Teacher Perspective of Distributed Leadership During Disruptive Change. The case of a University in Cameroon

A thesis presented

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Abstract

Current literature on school leadership has shifted away from the traditional and hierarchical top-down model of leadership to a form of leadership that is collaborative and shared. Policymakers, researchers and educators are now calling for practicing teachers to assume leadership positions in schools. The goal is for these teacher leaders to work with administrators and bring about school change. The purpose of this descriptive case study was to understand how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon, as well as teachers’ perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of such efforts.

The study focused on the perception of 9 teachers from a university in Cameroon. Data collection involved documentation review of student protests in this university and semi-structured interviews with participants. The data were thematically coded and analyzed in order to understand how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change, along with the benefits and drawbacks of such efforts. Results of the study are relevant to school teachers who seek to better understand what will be required to extend leadership to them. The study also creates an opportunity for university administrators to learn from the experiences of their colleagues on how leadership should be distributed during a disruptive change situation.

Keywords: distributed leadership, teacher leadership, collaboration, shared leadership, crisis management
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to understand how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon. Specifically, this researcher sought to understand the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing violent student protests at this university. Policymakers, researchers, and educators are calling for practicing teachers to assume leadership positions in schools. The goal is for these teacher leaders to work with administrators and bring about school change. Despite the documented value of skilled leadership in today's educational climate, the school leader cannot single-handedly run the affairs of the school, no matter how skilled the school leader is.

Context and Background

African universities are in deep crisis. Academic standards have been falling rapidly because these universities lack the basic infrastructure needed to cope with massive growth in the student population. Many graduates, including this researcher are finding themselves obliged to defer their entry into adulthood indefinitely, as they are unable to achieve economic independence and are forced to abandon their aspirations for elite status. Despite the current political liberalization process, most African universities are continuing to operate under authoritarian management structures and political control that pose a severe threat to academic freedom and autonomy, and impede teachers and students from organizing in defense of their interests and participating in university management. Faced with this crisis in African universities, students have started fighting for improvements in their living and study conditions, and the introduction of a democratic culture in their universities and society as a whole,
including the right to express their views, organize in student unions and participate in university management (Amutabi, 2002). In the past, African students’ protests were sporadic. Currently, it has become endemic in many African countries (Nyamnjoh, Konings & Nkwi, 2012). Federici and Caffentzis (2000) have published a chronology of African university student struggles between 1985 and 1999, and this provides an impressive list of some of the violent confrontations between students and the forces of law and order in African universities.

The university under investigation is one of the two English-Speaking public universities in Cameroon, and multiple student strike actions have taken place in this university since its establishment in 1993 (Nyamnjoh, Konings & Nkwi, 2012). Students of this university have played a radicalizing role in manifesting protests against their deteriorating study and living conditions in higher education, and against the authoritarian regime of the university. Faced with this deepening crisis, these students have been fighting for the introduction of a democratic culture in their university, including the right to express their views, organize in student unions and participate in university management (Amutabi, 2002; Konings, 2002). This radicalization has led to violent confrontations between these students and the forces of law and order. As a result of increasing student activism, Nyamnjoh, Konings and Nkwi (2012) explain that the government of Cameroon is now “inclined to treat students as if they were their countries’ major enemies, turning campuses into war zones. Police intervention and the occupation of campuses by the security forces are now routine in many places and so is the presence of intelligence officers and police informants in classrooms” (p. 2). With regards to the students strike action in 2005/2006 for example, it was clear that there was no responsible and effective leadership which should have directed the strike action or create effective channels of communication or negotiation (Nyamnjoh, Konings & Nkwi, 2012). Thus, many students had to lose their lives.
Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) argue that in the distributive perspective, leadership is potentially enacted by people at different hierarchical levels in the organization, in contrast to a view of leadership as a set of personal characteristics or attributes found in people at the top of the hierarchy. Hence, the distributive perspective opens up the possibility for every person to act as a leader in one way or another (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Leithwood et al. (2004) advocate for an urgent need to enrich the concept of distributed leadership, and a dynamic and challenging way forward is to explore teachers’ perspectives of distributed leadership during disruptive change situation.

The results of this study are relevant to higher education teachers who seek to better understand what will be required to extend leadership to them. The study also creates an opportunity for university leaders (Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Directors and HOD’s) to fathom shared decision-making practices during a disruptive change situation. This will ultimately improve a collective activity of this university’s administrators and teachers in preventing violent student protests. From an organizational perspective, this researcher believes the findings of the study will hopefully prompt scholars to think about the entailments of different ways of operationalizing distributed leadership. Therefore, this study sought to understand how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon.

**Rationale and Significance**

One of the greatest challenges confronting school leaders today is the reality that school communities are vulnerable to unforeseen crisis events like student strikes that challenge the leadership abilities of institutional leaders (Schlafer, 2009). Student protests tend to disrupt operations, both short and long-term, and have the potential to leave lasting damage on a school’s
reputation if not handled effectively. Since the creation of the university under investigation (created in 1993), student protests have occurred almost every academic year, which have tested the leadership abilities of the university leaders. In the 2005/2006 student strike action at this university, the students joined their striking colleagues in the University of Yaoundé on what they termed a ‘solidarity strike’. In sharp contrast to the strike action at the University of Yaoundé, the student strike action at this university rapidly took a violent character. According to Nyamnjoh, Konings and Nkwi (2012), the violent 2005/2006 strike went out of control because “the authoritarian university administrators and government officials lacked the necessary tact and patience to manage the strike” (p. 13).

Given the expectations that institutional leaders have upon them in leading their school communities, it is not possible to rely only on the leadership of institutional leaders in meeting all the demands that the school requires. It is therefore crucial for institutional leaders to be aware of stakeholders’ insights on practices that promote or hinder participation in leadership roles. Brownlee (1979) highlights that in the literature on educational leadership, little attention is given to the teacher as an educational leader in the school other than in the classroom.

The concept of distributed leadership operates from the premise that leadership should be widely shared throughout a school. Thus, developing the leadership potential of all staff members is imperative. Cultivating, utilizing, and promoting a distributed leadership model is a potentially powerful way for institutional leaders in Cameroon to involve teachers meaningfully in the improvement of the higher education climate in Cameroon. Often mentioned as a reason to promote teacher leadership is the benefit realized by students when adults model democratic, participatory forms of government and communitarian social systems for schooling (Barth, 2001). Not only do students observe and experience democratic leadership; they are, presumably,
the beneficiaries of higher teacher morale and better decisions about student life in school because their teachers are more centrally involved in decision-making and other forms of leadership. Furthermore, it has been posited that if school leaders relinquish some of their responsibilities, they enlist the creative powers of the faculty (Barth, 2001).

In this study, this researcher characterized teacher leaders as “individuals who are actively involved in promoting change, effectively communicate with multiple constituents, possess a global understanding of school and district organizations, and continue to grow professionally” (Harrison & Lembeck, 1996, p.102). This study commences from the proposition that teacher leadership is essential to change and improvement in a school; that “genuine, long-lasting school change initiatives must derive from and involve teachers” (Kelley, 1994, p. 300). This research study will therefore create an opportunity for university leaders to reflect on their handling of student protests, and the findings will have significant implications for leadership practice and leadership development in higher education institutions in Cameroon.

Statement of the Problem

Current literature on school leadership has shifted away from the traditional, hierarchical top-down model of leadership to a form of leadership that is collaborative and shared. Spillane (2001) argued that the idea of an activity getting distributed or stretched over multiple people and the tools they use would be helpful to understand the practice of leadership in schools. This distributive perspective of leadership calls for greater participation of teachers in decision-making processes of institutions.

Higher Education in Cameroon is undergoing a major transition; high quality teaching and research, changing funding mechanisms, competition and internationalization of all parts of the shifting landscape. Combined with a need to accommodate the increasing number of students
seeking degrees, it is perhaps unsurprising that good leadership is increasingly espoused as a strategic and operational imperative. Since the nature and structure of higher education institutions does not generally suit a top-down leadership model, there remains a deep-seated desire for collegiality, consultation and academic freedom (Deem, 2001). In the context of the university under investigation, where the university must steer an uncertain path through conflicting and competing demands and expectations, how can it motivate teachers to work towards a shared purpose and mobilize collective effort to help prevent violent student protests on campus?

One of the greatest challenges confronting school leaders today is the reality that school communities are vulnerable to unforeseen crisis events that challenge the leadership abilities of institutional leaders. Student protests for instance, tend to disrupt operations, both short and long-term, and have the potential to leave lasting damage on a school’s reputation if not handled effectively (Coombs, 2004). The right to protest is a tenet of democracy. How a protest is executed is also of essence. Containing or managing student protests by the various authorities is also a crucial factor, which contributes to the final outcome of the protest.

In response to these challenges, the higher education sector in Cameroon is increasingly espousing the practice of distributed leadership whereby leadership is conceived as a process dispersed across the organization rather than residing within the actions of leaders in formal positions. Despite emerging evidence that distributed leadership has the potential to positively influence organizational change (Leithwood et al., 2007), it remains unclear what is distributed (in terms of power or accountability), the processes by which it is distributed, or whether the concept itself offers substantial benefits for practice, analysis or policy-making.
The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon. The study investigated the insights of teachers to determine some of the ways in which leadership can be distributed to teachers in the event of a student strike action, and sought to identify the benefits and drawbacks of such efforts.

**Research Question**

Two research questions guided this study. The questions are:

**Research Question**: How do teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change?

**Sub-Research Question**: What do teachers perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of their efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university?

These questions gave teachers an opportunity to explain the decisions they can make in a disruptive change situation, and how they may have approached the situation differently from the university leaders. Participants’ responses and information sharing created an opportunity for university leaders to learn from the perspectives of their colleagues. This form of learning is useful for amending a collective ability to respond to future school crisis situations (Combs, 2004). The answers to these questions captured key tasks, actions, actors, and interactions of distributed leadership. These questions also gave teachers the opportunity to reflect on their leadership abilities and efforts to support a distributed leadership model in a disruptive change situation, and the challenges involved in the distribution of leadership at this university.
Definition of Key Terminology

**Term 1-Distributed Leadership**: A conceptual and analytical understanding of how leadership practice takes place among constituents in an organization. Rather than focusing on the characteristics of the individual leader, distributed leadership foregrounds how actors engage in tasks that are stretched (distributed) across the organization. Understanding leadership from a distributed perspective means seeing leadership activities as a situated and shared process at the intersection of leaders, followers, and the situation.

