil reserves, making it one of the largest countries involved in the production, export and preservation of oil. It is also a significant producer of gas, being the fourth-largest owner of gas reserves (The Council of Saudi Chambers, 2014). Hanware (2011) points out that the KSA ranked 17th in the Global Competitiveness Report of 2011-2012, while the World Bank (2013) estimated the KSA's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at more than \$US 669 billion in 2011, with an annual growth rate at that time of 9%. Meanwhile, the per-capita gross national income (GNI) over the same period was \$US 30,160, not far behind the United Kingdom's \$US 35,260 (The World Bank, 2013).

Gerth (2004) advises that both economists and the Saudi government have expressed concern over Saudi's rapid economic growth, as it has been almost entirely dependent upon gas and oil reserves, which are a finite resource. The fact that at least a quarter of the population comprises foreign workers is an additional concern raised by Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013), as the majority of these workers send money back to their home countries, rather than investing or spending it locally. This has a consequent negative effect on the Saudi economy.

1.5.4 General background of the Saudi education system

The Saudi education system developed in five distinct stages. The first stage began prior to the formation of the KSA in 1922. Education at that time took three different forms:

The first was traditional education in the form of Islamic learning, as a continuation of practices at the time of the prophet Mohammed (Nasir et al., 2010). This mainly took place in mosques and involved the teaching of Islam, Arabic, maths and literacy. This

type of education was referred to as ‘Katateeb’, a phrase that refers to teachers. It was not governed by a specified body; rather it was self-managed, and families chose a level of education that accorded with their income level and the needs of their children (Mostafa, 2006). This type of education originated from the early 7th century, and continued until the 1950s, when it was replaced by formal education (see Figure 1.2 below).

Figure 1.2: Representative photo of Katateeb education



(All images are Google images copyrights)

The second type of education took place in Ottoman schools, overseen by the Ottoman Empire, to whom the governors of the western side of the Arabian Peninsula were loyal (Alaqeel, 2013). The first school of this type was established in the 1890s and taught Turkish, maths and history. The majority of the staff were Turks, accustomed to

teaching in Turkish, and even Arabic grammar was taught in Turkish (see Figure 1.3, below). This was seen by many observers as an attempt by the Ottoman Empire to transform people into Turks; thus, these schools were not popular (Nasir et al., 2010).

Figure 1.3: Representative photo of Ottoman schools



(All images are Google images copyrights)

The third type of education was offered by private schools. The term ‘private’ here does not refer to fee-paying schools; rather it means the community ran them and not the government (Mostafa, 2006). Where people felt a need for organised education to fight illiteracy, they campaigned to raise money and collect books to establish private schools. One of the earliest schools in this category was established in Makah in 1922 (Nasir et al., 2010) (see Figure 1.4, below). It is worth noting that the efforts of the Ottomans to convert Arabs into Turks significantly accelerated the establishment of

private schools (Mostafa, 2006). Many schools were founded in this way, and prepared many scholars and educators (Alhamed et al., 2007).

Figure 1.4: Photo of the first private school in Makah



(All images are Google images copyrights)

The second stage started in 1926, with the creation and establishment of the local education authority in Makah. This was an initial step towards a national education system (MOE, 2015). The main aim of creating this department was to build schools and introduce formal education to the KSA. At this point, and in the same year (1926), the local education authority opened twelve primary boys' schools (Alsonble et al., 2008). The first secondary boys' school was opened in 1927, aiming to prepare students to teach in primary schools (ibid).

The third stage involved the creation of the first Saudi educational council; established in Makah in 1928. Subsequently, the first boys' high school was created in 1935, intending to prepare students for university level (Alhogail, 2011). Students who completed secondary school could either work as teachers in primary schools, or continue to study at high school. This was a three year process, if they wanted to carry on to study abroad for a Bachelor's degree (ibid).

The fourth stage began in 1941, with the opening of the first girls' school in Jeddah (Alhammed et al., 2004). This was a crucial stage, as it was the first time girls were able to study at school. There were no co-educational settings in the KSA at that time (MOE, 2015).

The fifth stage was in 1951, and saw the creation of the Saudi Ministry of Education led by King Fahad as first Minister (MOE, 2015). The Ministry of Education at that time was only concerned with the operation of boys' schools. Girls' schools were monitored and supervised by the General Presidency for Girls' Education, which was established later, in 1960 (MOE, 2015). The Ministry of Education and the General Presidency for Girls' Education functioned independently until 2002, when both sectors were integrated into the Ministry of Education, which then became the only official body responsible for the educational system, covering schools for both sexes in all districts of the country (MOE, 2015). The Ministry of Education is located in the capital city of the KSA, and has 45 local educational departments to serve the districts and the cities of the country. The main role of those departments is to monitor the operations of schools and their implementation of proposals, instructions and decisions issued by the Ministry of Education, which is the main overseer of national educational rules, regulations, objectives and policies (Local Department of Education, 2013).

1.5.5 The current Saudi education system

The Saudi educational system is centralised and based on a hierarchical and bureaucratic system entirely controlled by the Ministry of Education. Administrative control, educational provision and national educational policy are managed at senior government level, and the role of the Ministry of Education is to manage areas such as budgeting, timetabling, the appointment of new teachers, monitoring the administration of schools, evaluating schools' outcomes and teacher performance, and monitoring the progress of training programs (MOE, 2015). The Ministry of Education is solely responsible for the national curriculum, textbooks, assessment system and syllabuses at the main educational stages (including primary, secondary and high school), whereas until recently the university stage was controlled by the Ministry of Higher Education (Alaqueel, 2013). Until 2015, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education were independent. After this time they were integrated into the Ministry of Education, which is now the sole official body responsible for the educational system at all stages (MOE, 2015). Schools, on the other hand, have very limited authority for managing chief schooling aspects, such as supervising the preparation and adoption of the school plans, distributing tasks to all school members in light of instructions provided by the Ministry of Education, preparing school's schedules and timetables, and monitoring the progress of students and the performance of teachers. This reflects the centralisation of the Saudi educational system, creating some disadvantages regarding educational development, and particularly educational change, which is considered slow (Alsayegh, 2007).

The formal educational system of the KSA is organised into three stages: primary, secondary and high school (see Table 1.1, below). The primary stage lasts six years,

from Year 1 to Year 6. Children begin Year 1 at age six, finish primary school at age eleven, and then begin secondary school, which they attend until age fourteen. The final stage of formal education in the KSA is high school, which lasts three years. Students start at the age of fifteen and graduate at seventeen (Information Management, 2011). These stages comprise general education, after which students can undertake a diploma degree (which usually takes two years to acquire), or study for a Bachelor's degree at a university (degrees vary in length from three to five years). There is also nursery education provided in the KSA; however, this system is privately run and there is no formal oversight or curriculum at this level (Curriculum Development Department, 2011). Education and schooling are not compulsory in the KSA, so people can choose to stop studying at any stage, or choose to never attend school (Rules and Regulations, 2010). Education is provided free of charge in state schools for all students at all stages, including primary, secondary and high school. Saudi universities also provide free education for Saudi students, with international students paying fees (MOE, 2015;Algarfi, 2010).

Table 1.1: Saudi general education stages

Stage	Duration	Year group	Start age	Finish age
Primary	6 years	1-6	6 years	11 years
Secondary	3 years	7-9	12 years	14 years
High School	3 years	10-12	15 years	17 years

Source: MOE (2015).

The types of schools in the KSA can be summarised as follows: at all stages, schools are based on a single-sex model; after nursery stage there are no co-educational settings,

even at university stage (Rules and Regulations, 2010). At all stages there are both state schools and private schools in the KSA; all schools in the KSA adhere to the national curriculum (ibid). The main differences between state and private schools are the facilities, level of care, and flexibility; i.e. standards are generally higher in private schools (Alyahia, 2007).

The national curriculum, as followed by all schools, is set, edited and updated by the Ministry of Education (Curriculum Development Department, 2011). Therefore, in the KSA, principals are given the title of school leaders, not principals, underlining the fact that school leaders receive limited permission from the Ministry of Education to determine the policies within their schools. School leaders in the KSA cannot create a private curriculum, nor do they have the right to edit, add or remove curriculum content; they only manage the implementation of the existing national curriculum (MOE, 2015). The curriculum is taught in two parts, with the academic year including two terms of 14 weeks each (Rules and Regulations, 2010).

The content of the curriculum varies according to stage, but there are roughly seven subject areas taught: religion, languages, sports, social studies, arts, science and computing. The number of subjects taught each term varies based on stage (see Table 1.2, below).

Table 1.2: Subjects' number vs. stage

Year group	Stage	Number of subjects
1-3	Primary	8
4-5	Primary	9
6	Primary	10
7-9	Secondary	13
10	High School	16
11-12	High School	14

Source: Planning and Curriculum Department (2012).

The system of examinations and assessment varies by stage. At primary school level, there are no examinations, and students are evaluated by their teachers from day one, via continuous assessment by primary school teachers, who evaluate students' achievements and their skills on a daily basis throughout the whole school term. They then provide a final report at the end of each term, which reflects the level of the student's achievement and skills (Curriculum Development Department, 2011). However, at secondary and high school levels, the evaluation is based on examinations: two exams each term; a midterm exam that accounts for 40 percent of the total score; and a final exam providing the remaining 60 percent (ibid).

In terms of the number of schools, teachers and students in the KSA, the latest available statistics, as confirmed by the Ministry of Education date from 2014 (MOE, 2015). According to the statistics presented, the number of formal education schools in the KSA in 2014 was 34,749 in total, including 18,710 girls' schools and 16,039 boys' schools. There were 546,592 teachers in total working at the schools. 245,842 were male teachers, and there were 300,750 female teachers. The total number of male and

female students attending the schools was 5,014,975, divided as follows: 2,570,334 at primary schools; 1,230,557 at secondary schools; and 1,214,084 at high schools.

1.5.6 The aims and objectives of Saudi high schools

The KSA's educational policy set out the central objectives of education. These are, to produce students with Islamic values and beliefs and the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to apply technology efficiently so as to be well placed to compete effectively on the world stage. Particular emphasis is placed on the practical sciences (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013).

Since the case study schools provided in this study are high schools, where students start at the age of fifteen and graduate at seventeen, it might be beneficial to clarify the national aims and objectives of this particular educational stage. According to Alhogail (2011), there are twelve aims and objectives associated with the Saudi high school stage:

- 1) To enhance students' understanding of Islamic culture;
- 2) To provide students with essential research skills and scientific critical thinking;
- 3) To enhance the learning skills of students so that they are compatible with their age;
- 4) To assist students to avoid negative ideas and thinking by enhancing their social awareness;
- 5) To help students prepare for their futures by providing them with useful experiences;
- 6) To help students understand their rights, responsibilities and duties regarding their families and other people;

- 7) To help students to establish goals and plans for university level;
- 8) To help students who do not plan to complete the university level to find appropriate jobs;
- 9) To enhance the culture of collaboration among students and encourage participation in charity work;
- 10) To encourage students to use the Internet, technology and the library;
- 11) To promote students' skills regarding essential learning aspects, such as observation, taking notes and data analysis; and
- 12) To enhance students' skills in linguistics, especially learning foreign languages, particularly English.

According to Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013), to meet these objectives, the government has invested extensively in education, seeking to change its direction to match the needs of the modern labour market. Alaqeel (2013) concurs with this view, advising that the direction of education has also focused on developing outcomes to enable the KSA to secure its place within what is an increasingly competitive global environment. The percentage of the national budget spent on education rose from 8.7% in the 1970s (Alsonble et al., 2008) to almost 25% in 2012, accounting for 6.4% of the total GDP. This compares to about 5.5% in the United States and the UK (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). This investment in education has lowered illiteracy rates, which fell from 60% in 1972 to just 4% in 2012. Meanwhile primary school enrolment has increased to 98.7% (Azazi, 2012).

Despite the considerable spending on education, Baki (2004) notes that educational outcomes do not appear to answer the needs of today's labour market, as evidenced by the fact that the number of foreign workers has increased to 20-30% of the total number of legal workers in Saudi Arabia, according to Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013). To

fill the gaps in the labour market currently occupied by foreign workers, the KSA requires skilled graduates able to fuel economic growth in areas other than the traditional oil industry (Baki, 2004). This new generation of talent should ideally focus on targeting employment in new business sectors, such as the service industry, since careers in the oil industry are not sustainable long term.

1.5.7 The development of Saudi schools

According to Nasir et al. (2010), several programmes have been implemented to improve the education system since 1975, with a number of researchers identifying the majority to have focused on high schools, seeking to narrow the gap between general and higher education (Alhamed et al., 2007; Alaqeel, 2013; Alsonble et al., 2008). For instance, “Developed High Schools” and “Comprehensive Schools” aimed to implement a university-style system, whereby students could select subjects and build their own timetables. This proved unsuccessful, in that many students elected to leave the school grounds during free periods and became more vulnerable to antisocial behaviour. The disciplinary issues and security problems these programmes generated necessitated government intervention to halt programmes, as advised by (Nasir et al., 2010; Alharbi and Almahdi, 2012).

Despite the failure of the programmes detailed above, the Ministry of Education has continued to develop a number of proposals intended to improve Saudi Arabian schooling. They have included the “Saudi Elite Schools” programme, which Mostafa (2006) advises was initiated in 1999 via a pilot scheme at five Riyadh schools, prior to being more widely implemented. This programme consisted largely of administrative changes, with the school managers, deputies, and teachersstructure being replaced with

a school leader, head of department and middle management. Alhamed et al. (2007) suggest that while this improved the school administration, the curriculum remained the same as that in ordinary schools, while there were unresolved issues relating to the motivations of school leaders. Largely because of these problems, Alharbi and Almahdi (2012) explained that the “Saudi Elite Schools” programme did not progress beyond the pilot stage, although some of the first five schools remain.

In addition, “The national King Abdullah Programme”, called “Tatweer”, and launched by King Abdullah in 2005, covers four different areas of education for improvement (Alharbi and Almahdi, 2012). The first of these areas concerned offering a programme of professional training and development for teachers on a continuous and ongoing basis across relevant curricular topics, while the second focused on introducing effective interactive technology to create a modern learning environment in schools. Meanwhile, Nasir et al. (2010) advise that the third strand concerned the development of the curriculum, which began to be implemented across schools after 2010, using a phased approach that started with the first and fourth years of primary school, and the first year of secondary and high school. Alharbi and Almahdi (2012) elaborated on the vision for this aspect of improvement, declaring that its aim was to create an elite curriculum with students at its centre, using a high degree of interactive technology to facilitate innovation and competitiveness in students, alongside core beliefs and values intended to achieve global thinking and national interaction. The programme’s final area related to non-classroom-based activities, stressing that these should be of equal importance to in-class learning. Activities that foster skills including leadership, innovation and communication serve to develop each student in a well-rounded manner, taking care of their physical, social, cultural, artistic, professional and scientific needs (ibid.). There is little evidence available currently to measure the programme’s success,

as it has been only partially implemented. Certain aspects, including curriculum changes, are well underway, but others, such as developing a technological learning environment, supporting activities external to the classroom, and professional training for staff are not yet in place.

Despite major efforts and continuous attempts by the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education, the educational system in the KSA still suffers from multiple challenges that slow the pace of educational improvement (Hamroun, 2009).

1.5.8 Challenges for the Saudi educational system

According to Algarfi (2010), two main barriers affect improvements in the Saudi educational system. The first involves plans to change made by policymakers that are not effectively implemented in the field. Second, the centralised system of the Ministry of Education is now a barrier to educational improvement in the KSA. This is due to the impact of this approach on the development of the educational system, educational rules and regulations, and learning equipment, which has not been changed for almost 25 years. The centralised nature of the KSA's education system is the key-contributing factor inhibiting positive change. Its bureaucratic and hierarchical culture means it is difficult to initiate administrative and policy-making changes at a local level (Alaqueel, 2013; Al-Fozan, 1997; Alsonble et al., 2008; Nasir, et al., 2010; and Alhamed et al., 2007).

Both Baki (2004) and Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013) have noted that the Saudi education system is currently failing to prepare graduates for the contemporary labour market. The consequence of this is that private companies, in particular, are continuing to employ migrant labour. Foreign workers are more skilful and offer greater flexibility

in terms of their working days and hours, as well as willing to accept lower salaries than local labourers, according to Alaqeel (2013) and Alhamed et al. (2007). As mentioned previously, migrants currently comprise 20-30% of the population (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). Young people in the KSA who enrol on vocational courses are rare, which is a further issue for the labour market. As Alsonble et al. (2008) argue, there is currently a paucity of jobs related to vocational qualifications, and in addition, the wages for these jobs are typically low.

There is an emerging gap between the demand for schooling and the availability of schools, with densely populated areas frequently having up to 45 children in each class (Alhamed et al., 2007). While the national statistics overall demonstrate adequate staff-student and school-student ratios, problems exist at a local level due to the country's growing population. Indeed, World Bank (2013) figures show the population of the KSA had grown to 28 million in 2012, whereas it was 24 million in 2004. Furthermore, Nasir et al. (2010) add that there has been growing awareness of the importance of education among the Saudi population, with World Bank statistics (2013) demonstrating that primary school enrolment grew by 3% between 2011 and 2012. The evidence presented by Alharbi and Almahdi(2012) suggests that classroom and building provision by the Ministry is not yet commensurate with increased demand.

The relationship between school and home is another critical factor for student achievement, according to Nasir et al. (2010), with Alhamed et al. (2007) suggesting communication is generally poor in the KSA. Communication between school and home is generally limited to issues over low achievement and bad behaviour and tends not to reflect broader support. Communication should be improved and parents educated if they are to support their children to make appropriate choices about fields of work and vocation (Nasir et al., 2010; Mostafa, 2006).

Another challenge impeding educational change, and particularly school improvements, is the reluctance to use technology as a learning resource in schools. This stems from either the lack of availability of technology, which applies in some schools, or teachers' limited experiences using technology (Alsayegh, 2007). This particular issue has a negative effect on the quality of teaching and learning, as many Saudi teachers continue to use traditional teaching strategies, that are incompatible with contemporary educational requirements. This not only negatively affects students' learning and development, but also has consequences for the future of students, who might, as a result, struggle to meet the requirements of the job market (Algarfi, 2010).

The KSA is very enthusiastic about developing its position globally by applying intensive changes to key sectors, such as the economy, health and education. In addition, it views excellence in education as essential to improvements in the country, the aim being to bring it closer to the level of developed countries. However, it should be understood that educational change is not easily changed; rather, it demands improvements across a combination of multi-related aspects that need to be considered, planned, developed and maintained by applying different processes, which require effort and time to achieve successfully. Similarly, successful school improvement requires many processes at different levels, as argued by Fullan (1999, cited in Harris and Lambert, 2003: 104); who referred to "three phases" regarding school improvement. The first phase is when schools begin working and focusing on improvement; this is the "initiation stage". The second phase is when schools start acting upon development plans; this phase is the "implementation stage". The third phase is when the procedures and traditions of school improvement become the central elements of school procedures and practices; this is the "maintaining and sustaining stage".

The development process at Saudi schools appears to be satisfactory when considering the requirement for educational change and school improvement. In addition, the results of the study might reflect some of the successes of the Ministry of Education and schools' leadership, by focusing on educational improvement through the application and practice of effective educational theories at the case study schools. Despite the surrounding circumstances and the difficulties experienced by the two case study schools within the current educational system, both effectively exemplify practices relating to the majority of the effective theories discussed in the literature. Applying specific targeted changes could result in these schools becoming outstanding.

1.5.9 Influential factors arising from Saudi educational policy

Educational policy in the KSA is influenced by a number of factors, which can be broadly segmented into five key categories: geographical, political, social, religious and economic (Nasir et al., 2010).

As previously mentioned, the KSA covers more than two million square kilometres, and has a hot and arid climate with great expanses of desert (Alharbi and Almahdi, 2012). The geography of this vast country has a profound effect on the communities who live there, with broad categorisations being Bedouin desert dwellers, agricultural and industrial communities. Due to the heat, the school day begins at 6 am during the summer, finishing at midday to allow students to arrive home before the strongest heat of the day (Mostafa, 2006). Alsonble et al. (2008) suggest there are unique challenges with regard to educational standards in desert areas. Not only does the location create its own issues, but there are also high rates of illiteracy amongst parents and families.

The political influence on Saudi educational policy in the KSA is strong, as is the case in the majority of non-democratic countries, where areas such as health, the economy, and education must meet the objectives of the ruler, who has ultimate and total power and authority over the running of the country (Alharbi and Almahdi, 2012). Thus, while rapid change and development are typical in democratic countries, this is not generally the case in non-democratic countries, such as the KSA, due to the difficulties and challenges faced by educational policy makers, who require greater power and authority to make decisions and implement changes, and to develop the educational system to improve the outcomes of schools (ibid). The difficulties with decision-making and implementation at school level, reflect the negative impact of politics on the education system in general, and its development in particular. Education is also influenced by the political situation in the KSA, which holds a position of influence within both the GCC and the Islamic and Arabic Worlds. Azazi (2012) posits that the significance of belonging to these groups has been fostered through educational propaganda. For example, Alharbi and Almahdi (2012) suggest that when Saudi leaders proposed the GCC move from a cooperation to a union in 2012, schools were instrumental in explaining this move to students; encouraging them to explore both the benefits and individual responsibilities associated with the transitional period.

Alharbi and Almahdi (2012) argue that a number of additional social factors also affect educational policymaking, such as the influence of Islam, language, and cultural differentiation within the population. Policymakers wish to reinforce a sense of belonging to the Arabic world among Saudi citizens, and this is evidenced by the fact that all education takes place in Arabic, the official language of the KSA, with all textbooks and scientific terms being translated from their original languages (Nasir et al., 2010).

The large number of foreign workers means expatriates' children must be served by the education system. Notably, the children of highly paid workers and diplomats are catered for by international schools, which typically use either an American or British curriculum, such as the British International School in Riyadh (Alharbi and Almahdi, 2012). However, Saudi nationals are forbidden from enrolling at these schools due to curricular differences and the fact that religion receives less emphasis.

The vast majority of Saudi Arabian students are Muslim, with the requirement to study Islam being paramount in relation to both textbooks and the subjects taught in school more broadly. According to Alhamed et al. (2007), the same source also advises that boys and girls are segregated in school and that this phenomenon is encouraged by Islamic scholars. However, Baki (2004) and Prokop (2003) both consider sex segregation is enforced by the government without consideration of people's personal preferences; although this should be seen in reference to the fact that segregation is present in many other areas of Saudi Arabian life. Men and women are separated in work places, at social events and parties, weddings, and funerals and even within the home (Mostafa, 2006; Alsonble et al., 2008). However, this does not repeal the influence of religion on educational policy in particular, or on Saudi society in general. This is because the majority of people in the country are very religious and consider the religion as important in all aspects of their lives. Their movements, behaviours, business deals, and personal decisions are made with reference to religion, as Saudi's emphasise living in a way that is compatible with Islam and its principles.

Regarding the economic factor; it is apparent that the KSA's natural gas and oil resources mean it is a wealthy country, with the ability to invest in funding to improve education, which is a primary focus for developers and planners (Nasir et al., 2010). Alaqueel (2013) states that educational investment continues despite fluctuating oil

prices, and education continues to be free for all students, from primary level all the way through to those undertaking doctorates. In addition, Alsonble et al. (2008) note that university students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels receive about £200 per month from the government to cover living expenses.

1.6 Overview of the chapters

Chapter 1 offered an introductory view of the thesis by providing a general background about the subject of this study. It presented the academic and personal rationale of this study. It discussed the research gap and presented the research questions. It presented the methodology used to conduct this research. It considered the research context and covered it from different angles through the presentation of the country and the people, culture, economy, general background of the Saudi education system, the current Saudi education system, the aims and objectives of Saudi high schools, the development of Saudi schools, the challenges for the Saudi educational system and the influential factors arising from Saudi educational policy.

Chapter 2 is the literature review. It aims to identify the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, the factors that can affect school improvement and the essential conditions for school improvement. It begins with a definition of terms, before starting the discussion about school improvement and school effectiveness. It also covers the discussion about the relationship between school leadership and school improvement. This is followed by the conceptual framework of the study. This is then followed by discussions about leadership approaches, school culture and the essential conditions for school improvement, which are divided at two levels: the school level, which involves a

discussion about inclusion, student voice, individual differences, school curriculum, school-parent relationship, professional learning community and teaching effectiveness. The second level is classroom-level conditions and it involves a discussion about inclusion at classroom-level, classroom atmosphere and class size. The final section of this chapter provides the emergent themes of the literature review.

Chapter 3 is the research design. It deals mainly with the research paradigm and methodology. It starts with a discussion about the issues of ontology and epistemology to clarify the research paradigm of this study and the suitable philosophical position/s, which determined the stance that was taken to carry this research study. This is followed by the research approach that was implemented to conduct this research. It continues to present the methodology of this research; in particular, it looks at a case study that informed the methodology of this study. This is followed by a discussion about the techniques implemented to ensure the reliability, trustworthiness and credibility of the research study. Finally, it considers the techniques and procedures that were used to draw the sampling, ensure the ethical issues, select the suitable data collection methods and choose the appropriate data analysis methods.

Chapter 4 is the presentation and discussion of findings. It provides detailed information about the two participating case study schools, their contexts and the participants included in this study. This is followed by presentation and discussion of the findings of this research study, which considers the findings from the two case study schools; Mahad High School and Sultan High School. It also includes the discussion of findings and it aims to examine this study's findings by comparing them to the findings of previous studies in order to evaluate how closely this study's findings correspond to those of the studies mentioned in the literature review, thus demonstrating how this research can make a contribution to the existing literature.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion. It presents a brief summary of the study, a summary of the study's main findings, the original contributions of this study, discussion of this study's limitations, the implications of the study, and the recommendation for further research.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an introductory view of the thesis by providing a general background about school improvement, presenting the rationale of this study, discussing the research gap, setting the research questions and presenting the methodology of this study. It has also considered the context of this research and covered it from different angles, including the presentation of the country and the people, culture, economy, general background of the Saudi education system, the current Saudi education system, the aims and objectives of Saudi high schools, the development of Saudi schools, the challenges for the Saudi educational system and the influential factors arising from Saudi educational policy. The next chapter will cover the literature review of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The terms “school improvement” and “school development” are generally used as terms that indicate positive change in schools and their members. The literal meaning of the two terms (improvement & development) is slightly different, for instance, improvement according to Oxford Dictionaries means “the act of making something better; the process of something becoming better...a change in something that makes it better; something that is better than it was before” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2015: 1), while the term development refers to the meaning of growth in general, “the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc” (ibid). On the other hand the meaning of both terms (improvement & development) seems to be close and refers to the same meaning as stated in Cambridge Dictionaries because the term improvement defined as “the process or result of something getting better” (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2008: 1), while the term development means “the action of someone or something changing and becoming better” (ibid).

Based on the above definitions the two terms (improvement & development) can be used as different terms referring to different meanings but commonly they are used interchangeably in the literature on leadership studies to indicate positive change to the schools and their members (Anca, 2013; Harris, 2013; Hopkins, 2008b; Park, 2012; MacNeil et al., 2009; Leithwood and Mascal 2008; Leithwood et al., 2006; Heck and Hallinger, 2009).

However, in this study, the two terms (improvement & development) will be used to indicate different processes. The term (improvement) will be used in this research as a term that reflects general change such as school improvement that refers to a general

idea, which includes many aspects to be changed and get better. So the term (improvement) will be used only when referring to school change as used by Hopkins (2008b: 2,3) “school improvement is a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change...through focusing on the teaching – learning process and the conditions which support it”.

The term (development) will be used in this research as a term that reflects a specific change for a particular subject, aspect or people, such as teachers’ development, students’ development...etc as commonly used in many studies (Engels et al., 2008; O'Neill and Conzemius, 2002; Richard, 2008; Dean, 1999; Day et al., 2007; Marshall and Drummond, 2006; Fisher et al., 2012).

2.2 School improvement and school effectiveness

Prior to discussing school leadership and its links with school improvement (as discussed in detail in a subsequent section), it is first essential to establish the definition of school effectiveness and school improvement, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of both aspects.

School effectiveness and improvement have both been widely researched, with a substantial body of literature being focussed on the subject. The primary objective of both is to ensure that schools are more effective in the realisation of their service delivery and allow learners to acquire the skills stated in the curriculum (Levačić and Jenkins, 2006).

Witte and Schiltz (2018) note that school effectiveness is primarily reflected in the

academic achievements of students, and can therefore be measured through the application of subject-specific tests. However, this perspective tends to ignore a number of other factors capable of influencing the experience and achievements of students, including the relevance of teaching practices employed by academic personnel, and the quality of the school environment (Jimenez-Barbero et al., 2016). This illustrates that school effectiveness is a multi-dimensional construct, one that encompasses not only the academic subjects themselves, but also the emotional and mental wellbeing of the stakeholders (Hubalovsky, Hubalovska and Musilek, 2018).

A related concept of school effectiveness is of equal significance for the realisation of improved performance in learning institutions. There are notable benefits to school effectiveness initiatives, particularly when it comes to improving the background conditions of learners (Bush, 2017). Most importantly, a school effectiveness plan will also enable the realisation of successful open day events. This positive outcome can be surmised by the fact that stakeholders who are actively engaged are more likely to contribute positively to external events, i.e. open days (Weinstein and Muñoz, 2014). Furthermore, it has been noted that an appropriate school improvement initiative can realise the goal of developing a strong ethos related to openness, thus promoting a culture of trust at the institutional level (Hopkins, 2003).

When every system is operating as expected by the Ministry, a bond is created by employers and employees that ensures a substantial increase in trust (Visscher and Coe, 2013). However, the learning process has also become less effective due to the consistent increase in class size over recent years, in order to simultaneously accommodate a greater number of learners (Sachs, 2015). This has led to the issue of overcrowded classes and the widening ratio between teacher and learner reducing individualised instruction, with state schools being the most adversely affected (ibid).

Effectiveness is also measured in relation to a student's reaction to the learning process. However, it is also important to highlight that frequent testing in such schools has had a limited impact on a child's development, as the method of measuring accountability has failed to consider the learning process (Sachs, 2015). Thus, standardised tests take up a large proportion of valuable instructional time and tend to be inaccurate as a measure of the accountability process when determining the student achievement level (Tymms et al., 2011).

Furthermore, schools have also enabled parents to become involved in their children's development, in particular by inviting them to meet with other parents and engaging them in social programmes (Lynch, 2015). School effectiveness initiatives have further proved instrumental in improving the relationship with student communities through the enhancement of child welfare programmes (Tan, 2008). Social reformers, politicians and educational leaders have considered the need for schools to be a platform for reaching out to the community and strengthening the relationship between schools and communities (Lynch, 2015). This process has enhanced the conditions for children. Schools frequently cater for the moral growth of learners by instilling behaviours intended to ensure the student becomes a better member of his/her community, i.e. by preparing him/her to become a parent (Lynch, 2015). Overall, the ethical development and moral traits apparent in the school system have been key to understanding how institutions have supported the education of children through the effectiveness and improvement of enhancement plans.

However, while schools have successfully undertaken initiatives to improve the development of children, their role has also been compromised by a number of challenges. In order to promote the effectiveness of the curriculum by ensuring teachers commit more of their attention to fulfilling its needs, many tutors have lost their focus

on nurturing morals, thus contributing to the rising level of violence (Sachs, 2015).

This argument has therefore created a need for a greater in-depth assessment of how the educational system can be improved. The current challenge for schools arises from the perception that the skills currently being taught tend to lack relevance for the outside market. It is thus recommended that, alongside the effectiveness and improvement goals, schools should embrace the concept of demonstrating to learners the need for practicality (Tymms et al., 2011). These practical aspects will ensure that learners are trained how to make things work rather than focus on theory as a method of encouraging creativity. Such mechanisms will improve the effectiveness of schools in terms of their effectiveness when it comes to service delivery while promoting creativity (ibid).

With regard to school improvement, the paradigm of school improvement can be claimed to include the implementation of any strategies, technologies, techniques, and practices that aim to enhance a school's performance, in line with the constituents of school effectiveness (Antoniou and Griaznova, 2018). Hopkins (2008b: 2,3) defined school improvement as “a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change...through focusing on the teaching–learning process and the conditions that support it’.

The primary strength of a school improvement plan is the employment of highly skilled teachers (Creemers and Kyriakides, 2015). The Ministry of Education frequently sets down specific requirements for teachers, which can only be implemented through school improvement initiatives (Visscher and Coe, 2013).

However, it has been argued that, despite the perception that school improvements benefit all stakeholders, there remain a number of potential drawbacks. The primary

challenge arises when institutions focus on improving their performance, potentially resulting in teachers being overloaded with work, leaving insufficient time for other important aspects, i.e. meeting parents (Levačić and Jenkins, 2006). Teachers' commitment can also result in many spending the majority of their time on implementation of the curriculum, leading to a lack of time to meet parents and plan for further events of equal importance, such as preparing lessons, managing the classroom and planning for external learning activities (Visscher and Coe, 2013). In addition, when the institution places its emphasis on the improvement of its service delivery, the curriculum can become too stretched to accommodate the additional activity outlined. Students are often required to grasp only a specific amount of knowledge at a given time and at a particular stage of their development (Bush, 2017). However, causing stress through the imposition of an unrealistic workload can damage their learning process, i.e. a cramped curriculum will result in a failure to achieve the anticipated objective.

Overall, it is noted that, despite the advantages of the school effectiveness and improvement system in promoting the development of a child and adherence to the teaching plan, there remain a number of serious obstacles that have ensured the process is not sufficiently effective.

The school system can be described as the most widely employed form of education globally, one that has proved effective due the development of approaches towards improvements that have played a key role in supporting quality education for children. One such mechanism concerns the apprehension that efforts towards improvement have continually assisted institutions in the evaluation of issues impacting on children and eliminating any obstacles to progress (Weinstein and Muñoz, 2014).

School improvement currently faces obstacles that need to be overcome through a modern leadership approach that must be suited to the changing requirements of teachers and students (Abo Alwafa, 2012; Atawy, 2014). This is because school leadership guides the school members' efforts to provide a suitable school culture that considers the differences among school members, their abilities and skills thus ensuring that the learning experience, teachers' performance and students' outcomes are of high quality (Abo Khatab, 2008; Abo Alwafa, 2012).

Similarly, Engels et al. (2008) argue that rather than the procedures used for school improvement the type of school culture is more vital. It is considered by them that for guaranteed school improvement, there is a requirement to put the development procedures into practice in a collaborative culture where pupils, teachers and other staff of the school make a joint effort along with school leadership in order to develop their school (school culture is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

In addition, there are other factors that are considered to be important and effective for the development of teachers and students, which are discussed here under the essential conditions for school improvement. These factors are as follows: inclusion, student voice, individual differences, school curriculum, school-parent relationship, professional learning community, teaching effectiveness, classroom atmosphere, and class size, all of which are argued to be essential conditions for consideration when attempting to change a school culture, and to improve a school.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992, cited in Busher, 2006) argue that inclusion is an important basis and element for school culture when attempting to improve schools. As agreed by Willis (2007), inclusion can facilitate school improvement as inclusion provides pupils, particularly those who have learning difficulties, who are from

different social minorities and who have different backgrounds, religions, ethnicities and different social classes to be more able to overcome barriers, solve problems and cope with their future (inclusion is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter). However, some studies identify aspects of school improvement that can be linked to external factors such as the wealth and economic status of students' families that have an effect on students' learning and their development (Burnham, 2009, cited in Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009).

Another factor that is thought to contribute to school improvement is student voice as it is stated by Kidd (2012) that student voice is an effective aspect that can support inclusion and increase the quality of learning. Listening to student voice is not only effective in terms of supporting inclusion and enhancing students' development, it is also important with regard to improving teaching practice particularly for novice practitioners who will be able to reflect on the teaching practices based on the comments made by learners that would help teachers to improve their practices and works to enhance students' outcomes (Kidd, 2012; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009; Sterrett, 2011; Rosebrough and Leverett, 2010). Schools' actions should be taken not only in the light of student voices but also these actions should be decided based on the stakeholders' voices including pupils, practitioners, parents and governors because all voices should be encouraged, considered and heard equally at all levels (Busher, 2006). (Student voice is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

On the other hand, there have been different views presented by other authors regarding the most important conditions for school improvement and pupils' development, for instance, Harris (2013), and Schmoker (2011), believe that the curriculum is the most important aspect for school improvement as it is associated with the outcomes of pupils, while Frederickson and Cline (2009) demonstrate that school improvement requires

sufficient care of the differences among the individuals that would increase learning quality and support school improvement. (School curriculum is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

School-parents relationship is also thought to be an essential factor that could contribute to school improvement. This is because creating strong relationships with parents are important elements for inclusion and the development of teachers and students (Frew et al., 2013; Busher, 2006). The school-parents relationship relates to the concept of parental involvement, which is defined as a strategy intended to enhance students' development by involving parents in the school's activities to enhance parents' communications, participation and relationship with their children's schools (Alyaqup, 2010; Alzaki, 2009). School principals should work to engage parents in schools that could encourage parents to actively take part in schooling, and could lead schools to be better able to construct an attractive learning environment (Nabhani, Busher and Bahous, 2012). The school-parents relationship could facilitate social integration, support democracy and increase public support for the educational process, all of which can support school improvement (Alyaqup, 2010). It is stated that the school-parents relationship makes it possible for teachers to be more aware of the diversity of their students, to be better able to explore and understand the cultural interests and needs of their students' and their families, and to resolve students' problems by providing the most suitable activities and teaching strategies (Alnahrawy, 2015). (School-parent relationship is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

On the other hand, professional learning communities (PLCs) are considered as an effective and important factor that lead to enhance school improvement (Ho, Lee and Teng, 2016). Developing strong PLCs is not only important to the professional development of teachers (Popp and Goldman, 2016; Woodland, 2016), but also it is one

of the most effective strategies that can be used to enhance learning quality, student outcomes, and resolve educational problems (Woodland, 2016; Buttram and Farley-Ripple, 2016; Lee, Zhang and Yin, 2011; Vanblaere and Devos, 2016). (PLC is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

Furthermore, Dean (1999), Richard (2008) and Heck (2009) emphasise on the importance of teaching effectiveness and the quality of teaching for students' development and school improvement. They believe that teaching effectiveness must be considered as a key principle when attempting school change and improvement. (Teaching effectiveness is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

In addition, class size that means the number of students in a single classroom is believed to have an impact on the development of teachers and students, and overall school improvement (Bosworth, 2011; Blatchford 2003). It is demonstrated that teaching time is more likely to increase in smaller classes as well as such classes might decrease the stress on teachers that would help them to be more effective (Blatchford, 2003). Smaller classes allow teachers to be more able to make a positive control for their classrooms, which lead to enhancing students' achievement (Mortimore et al., 1988, cited in Day et al., 1996). Furthermore, in smaller classes teachers are able to provide more attention and care to their students that might increase the students' interactions and lead them to be more successful, higher achievers and their behaviours to be more positive (Deutsch, 2003; Alzaki, 2009). (Class size is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

2.3 School leadership and school improvement

Many definitions have been ascribed to school leadership, such as that of Sergis, Sampson and Giannakos (2018), who describe it as the behaviours exhibited by the senior academic staff, such as the school directors, regarding major academic decision-making and school management. In contrast, Spillane (2005: 384) provides a wider definition, stating that “Leadership refers to activities tied to the core work of the organisation that are designed by organisational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, and practices of other organisational members or that are understood by organisational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, and practices”. In addition, Gronn (2000, cited in Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011: 872) define leadership “as a relational, fluid, multi-directional...dimension that can empower workers”.

In terms of the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, several studies have revealed that school improvement and school leadership are inter-linked (Park, 2012; Harris, 2013; MacNeil et al., 2009; Leithwood and Mascall 2008; Leithwood et al., 2006; Heck and Hallinger, 2009; Vanblaere and Devos, 2016; Buttramand Farley-Ripple, 2016). “Scholars also highlight the vital role of leadership...in achieving the twin goals of school improvement, which are to strengthen organisational capacity and improve students’ outcomes” (Sigurðardóttirand Sigþórsson 2016: 600).

There are many grounds that indicate the significance of the link between school leadership and school improvement. For instance, educational change, which is argued as the first step for school improvement, is guided and controlled by school leadership (Harris, 2013;Buttramand Farley-Ripple, 2016). It is also stated by Anca (2013: 238)

that “a wide range of international studies have confirmed that leaders clearly facilitate major and concrete in-school differences to student achievement or organizational culture and relations, teachers motivation etc”. In addition, MacBeath and Dempster (2009: 32) state that “In educational organisations such as schools, leadership is needed to promote learning. In schools, learning should be the prime concern of all those who exercise leadership, and learning should both set the agenda and be the agenda for leadership”, “Leadership is the connecting tissue which infuses learning at every level and makes the connections a particular reality” (MacBeath and Dempster, 2009: 43).

