



VALUING SCHOOL LEADERS
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE
CONSTRAINTS FACING SCHOOL
LEADERS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION
IN THE MALDIVES

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For more information, visit: www.vsointernational.org

VSO International
Carlton House
27A Carlton Drive
London SW15 2BS
United Kingdom
+44 (0) 208 7807686
www.vsointernational.org

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Text: Sue O'Shaughnessy
Editing: Stephen Nock and Rachel Bishop
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CFS	Child Friendly Schools
CPD	Continuing professional development
EDC	Educational Development Centre
ESQIS	Educational Supervision and Quality Inspection Service
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PTA	Parent-teacher association
TRC	Teachers' Resource Centre
START	Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

INCREASING SUPPORT FROM PARENTS

- Establish a more proactive approach from school leaders in informing parents regarding changes being made in school and the reasons behind them.
- Introduce school contracts for parents when their child starts school, outlining expectations and the differing but complementary roles of home and school to help clarify the relationship between schools and parents. This would need to be developed by the school in partnership with parents.
- Develop and share with parents a clear student behaviour policy.
- Make a policy at school level that clarifies the expectations from the school leadership regarding the professional conduct of staff.
- Provide training for staff in managing difficult situations and support from zone coordinators when problems arise between parents and school leaders.

Other strategies to raise the status of school staff in the eyes of parents could include:

- Courses for teachers on developing good relations with parents
- Courses run by teachers for parents on current educational methodology
- The promotion of teaching as a respectable career and better coverage of teachers' and schools' success stories in the media
- Timetabled meetings to enable staff to have regular discussions with parents about their children's progress
- A curriculum that incorporates active learning methods and meets the students' needs
- An explicit policy, regularly communicated by school leaders, for teaching staff to treat all pupils equally
- The introduction of more vocational courses in schools and a Maldivian school accreditation system for pupils
- Career guidance or 'careers fairs' for students to help them understand the range of opportunities open to them
- Agreement with the parents that the school will ensure political neutrality in all lessons and activities.

INCREASING AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF ISLAND SCHOOL LEADERS

Improved training for school leaders would reap countless rewards. Training courses run by the Professional Development Unit (PDU), Centre for Continuing Education, the Faculty of Education and the Teachers' Resource Centre (TRC: online courses) should be prioritised for improvements and funding.

School leaders would also benefit from:

- A reduction in the amount of bureaucracy they have to deal with, freeing up more of their time for teacher management and support
- More delegation in relation to the school budget, to give them greater control over their own finances
- A review of the system for the appointment of school staff to give them more choice in new appointments
- Increased support and guidance from the zone coordinators. This would require improvements in the training and support offered to zone coordinators in order to build their capacity to support and guide school leaders
- Improvements in the capacity and effectiveness of the Educational Supervision and Quality Inspection Service (ESQIS)
- The establishment of an advisory body, or association for school leaders
- The introduction of three-year development planning and school self-evaluation procedures
- A performance management system that includes a job description with clear objectives, roles and responsibilities, to improve accountability and increase motivation and morale
- A reduction in movement and turnover. For example, school leaders could be given contracts that last for at least three years.

INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF WELL-TRAINED MALDIVIAN TEACHERS

- At a national level, raise the status of teachers by improving pay and conditions of service and by communicating more positive images of teachers in the national media.
- Improve conditions in the island schools in particular by providing teachers with subsidised accommodation, travel and health benefits.
- Attend to and develop the capacity of the Faculty of Education, particularly in the island campuses.
- The Ministry of Education could tighten the bonding arrangement in teacher contracts, so that it is more binding, to help reduce teacher attrition.
- Provide expatriate teachers with a full induction into the Maldivian education system and provide orientation training to ensure they understand Maldivian culture and help them integrate into the community.
- The Ministry should continue to review the curriculum to make it more relevant to the Maldives but also to ensure it prepares students for a global world and encourages a love of learning.
- Continue and upscale courses for Maldivian and expatriate teachers to help them improve their English teaching.

GAINING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- The Ministry of Education should clarify the role of the island chief in relation to the school.
- The Ministry should provide clear guidance regarding political division and the importance of political neutrality in the role of the school leader.
- Zone coordinators and/or the island chiefs should provide support for school leaders new to the island community.

1 INTRODUCTION

This research explores the constraints experienced by island school leaders in implementing changes in their schools to improve the quality of education in the Maldives. It examines educational leadership in a developing country that is striving but struggling to meet global educational goals and build on its indigenous roots. The aim is to evaluate educational change rooted in Western ideology against that rooted in the unique culture of the Maldives, considering the perceptions of Maldivian head teachers. The primary concern is to give a voice to Maldivian school leaders and their perspective on the constraints they meet. To understand this fully, it is also necessary to look at the perceptions of other stakeholders and the interactions between them.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

After 15 years as a school head in the UK, I volunteered with VSO as a school management adviser at the Educational Development Centre in the Maldives in February 2005. My role entailed training and supporting new head teachers in order to improve the quality of education provided for the island pupils. As I neared the end of my two-year placement, VSO Maldives asked me to carry out a research project into the problems met by school leaders in attempting to implement changes in their schools.

This research project has several roots:

- In my role as school management adviser with the Educational Development Centre in the capital, Male', I had become aware of many issues that affected school leaders acutely in performing their leadership function. Over a period of two years, I carried out a needs analysis, wrote a five-month accredited school leadership training programme (with guidance and support from a wide range of Maldivian educationalists) and trained 55 new head teachers. After the training programme, I monitored the progress of the head teachers in their new schools and gave mentoring support. They struggled to make significant changes due to a range of constraints. On visiting school leaders in the islands, it became clear that a major constraining factor was that much of the training provided was based on a Westernised framework that may have lacked cultural validity. I wished to explore this further.
- The head teachers I had trained made frequent requests about advocating on their behalf. They expressed the belief that they were meeting multiple restrictions in their effort to improve the quality of education in their island schools.
- The research also developed from an earlier global research project into the factors that were demotivating to teachers. The VSO The Maldives report entitled *Learning from Listening: A Policy Report on Maldivian Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession* (Wheatcroft 2005:16) highlighted the need for effective school leadership research and made several recommendations on school leadership in the Maldives:
"Universal primary access has almost been achieved and now the focus is on providing quality education. In the round table meeting, much discussion was generated on the topic of school leadership".

The report goes on to suggest there are three issues underlying the topic of school leadership: selection of heads, training and frequent change of headship.

- Based on recent findings in Valuing Teachers research, VSO International is focusing education and advocacy work on teacher management and support issues over the next few years. Projects are being carried out in several different countries. This research is part of that global research programme.
- The research was welcomed by the Ministry of Education and funding was made available from the British Council.

There is a great deal of research written on the widening gap between the capabilities of developing educational systems and the emerging demands of the information age (Cheng and Wong 1996; Hallinger and Heck 1996; Caldwell 1998; Dimmock and Walker 1998; Murphy and Adams 1998). The need for highly motivated, independent thinkers and learners demanded by today's information technology has led to strategies familiar to most educationalists: student-centred teaching and learning, school-based management, parental involvement, system decentralisation, curriculum reform and more. There is also a number of agencies in the

Maldives assisting the islands in striving towards their goals. One of the most important current initiatives is the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) programme and the related Teachers' Resource Centres, funded primarily by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This study also draws selectively on VSO International's Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques (START) methodology.

1.2 WHAT IS A QUALITY EDUCATION?

This research hinges on two very broad concepts and the complex relationship between them. The two concepts are quality education and effective leadership. My intention is to start by examining these concepts, explore the Westernised interpretation and contrast this with the understanding of the concepts held by school leaders in the Maldives.

In the *ActionAid Global Education Review* (2002:11), the authors urge that we should:

"...keep a strong focus on quality. In the quest to achieve education for all, we must never forget what education is for. National and international campaigning while needing focus must not be reductive, assuming that getting children into school is an end in itself. There isn't enough debate on the role of education in society, on the appropriateness or relevance of education, on the status and skills of teachers, on the curriculum etc. We need to ensure that we keep a strong focus on quality..."

Many researchers believe that quality is characterised by interrelated and interdependent strands. Hawes and Stephens (1990) give three such strands in relation to an educational system:

1. Efficiency in meeting its goals
2. Relevance to human and environmental conditions and needs
3. 'Something more', that is, the exploration of new ideas, the pursuit of excellence and the encouragement of creativity.

These strands, however, give rise to questions, for example: What is the relative importance of these areas? What are the goals? And what is meant by relevance?

Echoing the Hawes and Stephens' components, the Global Campaign for Education, in a paper entitled *A Quality Education for All* (Jellema: 2002), state that:

"A quality education system is one that succeeds in meeting its own goals; one that is relevant to the needs of children, communities and society; and one that fosters the ability of children to acquire knowledge and critical learning skills".

The paper goes on to identify six dimensions of quality, based on a framework provided by UNICEF, which sets out five principles of quality in basic education and to which the Global Campaign for Education have added a further cross-cutting principle:

- learners who are healthy, well nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities
- environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities
- content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV and AIDS prevention and peace
- processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools, and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities
- outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society
- responsiveness to the diverse needs of children, and accountability to parents, communities and taxpayers for educational outcomes, must be emphasised across all five dimensions of quality.

While I intend to question and explore all six of these dimensions in the research, Urwick and Junaidu (1991) also make a useful distinction between two contrasting paths to quality, which they describe as 'technical efficiency' and 'pedagogic'. The 'technical efficiency' orientation focuses on the provision of basic school inputs (especially numbers of teachers, educational materials and learning time), their effects on academic achievement and the consequent priorities for investment. This is characterised by positivist assumptions and by attempts to measure production functions through large-scale surveys. The 'pedagogic' orientation towards the quality of education does not give much emphasis either to physical inputs or to their 'effects', but rather sees teaching skills, patterns of school organisation and curricular content as the essential components of 'quality'. It is the pedagogic components of quality that interest this research most, but as Pennycuik (1993) points out, often the focus is more on the technical efficiency, as this is often easier to measure and **"...the measurable thus assumes unwarranted importance"**.

1.3 WHAT IS EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006), in discussing the meaning of leadership, state that:

"Leadership is about the organisational improvement: more specifically it is all about establishing widely agreed upon and worthwhile directions for the organisation and doing whatever it takes to prod and support people to move in those directions. Our generic definition of leadership...is very simple, then, it is about direction and influence".

Leithwood et al continue by asking the question, **"Is the value typically attributed to school leadership actually warranted by the evidence?"**

1.4 HOW DOES SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IMPACT ON A QUALITY EDUCATION?

In this research project, I intend to argue that the extent to which educational policies and other reform efforts improve what students learn depends on what teachers do. I also intend to argue that this has to be underpinned by effective leadership that supports and enables teachers to concentrate on high-quality teaching and learning.

O'Day and Rowan (1996, cited in Leithwood et al 2006) claim that teachers' work performance is functionally dependent on their motivations, abilities and the situations in which they work. As Leithwood et al (2006) point out, the relationship between these variables can be represented in this deceptively simple formula:

$$P = f(M, A, S)$$

Where:

- 'P' stands for teacher performance
- 'f' stands for 'function of'
- 'M' stands for teacher motivation
- 'A' stands for teacher abilities
- 'S' stands for their work setting.

Leithwood et al also point out that the relationships in the formula are interdependent and that all three areas need to be successfully occurring for quality educational provision to occur.

The implications for leadership practice of this account of workplace performance are that leaders need to engage in practices with the potential to improve all elements in the formula; the overall function of the school leader is to enhance the conditions of all three variables. Success, therefore, requires the school leader to be in possession of a range of cognitive and affective qualities, strategies and skills.

Returning to Leithwood et al's question, **"Is the value typically attributed to school leadership actually warranted by the evidence?"** there is a huge amount of research demonstrating the pivotal role of school leaders. In the UK, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has produced a substantial body of evidence about school leadership, commissioning researchers, conducting its own studies and scanning research findings within education and beyond (for example, business, schools and the public sector), in the UK and internationally.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) asserted a clear need to focus research on how leaders made a difference. Consequently, the NCSL looks at how school leaders make a positive difference to pupils' progress and achievements, emphasising the practice of school leadership, the importance of this and its impact on the quality of learning and the attitudes of pupils in their schools. This impact, however, is often challenged. O'Shaughnessy (2007), head of research at the Policy Exchange, recently claimed that:

"Head teachers have little impact on the quality of learning and the attitudes of pupils in their schools. It is a massive challenge to the existing orthodoxy and raises many questions about our emphasis on leadership".

O'Shaughnessy also goes on to argue that the quality of the school's teaching staff has more influence on school performance than the quality of the head teacher. The McKinsey report (Barber and Mourshed 2007) also claims that attention should be focused on the classroom teacher rather than school leadership.

Another debate led by Meindl (1995) on romanticised leadership argues that our confidence in leadership as a pillar of organisational effectiveness is misplaced. Gronn (2003) challenges the whole notion of leadership, identifying what he feels are important conceptual inadequacies:

- Difficulties in distinguishing leadership from management
- Tensions between leadership, influence and power
- The potential redundancy of leadership in the face of possible substitute factors
- Leader-followership's presumption of a division of labour
- The prevailing myth of exceptionality
- The consequences of the emergence of leadership design prototypes.

Embedded in each of these criticisms is the claim that, if leadership is to retain its conceptual and practical utility, then it has to be reconstituted in a distributed, as opposed to a focused, form.

I would agree that, in many schools, an effective leader would ensure that leadership was distributed, but this could depend on how well the school is functioning as a whole and the capability of the staff (an organisation's collective intelligence). An effective school leader, with a school that is functioning well, may indeed delegate leadership tasks and ensure that staff receive the required continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. In a school where the collective intelligence and the motivation of staff is high, distributed leadership will also ensure that existing hierarchies and unequal power and gender relations are challenged.