**Term 2-Teacher Leadership**: The term “teacher-leader” is applied to teachers who have taken on leadership roles and professional responsibilities in schools. In recent decades, schools have been restructuring traditional governance models and redefining leadership functions in ways that distribute decision-making authority more broadly and allow more teachers and other staff members to continue in their positions while also taking on more responsibility in the governance of a school. In some cases, teacher-leaders have formal, officially recognized positions that entail specific responsibilities and assignments in others (study new teaching ideas and methodologies, test these approaches in the classroom, acquire a specialized expertise, and then share what they have learned with colleagues). Teacher-leaders fulfill a variety of leadership roles and responsibilities, exercise a variety of leadership practices and use different modes of communication.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework informing this thesis is Spillane and Gronn’s work on distributed leadership. Spillane and Healey (2010) note that a distributed perspective of leadership offers two analytical frameworks for analyzing school leadership and management; *the leader-plus*, and *practice aspects* of distributed leadership. The *leader-plus aspect* operates
under the premise that not just only those at the top of organizations or those with formal leadership positions can lead and manage schools; but also, leading and managing schools involve multiple individuals. The leader-plus aspect focuses on “who” is involved in leadership. Spillane et al. (2007) note that “school leadership and management do not reside exclusively in the actions of the formally designated leadership and management positions that are common place in schools” (p. 108). This implies that from a distributed leadership perspective, school leadership and management requires the work of more than one individual in a leadership or management position. Individuals who are not designated school leaders can also take responsibility for organizational routines and provide leadership and management.

On the other hand, the leadership practice of the distributed leadership framework addresses “how” leadership practice is enacted. It foregrounds the day-to-day activities of leadership and management. It focuses on the interactions of people, not just actions. Spillane et al. (2007) underscore that when something happens, people do act, but only in relation to others. Thus, “interactions” is crucial. From a distributed leadership perspective, Spillane (2006) notes that “practice” is framed as a result of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situations. Studies utilizing a distributed framework have glossed leadership practice as the interaction of people and their situations. Proponents of this conception of leadership assert that viewing leadership from this perspective “adequately captures the nature and urgency of practice” (Spillane et al., 2007, p. 110). They view leadership practice as the actions and interactions of people in making choices, taking initiatives, and participating in leadership work (Tian et al., 2015). Hence, from a shared and distributed leadership perspective, not just official leaders, but any member of a school or artefact is deemed as having the potential to exert leadership influence on school affairs, as illustrated in the diagram below:
Spillane's (2006) *leader-plus aspect* reveals that it is the *interactions* of people or the “reciprocal interdependency between their actions” (p. 146), not solely the actions and expertise of heroic school leaders, that construct leadership practice. Building on organizational theory, Spillane identifies collaborated, collective, and coordinated forms of distribution. In each case, Spillane presses researchers to look beyond who takes responsibility for particular functions and routines and points out how leadership practice exists in the *intersection* of leaders, followers and their situations. Similarly, Smylie and Hart (1999) emphasized how “attention shifts from people’s actions to their social interactions” (p. 435). Different school members emerge and take on leadership functions as dictated by the situation and their own interests and expertise. Foster (1989) opines, “leadership becomes socially critical when it “does not reside in an
individual but in the relationship between individuals, and it is oriented toward social vision and change” (p. 46).

Distributed leadership is a non-hierarchical and inclusive leadership approach that fosters collaborative and ethical practice. Because performance is negatively impacted when people feel alienated and powerless, (Leithwood & Duke, 1999) note that “the ability to empower others leverages the commitments and capacities of organizational members” (p. 48). When the beliefs and contributions of teachers are considered important – teachers are also more likely to support school goals (Sheppard, 1996). Distributed and transformational leadership emphasize the critical relationship between motives, resources, leaders, and followers (Burns, 1978). Both conceptualize leadership “as an organizational entity rather than the property of a single individual” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 338).

Spillane (2006) recognizes communal and relational aspects of leadership. Dialogue, as described by Spillane, multiplies the original, individual act of leadership by bringing people, materials, and organizational structures together in a common cause. Analyzing how tasks are “stretched over” the practice of multiple players, Spillane highlights who takes responsibility for a task (who leads is dictated by the task – not hierarchical position) and how the task is accomplished through interactions of multiple leaders and followers. Meaning is elucidated through the juxtaposition of multiple and separate realities (Greenfield, 1993).

Spillane acknowledges the managerial imperative dominating school leaders’ work and argues that transactional routines (macro and micro) also constitute practice – even if technical tasks protect and legitimize institutionalized structures. Therefore, leadership is inevitably distributed in schools; however, the distribution may or may not be transformational in nature. Hence, Spillane examines both social interaction and situation simultaneously, considering
espoused theories and theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Emphasis is placed on “how the leadership activities are distributed and the ways in which this distribution is differentially effective” (Timperley, 2005, p. 397). Spillane depicts distributed leadership as collective, educative, dissensual, causative, and ethical.

**Critics of the Theory of Distributed Leadership**

The analytic tools for describing the concept of distributed leadership serve to help researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to improve their understanding of distributed leadership as a mode of analysis. However, critics of the theory of distributed leadership argue that the theory of distributed leadership has conceptual problems and definitional issues. Timperley (2005) argues that the term distributed leadership means different things to different people. Timperley goes further to argue that one point on which different authors appear to agree is that distributed leadership is not the same as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organizational roles, but rather it comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers. Copland (2003) also reiterates that task responsibilities are distributed across traditionally defined organizational roles. Copland argues that “decisions about who leads and who follows are dictated by the task or problem situation, and not necessarily by where one sits in the hierarchy” (p. 378). However, Spillane et al. (2004b) refer to this distribution as being “stretched over” people in different roles.

**Rationale for using the theory of Distributed Leadership**

Distributed leadership theory provides a framework for understanding and identifying teachers’ perceptions of the practices that either limit and/or broaden distributed leadership practice in the university under investigation. It highlights the ways in which sharing leadership throughout a school community influences collaboration and motivation.
of those within the organization. Distributed leadership might be seen as an analytical orientation to leadership, which leaves open choices and priorities to be made concerning its operation, which create varying tangible types and forms of distributed leadership. For this reason, it is important to acknowledge Gronn’s concern that, as distributed leadership becomes a preferred approach to leadership among public policymakers, researchers should be paying attention to its possible disadvantages, as well as exploring its potential benefits.

**Applying distributed leadership to the study of leadership and management in schools**

Recent studies on leadership suggest that viewing school leadership from a distributed perspective can provide great insights into how leadership and management unfold in schools (Spillane, 2008). Leithwood et al. (2009b) suggest that “there is an urgent need to test and enrich the concept of distributed leadership with systemic evidence” (p. 102). This suggests that models of leadership which appreciates teachers as leaders have to be embraced. A foreseeable way to move onward would be to shoulder a research study that explores the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing strikes in a university in Cameroon.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Recent studies on leadership models suggest that viewing school leadership from a distributed perspective has the propensity to provide great insights into how leadership and management evolve in schools. Researchers, educators, and policymakers are calling on faculty to undertake leadership roles in schools. The ultimate goal is for these teacher leaders to work together with school administrators to bring about school change. This review of literature explores the conceptualization and application of distributed leadership in order to unveil the current state of information on the concept of distributed leadership. The review justifies why gaining an understanding of teachers’ experiences and insights to determine how distributing leadership to teachers in a student strike situation may add new knowledge to the existing literature on distributed leadership. The review conceptualizes leadership in terms of interaction, and affirms that teachers need to be assigned new leadership roles in leading and managing schools. The review is done with the hope of further advancing the circumstances and conditions under which distributed leadership is essential (or not) as a tool to initiate change.

Researchers, educators, and policymakers have thought that great leaders with remarkable leadership skills were the answer to the daunting task of school change or school improvement. However, in today’s educational milieu, a school leader cannot single-handedly run the affairs of the school, no matter how skilled the school leader is. Crawford (2005) highlights that school issues are becoming more complex in purpose and structure, and therefore in order for organizational change to occur, schools will require more variable and distributed forms of leadership. Indeed, in the current state of affairs regarding alternative approaches to educational change, Hargreaves & Fink (2008) note that distributed leadership has received a wide acclaim. Distributed leadership is a more collaborative view of authority and influence with
a shift from the ideology that leadership resides with school administrators. Gronn (2002) establishes that when folks collaborate with one another, their outcomes are greater relative to their individual efforts. Gronn has challenged the view that leadership is bestowed in positional leaders. This view provoked practitioners, reformers and educational theorists to call for a re-conceptualization of school leadership (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Spillane, 2009). School leadership is now viewed as “a practice whose functions, responsibilities, and actions are shared by school administrators and teachers” (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 42).

Spillane (2001) asserts that the idea of distributing or stretching leadership over multiple people, and the tools they use would be helpful to understand the practice of leadership in schools. This distributive perspective of leadership calls for teachers to participate in the decision-making processes of institutions. Since distributed leadership calls for greater participation of teachers in decision-making processes, this review of literature will explore the ways in which leadership is distributed to teachers, with the hope of justifying that an understanding of what teachers can do in a student strike situation will add new knowledge to the existing literature on distributed leadership.

Lebeau and Ogunsanya (2000); Nyamjoh and Jua (2002); Nyamjoh, Konings, and Nkwi (2012); and Zeilig (2007) noted that African universities are in deep crisis nowadays. The academic standards in African universities have been declining rapidly due to persistent student strike actions. Notwithstanding the contemporary political liberalization process in Africa, most universities in on the continent still continue “to operate under authoritarian management structures and political control that pose a severe threat to academic freedom and autonomy and impede students and teachers from organizing in defense of their interests and participating in university management” (Nyamnjoh, Konings & Nkwi, 2012, p. 1). African student strikes were
sporadic in the past; today they have become endemic in many African countries. Due to rising student activism, most university administrators in African universities are now prone to treating students as though they are the country’s major enemies by transforming campuses into warzones (Nyamnjoh, Konings & Nkwi, 2012). Federici (2000) noted that the intervention of police officers and the presence of intelligence officers in classrooms in order to identify activists is now routine in many African universities.