Moreover, the position, control and influence that is possessed by the leaders enabling them to authorise and encourage members of the school further clarifies that leadership is a significant part of school improvement (Park, 2012; Engels et al., 2008; Buttramand Farley-Ripple, 2016; Vanblaere and Devos, 2016). It is argued that the level of school improvement reflects the level of principals’ effectiveness because schools are considered to be mirrors that reflect their principals and their effectiveness (MacNeil et al., 2009). In addition to the impact of school principals on the improvement of schools, school leadership also has effects on the feelings and sense of belonging regarding the school among all the stakeholders of the school: teachers, school staff, pupils and parents (Frew et al., 2013; Nabhani et al., 2012; Gamble and Kinsler, 2004; Gruenert, 2005). Similarly, Thawinkarn, Tang and Ariratana (2018) highlight the fact that the creative behaviour of the school leaders has a substantial impact on the willingness of the regular teachers to implement innovative and valuable classroom practices.

Furthermore, the majority of studies carried out in Arabic countries confirm the relationship between school leadership and school improvement (Atawy, 2014; Abo Khatab, 2008; Abo Alwafa, 2012). However, Nir and Hameiri (2014: 211) argue that although “[e]arlier works have suggested that school leaders have a significant and

direct influence on school processes and outcomes, however, school leaders' influence on school outcomes seems to be indirect and is mediated through various means that leaders employ in order to increase the productivity of their school". Meanwhile, some scholars argue that the relationship between school leadership and school improvement is not direct, and is instead at least partially moderated by the factors related to the behaviour of the regular personnel, and the educational context (Thawinkarn, et al., 2018). The personal considerations of the principals, which can interfere in the educational process, and disrupt the attainment of academic objectives, such as student performance, or teacher efficacy, can constitute a primary factor affecting the relationship between school leadership and school improvement (Brown, 2018).

School leaders might struggle to transform their leadership behaviours into measurable school outcomes, due to the influence of aspects that are beyond their control, which suggests that leadership capabilities and skills are essential for forming a close bond between school leadership and school improvement (Jayan, Bing and Musa, 2016). Moreover, obstacles may remain that diminish the impact of beneficial school leadership. One such issue is the characteristics of the students. For example, some of these educational stakeholders may be predisposed towards bullying, which could have a negative effect on the quality of the classroom environment, and school improvement (Chalamandaris, et al., 2017). Consequently, it can be stated that efficient school leadership includes not only being proficient at managing the educational process, but also being flexible and adjusting one's behaviour to suit the personal and academic conditions.

In addition, an important aspect for school improvement is the curriculum which principals take the whole accountability of its construction, creation and edition (Harris, 2013; Park, 2012; O'Neill and Conzemius, 2002). This applies to many developed

countries such as United Kingdom and America (Park, 2012). However in Saudi Arabia school leaders have limited power and authority and all schools are obliged to follow the national curriculum, which is set by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia (Curriculum Development Department, Ministry of Education, 2014). Therefore, in Saudi Arabia school leaders were called school managers not principals, underlining the fact that they have limited authority from Saudi Ministry of Education to determine what happens within their schools (Atawy, 2014). School managers in Saudi Arabia cannot alter the curriculum; they only manage dissemination of the existing national curriculum (Rules and Regulations, Ministry of Education, 2010). In 2015, The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia changed the name of school managers to be school leaders but the change does not affect the authority of school leaders, which is still limited (see p.19) (Rules and Regulations, Ministry of Education, 2015).

It is believed that the conduct of school leaders is invariably dictated by curricula and governmental demands, which reduces the degree of freedom allocated to the professionals with regard to leadership techniques (Aburizaizah, Kim and Fuller, 2016). Since the academic setting usually involves significant stakeholders, namely the regular teachers and the students' parents, leadership is ultimately dependent on the demands posited by these individuals (Mitchell, 2017). The main implication of this is that school leadership may not be solely concentrated within the authority allocated to school leaders.

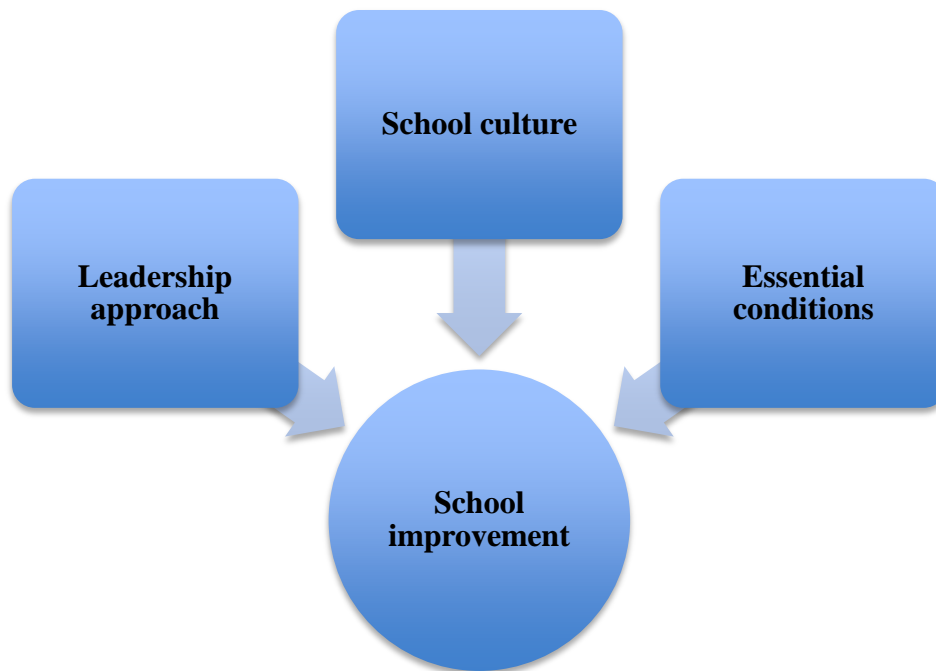
Leaders' authority means the power of leaders to "assert their preferred values and choices over those of other people... [to] prevent other people making choices or, indeed, challenge the choices that have already been implemented" (Lukes, 1979, cited in Busher, 2006: 34). Regarding the resources of leaders' authority, it has been argued that leaders' "authority comes from governing bodies or owners" (Busher, 2006: 38),

which depends on the type of the school and whether it is a state or a private school.

In terms of how school leadership could affect school improvement, it is important to recognise that school improvement is a highly dynamic process that is strongly dependent on the ability of educational institutions to adapt to the external (curricula and governmental regulations), and internal (student characteristics) conditions (Gibbons, Kazemi and Lewis, 2017; Ngang, Mohamed and Kanokorn, 2015). Thus, successful school leadership is needed and considered as the cornerstone for school improvement since the aims of school leadership are not only limited to the routine processes of school management but also extend to all aspects relevant to students and teachers including teaching methods, learning activities, school-social relationships and other aspects which are directly or indirectly relevant to the quality of the learning experience (Atawy, 2014).

It is apparent that many factors contribute to school improvement, as noted above. These factors are the main conceptual framework for the present research project, and will be considered and discussed below under three main themes: leadership approach, school culture, and essential conditions for school improvement, as summarised in Figure 2.1, below. These factors will be discussed critically in relation to the existing literature, and subsequently to the data presented in this study, in order to emphasise the significance of each aspect.

Figure 2. 1: The conceptual framework



2.4 Leadership approach

This section primarily concerns leadership theories, and involves the discussion regarding the most common leadership styles, their definition, dimensions, features, drawbacks, the role of school principals in each leadership style, and the effect of these leadership approaches on teachers' and pupils' development, and on overall school improvement.

The discussion about leadership approaches and the effect of different approaches on teachers' and pupils' development is considered here from two angles: the international context and the Saudi context. This will help provide a comprehensive picture of the most common leadership styles used within the two contexts which, in turn, will extend the scope for comparison in terms of existing theories and the findings of this research.

2.4.1 International views on styles of leadership

“The literature shows much consideration of types and models of leadership that may enhance teaching and learning and hence contribute to overall school improvement” (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009: 362). This means that there are numerous types and forms of leadership that can contribute to develop teachers’ performance, practices and students’ learning which leads to support the improvement of schools. According to Dinham et al. (2011), the intensive research regarding school leadership leads to present multiple leadership theories such as transformational leadership, instructional leadership, moral leadership, servant leadership, constructivist leadership, primal leadership and cultural leadership. Some authors, however, argue that some of these styles are either “not more than slogans” (Leithwood et al., 2006: 7) or have no evidence of their effectiveness and have no comprehensive conceptual frameworks (Dinham et al., 2011). Therefore, Anca (2013: 238) refers to three styles of school leadership as approaches that have an extensive presentation and have been “subjected to extended empirical study over time”, which are distributed leadership, transformational leadership and instructional leadership.

Some authors think that distributed leadership is a way of increasing school improvement and improving teachers’ performance and pupils’ outcomes (Harris, 2013; Harris and Lambert, 2003), while some other authors hold different perspectives regarding the suitable approach of school leadership that can foster school improvement. Anca (2013), for instance, emphasis on the performance and the effectiveness of the transformational leadership approach for school improvement. He mentions that transformational leadership emerged in the middle of 1980s in North America as a result of the extended research made upon the effective schools. Anca

(2013: 238) argues that this style of “leadership focuses on leadership functions directly related to teaching and learning”.

Transformational leadership can be defined as an approach where a leader “raises the aspirations of his or her followers, such that the leader’s and the followers’ goals are fused, in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose” (Burns, 1978, cited in Graeme and Andy, 2007: 343). In addition, Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012: 43) define transformational leadership “as increasing the interest of the staff to achieve higher performance through developing the commitments and beliefs in the organization”.

Transformational school leadership involves three dimensions: “defining the school’s mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school-learning climate” (Anca, 2013: 238). Based on these dimensions, the role of schools principals, within the schools that implements transformational leadership style, is to coordinate, control, supervise, and develop school curriculum and the instruction of their schools (ibid). According to Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012: 43), “four factors characterize the behavior of transformational leaders: individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence”.

Sun and Leithwood (2012) believe that transformational school leadership has a variety of features that can support school improvement and the development of school members. For example, transformational leadership seeks to develop shared vision, goals and atmosphere among school staff, support individuals by considering their opinions and needs, enhance positive behaviours among school staff by providing them more trust and respect, increase the expectations of students’ achievement and teachers’ performance, promote collaboration, distribute the functions of leadership among staff in a broad sense and enhance inclusion (Sun and Leithwood, 2012). The

transformational leadership style encourages creativity in solving problems, as an effective leader of this kind challenges their followers on occasion (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

On the other hand, there have been some theories that consider instructional leadership style as a means that can enhance school improvement. For instance, Hans (2012) argues that instructional leadership must be considered as a basic condition for school improvement as such style of leadership seeks to provide high-quality classroom instruction that will lead to enhance students' achievement and learning. Hans believes that the main aim of instructional leadership is to develop the capacity of leadership, skills, motivation, resources, flexibility, engagement and support learning development. However, Nir and Hameiri (2014: 211) believe that "the relation between transactional leadership style and school outcomes is inconsistent". In addition, the execution of instructional leadership requires expertise to ensure that it is implemented correctly; if it is not, the likelihood of the misuse of power is relatively high (Horsford, 2010).

The role of instructional leaders is to make some suggestions to teachers, providing them feedback, modelling some effective teaching techniques and instructions with students, providing teachers advice and giving teachers praise to motivate them (Blase and Blase, 2000).

However, according to Hallinger (2010), transformational and instructional leadership are overlapped, which means that both modes share the same goals and can lead to school improvement. Similarly, Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012: 43) argue that "although transformational and transactional leadership are at opposite ends of the leadership continuum...the two can be complementary". Moreover, Anca (2013: 241) mentions that distributed, transformational and instructional leaderships "do share significant

similarities. All these leadership models have improvement-oriented targets, they all aim to build leadership capacity among all school members in order to foster progress” as they share some features such as, “creating a shared sense of purpose in the school, focus on developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture focused on the improvement of teaching and learning...organise and provide a wide range of activities aimed at intellectual stimulation and development for staff” (ibid). In addition, Hallinger (2010) demonstrates that distributed leadership was derived as a result of the continuous development of instructional leadership style.

In contrast, Shatzer (2009) argues that transformational and instructional leadership styles are different in terms of their nature, operation, application, and aims, noting three main differences between the two leadership styles. First, transformational leadership focuses constructively on the influence the leaders have over their followers, in the quest of a common goal, whereas instructional leadership functions by providing directions that facilitate learning in schools. Second, transformational leadership has a broad application in other disciplines, aside from education, while instructional leadership evolved wholly in the education sector. Finally, transformational leadership considers the school as a community, and therefore focuses on inducing a sense of belonging, together with positive attitudes and emotions among the staff, while instructional leadership views the school as a formal institution, thus focusing on the application and enforcement of rules and regulations.

Moreover, Bass and Riggio (2006) argue that although the transformational leadership style is more effective than the instructional leadership style, especially in the areas of conflict management, staff attitudes, and job satisfaction, the application of the two styles of leadership remains debatable.

Therefore, the intention here is to focus on distributed leadership as an approach that can lead to enhance school improvement and the development of teachers and students.

2.4.1.1 Distributed leadership

There are several reasons behind this choice. For instance, distributed leadership provides teachers additional opportunity to gain knowledge and encourage the development of school leadership as such style of leadership allows teachers to be involved in designing leadership system and its roles. (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009; Harris, 2013). In addition, distributed leadership enhances professional learning communities which are essential for the development of teachers and students (Earley and Weindling, 2004). Furthermore, distributed leadership supports teachers' leadership which can lead to promote the professional development of practitioners as well as students' achievement (Harris, 2013). Moreover, schools are more likely to respond quickly with the change and cope with it when the functions of leadership are distributed (Coles and Southworth, 2004), as it has also been proven in some recent studies that distributed leadership is the key element for school change as teachers are involved in school decisions and encouraged to work collaboratively that would assess and contribute to support school improvement (Dora, 2010). It is also believed that the benefits of collaboration, shared ownership and shared purpose are the main objectives of distributed leadership, which lead to increase the capacity of leadership and support schools' change and improvement (Davison et al., 2014). Finally, "Student outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and when teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them" (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009: 366).

However, despite the benefits of distributed leadership noted above, there is currently an on-going argument regarding the conceptualisation of distributed leadership, and its application. For instance, Tian, Risku and Collin (2016: 146) performed “a meta-analysis of research conducted on distributed leadership from 2002 to 2013”, and “found that the studies had been unable to conceptualise distributed leadership or empirically outline its application”. In addition, Lumby (2016) argues that although researchers tend to connect distributed leadership with more generally attractive characteristics, such as inclusion, collaboration, collective interaction, and empowerment among members of an organisation or a school, there is insufficient practical evidence to prove the presence of these characteristics, which may support the fact that distributed leadership is likely to be more of a fashion than a conceptualised theory. In addition, Lumby (2016: 165) notes that “A focus on the theory of DL misses the big picture of how schools are or are not fitting all children to be confident individuals and citizens of the twenty-first century”. Similarly Tian et al. (2016) argue that distributed leadership studies tend to consider this form of leadership as means of implementing change, while ignoring the nature of distributed leadership, its ontology, and the ethical foundation of the style, which are essential for ensuring the effectiveness and application of distributed leadership.

The idea of distributed leadership emerged in the era of 1950s, in Australia (Gronn, 2002). The concept and belief that the members of a school or other organisational setting are able to play their role as leaders and can participate in the process of decision making has given birth to the idea of distributing leadership tasks (ibid). “This means that senior staff must entrust others and create a culture of openness where individual expertise is recognised and individuals are empowered. The culture of distributed

leadership accordingly develops from within” (Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011: 872, 873).

It has been argued by Goleman et al. (2002, cited in Earley and Weindling, 2004: 15) that “There are many leaders, not just one. Leadership is distributed. It resides ... in every person at every level who, in one way or another, acts as a leader to a group of followers – wherever in the organisation that person is”. It has been mentioned further by Pedlar et al. (2003, cited in Earley and Weindling, 2004: 15) that “today’s leadership needs to be ... distributed in every part of the organisation so those ... who are first to spot challenges can act instantly on them”.

Hence, it is not required for a leader to perform all the functions of leadership in those organisations having distributed leadership in action since all organizational members would work collaboratively to perform the leadership functions (Gronn, 2002). This concludes to a point that this approach of leadership leads to encourage individuals and motivates them to consider their accountability for the organisation and its improvement and this is the major benefit of distributed leadership (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010). However, it is argued that “a notion of distributed leadership which engages models of leadership that are multi-level and actively democratic is in direct tension with policy agendas imposed through a hierarchical educational structure” (Hatcher, 2005, cited in Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011: 874).

There have been some definitions for distributed leadership. For example, Woods and Roberts (2015: 139) argued distributed leadership as “a culture that views leadership as emerging from ongoing flows of interactions across the organization and its hierarchy, not simply the actions of the single leader or small leadership elite...values leadership contributions from across the organization and its hierarchy...recognizes that this view

of leadership can be deployed in order to improve organizational effectiveness". In addition, distributed leadership is viewed by Gronn (2003, cited in Hammersley-Fletcher, 2005: 46) as "a model which advocates that people work together to develop vision and strategy for their organisation. In this way people utilise and respond to the combined knowledge and expertise of everyone in the group in a manner that offers greater possibilities for creativity and inspiration than could be expected of one individual alone". Similarly, Yukl (2002, cited in Storey, 2004: 252) defined the distributed leadership as "a shared process of enhancing the individual and collective capacity of people to accomplish their work effectively ... Instead of a heroic leader who can perform all essential leadership functions, the functions are distributed among different members of the team or organization". However, it is supposed by Harris (2013: 546,547) that distributed leadership does not mean every body in an organisation is leader but it "means actively brokering, facilitating and supporting the leadership of others".

Furthermore, Spillane (2006 cited in Reed and Swaminathan, 2016: 1099) define distributed leadership as a style that "implies a social distribution of leadership where leadership is stretched over a set or group of individuals and the tasks are accomplished through interaction between multiple leaders". Meanwhile, Gronn (2002 cited in Reed and Swaminathan, 2016: 1099) define distributed leadership "as concerted action or an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals". However, Lumby (2016: 161) argues that "there is no adequate definition of DL to identify it as a distinctive way of leading, and therefore no credible way of promoting it as action or of assessing its impact". Similarly, Reed and Swaminathan (2016: 1099) note that, despite the definitions of distributed leadership, "scholars agree that it remains a fuzzy concept and not clearly operationalised in the empirical research", which is evidenced by "the

lack of definition agreement” among scholars that creates different perspectives and understanding regarding the nature and the operation of distributed leadership. Indeed, Tian et al. (2016: 156) argue that “The lack of a universally accepted definition of distributed leadership seems to complicate the task”.

Many researchers have considered and examined distributed leadership, seeking to identify the relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement, and to identify the advantages and the limitations of this form of leadership.

In terms of the benefits of distributed leadership, it is one of the most useful methods for enhancing school improvement, as it allows all of the members of the organisation to engage, and allows them the opportunity to partake in decision making (Woods and Roberts, 2015). Moreover, Reed and Swaminathan (2016) observe that distributed leadership has positive effects, not only in school improvement in general, but also on the academic capacity of schools, staff performance, students’ development, and achievement, in particular. In addition, Harris (2008, cited in Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011: 873) believe “that distributed leadership can be a vehicle for knowledge creation, sharing and mutual learning through school-to-school networks and the establishment of professional learning communities within and between schools”. Furthermore, Davison et al. (2014: 98) believe that “the distributed leadership approach overcame barriers to interdisciplinary climate change teaching. Cultivating distributed leadership enabled community members to engage in peer-led professional learning, collaborative curriculum and pedagogical development, and to facilitate wider institutional change”.

Despite these benefits, distributed leadership has some weaknesses that might result in some drawbacks, for instance such a style of leadership may contribute to complications

while making decisions, possibly resulting in an uncertain environment, also there is risk of a quick and huge change that may have some negative effects on school improvement (Storey, 2004). In addition, it is argued that distributed leadership might have negative effects on teachers, because “while teachers wish[ed] to develop their leadership roles, the additional workload distract(s)[ed] them from their teaching and deprive(s)[d] them of time to spend with their families, thereby discouraging them from volunteering for such roles” (Sigurðardóttir and Sigþórsson 2016: 601-602). Blasé and Blasé (1999, cited in Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain, 2011: 873) argue that “shared forms of governance may also allow leaders to control staff at a more subtle level. For example, having a particular group of teachers making decisions can be another form of control, less visible because it creates a feeling of teacher involvement”. Furthermore, Tian et al. (2016) note that it is difficult to underpin the relationship between distributed leadership and the learning outcomes of students, which depend on a number of variables.

It is believed that different leadership styles construct different cultures in order to work successfully (Harris and Lambert, 2003). Similarly, MacNeil et al. (2009) is in agreement of the viewpoint that diverse leadership styles create different cultures, and believe that distributed leadership generates and more successful in collaborative cultures.

Thus, in order to put distributed leadership approach into practice, it is supposed that the most appropriate culture required is a collaborative culture where both subjects share the same objective (MacNeil et al., 2009). This objective is to construct professional learning communities where all the organisational members are involved and encouraged to collaboratively work together as a group, make decisions, share the

procedure of solving problems and performing the functions of leadership (Gronn, 2002; Harris and Lambert, 2003; Given et al., 2010).

2.4.2 Saudi views on styles of leadership

School leadership approaches vary according to the multiple styles which are created, shaped and developed by school principals according to their philosophies and practices (Atawy, 2014; Alkhatam, 2013; Almaitah, 2007). Some principals in this context believe in an autocratic style, which excludes all other school members from power and decision-making while other principals believe in the importance of cooperation and the participation of school members in leadership functions, practices and school decision making (Alkhatam, 2013). These differences reflect four main leadership styles, namely: autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership and consultative leadership (Alkhatam, 2013).

Some authors believe that the consultative leadership style is a copy of the democratic leadership style as they share the same features (Atawy, 2014; Abo khatab, 2007). However, although there are some similarities between consultative leadership and democratic leadership, there are some differences between the two styles in terms of the nature and practice of each style, the role of school leader and the duties and tasks of subordinates in each style that is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections. In addition, the leadership literature presents consultative leadership as one of the main leadership styles (Alkhatam, 2013). Thus, the following discussion will focus on autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership and consultative leadership styles. The discussion will consider each leadership style, its definition, dimensions, features and the role of the school principal in the leadership style.

2.4.2.1 Autocratic leadership

Autocratic leadership is one of the existing leadership styles used in countries such as Saudi Arabia (Alkhatam, 2013). The concept of autocratic leadership is that leadership authority and power should be invested only in the leaders authorised by the highest authority of schools, that is, the Ministry of Education (ibid). This is because “the basis of autocratic power is derived from the opportunities inherent in the leader's position in the organization, which provides control over resources and rewards, punishments, information, and the physical work environment” (De Hoogh, Greer and Den, 2015: 689). This means that the school principal is the only person who is responsible for developing and implementing the school’s regulation, culture, decisions, aims and goals (Almaitah, 2007). This means that other school members are excluded from the leadership space and its functions as they have to follow the instructions given by the school principal to achieve the goals and aims that the principal creates on the basis of his/her own perspective and the picture in his/her mind of the school’s future and the possible ways to get there (De Hoogh et al., 2015; Abo Alwafa, 2012). The resulting autocratic form of leadership is defined by the leader possessing complete power and authority over their juniors, who unquestioningly follow their instructions, without requiring an explanation, which entails various scholars describing this leadership style as a dictatorial and tyrannical approach (Laub, 2018).

Autocratic leadership can be defined as a strict leadership approach that provides leaders total authority and control over decision making where leaders practise their power not only to control other members’ efforts but also to monitor their performance in meeting the leaders’ decisions and orders (Atawy, 2014). Autocratic leadership has also been defined “as the usage of controlling and directive leader behaviors directed

towards the centralization of decision-making and the concentration of power” (De Hoogh et al., 2015: 689).

The author Laub (2018) cites four characteristics of the autocratic leadership style, the foremost of which is the retention of power and decision making by the autocratic leader, who reserves the right to make all authoritative decisions that impact on their juniors. The second trait is that autocratic leaders usually possess a form of mistrust of their subordinates, and consistently engage in close supervision of their juniors as a result. This engenders the third characteristic, which is the lack of delegation by the authoritative figure, and means that they are adversely involved in the daily basic practices of the business or organisation, while the fourth trait is the adoption of a single means of communication by the leader, who does not value the opinions, contributions, and output of their subordinates. This approach to leadership does not support an intrinsic inspiration on the part of the subordinates, who are instead motivated by a defined reward and punishment system, as autocratic leaders usually inspire productivity through fear and intimidation.

Autocratic leadership involves three dimensions, namely: developing the school’s regulations, monitoring the teachers’ performance and learning process, and considering the effectiveness and the accuracy of school leadership and management (Abo Khatab, 2008). The role of the school principal in autocratic leadership is to create the school plan, draw up the duties of school members and work to ensure the implementation of leadership decisions and instructions (ibid).

The autocratic form of leadership has faced an unprecedented amount of criticism, especially in the modern era. The main criticism levelled against it is that it under-utilises talent, and fails to consider the proper management of naturally motivated

employees (Laub, 2018). In addition, Laub (2018) argues that several research studies demonstrate that the consistent monitoring of subordinates' activities does not encourage production, but instead further demotivates them, and causes animosity towards the leadership. Moreover, the limiting of employee participation in decision making has been shown to contribute to low morale, indifference to work, and high employee turnover. Therefore, the reliance on a single decision-making party is detrimental to an organisation, as a lack of presence on the part of the figurehead may cause the closure of operations, since the single form of communication can repress the creativity of subordinates, and their uptake of responsibility (Laub, 2018).

According to Atawy (2014), there are seven disadvantages of autocratic leadership style that make it less effective in achieving school improvement. First, the leadership capacity in the autocratic leadership style is limited as teachers' leadership is not supported. Second, autocratic leaders do not focus on motivation, which is essential, particularly for teachers who play a significant role in the quality of learning and can make a difference in terms of school change and improvement. Third, autocratic leaders are not flexible and they use the power of leadership to achieve the goals and aims that are decided upon by the leaders, excluding the opinions and perspectives of school members and other interested parties, which might negatively affect the accuracy of the goals and aims. Fourth, the relationship environment in schools which follow the autocratic leadership style is negative because this style is based on a top down strategy which means that the relationship between the school principal and school members is shaped within the context of the leadership power that the school principal practices. Fifth, the risk of errors when making school decisions is very high in an autocratic leadership environment because decisions are made by the principal of the school only, excluding teachers, students, other members of the school and other interested parties

such as parents. Sixth, the agency and loyalty of school members, particularly the teachers' and students' agency is low to non-existent in autocratic schools as the fear of punishment is very high among school members in such schools. Seventh, autocratic leaders are highly concerned about the school curriculum and students' development; however, they ignore the main aspects which support such development, such as individuals' differences, needs and voices (Atawy, 2014). Similarly, Gonos and Gallo (2013) argue that autocratic leadership style has very limited space for the participation of subordinates particularly in decision-making that are always made by leaders themselves who are often uncompromising with subordinates.

In contrast, Laub (2018) argues that certain advantages of the autocratic leadership style exist, as advanced by its proponents. These include the fact that the administration is able to accelerate the decision-making process, since it generally relies on a single decision-making body. In addition, this leadership style involves the organisation of goal achievement and objectives in a unique, reliable system, and is better able to anticipate business and organisational problems, as well as improving levels of communication and logistics. Similarly, De Hoogh et al. (2015) argue that although autocratic leadership has some disadvantages, such as limiting the control of subordinates over decision-making, which might negatively affect subordinates' agency, performance and effectiveness, autocratic leaders tend to provide directions, clear roles and clear responsibilities that could lead to construct a well ordered and structured environment, which in turn reduces the stress on subordinates and provide them peace of mind that could enhance their predictability.

2.4.2.2Democratic leadership

The concept of democratic leadership is based on the fundamental principle of collective participation in decision-making, in creating the school's aims and goals and in the process of achieving such aims and goals (Abo Alwafa, 2012). This means that the capacity of leadership in the democratic leadership style is extended to involve school members in leadership practices and functions (ibid). "The democratic leader welcomes team input and facilitates group discussion and decision-making" (Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji, 2012: 42). The democratic leader ensures that their juniors are kept informed about matters affecting the organisation and their work, but remains the final authority in decision-making (Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy, 2014). However, it must be noted that since schools' principals and leaders generally have limited source of authority to lead their subordinates, particularly in Saudi Arabia where school leaders suffer from the lack of authority as mentioned previously (see pp. 19, 45), the concept of democratic leadership for schools might be difficult to be fully implemented (Atawy, 2014).

Democratic leadership is defined as a leadership style that seeks to involve members of an organisation or a school in decision-making by dividing the leadership's authority and power between the employees or the members and their leaders or principals (Al Bahawashi, 2013). Democratic leadership is based on participative management as well as human resources theory, where each team is offered a chance to share knowledge, experience, and opinions related to a specific situation (Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube, 2015). Democratic leadership involves three dimensions, namely: providing members with a guideline of how to create a decision, dividing the functions of leadership among the members and other interested parties, and determining the responsibilities of the involved people and parties (ibid).

The role of principals within the democratic leadership style is to provide essential and useful resources that help school members create and evaluate school decisions and objectives, ensure and promote equity in the division of leadership authority and power, and work to provide a positive culture that enhances collaboration among school members (Abo Alwafa, 2012; Alzaki, 2012).

Prior to discussing the advantages and disadvantages of democratic leadership, it is beneficial to first discuss the differences between the leadership styles of democratic leadership and distributed leadership.

Firstly, democratic leadership awards all participants equal roles in the decision-making process (Raelin, 2016), while distributed leadership focuses on leadership practices rather than focusing on the roles and responsibilities of leadership positions (Jones and Harvey, 2017).

Secondly, democratic leadership ensures all members of an organization are awarded equal opportunities for decision making (Bird and Mendenhall, 2016), while distributed leadership gives the participants at the forefront of the operation greater priorities when it comes to decision-making (Bird and Mendenhall, 2016). This implies that the decision-making process in distributed leadership requires specialization when it comes to the decision-making process, an aspect that is absent in democratic leadership

Thirdly, distributed leadership is characterized by differentiated levels of transparency between members, along with mutual respect and trust (Jones and Harvey, 2017), while democratic leadership lacks strategies to ensure trust and transparency among those taking part in the decision-making process. Therefore, democratic leadership experiences longer delays than distributed leadership throughout the discussion and decision-making processes (Storey, 2016).

Finally, the democratic leadership style encourages all levels to interact freely in the decision-making process, with all participants able to put forward the conclusive idea (Raelin, 2016). However, distributed leadership styles enable different individuals to interact with their subordinates and report the decisions made to senior management prior to reaching a final decision (Raelin, 2016). This ensures that distributed leadership enhances leadership practices among individuals, while democratic leadership advocates equality.

Regarding the advantages of democratic leadership, this style of leadership is evaluated as an effective leadership approach for the development of teachers and students and overall school improvement. According to Abo Alwafa (2012), democratic leadership is one of the most important factors in school improvement because of the advantages afforded by this leadership style in terms of learning quality. Ahmad (2011) mentions eight features of democratic leadership which makes it effective in terms of teachers' performance, students' outcomes and learning quality; First, teachers in democratic schools are involved and encouraged to take part in the school's activities which can enhance teachers' motivation. Second, principals who use the democratic leadership style are not solely responsible for the leadership of the school as teachers and students share the responsibility of running the school, not only in terms of planning the school's goals and objectives but also they work collaboratively to set and evaluate the school's aims and decisions as well as to achieve the school's goals and objectives. Third, democratic leadership considers the differences among individuals to be an important aspect in promoting the development of teachers and students, and enhancing the school's success. Fourth, democratic leadership aims to raise the morale of teachers and students by providing them with the space to participate in the development of the most suitable policies and programmes. Fifth, democratic leadership enhances the

relationship environment and helps it become more positive and collaborative, particularly in terms of the relationships among the teachers which could help them become more effective and motivated to develop. Sixth, democratic leadership supports equity and inclusion of all school members in terms of the school curriculum and decision- making. Seventh, experimentation and change are welcomed in democratic cultures. Eighth, democratic leaders use a number of sources of motivation as a means to foster teachers' work and students' learning.

In addition, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) note that democratic leadership includes various advantages, including the fact that the system is self-sufficient, therefore the democratic process can function independently, without the supervision of a governing authority, and the process is inclusive of compromises, therefore the ideals of opposing parties can be accommodated. Moreover, this type of leadership is well-equipped to address problems, creativity is encouraged, freedom of opinion is supported, and equal rights are advocated actively. Moreover, Gonos and Gallo (2013) argue that there are many features that make democratic leadership style more effective, such as the engagement of subordinates not only in terms of decision-making but also in the majority of related issues, such as implementing changes, discussing relevant problems, discussing work progress and relationships among groups, where leaders work to explain current situation, listen to subordinates, encourage their freedom and consider subordinates' suggestions, ideas, opinions and put them into practice. Similarly, Bhatti et al. (2012: 193) argue that "[a]lthough a Democratic leader will make the final decision, he/she invites other members of the team to contribute the decision making process. This not only increases job satisfaction by involving employees or team members in what's going on, but it also help to develop people's skills".

However, it should be noted that democratic leadership results in a number of disadvantages. Firstly, it is a slow decision-making practice (Storey, 2016), as it is comprised of a large number of participants who are able to share different opinions. This leads to a considerable amount of time wasting and procrastination when it comes to important activities. As a result, it takes a considerably longer time to make the appropriate choices in this type of leadership style. The process can thus hinder important organizational workflows. This argument is supported by Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) who stated that the democratic leadership style is time-consuming for the administration, due to the need to weigh opinions and then vote, with the potential for difficulties in accommodating differing views and opinions. Secondly, Bird and Mendenhall (2016) argued that discussions taking place in the democratic leadership style may take longer to arrive at a consensus, as the multiple levels of feedback can result in the discussion processes leaving uncertainties and inconclusiveness. This implies that leaders involved in this style may fail in situations demanding aspects of authoritarianism. Similarly, Alzaki (2012) noted that several research studies have identified that the discussions forming an integral part of a democratic system can lead to a loss of interest. Thirdly, the democratic leadership style lacks a clear definition of its applications (Storey, 2016). This is clearly evident in the fact that most leaders fail to solicit opinions and feedback from other members within their organization, due to the lack of any appropriate organizational structure to accommodate this style of leadership (ibid). Moreover, democratic leadership may not be applicable when it comes to offering a relevant solution to a crisis situation, due to the number of diversified opinions involved in the discussions. This can result in the democratic leadership style failing to provide a positive outcome, due to being based on majority opinion rather than the most effective suggestions. Finally, Raelin (2016)

noted that the role of the leader is diminished in an organization adhering to the democratic leadership style, resulting in those team members offering the most effective suggestions beginning to doubt the capabilities of leaders within the organizational setting. Recognition of this limitation is prudent, because it may cause disharmony and decreased levels of productivity (ibid).

2.4.2.3 Laissez-faire leadership

The concept of laissez-faire leadership is based on freedom, respect and indulgence as basic rules for leadership practices and the relationship environment particularly in terms of the relationship between teachers and their school leaders (Algaber, 2012). “laissez-faire leader allows the group complete freedom for decision-making without participating himself/herself” (Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji, 2012: 42). In schools that follow laissez-faire leadership, school members are given total freedom to select the most suitable school curriculum, to create the school culture and select learning resources based on the own choice of school members, in the absence of authority and school leadership (Atawy, 2014).

“The laissez-faire leadership style involves non-interference policy, allows complete freedom to all workers and has no particular way of attaining goals”(Bhatti et al., 2012: 193). This might lead to lawlessness and anxiety within the school environment due to the absence of effective guidance and control which could negatively affect improvement (Atawy, 2014). Similarly, Nir and Hameiri (2014: 211) believe “that laissez faire (LF) leadership style is negatively connected with school outcomes”.

While a laissez-faire approach can be useful during the initial phases of an idea, or even of a task, although it is primarily applicable to a creative subject, and among highly

motivated individuals, a number of studies demonstrate that this form of leadership is the least productive, due to the lack of supervision by an authority figure (Arnold et al., 2015). In addition, the laissez-faire leadership style is not applicable to high-stake responsibilities, to duties with a short deadline, or to instances in which individuals require a significant amount of direction and guidance (ibid).

Laissez-faire leadership is defined as a leadership style that allows group members to make decisions and to respond to their obligations and responsibilities in their own way with minimum guidance and control from leaders (Almaitah, 2007). Laissez-faire leadership involves one main dimension: total freedom (ibid). The role of laissez-faire leaders is to provide general instructions for group members and allow the members to select the most suitable approach for themselves and plan and implement school instructions based on their preferences and views (Abo Alwafa, 2012). According to Arnold et al. (2015), there are various examples of leadership that have successfully employed the use of laissez-faire models. For instance, the late Steve Jobs of Apple Inc. offered insights to his team, and then permitted them to determine the solution independently. Another example is President Herbert Hoover who, during his administration, delegated tasks to more experienced individuals in areas in which he lacked expertise.

Laissez-faire leaders do not make decisions or suggest solutions for school problems as they encourage teachers to take this responsibility, which enhances teachers' leadership. However, although laissez-faire leadership includes teachers in leadership functions which in itself could be a positive thing (Algaber, 2012). However, responsibility for the school is totally left in the teachers' hands which increases the workload for teachers who are meant to be focusing on teaching not leading. In addition, laissez-faire leaders do not use motivation or consider school planning and work arrangements which may

negatively affect the school's aims and goals and the development of teachers and students. Finally, laissez-faire leaders do not support the experience, skills and performance of school members who may feel lost given the lack of guidance and control (ibid). Similarly, Arnold et al. (2015) argue that the lack of defined roles among groups may engender disagreements, and the wastage of time. There may also be a risk of low answerability among leaders that may divert failure to the team assigned the task, while the leaders are also inhibited from engaging fully with the group, which may cause disadvantages, and engender a lack of consistency.

However, the advantages of laissez-faire leadership are that it can function effectively with subordinates who possess expertise in a subject matter, creating maximum output. Moreover, the model is extremely constructive for creative individuals who value their freedom, away from supervision, and it can therefore constitute an intrinsic form of motivation for such skilled and creative individuals. Finally, the method also works effectively when the leadership makes suitable provision for the necessary resources (Arnold et al., 2015).

2.4.2.4 Consultative leadership

The concept of consultative leadership is that leadership authority and power should be invested not only in authorised leaders but also in subordinates, who should be provided with the space to participate and share their thoughts and opinions with their leaders, who control policies and decisions (Gonos and Gallo, 2013). The relationship between consultative leaders and subordinates is based on trust, which allows subordinates to participate in decision-making (Drysedale, Goode and Gurr, 2009). A consultative leader usually consults their subordinates before making a decision, which represents a drastic difference from the autocratic form of leadership (Lam et al., 2015).

The role of consultative school leaders is to work collaboratively with subordinates, either as individuals or groups, to raise and discuss issues and to make decisions for schools (Drysedale et al., 2009). Consultative school leaders empower teachers to set their goals and then help them to achieve those goals, such as by visiting their classrooms to provide support, which leads to enhanced innovation and professional learning (ibid). However, Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012: 42) argued that “in consultative style, the leader [makes] genuine efforts to listen carefully to ideas; nevertheless, major decisions are still largely centrally made”.

Consultative leadership can be defined as “the degree to which the leader influences the follower by providing advice, professional guidance, and background information about the process innovation” (Krause, Gebert and Kearney, 2007: 17).

The model has various advantages, as consultative decision making improves job satisfaction and motivation, and increases output, and the quality of the output, as it engages the executors at all levels. There are also decreased production costs, due to the reduced need for supervision (Lam et al., 2015). In addition, Alkhatam (2013) notes the five main features of consultative leadership that reflect the effectiveness of this leadership style for a school’s success. First, consultative leaders take all responsibility for their schools and seek to achieve the targeted goals by providing directions while taking into consideration the subordinates’ perspectives. Secondly, consultative leaders overcome obstacles and solve problems in a logical way to ensure the validity of implemented solutions. Thirdly, consultative leaders extend the space of participation in decision-making, which leads to more appropriate and effective decisions. Fourthly, consultative leaders enhance subordinates’ learning opportunities and encourage them to practise leadership roles. Fifthly, consultative leaders create a school culture that is based on freedom and respect among all school members, particularly between the

leadership team and all other school members. Furthermore, Drysdale et al. (2009: 703) argued that the consultative leadership style is likely to enhance teachers' performance as they are "encouraged to be leaders at every level and both individuals and teams [are] expected to be accountable for their performance". Furthermore, consultative leadership fosters subordinates' innovation and enhances their cognitive skills (Krause et al., 2007). Consultative leaders use rewards and punishments as motivations for their subordinates (Gonos and Gallo, 2013).

However, disadvantages of this leadership style also exist, such as the deceleration in decision making, due to the increased participatory approaches in the various stages, and also the risk of information leakage, or espionage, due to the consultative nature of the model (Lam et al., 2015).

2.5 School culture

This section involves the discussion concerning the importance of school culture for school improvement in general, and for the development of school members in particular. It provides a definition for the term, together with its components, and considers the effect of school leadership on school culture, providing certain strategies that can be employed to enhance school culture, and consequently school improvement. It includes the discussion of the importance of collaborative cultures, their features, advantages, and drawbacks for the development of teachers and students, and for overall school improvement.