In a later paper, Gronn (2007) discusses the views of Lakomski (2005), who stresses that 'leadership' is just an arbitrary label and that organisations can be more productively understood as systems of distributed cognition. Gronn then discusses the concept of 'hybridity', which is neither focused nor distributed leadership, but a mixture of degrees of focus and distribution, that is, environmental adaptation to the organisation. Another reason why an effective school leader would strive to create an ethos where leadership was distributed would be because of the increasing complexity of the role. As Gunter and Ribbins (cited in Gronn 2003) state:

"...work in schools and universities has intensified due to the huge array of mandatory accountability and audit requirements as part of the price paid for self-managed institutional autonomy within a culture of performativity".

It is clear that there are different perceptions of leadership and of the value attributed. I would argue that, within the school, the focus has to be on the child's learning. The important person in relation to the child is generally considered to be the teacher. Within the school, one or more people need to ensure that all the conditions are in place to enable the teacher to provide a quality education. We return to the equation. The motivation, abilities and work setting have to be in place and supported in order for the teacher to perform their work effectively. This, I would suggest, is the work for the school leader or leaders. They will also have to judge the status of their school as a learning community in order to decide on the degree of distributed or focused leadership. This is my view made as explicitly as I can. Will it also be a view held by the island school leaders?

2 CONTEXT AND CULTURE

2.1 EDUCATION IN THE MALDIVES

The Maldives is an archipelagic state of 850,000 square kilometres in the Indian Ocean. It comprises of 1,192 tropical islands and a marine environment rich in biological diversity. Many of the islands are uninhabited but there are 90 tourist resorts and 198 inhabited islands. The population of 298,968 has a strong national identity, characterised by a common religion, history and culture, and a unique language and script. Forty-six per cent of the Maldives population is under 18 (Department for Policy and Planning, 2007).

On 20 December 2004, the United Nations graduated the Maldives from its least developed countries list. Income from tourism and tuna fishing has resulted in improved prosperity and living conditions. However, most of the wealth is concentrated in the capital, Male', and some of the more southern islands. In the 2002 *Poverty Reduction Partnership Agreement Between The Government of the Republic of Maldives and the Asian Development Bank* His Excellency President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom claimed that:

"...the Maldives should become one of top-ranking among middle-income nations in less than two decades" (ADB 2002:2).

One of the results of this increasing wealth is a current withdrawal of financial and skills support from aid agencies and NGOs.

In relation to education, *The Maldives Seventh National Development Plan: 2006–2010* (Department for Policy and Planning 2006) includes the aim of universal access to ten years of education for all, to increase the percentage of trained Maldivian teachers and to increase the proportion of the population with diplomas or degrees to three per cent.

At the September 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, the Maldives government promised, along with other nations of the world, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Maldives claims to have already achieved the MDG of providing universal primary education and to have established a national system of public education with a common national curriculum. However, this does not yet include national regard for children with disabilities. With the success in achieving high levels of primary and secondary enrolment, attention has been diverted to improving the 'quality' of education.

Among the issues identified in the National Development Plan for the 233 schools in the Maldives are:

- The proportion of untrained teachers at primary level: in 2006, there were 100,241 students, 2,935 trained and permanent Maldivian teachers, 1,519 untrained temporary teachers and 2,202 expatriate trained teachers. Untrained teachers therefore amount to 22 per cent of the teacher workforce
- The heavy reliance on expatriate teachers at secondary level (80 per cent)
- The limited curriculum on small islands
- Scarce learning materials and equipment (68 per cent of island schools lack basic teaching and learning resources and facilities)
- The double-shift system in schools (a classroom may be used by a Grade 7 class from 7am until 1pm and then a Grade 1 class from 1.30pm until 6.30pm)
- Concern regarding the suitability of the national curriculum in preparing students for the international syllabuses at the secondary level.

My perspective on the Maldives after three years in the country observing, listening and reading is that the Maldives is at a crossroads between tradition and change. Politically, as mentioned earlier, the president states that he is supporting the nation's move towards democracy. He has led the country for 27 years. Currently, the constitution is under review and the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and many of the population are calling for changes in leadership and in the electoral process.

Change in the political structure of the Maldives is a slow struggle as are the changes in the education system. The traditional role of the school head has been that of an administrator or manager. Cuban (1988) argues that a 'managerial' or conservative orientation is embedded in the **"DNA of the principalship"** in the United States. Efforts by principals to act in ways that depart from this conservative or managerial orientation are likely to face overt and covert resistance from above and below, as well as inside and outside the school. As Hallinger (2004:67) points out: **"In the light of this tendency, what could be more disconcerting to a school administrator than sudden pressure to assume the role of a leader of innovation?"**

In the past, many school leaders in the Maldives had little experience of teaching and after taking a one-year administrative course in Sri Lanka or India would become the school administrator. These school leaders in the islands may find it difficult to manage the changes being expected of them. In some instances, the school leader has delegated responsibility for changes in teaching and learning to a senior staff member, often the school supervisor. However, the approach to change is often the same.

Hallinger (2004) asserts that a key challenge facing principals throughout the world is 'cultural leadership'. Cultural leadership requires principals to assess the demands for a change originating in the school and its environment in the light of the school's capacity for change. School leaders must always be sensitive to the competing pressures for stability and change (Cuban 1988; Tyack and Cuban 1995). In a Maldivian island school lacking in trained teachers and poorly resourced, and with a school leader who is primarily an administrator and not a 'leader of innovation', change may be difficult.

In recent years, policy-makers have become aware of the need to produce the highly motivated, independent thinkers and learners demanded by today's global information economy. The small numbers of highly educated Maldivians are too few to meet the capacity requirements of the policy-making bodies. Educationalists and politicians are aware of this, as indicated by the National Development Plan. In education, they are forced to depend on outside consultants, NGOs and other agencies. School leaders are imported from nearby India and Sri Lanka. Unable to develop the capacity to develop their own unique education system, which builds on their own cultural traditions and prepares students for a global world, they become reliant on importing initiatives from different cultures that may not fit their current needs or may not fit with the cultural values or norms.

Learning in the island schools has, in the recent past, been traditional with a focus on memorisation as opposed to critical thinking. In the distant past, learning focused on the Qur'an and accepting handed-on wisdom and knowledge. It was, to a certain extent, ingrained in the Maldivian psyche that 'correct' answers always existed and are to be found in books or from the authorities. Religion was based on gaining knowledge and unquestioning obedience. Questioning authority was considered disrespectful and Maldivians are renowned for always saying 'yes' when they mean 'no', as to refuse a request is often considered rude. This unquestioning acceptance of authority appears to be changing both in regard to political leadership and in relation to authority figures within education, but attitudinal change on this scale takes time. Many of the Maldivian school leaders have relied strongly in the past on the power that comes with holding a position of authority and this is still evident in some schools.

Hallinger (2004) discusses the management of cultural change in Thailand. He describes a typical change strategy observed among Thai principals in the following terms:

- Announce the change to be implemented by the school at a meeting of teachers.
- Send selected staff to workshops for training.
- Leave staff to implement the new practices in their classrooms largely on their own.

This change strategy has been an approach observed in many Maldivian schools. Cultural norms could have shaped the behaviour of school leaders in this way.

However, as suggested by Leithwood et al (1996) and discussed earlier, successful implementation of change requires a repertoire of skills associated with leadership. Hallinger suggests that the following skills are required:

- **Vision:** understanding educational trends as they are evolving globally and interpreting them in ways that help local practitioners make sense of them
- **Motivating:** shaping a school culture that motivates and supports students and staff for lifelong learning and change
- **Organising:** organising the school's fiscal, educational and human resources to achieve its vision of new educational practices.

This approach requires a more proactive, involved and time-consuming engagement of the school leader with staff. One example where this approach may be needed is in the successful implementation of the UNICEF-funded Child Friendly Schools project.

Shareef (2007), in his evaluation of the implementation of the Child Friendly Schools programme in the Maldives, finds that success depends very much on the way the implementation is managed by the school leader and he endorses the view expressed by Hallinger. He also stresses the importance of having a curriculum that is outcome based and more flexible to enable teachers to teach in a more participatory way. School leaders also need to be able to adapt the approach to match the current level of teachers' skills. This requires the head to be able to interpret the programme ideas being introduced in their school and help their teachers make sense of the underlying concepts. He notes that an important consideration is that, in the case of the CFS programme, the concepts underpinning it have come from another culture and therefore, to ensure success, they need to be adapted to the Maldivian context so that they are responsive to local needs and values.

2.2 QUALITY AND CULTURE

A large part of the accumulated body of literature on quality in education and related fields, such as school effectiveness research, has been generated by a culturally homogeneous group of researchers from English-speaking backgrounds. In many instances, they fail to delimit the geo-cultural boundaries within which their models, theories, ideas, findings and conclusions apply. On other occasions, they naively advocate the transfer and adoption of policies and practices from one society to another. As Broadfoot (1997:20) claims:

“There has been no shortage of individual researchers, government agencies and international aid organisations ready to define problems and prescribe solutions according to their own priorities and their own cultural assumptions. Policy makers, too, are not slow to adopt policies that are culturally borrowed from elsewhere. This seems to be expected in a globalized world.”

However, as Oplatka (2004) stresses that the structure of educational systems differs widely across countries (Dimmock and Walker 1998; Lassibille and Gomez 2000, cited in Oplatka 2004). Bajunid (1996) summarises the issues well in posing the following questions to non-Western societies in pursuing a quality education:

- Is the wholesale acceptance of Western educational practices appropriate to your national goals?
- Are the educational practices you have adopted from the West consistent with and sustaining of your cultural heritage?
- What are your own intellectual traditions and indigenous approaches to education and cultural transmission?
- How does the indigenous knowledge embedded in your culture fit with the theories, assumptions and practices embedded in Western-derived educational programmes?

In her PhD thesis, *Maldivian Ways of Knowing*, Saeed (2003) argues for a schooling in the Maldives that builds on the indigenous culture:

“It is evident that while knowledge of other cultures is important in the global world in which we live, importing education systems from other cultures is self destructive... More than ninety percent of the Maldivian youth leave school having failed the school system. Making Maldivian children 'more English than the English' may not be very sustainable for a Maldivian community to survive in the long term”.

School leaders have often expressed concern regarding children working in English rather than Dhivehi from Grade 1, and there are many issues with an imported curriculum. I will return to these issues in the discussion section although further in-depth research needs to be conducted regarding these issues. As Dimmock (2002) states:

“There is a strong case for encouraging more postgraduates and academics to research the influence of societal culture on schooling and educational leadership since relatively little is known about it”.

A key issue is that successful policies and practices cannot simply be replicated and transplanted from one society to another, even with some adaptation. Before a particular policy or practice is adopted in a given system, there is a need to know why it is working in other societies and with what effects. This demands an understanding of the indigenous culture, its values, beliefs, customs and ways of life, all of which interact.

2.3 CLARIFYING THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

“Culture is an amorphous, ambivalent and contested concept” (Brislin, 1993).

Anthropologists, sociologists, culturalists and modernists tend to attribute different emphases, if not meanings, to the term ‘culture’. Anthropological and ‘culturalist’ approaches dwell on the values, beliefs and customs of distinct groups of people, whether they are at national/regional level (societal culture), local level or school level (organisational culture). From these perspectives, culture is based on the traditional values that have built up over a long period of time. Sociologists, on the other hand, adopt a more institutionalist position, viewing culture as an amalgam of values, institutional and structural arrangements, political and historical forces that together configure a society. Modernists emphasise the world as a changing environment, where traditional values are constantly eroded. They tend to see ‘culture’ as a mix of older and newer values, all in a state of flux.

Dimmock goes on to discuss the difficulties of delimiting the boundaries of culture in relation to say, history, politics, economics and religion. In contrast, the authors of the ActionAid report referred to earlier see that: **“There is a need to unpack the word ‘culture’...as we explore more deeply ...under the umbrella of culture there is a mesh of economic, political, and religious factors”** (2002). For the purposes of my research, I intend to take the broad definition and include interrelated aspects of history, politics, economics and religion.

Evidently, there is a great deal of literature on what constitutes ‘quality’ in relation to UK, Western or developed countries’ ideals, but how can I discover what is meant by ‘quality’ in the Maldives? If, as Crossley and Watson (2003) state, **“...an education system can only be understood in the light of a particular culture and society”**, how can I get to grips with what it means in the Maldivian islands? It is clear that when examining issues relating to quality in other countries, careful judgement has to be made in relation to its value.

However, there are a number of other ways that the researcher can get closer:

- Live in the country in question and begin to study the history, politics, economics and religion of that country
- Examine national and local documentation
- Ask school leaders, Ministry officials and those at the grassroots level (pupils and parents) what they understand is meant by a quality education.

The first I have begun and the last is part of my research. In reviewing national and local documentation there is a number of issues. It is not always easy to obtain documents: they may need translating, they may be very general and not specific enough to be useful or they may be contradictory. However, there is a number of helpful documents, which I have reviewed for this research. One of these is *The Maldives Seventh National Development Plan: 2006–2010* to which I referred earlier. Another useful source of information is local research projects undertaken by Maldivian colleagues and various reports produced in my place of work, the Educational Development Centre.

2.4 QUALITY, CULTURE AND THE POSITIONING OF THE RESEARCH

In Coleman and Briggs (2002), the concept of 'reflexivity' is discussed. They state that:

"...reflexivity denies the possibility of researchers ever achieving an entirely objective position ...the sense they make of the world is reflected in, and affected by, the norms and values that have been absorbed as part of life experience".

They continue to state that postmodern perspectives on the world distrust grand theories and meta-narratives while celebrating diversity, difference and the voices of the other. Context and culture are given increased recognition by postmodernists, thus Gadamer (cited in Hammersley 1995) argues that **"...all knowledge reflects the socio-historical context of its production."** Foucault (1972, 1977), Derrida (1981) and Lyotard (1984) are among the most influential writers who have pioneered postmodern perspectives. Recognition of the 'authenticity of other voices', for example, resonates well with innovative work carried out by international development workers who acknowledge the importance of understanding different world views and cultural differences at both the macro and the micro level (Levesque 2001; Ward 2002).

This is in direct contrast to the work of Robinson-Pant (2001), who discusses how the concept of development work itself embodies colonising ambitions to reproduce other societies in its own image. I am not convinced that there are always deliberate 'colonising ambitions' but I would agree that project implementation suffers when cultural differences are not fully explored.