Students of the university under investigation have played a radicalizing role in manifesting protest actions against their deteriorating study and living conditions, and against the authoritarian regime of the university. This radicalization has led to “violent confrontations” between university students and campus police officers. With the students’ strike action in 2005-2006 for instance, there was no responsible and effective leadership which should have directed the strike action, or create effective channels of communication or negotiation. Thus, many students had to lose their lives (Nyamnjoh, Konings & Nkwi, 2012). In the course of these strike actions, several attempts have been carried out by various actors (excluding teachers) to arrive at a settlement and restore peace on campus. Unfortunately, all these attempts that did not include teachers have failed. Understanding faculty perspectives of distributed leadership and what they can do in a student strike situation is therefore necessary. As a backdrop and context for the research, a review of literature is conducted in the following areas: Teacher Leadership within a Distributed Leadership Framework and Paradigms of Distributed Leadership (Normative-Prescriptive and Descriptive-Analytical) paradigms of distributed leadership.
Teacher Leadership within a Distributed Leadership Framework

Proponents of teacher leadership advocate that “teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the way schools operate” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p.225). Teacher leaders operate in various capacities and responsibilities. Harrison and Lembeck (1996) described teachers who assume leadership roles as “individuals who are actively involved in promoting change, effectively communicate with multiple constituents, possess a global understanding of school and district organizations, and continue to grow professionally” (p. 40). This implies that teacher leaders are part of the school leadership, and they assist traditional school leaders in a variety of roles. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) explain that teacher leadership is one of the manifestations of distributed leadership. They went further to argue that teacher leaders identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; and influence others to improve their teaching practice; and accept responsibility for realizing the goals of leadership.

Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley, and Somaroo (2010) conducted a study to explore teachers’ understanding of teacher leadership, and what roles teachers can take up in school. The authors adopted a survey approach and developed a closed questionnaire to gather data. A total of 1055 questionnaires were completed with a group of 12 teachers. Their study pinpoints four areas where teacher leadership occurs: in the classroom, outside the classroom (working with teachers and learners doing extracurricular work), outside the classroom in whole school development activities, and leading between neighboring schools in the community. Nevertheless, the findings of their study revealed that even though most teachers supported the concept of teacher leadership, and believed in themselves as having the potential of leaders, their leadership roles were limited to classrooms.
There are several characteristics of teacher leaders from the review of literature. Wilson (1993) conducted interviews with high school teachers nominated by their colleagues, and sketched a portrait of who teacher leaders are, and how they behave. Her findings revealed that teacher leaders prefer to handle encountered conflicts through persuasion rather than confrontation. She also notes that “teacher leaders are role models for their students and have a reputation for being hard and challenging. They [teacher leaders] are the ones who have students come back to them years after graduation to share the influence and motivation the teachers had on them” (p. 17).

Another central strength of teacher leadership is that teacher leaders have strong interpersonal skills (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Their key skills include confidence, assertiveness, procreativity, fluency in communicating with multiple adults, and bringing out the best in others (Yarger & Lee, 1994). Teacher leaders are also skillful in building trust and rapport, leading diverse constituents in shared decision-making efforts (Lieberman, 1987; Smylie, 1996). Smylie and Denny (1990) also carried out an exploratory study of teacher leadership roles in a K-8 school district. Their interpretations and findings suggest that the roles teacher leaders assume are substantially influenced by the context of the organization in which they are established. They went further to suggest that “these contexts include organizational structure, the time, and space in which these roles are to be performed” (p. 256). The authors also note that some teacher leadership roles also involve “normative, social, and political factors that are manifested in prevailing patterns of power, practice, and belief in schools” (p.257). Their study concludes that because of compromising and potentially conflicting organizational factors, the concept of teacher leadership should be approached from the perspective of organizational change, and not merely as a task of enhancing individual opportunity and capacity.
Other findings have also revealed that teachers tend to have high morale when they are empowered. Teachers often take ownership in ensuring that the goals, mission, and vision of the school are realized (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980). Barth (2001) also notes that teacher leaders assist in shaping schools, which in turn shapes their own destinies as educators as they take on leadership responsibilities. Another domain of skills which characterizes teacher leaders has to do with administrative proficiencies. Teacher leaders are good at taking initiatives, prioritizing, and monitoring progress (Lieberman, Saxle, & Miles, 1988). Other important proficiency for teacher leaders include: skills in confronting and overcoming human and structural barriers, building supportive structures, securing and using resources and to conduct an organizational diagnosis (Murphy, 2005).

The literature on the role of teacher leadership on school management is very clear. York-Barr and Duke (2004) suggest that opportunities need to be created for teachers to take on leadership roles, and teacher expertise ought to be praised. Grant et al. (2008) conducted a quantitative study involving 1051 post level 1 teachers in three district schools in South Africa. The researchers administered surveys and questionnaires in their study and found that teachers were able, excited, and ready to lead with the school management in curricular and extracurricular activities, in and out of the classroom. However, these teachers also believed that the school management was a main barrier to teacher leadership as they demonstrate a lack of trust in teachers. Hence, they would not involve teachers in decision-making processes. Examining the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher leadership, the similarities are apparent. These similarities include: having a clear vision shared by all constituents, striving for pedagogic excellence, and collaboration.
Paradigms of Distributed Leadership

Grint (2011) asserts that “distributed leadership has increasingly become part of the educational leadership landscape in the 21st century and reflects the current emphasis on leadership as a collective in the general leadership field” (p. 10). Fusarelli, Kowalski, and Peterson (2011) assert that unlike other leader-centered models of leadership, where leadership is centralized in the hands of a top administrator, distributed leadership diffuses leadership throughout the organization, and makes the organization less dependent on top administrators. This implies that leadership abilities should be shared beyond the school leader. This seems to be a necessity in order to respond to the complex nature of leadership demands in our schools, as is the case of this university. This suggests that models of leadership which appreciate teachers as leaders and provide for a paradigm of open, transparent and deep democratic leadership should be embraced (Lambert, 1998).

Tian, Risku, and Collin (2015) identified two models in distributed leadership research: Normative-Prescriptive Paradigm of Distributed Leadership, which presents prescriptions for, and best practices of distributed leadership in daily school operations; and Descriptive-Analytical Paradigm of Distributed Leadership, which aims at providing an understanding and interpretation of the notion of distributed leadership.

Normative-Prescriptive Paradigm of Distributed Leadership

Studies in the normative or prescriptive paradigm focus on the practical application of the concept of distributed leadership. Studies which have focused on the normative-prescriptive paradigm have been very dominant over the past decade (Spillane and Healey, 2010; Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2015). Proponents of this paradigm suggest that studies in distributed leadership
should be tied closely to learning, whereby distributed leadership patterns that seem to exert a positive impact on school improvement will be identified. They believe that research in this paradigm will provide norms and prescriptions to guide practice (Harris, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2009). Bolden (2011) asserts that normative-prescriptive researchers raise questions such as: How can leadership be distributed in order to maximally benefit the school practice? How does distributed leadership develop leaders who serve the knowledge creation?

Harris (2004) conducted a study where he explored the extent to which distributed forms of leadership exert positive impact on school improvement. His study argues that distributed leadership “offers a new and important theoretical lens through which leadership practice in school can be configured and re-conceptualized” (p. 11). The study concludes that successful leaders are those who distribute leadership, understand relationships and recognize the importance of reciprocal learning processes that lead to shared purposes, and suggests that distributed forms of leadership will support capacity building within schools that contribute to school improvement. Distributed leadership is stretched over the schools’ situational and social contexts. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) also conducted a 4-year longitudinal study with thirteen elementary schools in Chicago. Their study found that the task of instructional improvement involved multiple leaders, and that comprehending the interaction between different leaders is pivotal to understanding the practice of leadership. Their study concludes that intervening to improve school leadership may not be most optimally achieved by focusing on the individual formal leader and may not offer the best use of resources.

Harris (2012) drew upon a wide range of research literature to explore the available empirical evidence about distributed leadership and student learning outcomes. His study
highlights how the role of the principal is affected and transformed as leadership is shared within the organization. His work focused on distributed leadership and student learning outcomes. The findings of this study reveal that principals need to relinquish power and authority; that there is “an inevitable shift away from leadership as position, to leadership as interaction and that principals will need to build a high degree of reciprocal trust to negotiate successfully the fault lines of formal and informal leadership practice” (p. 7). The study concludes that in order for principals to keep tabs with unforeseen educational demands of the twenty first century, they definitely need to give others an opportunity by distributing leadership responsibilities onto others.

Another work that has focused on distributed leadership and its impact on instructional change involves work by Camburn and Han (2009). They conducted an investigation of the America’s Choice Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Program to explore the outcomes of distributed leadership in this program. CSRs are designed to configure school leadership in schools by defining leadership roles. These authors conducted a quasi-experiment of three comprehensive school reforms in 30 elementary schools. Data for this study was collected over a four-year period. Their work explored the impact of distributing leadership to teachers on the America’s Choice CSR Program in thirty urban elementary schools. Their work concluded that extending leadership to teachers has a positive effect on instructional change. Hallinger and Heck (2009) also carried out a qualitative study that assessed the impact of distributed leadership on school improvement and student achievement. Their study collected data from a sample of U.S. primary schools over a four-year period. They utilized a longitudinal survey data on leadership and school improvement capacity collected from teachers over a four-year period to compare the efficacy of four models in explaining relationships to growth in student achievement in reading
and math. The purpose of their study was to understand how distributed leadership contributes to student achievement and school improvement. The study concluded that distributed leadership is an important co-effect of school improvement. As far as these authors are concerned, collaboration and shared accountability for student learning are very crucial for distributed leadership to be accurately executed.