It is a general supposition that school culture is the most important component required for school improvement (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Algaber, 2012). It is rather believed that without enough effort and care of school culture, school improvement might be

impossible (Fisher, Frey and Pumpian, 2012). Thus, school culture must be considered as the main component and the basic ground for school improvement because it describes the environment, events and circumstances within the schools (Hopkins, 2001, cited in Busher, 2006). The definition of school culture has been given as “the basic assumptions, norms and values, and cultural artefacts that are shared by school members, which influence their functioning at school” (Engels et al., 2008: 159). Therefore, the components of school culture can be summarised as four, which are “the traditions, beliefs, values and customs that knit together the community of small isolated societies” (Zollers, Ramanathan and Yu, 1999: 195).

There are many grounds suggesting that school leadership also has an impact on school culture. For instance, due to the position of authority and the power, leaders have a major influence on their school’s culture, which in turn has an impact on their staff as well as they control the culture of the school on a direct and indirect basis (MacNeil, Prater and Busch, 2009; Atawy, 2014). Consequently, it is declared by Engels et al. (2008) that good school cultures indicate the success of leaders because cultures reflect the principles and values of their creators. Thus, principals will be able to enhance school improvement through changing their schools’ cultures to be based on good relationships with stakeholders, particularly teachers that would motivate their performance and the learning quality (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010; Fisher et al., 2012). It is stated that there is a strong relationship between school culture and students’ development as attractive and positive schools cultures can enhance the learning quality and increase the chances of students’ development (Alhur, 2011).

Moreover, it has been demonstrated that in order to create positive cultures for schools which can support school improvement, principals must consider some important issues such as the individuality of school members, so feelings of the teachers and pupils, their

beliefs and perspectives of their schools and schooling in general, must be understood and taken into account when creating the culture and setting the values (Busher, 2006). Furthermore, the context of the school and moral as well as ethical issues linked to values of the school should be taken into account as these are linked with the school stakeholders (Gruenert, 2005; Alhur, 2011; Algaber, 2012). Also, it has been further explained by Fisher et al. (2012) that for school improvement, it is important that principals need to explain and share their visions and goals with all school members; as it is crucial to enhance cooperation through working collaboratively with teachers that might enhance the relationships among them and thus help in term of solving problems. Hence, according to the stated necessities for a positive culture, it seems that collaborative culture is appropriate for school improvement.

2.5.1 Collaborative culture

Collaborative culture is a concept that suggests members of an organisation should work in a supportive environment that motivates members to cooperate, adapt and act flexibly through working collaboratively (Coatney, 2005). Collaborative cultures require leaders “who commit to leading for student accomplishment for organizational health, for professional learning, and for long-range and deep improvements” (Lieberman and Miller, 1999, cited in Emihovich and Battaglia, 2000: 228). It is supposed that “People who collaborate will do anything better” (Gruenert, 2005: 50). Moreover, it is argued by Nancy, Waldron and James (2010) that though there is not any particular way of how to convert the culture of an organisation into a collaborative one, because it depends on the context of the organisation that differs from an institution to another, none the less collaborative culture remains as the most crucial component for school improvement. It is supposed by Waldron et al. (2010) that the

extent of collaboration between the members of the school and especially between the professionals decides the degree of school improvement.

On the other hand, there have been some cases where collaborative cultures have resulted in disadvantages because of the members with diverse perceptions and needs that may lead to conflict (Given et al., 2010). Moreover, collaborative cultures put more pressure on teachers that threatens the sustainability of such culture over time (Gamble and Kinsler, 2004; Almaitah, 2007).

In spite of these drawbacks of collaborative culture, this type is agreed to be effective in terms of improving pupils' outcomes (Gruenert, 2005). In addition, teachers participate in making decisions within the collaborative culture, representing values of the school and sharing to solve problems which means that they have been provided with more chances to develop as they are enhanced to do by feeling engaged and respected since teachers' opinions and contributions are valued in collaborative cultures (Gamble and Kinsler, 2004; Nelson and Slavit, 2008). Furthermore, Carter (2011) says that teachers' performance is likely to increase when school culture is collaborative as teachers feel they can influence the process of decision making even if only in terms of how they construct their professional development. "Schools that build collaborative cultures are said to show a 'commitment to shared purpose; knowledge creation; multi-level learning; trust and curiosity' as well as 'self- awareness; awareness of others; managing emotions; developing emotional literacy' that will create 'time for reflection; self-evaluation; deep learning; feedback for learning" (MacGilchrist et al., 2004: 113, cited in Nabhani et al., 2012: 39).

Moreover, Given et al. (2010) believe that the interaction between teachers and students is likely to increase when school culture is collaborative, as that will enhance the

confidence of teachers and pupils, lead to some positive impacts on the learning quality and result in a reduction of feelings isolation or fear. Furthermore, classroom environment is affected and rather shaped by teachers' collaboration as this allows teachers to exchange their experience, which will improve the quality of learning and so lead to overall school improvement (Nelson and Slavit, 2008). Similarly, Nabhani et al. (2012) argue that collaborative school culture enhances teachers' ability to exchange knowledge and skills as well as to improve their practices by reflecting and monitoring each other. Collaborative cultures are also used to involve students with different backgrounds, cultures, talents, values, beliefs and abilities in school culture and in the process of achieving schools' goals (Fisher et al., 2012). Collaborative culture is a necessary condition for inclusion, as well as collaborative culture is the most crucial characteristic for the professional development of teachers and students (Rosebrough and Leverett, 2010; Ahmad, 2011).

2.6 Essential conditions

Essential conditions concern the factors that are considered to be important and effective for school improvement in general, and the development of teachers and students in particular. These factors are as follows: inclusion, student voice, individual differences, school curriculum, school-parent relationship, professional learning community, teaching effectiveness, classroom atmosphere, and class size, all of which are argued to be essential conditions for consideration when attempting to change a school culture, and to improve a school.

Essential conditions for school improvement will be discussed at two levels:

- 1) School-level.

2) Classroom-level.

At this point the purpose is to review all of these conditions and consider the effects of every one on school improvement and on the development of teachers and pupils. The intention here is to discuss these conditions through considering the relevant Arabic literature and the international literature to evaluate each required condition for school improvement.

2.6.1 School-level conditions

There are several school level aspects that school leadership needs to address to promote school improvement:

- Inclusion;
- Student voice;
- Individual differences;
- School curriculum;
- School-parent relationship;
- Professional learning community;
- Teaching effectiveness.

These different aspects are considered in the sections below

2.6.1.1 Inclusion

Inclusion has been defined as “the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organisation and provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity” (Sebba and Sachdev, 1997, cited in Frederickson and Cline, 2009: 71). Inclusion is required at two

levels, classroom and the school as a whole community. The school level inclusion will be discussed at this point; classroom level inclusion will be deferred.

“Inclusion is a set of never ending processes. It involves the specification of the direction of change. It is relevant to any school... It requires schools to engage in a critical examination of what can be done to increase the learning and participation of the diversity of students within the school and its locality” (Frederickson and Cline, 2009: 71, 72). According to Fullan and Hargreaves (1992, cited in Busher, 2006), inclusion must be considered as one important basis and element when attempting to improve schools. This is because inclusion provides all the stakeholders of a school including administrators, teachers, pupils and parents to be involved and to work collaboratively together to achieve the visions and goals of their schools (Abo Alwafa, 2012).

Inclusion provides individuals with less ability or those who have learning difficulties to be more successful; it makes it possible for them to be able to solve problems, overcome barriers and cope better with the future (Willis, 2007). Moreover, inclusion enables pupils to have more confidence, to be in a good relationship, active, motivated and higher achievers (Villa and Thousand, 2005; Ainscow, Farrell and Tweddle, 2000; Al Bahawashi, 2013). Furthermore, it has been suggested by Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) that inclusive schools usually have links with local communities, which is not only useful to enhance school improvement in general, but also can positively affect the behaviours of pupils, their attendance as well as their achievements.

Inclusion is not only dependent on teaching practices or on the educational practices of schools, but also influenced by some other external factors, such as “demographics of the areas served by schools, the histories and cultures of the populations...and the economic realities faced by those populations” (Ainscow et al., 2012: 198). It is also

believed that schools are influenced by the district politics, its decision-makers, and the “national policy-makers”, which might affect the ability of schools to implement inclusion or its extent (Ainscow et al., 2012: 198). This means that the role of schools and their leaders to foster inclusion is limited and dependent particularly in schools that follow national curriculum, such as Saudi Arabian schools (Alkhatam, 2013). However, schools can overcome these obstacles, since inclusion is reliant on including all school members and other stakeholders in making the school’s decisions and drawing up the school’s values by distributing the leadership’s functions among school stakeholders, which will lead to create a collaborative culture and provide an inclusive curriculum that may to some extent support inclusion (Frederickson and Cline, 2009).

2.6.1.2 Student voice

Another important aspect for inclusion is students’ voice that is believed to be one component of school improvement (Sterrett, 2011; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009; Ainscow et al., 2000; Ofsted; 2009). According to Kidd (2012: 120) “Student voice work impacts massively on creating inclusion...and in improving the quality of learning and teaching”. Kidd believes that considering student voice is not only effective in terms of supporting inclusion, it is also important with regard to raising teaching practice particularly for novice practitioners who will be able to reflect on the teaching practices based on the comments made by learners that would help teachers to improve their practices and works to enhance students’ outcomes. Similarly, Rhodes and Brundrett (2009: 363), state that “the research literature reveals examples of reported benefits with respect to the improvement of teaching and learning by listening to the voices of learners”. Furthermore, Sterrett (2011) argues that listening to pupils’ voices is important for students’ development because hearing students’ voice can motivate

them and enhance their rights, citizenship, participation and achievement. Moreover, listening to students is important to promote inclusion for all students and it is likely to make students feel more involved in the community of their schools as their visions and needs will be considered and involved in school policies and actions (Rosebrough and Leverett, 2010).

However, it has been argued by Busher (2006) that schools' actions should be taken not only on the light of student voices but also these actions should be decided based on the stakeholders' voices including pupils, practitioners, parents and governors. All voices should be encouraged, considered and heard equally at all levels. Although there have been some possible drawbacks regarding listening to students' voices as this means students will be engaged in decision making which may threaten teachers' power and authority (Leithwood and Seashore, 2011), the benefits of listening to the voices of stakeholders are crucial for school improvement since hearing students' voices, for example, makes it possible for school leadership to identify the needs of pupils and consider these needs within the school's curriculum, decisions and its values (Ainscow et al., 2000). It is confirmed by Ofsted (2009) that student council is a means that can encourage the hearing of students' voices in addition to the positive impact of it on pupils' wellbeing, confidence and learning development.

2.6.1.3 Individual differences

Individuals differ in terms of their feelings, behaviours, experiences, backgrounds, insights, abilities, personalities, and identities (Frederickson and Cline, 2009; Nabhani et al., 2012; Al Bahawashi, 2013; Willis, 2007). Individual differences are the features that make every human being unique, whether they are physical or social behaviours,

such as body shape, height, weight, voice tone, or the cognitive and emotional differences between individuals (Alnahrawy, 2015). There are two main causes of these differences, genetics and the social culture into which one is born (ibid). However, some additional factors can affect individuals and thereby extend the differences between them; such as different experiences, actions, and the day-to-day environment, including aspects like relationships and life changes (Al Bahawashi, 2013).

These differences between individuals, whether they relate to general differences among individuals, gender differences, personal differences, or national differences, inform individual successes (Alhur, 2011). Attaining success demands greater care and attention to individual differences in general and in the case of children in particular (Al Bahawashi, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to consider differences between individuals when attempting to enhance the development of teachers and their students, as a means to foster improvement in schools (Day et al., 2007).

Evelien et al. (2012) demonstrate that teachers have different perspectives and responses regarding the structure of their schools. For instance, the way that teachers respond to change and innovation is diverse or varied based on their perspectives regarding the impact of such change on their professional identities because the introduction of change may either positively or negatively affect teachers' identities. Therefore teachers, before making a decision of whether to accept an intentioned change, tend to position themselves, making their choices by "balancing personal beliefs, desires, and values regarding education against the characteristics and demands of the proposed changes" (Evelien et al., 2012: 992). This suggests that the capacity of teachers towards change and school improvement as well as to maintain the sustainability of this change is dependent on the degree of the agency that teachers experience because a high level of agency allows teachers to feel engaged and have

control to select their own choices that suit their interests, goals and motivations, which would enable teachers to be more able to manage pressures (Day et al., 2007; Moore, 2008). Giving teachers a high level of responsibility encourages them to be more motivated, effective, successful and more ready to accept the structure of their school (Marshall and Drummond, 2006). This might be true because agency leads teachers to feel more comfortable since their values and beliefs are not threatened or conflicting with the structure and the processes of their schools, which might increase teachers' resistance as being forced to do some thing not related to their goals and beliefs that may either prevent school improvement or makes it happen more slowly (Day et al., 2007; Marshall and Drummond, 2006).

With regard to the differences among children, Cullingford (2010) believes that pupils have different emotions and motivations. Moreover, Dean (1999) argues that sex, ethnicity, age and social backgrounds of pupils extend the differentiation among them. In addition, through an experimental research study Crozier (1997) discovered that pupils have different abilities significantly in terms of understanding as well as reading skills.

Therefore, to enhance the development of pupils it is essential for principals to collaborate with teachers and parents to determine the differences' causes and provide appropriate support and sufficient care that will lead to increase the quality of learning (Frederickson and Cline, 2009). Furthermore, in order to meet pupils' needs, school leadership is required to provide more opportunities for reflection, feedback, adapt the school's values and aims, facilitate pupils' networking and listening to pupils' voices (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009; Abo Alwafa, 2012). Moreover, Miller (2010) argues that it is important to offer freedom for students as well as nurture the belief that they can make a difference in order to develop a sense of students' civic agency that will shape

their educational environment as well as lead them to be agents who are more able to change and develop. This suggests that to ensure school improvement the power that school leadership has needs to be extended to involve all school members including students, because it is believed that when individuals, particularly children, have got no power then they will behave “as if nothing they can do will change their organization” (Miller , 2010: 4).

Thus, it seems that school leadership needs to consider the needs of individuals for a sustainable and continuous school improvement and empower school members to have a high degree of agency that would increase their identity and help them to feel responsible for their school improvement as well as help school members to position themselves within the school system which might be more possible and effective within inclusive schools.

2.6.1.4 School curriculum

School curriculum is an initial step and the basic component for school improvement as stated by Schmoker (2011). This is because the curriculum has direct associations with pupils’ outcomes. Generally, principals are believed to be the main person responsible for the school curriculum as they only have the right to change or edit the curriculum of their schools (MacNeil, Praterand Busch, 2009). Therefore, in order to enhance school improvement, principals need to consider some important factors, such as school context and the nature of the school members, before attempting the change and development to the curriculum, which might be possibly done by working as a team collaboratively with school members that will allow different insights to be involved and thus lead to increase the diversity of the curriculum (Ogrinc, Nierenberg and

Batalden, 2011). It is also possible and useful to use students' outcomes data to be the measure for analysing the content of the curriculum (Ogrinc et al., 2011).

However, school leaders in Saudi Arabia have limited authority, particularly regarding the curriculum, which is created and revised by The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, which sets a national curriculum to be followed by all the schools in Saudi Arabia, including the private and international schools there (Alghamdi, 2010). The authority afforded to school leaders in Saudi schools regarding the curriculum is limited to the process of the delivery of content and the amount of content to be delivered in a single school term, unless special circumstances affect the school and its members particularly teachers who bear the main responsibility for the delivery of the school curriculum (ibid).

It is supposed by Dean (1999) that pupils' achievement relies on the followed curriculum; thus improving the content of the curriculum can lead pupils to be more successful and higher achievers. Therefore, the curriculum need to be inclusive where pupils have equal access to the content, which requires principals and teachers to consider individuals' differences and take into account pupils who have learning difficulties and the different cultures that students hold (Ofsted, 2009). Hence, an inclusive curriculum can be defined as the varied curriculum that includes comprehensive resources of knowledge and activities and different materials from other cultures to meet all individuals' needs, which can be enhanced through communicating with other contexts locally, nationally and internationally (Jones, 2004; Skidmore, 2004).

2.6.1.5 School-parent relationship

Another important aspect for school improvement is school-parents relationships (Nabhani et al., 2012). For instance, Frew et al. (2013: 27) state that “research in general education has documented a strong link between a child’s success in school and parent involvement in school-sponsored activities such as participating in a general school wide meeting... attending a school/class event... The importance of these benefits is emphasized at all ages, including the adolescent years”. In addition, inclusion, which has been agreed previously to be one of the most crucial elements for the development of teachers and pupils, demands that schools engage parents in the school community as well as to create strong relationships with them (Busher, 2006). Furthermore, O’Neill et al. (2002) demonstrate that when parents are in touch with schools and attending open evenings then they will feel engaged in the school community and so may be more supportive as well as providing schools more access to the information of their children and their backgrounds.

The school-parents relationship relates to the concept of parental involvement, which is defined as a strategy intended to enhance students’ development by involving parents in the school’s activities to enhance parents’ communications, participation and relationship with their children’s schools (Alzaki, 2009). The aim to promote parental involvement derives from the belief that parents have huge potential and energy that can be exploited and used by schools to achieve multiple benefits. This will benefit all interested parties, including society in general (Alyaqup, 2010).

The school-parents relationship has many advantages for parents, the school, teachers and students. The relationship between the school and parents can help parents to improve their efficiency and ability to participate in the learning and schooling of their children (Alajmi, 2007). An effective school-parents relationship could improve

parents' communication and relationship skills, and raise parental awareness regarding their children, their behaviour, the needs of their children, and the most suitable means to help their children (ibid). Similarly, Busher (2006) mentioned that the school-home relationship allows parents to keep in touch with their children's schools, teachers, and other school members, so that they can be more aware of what their children are learning at school to be able to help them at home.

With regard to schools, the relationship between a school and its pupils' parents is important and effective in terms of the economic support that schools receive, the collaboration between schools and other interested parties, and the enhancement in the principle of social participation (Alajmi, 2007). In addition, the school-parents relationship could facilitate social integration, support democracy and increase public support for the educational process, all of which can support school improvement (Alyaqup, 2010).

The school-parents relationship is also associated with the development of staff, particularly teachers and their performance (Goldberg, 2001). It is stated that the school-parents relationship makes it possible for teachers to be more aware of the diversity of their students, to be better able to explore and understand the cultural interests and needs of their students' and their families, and to resolve students' learning problems by providing the most suitable activities and teaching strategies (Alnahrawy, 2015).

It is also argued that constructing a broad relationship with parents can produce positive results regarding students' outcomes, academic achievements, behaviour (particularly in school), engagement, motivation, attendance (Frew et al., 2013), performance, relationships, emotions, agency, personal characteristic and abilities, particularly the

ability to overcome obstacles and problems that students might encounter, whether medical or psychological (Alzaki, 2009).

Parental involvement describes the participation of parents in schools at three levels: participation in school leadership (e.g. decision-making), participation in the learning process (e.g. classroom activities, school workshops, home learning), and participation in school support and external activities (e.g. school library and school trips) (Alyaqup, 2010). Lambert (2003), for instance, demonstrates that it is important for school improvement to promote parents' leadership, which allows parents to be involved in school activities, have relationships with other parents and share with school leadership the responsibility of learning. In addition, Busher, Harris and Wise (2000) believe that children's learning and their skills, especially reading skills, are mainly affected by parents, thus, school leadership is not only required to construct extensive relationships with parents, it is also demanded to engage parents in the school curriculum and its culture that would enhance the quality of learning. Hence, it is useful to consider parents as one effective resource when attempting school change and improvement (Goldberg, 2001).

However, although constructing relationships with parents and promoting parents' leadership are important for the development of teachers, pupils and school improvement, there have been some barriers to this. For example, contacting parents sometimes is difficult as some parents are not helpful or seem to be unwilling to respond to schools' letters particularly when these are not relevant directly to their children which may be because either they are busy or feel not responsible about school matters (Coles and Southworth, 2004). Similarly, Nabhani et al. (2012) argue that although parental involvement in schools is an effective strategy that could lead to enhance school improvement, however some parents are not willing to be involved in

their children's schools, which is caused by different reasons, such as social and cultural traditions.

2.6.1.6 Professional learning community

The concept of a professional learning community (PLC) has arisen in the last twenty years from the debate concerning the failure of education, and its relative neglect for the importance of community life in favour of school improvement, and the development of teachers and students (Allen, 2013). Schools are believed to be the most appropriate context in which teachers can embark upon professional learning. They provide opportunities for teachers to work together and interact with other teachers in a collaborative setting (Vanblaere and Devos, 2016).

According to Ho, Lee and Teng (2016), teachers are of primary importance in effecting school improvement in general, and students' development in particular. A PLC is important to the professional development of teachers (Popp and Goldman, 2016; Woodland, 2016). In addition, developing a PLC is one of the most effective strategies that can be used to enhance learning quality, student outcomes, and resolve educational problems (Woodland, 2016; Buttram and Farley-Ripple, 2016). According to Lee, Zhang and Yin (2011: 821), a "PLC plays an important role in building teachers' personal and collective capacities as well as in improving students' achievements in school". Indeed, Vanblaere and Devos (2016) argue that a PLC is one of the most effective tools leading to enhanced learning quality, which relies on teachers and their willingness to refresh their teaching skills and professional knowledge. Thus, in order to enhance school improvement, professional learning must be fostered to assist teachers to develop their practice, to be better able to build professional learning communities (Ho et al., 2016).

Previous studies have suggested, “[E]ffective PLCs can enhance everything from teacher satisfaction to student performance... [PLCs] are purported to positively affect school culture, improve teacher self-efficacy, reduce teacher isolation, boost an organization’s overall capacity, and build a shared culture of high-quality instructional practice” (Woodland, 2016: 506, 507).

Moreover, PLCs make it possible for teachers to work together in groups with colleagues who have more experience than themselves, assisting them to reflect upon their teaching, adjust their practices, and take appropriate actions to enhance students’ achievements (Woodland, 2016; Buttram and Farley-Ripple, 2016). It has further been suggested that, “well developed PLCs could positively improve teachers’ teaching practices and students’ learning activities ... as well as students’ achievements” (Lee et al., 2011: 821).

With regard to the dimensions and definitions of a PLC, Woodland (2016) argued that a PLC is a networked community, a collaboration among teachers intended to enhance learning quality and improve learning outcomes by transforming acquired knowledge into practice. He continues that this not only supports collaboration and teamwork for teachers, but also helps teachers to jointly locate and solve problems related to students’ learning. Based on this assertion, Woodland (2016: 508) defines PLCs as, “school environments where teachers work collaboratively in purposefully designed groups to improve student achievement.” Similarly, Wennergren and Blossing (2015) argue that a PLC demands a collaborative culture, in which teachers work continuously out of a collective responsibility to create new knowledge, and help each other. Wennergren and Blossing (2015: 3) continue, defining a PLC as “a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way; operating as a collective enterprise.” Furthermore,

Stoll et al. (2006,cited in Woodhouse and Pedder, 2017: 556) refer to the following characteristics as the most common features“of effective PLCs:

- Shared values and vision
- Collectiveresponsibility
- Reflective practitioner inquiry, which includes reflective dialogue and mutual observation andevaluation
- Collaboration
- Group, as well as individual, learning is promoted
- Mutual trust, support and respect among staff members
- Inclusive membership
- Openness, networks and partnerships beyond the school”.

Similarly, Lee et al. (2011), argue that PLCs are based on specific characteristics, such as shared vision and values, collaboration, professional reflection, collective responsibility, and group learning. Based on these characteristics, Lee et al. (2011: 821) define PLCs as, “Learning communities [that] provide and sustain supportive environments for teachers’ collaboration and the sharing of professional norms and values.” Moreover, Allen (2013: 193) refers to four features as being common within the literature of PLC: “1) a shared vision and sense of purpose related to student learning; 2) collaboration; 3) reflective or inquiry-based dialog; and 4) collective responsibility for student learning.” Drawing on these features, Allen (2013: 194) offers the following description to define a professional learning community: “PLC is realized through the day-to-day practices of regularly meeting groups of teachers referred to variously as inquiry groups, critical friends groups, or simply ‘PLCs’. These groups

engage in a variety of practices intended to foster professional learning and instructional improvement”.

According to Ho et al. (2016), PLCs are mainly used to foster the professional learning of teachers to enhance students’ development and improve schools. Proceeding from this belief, Ho et al. (2016: 33) argue that a PLC can offer, “a promising direction for future school reforms.”

On the other hand, Vanblaere and Devos (2016: 27, 28) argue that the concept of a PLC is “[M]ultidimensional, including organizational, personal, and interpersonal capacities. Firstly, organizational capacity includes supportive resources, structures, and systems...Secondly, personal capacity refers to teachers' active and reflective construction of knowledge, ...Thirdly, interpersonal capacity contains behavioural elements”

Based on these principles, Vanblaere and Devos (2016) argue that PLCs foster collaborative cultures, encouraging teachers to support and interact with each other, not only to develop their effectiveness, but also to use the best possible method to educate their students. According to Vanblaere and Devos (2016: 27), PLCs can be defined as, “promising for improving the quality of teaching and for moving educational systems forward.”

Hence, it seems that the availability of a PLC is an important factor that can lead to enhanced school improvement, through a cycle starting with high quality teachers’ professional learning, and concluding with enhanced student outcomes and overall school improvement (Ho et al., 2016). In addition, Woodland (2016) argues that establishing a PLC is one of the main conditions essential to school improvement, because school improvement demands that teachers work successfully as a team to

recognize issues, define problems, provide solutions, implement actions, and examine the effectiveness of proffered solutions by considering the outcomes of any implemented actions, to enhance teachers' practices and students' achievement. These processes reflect the nature of a PLC, which relies on the four main components: "dialogue", "decision-making", "action-taking" and "evaluation" (Woodland, 2016: 509).

However, although a PLC is believed to be an effective factor for teachers' professional development and school improvement (Ho et al., 2016; Woodland, 2016; Popp and Goldman, 2016; Lee et al., 2011; Buttram and Farley-Ripple, 2016), the role of students in a PLC seems to be peripheral. Typically "student participation was not made explicit" (Wennergren and Blossing, 2015: 1), as student participation is not recognized within the context of PLCs, although students have the right to participate in every aspect of the learning process. Similarly, Reed and Swaminathan (2016: 1102) argue "although there is a lack of consensus regarding the influence of PLCs on student achievement, the literature suggests that the role of leadership in the creation and support of PLCs is critical to its sustainability".

Involving students in PLCs is more likely to enhance students' achievements and teachers' academic performance and knowledge, because when students are given additional opportunities to interact with their teachers, and when they are engaged in learning activities, teachers will be more aware, "of how to invite students to participate in the classroom dialogue" (Wennergren and Blossing, 2015: 1).

In addition, although PLCs are important for teachers' professional learning, teachers' educational qualifications are also important for the professional development of themselves and for ensuring school improvement (Ho et al., 2016). Studies indicate that

teachers who hold a bachelor's degree are more professional, more innovative, more able to respond to students' needs by providing suitable and supportive learning activities, have superior discipline, additional skills, and a sounder foundation of knowledge than their less well-educated counterparts (ibid).

Concerning the role played by the school leadership in facilitating PLCs, it is argued that principals have the power to encourage PLCs, and to thereby enhance educational quality, due to their huge influence on both teachers and the school learning environment (Vanblaere and Devos, 2016). School leadership is believed to be the primary factor that can lead to the creation of strong PLCs, because school leaders are responsible for the style of leadership within a school, which has a direct influence on PLCs in schools (Vanblaere and Devos, 2016). Similarly, Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016) argue that school leadership plays a significant role in PLCs, because principals are central to a school's success, exerting considerable influence on their teachers' practices. Positive results are expected if principals take "steps to support the implementation of the state PLC[s] mandate in their building through various means, including creating a culture focused on high expectations for student learning, enhancing teacher knowledge and skills, and allocating and managing resources" (Buttram and Farley-Ripple, 2016: 202).

2.6.1.7 Teaching effectiveness

Teaching effectiveness and the quality of teaching that students receive are essential factors that are associated with students' development and school improvement (Dean, 1999). It has been argued by Hoque, Alam and Abdullah (2011) that although the results of the huge number of studies regarding school improvement refer to different

factors that can enhance school improvement such as school leadership, school culture, learning environment and school curriculum, teaching effectiveness is the most important factor that has the greater influence on students' development and school improvement. According to Stronge (2007), teaching effectiveness requires teachers to transform classroom environment into a positive atmosphere, which is likely to encourage students' success. Furthermore, through an empirical research study, Dean (1999) argued that there are five positive effects of teaching effectiveness on students and their development. First, pupils' abilities are more likely to increase, especially independent learning abilities. Second, pupils' behaviours are more positive. Third, behavioural problems of pupils are reduced. Fourth, pupils' achievement and their learning are likely to improve. Fifth, pupils are more active and ready to learn.

In addition, Day et al.(2007) argue that teaching effectiveness can enhance pupils' outcomes, particularly in two subjects: mathematics and English. It is also agreed by Heck (2009) that teaching effectiveness is associated with pupils' achievements. Heck found that the achievement of pupils who were taught by effective teachers was high especially in reading and mathematics. Hollins (2011), therefore, believes that it is possible to use pupils' learning and outcomes as variables to measure teachers' effectiveness.

Thus, based on the importance and the advantages of teaching effectiveness for pupils' development that is supposed to be an important condition for school improvement, schools' principals need to consider teaching effectiveness as the top condition to accept new teachers that would also encourage existing teachers to develop and work to improve their skills. As stated by Richard (2008: 141) "the principals of effective schools did not tolerate ineffective teachers. Ineffective teachers were expected to change, or they were removed". Hence, school leadership should consider the issue of

teaching effectiveness and use it as a key principle for the success of students and the school (Heck, 2009). This means that principals need to work hard to enhance teachers' professional development, that would be achieved by several means such as, extending the training courses for teachers as well as measuring teachers' success based on the characteristics of teaching effectiveness that teachers practise (Abo Alwafa, 2012).

However, it is argued by Dean (1999) that it is not fair to use teaching effectiveness as a measure to evaluate and judge teachers because teaching effectiveness is a personal skill, which is not possessed by all practitioners. On the other hand, Cullingford (2010) argues that even though teaching effectiveness is believed to be a personal issue, this skill can be developed and rather achieved by training and practices. Another important issue associated with teaching effectiveness is that the characteristics of teaching effectiveness are multiple due to the extensive studies in this field that leads to unlimited features for teaching effectiveness, which might result in confusion as what to be considered as a characteristic for effective teachers (Crawford et al., 2005; Alghamdi, 2012; Alhur, 2011). However, the literature of teaching effectiveness presents some common characteristics that could be used by principals to assess the effectiveness of teachers. Some of these characteristics have already been considered including individuals' differences and teacher-student relationship and how do these contribute to enhance students' development, which have been covered in details under the individual differences' section. Thus, the focus of the following section will be on four characteristics of teaching effectiveness and the influence of these on the development of pupils and teachers, and on the overall improvement of schools:

- 1) Learning and teaching;
- 2) Planning and preparing;
- 3) Classroom and time management; and

- 4) Using assessment for learning.

Learning and teaching

According to Cullingford (2010), teaching experience is one of the most valued resources for teachers' learning and development, which means that teachers need to explore the opportunity of being teachers to learn and develop through their practice. It is argued that learning and teaching is an effective factor that could enhance teachers' experience, performance and motivate teachers to be more excited and productive, which could lead to enhancing learning quality (Mustafa, 2013).

There have been some suggested ways of how to learn through teaching. Dean (1999) for instance, suggests that teachers can learn through observing each other or through students' feedback that would allow teachers to reflect on their work, improve their performance and develop their skills which will contribute to enhance students' development.

However, there are some obstacles of learning and teaching particularly for full time table teachers who might find it time consuming as they do not have spare time to observe other teachers, for example, as well as learning and teaching may result in reduction to the allocated teaching time (Hollins, 2011). In spite of these obstacles, the importance and the positive impact of teaching and learning on teachers' and students' development, and on school improvement is believed as valuable and worthy factor for school improvement (Cullingford, 2010; Algaber, 2012). Thus, teachers should engage in reflection and seeking to improve by asking themselves what and why they are teaching, and how to develop for the future (Scales, 2008; Jackson, 2011).

Planning and preparing

Stronge (2007) argues that teaching effectiveness demands teachers to make a comprehensive preparation for the delivery of the curriculum as well as to plan for the multi activities that will be covered in the lesson. The reason behind the importance of planning and preparing to teaching effectiveness is that pre-session planning can reduce the risk of committing errors and provides teachers to be more confident, which will positively affect students' learning and their achievement (Scales, 2008). In addition, planning and preparation can make it possible for an ordinary teacher to be an effective teacher (ibid). Thus, it is important for teachers to consider the long-term planning that should be done before the beginning of each academic year and the short-term preparation that forward each schooling day and each individual session, which will enhance the quality of teaching that would lead to successfully deliver the curriculum and foster the quality of learning (Hollins, 2011; Almuneef, 2012).

Classroom and time management

Classroom management is one of the most important factors for teaching effectiveness that requires teachers to consider some skills, such as communication and interaction within the classroom, which helps teachers to create a collaborative learning environment and successfully manage their classrooms (Alhamadany, 2015). Classroom management is believed to be a complicated process, especially for new practitioners, because long-term experience is the main required condition for successful classroom management (Cummings, 2000). However, there have been some suggested strategies

that can assist new and experienced teachers to be more able to manage their classrooms. Marzano et al. (2005), for instance, suggest that classrooms can be successfully managed by following some effective steps: First, is to establish a role system that will be followed during the term time. Second, is to provide students a written copy of the system. Third, is to display the role system clearly in the front of the classroom and ask pupils to write some words, such as their names or to sign on the role paper. Furthermore, in order to effectively manage classrooms, teachers need to check the components of the classroom, place them in a way where they can be easily found and used, arrange the classroom's space and students' desks in a way that makes it possible for students to collaborate and work in groups (Pam, 2006; Rosebrough and Leverett, 2010). In addition, Stronge (2007) proposes that teachers are required to involve students in a teaching process that would keep them active as well as assist teachers to effectively manage their classrooms.

With regard to time management, Stronge (2007) believes that managing learning time is an important condition for teaching effectiveness, which means that teachers have to be more careful about learning and classroom time as they need to invest this time and work to reduce the time that irrelevant to the lesson or less useful for students. This means that teachers need to think about every minute of the classroom time, and to consider the seconds spent while waiting for an answer or a response from a student (Alnahrawy, 2015).

Using assessment for learning

Assessment is seen as a sensitive and essential aspect for effective teachers as it has an emotional effect over pupils, potentially influencing their learning, outcomes,

confidence and their future in general (Scales, 2008). This suggests that using assessment inappropriately might result in negative impacts on pupils' learning. Furthermore, the aim of the assessment is not to determine students' failure points, but to enhance students' development and their learning in particular (Pam, 2006). Thus, formative assessment can be used to improve students' achievement by using multi tests and homework to explore pupils' knowledge regarding specific issues that would help teachers to find out the points of weaknesses of pupils and so amend or change the teaching and learning strategies that may enhance students' achievement (Scales, 2008).

Black et al. (2003) argue the importance of feedback for the development of pupils. They believe that although providing written feedback can be time consuming for teachers, providing students feedback can let them identify their weaknesses as well as help them to be aware of their strengths that may help students to reflect and be more likely to develop. Thus, teachers are required to use the assessment for the purpose of learning through providing clear, accurate, positive, understandable and motivating feedback, which is likely to encourage the development of students and help them to be higher achievers (Marzano et al., 2005; Alyaqup, 2010).

2.6.2 classroom-level conditions

As discussed in the beginning, the essential conditions for school improvement are viewed at two levels, school level and classroom level. The first level (school-level) has already been examined. The second level (the classroom-level) will be the main scope of the remainder of this chapter. However, it is crucial to note that all of the conditions required for school improvement at the school-level, also translate down to the classroom-level. In addition, some of the school-level conditions are required at

classroom-level, such as inclusion and individual differences (Frederickson and Cline, 2009). Thus, this section will focus on inclusion at the level of the classroom, classroom atmosphere and class size, and how these contribute to teachers' and students' development, and to overall school improvement.

2.6.2.1 Inclusion at classroom-level

Inclusion is believed to be more important at the level of the classroom where pupils spend the majority of their study and school time (Ainscow et al., 2000). Inclusion is argued as an effective means in terms of solving students' problems, and encouraging students to be more active, ready to learn and higher achievers (Alguhani, 2013). Thus, school leadership is required to clarify teachers' responsibilities to equally involve all pupils in the learning environment that would enhance inclusion in classrooms (Cummings, 2000). This suggests that teachers should work collaboratively with students that would encourage both of them to feel responsible about the classroom atmosphere and thus share in this responsibility. This requires teachers to encourage pupils to work as one group, help them to learn and think, and teach their pupils and train them to be independent learners taking into account individuals' differences and how to meet these differences (Crawford et al., 2005).

Furthermore, Cullingford (2010) mentioned that students have different ethnicities, backgrounds, natures, needs and abilities. Hence, in order to enhance students' learning, principals need to pay attention to these differences among students and work with school staff, teachers and parents to identify some means that can lead to engage all individuals whatever learning difficulties or differences they have and assist them to be more success (Cummings, 2000). There have been some suggested means that can help

in terms of inclusion. Scale (2008), for example, mentioned that using different teaching methods and styles could help pupils with different abilities to understand, achieve and learn better. Similarly, Ainscow et al. (2012: 203) argue that “equity, ... requires practitioners who understand the importance of teaching the same thing in different ways to different students, and of teaching different things in different ways to the same students”. This theory presents the importance of teaching effectiveness for inclusion, students’ development and school improvement. Inclusion, particularly at classroom level, is seen as an effective means to enhance teaching effectiveness because it is believed that teachers who are concerned about inclusion are more able to set the most suitable teaching strategies and classroom environment which could enhance inclusion and encourage teaching effectiveness (Alajmi, 2007).

There are some factors that can enhance inclusion, for instance, the relationship’s environment including, teacher-student and student-student relationships, is believed to be an effective factor that can enhance inclusion because students’ confidence is more likely to improve when such relationships are developed, which would encourage pupils to trust their abilities that will then enhance their learning, lead them to achieve and develop in a better manner (Dean, 1999; Hart and Kindle, 2004). Moreover, Busher (2012) emphasises the importance of teacher-student relationships for students’ learning and development as such relationships encourage teachers to appreciate students’ agency, which would increase the level of respect between teachers and students and lead to an exciting learning environment.

2.6.2.2 Classroom atmosphere

It is believed that students' learning is associated with the learning environment in classrooms (Sternberger, 2012). According to Dean (1999), classroom atmosphere can affect students' development as the classroom-atmosphere has an influence on students' confidence. Rosebrough and Leverett (2010) suggest a constructivist environment as a way that involves all students in the learning atmosphere and helps them to be able to connect newly achieved knowledge with their own experiences. Similarly, Zurita and Nussbaum (2004: 235) argue that "A constructivist learning environment allows students to build up their own knowledge (based on previous one) while working jointly among them in a reflexive process directed by the teacher". "The constructivist learning environment implies a setting when learners collaboratively construct knowledge through problem solving and the use of learning tools and knowledge sources, while supporting each other in this learning process" (Zeidan, 2015: 947).

It is argued that teachers' effectiveness can be measured through looking at the appearance of their classrooms and particularly through considering the quality of the relationships between teachers and their students, which reflect the level of teachers' effectiveness (Cullingford, 2010; Sternberger, 2012). Therefore, it is important for teachers to be more careful about their classrooms, the learning resources and how to allocate these resources in such a way that assists pupils to learn and develop. Teaching effectiveness demands that teachers construct a strong relationship with their students in order to promote students' learning and enhance collaborative learning (Zeidan, 2015). Similarly, Crawford et al. (2005) mention that a positive learning atmosphere requires teachers to create a shared classroom atmosphere where questions are welcome, independent learning is encouraged and tables are arranged in a way that makes it possible for students to work in groups and help each other.

2.6.2.3 Class size

Another crucial issue for the development of teachers and students is class size that means the number of pupils in a single classroom (Deutsch, 2003). Class size became an issue of concern in the United Kingdom in the middle of 1990 (Blatchford, 2003), and in Saudi Arabia in 2000 (Alzaki, 2009). Since then there have been many studies conducted regarding the importance of class size and its influence on teachers, their effectiveness and on the achievement of students. The majority of these studies conclude that smaller classes have more advantages than large classes as smaller classes in general are believed to hold positive impacts on pupils' learning, their behaviour and on the performance and effectiveness of teachers. Blatchford (2003), for instance, demonstrates that teaching time is more likely to increase in smaller classes as well as such classes might decrease the stress on teachers that would help them to be more effective.

In addition, through an empirical research study, Mortimore et al. (1988, cited in Day et al., 1996) showed that smaller classes allow teachers to be more able to take positive control of their classrooms, which leads to enhanced students' achievement, particularly in mathematics. Furthermore, in smaller classes teachers are able to provide more attention and care to their students that might increase the students' interactions and lead them to be more successful, higher achievers and their behaviour to be more positive (Deutsch, 2003; Alzaki, 2009).