The relevance of this for my own research is that I will be working **with** and **for** Maldivian school leaders instead of undertaking research **on** them. My research will be a case study of the Maldives, supporting school leaders in the identification of constraints from their viewpoint. I will be an insider in the research and part of my research will be an examination of our cultural differences and misconceptions. Many studies indicate that different stakeholders have different views on what constitutes a quality education (Boyle 2002). These differences in perception are emerging as a major constraint and several school leaders have identified the need for discussion and debate.

2.5 LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

In the island schools in the Maldives, school leadership is structured according to school size and the school leader's qualifications. In the largest schools, the well-qualified school leader is known as the 'principal'. In the medium-sized schools, the job title used is 'headmaster' or 'headmistress', and in the smallest schools, the leaders are called 'supervisors'. On each island, the roles and status of the school leaders are different. For example, in a large island school, the principal may be more of a figurehead, primarily involved in marketing the school while a number of supervisors may actually carry out the distributed leadership tasks related to the support of teaching and learning. In my last pilot data collecting conference, I began to take this into account by inviting all those leaders in a school who were involved with strategic developments or with ensuring teachers were supported effectively.

Oplatka (2004), as mentioned previously, focuses on examining school leadership in developing countries. He states:

"Literature on educational leadership is particularly related to the social and organisational structure of educational systems in the western world. However, the structure of educational systems differs widely across countries, and education systems are structured in very different ways".

Oplatka carried out a literature research project drawing on 14 different journals that looked at school leadership in developing countries. A number of issues emerged, which could be relevant to the Maldives:

- Many school leaders in the UK would claim that the school system is highly centralised, but Oplatka claims that, in many developing countries, the school leaders' power and autonomy is even more severely limited. This issue has often arisen during research interviews with head teachers in the Maldives.
- He also claims that school leaders are often valued less than in the West and that the post is sometimes more of an administrative public position than a leading position for an experienced education professional. In many developing countries, school leaders may have no knowledge or experience of teaching. Indeed, many of the Maldivian school leaders interviewed for this case study have never taught.

- He also states that school leaders are expected to ensure that the prescribed curriculum is delivered rather than adapted to pupils' needs or developed in collaboration with the community. Again, it could be argued that this occurs in the UK, but perhaps it is a matter of degree. In the Maldives, there are certainly issues relating to the use of English-medium-teaching and pupils' lack of attainment.

The degree of control over decisions about staffing that school leaders have may be low in developing countries compared to the UK (Ryan 1998, cited in Oplatka 2004). Similarly, there is little effort made in promoting quality teaching and there may be a lack of trained teachers or a need to import expatriate teachers. This is certainly an emerging central issue in the Maldives.

In developing countries, the school leader may be extremely conservative, concentrating on routine activities and unlikely to encourage innovation. The leadership style may be autocratic rather than participative or democratic and there may be a lack of instructional leadership. Sheppard (1996, cited in Oplatka 2004) identifies instructional leadership as one that is involved in framing and communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating teaching, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting teaching time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, supporting professional development sessions and providing incentives for learning. In the Maldives, the five-month training programme for school leaders that I was asked to write by the Ministry of Education at the beginning of my VSO placement focused largely on developing these very skills. These areas were identified by the Ministry as important and lacking. These areas were also identified as a weakness in the VSO The Maldives Valuing Teachers policy report (Wheatcroft 2005), mentioned earlier.

Two factors not discussed by Oplatka in his paper are the age of the education system in a particular culture and the impact of religion on school leaders' sets of values, attitudes and norms. The formal education system in the Maldives is 35 years old, in its infancy, compared with the Western world. The religion is 100 per cent Sunni Muslim and this has a huge influence on Maldivian school leaders' values, norms and attitudes.

2.6 EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND THE POSITIONING OF THE RESEARCH

In conducting research into educational leadership that takes societal culture into account, a key issue concerns the researcher's understanding of the particular culture being studied. 'Outsider' researchers also present problems in possibly lacking detailed knowledge and appreciation of the indigenous culture. On the other hand, 'outsiders' may bring fresh perspectives, which may not only highlight key aspects of a culture, but recognise salient differences between it and other cultures.

I described my research role earlier as that of an insider working 'with' and 'for' the school leaders in identifying their problematic issues. I am also, however, an 'outsider' as I am from a different culture. One aspect of my ongoing research will be to explore our different perceptions. In order to do this, I will have to explore my interpretations constantly with the school leaders and the focus group of Maldivian policy-makers that are participating in the research project.

2.7 THE MCKINSEY REPORT

I have elected to review briefly this report last, as I believe it will help to illustrate some of my arguments and my research position. This recent report, entitled *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out on Top* (Barber and Mourshed 2007), caused controversy and was, justifiably, reported on widely in the press. I will be referring to the findings of the study in later sections of this report and while I agree with many of the recommendations, I also have a number of questions. The authors of the report looked at 25 of the world's school systems, including ten of the top performers. The report claims that its main question to be addressed is the relationship between school leadership and the provision of a 'quality education' for school pupils. They examined what the high performing school systems have in common and what tools they use to improve student outcomes. They use international comparisons, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

My first question regarding the McKinsey report is that there seems to be little discussion of what a quality education is, and the comparative data seems to be primarily 'knowledge and skills in the key areas'. The components of a quality education are contentious and avoidance of this debate is understandable, but the report could be criticised as concentrating on a narrow model of quality. In research of this nature, should we now be concentrating on the skills our pupils will need in the future to cope with a fast-changing global world? Surely our first priority should be to discuss the attitudes, skills and knowledge needed by the next generation? The developing world could learn from the mistakes of education systems in the West and, perhaps with optimism, creativity and inspiration, leapfrog to educational prominence.

My second question relates to the argument that it is teaching that really makes the difference, rather than effective leadership. The report states that: **"...school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on learning"** (Barber and Mourshed 2007:29).

I would argue that it is unhelpful to rank these aspects, as effective classroom teaching is dependent upon good school management and leadership. Effective school leadership is a prerequisite and this is actually acknowledged later in the report (Barber and Mourshed 2007:40), when the authors accept that reforms rarely succeed without effective leadership. The report also contains minimal discussion regarding different forms and styles of leadership in different countries. For example, forms of distributed leadership in some Scandinavian countries might have a significant impact on teacher morale and motivation.

The three important factors identified in the McKinsey report are:

- 1 **Getting the right people to become teachers;**
- 2 **Developing them into effective instructors and;**
- 3 **Ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child"** (Barber and Mourshed 2007:1).

The report does conclude, however, that **school leadership is as influential as classroom teaching on pupil learning and, as such, high quality leadership is a key characteristic of effective schools**, citing Leithwood et al (2006:5) who note that:

"As far as we are aware, there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership"

and that

"...the effects of transformational school leadership on pupil engagement are significantly positive".

My third question relates to the lack of detailed discussion on cultural effects.

The report states that:

"...these three things work irrespective of the culture in which they are applied. They demonstrate that substantial improvement in outcomes is possible in a short period of time and that applying these best practices universally could have enormous impact on improving failing school systems, wherever they may be located".

I am not convinced that the cultural effects have been fully explored. The McKinsey report constantly refers to the importance of a country's context, culture, politics and governance on its school systems, but still claims that improved instruction has universal effects. But what is **improved** instruction? Does this mean that the characteristics of effective school instruction are universal? Would an effective teacher in the UK also be an effective teacher in China or the Maldives? Or do we ignore this and, as the authors of the report suggest, just ensure that the best graduates in each country become teachers?

Dimmock (2002) in an article entitled 'Cross-cultural Differences in Interpreting and Doing Research' gives a great many examples of cultural context and differences of meaning. One example is the concept of 'creativity', which, he suggests, is seen in terms of originality and freedom of expression in the UK and the US, but is viewed very differently in countries like Singapore and China.

The top-performing educational system in the McKinsey report is Finland. The country's success is attributed to its highly trained teachers (all have Masters degrees), despite the fact that the children do not start formal schooling until they are seven. There is little discussion of other explanatory factors; might effective parenting play a role, for example?

2.8 MALDIVIAN WAYS OF KNOWING: INDIGENOUS OR GLOBAL?

Reagan (1996, cited in Crossley and Vulliamy 1997) discusses a number of issues in relation to education in non-Western cultures:

- The importance of not confusing 'formal schooling' with 'education'
- The importance of community-based and communal education practices where child rearing is seen as a social responsibility shared by all
- Understanding that the education system may focus on its economical function, that is, emphasis on vocational education
- The roles of men and women are different
- Oral traditions may be stronger rather than written traditions
- The importance of values, morality and spirituality.

Shortly after arriving in the Maldives for my placement, I was fortunate to meet Dr Sheema Saeed, who was then a school leader in Addu. In 2003, she had written a thesis on 'Maldivian Ways of Knowing: An Inquiry Into Cultural Knowledge Traditions and Implications for Schooling' for her PhD. Although I will always be an outsider, her thesis gave me some insights into the unique culture of the Maldives and some idea of the impact that Islam has on the whole way of life.

Reagan (1996:123, cited in Crossley and Vulliamy 1997) states that:

"Islam provides far more than a framework for social organisation; it is a total, comprehensive way of life in which religion is integrated to economics, politics, law and society...Education from an Islamic point of view makes little sense if one removes it from a religious context, and it is in the Qur'an that educational thought should be grounded".

And Saeed (2003) explains:

"...They knew what was valid knowledge at that time. It was not a rejection of what was considered knowledge but an acknowledgement that the knowledge of the relationship to the Creator was more important than the factual knowledge of how things work. This relationship to the Creator is manifested in our daily life, in customs and traditions, in storytelling and poetry. The concept of relationship extends to other humans and spirits and a creation. Salahuddin who was educated in Addu Meedhoo described that the physical people are here on earth for a temporary time, while the spiritual self is eternal. The purpose of living is to nurture this eternal spirit".

Getting the balance right between retaining educational strengths from their indigenous past and preparing pupils for a global world is a huge challenge for the society.

One of the first initiatives by the newly elected government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom was to introduce a unified national curriculum across the whole country. While the curriculum was being designed in Male', new school buildings began to be built in all the islands and a teacher-training institute was established in 1984 to train the local teachers to teach the national curriculum. The three aims of the national curriculum were to provide 'universal' basic education for all, to increase trainable 'manpower' for national development and to make the curriculum more relevant to the local environment. As Saeed states: **"...these goals are incompatible with each other and have conflicting ideologies behind them"** (2003). She claims that making the schooling universal has resulted in agencies outside the Maldives having had the power to dictate what is acceptable schooling. Although not stated, the suggestion seems to be that funding from external agencies appears to come with strings attached. Saeed also claims that provision of a 'universal' basic education can be viewed as in direct conflict with the concept of a locally relevant curriculum. She claims that the locally relevant curriculum policy of the Maldives has ended up being marginalised and ignored.

An important aspect of the imported curriculum is that it is taught in English medium from Grade 1. Only Dhivehi and Islam are taught in the home language. This results in parents and local community members who cannot speak English being alienated from supporting their children and from supporting the school.

There is also evidence in the literature that teachers' lack of adequate English and poor teaching methodology often result in a poor quality curriculum. Shakeel (2007) claims that:

"Lack of English proficiency is the major reason for language minority students' academic failure...the evidence from this study suggests that even though teachers were trained in English Medium teaching, their E.M. methodology skills need enhancement to be competent to attempt to develop their students' cognitive and linguistic skills simultaneously with the curriculum content".

In the late 1970s, government-funded primary schools were established in all atolls. By 2005, all islands had a secondary school. Education is not compulsory at any level by law, but more than 99 per cent of children under the age of ten are in primary schools.

Children usually start pre-school at three or four years old in the Maldives. In many of the islands, this is fairly formal by Western standards and may take place in the traditional Edhuruge (a small school run in a local home, which traditionally emphasised religious instruction, reading and writing). Primary education starts at about six years of age and leads, after seven years, to secondary school. There are three years of secondary school, in which students prepare for the Cambridge examinations in six subjects. In addition, students sit two local subjects.

However, as Saeed points out, each year, around 90 per cent of the children leave school with no formal qualifications. This leads to disappointment, low self-esteem and may well contribute to other social issues such as the high drug usage in some islands. UNICEF (2006) claims that in some of the islands, over 50 per cent of the youth abuse drugs.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1 What do Maldivian stakeholders understand by the term 'quality education'?

- Do the views agree with the six dimensions of quality outlined earlier from the GCE paper *A Quality Education for All?* (Jellema, 2002)
- Is the orientation towards the 'pedagogic' or towards 'technical efficiency' as outlined in Urwick and Junaida (1991)?
- Are policies and practices adopted from other countries relevant to the Maldivian culture?
- Is there a globalised view of a quality education or is it more indigenous?
- Is there agreement?

2 What is the role of the school leader? How does the leadership role impact on the quality of education?

- What are the perceptions of school leadership in the Maldives compared with current Westernised views outlined earlier?
- How far is the leadership role linked to supporting the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom? ($P = f(M, A, S)$)
- How far is the role culturally specific and how far has it become globalised? (Oplatka 2004).

3 What are the constraints met by school leaders in striving to implement a quality education in their schools?

- Are the constraints as expected from the literature search?
- Are the constraints identified by the school leaders validated by other methods and other stakeholders?

4 What are the recommendations for reducing these constraints?

- What are the recommendations from the school leaders?
- Are other stakeholders in agreement?
- What are the concerns and cautions in relation to the report's recommendations?

3.2 THE CASE STUDY

Yin (1994) defines a case study as:

"...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomena within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomena and the context are not clearly evident, and in which the multiple source of evidence are used. It is particularly valuable in answering who, why and how questions in management research".

The aim of the case study is to provide a 3D picture of the situation. It should illustrate relationships, corporate-political issues and patterns of influence within a particular context.

This research aims to inform educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action in relation to school leadership in the Maldives.

It is an empirical enquiry because its starting point is the collection of data through observation, asking questions and extracting evidence from documents. The study is conducted within a localised boundary of time and space, that is, the location is the Maldives and the defined period of time is September 2007–April 2008. The focus of the study is a singularity: a group of head teachers working currently in school leadership positions in the Maldives. The 'interesting aspects', as discussed in the introduction, are the constraints met by the school leaders and solutions put forward initially by them and then explored with secondary and tertiary stakeholders. The problems they have in implementing a quality education deserve to be explored in order that they can provide a better provision for the 10,000 pupils in their island schools.