Student achievement may be affected by the leadership style of people who are in charge and making decisions. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) also examined the impact of distributed leadership on student achievement. These authors conceptualized and operationalized distributed leadership as a form of distributed influence and control. They collected surveys from 2570 teachers, and obtained data in language and mathematics through websites. Their analysis revealed that collective leadership was found to explain significant variation in student achievement across schools, with the effect of collective leadership most strongly linked to achievement through teacher motivation. Silins and Mulford (2002) also explored the effect of leadership on student learning outcomes. Data was collected from more than 2500 teachers, and 3500 pupils in Australia. The study concluded that student outcomes were more likely to improve when leadership sources were distributed throughout the members of the school community and when teachers felt empowered in relation to issues they considered important.

Finally, Sheppard, Hurley, and Dibbon (2010) examined the role of the school principal in the facilitation of distributed leadership and its impact upon teachers’ morale and sense of enthusiasm for their work. Their study utilized The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to examine the relationships among the following factors: formal school leaders, teacher collaborative leadership, teachers’ professional learning, shared decision-making, shared vision, teacher morale, and teacher enthusiasm. The findings of the study confirmed that employing a
distributed leadership approach has a positive impact on teacher enthusiasm and teacher morale. This study employed a distributed leadership approach that focused on identifying the complex pathways through which this emerging approach to leadership influences a variety of factors that are more directly connected to student learning.

**Descriptive-Analytical Paradigm of Distributed Leadership**

Studies in the descriptive-analytical paradigm focus on the conceptualization of distributed leadership. Descriptive-analytical paradigm researchers assume that leadership is already distributed, and they do not reflect on whether leadership should be distributed (Gronn, 2002, 2003; Macbeath, 2005, Mayrowetz, 2005, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Since these researchers presuppose that the concept of distributed leadership naturally exists in schools, their studies aim “at dissecting the components and processes of leadership practice in order to expand and deepen the understanding of leadership work” (Tian et al., 2015, p. 4).

Research studies in this paradigm examine social interactions in schools. Researchers in this paradigm perceive leadership as emerging, created by social interactions. They challenged traditional notions of leadership as being bestowed on officially designated leaders. Their works assert that not just official leaders but any school member and even artifacts were considered as having the ability to exert leadership influence on activities (Spillane et al., 2004). Gronn (2009) asserts that descriptive-analytical researchers posed research questions such as: What does leadership mean to you? Who are the formal and informal leaders? What constitutes a leadership task? The responses to these questions are intended to capture key tasks, actions, actors, and interactions of distributed leadership.
Organizational performance may be affected by the leadership style of people who are in charge and making decisions. Leithwood et al. (2007) conducted a study with 25 secondary and 140 elementary schools in a suburban district in Ontario from a distributed perspective. The authors conceptualized how leadership is distributed in these schools. They focused on the extent to which the performance of leadership functions is consciously aligned across different sources of leadership. Their study paid particular attention on four operations: first, leadership tasks and responsibilities have already been aligned with individuals (who will take on what task?), second, spontaneous alignment of tasks-no assignments necessary, third, spontaneous alignment based on the individuals’ values, beliefs, and norms. Fourth, anarchic alignment whereby individuals pick up leadership roles because they reject and challenge the responsibilities of other leaders on certain tasks or functions. These authors theorized how these different leadership patterns impact school change. Their study concludes that anarchic and spontaneous alignments are more likely to have negative effects on organizational outcome and performance.

Studies employing a distributed leadership framework all focus on sources of leadership in organizations. However, each study applies different study operations and measures on how leadership can be distributed. For instance, while Leithwood et al. (2007) focused on the extent to which leadership is aligned and preplanned among leaders, the study by Hallinger and Heck (2009) discussed earlier focused on how teachers’ perception of distributed leadership and its effect on student learning (student achievement and school improvement). On the other hand, Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) focused exclusively on the forms of leadership that are distributed among members of the school community. Comparing and contrasting these studies illuminates three different study operations through which the concept of distributed leadership can be discussed. One of the dimensions can be: “who” should take responsibility for leadership
and management? In other words, which individuals should leadership be distributed to? Another dimension can be: “what” leadership aspect or responsibilities are distributed? Studies by Camburn et al. (2003), and Hallinger and Heck (2009) capture the “who” and “what” study operations on how leadership is distributed. The third-dimension deals with “how” the work is distributed as demonstrated in Leithwood et al. (2007) or Hallinger and Heck (2009). The researcher underscores here that any of these study operations is preferable, and that studies “using a distributed framework on school leadership depend on the study operations and measures used in the research” (Spillane, & Healey, 2010, p. 258).

Spillane, Camburn, and Pareja (2007) took a distributed perspective to explore how school principals in a U.S. urban school district (elementary, middle high and special schools) handle the challenges of leading and managing their schools. Data for this study was drawn from a longitudinal study sponsored by the Institute for Education Sciences. Fifty-two of the schools’ principals were asked to participate in a leadership development program (National Institute for School Leadership). The research design involved a mixed-method research with questionnaires, and in-depth interviews conducted with school principals in the spring of 2005. The study was guided by two research questions: To what extent is responsibility for administration and curriculum spread across multiple individuals in schools? To what extent do administration- and curriculum and instruction-related activities involve co-performing with one or more other individuals? Building on these questions, the authors examined the extent to which responsibility for administration and curriculum is distributed among people in order to determine who is involved in the work of managing and leading schools. The study focused exclusively on the work of the school principal. The findings of the study revealed that managing and leading schools is distributed over multiple actors; some occupying formally designated leadership
positions, others without such formal designations. The study specifically reveals that classroom teachers with no formal leadership position or experience figured prominently in taking responsibility for administration and curriculum and instruction-related activities that school principals participated in.

Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, and Myers (2007) carried out a study which explored distributed leadership in relation to two teacher teams in a secondary school in Missouri (approximately 1650 students). In order to examine the process of distributed leadership in teacher teams, the researchers collected audio and video tapes from two teacher teams, and used discourse analysis to examine leadership as a distributed phenomenon. The authors note that their choice for the two teacher teams is as a result of the team’s ability to work together effectively. Their findings revealed that collaborative interaction was present within each professional learning team due to their patterns of discourse that characterizes the interaction of the team members. Their study argued and concluded that the nature of purpose within each teacher team can influence the social distribution of leadership. Thus, the social dynamics of distributing leadership should not be taken for granted.

Questions have also been raised as to whether distributed leadership contributes to organizational commitment (Somech, 2005). Reasoning along these lines (Hulpia & Devos, 2010) carried out a qualitative study that explored how distributed leadership can make a difference in teachers’ organizational commitment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to unveil the differences in the distribution of leadership in four schools with potentially high teachers’ organizational commitment, and four schools with potentially low teachers’ organizational commitment. This study was a follow-up study of a larger quantitative research project on teacher’s organizational commitment conducted in Flanders, Belgium. In line with the
quantitative study, the follow-up qualitative study by Hulpia and Devos (2010) revealed that teachers are more strongly committed to the school if leaders empower teachers to participate in decision-making processes, and if school leaders tackled problems efficiently. The study also concluded that leadership practices in the four schools with high potential of teachers’ organizational commitment include: organizational commitment, cooperation of the leadership team, social interactions, the quality and distribution of leadership functions, and participative decision-making.

Singh (2012) also conducted a qualitative study where she explored the challenges of effectively distributing leadership through the creation of a leadership team. In this study, the author shared her experience in creating and working with a leadership team in a high school in Mexico over a three-year period. She discussed the pros and cons of working under a distributed leadership model, and made recommendations for leaders and trainers of leaders. In this study, the author employed the auto ethnography approach in eliciting and analyzing her data. Even though this type of research approach involves dialogue with the informants and the researcher, it is relatively disadvantageous because the researcher primarily focuses on her perspective (Anderson, 2006). Nevertheless, her study revealed that in order to create a successful distributed leadership model, “a great deal of thought and effort” is required (p. 35). Her study concludes that distributed leadership permits school leaders to utilize the talents of staff to solve complex problems, and in order for school leaders to prepare for the challenges of distributed leadership, school leaders must understand that our schools are complex organizations which constantly change, and that designated leaders cannot bring about change alone, no matter how knowledgeable or skilled they are. The author also notes that school leaders “must see the value
in involving others and realize that true leadership lies in lighting the fire that ignites the passion of commitment of self of others” (Singh, 2012, p. 43).

The role of distributed leadership is examined by Lumby (2009), where there are collective aims across a number of schools. The study argues that research on colleges to date has focused on discrete levels of management/leadership and seems to be out of key with developing theories of distributed leadership emerging from school research. It is suggested that leadership is embedded in the activities of staff and students, including delegated management, and can be understood to be both distributed and systemic. The creation and enactment of such leadership is explored by drawing on data from two research projects in England, one of which focused on general further education colleges and the other on sixth form colleges. The author argues that the distribution of tasks and responsibilities are fundamentally different in the two categories of college. The reasons for these differences indicate that the leadership which is constructed in each type of college is shaped not only by the pressures of government policies, as suggested by previous research, but also by a number of factors including the socioeconomic composition of students and the profile of staff. This study therefore suggests that leadership cannot be understood by discretely analyzing the practice of particular categories of staff. Rather it can be seen as distributed in a variety of different ways and also as simultaneously systemic, flowing through and shaped by the entire community of each college.

In the post-colonial African context, scholars are calling for the introduction of a more participative, consultative, and inclusive approach in solving problems, and move away from relying on hierarchical structures. Naicker and Mestry (2013) utilized a generic qualitative approach to understand the perspectives of teachers regarding distributed leadership in Soweto (a township in Johannesburg, South Africa) primary schools. Data for this study were collected
through focus group interviews, and then documented and analyzed using Tesch’s method, which “involves the identification and coding of topics, the development of conceptual categories and the formulation of themes and sub-themes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 186). Four themes emerged in their study: Leadership styles (autocratic leadership & participative leadership style), School climate (staff relationships, teacher moral and motivation, job satisfaction, teaching and learning), Communication (meetings, closed communication, transparency), and lastly, Barriers to leadership (opportunities for teacher leadership, teacher isolation in learning planning, teacher workload, power relations, professional development). The findings of the study revealed that in primary schools in Soweto, leadership is entrenched in classical leadership practices and that any potential for the practice of distributive leadership is hindered by autocratic styles of leadership, hierarchical structures, and non-participative decision-making (Naicker & Mestry, 2013).