However, Bosworth (2011) argues that although students' achievement might be affected by class size, there are additional factors that can play a basic role in this term, such as, students' peers, gender, relationship, classroom organisation and teaching

effectiveness. On the other hand, Abo Alwafa (2012) demonstrates that in large classes teachers tend to spend more time to take the registration and administrate lesson's aspects that may decrease teaching time and the time that is supposed to be spent for individuals' assistance.

Therefore, school leaders need to consider the importance of class size and its influence on teachers' performance, students' learning and overall school improvement. They need to identify the optimum class size for their schools, which might vary from one school to another based on teachers' abilities, individuals' gender, intelligence, level of knowledge, and the physical capacity of the classrooms (Bosworth, 2011; Abo Alwafa, 2012).

2.7 Emergent themes

According to the literature discussed above, school improvement is a holistic approach that refers to the positive changes in schools' outcomes, students' success and teachers' professional development. These changes demand several conditions to be in place in order to realise school improvements that are highly affected by the practices of a school leadership team, the implemented leadership style and school culture.

The themes that emerged from the literature review can be arranged into four main categories:

- The relationship between school leadership and school improvement
- The role of school leadership in school improvement
- Factors that can affect school improvement
- The requirements for school improvement

2.7.1 The relationship between school leadership and school improvement

Based on the literature reviewed, there is a strong relationship between school leadership and school improvement. This relationship is evident from different angles, including the control and influence of a school leadership team over the essential aspects of school improvement, such as educational change, leadership style, school culture, school curriculum and school members. The relationship between school leadership and school improvement is also reflected through the correlation between school success and the success of school leadership, which is believed to be the first step towards school change and improvement.

2.7.2 The role of school leadership in school improvement

According to the literature reviewed, school leadership plays a significant role in school improvement due to the position of authority and the power that leaders have. This authority allows them not only to have a major influence on school culture and school success but also on the feelings and sense of belonging regarding the school among all the stakeholders including teachers, school staff, pupils and parents. The role of school leadership in school improvement is also confirmed to be significant due to the position of school leadership and its authority over the essential conditions for the development of teachers and students, such as PLCs, teaching effectiveness, school curriculum, inclusion, student voice, school-parent relationship and class size.

2.7.3 Factors that can affect school improvement

As shown in the literature, school improvement is mainly affected by leadership style and school culture which are argued as the most significant aspects that can affect school improvement in general and the development of teachers and students in particular.

For leadership style, the literature concludes that to enhance school improvement, principals/school leaders need to extend the capacity of leadership and encourage the participation of subordinates in the functions of leadership through transferring leadership style into an extended capacity leadership approach, such as distributed leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, democratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership and consultative leadership, which could facilitate school improvement and enhance teachers' performance and pupils' outcomes.

Regarding school culture, the literature reviewed suggest that principals need to develop school culture to support school improvement through considering important issues, such as the individuality of school members, feelings of the teachers and pupils, their beliefs and perspectives regarding their schools and schooling in general and the context of the school. Other considerations include moral and ethical issues linked to the values of the school, school visions and goals that need to be explained and shared with all school members and cooperation between a leadership team and teachers. All of these improvements can be achieved by creating a collaborative school culture that is based on cooperation among all school members and a good relationship among stakeholders in order to motivate teachers' performances, enhance learning quality and thus facilitate school improvement.

School improvement is also affected by the district's politics, its decision makers, the national policy makers and other external factors, such as the wealth and economic status of students' families, which have an effect on students' learning and their development. These factors can affect the ability of schools to implement changes and foster school improvement.

2.7.4 The requirements for school improvement

According to the literature reviewed, there are several conditions that are required for teachers' professional development, students' learning development and overall school improvement. Some of these conditions are at school-level and extend to the whole community, whereas others are more significant at the classroom level.

School-level conditions for school improvement:

- Enhancing inclusion for all school members, students in particular, which demands that schools first appreciate the diversity of their stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, pupils and parents, and then work to enhance inclusion for all through different means, such as involving stakeholders and encouraging them to work collaboratively and share in making decisions for their schools and developing school policies and achieving the visions and goals of their schools. Efforts must also encourage the engagement and participation of students in their schools and their localities, in particular students with learning difficulties, who need to be included more than others to be successful, able to solve problems, overcome barriers and cope better with the future.

- Listening to students' voices is an essential condition to foster inclusion and improve the quality of teaching and learning. This demands that school principals encourage their students to speak and listen to their students in order to meet students' needs, motivate them and enhance their rights, citizenship, participation and achievement.
- Considering the differences among individuals and providing great care and attention to individual differences in general and children in particular, which demands that principals collaborate with teachers and parents to determine the causes of differences and provide appropriate support and sufficient care. This will increase the quality of learning, enhance the development of teachers and students and foster improvement in schools.
- Providing an inclusive school curriculum that suits the context of the school and the nature of the school members, includes comprehensive resources for learning and activities, involves different materials from other cultures to meet all individuals' needs and provides equal access for all students in order to foster students' success and enhance their achievement.
- Building good relationships with parents, which demands that schools consider parental engagement by involving parents in the school community and its activities through constructing a strong school-parent relationship. This is an effective strategy to enhance students' outcomes, academic achievements, engagement, motivation, attendance, performance, relationships, emotions, agency, personal characteristics and abilities. The school-parent relationship is also an important factor in helping parents improve their efficiency and ability to participate in the learning and schooling of their children, improve parents' communication and relationship skills and raise parental awareness regarding

their children, their behaviour, their needs and the most suitable means to help them at home. In addition, the school-parent relationship has been confirmed to have multiple advantages not only for teachers to be more aware of the diversity of their students, to be better able to explore and understand the cultural interests and needs of their students' and their families, and to resolve students' problems but also to provide schools more access to their students' backgrounds. The school-parent relationship enhances the economic support that schools receive, encourages social integration, supports democracy and increases public support for the educational process, all of which can enhance school improvement.

- Developing professional learning communities, which are not only important for the professional development of teachers and their effectiveness but also provide effective strategies that have positive effects on school culture, learning quality, student outcomes and educational problems.
- Promoting teaching effectiveness and considering it as an initial step towards students' development and school improvement. This requires school leaders to extend the training courses for teachers as well as measure teachers' success and evaluate their performances based on the characteristics of teaching effectiveness that teachers practice, such as learning and teaching, planning and preparing, classroom atmosphere, classroom management, time management and using assessment for learning, all of which have been confirmed by the literature to be the main characteristics of teaching effectiveness that need to be considered and developed in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and consequently facilitate school improvement.

Classroom-level conditions for school improvement:

- Promoting inclusion at the classroom-level is an effective means for school improvement in terms of solving students' problems, encouraging students to be more active, ready to learn and high achievers. This demands that teachers equally involve all students in the learning environment, share the responsibility of the classroom atmosphere with students, encourage students to work as one group, help them to learn and think, train them to be independent learners while taking into account individual differences and how to meet these differences, and use a variety of teaching methods and styles to help students with different abilities to understand, achieve and learn better. These actions can enhance teaching effectiveness and students' development.
- Considering learning environment in the classroom as a means to enhance students' learning since the classroom atmosphere has an effect on students' development and their confidence. This demands that teachers construct strong relationships with their students and change the classroom's environment to be a constructivist environment in order to involve all students in the learning atmosphere, assist them to be able to connect newly achieved knowledge with their own experiences and to encourage collaborative learning among students.
- Reducing class size to improve students' learning, behaviour and interactions, as well as to enhance teachers' performances and effectiveness. Reducing class size will also increase teaching time, help teachers have more control in their

classrooms and provide more attention and care to their students. This demands that schools identify their optimum class size, which will be different from one school to another based on teachers' abilities, individuals' gender, intelligence, level of knowledge and the physical capacity of the classrooms.

Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter will cover the following:

- Research paradigm
- Methodology
- Methods

3.1 Research paradigm

In order to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of knowledge, researchers carry out research in accordance with certain philosophical stances and theories that are based on particular beliefs and assumptions; these philosophical positions then form the fundamental basis of their research practice. A lack of philosophical background, ontological/epistemological stances may prevent a researcher from gaining a holistic picture or in-depth understanding of the phenomena being investigated, and the construction of the research (Pring, 2010; Bryman, 2012). "These philosophical positions are known by a range of bewildering titles...[such as] positivism...(which represents a philosophical tradition held in much contempt by many researchers), functionalism, interpretative theory, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, ethnography, constructivism, postmodernism, and so on" (Pring, 2010: 90). Kettley (2010: 64) argues that the philosophical theories or foundations of educational and social studies have

some overlapping features and similarities, and can thus be grouped into four main categories, which are “positivism, empiricism, realism and idealism.”

In addition, many authors divide the philosophical positions into two wider categories, quantitative and qualitative research, based on the nature of the research and the data used (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Despite these broad divisions and the various literature regarding the different philosophical positions, the main objective of all philosophical stances is to guide researchers in carrying out studies, as well as to provide researchers with the ability of how to cover and ensure the ontology (reality) and the epistemology (how to gain information or knowledge regarding a specific issue) of the issues being studied (Kettley, 2010; Bryman, 2012). As such, this section will describe the ontology and epistemology that determined the research paradigm of the present study, and the various positions and assumptions that determined the philosophical stance taken when conducting this research study. This will be followed by a discussion of the research approach that was applied to conduct this study, the case study strategy that was employed, the nature of the present research, and the techniques and criteria used to ensure the quality of the research and its findings, including an assessment of its reliability, trustworthiness and credibility. This will be followed by an explanation of the techniques and procedures used to select the sample, ensure the consideration of ethical issues, to select suitable data collection methods, and determine the appropriate data analysis methods.

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is an area of philosophical that is concerned with the issues of being and existence (Jacquette, 2002). Ontology describes what it means to be, to exist, or “to

have being as an existent entity in the actual world” (Jacquette, 2002: 13). According to Bryman (2012), the argument and the aim of the various ontological positions concerns the nature of social entities, whether these entities are objectives and have external reality to social actors, or whether these entities and the reality are social constructions that are shaped and constructed by the actions, perceptions, and interactions of social actors. According to Bryman (2012: 32), these arguments correlate to two positions, “objectivism and” constructivism respectively (see Figure 3.1, below).

Objectivism is an ontological position that supposes that social phenomena are external facts that are beyond the reach and influence of social actors (Cakir, 2012). Bryman (2012) used organizations and cultures as examples that can explain the meaning of that social phenomena are external facts from social actors. He mentioned that members of organizations and cultures are constrained by their organizations and cultures because they internalize the values, beliefs, rules, regulations and follow the procedures of their organizations and cultures as they believe they have to do what they are doing to avoid being reprimanded or fired, which means that the organizations and cultures are constraining forces, which acts on their members that means that social entity has an objective reality that is external to the social actors.

Conversely, constructivism “is an ontological position...that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2012: 33). This means that the reality of organizations and cultures is not an external or constraining force; instead, the reality is emergent, created and constructed by members of those organizations and cultures (Bryman, 2012). For instance, cultures are not able to perfectly solve problems; rather, problems are solved by members of cultures who adapt on a daily basis, as it is possible that an appropriate solution for a problem that occurs on one particular day may not solve the same problem on another

day (Becker, 1982, cited in Bryman, 2012). This suggests that timing can make a difference in terms of solving problems and providing appropriate solutions, because the belief in life change demands the belief that suitable solutions for a particular problem might differ depending on the timing of the problem. This can be clearly seen in the continuous change in the roles, regulations and policies of culture as a response to life change.

This research assumes the stance of constructivism, as an ontological approach that reflects the views of the author regarding the construction of the social world, specifically that social reality is not an external object or constraining force on social actors, but rather is created and completely accomplished by social actors and their interactions. This research, therefore focuses on the members of two Saudi high schools, including school leaders, senior staff, teachers and students, as social constructions who, based on their experiences and perceptions, were judged to be able to fulfill the objectives of this study. This research, based on the nature of the phenomenon under study, supposes that social actors (school members), their practices, understandings, perceptions and experiences are ontological elements that exert an influence over the direction of school change and improvement, and thus can frame knowledge of the phenomenon being investigated.

3.1.2 Epistemology

In order to ensure research credibility, researchers are required to be more concerned about philosophical assumptions, which underline their studies, than the objectives of their studies and the protocols of data collection's choices because "social research should emanate from beliefs about what constitutes an understanding and explanation of

a social phenomenon” (Leitch, Hill and Harrison, 2010: 69). This means that the quality of a research is dependent on the philosophical issues that should be the central of research design that need to be shaped by epistemological assumptions (Cakir, 2012).

Epistemology, according to Leitch et al. (2010: 69), confronts researchers with the following questions: “should explanations of the social world be deduced from observable facts? (the empiricist or positivist position); should they be grounded in people’s self-understandings? (the interpretivist position)”. Similarly, Sylvain (2010: 177) explained that, “In the course of history there have been, and always will be, several paradigms. However, since the articulate formation of academic disciplines in the 1700s and 1800s, two major paradigms have characterized research design: positivism or rationalism vs. historicism or interpretivism, which are aligned respectively with quantitative and qualitative research”. Thus, the following discussion will explain the two epistemological positions, positivism and interpretivism that were considered when the paradigm used to conduct the present research was determined (see Figure 3.1, below).

3.1.2.1 Positivism

“The word 'positivist' seems to refer to those accounts, which study systematically what is clear, factual and open to observation” (Pring, 2010: 91). Positivism, according to Sylvain (2010: 178), “views reality and research in terms of links or causality in that researchers need to show the links between the selected topic, raised research questions, reviewed literature, and chosen methodologies”. Positivism supposes that the base of all knowledge must represent the immediate experiences of people, which suggests that whatever theories of knowledge developed “must ultimately be logically reducible to 'basic statements' about those experiences, even if, at first acquaintance, they do not appear to be about such experiences” (Pring, 2010: 92). Pring (2010: 93) refers to two

types of proposition that can be verified and described as meaningful statements: “empirical statements of the kind that science is built upon, and logical/mathematical statements which are true tautologically”. This means that the development of knowledge must be based on the extent of the verification of the knowledge and its evidence, which can show whether what has been said, is true or false that can examine the meaning of the statement. Positivism, according to Pring (2010), suggests two main assumptions to educational research; First, individuals, in spite of their personalities, individualities and personal choices, are divided into groups, which means that it is possible to make general and verifiable statements about these groups that would make it possible to build up a theoretical picture of these groups in relation to social structures and its institutions that would explain or interpret why certain groups or individuals act in certain way based on the structure of social that can be the main cause of these specific behaviors. Second, researchers need to understand the distinction between education’s values and aims, and the means or ways of reaching these values and aims, which will make it possible for researchers to overcome the challenges made by education and achieve logical and trust knowledge regarding the issues and phenomena of their investigation. According to Alan (2014: 210), “positivist approach concludes that the world is external and therefore should be measured by objective methods”. This means that positivism is compatible with objectivism, which is an ontological position that views social phenomena as external facts that beyond the reach and influence of social actors (Bryman, 2012).

3.1.2.2 Interpretivism

“Interpretivism is based on a life-world ontology, which argues that all observation is theory- and value-laden and that investigation of the social world is not, and cannot be, the pursuit of detached objective truth” (Leitch et al., 2010: 69). This means that it is

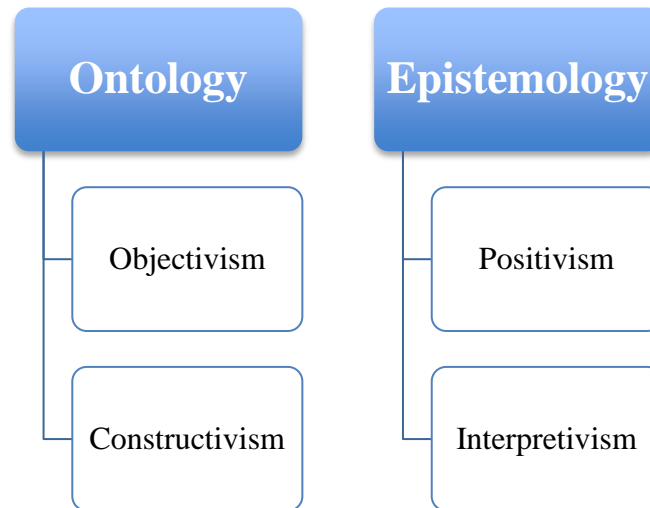
not possible to understand the social world or create knowledge without a full understanding and interpretation of participants' perceptions, which would make it possible for researchers to gain a holistic view regarding social research phenomena or problems. This demands that researchers generate rich and in-depth "descriptions of actual events in real-life contexts" (Leitch et al., 2010: 70). Interpretivism seeks to understand the meaning of general concepts or problems in the specific operation of them to find out the explanations that people have regarding their actions and beliefs or to reproduce particular cultures, places or times that can make actions taken by people become intelligible (Lin, 1998). Ultimately, Alan (2014: 210) highlights that "interpretivist approach, concludes that the world is open to interpretation and is socially constructed by people who may be regarded as social actors". According to Leitch et al. (2010), the interpretivist approach is concerned with people rather than the world or society. This means that interpretivism is compatible with constructivism, which is "an ontological position... that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (Bryman, 2012: 33). This highlights the difference between the positivist approach, which seeks to produce generalizable results, and the interpretivist approach, which seeks to understand individuals, and so demands that researchers investigate the phenomena from within the actual context of the events (Kettley, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, the nature of positivism is more compatible with quantitative approaches, whereas the nature of interpretivism is more in line with qualitative methods (Johnston, 2014; Leitch et al., 2010).

Hence, this research employed an interpretivist approach to investigate the role of school leadership in school improvement, and the associated requirements for the development of teachers and students, both at the school and classroom level. This

enabled the author to gather knowledge of this issue through considering the perceptions and explanations of participants regarding the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, the factors that can affect school improvement, and the most important conditions for the professional development of teachers and students and overall school improvement. This was achieved by talking to participants and listening to their perspectives and descriptions based on their actual experiences in this field, carried out via face-to-face semi-structured interviews and group interviews. This was followed by interpreting those perspectives and descriptions through several cycles of analysis in order to provide answers to the following four research questions in the context of Riyadh, the capital city of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA):

- 1) What is the relationship between school leadership and school improvement?
- 2) How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?
- 3) To what extent do policy and social contexts affect the processes of school improvement?
- 4) How can teachers' and students' professional development be constructed?

Figure 3.1: Research paradigm subdivisions



3.1.3 Research approach

Research can be approached by employing either deductive or inductive theory (Alan, 2014;Cohen et al., 2007). The deductiveapproach, according to Bryman (2012), is the most commonly used in social research, and in which the relationship between the theory and the research derives from and is formed by the theory prior to collecting data. In deductive research, researchers deduce hypotheses in light of relevant existing theory regarding the area or field of interest, those hypotheses must then be tested via empirical processes in order to confirm or reject them(Alan, 2014). This means that the process of gathering data will be guided by and is dependent on the hypotheses, whichare deduced from the theory.

On the other hand, when employing an inductive approach, the relationship between the theory and the research isproduced by the data, rather than the theory, where researchers

use their findings to feed back “the stock of theory” (Bryman, 2012: 24). This means that the process of the research begins with collecting data and then progresses to interpreting the findings and matching them to existing knowledge or theory.

The present research study applied an inductive approach in order to produce information regarding the issue of investigation by considering the perceptions and explanations provided by the study participants. Using this approach, the first step was to identify the theory that subsequently determined the research questions, and enabled the author to develop a suitable research design for the study.

3.2 Methodology

Different strategies can be used to conduct research, such as case studies, action research, experiments, narrative history, surveys, phenomenological research, ethnography, and grounded theory (Busher, 2013; Creswell, 2007). However, the nature of the research, the questions it addresses, and the conclusions that researchers seek to reach, can guide researchers in determining the most suitable strategy for their intended study (Cohen et al., 2007). The aim of the present research was to investigate the role of school leadership in school improvement, and the associated requirements for the development of teachers and students, both at the school and classroom level. As such, a case study design was chosen as the most appropriate strategy for this research.

The reason behind the choice of a case study as the methodology for this research was that the research assumes an interpretivist epistemological position, based on the adoption of constructivism as the ontological position, which assumes that social reality is not an external object or a constraining force on social actors, rather, it is created and completely accomplished by social actors and their interactions. The researcher,

therefore, is required to consider participants as subjective entities, and to take this into account when gathering data by talking to them and listening to their perspectives and descriptions. This can be achieved by interviewing participants, which is one of the main data collection methods employed in the case study research design. In addition, the case study is believed to be the most appropriate methodology for research that is descriptive in nature (Yin, 2012), as is the case with the present research.

A case study can be defined as “an evidence-based, empirical approach that focuses on an intense investigation of a single system or a phenomenon in its real-life context” (Lee, Mishna and Brennenstuhl, 2010: 682). A case study provides researchers with an opportunity to produce “an in-depth description, exploration, or explanation of a particular system or phenomenon through quantitative and/or qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The case study aims to generate or test a theory in its particular social, cultural, and historical context” (Lee et al., 2010: 682).

Although case studies have some weaknesses, such as the sample size, which is frequently small and so might affect the generalizability of the research findings (Lee et al., 2010), case studies are acknowledged to be a useful method of investigating and studying phenomena through multiple data sources, which can provide researchers with a wealth of evidence regarding their area(s) of interest, and the issue(s) under investigation. Case studies, therefore, make it possible for a researcher to provide evidence for the answers to their research questions (Gillham, 2010). Furthermore, case studies are a commonly used research strategy in educational studies, and particularly in school leadership and school improvement studies, for instance those by Harris and Lambert (2003), Rhodes and Brundrett (2009), and Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012).

The objective of the present study is to answer research questions using qualitative methods, including documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and group interviews. The main focus of this research is the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, the factors that can affect school improvement, and the most important conditions for the professional development of teachers and students and overall school improvement. It was determined that the case study approach was likely to provide opportunities to obtain general background information about this issue in the form of documentary evidence (Gillham, 2010).

The case study research strategy can be employed using either a single case study design, considering one case, or a linked case study considering multiple cases. The choice is determined by a range of factors, such as the research questions, the nature of the study, the research aims and objectives, and the result that the researcher intends to achieve through the research process (Zaidah, 2007). However, conducting research based on a singlecase study, according to Zaidah (2007: 2), can create certain limitations, such as the “inability to provide a generalizing conclusion”. On the other hand, carrying out a linked case study strategy can overcome these limitations and thus enhance the research credibility through triangulation. The intention of the present studywas to answer the research questions by employing a linked case study involving two case study schools, which will be described later on in the sampling section.

Shkedi (2005) argues that case studies can be further divided into two different types: the instrumental case study, and the intrinsic case study. Shkedi(2005) states that the instrumental case study is used as a research strategy to gain general background details and information about a particular issue,but does not provide an understanding of other relevant narratives that might be related, either directly or indirectly, to the case, and

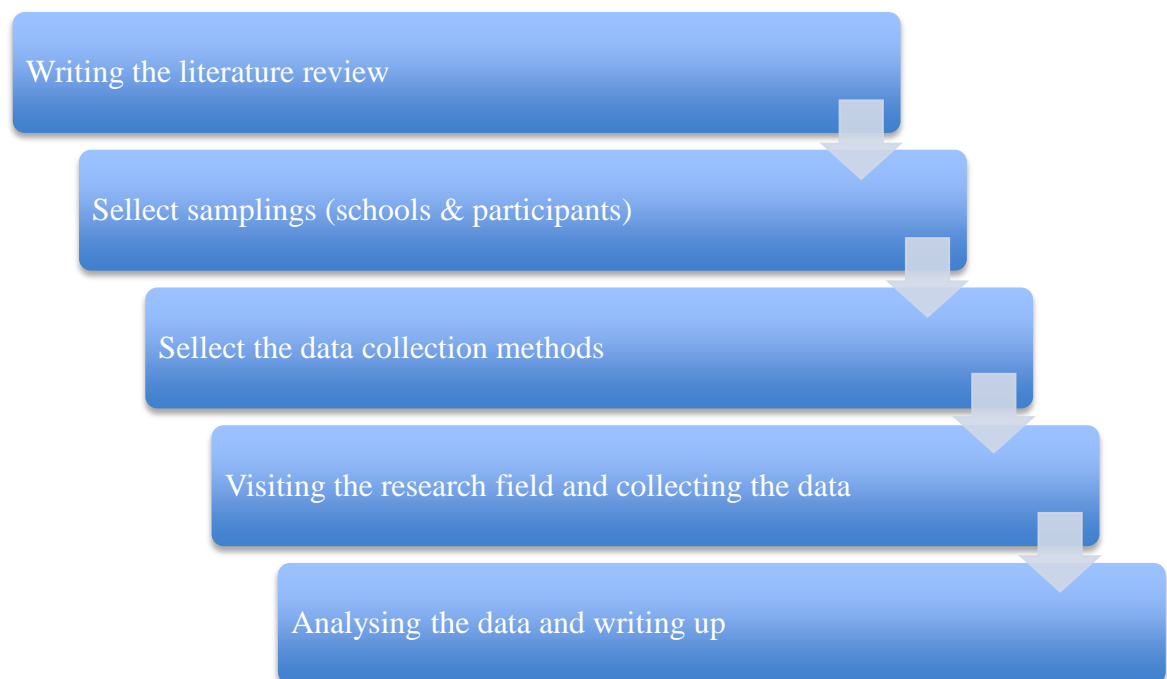
which might have an effect on it. On the other hand, the intrinsic case study is used to obtain in-depth knowledge regarding an issue by analyzing the issue, considering the relevant documentary evidence, and comparing different types of evidence and employing different data collection methods in order to answer the research questions (ibid). The present research employed an intrinsic linked case study methodology, as the intention was to analyze related documents from the two case study schools, interview two school leaders, two school deputies, two student advisors, and 12 teachers via face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and interview four groups of nine students via group interviews.

Case studies, according to Biggam (2011: 119), can be further divided based on the different aims of the research, into three types: “descriptive...exploratory... [and] explanatory”. The “descriptive” case study technique seeks to gain an in-depth understanding, knowledge and information regarding a phenomenon or an issue without influencing the subject or its impact; the “exploratory” case study is commonly used in large-scale studies that aim to acquire general background information on a particular issue; the “explanatory” case study aims to identify and explain a phenomenon by applying observation as a data collection method. The present research employs an intrinsic descriptive linked case study to answer the four research questions stated above.

The process of this research was completed in multiple stages (see Figure: 3.2, below). The first stage was the literature review, which provided the conceptual framework for the research, as the relevant literature and theories helped to generate the main research questions. The second stage was to decide upon the research design and the sampling process, including identifying the case study schools (two Saudi Arabian High Schools), which were purposively selected for this research, and the participants who generated

knowledge and information regarding the issue of investigation, who were targeted based on their experiences and perceptions in order to fulfill the aim and objectives of the research. The third stage involved selecting the three data collection methods that were employed, namely documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and group interviews. The fourth stage was the data collection process, which was carried out with the relevant participants in the real life context. The final stage involved the processes of data analysis and writing up of the results. The data from the two schools was analyzed and the findings were presented and compared before, and then discussed in reference to the findings of previous studies. Finally, a conclusion was formulated in light of the research findings and the contributions of the study.

Figure 3.2: Research process



3.2.1 Constructing reliable knowledge

“Although research methods should be determined largely by the aims and context of the research, they should also have regard to quality criteria” (Briggs and Coleman, 2007: 1). It is argued that the quality of a research study is more important and valuable than the research results (Yin, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to think deeply about the authenticity of their work, and take that into consideration when determining the research design, methodology and methods that will be employed (Johnston, 2014). It is argued that, “The authenticity of educational and social research can be judged by the procedures used to address validity, reliability and triangulation” (Briggs and Coleman, 2007: 1). However, these procedures might differ depending on the nature of the data collected and the ontological and epistemological positions taken, which determine the procedures that are suitable for assessing research authenticity (Yin, 2012). Since the present research is based on an interpretivist epistemology, and the data collected is qualitative, the authenticity of this research can be judged by assessing its trustworthiness and credibility. The next section will further explain the procedures followed by the author to address these aspects of the present research.

3.2.2 Trustworthiness/credibility

Many researchers cite reliability and validity as criteria by which to assess research quality (Shkedi, 2005). Research reliability, as a concept, is concerned with the extent of congruence and similarity between the findings achieved in a particular study and other similar studies carried out by other researchers (Shkedi, 2005). This means that

research reliability cannot be achieved or enhanced unless the same research result can be achieved by another researcher working in the same field and using the same procedures as employed in the first piece of research. However, although the idea of research reliability can be employed within positivist research, it is not as simple to employ this idea in interpretivist research simply because this type of research seeks to generate rich and thick “descriptions of actual events in real-life contexts” (Leitch et al., 2010: 70), as well as to understand the meaning of general concepts or problems in the specific operation of them to find out the explanations that people have regarding their actions and beliefs (Lin, 1998), which might be different among individuals based on their own experiences, the time and the context where those concepts or problems occurred.

With regard to research validity, according to Cohen et al. (2007), research validity is concerned with the relationship between the objectives of the research and its findings. Briggs and Coleman (2007) argue that research validity can be divided into two levels, internal and external validity, and researchers are required to achieve both. Internal validity relates to the level or the extent of compatibility between the research questions and its findings. External validity, meanwhile, refers to the possibility of drawing a generalizable result that can be applied to other cases or populations on the same context. However, there is ongoing debate regarding validity in qualitative research. For instance, Bryman (2012) suggests that validity in general can be replaced by trustworthiness as a criteria to assess qualitative research. Trustworthiness includes aspects such as credibility, which is concerned with the question, “how believable are the findings”, transferability, which is concerned with the issue of generalizability, or the ability to apply the research results to other populations or contexts (Bryman, 2012: 49), and triangulation (Chauncey, 2006). Furthermore, Lee et al. (2010) argue that

internal validity can be replaced by credibility as means to assess the trustworthiness of case study research in general. Specifically, though, “when the case study uses qualitative methods, credibility aims to demonstrate that the inquiry was carried out in such a way as to establish relations among the different components of the case, to achieve rich and meaningful descriptions of the case, and to assure internal coherence of findings in the data analysis” (Lee et al., 2010: 684).

Hence, certain strategies for assessing the trustworthiness of the research were taken into consideration in the early stages of this study. For instance, a pilot study was carried out by the author as part fulfilment of a master’s degree. The pilot study was a master’s dissertation entitled, “An investigation into the role of school leadership in school improvement, including teachers’ and students’ development: a case study of two Saudi Arabian high schools”. The study was carried out in 2013 and submitted in September of the same year. The following steps were taken for the pilot study. First, to ensure research credibility, the author initially defined the purpose and scope of the research by determining the areas to be investigated. In addition, a research outline was discussed with the research supervisor who, after commenting on the initial structure of the study, approved the outline and the selected data collection methods. The same process was followed for the actual research. In addition, the research instruments were checked and discussed with the supervisor, as an experienced researcher in this field who considered the structures of the instruments and provided some useful comments and suggestions. Furthermore, a pilot study for the present research was carried out in order to test the research instruments, i.e. the interviews, to enhance credibility and to ensure the feasibility and accessibility of the instruments to collect the required information and relevant data. The instruments were piloted by three PhD students who had worked previously as teachers in Saudi Arabia, one school leader, and two Saudi students.

In addition, the nature of this research and the ontological and epistemological positions held, increase the trustworthiness of this study, because the focus and aim of this research is to identify participants' opinions regarding the role of school leadership in school improvement, and the associated requirements for the development of teachers and students, both at the school and classroom level. In other words, the findings of this research are subjective, reflecting the perceptions and interpretations of participants regarding the issue under investigation. The data was collected by talking to participants and listening to their perspectives and descriptions of the long-term experiences in the field so that, if the same research is carried out by another researcher using the same procedures, the findings should be identical, or at least the differences should be limited, unless there are external factors that increase the level of difference between the findings. Such factors might include social policy and context, which might vary from one study to another and have a significant impact not only on the research findings, but also on the way that people think, believe and behave.

Finally, this research is based on a linked case study that allows for a comparison between the results of the two constituent case studies, which further enhances the trustworthiness of the research (Yin, 2012; Zaidah, 2007).

With regard to the transferability of the present research, it was difficult to ensure transferability because both the pilot study and the current research were based on small case studies that cannot be said to be representative of a population, since the number of participants involved was limited: to semi-structured group interviews with two groups of nine students, and an open-ended questionnaire distributed to 12 teachers in the pilot study; and, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with two school leaders, two school deputies, two student advisors and 12 teachers, and group interviews with four groups of nine students in the current research. This will be further discussed in the later

section describing the sampling process. Different perspectives and results might thus be seen if this research were conducted on a larger scale (Gillham, 2010). However, since this research was piloted and based on a linked case study, the transferability might be enhanced (Zaidah, 2007).

In addition, the data collection methods used increase the trustworthiness of this study, as applying more than one method is believed to be an effective technique for enhancing research transferability, triangulating the findings, and reducing bias (Chauncey, 2006; Gorard, Roberts and Taylor, 2004). Similarly, Cohen et al. (2007) also argue that applying multiple data collection methods can increase trustworthiness. This is logical, as triangulation makes it possible for a researcher to reflect on the research results by comparing the findings produced by the different data collection methods and instruments and examining the causes of any differences, if they occur, to increase the accuracy of the findings. As such, three data collection methods were used in the present study including documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and group interviews, which will be discussed in more detail in the methods section. Furthermore, triangulation was applied in this research, a linked case study involving two case study schools simultaneously; this enhanced space triangulation as the data was collected from two Saudi Arabian High Schools in different locations (Zaidah, 2007; Gorard et al., 2004). Finally, participants triangulation further enhanced the trustworthiness of the present research, as the participants in this case study were drawn from four different sites, and included two school leaders, four senior staff, 12 teachers and four groups of nine students (Gorard et al., 2004).

3.3 Sampling

In order to enhance research quality and credibility, participants must be selected purposively; they “should be likely to generate rich, dense, focused information on the research question to allow the researcher to provide a convincing account of the phenomenon” (Cleary, Horsfall and Hayter, 2014: 473). Therefore, the purposive sampling technique was chosen and applied to select both the case study schools and the participants for this research.

Purposive sampling is defined by Topp, Barker and Degenhardt (2004: 34) as a sampling strategy “that seeks to draw from a wide cross-section of users, and to sample a relatively large number of individuals” to investigate issues, phenomena, or to answer particular research questions. Purposive sampling is also defined by Bryman (2012: 418) as a sampling technique that makes “reference to the goals of the research”. The researcher’s role in purposive sampling is defined by Creswell (2007: 125) as one of an “inquirer” who “selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study”. This means that researchers need to determine certain selection criteria in order to select an appropriate sample that is able to fulfill the research requirements (Bryman, 2012).

The targeted population for this research were members of two Saudi high schools; Mahad High School and Sultan High School, which were selected as the case studies for this research (more details about the contexts of the case study schools will be provided in the next chapter, the Presentation of Findings, under Section 4.2: The context of Mahad High School and Section 4.3: The context of Sultan High School). The reasons behind the choice of Mahad and Sultan high schools were that Mahad High School is known as an outstanding school in Saudi Arabia, and Mahad High School has a

number of branches across Saudi Arabia, located in four cities inhabited by people from the middle and higher economic classes. Additionally, Mahad High School is known as one of the most effective schools in the country, and is also one of the most complicated in terms of its conditions for accepting new students, because it requires high-level degrees and qualifications for students. Sultan High School, meanwhile, is an ordinary school located in a small village where the residents can be considered to be lower class, and was selected in order to provide different perspectives and insights regarding the issue under investigation, based on the differences between the two schools in terms of quality, population, location, and economic status of the school members.

With regard to the participants, Cohen et al. (2007) argue that in order to gain in-depth knowledge and information in research, the participants involved should possess sufficient knowledge about the issue under investigation, be professional, and the research topic must be relevant to them. Therefore, in order to fulfill the aim of this research, and to ensure the study's authenticity, the participants were selected based on their ability to provide relevant knowledge that would help fulfill the objectives of this study (Biggam, 2011).

Another important issue that was considered was the sample size, which refers to the number of participants included in an empirical study. According to Cleary et al. (2014), the number of participants in a study should not be the criteria by which to evaluate the quality of the research; rather, an evaluation should consider participants' experience in the research topic because "an experienced interviewer, with a clearly defined research topic, and a small number of well-selected ... interviewees...can produce highly relevant information for analysis. An inexperienced interviewer with a variable and very large sample could result in superficial data, providing a false sense of security and/or generating large amounts of information non-conducive to in-depth

analysis” (Cleary et al., 2014: 474). This is logical, as it is important that the findings represent all of the participants, if possible, or at least the majority of them. This is difficult to achieve if the number of participants is large, and particularly where group interviews are conducted. Hence, for this study, purposive sampling was used to interview one school leader, one school deputy, one student advisor, six teachers, and two groups of nine students from Mahad High School, and one school leader, one school deputy, one student advisor, six teachers and two groups of nine students from Sultan High School. Each student group was made up of nine students: three student participants from each year group at the schools (years 10, 11 and 12), and with varying levels of achievement, including high, average and lower level achievers, to provide different perspectives and to enhance triangulation (Gorard et al., 2004).

Regarding the size of the sample population, the above sample was drawn from two Saudi high schools. The first is Mahad High School, which has one school leader, two school deputies, two student advisors, four support staff, one activities manager, two librarians, 46 teachers and 720 students (School Leader 1, March 2015). The second is Sultan High School, which has one school leader, two school deputies, two student advisors, two support staff, one librarian, 41 teachers and 269 students (School Deputy 2, April, 2015).

The criteria used to select the participants were based on different grounds (see Appendix-L). First, the two school leaders were selected based on their position as the head of the school leadership and their experience in the leadership field, which implied that they had the required knowledge to answer the first and second research questions. Second, the two school deputies and the two student advisors were selected based on their positions, whereby they also fulfilled leadership functions, in addition to the link they had with all members of their schools. This enabled them to have a holistic picture

about the effect of school leadership on school culture, the effects of policies, social contexts, and other external factors on the construction of the school and its improvement. This further implied that the subject was relevant to them and that they would be able to provide in-depth information regarding the issue under investigation, particularly information relating to the second and third research questions. In addition, due to the nature of the role of student advisors, which includes responsibilities such as supporting students' development and learning, enhancing school-home relationships, and resolving any problems students experience, student advisors were judged likely to have useful knowledge and information regarding the required conditions for students' development, enabling student advisors to provide useful information and knowledge relevant to the fourth research question. Third, the 12 teachers were selected based on their teaching experience; the minimum required experience for the teacher participants was five years of teaching, which was determined to ensure sufficient knowledge and ability for teachers to answer the second and fourth research questions. Finally, two groups of students were selected in each school because the issue under investigation was deemed to be relevant to them as school improvement is primarily concerned with the development of students, their achievement, and their outcomes, which means that students' perspectives and beliefs needed to be included in order to gain rich and sufficient knowledge. Therefore, due to the importance of students' participation, two groups from each case school were selected, and one group from each school was involved in a group interview that aimed to answer the second research question, whilst the other two groups participated in other group interviews that aimed to answer the fourth research question. This procedure was followed because, in the pilot study, it was recognized that including one group in an interview to answer more than a research question could prevent the author from collecting in-depth knowledge, because time

was limited to one hour and it was not easy to investigate in detail each perspective on each concept discussed in the interview. Therefore, two groups of students from each case school were selected in order to enhance research quality, and the contribution to knowledge and triangulation (more details about the participants are available in the next chapter, the Presentation of Findings, under Section 4.4: Participants).

All of the above combined to provide different insights and perspectives into the issue of how schools can be improved, thus allowing the researcher to compare different views on the subject based on the various perspectives provided by the participants, and the data collected from the relevant documents.

3.4 Ethical issues

When conducting research, “Ethical considerations are important for both moral and practical reasons” (Swann, 2004: 189), and it is important for researchers to consider the ethical issues from the outset of the research process. This is because “ethical considerations are woven throughout all stages of the research process, from the selection of a focus to the reporting of findings, as well as in the formulation of evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice” (Woodand Smith, 2016: 16). While these considerations are important for any research project, they are of particular significance in social sciences research, which involves living individuals, and related information about them and their natural environment (Whiteman, 2012).

Ethical considerations can also determine the research quality that relies on, and is affected by, the consideration of ethical issues, as the measure of quality and ethics exists in tandem, and hence it is impossible to ensure research quality without sufficient consideration of the ethical issues (Harrison and Rooney, 2012).

The importance of ethical issues is increased in qualitative studies, as such “studies are frequently conducted in settings involving the participation of people in their everyday environments. Therefore, any research that includes people requires an awareness of the ethical issues that may be derived from such interactions” (Orb et al., 2001: 93).

Ethical practices in qualitative research require researchers to focus on responding to any potential challenges that may arise. The complexity of qualitative research can result in researchers finding their interactions with participants ethically challenging, with reflective thinking helping them to deal with these dilemmas by valuing the interests and ethics of respondents (Munhall, 1988).

Busher and James (2012: 2) noted that: “the ethics of research is intimately intertwined with constructing purposeful collaborative learning communities, called research projects, based on trust and respect amongst its members working together for a purpose, where every involved participant learns and contributes to construct information and knowledge that lead to achieve purposeful conclusion of the research project”.