3.3 METHODS AND THE AUDIT TRAIL

3.3.1 THE STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

This was used to identify those people who should be involved in the research process. It was clear that the school leaders in the islands would be the primary stakeholders, but in order to get a fuller picture of the constraints, other groups were identified. This process was carried out with a small group of school leaders early on in the process, as soon as the research questions were clarified and the general research methods selected. The guidance given in the VSO START research methodology toolkit (VSO International, 2005) was followed and stakeholders were divided into three distinct groups:

- 1 **Primary stakeholders:** those who are directly affected by the constraints and who the focus is on, that is, the school leaders
- 2 **Secondary stakeholders:** those who both affect and are affected by the constraints, that is, the school staff, parents and pupils
- 3 **Tertiary stakeholders:** those who are in positions of power and could support school leaders in reducing the constraints, that is, the Faculty of Education (the main teacher training college with four regional branches) and The Education Development Centre.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Primary	Island school leaders
Secondary	School leaders in the capital (Male')
	Teachers
	VSO advisory teachers and office project managers
	Parents
	Pupils
Tertiary	Island community members
	Other NGOs and agencies working in the field of education
	The Education Development Centre
	The Faculty of Education
	The Policy and Planning Department
	The zone coordinators
	The Ministry of Education
	Educational Supervision and Quality Inspection Service (ESQIS)
Centre for Continuing Education (CCE)	

Having decided on the research focus and the people most able to help, careful consideration needed to be given to the methods that would be most effective in helping answer the research questions. In a case study of this nature, I wanted to give as many stakeholders as possible a voice in order to examine conflict and agreement and give opportunity for debate and discussion.

In my previous role as school management adviser, I had frequently held conferences for school leaders in the islands. These usually lasted for a few days and focused on areas identified by them collectively. I decided for ethical and practical reasons that I would continue to run the conferences and collect data at the same time. I felt that if I was continuing to facilitate continuing professional development as well as collecting data for the research, I could justify taking them out of school and that they would be more likely to attend.

In the past, I had found that discussion and debate during the conferences had often raised important constraints met by school leaders in their efforts to improve the teaching and learning in their schools. During one conference, while teaching coaching skills, I had used 'performed oral stories' to encourage school leaders to explore issues in more depth. I found that this method gave additional insights and depth to the problems met and in subsequent group discussion often raised possible solutions.

I discussed this with colleagues and decided over a period of six months to run five data collecting conferences in a sample of atolls. Having travelled extensively in the islands (18 of the 20 atolls), I was aware that different atolls have differing problems. For example, Addu in the south is distinct politically, economically and culturally from some of the more northern atolls. I was therefore mindful in the selection of atolls, to ensure country representation. I organised

five conferences for around 20 participants at a time. This gave a total of around 100 school leaders, an acceptable sample size in a country of only 300,000 people and 230 schools.

I interviewed ten of the school leaders in some depth during the conferences and accompanied one of the school leaders back to their island school after each conference in order to shadow them, look at school documentation and talk to staff, parents, pupils and community members. In this way, I was able to check whether the other secondary stakeholders also held the school leader's perceptions of the constraints.

During my six months collecting data, there were two VSO conferences planned in the capital Male'. These conferences were attended by volunteers supporting schools in the islands, which enabled me to collect their views during these few days.

Ten tertiary stakeholders were interviewed and representatives from each group were invited to form my focus group. I sought their guidance and advice at strategic times throughout the research process and I regularly asked them to check contextual and cultural understanding.

3.3.2 PILOTING THE RESEARCH TOOLS

I used the first conference in Noonu atoll to trial the different research tools that I intended to use with the primary stakeholders in order to develop my case study and focus on the research questions. The research tools I used were:

- Discussion groups
- Performed oral stories
- Interviews
- School observation and analysis of school documentation.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

I considered a variety of data collection methods but felt that simple discussion groups would be the most productive. This is less threatening to those participants who worry about their written English (in questionnaires) and lack confidence in their verbal skills when speaking an additional language (during interviews). During the conference, in groups of four or five individuals, I asked participants to discuss first the issue of effective school leadership, followed by exploring their views on what constitutes a quality education in the Maldives for the island students and the constraints school leaders have to deal with in promoting a quality education in their schools. The following tables summarise the key points that emerged from each discussion group:

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

<p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has good rapport with staff and students • Is responsible and committed • Delegates work equally • Monitors teaching and non-teaching developments • Rewards for jobs done well 	<p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctual • Listens/understands • Enthusiastic • Assertive • Firm/polite • Motivates staff and students • Ensures the school environment is safe and secure
<p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds appropriate teams for various activities • Values ideas, opinions and suggestions given by staff, students and parents • Good rapport with all parties involved • Sets guidelines for various procedures that involve staff and students, that everyone is aware of • Has the human touch and has compassion towards students and staff and is approachable to all • Has plans for the future and tries to develop the staff 	<p>Group 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements initiatives • Visionary, creative and enthusiastic • Leads and gives directions in an understanding way • Is trained and qualified • Does the right things

QUALITY EDUCATION

Group 1

- Aspirational (societal values)
- Standardised
- Clear school policies
- Well-rounded education
- Trained, qualified teachers
- Conducive environment
- Safe and secure
- Clear goals and targets

Group 2

- Safe environment
- Equal opportunities
- Activities to improve social skills
- Focus on learning for life
- A quality education encourages all children to achieve their maximum potential – high standards and high expectations from all pupils
- Focus on values
- Encouraging children to take responsibility for their learning and their actions

Group 3

- An education that makes special provision for the overall development of children, plus caters for their other special skills and talents
- An education that develops high self-esteem
- A place where children feel safe and secure
- Committed teachers
- Positive attitudes among the staff, parents and students

Group 4

- A conducive learning environment
- Learning through experience
- Proper guidance
- Enough resources
- Firm and consistent rules and regulations
- Child centred
- Safe and secure
- Assertive teachers
- Responsible and committed staff and pupils

CONSTRAINTS FACED BY SCHOOL LEADERS

Group 1

- Lack of support from parents of pupils
- Lack of quality teachers and poor teacher retention
- Lack of staff development programmes
- Difficulty of fitting into a new island community and getting on with island chiefs
- Island politics
- Ministry policies

Group 2

- Unqualified teachers
- Lack of parental support, particularly in regard to problem students
- Lack of competent support staff
- Semi-autonomy
- Too many routines
- Lack of authority
- Behaviour of pupils and drugs issues
- Lack of resources
- Isolation
- Lack of motivation of pupils
- Poor teaching
- Low standards in exams (Cambridge 'O' levels)

Group 3

- Poor behaviour of pupils
- Lack of respect from island parents for school
- Lack of respect for teachers, particularly expatriate teachers
- Untrained teachers, resulting in poor teaching
- Automatic promotion [of pupils to the next grade]
- Having to teach to the syllabus, even though it is much too difficult for the students
- Having to check everything with the Ministry
- No resources
- Students who do not take responsibility but know their rights

Group 4

- Never staying on one island for long
- Not being able to take family with you
- Difficulty of following on from the previous head and difficulty gaining the respect of the community
- Lack of respect from parents
- Poorly motivated pupils
- Poorly behaved pupils
- Untrained teachers and poor classroom management
- Isolation from Male' but all the power is there
- Lack of resources (human, material, time)

After each session, there was a discussion time to explore the concepts and terms used and check that any issues raised were fully understood. For example, in relation to school leadership, we explored together our understanding of the concept of 'monitoring' and what should be monitored and how. In relation to 'standardised', we found that the group was referring to end-of-year tests, which are currently written by individual teachers and are not standardised.

PERFORMED ORAL STORIES

In order to examine the constraints further, I asked the groups to split into twos and threes to discuss recent problems they had encountered in school and enact one of the issues for the rest of the participants to discuss in a supportive way. I have used this approach often in teaching with success, and found that it works particularly well here, perhaps relating to the Maldivian cultural heritage of storytelling, or perhaps a reaction to the 'lecture style' of teaching predominant at every level.

The oral stories performed demonstrated:

- A school leader having difficulty with two parents over a stolen bicycle
- A school leader having an interview with an untrained teacher who was demotivated and not controlling her class
- An argument between an island chief, his assistant and a school leader over a new initiative in the school
- A school leader trying to intervene in an argument about politics between two teachers
- A school leader phoning the Ministry about being sent an expatriate chemistry teacher when he needed a social sciences teacher
- A school leader dealing with a bullying incident.

Notes were taken during the sessions, and, following ethical discussions with the participants, I took some photographs and video footage for later analysis.

INTERVIEWS

During the conference, the interview process was piloted with two randomly selected school leaders. The purpose of the interviews was to continue to explore the constraints met by school leaders in performing their leadership function and to elicit their views on how these constraints might be tackled. Participants were asked for around two hours of their time. Working within an interpretive paradigm, I used an unstructured interview format and roamed fairly freely over the issues.

Before each interview, participants were given a paper describing the research and outlining the ethical considerations. They were informed that confidentiality would be maintained and that neither their name would be used nor the name of their island or school. The forms were discussed and signed.

The interviews focused on the constraint issues raised by the conference participants. The participant was given the list of issues and encouraged to discuss whether they agreed with them, if they could give examples and what ideas they may have had for solutions. The participants were not happy for a tape recorder to be used, so I took notes while they were talking; this also enabled me to step back and let the participants talk. I aimed throughout the interview to encourage, prompt and clarify.

SCHOOL OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION

After the conference, I spent a week with a school leader in Baa atoll. During this time, I tried to check the perceptions of that particular head in relation to his school and look for evidence of issues raised at the conference. I observed over 30 lessons and ran a four-day training course for his staff alongside him. I talked informally with staff, parents, pupils and community members, and studied school data including a recent inspection report.

3.3.3 DISCUSSION OF THE PILOT OF RESEARCH TOOLS

RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Wragg (1984:191) asks important questions in applying the concept of reliability to interviews:

- Would two interviewers using the schedule or procedure get similar results?
- Would an interviewer obtain a similar picture using the procedure on different occasions?

Reliability is clearly easier when the interview is highly structured, but I wanted to give respondents scope to discuss issues important to them and I wished to avoid leading them. In line with an interpretive approach, an unstructured interview was more appropriate.

In order to meet the reliability test, I asked a colleague in the Professional Development Unit to carry out the same procedure with school leaders when she was carrying out some CPD in another atoll. She arrived at similar issues.

In relation to the second point, the process for this research was repeated on five occasions at five different conferences within the research period.

The concept of validity is used to judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon that it is intended to describe. This can be partially met by being transparent and open regarding the research design, the methodology and the conclusions of the research.

TRIANGULATION

Nisbet and Watt (1984:85) apply the concept of triangulation to case study research:

“In order to guard against being misled, either in interview or by documents, you must check one informant against another, and test what they say against any documents which exist. Similarly, observations in one context must be checked against others in comparable situations”.

This study uses ‘triangulation of method’ to check school leaders’ perceptions of the constraints they are identifying. For example, if, during an interview, poor resources are identified as a constraint, is this borne out during school and class observations? The study also uses ‘respondent triangulation’, which results in cross-checking answers to the same questions, for example, by checking to see if there is an agreed definition of what constitutes a quality education between school leaders, parents and teachers.

DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative analysis needs to categorise factors and later link them to possible solutions. After the second conference in October 2007, I had enough data to begin to categorise the constraints being identified by the participating school leaders. In a search for a way to do this successfully, I came across the concept of ‘problem trees’, described in the START toolkit for research techniques (VSO International, 2005). This is a flow diagram tool used to identify causes and effects of key issues. It is useful after problem identification to place issues in their wider context. This was done by constructing a tally chart of issues raised by the school leaders in order to identify the issues raised most often. With the use of ‘post-it’ notes, I worked with a small group of school leaders to attempt to identify the core issues and look at causes and effects. This was a complicated process, but four core issues began to emerge:

- Lack of cooperation from parents
- Lack of autonomy of school leaders in island schools
- Lack of well-trained Maldivian teachers
- Lack of community support due to complex issues.

The problem trees (see Appendix) were initially constructed from the data collected from the discussion groups at the first two conferences, but an examination of the other data collected so far also verified these core issues. The performed oral stories focused on these issues. An examination of interview data also indicated that these were the major issues. School observation and analysis of documentation also confirmed these constraints to be of central importance. I had, for example, observed problems between parents and staff; I had seen frustrations caused by the school leader having to check everything with the Ministry; I had observed unqualified teachers of 16 or 17 years of age struggling to manage in the primary sector; and I had witnessed difficulties in a school caused by differing political affiliations of teachers.

However, I was also aware that having spent over two years working with school leaders in Male' and the islands, I had formed many opinions already about the problems and issues being experienced. It was important, therefore, to let the group work on the problem trees using all the available data, without too much input from me.

I also decided to repeat the whole process with a group of 29 school leaders studying at the Faculty of Education in Male' in November 2007. They were undertaking a one-year school leadership course and had all been school heads or were school supervisors from the islands. The problem trees that evolved were very similar, but also identified an additional issue: the need for increased training for school leaders. They also identified the need for training in managing difficult situations and in managing and motivating staff. This group seemed more self-reflective and self-critical, perhaps as a result of their current course at the faculty. There was also one other important difference regarding this group of school leaders, and this was the fact that there were slightly more females in the group than at the previous conferences.

The performed oral stories carried out at the two conferences earlier and the interviews undertaken also suggested a need for further training for school leaders in these areas.

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Analysing case study evidence is often considered to be the least developed part of the methodology, and hence the most difficult. Yin (1994) presented two strategies for general use. One is to rely on theoretical propositions of the study, and then to analyse the evidence based on those propositions. The other technique is to develop a case description, which would be a framework for organising the case study. This study follows the first proposal. In the first section, I carried out a literature review outlining current Westernised views on a quality education and on school leadership. I also examined some research on the difficulties that arise with these concepts in different cultures. I will now analyse the data in light of those views.