Holt et al. (2014) conducted interviews in a nationally funded project on distributed leadership in the quality management of online learning environments (OLEs) in higher education. The study is based on an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) nationally funded project titled “Building distributed leadership in designing and implementing a quality management framework for Online Learning Environments. Questions in this study were framed around the development of an OLE quality management framework and the situation of the characteristics of distributed leadership at the core of the framework. The project’s premise is that distributed leadership is a descriptive reality of managing OLEs given the various leadership parties involved and the complexities of the contemporary technological landscape. The study involved five partner universities representing the diversity of developments in the Australian higher education sector. The project’s rationale was that distributed leadership seemed centrally important to this sphere of higher education activity given the complexities of the challenge. The
study concluded that for change management within the OLE space to be effective, even within
the DL construct there remains a hierarchy of leadership and leaders need to act in ways that
accord with their position. While making their own contribution to the university’s mission and
vision in this regard, the authors concluded that it is the responsibility of senior leaders to set an
appropriate organizational framework to help shape the effective change management of the
OLE.

Another study by Gosling et al. (2009) based on the same data as the Bolden et al. (2009)
article above argues that the concept of distributed leadership is highly limited in what it can
achieve in terms of a leadership strategy. They examine the usefulness of distributed leadership
as a descriptive, corrective, empowering or rhetoric device. Gosling et al. argue that distributed
leadership has limited usefulness as a descriptive device as they found little evidence that what
was actually occurring in Higher Education could be described as distributed leadership.
However, they do believe it could be useful as rhetorical device as a way of moving away from
the leadership being centered on personal traits and behaviors. They, like other critics of the
concept of distributed leadership, put a caveat on this last point and say it could, “distract from
the systemic degradation of academic autonomy and creeping managerialism” (Gosling et al.,
2009, p. 308).

However, although some of the reviewed studies looked at distributed leadership from
the perspectives of teachers: Hallinger and Heck (2009); Harris (2012); Leithwood et al. (2007);
Leithwood & Mascall (2008); Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, and Myers (2007); Sheppard, Hurley,
and Dibbon (2010); Somech (2005), and Spillane, Camburn, and Pareja (2007), it remains
unclear what contributions teachers can make in a violent student protest situation. Here lies the
fundamental difference between previous studies on distributed leadership and the current study
under investigation. While there have been advances to exert profound influence on the conceptualization of distributed leadership on school leadership and management (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2004; Spillane, 2006), no study seems to have explored the experiences and insights of teachers to determine some of the ways in which the practice of distributed leadership can help prevent violent student strikes. Past research on the practice of distributed leadership does not address crisis situations in schools from a distributed perspective. Research in this area is therefore limited. For this reason, the need further exists to better understand teachers’ perspectives of distributed leadership when dealing with consistent student strike situations, as is the case of this university. What is known is that in order for distributed leadership to thrive in a school, school administrators need to determine ways to empower teachers to assume leadership opportunities with the ultimate goal of influencing one another to improve school leadership and management. According to Fullan (2000), as the discussion about distributing leadership to teachers is beginning to gain momentum, researchers are now exploring various forms that teacher collaboration and collegiality may take.

Tian, Risku, and Collin (2015) explain that “since the mid-1990s, the most significant discussions concerning educational leadership has involved distributed leadership” (p. 1). Most studies on distributed leadership have focused on the relationship between distributed leadership and instructional change (Harris, 2004, 2008, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2009). Studies in this paradigm identified distributed leadership patterns that contribute to school improvement. However, Spillane et al. (2008) explain that “recent work suggests that viewing school leadership from a distributed perspective has the potential to provide useful insight into how management and leadership unfold in the daily lives of schools” (p. 190). While there have been advances to exert profound influence on the conceptualization of distributed leadership on school
leadership and management (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2004; Spillane, 2006), no study seems to have explored the experiences and insights of teachers to determine some of the ways in which the practice of distributed leadership can help prevent future student strikes.

**Distributed Leadership in Higher Education**

Jones et al. (2014) note that there is very limited research on university leadership and management from a distributed perspective. In the United States, the focus has been on empirical examples of the operation of distributed leadership in elementary and secondary education (Harris, 2012; Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009). This has embraced both the teacher as a leader in the school setting as well as the administrative roles they undertake, both within the school and between the school and the community. In the United Kingdom, research has focused on the theoretical conceptualization of distributed leadership in all three sectors of education (Harris, 2009). In Australia, Jones et al. (2012) note that both the secondary and higher education sectors have provided opportunities to explore distributed leadership. Much of the literature on shared leadership in higher education has been descriptive, with many arguments for the benefits of shared leadership drawn from the studies previously described. Nonetheless, a small body of empirical research exists that supports the value, benefits, and design of shared leadership within higher education. As an early advocate of distributed leadership, Gronn (2002) described distributed leadership as a new architecture for leadership in which activity bridges agency (the traits/behaviors of individual leaders) and structure (the systemic properties and role structures in concertive action).

Even in contexts where shared leadership is purported to exist, some higher education scholars have found limited evidence that it functions in optimal ways. For example, (Bolden,
Petrov, and Gosling, 2009) conducted a study on how faculty and staff perceive distributed leadership at 12 universities in the United Kingdom and found that shared forms of leadership tended to be more rhetorical devices rather than authentic sharing of leadership tasks and responsibilities. Each university was explored as a ‘case’, the main source of data being in-depth interviews enabling the capture of narrative accounts of leadership, supported by additional documentary evidence as well as two collaborative workshops with representatives from the staff development divisions of participating institutions. Within each university, ten to seventeen people at different levels were interviewed (Vice-Chancellors, Pro and Deputy Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Human Resource Directors, Deans of Faculty, and Heads of Department. The study concluded that as a description of leadership practice, the concept of ‘distributed leadership’ offers little more clarity than ‘leadership’ alone. As an analytic framework, the authors conclude that distributed leadership is a more promising concept drawing attention to the broader contextual, temporal and social dimensions of leadership. Fundamentally, they argue that distributed leadership is most influential through its rhetorical value whereby it can be used to shape perceptions of identity, participation and influence but can equally shroud the underlying dynamics of power within universities.

In Australia, (Jones et al., 2014) examined distributed leadership structures within project teams that arose as a part of a national project called the Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Program. Though not the original intent of the project (which was designed to promote leadership in teaching and learning), distributed leadership came to define several of the most successful campuses’ initiatives. These institutions were able to effectively create changes to teaching and learning practices because they engaged both academic and administrative staff with a broad range of expertise.
The majority of research on leadership and management in Higher Education concludes that leadership in universities is widely distributed or should be distributed across the institution (Shatock, 2003). Despite this, however, the actual processes and practices by which leadership is distributed and the implications for leadership practice and development in universities have received relatively little attention. Consequently, it remains unclear as to whether or not the concept of distributed leadership exerts any influence on the effectiveness of leadership practice within Higher Education institutions.

This thesis explored how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change. The passage from the instructional leadership movement in the 1980’s to the transformational movement and eventually the teacher leadership movement continue to be fine-tuned today. These models of leadership now focus on diffusing leadership throughout the organization, rendering the organization less dependent on official leaders. The main ingredient among all these leadership frameworks is shared collaboration: a leadership that is actually distributive in nature. It is this distributed leadership framework that served as the bedrock of this research study, as it is one that requires further exploration, particularly as it relates to teacher perception of distributed leadership in a higher education community engulfed in continuous violent student protests.
Summation

The problem of practice explored in this research is teachers’ perceptions of distributed leadership during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon. Distributed leadership can be realized through the social interactions between leaders and followers. Gronn (2008) argues that in a distributed leadership model, no individual effort can lead a school successfully, but rather schools will be effectively led by using a collaborative framework involving the participation of faculty through shared decision processes. Distributed leadership is a topic that warrants further examination and research, particularly as it relates to its impact on teachers’ collaboration in a school community with consistent student strike actions. Studies like this may contribute to a better understanding of the concept of distributed leadership by adding new knowledge to the topic. The study may further advance the circumstances and conditions under which distributed leadership is beneficial (or not) as an instrument to initiate change. In order to fully understand this problem of practice, the researcher will still need to explore teacher perceptions about the build-up to a student strike, as teachers have a unique vantage point to feel unrest and complaints by students.

In the literature on educational leadership, little attention is given to the teacher as an educational leader in the school other than in the classroom (Brownlee, 1979). The assumption has been that teaching is for teachers and leading is for Administrators and managers of schools (Lynch & Strodl, 1991). Leadership has been perceived to reside with school administrators where power flowed downward to teachers (Yarger & Lee, 1994, p. 226). The view that leadership is vested in positional leaders, such as principals, has been challenged (Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2005a) and has led to educational theorists, reformers and practitioners calling for a re-conceptualization of school leadership (Grant & Singh, 2009). This study offers a different lens
through which a crisis can be resolved, by adopting the theory of distributed leadership (The case of a university in Cameroon, Central Africa).
Chapter 111: Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing violent student protests in a university in Cameroon. Given the focus of this investigation, the following research questions guided the investigation:

1. How do teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change?
2. What do teachers perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of their efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university?

Rational for a Qualitative Research Approach

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research design and methods used in this study. This study was designed to understand the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing violent student protests at a university in Cameroon. Therefore, a descriptive case study methodology was used to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change. In this qualitative analysis, distributed leadership theory was used as the lens through which to better explore the actions teachers can take during this disruptive change.

Qualitative research methods, by their very nature to nuance and detail, allow for data gathering that can be extremely deep and take into consideration opinions and perspectives that may not initially be visible or obvious (Creswell, 2012). It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. Additionally, it seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. This study was influenced by the constructionist/interpretivist paradigm, which relies upon the participant’s
views of the situation being studied and recognizes the impact on the research of their own background and experiences (Creswell, 2003). Constructivists–interpretivists argue that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Constructivists–interpretivists maintain that the researcher’s values and lived experience (Erlebnis) cannot be divorced from the research process. The researcher, as the primary instrument for both data collection and data analysis, shares in the world of the researched and then interprets what he or she experienced there. Sciarra (1999) notes that in the constructivist approach, meaning is hidden and must be brought to the surface through deep reflection. This reflection can be stimulated by the interactive researcher–participant dialogue.