It has been argued that researchers need to implement collaborative learning communities to host participants during the research process, in order to: (1) ensure the trustworthiness of the research; (2) enhance trust with participants; and (3) keep participants from harm. However, the implementation of such communities requires expounding on the rules guiding engagements between participants and researchers, thus ensuring the research study is conducted in a deferential manner (Busher and James, 2012).

An essential factor in creating a suitable culture for a research project is the development of trust between the researcher and the participants. Trust is crucial in

research, due to its influence on participants' feelings of ownership and appreciation of the value of their participation for the research project. The respect provided by the researcher thus encourages participants to contribute, as they feel able to influence the results of the research project. This requires researchers to create a safe working environment, particularly when it comes to online research or onsite projects dealing with vulnerable individuals or sensitive topics, that could help researchers to minimise risks to the privacy and confidentiality of participants (Busher and James, 2012).

Moreover, it is important to develop and maintain collaborative relationships between researchers and participants, in order to enhance the trustworthiness of research outcomes. Busher and James (2012: 3) stated that: "where research is onsite in the school context, it is important that it does not distract from the everyday practices of working with teachers and children". This issue must be considered at an early stage, particularly when pursuing consent and approval from the relevant authorities, as well as the need for researchers to clarify the advantages of a specific research study to the institutions with which they engage, including clarifying how such institutions will be protected from ethical harm (ibid).

According to Oliver (2010), part of the process of considering ethical issues is to identify the nature of the study, the research participants, and the data collection methods, all of which might entail certain ethical concerns. Identifying the nature of the study, and its aims, is not only important for the researcher to ensure the consideration of the research's ethics, but also concerns the rights of the participants, who must be informed about the nature and the aim of the research, together with any possible impact resulting from their participation (Ryen, 2004).

Specifically, Cohen et al. (2007) argue that protecting the participants and their identities is the most important factor for a researcher to consider when conducting an empirical study. Furthermore, Wood and Smith (2016: 16) argue that “consent, honesty and care” are the most important ethical principles that need to be considered by researchers in order to ensure and enhance the ethical integrity of their works. Moreover, it is also important for the researcher to consider the participants’ rights at all levels, and to ensure that the participants are treated in an ethical manner (Harrison and Rooney, 2012). As Orb et al. (2001: 93) argue, “ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm... [which] can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles”.

According to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2010), six main ethical principles must be considered:

- 1) The “Integrity, quality and transparency” of the study;
- 2) Participants should be informed about “the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research,” and if there is any potential risk involved;
- 3) Participants’ anonymity should be protected and confidentiality ensured;
- 4) Co-operation should be voluntary, “free from any coercion”;
- 5) Harm to participants should be avoided at all stages of the research; and
- 6) “The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit” (ESRC, 2010: 2-3).

Accordingly, the author of this study followed a six-part process from the outset of this project, and paid particular attention to ethical concerns during the process of data collection:

- 1) Ethical approval was first obtained from the University of Leicester, and permission sought from (and granted by) the Saudi Ministry of Education and the two schools in question, before the study began (see Appendix-A).
- 2) A commitment statement was signed by the researcher guaranteeing that data would be collected in a responsible manner, and any relevant permission was sought prior to commencing the research (see Appendix-B & Appendix-C).
- 3) The purpose of the research and the potential uses of the data and information collected were fully explained to all of the study participants, as well as to other interested parties (see Appendix-B & Appendix-C).
- 4) All participants were suitably notified about their right to refuse to participate, or to withdraw at any stage of the process (see Appendix-B & Appendix-C).
- 5) The researcher accepted responsibility for the protection of the identity and privacy of all participants and the confidentiality of data at all times. This was achieved by providing the participants with an informed consent form to be signed and returned within two weeks, prior to beginning the data collection process (see Appendix-B & Appendix-C).
- 6) The researcher anticipated and prepared for any potential risks of harm to the participants, which were minimal. This preparation included ensuring the protection of data, which was fully explained to the participants so that they were aware of the process followed by the researcher to keep the data safe and to restrict access to the data to the main researcher only, the privacy of the conversations had during the interview process, which were conducted privately, on a one-to-one basis within the selected schools, apart from the group

interviews, and the provision of informed consent (see Appendix-B & Appendix-C).

3.5 Data collection methods

The main advantages of using a case study as a research strategy is that researchers are able to employ several data collection methods. The present research collected data using three qualitative techniques: documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and group interviews.

3.5.1 Documentary analysis

The documentary analysis data collection method is defined as “a form of qualitative analysis that requires readers to locate, interpret, analyze and draw conclusions about the evidence presented” (Briggs and Coleman, 2007: 279). The aim of using documentary analysis as a data collection method for this research was to obtain documents from the Saudi Ministry of Education and the two case schools (Mahad High School, and Sultan High School) relevant to school improvement, such as school policies, reports on pupils’ development, and other policy documents related to school culture, and development programmes for students and teachers. Documents included those written by the two schools and by the Saudi Ministry of Education, and those which applied to the two schools, which were written between 2010 and 2015, to ensure their validity. These documents included both primary and secondary data relevant to the research aim and objectives. The authenticity of the documents was examined in the light of the purpose for which they were written. Once the data had been collected, it was then analyzed and stored.

The documentary analysis method was selected for this research because of the benefits it provides. Although it might be difficult to gain access to some documents in certain circumstances, documentary analysis can reduce the effort and time required for a researcher to collect the data contained within the documents (Briggs and Coleman, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, documentary analysis can help researchers to revise and select the most suitable data collection tools and methods for their studies, and makes it possible for researchers to share the data collected with other interested parties to enhance the reliability of the findings (Briggs and Coleman, 2007).

3.5.2 Face-to-face semi-structured interviews

The second selected data collection method employed was the face-to-face semi-structured interviews, a qualitative method (see Appendix-E). The reason why this method was chosen for use in this research is the advantages it offers. For example, Woodside (2010) explains that semi-structured interviews enable a researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of an issue by asking open-ended questions. Another important advantage is that the interviews can be recorded, which enables the researcher to revise and reflect on what was said by the interviewees. Furthermore, interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to compare different perspectives and insights, which not only enhances the quality of the research in general, but also enables triangulation (Rowley, 2012; Robson, 2011). Moreover, the interview data collection method is compatible with the nature of the present research and its orientation, which is based on an interpretivist epistemological position and a constructivist ontological position, which assigns high importance to the interpretations, perspectives, and accounts of participants, and demands that the researcher consider participants as subjective entities, speak with and listen to the participants, which can be achieved through involving

participants in interviews. Cohen et al. (2007: 349) argue that the main feature of interviews is that participants are allowed “to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable”.

Finally, when a semi-structured interview utilizes open-ended questions, the interviewer is better able to acquire in-depth information that might be difficult to obtain using other data collection methods, because the interviewer has the opportunity to investigate and uncover new insights or ideas that may be raised during the course of an interview by asking further questions for clarification (Bell, 2010; Hopkins, 2008a). Therefore, for this research, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were carried out with one school leader, one school deputy, one student advisor, and six teachers from Mahad High School, and one school leader, one school deputy, one student advisor, and six teachers from Sultan High School. The primary aim of these interviews was to generate in-depth information about the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, the factors that can affect school improvement, and the essential conditions for the development of teachers and students and overall school improvement (see Appendix-L). Each individual interview lasted for approximately 40 minutes to one hour.

3.5.3 Group interviews

The third data collection method used was group interviews, a qualitative method involving open-ended questions. The reason why this method was chosen for this

research the advantages it offers, which, according to Flick (2009), include all of the features and advantages of face-to-face interviews.

In addition, according to Bell (2010), group interviews make it possible for the interviewer to gain in-depth information regarding what interviewees collectively think, as a whole group, about a particular issue or phenomenon, and why. Furthermore, group interviews were selected as a data collection method for this research in order to consider the perspectives and insights that students had regarding the issue under investigation, and, since the students were aged between 15 and 17 years, it was anticipated that it might be difficult to encourage an individual student to interact and provide in-depth information in a face-to-face interview. On the other hand, it was expected that students' interaction would likely improve if they were able to participate collectively, in groups, as they might feel encouraged to align with their peers and contribute to the conversation.

The role of the interviewer within a group interview is to moderate and regulate the group by managing the conversation to keep it relevant, and to ensure the discussion is smooth and organized (Robson, 2011). However, it is very important for the interviewer to differentiate between a moderating and influencing role in the discussion, which is type of bias that is not expected nor accepted from an academic researcher, who must avoid all forms of bias at all research stages (Flick, 2009). This means that the role of the interviewer is very specific, and must not exceed its limits, which is to keep the conversation relevant and avoid the domination of participants, and to encourage the participation of all group members in the conversation (Flick, 2009).

Group interviews were used in this research to interview two groups of nine students from Mahad High School, and two groups of nine students from Sultan High School.

The main aims of carrying out group interviews in this research were to generate in-depth information about the role of school leadership in school improvement, and identify the essential conditions for the development of teachers and students and overall school improvement (see Appendix-L). Each group interview lasted for approximately 50 minutes to one hour.

Regarding the instruments used for the interviews and the questions used within those instruments, the main interview schedule contains 12 main questions, which are divided into four groups. The first group involves 3 main questions (1-3) that are related to the research question one. The second group involves 4 main questions (4-7) that are related to the research question two. The third group involves 3 main questions (8-10) that are related to the research question three. The fourth group involves 2 main questions (11&12) and 7 sub-questions that are related to the research question four (see Appendix-E).

3.6 Data analysis

The data analysis process commenced simultaneously with data collection. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. However, it is argued that “although much of the analysis conducted in qualitative research falls within the broad church of thematic analysis, the wide scope of qualitative enquiry presents the researcher with a number of choices regarding data analysis techniques,” which must be determined in reference to the suitability or compatibility of the data analysis technique with the research questions, and the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that underpin the research design (Fade and Swift, 2011: 106). A number of suggestions have been put forth regarding the most helpful techniques to apply when conducting

thematic analysis. For example, Fade and Swift (2011) suggest three techniques as being the most effective for thematic analysis. First, reading and observing data, which demands the researcher to avoid any personal preconceptions during the reading process in particular, and the process of data analysis in general. Here, the researcher should be mainly concerned with the research quality, which requires them to reflect on their role in the research process and any possible effect they might have on the data analysis. Second, coding data, which requires a researcher to divide the data, based on its rationale and relevance, into pieces and code these pieces using labels. With these labels, the researcher can attach the data to the relevant code and then organise the data and determine what should be included and excluded from the findings, and decide whether to use deductive or inductive coding. Third, creating themes, which are used to group related codes into categories. However, researchers have different ideas regarding the creation of themes. Some researchers treat sections of interview transcripts as themes, while others apply different strategies, such as using interview themes, or the main questions of a questionnaire as themes for data analysis. In this research, however, themes were created based on sections of interview transcripts.

A pilot study for this research was carried out prior to the main study with a small number of participants, including three Saudi PhD students who had previously worked as teachers in Saudi Arabia, one school leader, and two Saudi students. The aim of the pilot study was to test the interview instruments to enhance the credibility of the research and to ensure the feasibility and ability of the instruments to collect the required information, and thus in turn ensure the ability of the selected data collection methods to collect the relevant data. The pilot study was carried out only for those purposes, and the findings of the pilot study were excluded from the main findings that represent the results of this research.

Briggs and Coleman (2007) suggest some further techniques that are useful for analysing qualitative data using a thematic analysis style. These techniques can be summarized as follows, where data should be:

- I. Defined and identified;
- II. Collected and stored;
- III. Sampled and reduced;
- IV. Reported and written;
- V. Restructured and coded.

Furthermore, it is argued that in order to provide meaningful and valid data, and overall high quality research, researchers must analyse the data logically, systematically, and use an appropriate data analysis method that is determined by the research questions, aim, and the nature of the data (Cohen et al., 2007). Hence, all of the data collected via the three data collection methods used in this research (documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and group interviews) was analysed using thematic analysis, as an appropriate style that makes it possible for the author to identify the data, analyse patterns, and describe the data based on the individual experiences of participants. According to Rivas (2012), thematic analysis allows researchers to make sense of the data they have collected by breaking the data down into themes that will then be integrated with other relevant themes to create categories, which is an effective technique for analysing qualitative data, which tend to be large in size and volume. In addition, thematic analysis makes it possible for researchers to generate themes from data in context, without detaching the data from its context (Shkedi, 2005).

Because the aim of this research is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of participants, the recorded interviews were transcribed in the original language (Arabic). The relevant data was then identified and translated into English. The accuracy of the translation was checked by two Arabic PhD students, who were provided with multiple translated sections alongside original transcripts to determine the accuracy of the translation. Both PhD students were colleagues studying in the UK, who spoke Arabic and English fluently; one was a specialist in educational leadership, and the other was working in E-learning.

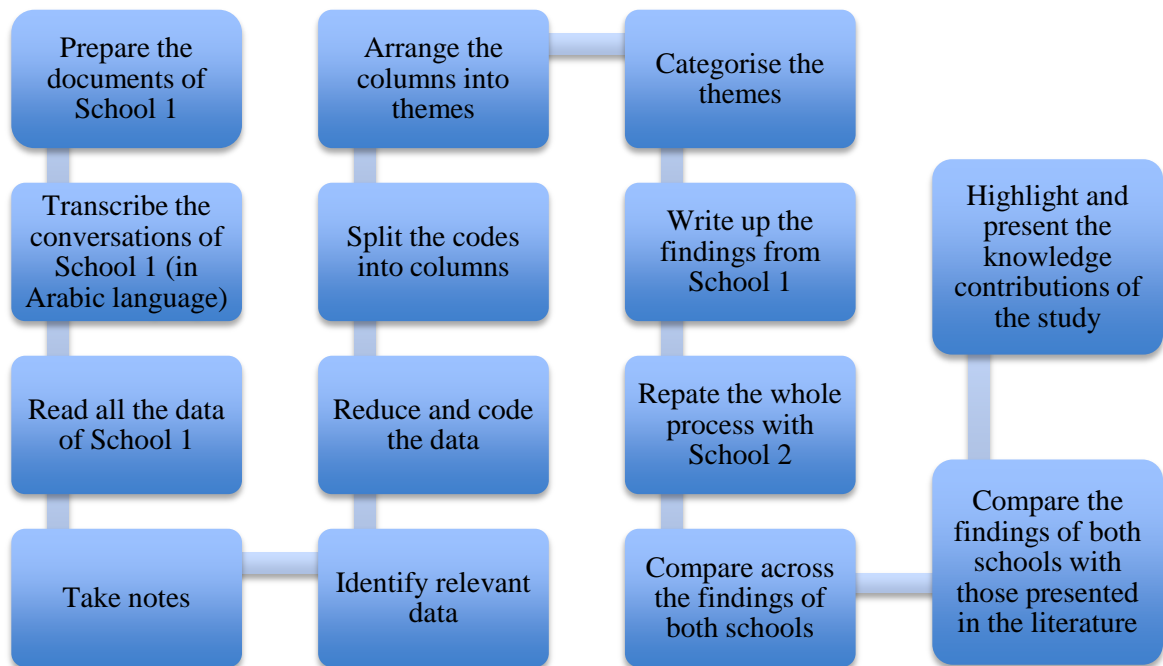
The data was analysed using thematic analysis based on an interpretative coding approach; this is reflective of the author's belief regarding the construction of social reality, which requires researchers to be explicit about their role and any possible impact they might have on the research, and the data in particular. This also implies that the nature of the accepted knowledge is subjective, and thus the author must avoid any preconceptions during the data analysis process, as they did in data collection stage. Therefore, since the author of this research believes reality to be socially enacted and constructed, and the intention was to produce subjective findings, an inductive coding approach was employed to interpret and present the collected data without any reference to existing theory.

Based on the suggestions of Fade and Swift (2011), Briggs and Coleman (2007), and Cohen et al. (2007) regarding the useful and helpful methods and steps to analyse qualitative data using thematic analysis, the following steps and techniques were used to analyse the data collected in this research:

- 1) Prepare the collected documents (documentary analysis);
- 2) Transcribe the recorded conversation (individual and group interviews);

- 3) Read all the data carefully;
- 4) Take notes;
- 5) Identify relevant data in light of the research questions and aims;
- 6) Reduce and code the data according to its value, relevance and importance;
- 7) Review the codes regularly and continuously to avoid repetition;
- 8) Split columns, and sort and arrange the data into themes;
- 9) Categorize the themes;
- 10) Write up the conclusion of the findings from the two schools in the case study,
one by one; and,
- 11) Compare the findings of the two schools with each other, and then discuss the
findings of both schools by comparing them with those presented in the
literature, and provide a written report of the results (see Figure 3.3, below).

Figure 3.3: Data analysis process



The above figure shows the process followed when analysing the research data; the process was completed in three different stages. The first stage involved the initial coding, which began once the relevant data was identified. The data was classified according to its relevance to the study, and then coded with labels in preparation for the second stage (see Appendix-M & Appendix-N). The second stage involved the splicing process, which was performed by grouping and connecting relevant codes with initial themes, which were then used to create the main themes; these were then arranged into categories as a final stage (see Appendix-O). The third stage involved categorising, which was performed to group the relevant themes together (see Appendix-P).

Chapter 4: Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings and is structured as follows: first, the introduction describes the two participating case study schools in order to provide a clear picture of the context of the schools. The ages, positions and backgrounds of the participants are described with reference to the criteria used to select the participants, how many were involved, and their experience in this field of research. This is followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings of this research study. The results from the two Saudi high schools examined in this study (Mahad High School and Sultan High School) are first presented and then discussed by comparing them to the findings of previous studies to evaluate how closely this study's findings correspond to those of the studies mentioned in the literature review, thus demonstrating how this research can make a contribution to the existing literature.

4.1 Introduction

This study was carried out in two Saudi Arabian high schools: Mahad High School and Sultan High School (anonymous names). This chapter briefly describes the context of each school, and introduces the participants of this research study, before going on to present and discuss the findings.

4.2 The context of Mahad High School

Mahad High School has a reputation as one of the highest quality schools in Saudi Arabia. Mahad High School operates as a chain, with 5 branches across Saudi Arabia, located in the four richest cities, inhabited by people from the middle and upper socioeconomic classes. Additionally, Mahad High School is considered one of the most effective schools in the country and is one of the most popular and selective schools,

due to the high-level degree requirements for new teachers and the entrance conditions for new students (School leader 1, March, 2015).

All 5 branches of Mahad High School are boys' state schools, which cater for both secondary and high-school levels, and have their own magazines, which are issued monthly. The branch chosen as the case study for this research is located in one of the main cities in Saudi Arabia. It is located in the centre of a crowded upper and middle-class area. A school paper provided to the researcher by the school leader 1 (March 2015) reports that there are 720 students on roll at high-school level in 2015. In 2014, 98% of students passed their examinations. There are no special classrooms for disabled students. 25 students are recorded as having special educational needs, and they are integrated with the other students. 87% of the students are Saudi nationals and 13% are Arabic students from neighbouring countries. The school, as all other schools in Saudi Arabia, does not have school principal but it has a school leader who acts as school principal in eastern schools but is named school leader. The school has one leader who has been a school leader for 23 years in total, including 10 years continuous service at this school. The school has two deputies, two student advisors, four support staff, one activities manager, two librarians and 46 teachers. The facilities at the school are as follows: the school is a government building consisting of two separate buildings which are each spread over three floors. One building contains 26 classrooms and a library and the second building houses two laboratories, leadership offices, teachers' offices, clubs and rooms, two computer laboratories, a talent centre and one big theatre. The school has a mosque and a multi-purpose sports hall which is used for volleyball, football, basketball and tennis (School Leader 1, March 2015).

Figure 4.1: Representative photo of Saudi high schools (exterior view)



(All images are Google images copyrights)

Figure 4.2: Representative photo of Saudi high schools (interior view)



(All images are Google images copyrights)

4.3 The context of Sultan High School

Sultan High School is a boys' state school which is located in a village near the capital city of Saudi Arabia. This is a rural village and the majority of the population belongs to the lower socioeconomic classes. A school paper given to the researcher by the school deputy 2 (April, 2015), reports that in 2015, there are 269 students on roll. 90% of students passed examinations in 2014. There are 3 classrooms for disabled students and 17 students are known to have special educational needs. 96.5% of students are Saudi nationals and 3.5% are Arabic students from neighbouring countries. The school has one leader, who has been a school leader for 28 years in total, and has worked at this particular school for 2 continuous years. The school has two deputies, two student advisors, two support staff, one librarian and 41 teachers. The facilities at the school are as follows: it is a government building, which is spread over two floors and contains 24 classrooms, one library, leadership offices, two teachers' meeting rooms, one computer laboratory and one theatre. The school has a mosque, an indoor sports centre which caters for volleyball, tennis and billiards, and a football pitch (School Deputy 2, April, 2015).

Figure 4.3: Representative photo of a school leader office



(All images are Google images copyrights)

Figure 4.4: Representative photo of Saudi high schools (interior view)



(All images are Google images copyrights)

4.4 Participants

The participants included in this research are from different sites and hold different positions (see Table 4.1 & Table 4.2, bellow). The participants were purposively selected based on their different backgrounds and experience, with the aim of providing a range of views and perceptions concerning the issue being investigated. An identical format was used to select the participants from both schools in order to ensure equity among the participants and between the schools.

Table 4.1: Participants from Mahad High School

Participant	Age	Experience	Job	Qualifications
School Leader 1 (SL1)	47	Teaching for 3 years, working as a school leader for 23 years, 10 years at Mahad High School	School administration, Managing the school culture, Arranging internal and external activities and duties	Bachelor's degree in History, Master's degree in leadership and management
School Deputy 1 (SD1)	49	Teaching for 14 years, working as a school deputy for 9 years at Mahad High School	Monitoring students' academic progress, and student affairs Sharing in school management	Bachelor's degree in Islamic Science, course in School Management
Student Advisor 1 (SA1)	36	Teaching for 2 years, working as a student advisor for 7 years at Mahad High School	Supporting students' development and learning, Enhancing school-home relationships, Solving students' problems	Bachelor's degree in educational psychology, Master's degree in Special Educational Needs
Teacher 1 (T1)	44	Teaching for 17 years, 8 years at Mahad High School	Teaching, Classroom leader	Bachelor's degree in English
Teacher 2 (T2)	32	Teaching for 6 years at Mahad High School	Teaching, Volunteer librarian, Classroom leader	Bachelor's degree in Social Science
Teacher 3 (T3)	45	Teaching for 19 years, 11 years at Mahad High School	Teaching, Director of educational activities, Classroom leader	Bachelor's degree in Arabic Language
Teacher 4 (T4)	35	Teaching for 9 years, 6 years at Mahad High School	Teaching, Leader for year 11 students, Classroom leader	Bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies
Teacher 5 (T5)	43	Teaching for 16 years at Mahad High School	Teaching, Head teacher, Classroom leader	Bachelor's degree in Geography, Master's degree in Geography
Teacher 6 (T6)	31	Teaching for 5 years at Mahad High School	Teaching, Teachers' representative, Classroom leader	Bachelor's degree in Human Sciences
Student group 1 (Students 1- 9) (GI 1)	15-18	Studying for 9-11 years	Studying, Sharing in some leadership functions, Arranging internal school activities	Secondary School certificate
Student group 2 (Students 10- 18) (GI 2)	15-18	Studying for 9-11 years	Studying, sharing in some leadership functions, Arranging internal school activities	Secondary School certificate

Table 4.2: Participant from Sultan High School

Participant	Age	Experience	Job	Qualifications
School Leader 2 (SL2)	58	Teaching for 5 years, working as a school leader for 28 years, 2 years at Sultan High School	School administration, Managing school culture, Arranging internal and external activities and duties	Bachelor's degree in Mathematics, Diploma certificate in school management
School Deputy 2 (SD2)	43	Teaching for 8 years, working as a school deputy for 8 years at Sultan High School	Monitoring academic progress, and students' affairs	Bachelor's degree in Human Sciences
Student Advisor 2 (SA2)	44	Teaching for 9 years, a student advisor for 7 years at Sultan High School	Support students' development and learning, Enhancing school-home relationships, and solving students' problems	Bachelor's degree in Arabic language, Master's degree in Educational Psychology,
Teacher 7 (T7)	35	Teaching for 7 years at Sultan High School	Teaching	Bachelor's degree in Special Educational Needs, Master's degree in Learning Difficulties
Teacher 8 (T8)	41	Teaching for 15 years, 5 years at Sultan High School	Teaching, Monitoring students	Bachelor's degree in History
Teacher 9 (T9)	32	Teaching for 6 years at Sultan High School	Teaching, External programs organiser	Bachelor's degree in Biology
Teacher 10 (T10)	31	Teaching for 5 years at Sultan High School	Teaching	Bachelor's degree in Arabic Language
Teacher 11 (T11)	37	Teaching for 9 years at Sultan High School	Teaching, Training programs' manager	Bachelor's degree in Physics
Teacher 12 (T12)	49	Teaching for 24 years, 11 years at Sultan High School	Teaching, Head teacher	Bachelor's degree in Geography
Student group 3 (Students 19- 27) (GI 3)	15-18	Studying for 9-11 years	Studying, Arranging sports' activities	Secondary School certificate
Student group 4 (Students 28- 36) (GI 4)	15-18	Studying for 9-11 years	Studying, Arranging sports' activities	Secondary School certificate

The above two tables (Table 4.1 & 4.2) show that there were 54 participants in total from Mahad High school: one school leader, one school deputy, one student advisor and six teachers were included in face to face semi-structured interviews, and two groups of nine students were involved in group interviews; from Sultan High School, one school leader, one school deputy, one student advisor and six teachers were included in face to face semi-structured interviews, and two groups of nine students were involved in group interviews.

School leaders were selected as they hold the highest position in their schools, which each only have one school leader. School leaders are responsible for the most important aspects of the school; including the school's aims, culture, facilities and timetable; the distribution of tasks and responsibilities amongst the school's staff, the preparation of learning resources, activities and programs; the evaluation of teachers' performance and development; arranging school visitors and supervisors from the Ministry of Education (who evaluate schools, teachers and the quality of learning); enhancing home-school communication and socialisation; fostering an environment of collaboration within the school and with relevant external parties; managing the school's meetings and development programs within and outside the school; and working to implement the instructions of the Ministry of Education (School Leader 2, March 2015; Rules and Regulations, 2015).

As shown in the above tables, the following senior staff members have been included in this research: one school deputy and one student advisor from Mahad High School, and one school deputy and one student advisor from Sultan High School. School deputies in Saudi Arabia are primarily responsible for the academic progress and day-to-day affairs of students, including behaviour, attendance, and ensuring that students are committed to the school's regulations and its systems (School deputy 1, March 2015; Information

Management, 2014). School deputies also share some leadership functions with the school leaders, such as managing affairs pertaining to employees, teachers and students, and they are also responsible for exams and technical affairs. Since deputies work with the school leader in the distribution of the school functions and responsibilities among the school's members, they also share in the creation of the annual plan, the management of teaching and the monitoring of staff (Rules and regulations, 2015; School deputy 2, March, 2015).

With regard to student advisors, in 1982 the Saudi Education Ministry promoted the concept of student advisors as a strategy to support students' development and learning (School Development Policy, 2015). However, only a small number of schools in major cities were selected to participate in this strategy (Student Advisor 1, March, 2015). Since 2000, student advisors have become more common and every school in Saudi Arabia has one or more advisors, depending on the number of students on roll and the type of establishment (ibid). The main responsibility of student advisors is providing appropriate support to students in order to enhance their learning and motivating them to succeed (School Development policy, 2015). This responsibility is divided into four aspects which are believed to be the main components of students' development. These aspects, which are the duties of student advisors in Saudi Arabia, are: Educational Guidance and Direction, Psychological Counselling and Guidance, Social Guidance and Health Extension (ibid).

In terms of the teachers' participation, 12 teachers were involved in this research study, six teachers from each school (Mahad and Sultan high schools). The main criterion used to select teachers was experience; they were required to have five years' teaching experience so that they would have the background knowledge and holistic view of the issue that might have been lacking in newly qualified teachers.

Student participation was based on a group interview strategy. 36 students were included in this research and were divided into four groups of nine students, two groups from each school. Each group includes three student participants from each year (there are three years: year 10, 11 and 12) and with varying ability levels including high, average and lower level achievers. The ages of the students involved in this research study ranged from 15 to 18 years.

4.5 Findings and Discussion

This section uses documentary data, semi-structured interviews and group interviews from both schools to consider the role of school leadership in school improvement, and the associated requirements for the development of teachers and students, at both the school and classroom level.

The data was obtained from school documents, face-to-face interviews with the senior staff and teachers, and group interviews with the students. The findings of this study are presented and discussed under three main themes, namely school leadership, school culture, and meeting students' needs. These themes are used as subheadings within the presentation and the discussion of findings, and each main theme is followed by the relevant sub-themes that emerged from the relevant data.

The relevant findings for each of the emerging themes based on the data collected from both schools (Mahad High School and Sultan High School) are presented. This is followed by a discussion of the findings that considers the findings from both schools with reference to the emerging themes and discusses them with regard to earlier studies described in the literature review.

The method below has been used to reference the quotations:

For quotations collected from documents:

Quotation (The name of the document, the year).

Example:

Although teachers have an important role to play, the role of school leader is more important in terms of managing schools and the academic affairs of students (Regulation Management of Education Ministry, 2014).

For quotations collected from respondents in face to face interviews and group interviews:

Quotation (The post of the respondent, the month, and the year).

Example:

Involving teachers in school leadership and providing them with leadership roles encourages teachers to be more active, more motivated, and more productive (T 9, April, 2015).

4.5.1 School leadership

Three sub-themes emerged from the data collected in reference to the theme above.

- The role of school leadership in school improvement.
- School leadership's effect on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leadership style and school improvement.

4.5.1.1 The role of school leadership in school improvement

Prior to the discussion about the role of school leadership in school improvement, it might be useful to determine the relationship between school leadership and school improvement that could help to provide a deeper understanding concerning the role of school leadership in school improvement.

The findings from both schools confirm that there is an obvious relationship between school leadership and school improvement, which relies on the school leadership that is the main factor responsible for the improvement of schools and the development of teachers and students:

I think school leadership is the basic ground for [school] improvement; it is the leadership team that usually suggest improvements, develop them and make them, an orientation within the learning community (T 1, March, 2015).

Regarding the extent of the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the majority of participants from both schools agreed that there is a strong relationship between school leadership and school improvement, which has an effect not only on school improvement in general but also on the professional development of teachers, their performances and the learning outcomes of students. This relationship is reflected in several ways. For instance, the authority and power held by leadership team and school leaders in particular, over the learning resources and the other important aspects related to school improvement, such as school culture, could reflect the significance of that relationship and the effect that school leadership has on the development of teachers and students:

If the school leadership wants to improve the school, it can do that by creating a positive school culture - that has a huge effect on teachers' performance and students' development (T 5, March, 2015).

Conversely, it is believed by some participants from both schools that although there is a relationship between school leadership and school improvement, this relationship is limited and affected by other school members, such as teachers who play the major role in terms of school improvement and students' learning. This is due to the fact that school leadership in Saudi schools has limited authority over teachers who have the major effects on students' learning development:

School leadership authority is limited, particularly in regard to teachers' performance...and teachers still have the most important role in this [school improvement] (T 3, March 2015).

On the other hand, a teacher participant from Sultan High School indicated that the relationship between school leadership and school improvement is shared between the leadership team who represents the "brain" that makes plans, and the other school members who represent the rest of the "body" that is responsible for the implementation stage of school improvement. This means that there is no separate relationship between the school leadership and school improvement, instead there is a complementary relationship among all school members who all together have an effect on school improvement:

School leadership represents the brain and the other school members represent the hands of that body and it is impossible to separate the two things because the brain plans and the hands implement. (T 7, April, 2015).

Concerning the role of school leadership in school improvement, the findings from Mahad High School indicate that school leadership team play a major role in school improvement due to the fact that school improvement is the main duty of school leaders:

The duties of the school leader can be summarised as follows: ensuring the success of the school, monitoring teaching and learning, managing teachers' professional development, and fostering social relationships (Mahad High School policy, 2014).

In addition, the majority of participants from Mahad High School argued that although teachers play the most important role in school improvement, teachers are directly affected by school leadership, which reflects the significance of school leadership's role in school improvement:

School improvement is a shared process between teachers and the school leadership...but teachers are usually affected by their leaders (T 6, March, 2015).

Furthermore, some participants from both schools believe that school leadership is the fundamental bases for school improvement due to the position of authority allowed to school leadership team over the important factors related to school improvement, and due to the effects that school leadership team have on school members and their perspectives:

The school leadership team is the essential foundation on which school improvement builds, and the school leader plays the biggest role in this due to

the effect he has on other members, their decisions... [and] their perspectives (T 12, April, 2015).

On the other hand, some participants from Sultan High School mentioned that the role of school leadership in school improvement is limited by the fact that school leadership teams in Saudi Arabia lack power and authority:

School leaders in developed countries have much more authority and power. In those countries, school leaders have control over financial issues, promotion, etc., whereas school leaders have no control of those aspects here [in Saudi Arabia] (SL 2, April, 2015).

In addition, the role of the school leadership in school improvement takes the form of a complementary system that is shared by both school leadership team and teachers who are thought to be directly responsible regarding the implementation stage for the main plans of school improvement:

School improvement...starts with the strategies set out by the Ministry of Education and finishes with the implementation stage, which is mostly directly practised by teachers (SD 2, April, 2015).

On the other hand, the success of school leadership and its importance for school improvement were considered by some participants from both schools as evidence that reflects the significance of the role that school leadership has on school improvement in general, and on the development of teachers and students in particular. The participants expressed the belief that a successful leadership team is the main prerequisite for school improvement. Several reasons were mentioned to explain the importance of school leadership success for school improvement. For instance, leadership success is believed

by some participants to be the key towards school improvement because the latter always reflects the success of school leadership team particularly the success of the school leader who has a direct effect on school improvement:

The school leader is the main person who has a direct effect on school improvement... a school's success always reflects the success of school leadership (SD 2, April, 2015).

In addition, successful school leaders are often concerned and keen regarding the effective factors for school improvement in general, and the development of teachers and students in particular, such as innovation and effective leadership styles, which are essential for school improvement:

Successful school leaders are more likely to be innovative and they are better able to distribute the functions of school leadership among school members (T 12, April, 2015).

However, some participants from both schools argued that although school leadership success is important for school improvement, there are other factors that are more important than the success of school leadership and have greater effects on school improvement, such as the success of high-level decision-makers:

The success of school leadership is effective for school improvement but other factors may have a greater effect on school improvement, such as the success of decision makers in the Ministry of Education (T 8, April, 2015).

Furthermore, school culture and collaboration between the school's members in particular were deemed by some participants to be more important and effective for school improvement than the success of school leadership:

The success of the school leadership does not necessarily result in the success of the school, because collaboration between the school and its members is the key for school success (T 1, March, 2015).

However, this particular assumption could be critically questioned since school leadership is the main creator for school culture and has a direct effect on it.

Furthermore, the school leader of Sultan High School mentioned that the role of school leadership in school improvement depends on the stability of the school's leadership: if the leadership is stable, it will play a greater role in school improvement, particularly if the school leader has sufficient time to plan and implement strategies that can help the school to improve. In schools with temporary leaders this might not be possible. The problem of unstable leadership is quite common in some schools in Saudi Arabia:

In order to improve the role of the school leadership...we must have stable leadership...stability here means that it is impossible for a school leader to improve the school if he will leave the school within a year or two, which happens in many schools (SL 2, April, 2015).

For a school leadership team to be better able to have a positive effect on school improvement, a minimum period of six years has been suggested by the leader of Sultan High School. Within that period of time, the school leadership team would be able to plan for the improvement and also put the plan into action:

I spent long time in this school and the first time I felt satisfied about my school was at the beginning of year six, when I started to clearly see my efforts put into practice by all school members (SL 2, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about the relationship between school leadership and school improvement seem to support the views of Harris (2013), Park (2012), Anca (2013), Engels et al. (2008), Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016), Vanblaere and Devos (2016), MacBeath and Dempster (2009), and Atawy (2014), regarding the correlation between school leadership and school improvement, which is related to the authority of school leaders over the important aspects for school improvement such as leadership style, learning resources and school culture.

However, the findings of this study indicate that the extent of the relationship between school leadership and school improvement depends on the power and authority provided to school leadership, which means that the level of power and authority allowed to the leadership team can determine the strength and weakness of that relationship as suggested by Atawy (2014). The findings also support the view of Thawinkarn et al. (2018) who mentioned that the relationship between school leadership and school improvement is strong when considering the effects that school leadership has on teachers and their performances.

In addition, the findings of the current study support the arguments of Woodland (2016), Ho et al. (2016), Nir and Hameiri (2014), Engels et al. (2008), Jayan et al. (2016), Brown (2018), and Chalamandaris et al. (2017) who suggest that the relationship between school leadership and school improvement is not strong due to the fact that school improvement is a holistic process affected by a number of different factors, including other school members, particularly teachers and students who have an effective role in terms of school improvement.

With regard to the role of school leadership in school improvement, the findings agree with the views of Harris (2013), Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016), and MacBeath and Dempster (2009), regarding the effective role of school leadership in school improvement. In addition, the findings agree with Anca (2013), MacBeath and Dempster (2009), Vanblaere and Devos (2016) and Park (2012), who mentioned that school leadership plays an effective role in school improvement due to the leadership's influence on the main factors for school improvement, particularly on teachers and students. This result disagrees with Nir and Hameiri (2014), who suppose that school leadership's influence on school outcomes is indirect and limited.

The findings also indicate that the role of school leadership in school improvement is affected by factors such as the level of power and authority allowed for school leaders. This result supports the arguments of Aburizaizah et al. (2016) and Mitchell (2017) who mentioned that the role of school leadership in school improvement depends on the level of the authority allocated to school leaders.

The findings of the current study show similar results to that of Atawy (2014), which stresses that the school leadership's success is the key that can lead to a holistic school improvement. This is due to the effect of school leadership's success on the development of teachers and students, as the findings of this study indicate that successful school leaders tend to encourage innovation and are better able to select a leadership style that will facilitate school improvement, which supports the arguments of Thawinkarn et al. (2018) and Abo Alwafa (2012).

The findings also appear to enhance the belief of MacNeil et al. (2009) that school improvement reflects the success of school leadership, which has a direct effect on the school's improvement. However, the findings stress that leadership success does not

necessarily lead to school success, because there are other factors that have a greater effect on school improvement, such as the success of decision-makers at the Ministry of Education, who have a greater influence on school improvement than the school leadership team.

4.5.1.2 The effect of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning

Some participants from Mahad High School indicated that the effect of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning depends on the level of authority and power allowed to school leadership team, which means that the more power they have, the greater their effect will be:

The leadership has no actual effect on learning, since they are not allowed to engage in self-management and must conform to the directives and trends of the Ministry of Education (T 6, March, 2015).

Nevertheless, the majority of participants from both schools believe that school leadership has an effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Several evidences have been mentioned by participants as evidence to that effect. For instance, some participants from both schools argued that due to the authority and power that the school leadership team enjoys, school leaders have significant effects on the quality of teaching and learning in general:

School leaders have a huge effect on teaching quality because they can evaluate teachers and ensure that they are deployed in the right places, where they will enhance the quality of learning (SA 2, April, 2015).

In addition, some participants from Mahad High School said that the effect that the school leadership team have on teachers and their performances reflects the effect of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning:

Learning quality is related to teachers and their abilities...but the leadership team can make a difference in this due to their power (GI1, March, 2015).

It is also believed by the majority of participants from Mahad High School that the effect that school leadership has on the quality of teaching and learning is evident through considering the effect that leadership team have not only on the learning environment, the learning resources, school activities, but also on school culture which is one of the main factors that is connected with professional development of teachers and students' learning development:

Academic development and high quality learning can be achieved ...by considering school culture...school environment, learning means and recreational activities for students... all of these are controlled by the leadership of the school (SD 1, March, 2015).

Moreover, some student participants from Mahad High School believe that students' agency is mainly affected by the school leader who can through different means enhance students' agency. This reflects the effect that school leadership has on students and their learning:

A school leader can increase students' loyalty to the school by ensuring that everyone is treated with respect, and also by providing good sporting activities (GI1, March, 2015).

Similarly, participants from Sultan High School provided several examples that reflect the effect of the school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning. For instance, some participants indicated that the authority of school leadership team over the school culture that is the basic ground for the development of teachers and students reflects the effect of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning:

School culture is the basis for teachers' and students' development, and the school leadership is able to change school culture so that it is a positive culture that supports school members..., particularly teachers and students, to work to the best of their ability and show their creativity (SD 2, April, 2015).

In addition, the effect of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning was confirmed by some teacher participants from four different angles. First, decisions made by the school leadership team regarding motivation and punishment strategies reflect the effect of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning. This is because teachers and students are positively affected by the incentives provided by school leadership, and might be negatively affected by methods of punishments used by the school leadership if those punishments are generalized, rather than involving the relevant parties:

School leadership can enhance the development of teachers and students by motivating them to be better... conversely, when the school leadership generalizes blame and punishment, this can negatively affect teachers' performance and students' attainment (T 11, April, 2015).