Data was initially analysed by colour coding with highlighter pens into categories and then coded again according to themes within those categories. Discussion group comments and notes made were coded according to the categories and themes. Notes from the performed oral stories were made from the video clips and coded. Interviews were analysed and again coded. Reports from school visits based on observation, discussion and analysis of documentation were also colour coded. Comparisons were made between all of the data. The process was ongoing throughout the six-month research period.

Data from the four conferences confirmed that the four issues arrived at using the problem tree analysis tool (lack of cooperation from parents, lack of autonomy of school leaders in island schools, lack of well-trained Maldivian teachers and lack of community support due to complex issues) were indeed core issues, and that a number of themes ran through all of them, for example: curriculum issues, gender issues, those connected with pedagogy and issues to do with capacity at all levels. These cross-cutting themes will be returned to in the final discussion.

After very careful consideration and some consultation with colleagues, a number of 'red herrings' or personal issues mentioned once and not supported through triangulation were discarded.

4.1 A QUALITY EDUCATION

In this section, my aim is to summarise the main findings in relation to the research questions. The intention here was to determine the differences between a Westernised viewpoint of a 'quality education' and the perception held by Maldivian school leaders at the four conferences.

1 What do Maldivian stakeholders understand by the term 'quality education'?

- Do the views agree with the six dimensions of quality outlined earlier from the GCE paper *A Quality Education for All?* (Jellema, 2002)

The lists elicited from the groups were useful as an aid to discussion. Often, it was only through discussion that the true meaning of the words or phrases could be elicited. A quality education was seen in very broad terms. In relation to the three strands identified by Hawes and Stephens (1990), there was little discussion relating it to national or global goals or to what a quality education was for in societal terms. The six dimensions of quality in Jellema (2002) were covered in part, with the exception of the fifth.

The following table presents a comparison between the GCE/Jellema dimensions for a quality education and the situation in the Maldives, accompanied by recommendations from school leaders participating in this research.

DIMENSIONS OF A QUALITY EDUCATION

GCE/Jellema	Situation in the Maldives	Recommendations from school leaders
<p>1 Learners who are healthy, well nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities.</p>	<p>Students in the Maldives are generally healthy and reasonably well nourished.</p> <p>Motivation to learn in some schools is an issue and school leaders are keen to improve the support for students from families and the community.</p>	<p>Continue to educate students in appropriate life skills programmes and involve students in projects promoting school and community allotments and gardens to improve their diet.</p> <p>Improve relationships and support between schools and the local communities.</p>
<p>2 Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities.</p>	<p>There is a number of initiatives underway to improve health and safety, for example, the healthy schools initiative funded by the World Bank.</p> <p>However, there are some issues connected with health and safety and gender equality.</p> <p>Many of the island schools do not yet have adequate resources and facilities.</p>	<p>Continue to introduce further health and safety guidance to schools with the aim of each school having a comprehensive health and safety policy.</p> <p>Ensure school buildings meet international health and safety guidelines.</p> <p>Improve opportunities for girls.</p> <p>Continue to improve school resources in the islands.</p>
<p>3 Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV and AIDS prevention and peace.</p>	<p>The National Curriculum is currently being revised and initial dissemination (the school leadership conference April 2008) indicates that it will be a great deal more relevant and will encompass knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV and AIDS prevention and peace in more depth.</p>	<p>School leaders were generally of the opinion that the new curriculum should build on the indigenous roots of the country and prepare pupils for a global world.</p>

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<p>4 Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools, and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.</p>	<p>The Maldives is changing to a more child-centred pedagogy in Grades 1, 2 and 3 with the aid of the UNICEF funded CFS programme. Currently schools are being supported by the Professional Development Unit in effective classroom management strategies and continuous assessment.</p>	<p>Teachers and school leaders are keen to adopt more active learning methodology and a more child-centred approach, but they are also aware that they need more well-trained teachers in order to do so effectively.</p>
<p>5 Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.</p>	<p>This project indicates that further debate here could stimulate students to view education more than as a means to getting a job.</p> <p>The value of education to the individual and to the nation seems to be often undervalued by students and by some parents and teachers.</p>	<p>There are many national documents and websites linking education to national goals and positive participation in society.</p> <p>Promoting discussion on these areas needs to be addressed in the new curriculum.</p>
<p>6 Responsiveness to the diverse needs of children, and accountability to parents, communities and taxpayers for educational outcomes, must be emphasised across all five dimensions of quality.</p>	<p>Many students leave school with no qualifications and a sense of failure. There is an awareness of this and there is currently discussion regarding the improvement of vocational qualifications and of implementing a system of Maldivian school qualifications in addition to the international qualifications.</p>	<p>School leaders all expressed the importance of more vocational areas of study and supporting practical facilities in schools.</p> <p>All participants felt that a formalised national schools award system should be implemented in order to recognise students' achievements and to increase motivation.</p>

- Is the orientation towards the 'pedagogic' or towards 'technical efficiency' as outlined in Urwick and Junaida (1991)?

There was evidence that many of the recently trained school leaders viewed their role more in pedagogic terms than in terms of technical efficiency. They were aware of the importance of 'leading learning' in their schools in addition to ensuring efficient management and administration. There was also evidence, however, of the school leader needing to use more sophisticated strategies to support staff in the implementation of new ideas. Policies and practices adopted from other countries need to consider carefully the culture and context of the country of origin and the needs of the Maldives. One example of this was the frequently made comment that some aspects of the CFS teaching methodology required skills beyond many of the current teaching force.

- Are policies and practices adopted from other countries relevant to the Maldivian culture?
- Is there a globalised view of a quality education or is it more indigenous?
- Is there agreement?

In examining the data, particularly the discussion transcripts, the views of these school leaders were much more Westernised than I had anticipated. The suggestion by some participants that we now have a globalised view of what constitutes a quality education seemed to be corroborated. As there are currently no universities in the Maldives, many Maldivian graduates return from overseas with Westernised and globalised viewpoints. This outlook is also increased by the expanding access to worldwide media and the internet. However, many parents in the islands do not have the same understanding of new methods of teaching related to our growing knowledge of how children learn. School leaders are aware that there are different perceptions of what constitutes a 'quality education' and of the importance of raising awareness in the islands. A good example of effective practice is the current parental awareness programmes being conducted in the atolls in relation to the Child Friendly Schools project.

What the school leaders were often describing as a quality education was, however, very different from observed practice in the majority of schools I had visited. This could have been partly due to participants giving me answers that they thought I wanted to hear, but Maldivian colleagues described similar responses. In the majority of cases, the view of a quality education that I was given was the one aspired to, not the one currently in practice.

There are also many concepts in education that may generate passionate support but in practice, lack operational clarity. For example, one school leader defined child-centred learning as ensuring that the child was simply happy and well cared for.

There was plenty of evidence that secondary and tertiary stakeholders did not always hold the same views as teachers regarding the components of a quality education. Parents and students viewed a quality education very much in terms of exam results and preparation for the world of work. Teachers tended to hold a much broader view. This was particularly worrying when discussing education with students in Grades 7 and 8 who were struggling academically, as one Grade 8 boy commented:

"What I want to come to school for? I get a job in a resort. I be a room boy. I earn more *rufia* than my teachers. Coming to school...waste of time".

One point that did come across very clearly was that without a well-trained qualified teaching staff, school leaders did not feel able to provide a top quality education.

4.2 EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

2 What is the role of the school leader? How does the leadership role impact on the quality of education?

- How far is the role culturally specific and how far has it become globalised? (Oplatka 2004).

The perceptions of the school leaders in relation to their role appears to be changing. Oplatka (2004) identified a number of issues common to school leadership in developing countries. The fact that school heads in the Maldives wish to have more autonomy, wish to be focused more on teaching and learning, wish to be able to adapt the curriculum to pupil needs, and desire to

take on the role of the instructional leader, as outlined by Sheppard (1996, cited in Oplatka 2004), indicates a growing awareness regarding the body of literature on effective school leadership. This, however, takes training and time, and school leaders are best placed to decide how much innovation and change their schools can cope with.

- How far is the leadership role linked to supporting the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom? ($P = f(M, A, S)$)

At the conferences, there was clear evidence that many saw their main role as leaders of learning or instructional leaders. They were aware of the importance of ensuring that teachers were enabled to do their jobs effectively in the classroom and were fully aware that teacher performance depended on them ensuring that teachers were motivated, that they had the training and abilities and that teachers had the work setting that enabled them to carry out their role. This is in agreement with the model discussed earlier by O'Day and Rowan (1996 – cited in Leithwood 2006) that teacher's workplace performance is a function of their motivation, abilities and work setting ($P = f(M, A, S)$).

- What are the perceptions of school leadership in the Maldives compared with current Westernised views outlined earlier?

During the discussions, it was apparent that, although on the whole school leaders were in clear agreement about their role, there was a number of constraints preventing them from doing this effectively, as identified in this research. Many school leaders also referred to the large amount of administration that had to be completed and the lack of administrative staff to delegate to.

There was clear evidence also of differences in perception between some of the younger and older school leaders. It is an oversimplification to suggest that older school leaders saw their role in terms of being a 'figurehead' or an 'administrator' and younger school leaders saw it as being 'instructional leaders', but this trend was certainly indicated to some extent in the data. One experienced and high-ranking educationalist commented during an interview:

“Several of the older school heads are not really experienced in classroom matters and are more administrators than school leaders. Many of the older heads cannot gain respect from the teachers because of lack of experience in the classroom”.

Without training, these school leaders are unable to undertake instructional leadership or even effectively monitor someone else taking on the role. The additional implication of course is that the role of the school leader in the Maldives is changing.

In the discussions, the majority of the school leaders described change in terms of Hallinger's (2004) first model: announce the change; send staff for workshops; and leave staff to implement, rather than the second model of outlining the vision, motivation and the organising and support needed to implement successful change. This suggests that school leaders may still be relying on positional power or simply may not have the will or the time to involve the staff in making decisions, or to motivate or support them. In one interview I had with a head teacher, he talked about his teachers' lack of motivation and asked for **“...a course for my staff on how they should get motivated.”**

4.3 CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having looked at how the school leaders perceive a quality education and what their views on school leadership are, I now wish to examine the constraints they have in using their leadership skills in supporting staff in implementing a quality education.

In this section, I will briefly outline the policy context and recent improvements and then examine the constraints and recommendations for further improvement. I intend to use the four problem tree headings devised by the school leaders, but have reworded them to turn them into positive statements instead of negative constraints.

The data confirmed that there is a number of challenging constraints facing school leaders in promoting a quality education in their island schools. Many of these constraints are interlinked and many will require long-term solutions. There was a very high consensus between different stakeholders on the constraints, but some differences of opinion on the resolutions.

The Maldives is at a crossroads politically and there is a great deal of healthy debate and discussion. In education, too, things are evolving. School leadership appears to be changing from the role of administrator to a role focused on leading learning. Child-centred methodology is slowly being used in Grades 1, 2 and 3. The curriculum is being rewritten and should be completed by 2013.

During the interviews, there was also an awareness shown of the importance of building on Maldivian strengths and not simply adopting ideas from the West, without taking into consideration the culture of the country where the concepts came from and the contrasting culture of the country of delivery.

4.3.1 INCREASING SUPPORT FROM PARENTS

THE POLICY CONTEXT

Before the island schools were built and the national curriculum introduced (1983), children learned in local houses. The compulsory curriculum for all was learning to read the Qur'an, and the parents were highly involved in the learning process. As Saeed (2003:204) comments:

“Not only did they choose the instructor; they also were with the child when the teacher taught. Thus, the parents knew their own child’s progress in relation to others. Their presence also ensured that the child was attending to the lesson. It was the parents’ commitment after the class instruction that ensured the child was progressing well”.

While the current education system ensures that the curriculum is broader and that many more children have access to schooling, the involvement and understanding of parents in their children’s learning is a great deal more limited. School leaders expressed concerns regarding the lack of academic support given by parents to their children, but also acknowledged that it was difficult for parents whose English language skills were poor and who were unable to access the curriculum themselves. As one school leader commented:

“They don’t understand the curriculum or the aims of our schools. Our parents are not educated. We have to work hard at supporting them and gaining their trust. We have started evening classes for parents in English and that’s helping. In this island it is only in recent years that we have taught in English. The parents wanted this because the children in Male’ (the capital) were taught in English and they were getting the best work opportunities in the resorts”.

An analysis of the data clearly indicates that the majority of island school leaders are seeking ways to improve their relationship with parents. In some interviews with school leaders, they spoke in glowing terms about the support they had from parents. They mentioned active parent-teacher association (PTA) support and fundraising initiatives, but rarely academic support for the pupils. In the majority of island schools visited, while parents ensured their children attended school and were immaculately dressed, they were unable to support their child’s school learning. At a recent VSO conference, ways of addressing this issue were discussed in relation to educational television. It was felt that the status of teaching could be raised and parents’ understanding of ways of supporting their children and motivating them improved through increased visibility on television programmes. However, it was noted that these programmes would need to have entertainment value as well. As one school administrator commented:

“Will they watch the educational programme or will they watch the Indian movie?”

Interviews with parents also indicated their desire to have more effective communications with schools and to be more involved in their children’s education. Concerns were raised regarding the standards of teaching and learning and the poor standards of behaviour in the schools. They also voiced concerns over the poor levels of English comprehension among students and the consequent difficulties for pupils in accessing the curriculum.

Many school leaders acknowledged these issues particularly in relation to standards of teaching and learning and often understood why there was a lack of respect shown by parents towards the school. One school head commented:

“This is our fault. The teaching is not good enough yet. The results are not good and pupils are not motivated. Sometimes the parents get rude and angry. Our untrained teachers do not know how to manage this and are rude back. A teacher should be a sponge and soak up that anger and respond in a calm and professional way”.

CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

Some school leaders confessed reluctance to letting parents come into classrooms where they weren't confident about the teaching ability of the teachers. This is understandable, but while the teachers' skills are improving, perhaps parents could give support in the library or by making resources.

In a few schools, conflict between parents and school leaders has led to complaints being made direct to the Ministry and school leaders being moved to another island. Sometimes this is necessary, but several reports indicate that it would have been better for the head to have been supported and problems tackled. Current political division in the country is exacerbating these problems.