Looking at this problem of practice through the lens of interpretivism, an interpretivist would focus on the deep details of how student strikes came about. They would come up with a case study of an African university to better understand the students’ demands and then seek ways to prevent, manage and resolve violent student protests. Proponents of constructivism–interpretivism emphasize the goal of understanding the “lived experiences” from the point of view of those who live it day to day. Constructivists–interpretivists believe there exist multiple, constructed realities (relativist position), rather than a single true reality. Reality, according to the constructivist position, is subjective and influenced by the context of the situation, namely the individual’s experience and perceptions, the social environment, and the interaction between the individual and the researcher.

The selected research approach for this study was Descriptive Case Study Methodology. Assessing the viability of case study research design for the identified thesis question necessitates grounding it within the overall methodological framework for qualitative studies. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), qualitative case study methodology provides tools for
researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. Harland (2014) notes that the qualitative paradigm consists of inquiry that requires an individual researcher or research team to analyze data that are open to various interpretations and each inquirer’s experience can provide a different understanding. In this sense, the unique circumstances of the case are contingent on the individual. Thus, to help understand complex real-life social situations such as student strike actions in the university under investigation requires either (a) experience or (b) learning from specific cases.

While a holistic approach typifies case studies, researchers do not necessarily see eye-to-eye on how to design case research. Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, and Robertson (2013) found significant differences between two dominant approaches to case studies, namely Yin and Stake. Boblin et al. (2013) alleged that Yin embraced a post-positivist approach that is philosophically opposed to Stake’s constructivist approach. The authors asserted that a researcher must choose one or the other for support, but not both. Baxter and Jack (2008), on the other hand, suggested that both Yin and Stake embraced an inductive and constructivist approach to case study design, with a corresponding emphasis on the social construction of reality. Perry’s (1998) advocacy for an inductive approach to answer the classic what or how questions, an approach also advocated by Yin (2013), would seem to support Baxter and Jack’s analysis of Yin’s approach. Despite the Yin debate, both inductive or exploratory, and deductive or confirmatory, approaches have been used successfully for case study designs (Perry, 1998).

A descriptive case study approach was specifically selected as the appropriate methodology for this research because of the need to gain an understanding of the concept of distributed leadership, as well as “the importance of understanding the context of the situation” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). Once it has been determined that a case study is appropriate for the
research questions, Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest the following steps: select a type of case study, develop a conceptual framework using propositions or issues, collect the data using multiple sources to enable data triangulation, analyze the data using an iterative approach, and report the research findings. The appropriate unit of analysis, which can vary from a person to a process or even to a community, is a function of the research questions (Yin, 2013).

Employing the case study methodology for this study allowed for the exploration of multiple perspectives on the case and gave this researcher an opportunity to consider his own positionality while conducting the research. This aspect of positionality will be addressed in the case study and makes the case study an ideal methodology for the research (Yazan, 2015). Yazan also considers the case study approach in terms of a constructivist paradigm informed by both the experiences of the researcher and the context of the case. Compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in detail, a case within real-life context. This method works best for research asking descriptive or explanatory questions, and can include aspects of both quantitative and qualitative data (Yin, 2013).

One advantage of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, which also enhances the credibility of the data (Yin, 2003). Data sources for case study research may include interviews, documentation, physical artifacts, direct observations, archival records, and participant-observation. Relative to other qualitative approaches, investigators using case study methodology can also collect and integrate quantitative survey data, which facilitates reaching a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In case study research, data from these multiple sources are then converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually. Each data source, according to Baxter and Jack (2008) is considered as one piece of the “puzzle,” with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the
whole phenomenon. This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case.

Eisner (1991) suggests that “one of the most useful of human abilities is the ability to learn from the experiences of others. We do not need to learn everything first hand” (p. 202). Initial learning from the case then calls for a further process of careful reflection as new ideas are integrated into thinking, changes are made to practice and the consequences of that change are evaluated. Given the expectations that institutional leaders have upon them in leading their school communities, it is not possible to rely only on the leadership of institutional leaders in meeting all the demands that the school requires. It is therefore crucial for institutional leaders to be aware of stakeholders’ insights on practices that promote or hinder participation in leadership roles. Hence, employing the case study methodology for this study facilitated exploration of the theory of distributed leadership within the context of the university under investigation.

**Site and Participants**

This research study occurred at a university campus in Cameroon; one of the two English-Speaking public universities in Cameroon, where this researcher served as a Teaching Assistant. The site was chosen because the university under investigation was established at a time of deepening political and economic crisis that affected Cameroon as a whole, and the system of higher education in particular from the mid-1980s onward. A lack of participation in university affairs created the impression among students that protests (often violent) were the only avenue to change the university. Nyamnjoh, Konings and Nkwii (2012) note that since the creation of the university in 1993, the university had witnessed at least five university strikes before 2005, with students graduating from the university while its administrative nucleus remained stagnant. Therefore, understanding the extent to which there exists a distributed
leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing violent protests at this university is a potential trigger for higher education transformation in Cameroon.

Purposive sampling was used in this research as a sampling strategy. Selected participants were teachers who had a minimum of five years teaching experience. There were nine participants in total of whom six were males and three females. Three of the participants were aged between 30 and 40 years, two between 41 and 49 years and three were above 50 years old. The participants were selected on the basis of the researcher’s individual judgment, that they could provide the necessary information needed for the research. Smith et al. (2009) urges researchers to use small sample sizes that will allow for the identification of a closely defined group. Small sample size also sacrifices breath for depth and tends to produce richer data (Smith and Osborn, 2007). In addition, a smaller, purposive sample size allows for better rapport building with participants and decreases the importance of the question order (Smith et al., 2009).

Humans want to facilitate change quickly, but without adequate thought, collaboration and care, there is a risk of slipping back to the frameworks that have historically guided the work. Taking the time to check interpretations through other people, and sharing these interpretations with the participants, researchers can build confidence in the interpretations they build. This justifies why this researcher interviewed current teachers of this university to gain their understanding and perspectives regarding the prevention of violent student protests. Each person’s experience and perspective is of worth, and without engaging all perspectives, researchers are unable to reach a shared understanding of a particular interaction, situation, or context. Given the expectations that institutional leaders have upon them in leading their school communities, it is not possible to rely only on the leadership of institutional leaders in meeting
all the demands that the school requires. It is therefore crucial for institutional leaders to be aware of stakeholders’ insights on practices that promote or hinder participation in leadership roles. The name of the university under investigation has been concealed and the actual name of the teacher participants will not be used in the study. Instead, pseudonyms were used to identify the teacher participants.

**Data Collection**

The study was conducted in two phases using two data collection strategies: documentation review and semi-structured interviews. Phase I involved conducting a documentation review to provide some initial insight about the contextual environment (Student strikes in this university). Documentary sources serve as a supplement as well as compensate for the limitations of other methods (Noor, 2008). Documentary evidence also acted as a method to cross-validate information gathered from interview and observation given that sometimes what people say maybe different from what people do. In addition, documentary sources provide guidelines in assisting the researcher with his inquiry during the interview. Both public and semi-public records and documents pertaining to student protests in African Universities were reviewed to reflect data from both internal and external sources. Thus, corroboration of multiple qualitative techniques for this case study research enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings.

Phase II involved conducting semi-structured interviews with nine current teachers of this university to understand how teachers describe shared decision making practices during disruptive change. The interviews were face-to-face interviews, and all audio-tapes were transcribed by this researcher. Interviews were conducted at the University campus in Cameroon. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. Before the interviews were conducted, the
researcher went over the informed consent form with the participants, and had them sign the form before any interview could be conducted. Teachers were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The voluntary and confidential nature of participation was emphasized in order to alleviate any concerns the teacher may experience due to the nature of the study. This expectation was reinforced through verbal and written communication that was provided to the participants.

A semi-structured interview process provided information on participants’ backgrounds and experiences, along with gathering data specifically related to the research questions. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that field notes enable the researcher to record what they see, think, and feel throughout the research process. Notes were therefore taken during interviews, especially when information was shared that was particularly interesting or warrants a follow up question.

Data Analysis

Typical of qualitative research generally, case data collection and analysis occur concurrently (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Yin (1981) notes that, as with data collection, “there are no fixed recipes for building or comparing explanations” (p. 61). Though the absence of clearly defined analysis techniques complicates this stage, Yin (2013) encouraged researchers to first specify an analytic strategy to prioritize the analysis process, ideally as part of the case study protocol. Options for developing a strategy include: developing a customized strategy by searching for patterns in the data using different tables and matrices to display the data, using theoretical propositions that you return to repeatedly during the analysis, inductively searching
through the data for a ground-up strategy, creating a case description, or focusing on competing explanations (Yin, 2013).

For this study, this researcher followed the five techniques for analysis described by Yin (2003): 1) linking data to propositions; 2) time-series analysis; 3) pattern matching; 4) logic models; 5) cross-case analysis and explanation building. Yin also notes that none of these techniques come with any formulas. According to Yin, one important practice during the analysis phase of any case study is the return to the propositions because this practice leads to a focused analysis when the temptation is to analyze data that are outside the scope of the research questions. Linking data to propositions, which was used in this study, provided an alternate explanation of the phenomenon of distributed leadership. By engaging in this iterative process, the confidence in the findings is increased as the number of propositions and rival propositions are addressed and accepted or rejected (Yin, 2013).

After gaining approval from the IRB, interviews were conducted with teachers in order to gain an understanding of the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing violent student protests at this university. Open-ended questions were used to encourage the respondents to be spontaneous in their answers and to create a sense of freedom from judgment and interpretation. The data collected from the interviews were then recorded, transcribed by this researcher, and reviewed by all respondents. Themes that emerged from the data were coded and measured in relation to each of the research questions. Significant and recurring themes were further developed and organized in order to identify and understand how participants describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in this university.
Ethical Considerations

Mertler (2009) defines research ethics as dealing with “the moral aspects of conducting research, especially research involving human beings” (p.34). Mertens (2010) calls our attention to the importance of social and cultural sensitivity in relation to the ethics of research. This, for example, manifests in the decision of which voices are included and excluded, in the consideration of the social relationships and power inequities in the processes of planning, conducting and reporting research.