Second, the effect of school leadership on teaching effectiveness, which is directly related to the quality of teaching and learning in general, is another evidence that reflects the school leadership's effect on the quality of teaching and learning:

School leadership affects the quality of learning because teaching effectiveness, for example, is significantly affected by school leadership and its practices (T 12, April, 2015).

Third, justice is a factor that can affect teachers and their performance, particularly among younger teachers. School leadership has a major role to play with regard to teachers' equity and justice:

School leadership is the first and the main responsible party for justice among teachers. This, in turn, affects teachers' performance and the quality of teaching (T 8, April, 2015).

Fourth, the quality of students' learning can be affected by school activities. However, school activities are set by the school leadership and are affected by its level of success:

Schools activities are significantly affected by the level of the school leadership's success (T 9, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about the school leadership's effect on the quality of teaching and learning confirm the view of MacBeath and Dempster (2009) that school leadership has a great effect on the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, the findings agree with Hoque et al. (2011), Vanblaere and Devos (2016), and Ho et al. (2016), that teachers have a greater effect on learning quality than any other factor. However, the findings confirm that school leadership has a direct effect on teachers, their performance and their effectiveness.

Furthermore, the findings agree with the studies of Anca (2013), Harris (2013), Park (2012), Atawy (2014), O'Neill and Conzemius (2002) regarding the importance of school decisions, school culture, teaching effectiveness, teachers' motivation, training programmes, learning environment, the crucial learning means and resources, and learning activities for the quality of teaching and learning. However, the findings confirm that leaders have a major influence not only on the quality of teaching and learning, but also on the essential factors related to the quality of teaching and learning, which all are affected by the school leadership team, as suggested by MacNeil et al. (2009), Waldron and McLeskey (2010) and Fisher et al. (2012).

In addition, the findings appear to further the views of Park (2012), Engels et al. (2008), Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016), and Vanblaere and Devos (2016), which suggest that the position possessed by school leaders enabling them to authorise and encourage members of the school further clarifies that school leadership plays a significant role in the quality of teaching and learning.

Moreover, the findings show similar results to those found by Frew et al. (2013), Nabhani et al. (2013), Gamble and Kinsler (2004), and Gruenert (2005), that in addition to school leaders' effects on the quality of learning, they also have an effect on the students' feelings and sense of belonging regarding the school.

4.5.1.3 Leadership style and school improvement

Participants from both schools believed that the style of school leadership significantly affects school improvement:

Leadership style plays a major role in school improvement (T 7, April, 2015).

Several criteria were suggested by participants from both schools that were believed to be essential for school leaders to consider when attempting to select the most suitable leadership style for their schools. For instance, participants from Mahad High School suggested four conditions as main criteria to be considered by school leadership in order to ensure the effectiveness of school leadership style. First, the nature of work and the nature of people and their perspectives need to be taking into consideration to ensure the selected leadership style is suitable for the subordinates:

I chose a leadership style that I believed to be suitable, based on the nature of the work and the staff members with whom I was working (SL 1, March, 2015).

Second, extending the capacity of school leadership through distributing the functions of leadership among all school members, including teachers, students and parents who should be involved in the school leadership and should be encouraged to share the responsibility of working towards the school's goals and take responsibility for the school's duties:

I think that leadership should be shared by all school members, so that each individual, even parents, feels and works like a school leader (SD 1, March, 2015).

Third, school leaders need to consider a leadership style that encourages teamwork as well as leaders should ensure that school vision and school objectives are very clear for subordinates:

I think that the right school leader for achieving educational goals is one who has a clear vision and clear goals, encourages teamwork and can delegate responsibility to others (T 5, March, 2015).

Fourth, school leaders need to avoid hierarchical leadership style which is most common in Saudi schools; this might be due to the fact that Saudi Arabian culture tends to be based on a stratified system:

In general, schools leaderships here are hierarchical. However, in this school we have a different style, because staff and teachers participate in many things (T 1, March, 2015).

On the other hand, participants from Sultan High School suggested some criteria that should be used to select a suitable leadership style. For instance, the school leader argued that the most important condition for school leadership style is to avoid central leadership and management and distribute the functions of school leadership among school members:

In order to enhance school improvement, we must avoid central administration and distribute the functions of school leadership among all the involved members (SL 2, April, 2015).

In addition, it is believed by a student advisor participant that the main prerequisite for an effective leadership style is that the leadership should be moderate: it should be neither very serious nor very indulgent:

The main feature of successful leadership is being in the middle: not very serious and not very indulgent (SA 2, April, 2015).

Furthermore, some participants assure the importance of flexibility for leadership style which needs to be flexible and supportive of giving more freedom to school members:

The best leadership style is a more flexible one that supports freedom and avoids strictness (T 7, April, 2015).

Finally, some student participants focus on inclusion, justice and equality as important aspects to be considered by school leaders in order to select the most suitable leadership style:

The best leadership style is a more flexible one, in which justice is encouraged and students' voices are heard (GI 3, April, 2015).

With regard to the nature of leadership styles used in the two case study schools, two different leadership styles are used in the two schools. Mahad High School uses a consultative style of leadership, which is rare in Saudi Arabian schools, while Sultan High School uses a distributed leadership style as expressed by participants from both schools. The following discussion will first consider the findings from Mahad High School to present the nature of consultative leadership style used with in this school, its features, essential conditions, advantages and disadvantages for school improvement. This will be followed by the findings from Sultan High School about distributed leadership and the same process will be used to discover the nature, features, required conditions, advantages and disadvantages of distributed leadership.

Concerning consultative leadership, the participants from Mahad High School agreed that the leadership style of their school is consultative, where school members work collaboratively together and some of them act as representative to the leadership teams:

For this school, I chose consultative leadership, so the management work collaboratively with other members of the school, and teachers and students act as representatives of the leadership team by participating in leadership functions (SL 1, March, 2015).

According to the findings from Mahad High School, consultative leadership style has a variety of features that could lead to enhance school improvement. One of the main features of a consultative leadership style is that it involves school members as consultants, and the role of the school leadership team is to distribute the functions of leadership and then make decisions by selecting the most suitable options from the ideas put forward by the members of the school:

The best leadership approach is consultative leadership, in which the school leader distributes and shares the functions of leadership and consults with school members in order to gain a variety of perspectives (T 2, March, 2015).

However, the main prerequisite for consultative leadership to succeed is the presence of a highly experienced leader who can minimise the risk of mistakes being made:

Consultative leadership requires a very experienced leader to avoid possible disadvantages, because an inexperienced leader may lack the ability to make the right choices when faced with the suggestions made by school members (T 2, March, 2015).

In addition, the remit of consultative leadership can also be extended to include parents. They can be included not only in school decisions, but also in solving problems. In particular, students' problems are usually solved by including parents in order to find the best possible solution for problems which have occurred, or to overcome barriers to students' learning:

I always include parents in school, particularly in solving students' problems: this helps us to correct students' behaviour and mistakes instead of punishing them (SD 1, March, 2015).

A consultative leadership supports teacher leadership because teachers are encouraged to act as leaders and they are provided the authority to do so in various circumstances:

In this school, deputies and student advisors work as leaders...teachers are also encouraged to participate in many leadership functions (SD 1, March, 2015).

Furthermore, consultative leadership style supports student leadership as students are given some leadership authority. For instance, students have the right to create and arrange their timetables as well as to participate in making school-decisions particularly those affecting them:

Students participate in their timetables, and in administrative decisions relating to students (T 4, March, 2015).

Moreover, a consultative leadership team encourages students to give feedback and express their views on leadership practices, thus allowing the leadership team to amend their practices based on suggestions made by students:

I motivate students by offering weekly rewards for the best suggestions and for critical feedback (SL 1, March, 2015).

In addition, consultative leadership is an effective style that could lead to meet students' needs through the involvement of students in leadership functions:

Every year, we choose 6 student representatives for each level [levels 10, 11 and 12]. These representatives work as an interface between students and school leadership and share in making decisions making based on students' needs (SL 1, March, 2015).

Another example of students' involvement within consultative leadership is the existence of a group of students who are authorised not only to be representatives for students, but also to represent the leadership by acting upon the actions and behaviours of other students; these students are known as student organisers. They have the power to make decisions and act regarding unacceptable behaviour and actions of students in different circumstances:

We have twenty student organisers, who help to monitor students at lunch and prayer time and record students' behaviours and actions...students' organisers are representatives of the leadership team and they have the authority to correct students' mistakes (SD 1, March, 2015).

However, students' power and authority remain limited since they are controlled by the school leader and the leadership team who make the final decision, after applying additional filters and conditions to the requests raised by students and their needs:

Students' needs and requests are considered in the light of three conditions: firstly, the request must be compatible with the school's rules and regulations. Secondly, it must not be beyond the capacity and the ability of the school. Thirdly, the request must not be in the personal interest of an individual unless it is based on health conditions (SL 1, March, 2015).

Regarding the disadvantages of consultative leadership style, the participants from Mahad High School mentioned several issues that were believed to be possible drawbacks of consultative leadership style. For example, the ability of the school to achieve its aims could be jeopardised if some of the people who are consulted are not satisfied with those aims:

Many of the school's goals might be lost if the included consultants disagree or do not like some goals (T 6, March, 2015).

Another disadvantage of this leadership style is the fact that the leadership needs to have unlimited authority in order to be successful, as limited authority means that the leadership team are less able to make or implement decisions, even though those decisions have been agreed by the parties who were consulted. This is due to the fact that the school leadership follows the regulations of the Ministry of Education, which only usually grants limited powers to the school leadership, and these restrictions can negatively affect the implementation of consultative leadership style due to the nature of this leadership style and its requirements:

The problem is that our leadership always refers to the overseer of the school [Ministry of Education] this means they do not have any authority sometimes (GI1, March, 2015).

In order to help us, the school needs to be independent (GI1, March, 2015).

Furthermore, consultative leadership may increase the workload of teachers and students, particularly if the school leadership relies on teachers and students to carry out the functions of leadership:

Consultative leadership is good but it should not mean that leadership functions are carried out by students or teachers. The leadership team must take responsibility for this (GI1, March, 2015).

On the other hand, consultative leadership style benefits from many advantages that could lead to enhance school improvement and the quality of learning. Participants from Mahad High School indicated five benefits of consultative leadership style, which they

believe to be the main advantages of this particular leadership style. Firstly, consultative leadership can help to bridge the gap between the school leadership and the classroom environment. Learning environment, particularly at the classroom is an effective factor related to students' development; however, many leadership styles may not be able to give sufficient consideration to the classroom environment. For example ideally, it would be necessary for teachers and students to be involved in leadership decisions, to offer suggestions to ensure decisions are made based on the classroom environment in which they operate, and this is the main benefit of consulting teachers and students as consultative leaders tend to do:

Consultative leadership is the best solution for the development of the school and students' learning ...because the leadership team is not as close to the classroom environment as teachers and students are, and the classroom environment is the centre of learning (T 2, March, 2015).

Secondly, consultative leadership style leads school leadership team to make suitable school-decisions that could meet the needs of school members, particularly students' needs:

Students have the right to share in the school's decision-making process because a student may put forward an opinion which the teachers or the leadership team might not otherwise have thought of (T 3, March, 2015).

Thirdly, consultative leadership makes it possible for the leadership team to create a clear school vision and set clear objectives; both of these are essential factors for school improvement:

In order to create a clear vision and clear aims for the school, teachers and students must be present to share and evaluate them (T 5, March, 2015).

In addition, consultative leadership style enhances the relationship between students and school leaders, as it provides students with more opportunities to meet with the leadership team and discuss relevant issues:

In consultative leadership, students regularly meet with, and talk to, the school leader and deputies (GI1, March, 2015).

Finally, consultative leadership is considered to be an effective means of solving students' educational problems:

It allows the school leader to be close to us [students]... to be aware of our needs ...and to solve any problem that we may have (GI1, March, 2015).

With regard to Sultan High School, the participants from this school agreed that the leadership style of their school is distributed, which can be described as an extended leadership that encourages innovation and the participation of school members in the function of school leadership:

Our school leadership is distributed... it is open to members' participation and innovation... it has a big space for all interested parties and it supports innovation and the participation of school members (SD 2, April, 2015).

The functions of school leadership in Sultan High School, as mentioned by the school leader, have been divided into two different levels. The first level represents the school leadership team and involves the school leader and all members of the leadership team except the student advisor. The second level represents teachers and students and involves teachers and the student advisor, who works as a representative for students:

Leadership functions here are distributed at two levels: the first level includes the leadership team, who work as representatives for school leadership, and me [school leader] as well. The second level involves teachers and the student advisor, who works as representatives for teachers and students (SL 2, April, 2015).

It is possible to confirm that the school leadership capacity in Sultan High School is extended, as the school leader states that the majority of decisions regarding the school and its facilities have been suggestions made by teachers and students. These suggestions have been adopted by the school leadership as a way of supporting the participation of teachers and students in the school and in its leadership and management:

Teachers and students share in school leadership through different means, as their [teachers & students] opinions and enquiries are considered and the majority of the schools' facilities were suggestions made by teachers and students, which we then considered and confirmed (SL 2, April, 2015).

However, the previous statement shows that leadership functions are divided at two levels and none of these levels include students directly. Although student advisor and teachers were deemed to be representative for students, however students are still not completely involved.

With regard to the importance of distributed leadership for school improvement, the majority of participants believe that distributed leadership is an effective style towards school improvement:

School leadership cannot improve the school unless the functions of leadership are distributed (SL 2, April, 2015).

Distributed leadership style was agreed to have many features that makes it distinguished. For instance, distributed leadership enhances inclusion and the culture of consultation among school members because it encourages school leaders to treat school members as consultants. This could lead to some positive results regarding school improvement in general, and the development of teachers and students in particular:

Distributed leadership causes school leaders to treat members of the school as consultants, which is good for inclusion, and also for the development of teachers and students (T 10, April, 2015).

According to some participants, there are some particular conditions that need to be considered in order to enhance the effectiveness of distributed leadership. For instance, the student advisor argued that, although distributed leadership is an effective leadership style that can facilitate school improvement, how distributed leadership is implemented and the extent to which the distribution goes are more important than the leadership style itself. This means that a leadership team should not be described as a distributed leadership if the distribution does not involve teachers' and students' roles:

Distributing the functions of school leadership among school members is a good way of enhancing school improvement. However, it is more important to decide how to implement distributed leadership ... because if the distribution does not exceed the teachers' role ...and if teachers' participation is not taken seriously by the school leadership team ...then we cannot describe the school leadership as a distributed one (SA 2, April, 2015).

In addition, the school leader mentioned that, although distributed leadership style can make a difference to school improvement, the stability of the school leadership is more important than the leadership style, because stability is an essential condition of leadership success:

The stability of the school leadership is more important than the school leadership style because all leadership styles need a stable team in order to be able to achieve their targeted aims and goals (SL 2, April, 2015).

Stability is not only important for leadership team but also it is crucial for teachers as the issue of staff turnover within schools is common in Saudi schools where teachers leave their schools in order to teach in a school that is closer to their home district or city. This can negatively affect students' learning and their development because students will then need to understand and adapt to the strategies used by their new teacher, and this can be inconvenient and time consuming for students:

We have had three different mathematics' teachers this year and every teacher has different strategies. When one of our teachers is replaced by a new one, it takes us a long time to get used to his strategies (GI 4, April, 2015).

In terms of the advantages of distributed leadership, participants from Sultan High School mentioned three main advantages for this leadership style. First, distributed leadership is an effective way of improving inclusion, particularly the inclusion of teachers, whose leadership should be encouraged in order to enhance school improvement:

Distributed leadership supports inclusion, particularly for teachers, whose perspectives and points of view should be included to grantee success for the school (T 11, April, 2015).

In addition, a student participant expressed the view that school leaders are more likely to be close to students and able to know more about students' opinions and needs when school leadership is distributed:

In distributed leadership, the school leader is able to know more about students' opinions and needs because he is closer to the students (GI 3, April, 2015).

Another teacher participant stated that the main feature of distributed leadership is that the perspectives of all school members are considered during the process of making decisions, which means that the schools' decisions are shared by all of its members:

The good thing about distributed leadership is that, in schools that implement distributed leadership, decisions are made by taking the perspectives of all school members into consideration (T 12, April, 2015).

On the other hand, the participants mentioned several drawbacks for distributed leadership. For instance, a teacher participant argued that, although distributed leadership can enhance the development of teachers, it increases the stress on them:

Distributed leadership motivates teachers to develop but, at the same time, it increases the pressure on teachers because it requires more effort, particularly from teachers (T 9, April, 2015).

In addition, the school deputy claimed that one possible drawback of distributed leadership is that school members might be dependants, which means that some members might depend on other members to do their jobs:

Distributed leadership might lead to dependency, which means everyone depends on the others to do his part or duty (SD 2, April, 2015).

Another disadvantage of distributed leadership is the fact that making decisions can be slow. This is because it takes a long time to make a decision that is shared by more than one person:

The main disadvantage of distributed leadership is that making decisions takes a very long time, because decisions are made by a group of people instead of by one person (T 7, April, 2015).

Finally, in distributed leadership, representatives might be unable to represent all the dependants on whose behalf they are supposed to be acting:

Representatives in distributed leadership might be not able to represent what they are supposed to (T 12, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about leadership style and school improvement seem to agree with Harris (2013), Anca (2013), Rhodes and Brundrett (2009), and Harris and Lambert (2003), that the style of school leadership has a significant effect on school improvement.

The findings of this study suggest some criteria that need to be considered by school leaders in order to select the most effective leadership style that can contribute to enhancing school improvement. Some of these criteria were suggested in previous studies as important conditions required for the development of teachers and students, and overall school improvement. The criteria expressed in this study includes the nature of work and aspects that concern subordinates, as suggested by Gruenert (2005) and

Algaber (2012); providing clear school vision and objectives as suggested by Fisher et al. (2012); avoiding central leadership and management by distributing the functions of leadership among all stakeholders, including the leadership team, teachers, parents and students, as suggested by Harris (2013), Davison et al. (2014), Coles and Southworth (2004) and Woods and Roberts (2015); encouraging teamwork, as suggested by Woodland (2016); encouraging subordinates' feedback and suggestions, as suggested by Gonos and Gallo (2013); considering freedom to school members, as suggested by Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012); ensuring justice among all school members, and fostering inclusion and students' voices, as suggested by Abo Alwafa (2012), Frederickson and Cline (2009), Fullan and Hargreaves (1992), Ainscow et al. (2000), Kidd (2012), Busher (2006) and Sterrett (2011). In addition, the findings underline that in order to select the most suitable leadership style, school leaders must consider a moderate leadership style that is neither very serious nor very indulgent.

With regard to the most effective leadership style for school improvement, the findings of this study revealed two different perspectives, with the findings from Mahad High School concurring with Alkhatam (2013), Drysdale et al. (2009) and Krause et al. (2007) regarding the effectiveness of the consultative leadership approach for school improvement, while the findings from Sultan High School agree with Harris (2013), Waldron and McLeskey (2010), Woods and Roberts (2015), Pedlar et al. (2003) and Davison et al. (2014), regarding the effectiveness of the distributed leadership approach for school success and the development of teachers and students.

The leadership style at Mahad High School was described by the respondents as being consultative. The respondents appeared to have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of this particular leadership style. However, for several reasons, it would appear to be difficult to have a fully consultative

leadership style in a context such as Saudi Arabia. First, the nature of the community, culture and politics in Saudi Arabia does not appear to be supportive of and compatible with a consultative leadership style, which requires particular conditions to succeed, such as flexibility and democracy. These might be not available in a country with a bureaucratic and hierarchical culture, as noted in the discussion of the research context in the introduction chapter. In addition, being able to maintain this type of leadership requires the school leadership team to have full autonomy and authority, whereas schools in Saudi Arabia are hindered by their lack of power and authority; schools are not independent but instead are fully controlled by the Ministry of Education. Thus, it could be argued that Mahad High School employs the concept of consultative leadership, even if this is not fully practised due to the reasons and barriers mentioned above. However, a consideration of the backgrounds and experiences of participants with regard to consultative leadership suggests that consultative leadership is fully practised within Mahad High School. This may be because Mahad High School is one of the best schools in Saudi Arabia, and its leader's 23 years of experience might allow him to easily implement a consultative leadership style.

The findings about consultative leadership seem to support the belief of Drysdale et al. (2009) that consultative leadership is one of the most useful and effective leadership styles that can enhance learning quality. In addition, the findings about consultative leadership style agree with Gonos and Gallo (2013) and Lam et al. (2015) that the main feature of the consultative leadership style is that it involves school members as consultants, which reflects the extended capacity of this particular leadership style. However, the findings conclude that the main prerequisite for consultative leadership to succeed is the presence of a highly experienced leader who can minimise the risk of mistakes being made.

The findings about consultative leadership style confirm that the role of consultative leaders is to distribute the functions of leadership and then make decisions by selecting the most suitable option from the ideas put forward by subordinates, which seems to be identical to the claim by Drysdale et al. (2009).

The findings about the advantages of consultative leadership style appear to enhance the views of Alkhatam (2013) and Drysdale et al. (2009) that consultative leadership empowers teachers and enhances teachers' leadership. However, the findings confirm that consultative leadership provides teachers and students some leadership authority and encourages them to take part in leadership functions by making school decisions and through acting as representatives for the leadership team in school management, which means that consultative leadership does not only foster teachers' leadership as believed by Alkhatam (2013) and Drysdale et al. (2009), but also it enhances students' leadership as well. In addition the findings add that the remit of consultative leadership is extended to include parents not only in making school decisions, but also to solve students' problems and overcome barriers to students' learning.

Moreover, the findings about the advantages of consultative leadership agree with Alkhatam (2013) that consultative leaders tend to consider students' perspectives and welcome their feedback on the leadership team's practices. The findings also seem to agree with Alkhatam (2013) regarding the positive effect of consultative leadership on the relationship environment. In addition, the findings about consultative leadership support the argument of Alkhatam (2013) and Krause et al. (2007) that consultative leadership makes it possible for the leadership team to make the most suitable school decision, and create a clear school vision and objectives. However, the findings indicate that consultative leadership can help to bridge the gap between the school leadership

and the classroom environment, as well as consultative leadership is an effective approach in terms of meeting students' needs.

With regard to the drawbacks of consultative leadership, the findings about this leadership style confirm the views of Ibrahim and Al-Taneiji (2012: 42), who believe that "in consultative style...major decisions are still largely centrally made" by consultative leaders who still have the overall control, particularly of students' power. In addition, the findings of this study show two more disadvantages of consultative leadership; First, the risk of achieving the school's aims, particularly if some of the people who are consulted are not satisfied with those aims. Second, the workload of teachers and students, which is increased in consultative style.

With regard to the leadership style at Sultan High School, respondents reported that their school has a distributed leadership style, in which the functions of school leadership are divided into two levels. The first level is the leadership team, and the second comprises teachers and students. However, although the participants from Sultan High School believed that their school has a distributed leadership style, their responses did not reflect an in-depth understanding of the distributed leadership style. In addition, it would appear to be difficult to have a distributed leadership style in a Saudi school due to the obstacles described above, including the centralized system of education system in Saudi Arabia, the lack of power and authority of the school leadership team, and the bureaucratic and hierarchical culture in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, distributing some functions of leadership among school members, with various limits and restrictions, does not mean that the leadership style is distributed, as such a leadership style would demand a full distribution of leadership functions, as described in the literature review. Such a leadership style would have various requirements, including the involvement of teachers, students and parents in the major decisions of the school.

Therefore, it appears that the leadership team at Sultan High school regards the minimal implementation of distributed leadership as preferable for their school. This would not extend beyond the participation of subordinates in some related leadership aspects under the supervision of the leadership team. This is still a positive development in light of the circumstances of schools and the educational system in Saudi Arabia.

The findings about distributed leadership appear to support the perspectives of Woods and Roberts (2015) and Pedlar et al. (2003) that distributed leadership is an effective leadership style; without it school improvement might be difficult or even impossible. However, the findings indicate that, although distributed leadership can make a huge difference to school improvement, the stability of the school leadership is more important than the leadership style, because stability is an essential condition of leadership success. In addition, how distributed leadership is implemented and the extent to which the distribution goes are more important factors than the leadership style itself. This result seems to support the argument of Swaminathan (2016: 1099) who note that distributed leadership “remains a fuzzy concept and not clearly operationalised in the empirical research”, which might be a result of the conflict among scholars regarding the definition of distributed leadership and its nature.

The findings about distributed leadership show that it is an extended leadership that encourages innovation and school members’ participation in the school leadership’s function, which confirms the beliefs of Waldron and McLeskey (2010) and Earley and Weindling (2004) regarding the nature of distributed leadership style. However, the findings affirm that school leadership cannot be described as distributed unless it involves all school members, including the leadership team, teachers and students in the operation of leadership functions, which supports the views of Harris (2013) and Gronn (2002) regarding the capacity and dimensions of distributed leadership style.

The findings about distributed leadership support the argument of Davison et al. (2014) and Woods and Roberts (2015) that distributed leadership's main feature is this leadership's capacity extended to where the participation of teachers and students is highly encouraged not only to take part in leadership's tasks, but they are also supported in making decisions for their schools. This study confirms this to be an effective technique for enhancing school success, as agreed by Dora (2010).

In terms of distributed leadership's advantages, the findings indicate several advantages that make distributed leadership a distinct approach to enhance school improvement. The findings appear to agree with Harris (2013), Dora (2010) and Davison et al. (2014), who believe that distributed leadership enhances inclusion and the culture of collaboration among school members. This particular result disagrees with Lumby (2016) who argues that although researchers tend to connect distributed leadership with more generally attractive characteristics, such as inclusion, collaboration, collective interaction, and empowerment among members of an organisation or a school, there is insufficient practical evidence to prove the presence of these characteristics.

In addition, the findings about distributed leadership's advantages agree with Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) and Woods and Roberts (2015) that distributed leaders tend to be close to students and know more about their opinions and needs, which allows the leadership team to make decisions that meet the students' needs, which might be not met if the students were excluded from the leadership space.

With regards to distributed leadership's drawbacks, the findings of this study are similar to Storey's findings (2004), that distributed leadership may contribute to complications while making decisions, as the findings of this study show that making decisions in schools that follow distributed leadership can be slow. The findings also seem to agree

with Sigurðardóttir and Sigbórsson (2016) who argued that distributed leadership might have negative effects on teachers, because “while teachers wish[ed] to develop their leadership roles, the additional workload distract(s)[ed] them from their teaching and deprive(s)[d] them of time to spend with their families, thereby discouraging them from volunteering for such roles”.

Moreover, the findings indicate additional possible drawbacks of distributed leadership. For instance, when school leadership is distributed, some school members might be dependants. Furthermore, in distributed leadership, representatives might be unable to represent all the dependants on whose behalf they are supposed to be acting.

4.5.2 School culture

Two sub-themes emerged from the data collected in reference to the theme above.

- School culture and school improvement.
- Collaborative culture.

4.5.2.1 School culture and school improvement

Participants from both schools agreed that school culture is an important factor in school improvement. They believe that school culture is the basic ground that plays a major role in the development of teachers and students which is highly affected by school culture:

School culture is very important for school improvement because school culture can significantly affect the success of teachers and students (T 7, April, 2015).

In addition, participants from Mahad High School argued that school culture has an effect not only on teachers' effectiveness, but also it can affect teachers' loyalty to their school:

Creating a suitable [school] culture or adjusting the existing one will increase teachers' performance and their loyalty to their schools as well (T 5, March, 2015).

According to the participants from Sultan High School, there are several internal and external factors that can affect school culture, such as leadership style that is believed to be an effective factor that can affect school culture and its nature:

School culture is affected by the practised leadership style (GI 3, April, 2015).

In addition, the society within which the school context exists has a significant effect on the school's culture. This effect might not be merely indirect, however it could influence the principles and aims of the school culture:

It must be understood that wider society affects school culture and shapes it, based on the social culture that exists within the school's district (T 9, April, 2015).

In terms of the necessary conditions for school culture, the participants from both schools suggested some factors and aspects that were deemed to be the criteria for an effective and positive school culture. These criteria could inform school leaders and help them to construct a school culture that fosters school improvement and the development of teachers and students. Participants from Mahad High School, for instance, suggested that in order to enhance school culture, clarity and fairness should be an evident factor of the school culture, learning environment and learning resources

need to be considered, problems must be solved immediately as they arise to avoid any possible impact of such problems on school members, seriousness should be one of the main features of the school culture which means that school culture need to be more serious and the role of school leadership's team should be more clear within the culture of the school, and training programmes must be considered and enhanced:

Clarity and fairness are very important factors to create a good school culture that helps both teachers and students to perform better (T 5, March, 2015).

The school culture must be serious and the school leader has to play his role and prove himself within the culture of the school (GI1, March, 2015).

On the other hand, participants from Sultan High School suggested that freedom, particularly that of students, should be promoted by the school's culture, in order to ensure its effectiveness and suitability:

Students' freedom should be the main feature and characteristic of school culture (GI 3, April, 2015).

However, the participants from both schools agreed about two conditions that they believe to be the most essential conditions for school improvement. First, the relationship among school members, particularly the relationship between school leadership team and school members that needs to be enhanced in order to foster school improvement:

The most important thing for school culture is the relationship environment that must be taken into consideration to enhance school improvement (T 5, March, 2015).

Second, the collaboration's culture as the participants assert the importance of the collaboration among all school members that was believed to be an effective factor to enhance the school culture and align it with the aims of the educational system:

The nature of the educational process presupposes collaborative work because when the school works on its own and not in collaboration... then... the development will be less than it should be...but when the school culture is collaborative... it will be completely different (T 1, March, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about the importance of school culture are consistent with those of Hopkins (2001), who believes that school culture must be considered the main component and the basic ground for school improvement, because it describes the environment, events and circumstances within the schools. In addition, the findings also support the ideas of Busher (2006) and Al Hur (2011), which suppose that school culture is an effective factor that not only affects teachers' performances and their loyalty to their school, but also has an effect on students' learning and motivations.

The findings of the current study corroborate the ideas of MacNeil et al. (2009) and Atawy (2014), who suggested that due to their position of authority and power, leaders have a major influence on their schools' cultures, which in turn has an impact on their staff as leaders control the culture of the school on a direct and indirect basis. In addition, the findings agree with Harris and Lambert (2003), who believe that leadership style has an effect on the nature and the type of school culture, as different leadership styles construct different cultures in order to work successfully. However, the findings of the current study indicate that the society within which the school

context exists is an effective factor that could influence the principles and aims of the school culture.

With regard to the essential conditions for school culture, the results of the current study agree with the suggestion made by Waldron and McLeskey (2010) that principals are able to facilitate school improvement through changing their schools' cultures to be based on good relationships with stakeholders, particularly teachers, which would motivate teachers' performance and the learning quality. In addition, the findings of the current study further support the ideas of Fisher et al. (2012), who found that in order to improve a school, it is crucial for principals to enhance the culture of cooperation by working collaboratively with teachers to enhance the relationships between them and solve problems together.

Additionally, the findings of the current study indicate other important conditions that could make school culture more effective and positive. These conditions include clarity, fairness and seriousness, which should be the main features of the school culture. Providing a suitable learning environment and learning resources. Creating a process to solve problems as they arise to avoid their possible impact on school members. Enhancing training programmes and fostering freedom, particularly students' freedom.

4.5.2.2 Collaborative culture

According to the participants from both schools, collaborative school culture is the most effective one for the development of school members due to the fact that school improvement needs to be a collaborative effort, in which all school members work as one group and help one another to achieve the school's aims and to facilitate school improvement:

In order to make the school more successful, school members need to work as one group in which every member is expected to help other members and is responsible for achieving the aims set by the school (SD 2, April, 2015).

Many features of collaborative school culture have been mentioned by participants from both schools, which reflects the importance and effectiveness of collaborative cultures for teachers' professional development, students' learning development and overall school improvement. For example, the participants from Mahad High school believe that collaborative school cultures not only could help decision makers to set the most suitable school goals, but also collaboration particularly among teachers can encourage them to exchange experiences and thus enhance the quality of their teaching and students' learning:

Collaboration among teachers means that teachers can exchange their experience..., which increases teachers' performances...and enhances classroom activities (T 6, March, 2015).

In addition, collaborative cultures support inclusion and extend the capacity of school culture to include students' homes and the society surrounding the school:

Collaborative culture is so important for us [students] because our opinions and perspectives are considered in this culture (GI1, March, 2015).

The collaborative school culture could exceed school borders to include students' homes and thus ensure students' development (T 3, March, 2015).

Furthermore, collaboration among school members is believed to be an effective factor that can help to solve problems which is essential to improve schools:

It is important to solve problems occurring in the school... to achieve success, which can be done through collaboration among all school members, including the school leadership, teachers, students and even parents (T 2, March, 2015).

Similarly, the participants from Sultan High School believe that collaboration between the school leadership team and students is an effective way of helping the school leadership to improve the school through correcting existing problems and being more able to evaluate teachers accurately:

Collaboration between school leadership and students is the best way of correcting existing mistakes and evaluating teachers more accurately (SA 2, April, 2015).

In addition, collaboration between school members results in students feeling that they have a greater value within the school, and this might increase their agency:

Collaborative school culture leads students to feel that they are valued within the school (GI 3, April, 2015).

However, it is argued by the student advisor from Sultan High School that although collaborative cultures are generally positive and can generate positive results, there are, however, some barriers that could limit the level of collaboration. Society is thought to be one of those barriers, since society does not seem to support a culture of collaboration. Parents in particular might not feel that they are responsible and may be less concerned about collaborating with their children's schools:

Collaborative cultures are really positive ...but society does not really support that in many cases, particularly parents, who do not care enough...and do not

appear to be willing to collaborate with the school, perhaps because they feel that it is the sole responsibility of the school (SA 2, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about collaborative culture are in agreement with the findings of Nancy et al. (2010) and Waldron et al. (2010), which showed that collaborative culture remains as the most crucial component and the most suitable culture for school improvement.

Regarding the advantages of collaborative cultures, the findings of this study show similar results to those found by Rosebrough and Leverett (2010), and Ahmad (2011), who said that collaborative culture is the most crucial characteristic for the professional development of teachers and students. In addition, the findings of the current study agree with Nabhani et al. (2012) that collaborative school culture enhances professional learning communities.

Furthermore, the findings about the advantages of collaborative culture are similar to those discovered by Fisher et al. (2012), who indicated that collaborative culture is a necessary condition for inclusion. Moreover, the findings of the current study are similar to those of MacGilchrist et al. (2004) and Given et al. (2010), who mentioned that collaborative cultures result in students feeling that they have a greater value within the school, which increases their agency.

In addition, the results of this study increase our awareness of the advantages of collaborative cultures as this study indicates three more advantages not mentioned in the literature reviewed. First, collaborative cultures help decision-makers set the most suitable school goals. Second, collaboration among school members can help to solve

the existing problems. Third, collaboration between school leadership and teachers helps the leadership team accurately evaluate teachers and their effectiveness, as well as achieve the school's aims.

However, the findings about school culture indicate that there are some factors that could limit the level of collaboration; the main factor is the society, particularly if it does not support a culture of collaboration. In addition, parents might not feel that they are responsible and may be less concerned about collaborating with their children's schools.

4.5.3 Meeting students' needs

In addition to the importance of school leadership, leadership style and school culture for school improvement, the participants also stated other important aspects that need to be considered by the school leadership team in order to meet students' needs that can lead to enhance students' learning development and overall school improvement. These aspects include inclusion, student voice, individual differences, school-parent relationships, teaching effectiveness, class size and the school curriculum. However, although the participants assert the importance of the school curriculum for school improvement in general and the learning development of students in particular, this is not to be examined or discussed in this section for several reasons. First, the school curriculum in Saudi schools is beyond the reach and influence of the school leadership team due to the fact that Saudi schools follow a national school curriculum run by the Saudi Ministry of Education. This means that school leaders in Saudi Arabia have no authority over the school curriculum and its contents. It is therefore not important to discuss the school curriculum here, as it remains out of the hands of school leaders. In

addition, the current study was carried by a single researcher and had a number of important limitations, such as resources, timeframe and word count, making it difficult or even impossible to cover and discuss all the previously described aspects. Thus, it was decided not to cover the school curriculum in this chapter. Hence, the remaining of this chapter deals with inclusion, student voice, individual differences, school-parent relationships, teaching effectiveness and class size.

4.5.3.1 Inclusion

Participants from both schools were in agreement that inclusion is an effective way of enhancing students' development. Inclusion, according to the participants, is an effective factor that is more important for students with special educational needs and those who have some learning difficulties, as these students need to be included and provided with more opportunities to learn and develop:

Inclusion can be used as a way of encouraging lower achievers and those who have learning difficulties to improve their performance (T 1, March, 2015).

According to student participants from Mahad High School, the main advantages of inclusion is that students' freedom is fostered and students' perspectives are considered in inclusive schools:

Inclusive schools usually provide enough space for students' perspectives that can support students' freedom (GI2, March, 2015).

In addition, some students believe that inclusion helps students to be more active and increases their motivation:

Inclusion is important for students and their learning... because inclusion helps students to keep active and get motivated (GI2, March, 2015).

With regard to the ways in which inclusion can be supported, a number of strategies have been proposed by the participants from Mahad High School. For example, student councils, suggestion boxes, and dialogue centres can be used to facilitate inclusion among students. In addition, the development of students with special educational needs can be enhanced by including them in mainstream classrooms, so that they share a learning environment with other students in the same school:

The most effective way of making the school more inclusive is to include students with special education needs with other students in the same school and classroom, as this will help them to feel better and develop (GI2, March, 2015).

Furthermore, considering the relationship environment particularly teacher-student relationship can lead to higher levels of inclusion, as students might be more likely to accept their teacher if they have a friendly relationship with him/her:

The relationship between the teachers and students must be positive and friendly; this can support inclusion and help teachers to be accepted (GI2, March, 2015).

Moreover, in order to enhance inclusion, school leaders need to care enough about students and their perspectives because inclusion demands school leadership to consider students' evaluations, their perspectives, and their feedback on the performance of the school, its activities, and its facilities, which could help the school to be inclusive:

Schools should involve students and consider them as a resource for evaluating the performance of the school... the schools' activities, and school facilities...

school leadership needs to use students' feedback to improve the school (T 5, March, 2015).

Similarly, participants from Sultan High School suggested some strategies that can promote inclusion in schools. For example, teamwork where all school members work together as a group can facilitate inclusion among students. In addition, intensive sessions can enhance inclusion and the development of students; particularly students with special educational needs who need such sessions to develop and make progress:

Providing optional intensive sessions each term helps students who need more support or have learning difficulties to improve (GI 4, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about inclusion agree with Busher (2006), who mentioned that inclusion must be considered as one important basis and element when attempting to improve schools. In addition, the findings' results were identical to those found by Willis (2007), who discovered that inclusion provides individuals with lesser abilities or learning difficulties a chance to be more successful and develop better.

The findings of the current study agree with Villa and Thousand (2005), Ainscow et al. (2000), and Al Bahawashi (2013), who found that inclusion enables pupils to be more active and motivated. However, the findings of this study also added that inclusion is an effective factor in fostering students' freedom.

The findings of this study disagree with Ainscow et al. (2002) and Alkhatam (2013), who said that the role of schools and their leaders to foster inclusion is limited in schools that follow national curriculum, as the findings of this study suggest several

ways and strategies that can be used by school leadership team to foster inclusion, which reflect the significant role of school leadership in terms of inclusion and how to support it. These strategies are as follow; First, student councils, suggestion boxes and dialogue centres have been confirmed as effective in facilitating inclusion among students. Second, inclusion can be fostered by including students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, so that they share a learning environment with other students in the same school. Third, encouraging students to evaluate their teachers and the school's performance, and considering students' feedback and perspectives were confirmed to be an effective technique to support inclusion. Fourth, constructing positive teacher-student relationships can lead to higher levels of inclusion. Fifth, encouraging teamwork where all school members work together as a group can facilitate inclusion among students. Sixth, intensive sessions were confirmed as essential factors for the development of students with special educational needs.

4.5.3.2 Student voice

According to the participants from both schools, student voice is one of the main factors that needs to be considered in order to enhance inclusion in general and students' development in particular:

Listening to students' voices allows schools to be more inclusive, which we agreed to be important for school improvement [and] students' development (T 11, April, 2015).

Listening to students' voices was agreed by the participants from both schools to have many advantages not only for students' learning development and teachers' professional development but also for school improvement and school success. For instance,

participants from both schools were in agreement that by taking students' voices into consideration, schools will be better able to resolve problems, and this will have a positive effect on students' development:

Listening to students' voices makes it easier to resolve students' problems, as it helps to overcome students' weaknesses and improve on their areas of strength (GI2, March, 2015).

In addition, the participants from Mahad High school believed that listening to student voice leads to improve students' achievement, increase their agency, and facilitate their interaction with their teachers:

Listening to students' voices is not only an effective way of encouraging students' agency and achievement, but also helps students to interact with their teachers and have positive relationship with them (T 4, March, 2015).