Frequent movement of school leaders presents real problems and many school leaders have discussed the need to be secure in their jobs to ensure that long-term plans can be carried out. I could not locate any statistics on leadership movement among schools, but reports from VSO volunteers in the islands give many examples. One volunteer in Noonu atoll reported that her school had five head teachers in one year.

Many school leaders felt it was demotivating to be moved around at any time by the Ministry. This also gave them a sense of powerlessness and insecurity. Several school leaders mentioned a reluctance to make any changes because of the risk of upsetting parents during the change process.

Many of the school leaders living and working in the islands are not accompanied by their family. They have to leave their partner and children often for long periods of time, and because of the expense of travelling, rarely return home. Along with difficult living conditions, this adds to the frequent movement of school leaders. This high turnover of school leadership is unsettling for the school and, coupled with a lack of long-term strategic planning, results in the abandonment of partially completed projects.

In discussions with parents, it was clear that lack of communication was also a real issue. For example, there was a number of misunderstandings between home and school regarding behaviour. In a school in Addu atoll, the school worked with parents in developing a detailed school behaviour policy, using general guidance from the Ministry. Clear guidance agreed with parents has enabled the school to make great strides in improving pupil behaviour.

Parents were also keen to see a curriculum that matched pupils' needs and motivated them to learn. One parent commented that his child wanted to be a fisherman and couldn't see the point of attending school. His child was repeating Grade 8 and his English skills were not adequate to cope with a curriculum in the English medium. This child will not cope with Cambridge exams at the end of Grade 10 and will leave school with no qualifications and a sense of failure. Many participants in the research mentioned a need for vocational training and some Maldivian certification system of recognising pupils' achievements. Lack of career guidance also seemed to be an issue, although one school leader had taken the initiative and commented:

“I am working with parents to try and get pupils motivated to learn. I feel that pupils do not appreciate the career opportunities open to them. They can get jobs in resorts...not good jobs, but work as room boys for example, or they can get work fishing. They need better career guidance. Last year we conducted a careers fair with help from the employment ministry”.

Other issues raised by parents included:

- Teaching staff need to treat all children fairly: several parents commented on teachers favouring the children of important or wealthy community members
- Frequent requests from schools for financial support, which many parents said they could not afford.

In schools that are working well with parents, the causes of problems have largely been removed. Schools that work well with parents:

- Have regular meetings and parental awareness sessions
- Are proactive and meet with parents, explain new initiatives and gain parental support
- Give guidance to staff on working in partnership with parents and how to deal with complaints
- Have leaders who are receptive to parents and welcome them into school and are respected. These leaders are also clear regarding the differing but complementary roles of school and home.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a more proactive approach from school leaders in informing parents regarding changes being made in school and the reasons behind them.
- Introduce school contracts for parents when their child starts school, outlining expectations and the differing but complementary roles of home and school to help clarify the relationship between schools and parents. This would need to be developed by the school in partnership with parents.
- Develop and share with parents a clear student behaviour policy.
- Make a policy at school level that clarifies the expectations from the school leadership regarding the professional conduct of staff.
- Provide training for staff in managing difficult situations and support from zone coordinators when problems arise between parents and school leaders.

Other strategies to raise the status of school staff in the eyes of parents could include:

- Courses for teachers on developing good relations with parents
- Courses run by teachers for parents on current educational methodology
- The promotion of teaching as a respectable career and better coverage of teachers' and schools' success stories in the media
- Timetabled meetings to enable staff to have regular discussions with parents about their children's progress
- A curriculum that incorporates active learning methods and meets the students' needs
- An explicit policy, regularly communicated by school leaders, for teaching staff to treat all pupils equally
- The introduction of more vocational courses in schools and a Maldivian school accreditation system for pupils
- Career guidance or 'careers fairs' for students to help them understand the range of opportunities open to them
- Agreement with the parents that the school will ensure political neutrality in all lessons and activities.

4.3.2 INCREASING AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF ISLAND SCHOOL LEADERS

THE POLICY CONTEXT

Since the introduction of the national curriculum and the building of the island schools, control of schools has been centralised and run from Male'. There are, however, indications that more autonomy may be given to schools at atoll level and the development of a teaching and resource centre at each atoll is an indication of this. School leaders seem to generally feel that the control over them from Male' is too tight, prevents them from responding to local needs and slows down improvement and initiative, leading to a decline in their motivation to invest in new initiatives. School leaders frequently expressed frustration after repeatedly telephoning Ministry officials and not getting any response. One school leader explained that he had community funding and support to build a school library, but couldn't get permission from the Ministry. Other complaints clustered around issues to do with the amount of paperwork requested by the Ministry, tying them up with administrative work.

There were also issues to do with feelings of isolation in the islands and unclear career prospects with school leaders feeling that they could be moved at any time to another island.

In section 2.5, I discussed Oplatka's (2004) findings in relation to school leadership in developing countries. Many of his findings are confirmed in this study. His first claim related to a lack of autonomy for school leaders in some developing countries.

Without exception, all the school leaders interviewed made statements agreeing about their lack of autonomy. When questioned further, in discussion groups, what they were primarily referring to was the large amount of paperwork demanded by the Ministry. They also expressed feelings of frustration at every small matter having to be checked with the Ministry first. One commented that: **"I had to contact the Ministry for pencils and rubbers"**.

CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

In relation to the concept of increased autonomy, many school leaders acknowledged that they needed further training to increase their skills. Several of the participants interviewed also discussed the need for accountability. They acknowledged the need for detailed job descriptions and a system of performance management and appraisal. In the UK, this would be linked to school self-evaluation and school development planning, but this 'bigger picture' was not evident.

Many of the school leaders expressed a desire for a decentralised system with more capacity possibly at atoll level. While sympathetic to the lack of capacity at zone and Ministry level, they were frustrated at not being able to contact people when they needed help or advice. They also commented that the pace of change in their schools was obstructed because they had to check everything and the response was often slow.

The sense of not being trusted also arose and several school leaders commented that they would like more delegation in relation to the school budget and in relation to staffing. Oplatka (2004) also claimed that school leaders' degree of control with regard to staffing may be low compared to Western countries such as the UK. As a school head in the UK, I would interview potential teachers and, along with the governing body's personnel committee, would appoint the best applicant for the post within delegated budgetary constraints. In the Maldives, the Ministry appoints the teachers. One head teacher said that he would like a say in staff appointments:

"We don't have any say in appointments. We could at least see the application forms. Once we have a teacher here it is nearly impossible to get rid of them. Also I asked for a chemistry teacher and I was sent a teacher of social sciences".

Several school leaders mentioned that they felt they were not trusted by the Ministry and bemoaned the fact that they could not adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Oplatka (2004) further states that school leaders are expected to ensure that the prescribed curriculum is delivered rather than adapted to pupils' needs or developed. School leaders in the Maldives generally acknowledged that teaching needed to be a great deal more active and the prescribed curriculum should be differentiated according to pupils' needs. My research suggests that school leaders have more flexibility with the curriculum than they think, providing they gain the support of parents. A few of the school leaders commented that they did adapt the curriculum, but didn't let anyone outside the school know. The suggestion was that it would reflect on them badly and that their pupils weren't keeping up! During the focus group meeting, a zone coordinator commented that it was perfectly acceptable for a head teacher to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. This was one example of many collected during the research that indicated communication issues.

As discussed earlier, another issue, again often related to lack of capacity at Ministry level, was the fact that school leaders who have problems with parents or community members are frequently moved to another school. When zone coordinators judge that there are major issues that cannot be remedied, this is understandable, but many school leaders expressed the view that it was easier to move them on rather than deal with the issue. This doesn't make them feel valued and, as I mentioned earlier, leads to a sense of powerlessness and insecurity. One head teacher, in commenting about change within his school stated: **"... change upsets the parents. They don't like change. If I make changes they complain to the Ministry and I get moved to another island...so I don't make changes"**. Another head teacher commented: **"We need to be in a school for at least three years to make anything happen and improve things"**.

On one school visit, a head teacher had been introducing a new behaviour policy for his school, but when a few parents complained and said they didn't want the proposed changes, the development was dropped without any further discussion.

Oplatka (2004) claims that, in developing countries, the school leader may be extremely conservative, concentrating on routine activities and unlikely to encourage innovation. At the beginning of this study, I argued why I believed 'instructional leadership' to be a vital part of the school leaders' role. If, as Sheppard (1996, cited in Oplatka 2004) states, instructional leadership is one that is involved with framing and communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation of teaching, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting teaching time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, supporting professional development and providing incentives for learning, the school leader in the Maldives has to develop their role or ensure that they effectively delegate and monitor. However, as discussed, there seem to be many factors mitigating against school leaders being innovators.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improved training for school leaders would reap countless rewards. Training courses run by the Professional Development Unit (PDU), Centre for Continuing Education, the Faculty of Education and the Teachers' Resource Centre (TRC: online courses) should be prioritised for improvements and funding.

School leaders would also benefit from:

- A reduction in the amount of bureaucracy they have to deal with, freeing up more of their time for teacher management and support
- More delegation in relation to the school budget, to give them greater control over their own finances
- A review of the system for the appointment of school staff to give them more choice in new appointments
- Increased support and guidance from the zone coordinators. This would require improvements in the training and support offered to zone coordinators in order to build their capacity to support and guide school leaders
- Improvements in the capacity and effectiveness of the Educational Supervision and Quality Inspection Service (ESQIS)
- The establishment of an advisory body, or association for school leaders
- The introduction of three-year development planning and school self-evaluation procedures
- A performance management system that includes a job description with clear objectives, roles and responsibilities, to improve accountability and increase motivation and morale
- A reduction in movement and turnover. For example, school leaders could be given contracts that last for at least three years.

4.3.3 INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF WELL-TRAINED MALDIVIAN TEACHERS

THE POLICY CONTEXT

The shortage of well-trained teacher was felt by many of the participants to be the most crucial factor. I also argued earlier that the most important school leadership function is to support school staff.

As identified earlier, among the issues outlined in the *Statistical Year Book* (Department for Policy and Planning, 2007) is the lack of qualified trained teachers, particularly in the islands. The Maldives is a small country (population 300,000) with a large proportion of the population (95,000) being of school age, and with a relatively new education system. There is awareness of the issue and of the importance of having well-trained class teachers. However, teaching is currently not highly regarded as a career and there is a recruitment and retention issue.

CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

The Faculty of Education in Male' now has three other campuses in the islands and these are expanding. Students accepted on to teaching courses are given grants and enter into a 'bonding arrangement', which is intended to ensure that teacher trainees take up and remain in teaching posts for a specified number of years after qualifying. However, the bonding arrangement, as it currently stands, is failing to achieve its purpose, as it allows trainees to take up postings in

other public sector professions, such as those in the police force. During interviews, I was given an example of one cohort of 50 trained teachers, out of which only two went into teaching. Although this is an extreme case, it illustrates that there is a number of complex recruitment and retention issues that need to be addressed. Teachers trained in Male' also seem to wish to stay in the busy capital, although some are happy to return to their birth islands. There is a reluctance to work on islands they do not know.

There is a 'quality' versus 'quantity' issue here, too, with the faculty often having difficult decisions regarding entry criteria. In a bid to train more teachers, the entry qualifications are sometimes lowered.

As the teaching and learning improves in schools, more pupils will become eligible to undertake teaching diplomas and degrees at the Faculty of Education. However, teaching also has to become a more attractive career choice than, for instance, working in tourism or the police force. One head teacher commented that: **"The pupils here observe how badly the teachers are treated by parents and they don't want that for themselves. Pay and conditions need to be improved too to make teaching more attractive"**. Another stated that: **"The media doesn't portray schools in a good light. We need more positive reports celebrating our successes"**.

There are many capable people in schools who are anxious to do their best but who lack sufficient training. Interview data suggests that many of the school leaders frequently request outside support and training for their teachers rather than consider in-house training. This dependency on outside providers results in a great deal of CPD and training opportunities missed, for example, teacher coaching and mentoring support activities. There has been, however, an increasing number of school leaders taking the initiative and carrying out their own staff training. For example, one of the school leaders that I trained telephoned to request materials on continuous assessment so that she could carry out some training for her teachers in the primary sector.

The Teachers' Resource Centres being set up in each atoll should enable staff training at atoll level, but there is a number of hurdles to be overcome. In many of the islands, school leaders report that it is easier for teachers to get to Male' than it is for them to reach the TRC island. Travel between the islands is difficult during the monsoon season and expensive. One head teacher also commented that he thought the TRC school leader was pleased with the centre and all the expensive computer equipment, but he doubted that it would be shared. When I talked with the head of the TRC, I expected this claim to be refuted, but he commented:

"The TRC is only used by my staff. They use the computers to browse the net. It is a pity the pupils can't use it, too. It is going to be very difficult for teachers in other islands to get here. They might be better with online courses but each school will need internet facilities with broadband and technical support. Some islands might also need a generator".

This comment was echoed by another head teacher:

"It would have been better if the money had been spent on equipping each school with good internet facilities and then developing good online courses. The teachers could study in their own time together. The parents don't like teachers having time off school to go on courses and they can't go on Fridays because of prayers. They don't like to travel on Fridays. On Saturday, we often have school events".

As argued in the McKinsey report (Barber and Mourshed 2007), the most important factor in an education system is the quality of the teachers. The report adds that the quality of the teachers is also dependent on the support and motivation given by the school leader. One effect of the low numbers of trained Maldivian teachers is the resulting need to recruit large numbers of expatriate teachers from neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka and India. Many of these teachers are committed and hard working, but many also experience cultural difficulties. It is often difficult for them to fit in with the small island communities and different religious beliefs. Many of the school leaders also commented that their teaching style is very different from the Maldivian approach. This is also apparent in their management of pupil behaviour. While school leaders struggle to support these teachers and retain them, they struggle with the teaching in the classroom. They also frequently express concern regarding the problems that pupils face in accessing the curriculum because of poor English.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- At a national level, raise the status of teachers by improving pay and conditions of service and by communicating more positive images of teachers in the national media.
- Improve conditions in the island schools in particular by providing teachers with subsidised accommodation, travel and health benefits.
- Attend to and develop the capacity of the Faculty of Education, particularly in the island campuses.
- The Ministry of Education could tighten the bonding arrangement in teacher contracts, so that it is more binding, to help reduce teacher attrition.
- Provide expatriate teachers with a full induction into the Maldivian education system and provide orientation training to ensure they understand Maldivian culture and help them integrate into the community.
- The Ministry should continue to review the curriculum to make it more relevant to the Maldives but also to ensure it prepares students for a global world and encourages a love of learning.
- Continue and upscale courses for Maldivian and expatriate teachers to help them improve their English teaching.