In order to protect the rights of the human participants in this study, approval was obtained from Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The study was conducted within the established guidelines by the IRB. Participants were informed and reminded throughout the duration of the study that there will be no monetary incentives given to them for their participation in this study. They were also assured that even though there are no incentives for this research, there would also be no repercussions for not participating in the study. Since the nature of this study was to examine shared decision-making practices during disruptive change, it is crucial that the sensitive issue of personal disclosure, maintaining the privacy of the participants is monitored closely (Creswell, 2009). Thus, participants were given the opportunity to read and sign the Informed Consent Form acknowledging their voluntary participation in the research study. This researcher did not, at any time, reveal the identity of the participants throughout the study. As a result, this researcher was the only person who had the ability to use the confidential and personal information of the respondents and their activity throughout the research study. All data records were also maintained by this researcher and kept securely in the researcher’s study laptop. All audio-tape recordings and participant generated data were guaranteed to be destroyed at the end of this study.
Finally, this researcher has successfully completed the National Institute of Health’s (NIH) online course entitled, “Protecting Human Research Subjects” that is offered through the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research project remains in full compliance with Northeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies following the IRB review.

Validity and Reliability

Baxter and Jack (2008) advance that numerous frameworks have been developed to evaluate the rigor or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative data. Baxter and Jack also note that researchers using the case study method will want to ensure that detail is provided so that readers can assess the validity or credibility of the study. Several strategies for establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been extensively written about across fields. As a basic foundation to achieve this, this researcher followed the five strategies used for enhancing overall study quality and trustworthiness as described by Russell, Gregory, Ploeg, DiCenso, and Guyatt (2005): 1) The case study research question must be clearly written, propositions are provided, and the question is substantiated; 2) The case study design should be appropriate for the research question; 3) Purposeful sampling strategies appropriate for case study have been applied; 4) Data are collected and managed systematically; and 5) The data are analyzed correctly.

Case study research design principles lend themselves to including numerous strategies that promote data credibility or truth-value. Baxter and Jack (2008) note that “triangulation of data sources, data types or researchers is a primary strategy that can be used and would support the principle in case study research that the phenomena be viewed and explored from multiple perspectives” (p. 556). In this study, triangulation improved the credibility of the concept of
distributed leadership by providing several data points from different sources to help confirm the findings. Finally, observations and interviews took place in the university’s natural setting to reflect actual experiences of those participating in the study.

This researcher had a prolonged and intense exposure to the phenomenon of distributed leadership within the context of the university under investigation so that rapport with participants could be established and so that multiple perspectives could be collected and understood and to reduce potential for social desirability responses in interviews. As data were collected and analyzed, this researcher also integrated a process of member checking, where this researcher’s interpretations of the data were shared with the participants, and the participants had the opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretation, and contribute new or additional perspectives on the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing strikes at their University. As a graduate, and a former teaching assistant at the university under investigation, this researcher was pretty familiar with the participants, and the on-going crisis at the university. As Briscoe (2005) points out, this researcher used this lived experience in representing the lives of those who have experienced oppression. For these reasons, this researcher remained hopeful that the faculty of this university continued to provide honest answers during and following the duration of this study, as this researcher consistently shared an amiable relationship with the faculty of this university.

**Researcher Bias**

This study explored how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change. This researcher is a graduate, and a former teaching assistant at this university. What is unique to students’ activism in this university that raised their militancy is the fact that these students are being more marginalized and oppressed than their Francophone
(French-Speaking) counterparts because of their Anglophone (English-Speaking) identity (Nyamnjoh, Konings and Nkwi, 2012). Students of this university have vehemently resisted the Francophone–dominated post-colonial state’s attempt to transform the newly created university, which was based on the Anglo-Saxon University system, from a space of freedom and democratic governance into one of domination and political control. The students of this University have engaged in a series of violent strikes between 2005 and 2015, leading not to the desired improvement in their living and study conditions, but instead to the banning of the university’s student union.

The scholar-practitioner’s work is, in part, an exercise of power and authority that begins with questions of justice, democracy, and the dialectic between individual accountability and social responsibility. As intellectuals in the public sphere of education, the scholar-practitioner must be aware of, and direct their authority and power productively, self-reflexively, and critically by opening a space of continuous reenactment that offers a provisional place to deploy pedagogical strategies of social engagement and transformation (Mouffe, 1992). As a former student and Teaching-Assistant of the university under investigation, this researcher has been a victim of oppression. This researcher can perceive, understand and represent the lives of those who have experienced oppression. This researcher believes that his demographic position provided an accurate analysis of the findings. The researcher understands that his experiences and identity can hinder the conclusions about this issue. However, it is essential to remember that as scholars in practice, we hold power. We lean toward our own biases and interpretations. Therefore, approaching this work as a novice scholar in practice requires the hermeneutic practice of interpretation via trust and suspicion (Gallagher, 1992).
As a scholar in practice in the field of education, this researcher believes that education is a field in which issues of power and privilege are at play. Interrogating ideas and perspectives around issues of power is an essential component, but not the only component, to looking toward new horizons and a more just and equitable society. As emerging scholars in practice, we have a responsibility to make sure new possibilities emerge. In order to enter this change process, this researcher’s experience had to come to play in order to make change possible and to create environments where human beings thrive. Machi and McEvoy (2012) explain that if our personal biases and opinions remain unidentified, our research will be severely compromised. As scholars in practice in the field of education, it behooves us to consider what questions we are asking, who is asking and defining them, what the question is considering, what the question is omitting, what power structures are at play in the way the questions are being framed, and the ways in which institutionalized assumptions and practices might constrain our opportunities to redefine and reshape our work toward better and more equitable human systems. In that spirit, this researcher has seen his perspective/identity shifting because of this doctoral opportunity. The researcher now fully understands that as scholars in practice, we assume that there is not one “right” perspective or interpretation of a human phenomenon or context, and that the exploration of and integration of myriad interpretations creates the opportunity for a new kind of understanding and approach to transform the higher education system of Cameroon. This defines how this researcher held the interviewees’ perspectives with respect and analytical power in order to facilitate a more inclusive, adaptable and nimble approach to this researcher’s work as an education-oriented scholar in practice.
Limitations

This qualitative study may have limitations with regards to validity, and reliability. As this researcher is also a graduate and a former Teaching Assistant of the university in which the research was conducted, external validity may be impacted and is therefore a potential limitation due to the researcher’s prior knowledge of the participants in the university. As a result, the findings of this study may not be transferable to or relevant in other situations. To minimize this threat, participants were given an opportunity to confirm statements and correct discrepancies where appropriate. Allowing the participants to review field notes helped ensure their accuracy. Another strategy that was used to improve the internal validity included checking participants’ agreement with the collected data by allowing them to review transcripts for accuracy in portraying their perceptions. This researcher was cognizant of his dual role as researcher and former student/Teaching Assistant, and took steps to mitigate its effect.

Conclusion

While there have been advances to exert profound influence on the conceptualization of distributed leadership on school leadership and management, no study seems to have explored the experiences and insights of teachers to determine some of the ways in which the practice of distributed leadership can help prevent student violence on campus. This researcher was interested in exploring the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing protests at this university. Further, the study sought to identify the benefits and drawbacks of those leadership practices, as perceived by the teachers. Data collected through interviews informed this study and formed the foundation from which the study’s findings were generated and understood.
It was the expectation and hope of this researcher to better understand teachers’ perceptions of distributed leadership during disruptive change, while also understanding the benefits and drawbacks of such practices. It is this researcher’s believe that leaders of the university under investigation need to provide teachers with leadership opportunities and resources to lead the way in preventing violent student protests. In doing so, this university could regain its image as the leading university in the country. If this university secures the limitless possibilities inherent in distributed leadership, it could substantially increase the ability to provide opportunities for quality education through teaching and research in an environment that is conducive to such pursuits and in ways that respond to market forces.
Chapter IV: Data Presentation and Analysis

Reporting of the Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, the findings that emerged from the analysis of interview data are presented in response to each research question. The chapter begins with a description of the study’s context, and includes a description of the study’s participants. The findings are then organized and presented with the goal of answering the following research questions:

1. How do teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change?
2. What do teachers perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of their efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university?

Participant responses will be reported as they relate to each research question. Findings from the data collected will be demonstrated with comments illustrative of emergent themes that were generated from the data (Massey, 2011).

Study Context

The purpose of this research study was to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand the extent to which there exists a distributed leadership orientation towards dealing with preventing violent student protests in this university. The study examined the insights of teachers to determine some of the ways in which leadership can be distributed to teachers in the event of a student strike action, and sought to identify the benefits and drawbacks of such efforts. In the context of a post-colonial Africa characterized by bribery, corruption and instability, university administrators in Cameroon should embrace the views of stakeholders, and move away from a reliance on hierarchical structures, which are insignificant
in a fluid organization. One significant line of work to strengthen the university under investigation is to ensure that teachers assume greater leadership of the university in which they work. This means a more consultative, inclusive and participative approach is appropriate for a democratic Cameroon.

**Participants**

Purposive sampling was used in this research as a sampling strategy. Selected participants’ span of total years of teaching ranged from five to forty years. There were nine participants in total of whom six were males and three females. Three of the participants were aged between 37 and 41 years, two between 42 and 49 years and four were above 50 years old. Participants represented a cross-section of team teachers, special education teachers, Social Science teachers, Humanities and special subject teachers. Among the participants, one held a master’s degree while the other eight held doctorate and professorial degrees. Table 1 provides pseudonymized information about the participants.
Table 1 provides an overview of pseudonymized data in order not to compromise the identities of respondents. The ultimate goal is complete confidentiality for every research participant, which Baez (2002) refers to as the “convention of confidentiality”. The convention of confidentiality is primarily upheld as a means to protect research participants from harm. Overall, the pseudonyms used in this research seek to preserve the anonymity of respondents whose lives are the subject of this study. Noting the number of years of teaching and subject areas also help the reader understand the level of experience of each participant, and why the participant may feel very passionate about his or her response to interview questions.
Research Question 1: Findings and Analysis

The first research question sought to describe the insights of teachers to determine some of the ways in which leadership can be distributed to teachers in the event of a student strike action:

How do teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change?