On the other hand the participants from Sultan High School mentioned that listening to the student voice has many advantages for students, teachers, and school success. Regarding students, listening to the student voice can help students to be more successful, not only at the present moment, but also in the future. It also motivates students to feel included and be more active and ready to learn and develop. In addition, it can help to reduce the pressure on students, particularly the pressure that is caused by the intensive demands of the school curriculum:

Listening to students' voices makes students feel that they are valued in the school and it motivates students to be more active... it decreases the pressure on students that is caused by the size of the curriculum (GI 4, April, 2015).

With regard to teachers, listening to the student voice makes it easier for teachers to find out what the needs of their students are and how they can meet those needs:

Listening to students' voices...makes it easier for teachers to find out what students need, so that they can then meet those needs (T 9, April, 2015).

Concerning the school, considering the student voice not only makes it possible for schools to provide the most suitable school activities and school decisions, but also it can improve the ranking of the school:

Hearing the voice of students guides the school to provide the most suitable school activities and to ensure that school decisions do not negatively affect students ... it helps the school to improve and increase its rank (GI 4, April, 2015).

However, it was suggested by the student advisor from Sultan High School that the lack of the necessary authority allowed to school leadership team works as barrier that might prevent the school leadership to hear the voices of all students:

The school leadership is unable to hear all students' voices or respond to all requests made by students due to the limited authority given to school leadership teams (SA 2, April, 2015).

In addition, a teacher participant from Mahad High School argued that although in large schools it might be difficult to consider the opinions of all students. However, some strategies exist for enabling schools to consider the voices of as many students as possible. One such method is to nominate some students to represent their peers. In addition, suggestion boxes can be used to enable the voices of students to be heard:

Listening to all voices of students might be difficult, or even impossible, in schools that have 500 students or more. Therefore, schools need to take action to ensure that the voices of all students are heard, such as by providing suggestion boxes and using student representatives (T 6, March, 2015).

Discussion

The findings of the current study indicate that student voice is one of the main factors to be considered in order to enhance students' development. This result supports the findings of Sterrett (2011) and Ofsted (2009), who found that considering student voice is an essential factor that could enhance inclusion and school improvement in general.

The findings about student voice confirm that listening to students' voices has many advantages for students, teachers and the school in general.

In terms of students, the findings agree with Kidd (2012) that hearing student voices can improve students' achievement and the quality of learning. Furthermore, the findings show similar results to those of Rosebrough and Leverett (2010), who found that listening to students' voices is likely to make students feel engaged in their school's community because their visions and needs are considered and heard. The findings added that listening to the student voice encourages students to be more active and more successful, helps to reduce the pressure on students, and increases students' agency, and facilitates their interaction with their teachers.

With regard to teachers, the findings show that listening to the students' voices makes it easier for teachers to find out their students' needs and be better able to meet those

needs. This result supports that of Kidd (2012) who found that considering student voice could lead to enhance teaching effectiveness.

Regarding the school, the findings agree with Ainscow et al. (2000) that hearing the students' voices allows school leadership to identify the pupils' needs and consider these needs within the school's curriculum, decisions and values. In addition, the findings of this study confirm that by considering the students' voices, schools are more likely to enhance inclusion, as agreed by Rosebrough and Leverett (2010). In addition, the findings of this study indicate that the student voice is not only effective in improving schools' ranks, but it also makes it possible for schools to meet students' needs, provide the most suitable activities, and be better equipped to solve problems and embrace inclusion.

The findings bolster the results found by Ofsted (2009) that student council is a way to encourage hearing the students' voices. The findings suggest some additional strategies that can help in terms of listening to the students' voices, such as nominating a few students to represent their peers and putting out suggestion boxes. However, the findings of this study indicate that any lack of leadership authority might prevent schools from being able to hear the voices of all students.

4.5.3.3 Individual differences

The participants from both schools were in agreement that the differences between individuals, and particularly between individual students, have effects not only on students' learning and achievement, but also on their perspectives regarding learning and education:

Differences between students are important factors that affect students and influence their opinions on learning and education... which could affect students' loyalty towards their schools (T 3, March, 2015).

According to the participants from Sultan High School, differences between students form part of the individual characteristics of students that vary from one student to another, and it must be taken into consideration at all levels in order to enhance students' development:

Differences between students are parts of the characteristics of students that must be considered at all stages in order to help students to learn (SD 2, April, 2015).

In addition, the participants from Sultan High School mentioned three main advantages that could be achieved by taking differences between students into consideration. First, it can improve students' achievement and allow them to be more successful. Second, it can help to minimize students' problems. Third, it makes possible for teachers to identify the weaknesses of each student. Consequently, the teacher will then be better able to help individual students:

Taking differences between students into account plays a major role in students' achievement and their success (T 12, April, 2015).

Considering the differences between students is an effective way of reducing students' problems (SD 2, April, 2015).

Taking care of students' differences helps teachers to be aware of students' weaknesses and have a better idea of how to help them (GI 4, April, 2015).

The participants from both schools made some suggestions regarding ways that can help leadership team and teachers to take differences between students into consideration. For instance, participants from Mahad High School suggested that schools can easily consider the differences among students through designing the school curriculum to be inclusive and suitable for all students, and to cater to all the individual differences between them:

The curriculum should be constructed in a way that suits all students, taking into account the differences between students (T 4, March, 2015).

In addition, using different teaching styles and techniques might help schools to cater to the differences between students. This could facilitate students' learning:

Teachers must use different teaching methods to make it easier for all students to understand the concepts being taught (GI2, March, 2015).

On the other hand, some participants from Sultan High School mentioned that teachers are encouraged to cater for the differing needs of students by dividing examinations into three levels – advanced, intermediate and foundation. This would take the differing levels of achievement among students into consideration:

The school leadership advises teachers to divide exams into three different levels so that they are suitable for higher, middle, and lower achievers (SD 2, April, 2015).

In addition, teachers are more likely to find out about the differences between their students, and their individual strengths and weaknesses, if they are given enough information about the educational history and background of each individual student:

Teachers should be provided with enough information about the educational history and the educational background of all their students... this will make teachers more aware of each student's strengths and weaknesses, and enable them to help every single student to get better (T 8, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about individual differences confirm the views of Al Hur (2011) and Al Bahawashi (2013), who indicated that differences between individuals inform individual successes, which demands greater care and attention to individual differences. The findings also support Crozier's belief (1997) that differences between students have an effect on their learning and achievement. In addition, the findings of the current study indicate that differences between students have an effect on students' perspectives regarding learning and education.

In terms of the importance of individual differences for students' development, the findings agree with Day et al. (2006) that caring about students' differences is an essential aspect of facilitating students' development. The findings of the current study also confirm that taking differences between students into consideration has many advantages for students and their learning development. For instance, the findings of this study agree with Frederickson and Cline (2009), who found that considering the differences among students are likely to increase the quality of their learning. In addition, the findings of the current study indicate that taking individual differences into consideration can not only improve students' achievements and success, but also it could minimise students' problems. Furthermore, the findings show similar results to those by Day et al. (2006) who believe that taking differences between students into

consideration makes it possible for teachers to identify each student's weaknesses, therefore equipping the teachers to be better able to help individual students. However, the findings of this study indicate that teachers need to have enough information about the educational history and background of each individual student to discern the differences between their students, and their individual strengths and weaknesses.

In terms of the strategies that can help take differences between students into consideration, the findings suggested three main strategies; first, school curriculum needs to be inclusive and cater to all the individual differences between students, as agreed by Ogrinc et al. (2011) and Ofsted (2009). Second, using different teaching styles and techniques might help schools cater to the differences between students; this has been further confirmed by Scale (2008), who mentioned that using different teaching methods and styles could help pupils with different abilities to understand, achieve and learn better. Third, dividing examinations into three levels – advanced, intermediate and foundation.

4.5.3.4 School-parent relationships

According to the participants from both schools, the relationship between the school and students' parents plays a significant role in school improvement. This is because both parties, schools and parents, are in charge of school improvement and the cooperation between the two parties could facilitate school improvement and makes it much easier and quicker:

The level of the relationship between the school and students' homes undoubtedly reflects the level of school success (SL 1, March, 2015).

The responsibility for school improvement is shared between the school and parents. If parents had a feeling of being responsible for school improvement, and were ready to take part in it, they might be able to help schools to improve much more quickly (SA 1, March, 2015).

It was agreed by the participants from both schools that the parent-school relationship has many advantages for the development of students. For instance, parents are likely to know more about their children, and the behaviour of their children, if they have a relationship with the school. Such a relationship could allow parents to find out about their children's needs and, as a result, be better able to help them:

The relationship between the school and students' homes helps parents to know more about their children needs and to know the best way to deal with their children to help them develop (SD 2, April, 2015).

In addition, some participants from Mahad High School believe that the relationship between schools and parents is an important factor for inclusion as constructing a strong school-parent relationship is an effective technique that could lead schools to be more able to help students with learning difficulties to better learn and develop:

[The parent-school] relationship can reduce the impact of learning difficulties that some students suffer from (GI2, March, 2015).

Similarly, participants from Sultan High School argued that the school-parent relationship not only helps parents to be more aware about their children, but also helps school leadership team to learn more about students and their social circumstances, which means that schools are more able to enhance students' development if such relationship is encouraged:

The relationship between the school and the parents helps parents to know more about their children and helps the school to find out about the social circumstances of students (GI 4, April, 2015).

On the other hand, participants from Mahad High School added that the relationship between school and parents has many advantages for students' learning development. For instance, enhancing such relationships is an effective way of filling in gaps caused by a lack of learning resources. It also helps to compensate for weaknesses in the learning environment:

The relationship between schools and parents can help to fill in the gap caused by a lack of learning resources or by the weakness of the school environment (T 4, March, 2015).

Another advantage is that it can positively affect students' perspectives towards education. This could, in turn, increase the value that students place on learning and would therefore be an effective way of developing students' learning:

The relationship between the school and students' homes can enhance the concept of the importance of learning in students' minds (T 3, March, 2015).

With regard to the school, some participants from Sultan High School believe that the school-parent relationship is an essential factor that can help schools and leadership team in particular to resolve both behaviour and social problems that students might have, which is important for students' development and school improvement as well:

The relationship between the school and students' homes has a positive effect on students and might help to resolve students' social problems (T 9, April, 2015).

With regard to the nature of school-parent relationship, some student participants from Sultan High School suggested that in order to enhance students' development the school-parent relationship should not only be used to report negative aspects, such as students' weaknesses and mistakes, it should also be used to inform parents about positive aspects, such as good behaviour and high achievement. This means that school leadership team needs to explore the school-parent relationship as a means to motivate students and encourage their learning by considering the positive aspects of their students and report them to students' parents which could encourage students to be motivated, more excited and better able to develop:

The school-parent relationship should not only be used to complain about students' weaknesses and mistakes at school... the school should contact parents to inform them about the positive achievements of the student and the positive behaviour (GI 4, April, 2015).

According to the participants from Sultan High School, school-parent relationship demands parents to cooperate with their children's schools as any lack of parents' cooperation might work as barrier for such relationship. This means that parents have a role to play in ensuring that the school-parent relationship is strong and effective through keeping in touch with the school that would enable parents to be better informed about the progress that their children are making:

The relationship between the school and parents should be very strong... however, some parents do not know anything about their children and might not even know which school year their child is in! (T 11, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about school-parent relationships bolster the findings of Frew et al. (2013) and Nabhani et al. (2012), who found that the relationship between the school and students' parents plays a significant role in terms of students' development and school improvement.

With regard to the advantages of the school-parent relationship, the findings of this study confirm that the school-parent relationship has many advantages for parents, students and the school's staff.

For parents, the current study has findings similar to those of Busher (2006), who found that the school-home relationship allows parents to keep in touch with their children's teachers and other school members, so that they can be more aware of what their children are learning and provide academic support at home. In addition, the findings of this study agree with Al Ajmi (2007) who mentioned that an effective school-parents relationship could raise parental awareness regarding their children, their behaviour, the needs of their children, and the most suitable means to help their children.

For students, the findings of this study agree with Al Zaki (2009) that the school-parent relationship is an essential factor in helping students with learning difficulties. In addition, the findings of the current study appear to enhance the beliefs of Busher et al. (2000), who mentioned that children's learning and skills are mainly affected by parents. Furthermore, the findings of this study confirm that the school-parent relationship can positively affect students' development, as agreed by Frew et al. (2013) and Nabhani et al. (2012). Moreover, the findings of this study indicate that school-parent relationship is an effective way to fill in gaps caused by a lack of learning

resources, to compensate for weaknesses in the learning environment and to positively affect students' perspectives towards education.

For the staff of the school, the findings of this study show similar results to those found by Alnahrawy (2015) and O'Neill et al. (2002), that school-parent relationships make it possible for teachers to be more aware of the social circumstances of their students, to be better able to explore and understand the cultural interests and needs of their students' and their families, and to resolve students' behavioural problems.

With regard to the nature of school-parent relationship, the findings of this study assure that in order to motivate students and enhance their development the school-parent relationship should not only be used to report negative aspects, such as students' weaknesses and mistakes, it should rather be used to inform parents about positive aspects, such as good behavior and high achievement.

In addition, the findings confirm that parents are in charge of the school-parent relationship, as parents demand cooperation with their children's school and ensure they keep in touch. This strengthens the school-parent relationship and keeps parents better informed about the progress that their children are making, as agreed by Busher (2006).

4.5.3.5 Teaching effectiveness

The participants from both schools believe that teaching effectiveness plays a significant role in school improvement as well as it is a basic prerequisite for students' learning development. This is because the teacher is the cornerstone on which school improvement and students' development relies. Any weakness that affects teachers and teaching will affect the process of school improvement and the learning quality:

Effective teaching is one of the main factors that are required for school improvement and the quality of learning (T 10, April, 2015).

In addition, the participants from Sultan High School mentioned that one of the main advantages of teaching effectiveness is that it has a positive effect on how well a school is able to solve educational problems:

Teaching effectiveness is the simple solution for almost educational problems (T 9, April, 2015).

Some participants for Sultan High School also added that teaching effectiveness not only can be used as a measure for evaluating teachers but also effective teachers have a positive effect on teachers' professional development, as ordinary teachers can improve their teaching skills by learning from the experience of the more effective colleagues:

Effective teachers have a positive effect... on the other teachers that work with them. This is because teachers can exchange their experiences when they work together or meet in the staffroom (T 11, April, 2015).

With regard to the reality of teaching effectiveness, the participants from both schools agreed that teaching effectiveness is a talent that is not possessed by all teachers. However, the participants from Mahad High School argue that although teaching effectiveness is believed to be a gift that cannot be achieved by means of practice, ordinary teachers can still develop by using student feedback to reflect on their performance. Having aims and goals for their development will enable teachers to improve their work:

Teaching effectiveness is a gift from God and cannot be achieved by practising... but some teachers can develop their skills and performance if they

consider students' feedback, and if they try to be more engaging and effective (GI2, March, 2015).

Similarly, the participants from Sultan High School believe that although teaching effectiveness is a gift that relies on the ability of the teacher, school leadership can still make a difference in terms of teaching effectiveness by providing teachers with the resources and facilities that they need to be effective:

Effective teachers should be provided with the facilities and tools that they require in order to remain effective, and this is the responsibility of the school leadership (T 9, April, 2015).

The participants from both schools expressed different conditions that are required to enhance teaching effectiveness. For instance participants from Sultan High School mentioned that teaching methods and communication skills are important conditions that teachers need to consider and develop which could be done through undertaking training courses on effective teaching methods and effective ways of communicating that could contribute to enhance the effectiveness of teachers:

Teaching effectiveness relies on teachers having appropriate training courses on effective teaching methods and the best ways of dealing with students (T10, April, 2015).

On the other hand, the participants from Mahad High School indicated several conditions that are important for teaching effectiveness. For instance, teachers need to increase the participation of students and improve the relationship environment. It is also crucial for teaching effectiveness that teachers prepare for every single lesson, use the most up-to-date learning skills, and evaluate the outcomes of the lesson:

The teacher needs to understand the importance of students' participation, the relationship environment, preparation for the lesson, using up-to-date learning skills, and evaluating each lesson and its outcomes (SL 1, March, 2015).

In addition, in order to enhance teaching effectiveness, teachers are required to use different ways of making best use of the allocated learning time. This includes using the most developed teaching methods, which can increase the amount of learning time:

Teachers should increase learning time by using the teaching methods that have been developed (GI2, March, 2015).

Finally, teachers are also expected to be modern and must be able to cope with the lifestyle of their students in order to be effective teachers:

Teachers need to cope with the changes in our day-to-day lifestyle...[and] avoid being traditional (GI2, March, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about teaching effectiveness support the ideas of Hoque et al. (2011), Bosworth (2011) and Dean (1999), who stated that teaching effectiveness has the greater influence on students' development and school improvement. However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research of Atawy (2014), which showed that successful school leadership is the cornerstone of school improvement; the findings of this study indicate that the teacher is the cornerstone on which students' development and school improvement relies.

The findings of the current study appear to agree with the results found by Richard (2008), Heck (2009), and Day (2007), who claimed that learning quality is highly affected by teaching effectiveness.

Regarding the importance of teaching effectiveness, the results of the current study are identical to those found by Woodland (2016) and Dean (1999), which showed that one of the main advantages of teaching effectiveness is the reduction of school problems, particularly students' behavioral problems. In addition, the findings of this study further support the ideas of Woodland (2016), Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016), and Vanblaere and Devos (2016) that effective teachers have a positive effect on teachers' development, as less effective teachers can improve by learning from their more effective colleagues.

On the other hand, the findings of this study do not seem to agree with Dean (1999), who argued that it is not fair to use teaching effectiveness as a measurement for evaluating and judging teachers, because teaching effectiveness is a personal skill not possessed by all practitioners; the findings of the current study show that teaching effectiveness should be used as a measurement for evaluating teachers.

In terms of the reality of teaching effectiveness and whether it is a gift or a skill that can be learned, the findings of this study indicate that it is a gift that relies on the teacher's ability and cannot be achieved merely through practice, which is compatible with Dean's findings (1999) as mentioned above. However, the findings of this study also agree with Cullingford (2010), who indicated that although teaching effectiveness is a personal issue, this skill could in fact be developed via training and practice.

This study also indicates that the school leadership can encourage teaching effectiveness through different means, such as providing teachers with the resources and facilities that they need to stay effective.

With regard to the characteristics of teaching effectiveness, the findings of this study show five factors confirmed to be important characteristics. First, inclusion at the classroom level, because the findings indicate teachers need to enhance inclusion through means such as increasing students' participation and improving the relationship environment. This result supports Al Ajmi's claim (2007) that inclusion, particularly at the classroom level, is an effective means of enhancing teaching effectiveness. In addition, this result further supports the belief that, considering the relationship environment, the teacher-student relationship is likely to increase the level of respect between teachers and students and lead to an exciting learning environment, as highlighted by Busher (2006). Second, preparation for every single lesson, as the findings seem to agree with Stronge (2007) regarding the importance of preparation for teaching effectiveness, which Scales (2008) has agreed is an effective way to enhance the effectiveness of ordinary teachers. Third, making best use of the allocated learning time, such as using developed teaching methods that can increase the amount of learning time. This result confirms the ideas of Stronge (2007) and Alnahrawy (2015), who said that managing learning time is an important condition for teaching effectiveness. This demands teachers be more careful about learning and classroom time, and to invest this time and work in reducing the time spent on matters that are not relevant to the lesson or less useful for students. Fourth, doing training courses on effective teaching methods and effective communication methods, as also said by Abo Alwafa (2012) and Alhamadany (2015), who emphasized the importance of training courses and communication skills in teaching effectiveness. Fifth, teachers need to be

modern and must be able to cope with the lifestyle of their students and to be able to use the most up-to-date learning skills.

4.5.3.6 Class size

According to the participants from both schools, class size, which means the number of students in the classroom, is an effective factor that has an impact on teachers' performance, students' learning and overall school improvement. It was agreed by the participants that optimum class size can facilitate students' learning development and teachers' performances:

Class size is a basic element of school improvement; if the number of students in the classroom is suitable, students will learn better and the teacher will perform better (T 11, April, 2015).

Regarding the advantages of small classes, the participants from both schools mentioned several benefits that can be achieved by reducing the number of students in classrooms. For instance, it was agreed by the participants from both schools that in small classes teachers are able to have more control over the classroom. In addition, some participants from Mahad High School mentioned that in small classrooms teachers are more able to vary their teaching methods, to deal with all individual students, to give students more care and attention, and to divide students into small learning groups, all of which could enhance teachers' performances and the quality of learning:

In small classes, teachers are able to use more than one teaching method because it is easy and possible for teachers [in such classes] to divide students into small groups and give more care and attention to all students (T 4, March, 2015).

Similarly, some participants from Sultan High School agreed that small classrooms result in teachers who are more motivated and students who enjoy their learning. As teachers in such classes are better able to cover all the activities in each lesson:

I think that smaller classes are better for both the teacher and the students... a long time ago, I only taught six students and I still remember how excited I was and how much students enjoyed their lessons (T 10, April, 2015).

On the other hand, the participants from both schools were in agreement that large classes not only make it difficult for teachers to use different teaching strategies, and to provide enough attention and support for students, but also the ability of students to concentrate on their work is diminished in large classes:

Students do not focus as well in large classes as they do in small ones (GI2, March, 2015).

In terms of the optimum class size, the participants from both schools mentioned several aspects that need to be taken into consideration when attempting to determine the optimum class size. For example, the participants from Mahad High School believe that the school curriculum and its size can have an effect on the ideal number of students in a single classroom:

Based on the existing curriculum, the number of students in the classroom should not exceed 20, because I, as a teacher, need to deal with all the

students... I need to consider the differences between the students... which is difficult if there are more than 20 students (T 2, March, 2015).

In addition, the nature of the subjects plays a role in determining the optimum class size. Each subject is different, and some subjects are more difficult than others. In those subjects, teachers need to make a greater effort to help students understand all of the points covered in each lesson. If the number of students in each class was suitable for the difficulty level of the subject, teachers would be better able to help their students:

The optimum class size is different and it depends on the nature of the subject being taught (T 3, March, 2015).

Furthermore, the optimum class size can be determined according to the teacher's skills and experience; these are different from one teacher to another:

The optimum class size depends on the ability and experience of the teacher (GI1, March, 2015).

On the other hand, the participants from Sultan High School consider the lesson time as the main factor that can make a difference in determining the optimum class size. They mentioned that the optimum class size can mainly be determined by the amount of time allocated for the lesson:

The optimum class size is 20 students in each classroom. This is based on the allocated lesson time, which is 45 minutes (T 8, April, 2015).

However, some suggestions have been made by the participants from both schools regarding the optimum class size. For instance, some participants from Mahad High School suggested that a class size of between 18 and 23 students is considered good, as

it increases interactions between students and it makes it easier for students to communicate with their teachers:

18-23 students in the classroom is the best size, as it increases the interaction between students (GI1, March, 2015).

With regard to the participants from Sultan High School, it has been suggested that a class of between ten and fifteen students is ideal, as this can improve the quality of learning:

Based on my experience, the average number of students in each classroom should be between ten and fifteen students, so that I can guarantee high quality learning and good outcomes (T 12, April, 2015).

Discussion

The findings about class size agree with Deutsch (2003) that the number of students in the classroom can have an impact on the development of teachers and students, particularly on teachers' performance and students' learning. The findings of this study agree with Al Zaki (2009) that the optimum class size is an effective factor that leads to increased interactions between students. In addition, the findings added that the optimum class size makes it easier for students to communicate with their teachers as well, as it is an effective factor for improving the quality of learning.

The findings of this study seem to enhance the view of Blatchford (2003) that small classes are much better for teachers' performances and students' outcomes. Moreover, the findings show similar results to those found by Mortimore et al. (1988) who found that smaller classes allowed teachers to have more control over their classrooms, which

lead to a corresponding increase in student achievement. Furthermore, the findings confirm the argument of Deutsch (2003), who mentioned that in smaller classes teachers are able to provide more attention and care to their students. Moreover, the findings of this study have also indicated that in small classes teachers are more motivated to deal with all students, to cover all the activities in each lesson, to vary their teaching methods and to divide students into small learning groups, as well as small classrooms result in students who enjoy their learning.

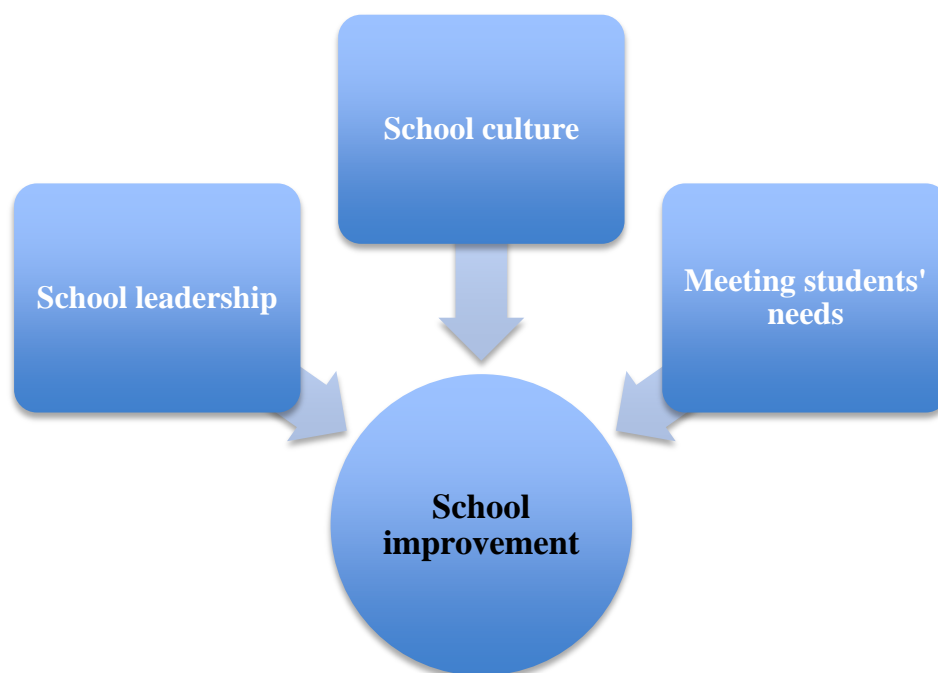
On the other hand, the findings agree with Abo Alwafa (2012) that large classes decrease teaching time and the time supposed to be spent for individuals' assistance. Furthermore the findings of this study contribute that large classes decrease teachers' abilities to foster collaborative learning and decrease the ability of students to concentrate on their work.

In terms of the optimum class size, the findings show some aspects that need to be considered to identify the optimum class size. For example, the findings agree with Bosworth (2011) that teachers' abilities can make a difference in terms of determining the optimum class size. Furthermore, the findings indicate some other factors that need to be considered in order to identify the optimum class size, such as school curriculum and its size, the nature of the subjects and the amount of time allocated for the lesson, all of which can make a difference in terms of identifying the optimum class size. However, based on the above aspects, the findings suggest that the optimum class size should range between 10 and 23 students in each single classroom, which must be decided based on the surrounding circumstances of each single classroom that might be different from one classroom to another in the same school.

4.6 Conclusion

The findings reported in this research project illustrate the three key elements agreed to be the main aspects informing school improvement. The elements are: school leadership, school culture, and meeting students' needs (see Figure 4.5, below).

Figure 4.5: Main elements of school improvement



The findings of the current study conclude that, to enhance school improvement school leadership teams need to consider the main three elements of school improvement and integrate them into teachers' professional development to encourage students' learning and development.

4.6.1 School leadership

The findings of the current study confirm that school leadership exerts a considerable impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and overall school improvement. This is due to the authority and power of school leadership to influence effective factors associated with the quality of teaching and learning, such as leadership style, school culture and important aspects associated with meeting students' needs; such as inclusion and student voice.

The findings of this study suggest that the style of school leadership significantly affects school improvement. Furthermore, the findings revealed two different leadership styles, consultative leadership and distributed leadership; both of which were confirmed as effective leadership approaches for school improvement, supporting the development of teachers and students. Both leadership styles were deemed to enhance inclusion and for meet the needs of all school members, while also encouraging the participation of teachers and students in school leadership. However, the findings suggest consultative leadership and distributed leadership styles are more successful in the context of collaborative cultures. This is because both leadership style and collaborative cultures encourage teamwork and the inclusion of school members, which are essential to school improvement.

4.6.2 School culture

The findings of this study reveal that school culture serves as the basic foundation for school improvement in general and the development of teachers and students in particular. The findings show a collaborative culture is the most suitable school culture; not only does it help decision-makers set appropriate school goals, but it also

encourages the professional development of teachers, improves the quality of students' learning, supports inclusion, and assists the leadership team to resolve existing problems and accurately evaluate teachers' effectiveness, as well as helping to achieve the school's aims.

In addition, the findings indicate several aspects that are deemed important to satisfy students' needs. Some of these aspects are associated with school culture, such as inclusion, student voice, and individual differences. While others are required at school level, and include the school-parent relationships, teaching effectiveness and class size.

4.6.3 Meeting students' needs

The findings assert the importance of inclusion, student voice, individual differences, the school-parent relationship, teacher effectiveness, and class size, for students' development, and school improvement in general.

Inclusion was confirmed in the findings as an important aspect of students' development, particularly for lower-achievers and students with special educational needs. In addition, the findings show students' voices need to be heard and considered in order to meet their needs, improve their level of achievement, increase their agency, facilitate interactions with teachers, encourage motivation, and amplify their success. Furthermore, individual differences, particularly between students, were determined as intrinsic to improved student learning, outcomes, and successes, as well as to minimize their problems. Moreover, the school-parent relationship was confirmed to play a significant role in school improvement, due to the importance and advantages of such a relationship, not only for the development of students and teachers, but also for parental engagement and school success. In addition, teaching effectiveness, which is believed to

be effective at fostering teachers' professional development, helps increase the quality of learning, resolve educational problems and facilitate school improvement. Finally, class size was also mentioned as a sensitive area with potential to affect teachers' performance, students' learning and overall school improvement. The findings show that determining optimum class size is effective at increasing interactions between students, making it easier for them to communicate with their teachers, and also improving the quality of their learning.

Hence, it appears that school improvement is a multi-dimensional process that demands much more effort and consideration be directed towards the elements of school improvement, including school leadership, school culture and important aspects that meet students' needs. These elements need to be combined and considered simultaneously, in order to enhance school improvement and the development of teachers and students. This is because each element of school improvement interacts with others, and demands them to work more successfully.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the study

This research investigated the role of school leadership in school improvement. It aimed to identify the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, the factors that can affect school improvement, and the most important conditions for the professional development of teachers and students and overall school improvement.

There has been a wide range of international studies that considered the essential aspects and conditions for school improvement. The majority of those studies discussed and covered the most important factors related to school improvement, such as leadership approach (Park, 2012; Harris, 2013; MacNeil et al., 2009; Leithwood and Mascall 2008; Leithwood et al., 2006; Heck and Hallinger, 2009), school culture (Nancy et al., 2010; Given et al., 2010; Carter, 2011; Nabhani et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2012; Busher, 2006; Engels et al., 2008), professional learning communities (Allen, 2013; Vanblaere and Devos, 2016; Ho et al., 2016; Popp and Goldman, 2016; Woodland, 2016; Buttram and Farley-Ripple, 2016), teaching effectiveness (Dean, 1999; Richard, 2008; Heck, 2009; Cullingford, 2010), individual differences (Frederickson and Cline, 2009; Nabhani et al., 2012; Al Bahawashi, 2013; Willis, 2007), inclusion (Frederickson and Cline, 2009; Busher, 2006; Ainscow et al., 2012), school curriculum (Schmoker, 2011; MacNeil et al., 2009; Ogrinc et al., 2011), student voice (Sterrett, 2011; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009; Ainscow et al., 2000; Ofsted, 2009;

Kidd, 2012; Leithwood and Seashore, 2011; Busher, 2006), the school-parent relationship (Nabhani et al., 2012; Busher, 2006; Frew et al., 2013), and class size (Day et al., 1996; Deutsch, 2003; Bosworth, 2011).

The majority of those studies consider a particular aspect in detail, which is an effective way that can lead to in-depth information about those aspects. The originality of this research study is distinguished from two different angles; first, this research study brings together the important aspects related to school improvement, including the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, other factors that can affect school improvement, and the most important conditions for the professional development of teachers and students, and overall school improvement. Second, this research study has been conducted as a response to the high demands in the context of this study (Mustafa, 2013; Alkhatam, 2013; Alguhani, 2013; Alghamdi, 2012), which could contribute to fill in the gap left by the lack of studies in this particular field in Saudi Arabia.

The present study was conducted to answer research questions through a linked case study approach based at two Saudi Arabian high schools. Both schools are state and single-sex male schools. The research design relied on qualitative methods, including documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and group interviews. The participants involved in the study were two school leaders, two school deputies, two student advisors and twelve teachers who were involved in semi-structured interviews, and four groups of nine students who were involved in group interviews.

The current study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between school leadership and school improvement?

- 2) How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?
- 3) To what extent do policy and social contexts affect the processes of school improvement?
- 4) How can teachers' and students' professional development be constructed?

5.2 Summary of the main findings

This section will present the main findings and results of this study in relation to the main themes that emerged from the presentation of findings.

5.2.1 School leadership

The findings of this study indicate that there is a relationship between school leadership and school improvement. This relationship can be either strong or weak, depending on the level of authority and power allowed to school leadership and the leadership style that has been implemented in the school. In addition, the findings of this study show that due to the position of school leadership team, school leadership plays a significant role in school improvement. The current study also indicates that the success of the school leadership is the key that can lead to a holistic school improvement.

The findings of this study also show that school leadership has a great effect on the quality of teaching and learning. This study has concluded that the quality of learning is mostly determined by teachers, who have a greater effect on learning quality than any other factor; however, school leadership has a direct effect on teachers, their performance and their effectiveness. The effect of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning is evident in this study from a number of angles, including the

authority and power of the school leadership team over the essential factors related to the quality of teaching and learning, such as leadership style and school culture.

One of this study's main findings is that the style of school leadership has an effect on school improvement. The findings revealed two different leadership styles, consultative leadership and distributed leadership, which have been confirmed by the findings of this study as effective leadership approaches for school improvement and the development of teachers and students. Both leadership styles are practised in the case study schools and were deemed by the participants to be effective for inclusion and for meeting the school members' needs, because the both leadership styles encourage the participation of teachers and students in the school leadership's functions.

5.2.2 School culture

Another main finding is that school culture is the basic foundation for school improvement in general and the development of teachers and students in particular. In terms of the most effective school culture, the results of this study show that collaborative culture is the most suitable school culture that not only helps decision makers to set the most suitable school goals, but also it encourages the professional development of teachers and the quality of students' learning, supports inclusion, helps the leadership team to solve the existing problems and to accurately evaluate teachers and their effectiveness, as well as it helps to achieve the school's aims.

5.2.3 Meeting students' needs

The findings of this study show six aspects confirmed to be important for school improvement in general, and for meeting students' needs in particular. First, inclusion has been confirmed by this study to be an essential factor for students' development, particularly for lower achievers and students with special educational needs. Second,

students' voices that need to be heard and considered in order to meet students' needs, improve their achievement, increase their agency, facilitate their interaction with their teachers, encourage their engagement and heighten their success. Third, individual differences, particularly students' differences, as the findings confirm that considering students' differences is the most important aspect for students' development, which not only could improve students' learning, achievement and success but is also essential to minimizing students' problems. Fourth, school-parent relationships play a significant role in school improvement due to the importance and various advantages of such relationships, not only for the development of students and teachers, but also for parents' engagement and school success. Fifth, teaching effectiveness, which this study has confirmed to be an effective factor for fostering teachers' development, to increase the quality of learning, to solve educational problems and to facilitate school improvement. Sixth, this study confirms that the number of students in the classroom can have an impact on teachers' performance, students' learning and overall school improvement. The results of this research indicate that the optimum class size is not only an effective factor for increasing interactions between students and making it easier for students to communicate with their teachers, but it can also improve the quality of learning.

5.3 Original contributions

The present study offers five different levels of contributions, including contribution to theory, contribution to context, contribution to knowledge, contribution to practice and contribution to policy.

5.3.1 Contribution to theory

The theoretical contribution relates to the framework of this research study, which was established to understand the role of school leadership in school improvement, and the associated requirements for the professional development of teachers and students. The main theoretical contribution of this research study lies in the fact that it brings together the important aspects related to school improvement, including the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, the role of school leadership in school improvement, the factors that can affect school improvement, and the most important conditions for the professional development of teachers and students and overall school improvement, which have not been explored together before. The framework looked at school improvement from these different angles in order to widen the scope and present a holistic picture about the most essential factors for school improvement and how to foster them.

5.3.2 Contribution to context

One of the main contributions of this study is the contribution to the context (Saudi Arabia), which takes place in two different forms. First, the number of studies conducted in the Middle East regarding school improvement is considered small (Al Bahawashi, 2013; Alzaki, 2009; Al Hur, 2011; Algaber, 2012), particularly in Saudi Arabia, where educational system, in general, and schools, in particular, suffer from the lack of empirical studies that are highly required to meet the needs of schools and professional development of teachers and students (Mustafa, 2013; Alkhatam, 2013; Alguhani, 2013; Alghamdi, 2012). This research study has been conducted as a response to the high demands in the context of this study, which could fill in the gap created by the lack of imperial studies in this particular field at the context of this study.

The second main contribution of the present study is the use of qualitative technique as methodology to investigate the role of school leadership in school improvement, and the associated requirements for the development of teachers and students; this is the first time, as far as the researcher is aware, this particular issue has been investigated through qualitative technique in Saudi Arabia.

5.3.3 Contribution to knowledge

The current study makes several noteworthy contributions to some aspects related to School leadership, school improvement and the professional development of teachers and students. The original contributions made by the current study will be presented and arranged under new themes in accordance to their appearance in the discussion of the findings chapter.

5.3.3.1 Leadership style

One of the main contributions of the current study comes from the findings about the advantages and disadvantages of consultative leadership style. The findings of the present study provide three additional advantages of consultative leadership style. First, consultative leadership is extended to include parents not only in making school decisions, but also in solving students' problems and overcoming barriers to students' learning. Second, consultative leadership can bridge the gap between the school leadership and the classroom environment. Third, consultative leadership is an effective approach in terms of meeting students' needs.

In addition, the findings highlight three additional disadvantages of consultative leadership. First, the risk of achieving the school's aims if some of the people consulted are not satisfied with those aims. In addition, consultative leadership may increase the

workload of teachers and students. Furthermore, students' power is still controlled by the school leader and the leadership team, who make the final decision.

Another contribution of the present study comes from the findings about distributed leadership style. This research extends our knowledge about the possible drawbacks of distributed leadership style, as the results of this study show additional disadvantages of distributed leadership. For instance, distributed leadership increases the stress on teachers; in addition, when school leadership is distributed, some school members might be dependants. Finally, in distributed leadership, representatives might be unable to represent all the dependants on whose behalf they are supposed to be acting.

5.3.3.2 Leadership stability

One of the most significant contributions of the current study is regarding the stability of school leadership and its importance for leadership success and school improvement. The current study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of leadership stability's importance for leadership success. The findings of the present study confirm that the stability of school leadership is very important not only for school improvement but also for the leadership team, particularly for school leaders to be more able to plan for the change and implement the changes for their schools. School leadership's stability here means the period or the duration that the leadership team, particularly school leaders, spent in their positions at the same school.

The findings suggest that the minimum required period for school leadership to be a stable leadership is six years. This means that school leadership cannot be described as stable unless the leadership team lasts for six continuous years with the same school leader.

Another contribution of the present study is regarding the role of school leadership in school improvement, as the findings of this study show that the role of school leadership in school improvement depends on the leadership's stability: if it is stable, it will play a greater role in school improvement, particularly if the school leader has sufficient time to plan and implement strategies to help the school to grow and improve. In schools with temporary leaders, this might not be possible. The problem of unstable school leadership is quite common in some schools in Saudi Arabia due to the turnover of leaders in Saudi schools where many school leaders leave from a school to another in order to work closer to their home district or city. This is because it is not possible for school leaders in Saudi Arabia to choose a particular school to work in because they have to select 10 different cities when applying for first time and when their applications accepted, the Ministry of Education will determine one option out of the 10 cities applied for, which might be so far from the home district of the leader due to the huge size of the country and the large destinations among the cities of the country.

5.3.3.3 Teachers' stability

One of the main contributions of the current study is regarding teachers' stability. The results of the present study show that staff turnover is common in Saudi schools where many teachers leave in order to teach closer to their home district or city. This not only can negatively affect teachers' development, but also it can impact students' learning and development because they will need to adapt to the strategies used by their new teacher, and this can be inconvenient and time consuming for students.

5.3.3.4 Inclusion

Some of the main contributions of the present study are the several strategies that can be used to foster inclusion. First, student councils, suggestion boxes and dialogue centres have been confirmed as effective in facilitating inclusion among students. Second, inclusion can be fostered by including students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, so that they share a learning environment with other students in the same school. Third, encouraging students to evaluate their teachers and the school's performance, and considering students' feedback and perspectives were confirmed to be an effective technique to support inclusion. Fourth, constructing positive teacher-student relationships can lead to higher levels of inclusion. Fifth, encouraging teamwork where all school members work together as a group can facilitate inclusion among students. In addition, intensive sessions were confirmed as essential factors for the development of students with special educational needs.