4.3.4 GAINING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

THE POLICY CONTEXT

Many of the school leaders commented that it was often very difficult settling in a new island. They often had difficulties settling in and gaining the respect of the community. As one head teacher said: **“It is much easier working in Male’ or in your own island where you know the culture and you have a relationship with all the key people already”**. Clearly, it is not always possible for the zone coordinators and the Ministry to place school leaders in their own islands. Many school leaders also identified that low standards of teaching and learning in schools had led to lowered respect from the community. Schools are often the social hub of the island and gaining harmonious support from the community is important.

CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

Several participants at all levels stressed the importance of school leaders and staff members always behaving in a professional manner both within school and within the small community in which they live (for example, not getting involved in island politics). In some communities, difficult power relationships evolve. One head teacher explained: **“The island chief or the richest man on the island has the support of the community and may undermine the authority of the head. Lack of clear roles in relation to schools can make this worse”**.

Several teachers I spoke to in schools commented that, occasionally, children of important island community members were not treated in the same way as other island children. For example, I heard several stories where children hadn’t been punished after a misdemeanour because staff feared there would be retribution. Some of the school leaders I observed during the performed oral stories demonstrated the emotional intelligence and resilience to deal with this. One female head teacher reported:

“When I arrived in the island, the island chief had been leading the school and I knew he could be a problem to me but I stroked him. I tried to involve him in all the decisions we made and I always sought his advice and welcomed him into school. I made him feel important and valued, and I did value his opinion. I have left the school now and I am studying in Male’ but we are still good friends”.

School leaders during the conferences often expressed the desire to improve their skills in order to win community respect and support.

Many of the expatriate school leaders found it extremely difficult to fit in with the community. Many have very different cultural backgrounds and different religious beliefs. However, there were many exceptions and I have met some highly regarded school leaders who are accepted and respected by the small island community they serve.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Ministry of Education should clarify the role of the island chief in relation to the school.
- The Ministry should provide clear guidance regarding political division and the importance of political neutrality in the role of the school leader.
- Zone coordinators and/or the island chiefs should provide support for school leaders new to the island community.

5 CONCLUSION

In this section, my aim is to summarise the main findings in relation to the research questions.

1 What do Maldivian stakeholders understand by the term 'quality education'?

- Do the views agree with the six dimensions of quality outlined earlier from the GCE paper *A Quality Education for All?* (Jellema 2002)
- Is the orientation towards the 'pedagogic' or towards 'technical efficiency' as outlined in Urwick and Junaida (1991)?
- Are policies and practices adopted from other countries relevant to the Maldivian culture?
- Is there a globalised view of a quality education or is it more indigenous?
- Is there agreement?

In summary, the six dimensions of quality were all referred to by participants. The consensus of opinion was that, in general, the children attending school in the Maldives are healthy, well nourished and ready to participate and learn in school. Involving children in their learning in a more participatory way, ensuring the curriculum meets their needs, and discussing with them how a good education can enhance their lives may increase their motivation. There was a number of suggestions from school leaders and other stakeholders on how they could increase the involvement of families and the community, and there are schools with good practice that could share strategies.

In relation to the second dimension, schools in the islands would benefit from improved resources and facilities. More locally made resources could also be utilised. A number of initiatives are being implemented to ensure that health and safety issues are addressed.

The curriculum is being updated and should be complete by 2013. It is important to school leaders that the curriculum is matched to the children's abilities and gives them a sense of achievement. School leaders also expressed the view that the curriculum should prepare students for a global world but also build on their unique indigenous roots.

As discussed earlier, child-centred approaches are being implemented and it is important that school leaders manage the process effectively and support staff in their professional development.

Very few school leaders linked the teaching and learning to national goals for education or to positive participation in society. Perhaps this is an area for discussion and debate.

Accountability of school leaders for their school's performance is an area that they felt could be developed in the future as capacity of different educational bodies increases. A system of performance management and appraisal was felt to be beneficial and could be balanced with increased autonomy.

There was evidence that many of the recently trained school leaders viewed their role more in pedagogic terms than in terms of technical efficiency. They were aware of the importance of 'leading learning' in their schools in addition to ensuring efficient management and administration. There was also evidence, however, of the school leader needing to use more sophisticated strategies to support staff in the implementation of new ideas. Policies and practices adopted from other countries need to carefully consider the culture and context of the country of origin and the needs of the Maldives.

As there are currently no universities in the Maldives, many Maldivian graduates return from overseas with Westernised and globalised viewpoints. This outlook is also increased by the expanding access to worldwide media and the internet. However, many parents in the islands do not have the same understanding of new methods of teaching related to our growing knowledge of how children learn. School leaders are aware that there are different perceptions of what constitutes a 'quality education' and of the importance of raising awareness in the islands. A good example of effective practice is the current parental awareness programmes being conducted in the atolls in relation to the Child Friendly Schools project.

2 What is the role of the school leader? How does the leadership role impact on the quality of education?

- What are the perceptions of school leadership in the Maldives compared with current Westernised views outlined earlier?
- How far is the leadership role linked to supporting the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom? ($P = f(M, A, S)$)
- How far is the role culturally specific and how far has it become globalised? (Oplatka 2004).

The perceptions of the school leader in relation to their role appear to be changing. Oplatka (2004) identified a number of issues common to school leadership in developing countries. The fact that school leaders in the Maldives wish to have more autonomy, wish to be focused more on teaching and learning, wish to be able to adapt the curriculum to pupils' needs, and desire to take on the role of the instructional leader, as outlined by Sheppard (1996, cited in Oplatka 2004) indicates a growing awareness regarding the body of literature on effective school leadership. This, however, takes training and time, and school leaders are best placed to decide how much innovation and change their schools can cope with.

Their impact on the quality of education for the island pupils has to be related to improving their teachers' performance, and according to the body of research discussed earlier, performance relies on the interplay of teachers' motivation, abilities and the work setting. All school leaders agreed that it is vital to increase the numbers of well-trained and motivated Maldivian teachers.

3 What are the constraints met by school leaders in striving to implement a quality education in their schools?

- Are the constraints as expected from the literature search?
- Are the constraints identified by the school leaders validated by other methods and other stakeholders?

The constraints identified by the school leaders reflect the issues raised in the literature search. The four core areas: lack of cooperation from parents, lack of autonomy, lack of well-trained Maldivian teachers, and complex community issues all have their causes and effects. The major overriding causes appear to be a young educational system struggling with lack of capacity. As the system improves and there are more trained graduates, the work load will become more evenly spread. Currently, progress does appear to be being made in all areas, but as the school leaders are aware, it takes time, planning and financial support. There are also issues of sustainability to be addressed particularly as outside support is withdrawn.

4 What are the recommendations for reducing these constraints?

- What are the recommendations from the school leaders?
- Are other stakeholders in agreement?
- What are the concerns and cautions in relation to the report's recommendations?

CONCERNS AND CAUTIONS

The Maldives is at a crossroads politically and there is a great deal of healthy debate and discussion. In education, too, things are evolving. School leadership appears to be changing from the role of administrator to a role focused on leading learning. Child-centred methodology is slowly being used in Grades 1, 2 and 3. The curriculum is being rewritten and should be completed by 2013.

During the interviews, there was also an awareness shown of the importance of building on Maldivian strengths and not simply adopting ideas from the West, without taking into consideration the culture and context of the country where the concepts came from and the contrasting culture and context of the country of delivery.

The recommendations made by the school leaders and other stakeholders are numerous and many of them require long-term commitment. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore these recommendations in more depth, but it is important to prioritise and plan carefully.

During this research, I have come across a concept that I would term 'leapfrogging'. An example relates to a request from several school leaders for chemicals to be supplied to their schools

so that the chemistry teachers could carry out practical demonstrations in their classrooms. The constraint, no chemicals, seemed to have an obvious answer: supply chemicals. But further investigation indicated that some chemistry teachers, although having a degree in chemistry, lacked knowledge in relation to carrying out practical demonstrations safely; inadequate storage facilities in some schools resulted in dangerous storage solutions; and lack of guidance on the disposal of dangerous chemicals also led to hazards in school. Only after careful investigation were the processes and practices that needed to be put into place before supplying chemicals, clarified.

Another consideration raised by participants is that before initiating recommendations, the issue of sustainability has to be considered. Many innovations in the West have failed because the capacity of the school to sustain them long term has not been fully considered. Lack of sustainability of successful projects could be attributed to economic or capacity issues. With many aid agencies withdrawing from the Maldives, it is certainly something to be considered.

FOLLOW-UP

The country's educational development plan is currently being reviewed. It is hoped that some of the school leaders' recommendations in this research will be included.

A paper outlining the findings was also disseminated to every school leader attending the head teachers' conference in April 2008 and given to other educationalists for feedback. VSO is, unfortunately, withdrawing from the Maldives in 2009 but it is hoped that this research will serve as a useful parting gift from VSO to the people of the Maldives.

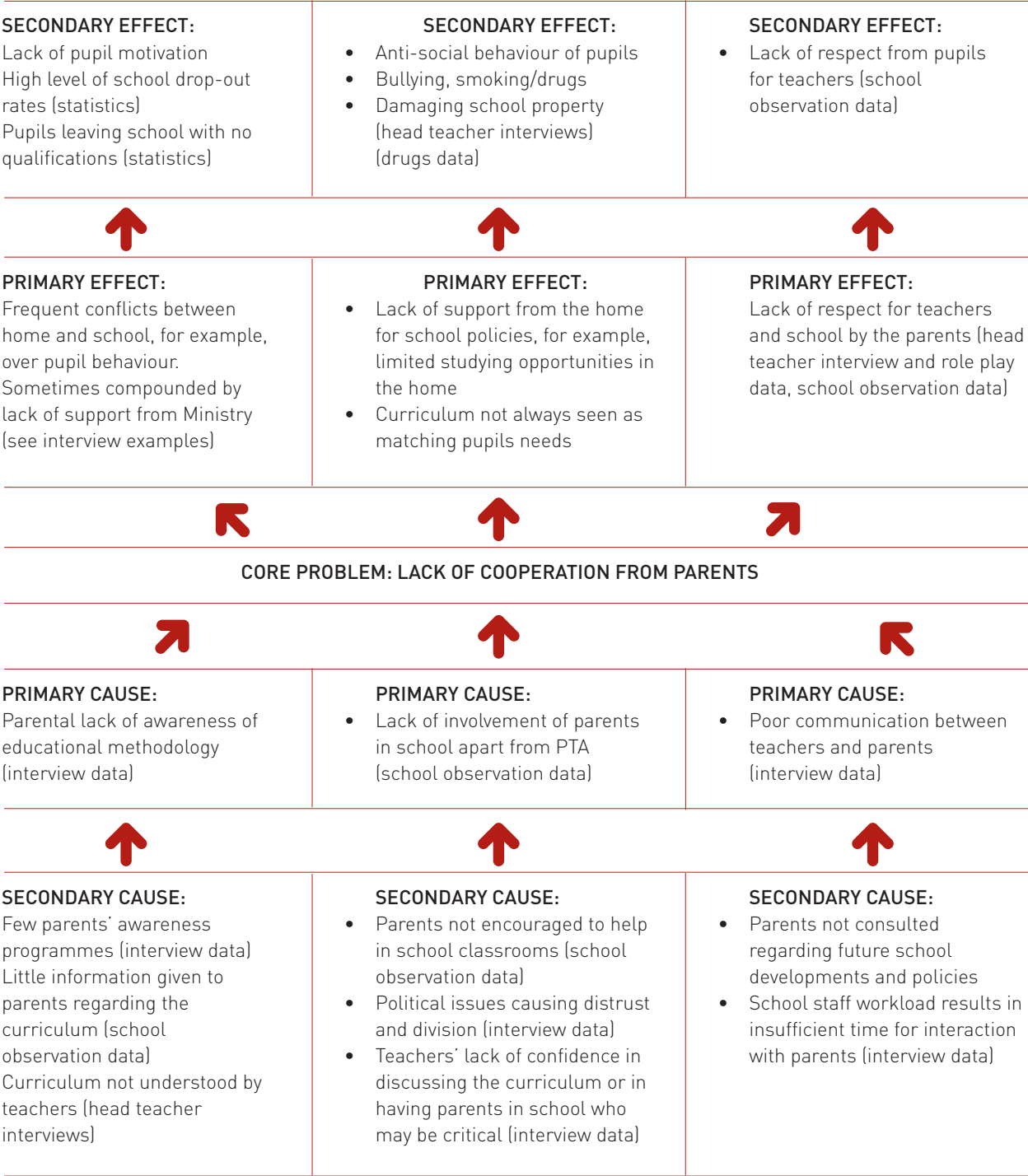
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APPENDIX