5.3.3.5 Student voice

This research extends our knowledge about the benefits of listening to student voices and some effective ways that could help schools to consider all student voices. The main contribution of the current study is regarding the advantages that schools can achieve through considering the students' voices. The findings of this study indicate that the student voice is not only effective in improving schools' ranks, but it also makes it possible for schools to meet students' needs, provide the most suitable activities, and be better equipped to solve problems and embrace inclusion.

The second contribution of this study is about the techniques that could enhance schools to consider the voices of all students, particularly in large schools where it might be

difficult to consider so many opinions. The findings suggest some strategies, such as nominating a few students to represent their peers and putting out suggestion boxes. However, the findings of this study indicate that any lack of leadership authority might prevent schools from being able to hear the voices of all students.

5.3.3.6 School-parent relationship

The main contribution of the current study regarding the school-parent relationship is related to this relationship's advantages for students' development. The results confirm that the school-parent relationship is an effective means of filling in the gaps caused by a lack of learning resources, as well as compensation for weaknesses in the learning environment. The school-parent relationship can positively affect students' development and their perspectives towards education.

Another main contribution is about the nature of school-parent relationship. The findings indicate that in order to motivate students and enhance their development, the school-parent relationship should not only be used to report negative aspects, such as students' weaknesses and mistakes, it should also be used to inform parents about positives, such as good behavior and big achievements.

5.3.3.7 Class size

The study enhanced our knowledge regarding some additional advantages of small classes and disadvantages of large classes. The findings of this study indicate that in small classes teachers are better able to deal with all students, to cover all the activities in each lesson, to vary their teaching methods, to divide students into small learning

groups, and to give students more care and attention, as well as small classrooms result in students who enjoy their learning.

In large classes teachers might be unable to divide all the students into groups for collaborative learning, and students often find their ability to concentrate on their work is diminished in large classes.

The current study's second main contribution is about the importance of lesson time in determining the optimum class size and its range number. The findings confirm that the amount of time allocated for the lesson can make a difference in terms of the optimum class size. The findings suggest that the optimum class size ranges between ten and twenty-three students in each classroom, which depends on the school curriculum, the nature of the subject, the skills and experience of the teacher, and the allocated lesson time.

5.3.4 Contribution to practice

The results of this study offer various contributions that could inform practitioners. For instance, practitioners, leadership teams and particularly leaders should concern themselves with the style of school leadership, which has a significant effect on school improvement. Distributed leadership and consultative leadership were found to be effective leadership styles that can be implemented to facilitate school improvement.

In addition, collaborative school culture was confirmed as the most suitable school culture that could encourage the teachers' professional development, teaching effectiveness, learning quality and inclusion, as well as the students' agency. Hence,

changing school culture into a collaborative one could help practitioners successfully improve their schools.

Moreover, practitioners need to consider the importance of the relationship environment, including internal relationships, such as teacher-student, student-student and school leadership team-student relationships, and the external relationships, such as school-parent and school-decision-makers' relationships, which are important factors that could effectively facilitate school improvement.

Furthermore, in order to enhance school improvement, practitioners and particularly leaders need to pay attention to the factors that can impact teachers' performances, students' achievement, learning quality and school success, such as society, which has been confirmed to have an impact on school members and school improvement.

School leaders should be aware of the effective factors for teachers' professional development, such as qualifications, training programmes, professional learning communities, teaching effectiveness and teacher leadership. Encouraging these factors could help leaders to easily and effectively foster the teachers' professional development.

In addition, leadership staff and teachers need to concern themselves with the important aspects that can lead to meet students' needs, such as school facilities, learning resources, motivations, individual differences, inclusion, student voice and class size, which all need to be carefully considered to promote students' development and their outcomes.

5.3.5 Contribution to policy

This study has offered some contributions that could inform policymakers. For instance, the findings of this study indicate that the level of power and authority provided to school leadership can affect its ability to implement changes that can enhance school improvement. The lack of power and authority limit the school leadership's ability to meet the needs required for school improvement, particularly the development of teachers and students. Thus, policymakers should take this issue into consideration and work to solve it through providing more power and authority to schools' leaderships, which is likely to enhance schools' abilities to change and improve.

5.4 The significance of the study

Research into how to improve schools is a common theme within the field of educational studies (Anca, 2013; Park, 2012; Harris, 2013; Leithwood and Mascal, 2008). How best to improve the quality of teaching, the school culture, and thereby students' learning is widely debated in many countries (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). However, the majority of previous studies consider a particular subject. However, since school improvement requires a combination of conditions that need to net together, this research was conducted to combine the required conditions and examine the effectiveness of each one in order to present a holistic picture of the most essential factors for school improvement and how to foster them. This reflects the significance of this study compared to the previous studies in this particular field.

In addition, there are two levels that reflect this study's significance and findings. First, the results contribute to informing international literature, particularly Western literature about school improvement, in a different context that has different circumstances,

cultures, traditions, policies and government. The second level relates to the context of this study, which is Saudi Arabia, a country that became very keen on developing its position in the world by making intensive changes to the important aspects such as economy, health and education. This resulted in the expansion of Saudi scholarships that can be seen particularly in developed countries.

Saudi Arabia has considered excellence in education as one of the most essential factors that can improve the country and drive it closer to the level of developed countries. This study does not only show the effective theories and cases from the developed countries, but also it shows examples of the good application and practice of those theories by the case study schools. Despite the surrounding circumstances and the difficulties experienced by these schools under the current educational policy, they both demonstrate a good example of practices similar to the majority of theories discussed in the literature. Applying some changes could lead these schools to become outstanding.

5.5 Limitations

Limitations arise in most studies, often relative to the research design and methodology. One of the main limitations of this study relates to the application of a qualitative method. Although a qualitative method can provide in-depth information and knowledge, it requires highly skilled researchers with a great deal of experience to ensure the quality of the study, as the risk of bias is quite high in such methodology (Shkedi, 2005). In addition, the application of a qualitative method does not enhance the ability to generalise the findings, due to the nature of this methodology and the sample size. Furthermore, characterising qualitative data is not easy (Cohen et al., 2007) and can lead to complexities that consume more of the researchers' time (Hopkins, 2008).

These limitations may negatively affect the reliability of any research, confusing the researcher about what findings to include or exclude. In addition, using documentary analysis as a data collection method could result in additional limitations, such as incomplete data, particularly if the access to documents is limited.

However, some of these limitations were recognised and considered at an early stage. For instance, the reliability was improved by using multiple data collection methods; i.e. documentary analysis, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and group interviews. In addition, this research involved two case studies, allowing a comparison to enhance the findings' reliability as well as reduce the risk of bias. The difficulties with applying data analysis have been resolved, since face-to-face interviews and group interviews were used as the main data collection methods, generating themes for data analysis to assist the researcher in categorising, coding and reducing the data as needed.

Another limitation is the sample size of this study, as this research would benefit from adding more than two schools. However, since this research is carried out by a single researcher who is limited in many important aspects, such as resources, timeframe and word count, adding more schools might be impossible or might lead to more confusion that could affect the quality of research results and findings.

The second limitation regarding the sample size is the number of students involved in the group interviews; there were eighteen students from each school, which may not reflect or represent the perspectives and insights of all students at the two case schools regarding the issue being investigated. However, this particular limitation was considered at an early stage, as the author selected three student participants from each year (years ten, eleven and twelve) of varying levels including high, average and lower level achievers, to provide different perspectives and insights. This technique was used

with the four groups of students from both case study schools in order to enhance the findings' accuracy.

Another limitation of this study is that both case study schools were all-male schools, because all schools in Saudi Arabia are single-sex schools, and access to a female school is impossible for a male researcher.

The last limitation is about the lack of Arabic and Saudi literature, which suffers from a lack of availability and accessibility because there are no available databases for dissertations or journal articles.

5.6 Recommendation for further research

Based on the previously mentioned limitations of this study, the main recommendation for future research is to implement additional strategies that can help to generalise the study's findings, which could possibly be achieved through several means, such as applying mixed methodology including qualitative and quantitative enquiries, extending the sample size by involving additional schools and participants from different districts of the context of this research, and by considering the female schools, all of which could better enhance the reliability of research findings and allow the results to be generalisable on other cases and schools.

Appendices

Appendix A- Ethical approval

To: **FAWWAZ Aluntawa**

Subject: Ethical Application Ref: **faoa2-d728**

(Please quote this ref on all correspondence)

31/10/2014 10:49:59

School of Education

Project Title: **An investigation into the role of school leadership in school improvement, including teachersâ€™ and studentsâ€™ development: A case study of two Saudi Arabian high schools**

Thank you for submitting your application which has been considered.

This study has been given ethical approval, subject to any conditions quoted in the attached notes.

Any significant departure from the programme of research as outlined in the application for research ethics approval (such as changes in methodological approach, large delays in commencement of research, additional forms of data collection or major expansions in sample size) must be reported to your Departmental Research Ethics Officer.

Approval is given on the understanding that the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and other research ethics guidelines and protocols will be complied with

- ☐ <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>
- ☐ <http://www.le.ac.uk/safety/>

The following is a record of correspondence notes from your application **faoa2-d728**. Please ensure that any proviso notes have been adhered to:-

Oct 16 2014 1:36PM Dear Fawwaz,

Thank you for your application. It is clear that you have considered some important ethical issues concerning your study. However, your application is not yet complete. In section 4, you state that you are using a Participant Information and Informed Consent form but you have not attached these documents to the application. You will need to add the following to your current application:

1) The participant information and consent forms you are planning to use with both the interviews and the questionnaire you mention.

Best wishes,
Jim Askham

Oct 23 2014 4:39PM Dear Fawwaz,

Thank you for the attachment entitled 'informed consent'. This contains some useful information but further improvements are needed. I suggest that a revised version of this document can be used with your interview participants and should:

- explain how long the interviews will last, as well as their frequency - a single interview or more?
- state how views will be recorded - through audio recordings?
- indicate what steps will be taken in terms of data security.
- indicate more clearly how individual views will be reported - use of pseudonyms?
You should also include a section at the end of the form for participants' names and signatures. Also the information you have included at the

bottom of the current version of the form is important. In other words, it would be helpful to move this information to the main section of text. Please consider these points and resubmit this interview consent for to your application.

Also, you will need to attach a second, briefer document - a paragraph or so of text that will go at the beginning of your questionnaire. This should offer a succinct description of your research, what the data are to be used for, and relevant confidentiality and anonymity assurances.

Best wishes,
Jim Askham

--- END OF NOTES ---

Appendix B- Informed consent (participants of face-to-face interviews)

The following informed consent was signed by all the participants included in the face-to-face interviews, including two school leaders, two school deputies, two student advisors and 12 teachers. The remaining participants (students) were provided another informed consent, as attached in appendix-C below.

Informed consent

Dear participant,

Based on your value experience, you are kindly invited to participate in an interview for a PhD research study, which has been approved by the School of education a Department of The University of Leicester, where I am working as a PhD student. The aim of this interview is to collect information regarding the role of school leadership in school improvement and the most effective factors for the development of teachers and students. Thus, your opinions and perspectives are valuable and important for this research.

Participation in this study is voluntary means that it is not compulsory to participate or to answer all the questions as you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. It will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, a copy of the transcript will be sent to you to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. The data achieved by this research will be analyzed and used as evidence to support school improvement in Saudi Arabia.

I am ready and more than happy to answer any inquiry you may have regarding your participation or the research via the E-mail attached below.

Sincerely,

FawwazAlmutawa

E-mail: fw.zaam@gmail.com

I have read all the information given above and I agree to participate in this study.

☐

YES

☐

NO

I agree to have my interview audio-recorded.

☐

YES

☐

NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

☐

YES

☐

NO

Participant's name:	Signature:	Date:
Researcher's name:	Signature:	Date:

Appendix C- Informed consent (participants of group interviews)

The following informed consent was signed by all students' participants who were involved in group interviews.

Informed consent

Dear participant,

Based on your value experience, you are kindly invited to participate in a group interview for a PhD research study, which has been approved by the School of education a Department of The University of Leicester, where I am working as a PhD student. The aim of this group interview is to collect information regarding the role of school leadership in school improvement and the most effective factors for the development of teachers and students. Thus, your opinions and perspectives are valuable and important for this research.

Participation in this study is voluntary means that it is not compulsory to participate or to answer all the questions as you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. It will involve a group interview of approximately one hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. With your permission, the conversation will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. The data achieved by this research will be analyzed and used as evidence to support school improvement in Saudi Arabia.

I am ready and more than happy to answer any inquiry you may have regarding your participation or the research via the E-mail attached bellow.

Sincerely,

FawwazAlmutawa

E-mail: fw.zaam@gmail.com

I have read all the information given above and I agree to participate in this study.

☐☐

____ YES ____ NO

I agree to have my conversation within the group interview audio-recorded.

☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant's name:	Signature:	Date:
Researcher's name:	Signature:	Date:

Appendix D- Initial interview schedule

The following interview schedule is the initial schedule that involves the whole questions related to this instrument. The changed version of this schedule will be presented in the following appendix (appendix-E).

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q1- What is the relationship between school leadership and school development?	General background Who are in charge of school improvement? What is the correlation between leadership success and school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q2-How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?	What is the role of principals in school improvement? How does school leadership affect teaching and learning quality? How does leadership's style contribute to school development? How does school culture affect teachers' and students' development?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q3-To what extent do policy and social contexts affect the processes of school	External factors that can affect schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix E- Changed version of the interview schedule

The instrument of the interview was piloted and changed based on the comments made by the piloting participants and the outcomes of the pilot study. The change was mainly associated with the format of the questions and the way that they were phrased. An important raised comment was that the missing of an introductory question about the understanding of participants regarding the meaning of school improvement, which seems to be important as a start point that would lead to more accurate information regarding the issue under investigation. The changed version is attached below:

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q1- What is the relationship between school leadership and school improvement?	General background What do you understand by school development/improvement? Who are in charge of school improvement? What links do you see between leadership success and school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q2-How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?	What is the role of school leaders in school improvement? How does school leadership affect teaching and learning quality? What is the most appropriate leadership approach for school improvement? And	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix F- Revised interview schedule for school leaders

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q1- What is the relationship between school leadership and school improvement?	General background What do you understand by school development/improvement? Who are in charge of school improvement? What links do you see between leadership success and school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q2-How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?	What is the role of school leaders in school improvement? How does school leadership affect teaching and learning quality? What is the most appropriate leadership approach for school improvement? And why? How does school culture affect teachers' and students' development?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Conclusion	Any other comments or questions? Follow up: respondent/validation Thank interviewees	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix G- Revised interview schedule for school deputies

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q1-How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?	General background	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What do you understand by school development/improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Who are in charge of school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the role of school leaders in school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How does school leadership affect teaching and learning quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the most appropriate leadership approach for school improvement? And why?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How does school culture affect teachers' and students' development?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q2-To what extent do policy and social contexts affect the processes of school improvement?	What external factors affect schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How is school improvement associated with the policy and social contexts?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the relationship between economical status of students and school	

	improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conclusion	Any other comments or questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Follow up: respondent/validation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Thank interviewees	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix H- Revised interview schedule for student advisors

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q1-How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?	General background	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What do you understand by school development/improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Who are in charge of school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the role of school leaders in school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How does school leadership affect teaching and learning quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the most appropriate leadership approach for school improvement? And why?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How does school culture affect teachers' and students' development?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q2-To what extent do policy and social contexts affect the processes of school improvement?	What external factors affect schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How is school improvement associated with the policy and social contexts?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the relationship between economical status of students and school	

Appendix I- Revised interview schedule for teachers

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q1-How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?	General background What do you understand by school development/improvement? Who are in charge of school improvement? What is the role of school leaders in school improvement? How does school leadership affect teaching and learning quality? What is the most appropriate leadership approach for school improvement? And why? How does school culture affect teachers' and students' development?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q2How can teachers' and students' professional development be constructed?	What factors have most influence on teachers' and students' development? How do the following aspects contribute to develop the school and its members:	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual differences; - Inclusion; - Curriculum; - Students' voices; - School- parents relationship; - Teaching effectiveness; and - Class size. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Conclusion	<p>Any other comments or questions?</p> <p>Follow up: respondent/validation</p> <p>Thank interviewees</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix J- Revised group interview schedule for Students: group 1 and 3

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q1-How does school leadership affect the culture of the school and bring about improvements in teachers' and students' work?	General background	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What do you understand by school development/improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Who are in charge of school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the role of school leaders in school improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How does school leadership affect teaching and learning quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What is the most appropriate leadership approach for school improvement? And why?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How does school culture affect teachers' and students' development?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conclusion	Any other comments or questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Follow up: respondent/validation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Thank interviewees	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix K- Revised group interview schedule for Students: group 2 and 4

Research Question	Interview Themes	Discussed
Introduction	Background and aims of the study	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Participant prerogatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q1How can teachers' and students' professional development be constructed?	General background	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What do you understand by school development/improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What factors have most influence on teachers' and students' development?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How do the following aspects contribute to develop the school and its members:	
	- Individual differences;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Inclusion;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Curriculum;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Students' voices;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- School- parents relationship;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Teaching effectiveness; and	<input type="checkbox"/>
	- Class size.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conclusion	Any other comments or questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Follow up: respondent/validation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Thank interviewees	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix L- Sampling schedule

Sequence	Participant/s	Data collection method	Aim/s
1	School documents	Documentary analysis	To gain general information and background relevant to school improvement and the development of teachers and students by examining relevant documents written by the two schools and by the Saudi Ministry of Education.
2	Two school leaders	Face-to-face semi-structured interview	To gain in-depth knowledge and information regarding the relationship between school leadership and school improvement, and the effects of school leadership on school culture and the professional development of teachers and students.
3	Two school deputies	Face-to-face semi-structured interviews	To gain in-depth knowledge and information regarding the effects of school leadership, policy, and

			social contexts on school culture, the professional development of teachers and students, and on the process of school improvement.
4	Two student advisors	Face-to-face semi-structured interviews	To gain in-depth knowledge and information regarding the required conditions for the learning development of students, and the effects of school leadership, policy, and social contexts on school culture, the development of teachers and students, and on the process of school improvement.
5	Twelve teachers	Face-to-face semi-structured interviews	To gain in-depth knowledge and information regarding the effects of school leadership on school culture and the professional development of teachers and students, and the essential conditions for the professional development of teachers and students.

6	Two groups of nine students each	Group interview	To gain in-depth knowledge and information regarding the effects of school leadership on school culture and on the development of students in particular.
7	Two groups of nine students each	Group interview	To gain in-depth knowledge and information regarding the essential conditions for the professional development of teachers, and students in particular.

Appendix M- Example of initial coding

المدرسة الطلابي (المدرسة ٤) :

Leadership style - Distributed

توزيع الوظائف الإدارية بين أعضاء المدرسة ^{inclusion} طريقة جديدة لدعم تطوير ^{nature - Distributed} school T-support
 لكن أهم من هذا هو تقرير كيفية ^{Decisions} ^{Planning} ^{implication} ^{Distributed} الإدارة الممتدة ... لأنه في حال
 أن النصيب لم يفي وأمر مستوى المعلمين وأدوارهم ^{borders} ... وإذا لم تأخذ مشاركة المعلمين
^{inclusion - Participation (teachers)} ^{Conditions - Distributed} ^{SL-Role} ^{feature} ^{strategies}
 جديدة من قبل إدارة المدرسة ... فإنه ليس بالإمكان الإمكانات وصف إدارة المدرسة
 بآرائنا إدارة ممتدة أو حتى مشتركة.

Leadership effect on learning quality

تأثير المدرسة ^{Leadership effects} ^{Leaders Position} ^{Authority} ^{Teaching quality} ^{Power} ^{Teacher - evaluation}
 على جودة التدريس لأنهم يستعملون تقييم المعلمين والتأثير
 من أهم في المكانة الممتدة الذي يستعملون من خلال رفع مستوى التدريس

School culture

الطلاب هو أفضل طريقة ^{Positive - Advantages} ^{group work} ^{Plan - Collaboration} ^{Advantages - T evaluation}
 لتقييم المعلمين بطريقة دقيقة ولتقديم تقارير المدرسة ^{S-Improvement} ^{accuracy}
^{reducing} ^{Mistakes -} ^{solving problems}

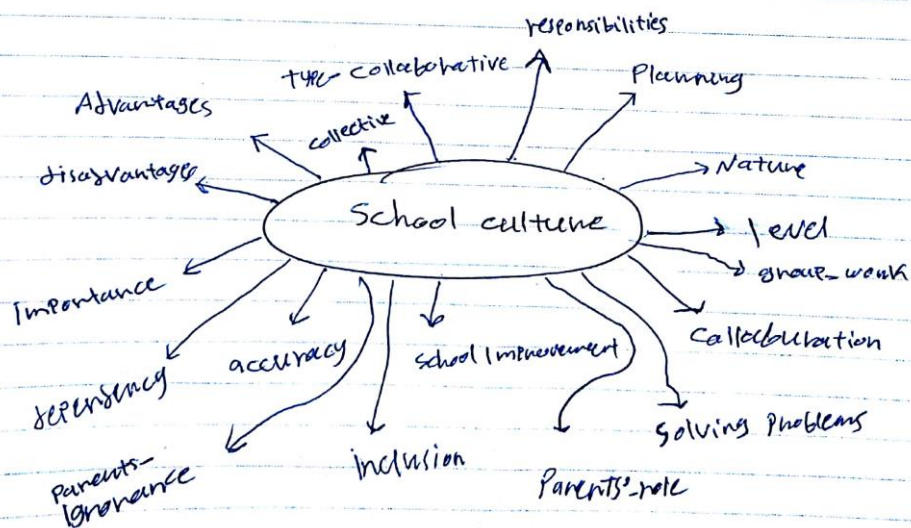
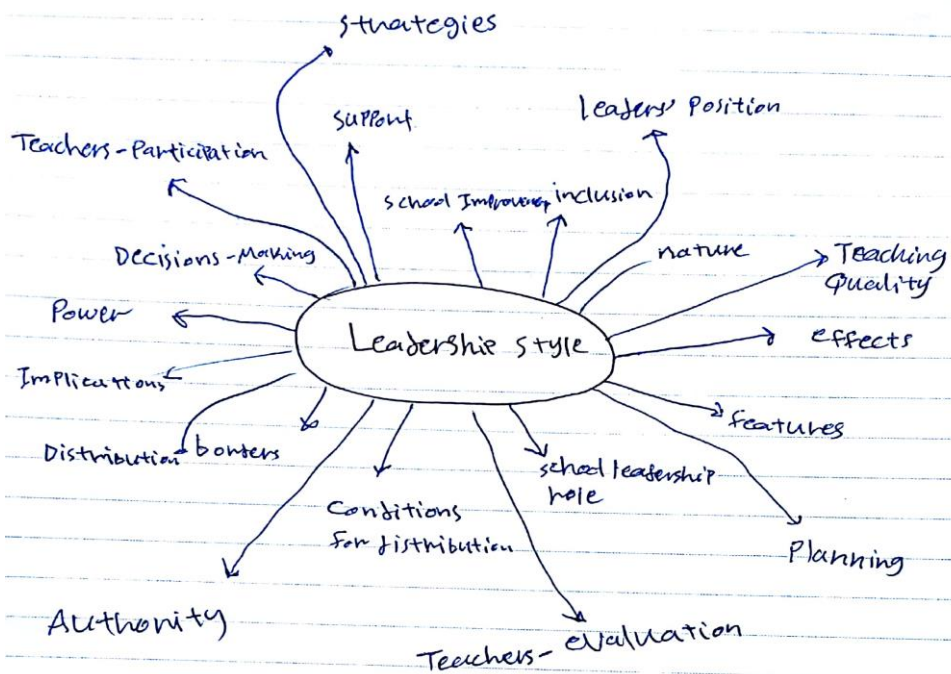
Collaboration

الممارسات تعان بسبب قلة التعاون من قبل أهل الطلاب ^{Importance of Collaboration} ^{Cause} ^{Problem}

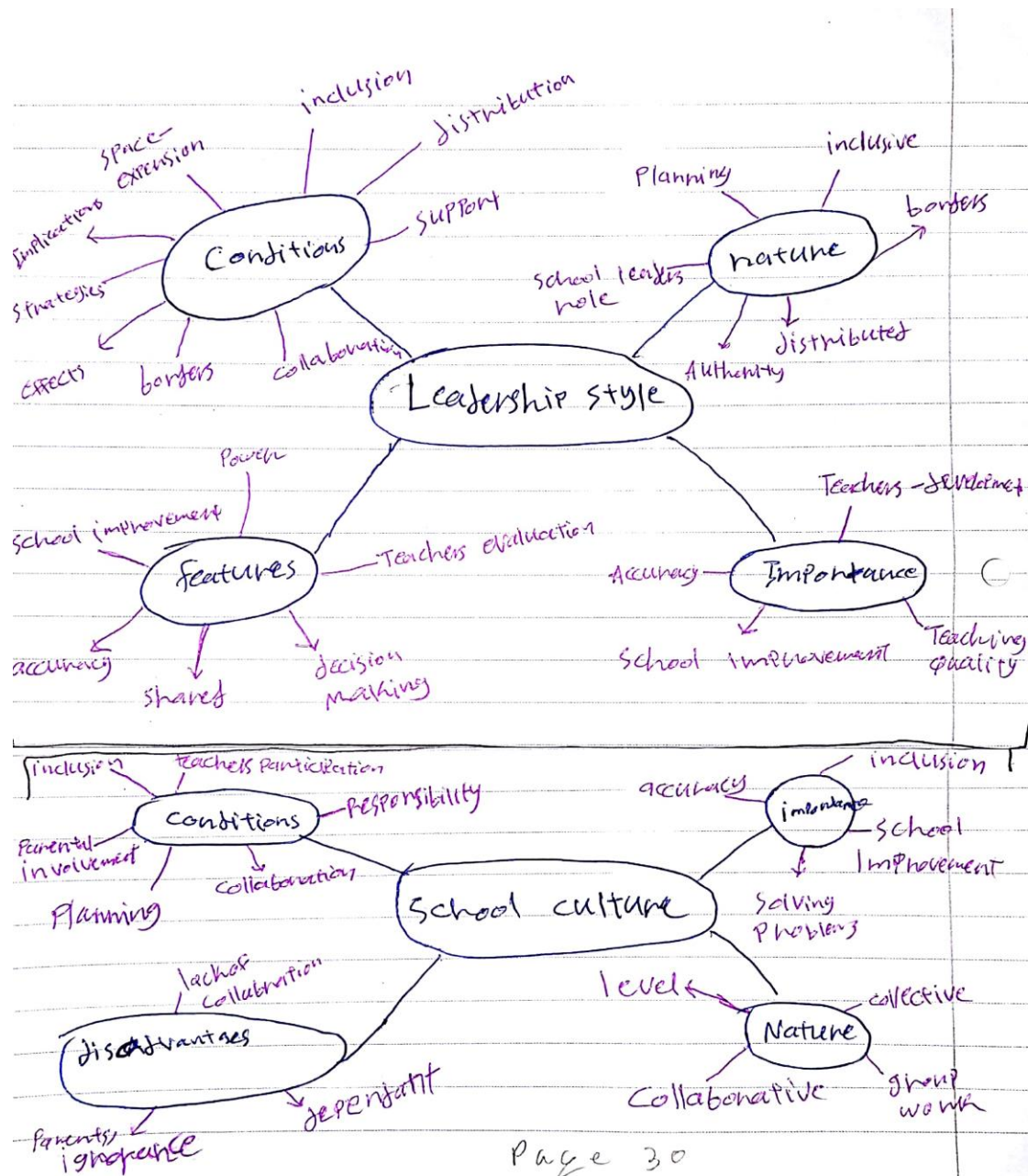
Collaborative cultures

التعاون والتفاعلات التعاونية أمور إيجابية بشكل عام ... لكن المجتمع لا يدعم هذا ^{Importance Features} ^{Collaboration}
 حالات كثيرة، بالتحديد الأباء عندما نتكلم عن ثقافة المدرسة ^{Parents - ignorance} ^{Parents Role} ^{Negative - disadvantages}
 ولا يدعم مستعد للتعاون مع المدرسة، ربما لأنهم يعتقدون أنه هذه المسؤولية تقع ^{Care - Responsibility} ^{collaboration - level}
 على عاتق المدرسة وهذا !! ^{collective} ^{dependency} ^(Reason)
 Page 24

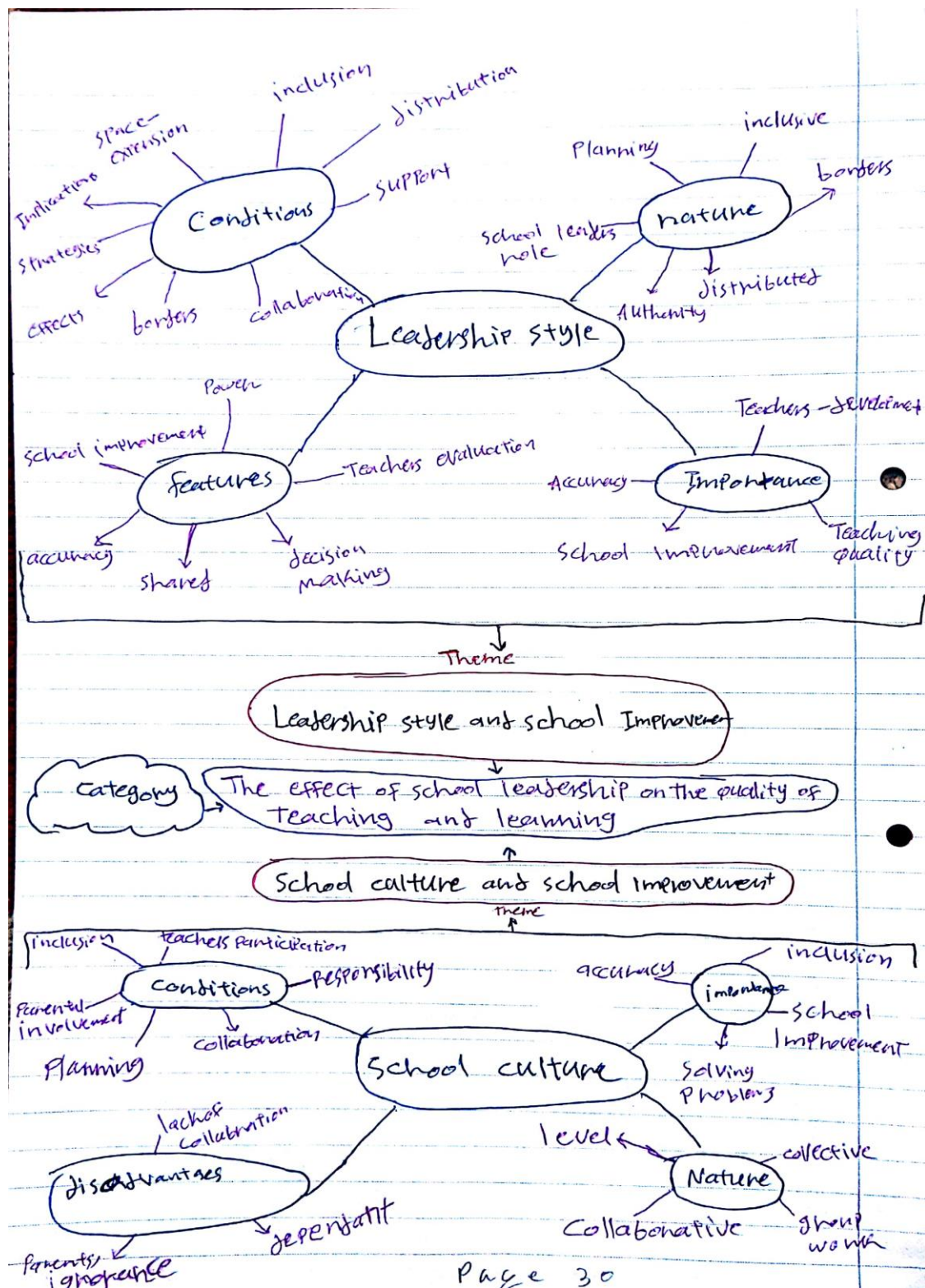
Appendix N- Example of labeling



Appendix O- Example of splicing process



Appendix P- Example of categorising



Appendix Q- Examples of the original quotations from Mahad High School

"تطوير المدرسة يبدأ من تطوير الإدارة...المعلمين، موظفي المدرسة والطلاب، والإدارة هي حجر الأساس في كل هذا" (قائد المدرسة ١، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

School improvement...starting from the development of the leadership...teachers, school staff and students, and leadership is the corner stone in all of that (SL 1, March, 2015).

"جودة التعليم تعتمد على جاهزية أعضاء الإدارة المدرسية لدعم المدارس وعلى جودة التدريس" (وكيل المدرسة ١، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

The quality of learning is dependent on the willingness of the leadership team to support schools, and on the quality of teaching (SD 1, March, 2015).

"ثقافة المدرسة شرط مهم جدا لتطوير المدرسة لأن تطور المعلمين يتأثر بثقافة المدرسة" (المرشد الطلابي ١، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

School culture is a very important condition for school improvement because teachers' development is affected by school culture (SA 1, March, 2015).

"التعاون داخل المدرسة يسهل التعاون مع المجتمع... وهو أمر مهم لأن هناك عدة أمور مشتركة بين مجتمع المدرسة والمجتمع" (معلم ١، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

Collaboration within the school facilitates collaboration with the society... that is important because there are many shared factors between the school community and the society (T 1, March, 2015).

"من المهم حل المشاكل التي تظهر في المدرسة... لتحقيق النجاح الذي يمكن أن يتم من خلال التعاون بين جميع أعضاء المدرسة بما في ذلك إدارة المدرسة، المعلمين، الطلاب وحتى الآباء" (معلم ٢، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

It is important to solve problems occurring in the school... to achieve success, which can be done through collaboration among all school members, including the school leadership, teachers, students and even parents (T 2, March, 2015).

"هناك أيضا عوامل أخرى يمكن أن تؤثر على المدارس وتعلم الطلاب وهي القرارات التي تأتي من وزارة التعليم... بعض تلك القرارات مفيدة ومحفزة بينما بعض تلك القرارات غير مناسب أو غير متوافق مع حقيقة المدرسة واحتياجاتها" (معلم ٣، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

There are also other factors that can affect schools and students' learning which are the decisions that come from the Ministry of Education...some decisions are helpful and motivating while some decisions are not suitable or not compatible with the reality of the school and its needs (T 3, March, 2015).

"يحتاج المعلمون أن يحفزوا لكي يتطوروا. هذه حقيقة خصوصا للمعلمين الجيدين والفاعلين الذين يحتاجون أكثر محفزات لكي يستمر تطورهم" (معلم ٤، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

Teachers need to be motivated to develop. This is particularly true for good and effective teachers, who need more incentives to keep developing (T 4, March, 2015).

"المدارس يجب عليها أن تحتوي التلاميذ وتنتظر إليهم كمصدر لتقييم أداء المدرسة... نشاطات المدرسة ومحتويات المدرسة... إدارة المدرسة تحتاج أن تستخدم آراء الطلاب لتطوير المدرسة" (معلم ٥، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

Schools should involve students and consider them as a resource for evaluating the performance of the school... the schools' activities, and school facilities... school leadership needs to use students' feedback to improve the school (T 5, March, 2015).

"الإستماع لجميع أصوات الطلاب قد يكون صعبا أو مستحيل في المدارس التي لديها ٥٠٠ طالب أو أكثر. لذلك المدارس تحتاج لعمل أمر ما لضمان سماع جميع أصوات الطلاب مثل توفير صناديق الإقتراحات وإيجاد ممثلين للطلاب" (معلم ٦، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

Listening to all voices of students might be difficult, or even impossible, in schools that have 500 students or more. Therefore, schools need to take action to ensure that the voices of all students are heard, such as by providing suggestion boxes and using student representatives (T 6, March, 2015).

"قائد المدرسة بإمكانه رفع ولاء الطلاب للمدرسة من خلال التأكد أن كل واحد يعامل باحترام ومن خلال توفير أنشطة رياضية جيدة" (مقابلة قروب ١، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

A school leader can increase students' loyalty to the school by ensuring that everyone is treated with respect, and also by providing good sporting activities (GI1, March, 2015).

"مقررنا الدراسي متأثر بالمبادئ الغربية التي تعتمد على الفلسفة والفهم وهي ليست متطابقة مع طبيعة العديد من موادنا الدراسية ولذلك تتسبب في خفض قدراتنا لتذكر ماتعلمناه" (مقابلة قروب ٢، مارس، ٢٠١٥).

Our school curriculum is affected by Western principles that depend on philosophy and understanding, which are not compatible with the nature of many of our subjects and therefore reduce our ability to remember what we have learnt (GI2, March, 2015).

Appendix R- Examples of the original quotations from Sultan High School

"قائدي المدارس في الدول المتطورة لديهم أكثر سلطة ونفوذ. قائدي المدارس في تلك الدول لديهم سلطة على الأمور المادية والترقيات... الخ بينما قاذدي المدارس هنا (في السعودية) ليس لديهم أي سلطة على تلك الأمور" (قائد المدرسة ٢، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

School leaders in developed countries have much more authority and power. In those countries, school leaders have control over financial issues, promotion, etc., whereas school leaders have no control of those aspects here [in Saudi Arabia] (SL 2, April, 2015).

"تطوير المدرسة هو نظام تكاملي يبدأ من الإستراتيجيات التي تضعها وزارة التعليم وينتهي بمرحلة التطبيق الذي يمارسه المعلمون بشكل مباشر في الغالب" (وكيل المدرسة ٢، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

School improvement is a complementary system, which starts with the strategies set out by the Ministry of Education and finishes with the implementation stage, which is mostly directly practised by teachers (SD 2, April, 2015).

"المدارس تعاني من قلة التعاون من قبل بيوت الطلاب" (المرشد الطلابي ٢، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

Schools are suffering due to the lack of collaboration from students' homes (SA 2, April, 2015).

"السلبية الأساسية للإدارة المقسمة هي أن صناعة القرارات تستغرق وقتاً طويلاً لأن القرارات تصنع بواسطة مجموعة من الأفراد بدلاً من فرد واحد" (معلم ٧، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

The main disadvantage of distributed leadership is that making decisions takes a very long time, because decisions are made by a group of people instead of by one person (T 7, April, 2015).

"لا يوجد هناك نمط إدارة مثالي لأن جميع أنماط الإدارة لها بعض الإيجابيات وبعض السلبيات لكن الإدارة المقسمة يمكن وصفها كأفضل نمط إداري مناسب لتطوير المدرسة" (معلم ٨، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

There is no perfect leadership style because all leadership styles have some advantages and disadvantages. However, distributed leadership can be described as being the most suitable leadership style for the improvement of the school (T 8, April, 2015).

"المعلمين الفاعلين يجب أن يوفر لهم التسهيلات والأدوات المطلوبة للحفاظ على بقاء فعاليتهم وهذه هي مسؤولية إدارة المدرسة" (معلم ٩، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

Effective teachers should be provided with the facilities and tools that they require in order to remain effective, and this is the responsibility of the school leadership (T 9, April, 2015).

"أعتقد أن الفصول الصغيرة أفضل لكل من المعلم والطلاب... قبل فترة طويلة درست فقط ٦ طلاب ولا أزال أذكر كيف كنت متحمساً وكيف كان الطلاب مستمعين في حصصهم" (معلم ١٠، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

I think that smaller classes are better for both the teacher and the students... a long time ago, I only taught six students and I still remember how excited I was and how much students enjoyed their lessons (T 10, April, 2015).

"العلاقة بين المدرسة وأولياء الأمور يجب أن تكون قوية جدا ... لكن بعض أولياء الأمور لا يعرفون أي شيء عن أبنائهم ولربما لا يعرفون بأي سنة دراسية يدرس أبنائهم!!" (معلم ١١، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

The relationship between the school and parents should be very strong... however, some parents do not know anything about their children and might not even know which school year their child is in! (T 11, April, 2015).

"بناء على خبرتي، معدل عدد الطلاب في كل فصل يجب أن يكون بين عشرة طلاب و خمسة عشر طالب، وبذلك أستطيع ضمان تعليم عالي الجودة ومخرجات أفضل" (معلم ١٢، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

Based on my experience, the average number of students in each classroom should be between ten and fifteen students, so that I can guarantee high quality learning and good outcomes (T 12, April, 2015).

"ثقافة المدرسة التعاونية تجعل الطلاب يحسون بأن لهم قيمة في المدرسة" (مقابلة قروب ٣، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

Collaborative school culture leads students to feel that they are valued within the school (GI 3, April, 2015).

"المقرر الدراسي يجب أن يكون مختصر لأننا بعض الأحيان نتشتت بسبب المقدمات المطولة التي يجب أن تحذف بشكل كامل" (مقابلة قروب ٤، أبريل، ٢٠١٥).

The curriculum should be brief because we sometimes get confused by the intensive introductions – these should be completely removed (GI 4, April, 2015).

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