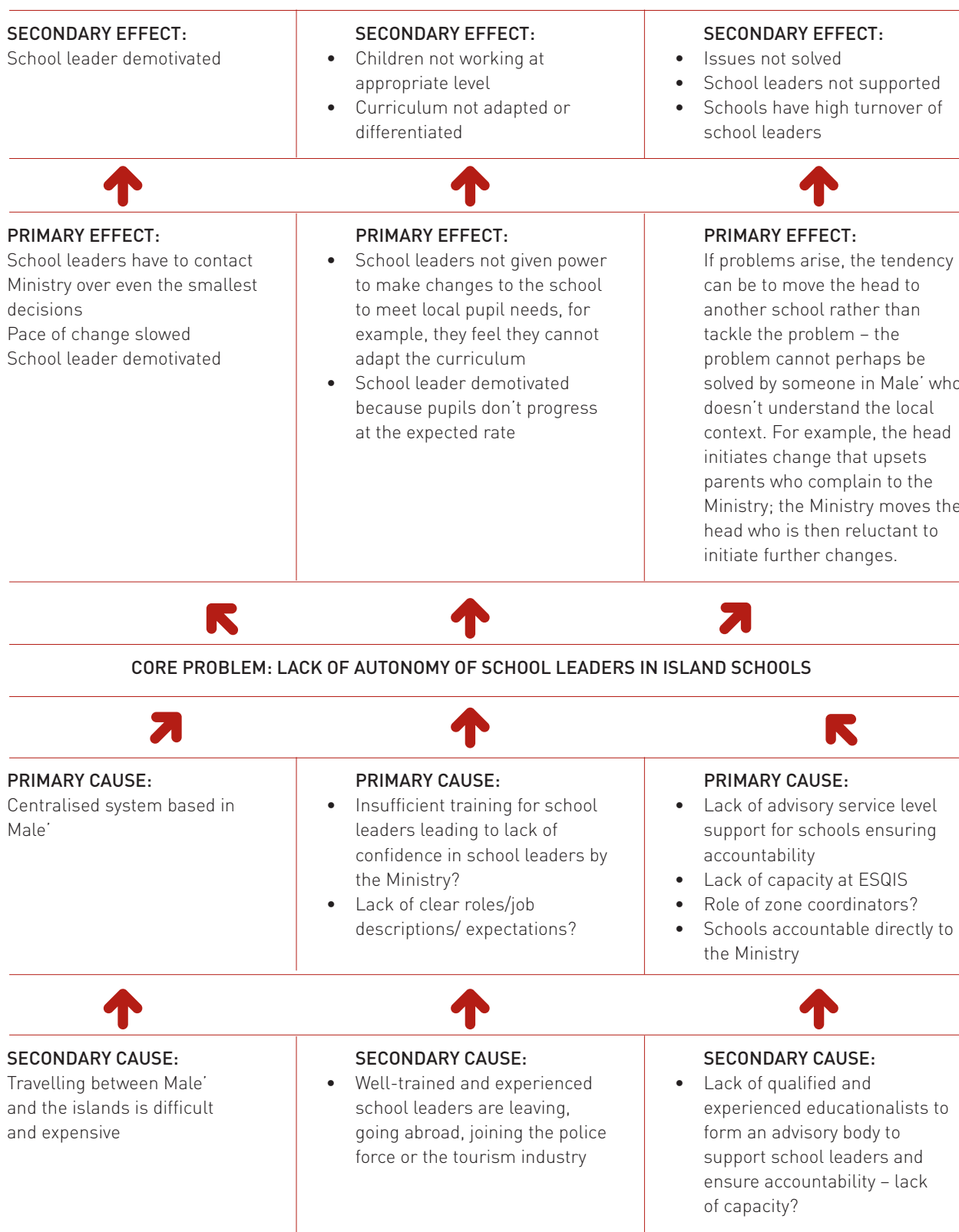
PROBLEM TREE 1: LACK OF COOPERATION FROM PARENTS



Database:

- 1 Maldives statistical information
- 2 School Observation Data
- 3 Interviews with parents and teachers
- 4 Interviews with head teachers
- 5 Data collected during head teacher data collection conferences
- 6 Interviews with other stakeholders

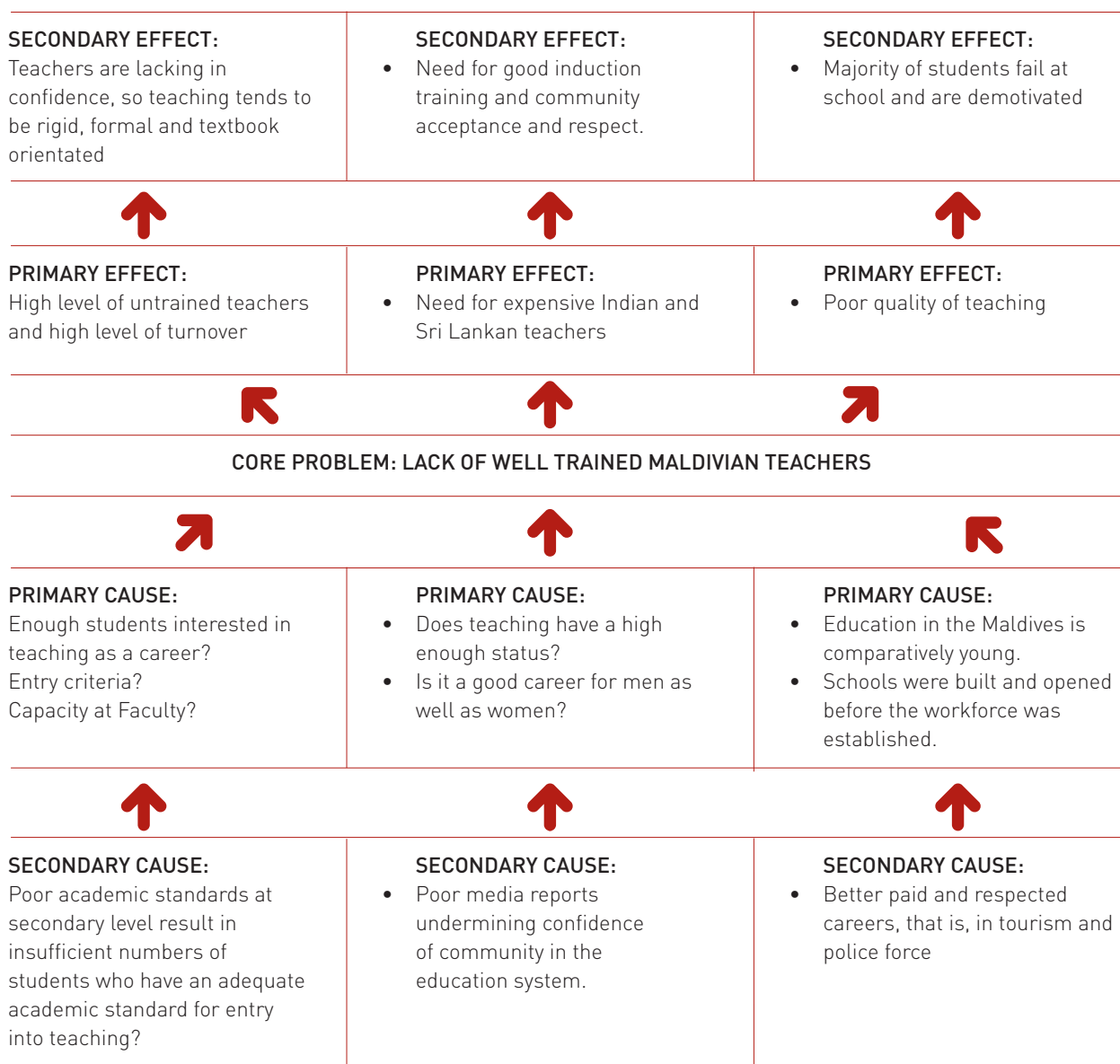
PROBLEM TREE 2: LACK OF AUTONOMY OF SCHOOL LEADERS IN ISLAND SCHOOLS



Database:

- 1 Maldives statistical information
- 2 School Observation Data
- 3 Interviews with parents and teachers
- 4 Interviews with head teachers
- 5 Data collected during head teacher data collection conferences
- 6 Interviews with other stakeholders

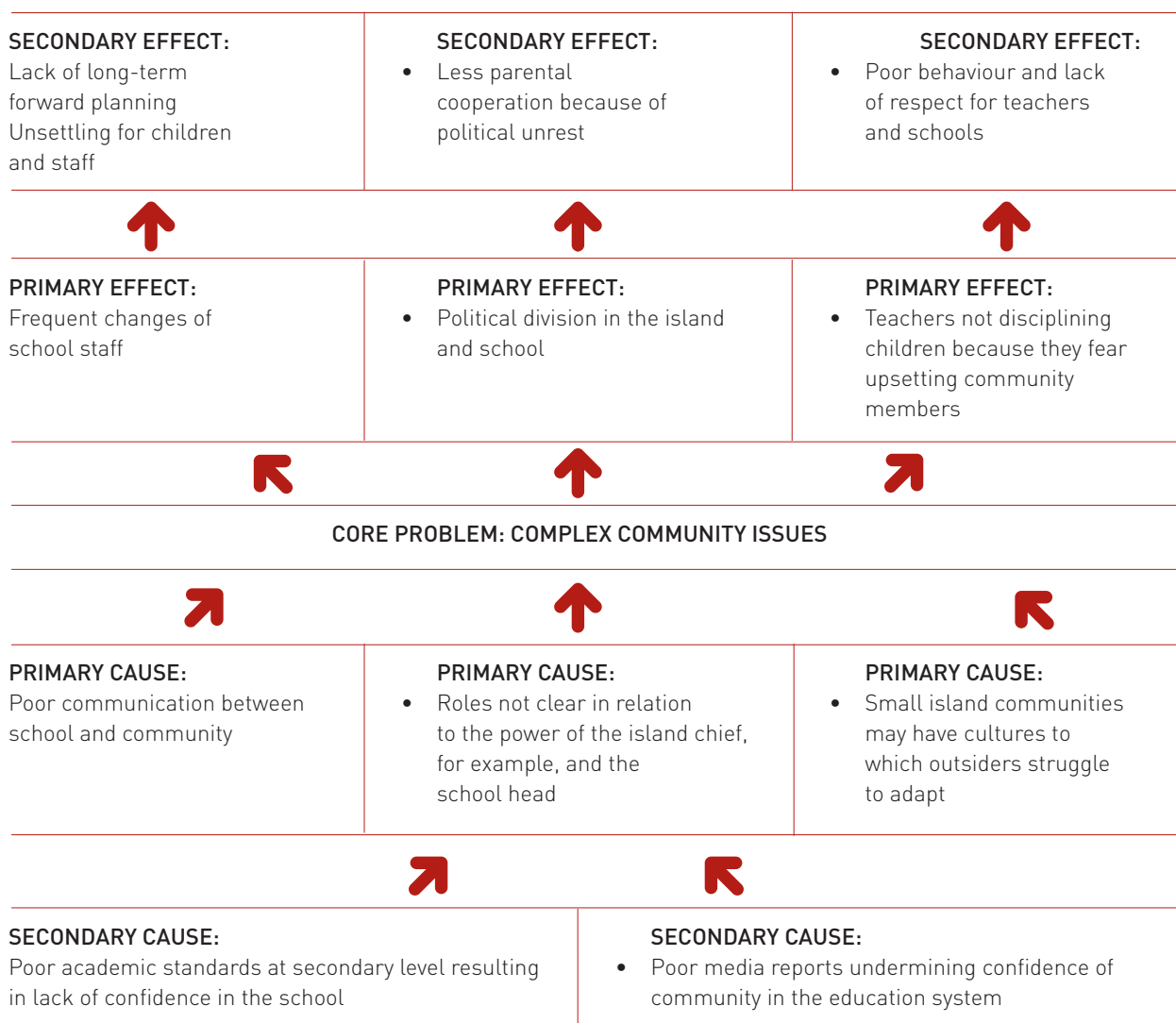
PROBLEM TREE 3: LACK OF WELL-TRAINED MALDIVIAN TEACHERS



Database:

- 1 Maldives statistical information
- 2 School Observation Data
- 3 Interviews with parents and teachers
- 4 Interviews with head teachers
- 5 Data collected during head teacher data collection conferences
- 6 Interviews with other stakeholders

PROBLEM TREE 4: COMPLEX COMMUNITY ISSUES



Database:

- 1 Maldives statistical information
- 2 School Observation Data
- 3 Interviews with parents and teachers
- 4 Interviews with head teachers
- 5 Data collected during head teacher data collection conferences
- 6 Interviews with other stakeholders

VSO VALUING TEACHERS RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Since 2000, VSO's Valuing Teachers research has been conducted in 12 countries and is currently underway in two further countries. Following the research, advocacy strategies are developed, which include the development of volunteer placements in: civil society education coalitions and Ministries of Education. In addition to this publication, the following research may also be of interest:

- *Learning From Listening – A Policy Report On Maldivian Teachers Attitudes To Their Own Profession* (2005) Louise Wheatcroft
- *Lessons from the Classroom – Teachers' Motivation and Perceptions in Nepal*, (2005) Purna Shrestha
- *Listening to Teachers – The Motivation and Morale of Education Workers in Mozambique* (2008) Simone Doctors
- *Making Education for All a Reality – VSO policy briefin (2006)* Chikondi Mpokosa and Stephen Nock
- *Making Teachers Count – A Policy Research Report on Guyanese Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession* (2004) Leena Vadher
- *Seen But Not Heard – Teachers' Voice in Rwanda* (2004) Reed Thomas and Ruth Mbabazi
- *START – Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques* (2005) Lucy Tweedie
- *Teachers for All – What governments and donors should do* (2006) Stephen Nock and Lucia Fry
- *Teachers Speak Out – A Policy Research Report on Teachers' Motivation and Perceptions of Their Profession in The Gambia* (2007) Sara Cowan
- *Teacher Talking Time – A Policy Research Report on Malawian Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession* (2002) Marianne Tudor-Craig
- *Teachers' Voice – A Policy Research Report on Teachers' Motivation and Perceptions of Their Profession in Nigeria* (2007) Helen Sherry
- *Teaching Matters – A Policy Report On The Motivation And Morale Of Teachers In Cambodia* (2008) Peter and Margaret Harvey, Julia Lalla-Maharajh, Freda Ellis and Sara Jago
- *They've Got Class! – A Policy Research Report on Zambian Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession* (2001) Saskia Verhagen
- *What Makes Teachers Tick? – VSO policy report* (2002) Lucia Fry

Forthcoming publications

- *Valuing Teachers Ethiopia (working title)*, Nigel Parsons, Julia Lalla-Maharajh and Emma Sarton
- *Valuing School Leaders in Zanzibar (working title)*, Martin and Yasmin Brown

To learn more about Valuing Teachers contact stephen.nock@vso.org.uk or visit www.vsointernational.org/how/advocacy-campaigns/valuing-teachers.asp

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