Suggestions on what teachers can do to prevent violent student protests fell into several themes: (1) recognizing and valuing teachers’ efforts, (2) advise, caution and educate students, (3) maintaining open lines of communication, (4) continues dialogue with students, and (5) collegiality. Teachers who were interviewed perceived that these practices are likely to be present if distributed leadership is to be effectively implemented in the university under investigation.

Recognizing and valuing teachers’ efforts. Participants in this study reflect different understanding of the concept of distributed leadership as presented by the literature. They describe distributed leadership as the sharing of tasks among people, involving everybody in the leadership process, giving other stakeholders the chance to take the lead, and decentralizing leadership/power. The participants also believe that by sharing leadership with teachers, teachers get the opportunity to be empowered and grow professionally. Charles, a 51-year-old Professor of Humanities noted,

I think that teachers are in contact with the students on a day today basis and they certainly know who is who. When you deal with students, it’s easy for you to know their temperaments. So, I think that teachers would be an important component
in leadership. If the administration could sometimes seek the opinions of teachers in decisions that are taken, maybe we wouldn’t have violent strikes in this university.

This participant’s comment is illustrative of others like himself, who provided examples of ways in which they were personally affected when they saw forces of law and order beating up students. Ferdinand, a 57-year-old Professor of Political Science also shared, “we [teachers] should be empowered to take on leadership roles because we can guide students to stay away from violence because we understand them better”. Even though teachers posses a set of skills and continue to teach students in classrooms, they also have an influence that extends beyond the classroom. When this researcher asked Serena (a 40-year-old female Professor of Humanities) how teachers can work with administrators in preventing violent student protests in this university, the participant’s response was:

The first thing is that the administration should make teachers feel they are part of the system. Once you feel that you belong, you will also contribute in preventing violent student protests. Once you feel that you don’t belong, then you will just be quiet in your small corner. The administration can also work with teachers provided that they have to make the students understand that their first contact in the university is the teacher, and encourage the students to go very close to the teachers. It’s important. But if you have to use students to fight teachers because of your selfish interest, then there’s a problem.

Further, participants communicated that they were more inclined to assume leadership roles in preventing violent student protests when personally invited by the university administration to get involved. Paul, a 69-year-old Professor of Sociology with the most years of teaching experience stated, “If you want to involve teachers, they should not only discuss this from the top. They should also make it part of faculty board meetings, and ask for proposals from that
level. They should also ask for our proposals at departmental boards and faculty boards”. In other words, these are forums in the university where teaching staff can make their opinions heard. There are departmental board meetings, faculty assemblies, congregation and senate meetings held every year to discuss social and academic issues involving the university under investigation. Teachers could definitely use these forums to suggest solutions that could prevent violent student protests. Another participant, Nancy, a 65-year-old Law Professor also shared,

Participatory approach means people can lead from below and give their proposals and then they become part of policy and implementation. So, if you take a bottom-top approach and then combine it with the distributed approach, you can get a lot. There are some teachers who are passive. Getting their opinions from below to be part of the opinions in management, then that will help in creating an environment where you will have less rioting and so on.

These opinions validated the notion that if distributed leadership is to be authentic, then skills of professional collaboration are critically important. For university administrators seeking improved school culture in the university under investigation, the challenge is to create the conditions where the entire school is working interdependently in the collective pursuit of preventing violent protests in the university.

Advise, caution and educate students. The burning of school property by students during demonstrations is morphing into a worrying trend in this university. There is no doubt that consistent and violent student protests take a toll not only on the students, but also on the school’s reputation. The implication is that these students will miss classes and eventually not fully complete the syllables. To the parents, this also comes as a shock considering how much they toil and sweat to raise money for school fees and general upkeep needed for their children.
Schools, on the other hand lose property, time and other resources and this distorts their strategic plan. But how can teachers work with the university administration to tame the increasing violent student protests? Ferdinand, a 57-year-old Professor of Law responded,

…the only thing I can do is to caution students that violence cannot pay.

I tell those that I teach that violence does not pay. I advise them. Dialogue is what will pay and for us to dialogue, we are going to diagnose this problem very well and find a common ground. I can only say that to the few students that I teach. In order to make this have an impact on the entire student body, we [teachers] will need to identify with the student leaders, who will carry the information to the student body.

When asked what he would tell protesting students, Garry, a 49-year-old Humanities Professor indicated, “I will tell them to go home, that the administration is going to look into your problem. We don’t need a strike action to solve problems but just go home, it will be solved. That you people have student representatives and they are supposed to come and discuss with authorities of the university”. Teachers assume leadership roles in the first place because they are teachers. A community gives a lot of importance to the personality of the teacher. Teachers are role models to their students, and they must be able to provide students the best orientation. Since teachers have a certain amount of knowledge in terms of what they have acquired as qualification, they are expected to transmit that knowledge from one generation to the other. Along these lines, Tony, a 60-year-old Professor of Education noted, “well, as a teacher, what we did was advise the administration as well. We told the administration that the university student union body is necessary [this body has been dissolved because according to the administration, it was the cause of the unstoppable violent student protests]. What you should do as a teacher or a
leader is to streamline or caution or educate the students. However, if you are teaching students and you can’t allow them to exercise their constitutional rights, then there is a problem”. Some teachers are remiss for not adding their voices to campus protests. Jennifer, the youngest participant and a graduate of the university under investigation noted,

Well, before I became a teacher, I used to be a student and I have participated in demonstrations. So, as a student back then, I was demonstrating for a reason. I was expecting that during this recent strike action, this is what our teachers are supposed to do; they are supposed to talk to us to calm down our nerves. But since they were not doing it, instead they scared us. We took the wrong rout. So now as a teacher, based on my experience, I can say dialogue. Also, teachers have to teach or explain to students about strikes. And it should be a main topic or course such as Civics and Ethics for all incoming students this university. We have to educate students and say to them, this is what you ought to do; this is what you ought not to do during a protest.

University administrators should certainly learn to negotiate rules governing protests action and have this in place ahead of any protest action. Some participants (Nancy and Garry) said they did not play any direct role other than meeting the individual students that they are able to meet and try to tell them to resolve their problem peacefully through dialogue. That is the best they said they could do at the individual level; trying to bring peace by advising individual students. Some (Paul and Jennifer) said the only person or the only office that takes that position officially and openly is the hierarchy. Jennifer shared, “when there is a strike, the central administration; that is the Vice Chancellor and his team, the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Registrar should try to address the students as a group, to talk to them and appease them”.

Charles, a 51-year-old Professor noted, “when there is any unpleasant situation, the first thing that comes into any right-thinking mind is giving a piece of advice to be able to solve the problem. That is the first thing for a right-thinking person. Yes. Good piece of advice should be the first thing that comes to your mind. That’s my point of view”. Zack, a 42-year-old Professor of Education also shared that one of the ways teachers could work with the administration is by “delegation of powers”. According to these participants, if the administration could delegate power to teachers so that they can carry out some responsibilities such as talking to these students and organize seminars and try to come up with solutions, it may help to prevent violent student demonstrations. When Tony was asked how teachers can work with the administration in preventing violent student demonstrations, the participant responded,

… if for example it is rumored that students want to strike because they feel that their money is not forthcoming from the Presidency and the administration hears these rumors, they can decide to call a meeting and we do have such meetings. We can have a discussion and see how we can handle the situation to prevent a demonstration. Because during the meeting, teachers and top administrators are going to give different proposals, different solutions, and then eventually tie everything together. A kind of participatory meeting. You get ideas from everybody and then you come up with something that can be helpful.

Leadership is all about setting standards and mobilizing people so that people can follow. This means that there are leadership skills that you possess that will help you lead. Leadership is not about you having a privileged position. That privilege can come with it. But leadership means that you understand who you are leading. If it is an institution such as the university under investigation, you must understand what a university means, what its rules are, and what its
functions are. It needs people who are highly knowledgeable and who are charismatic - people who have the ability to lead. Some dose of personal dynamics may be needed. But it also needs people who are versed with the functions and the roles of institutions. Zack suggested, “you cannot know what to lead if you can’t be spontaneous… a person who aspires for a leadership position should be somebody who knows where to take people to”.

When violent student protests occur, it shows that there is a breakdown in university procedures for consultation. A peaceful protest is a way of influencing when all other avenues have been shut down. It needs to be recognized as being legitimate and requires university leaders to listen to students and staff and come to a compromise. Paul noted, “through dialogue with student protesters and engagement with the students prior to any arbitrary arrest of students, [this university] can take the lead on creating a true partnership with students and staff. True partnership does not mean forums with no communicable change afterwards, but real results that are tangible for the community”. This university needs to start exploring the meaning of a democratic university: a university with meaningful involvement of the community in the decision-making process. This form of governance will hold senior leaders accountable to their communities and enable them to make decisions that the communities are invested in.

**Maintaining open lines of communication.** Students want better representation of their views throughout their institutional structures and are willing to engage positively and constructively to this end. Instead of seeking to suppress this critical engagement with the key issues of our time, university leaders should welcome and encourage their input. Above all, administrators should engage and keep the channels of communication with protesting students and their leaders open. Participants suggested that a greater level of communication is necessary in the university under investigation. Garry noted,
Generally, people say we in the administration, this is us here. No, we are all the administration. We are all teachers and we are part of the administration. And that’s the approach we have to use. So far as we separate the administration from the teachers. How do we solve problems when we are not united? And this university is built that way. We have committees. We have committees of Directors for instance, where if we have a problem, we sit down with the Deans and the Board of Directors to solve problems. At the beginning of every year, we also have what we call a Congregation where we solve institutional problems. It includes cleaners to the top university officials. We have senate, we have council. So, these are just forums where we can sit down and discuss problems.

Distributed leadership means mobilizing leadership expertise at all levels in the school in order to generate more opportunities for change and to build the capacity for improvement. The emphasis is upon interdependent interaction and practice rather than individual and independent actions associated with those with formal leadership roles or responsibilities.

When this researcher asked Ferdinand a follow-up question on how he can work with the administration in preventing violent student protests, the participant noted, “there is a possibility if people are meeting…” With all those avenues, while we are always preaching that we are together, we should have a common goal, people are still deliberate to be out of the system. Sometimes when we have a meeting, teachers don’t talk, they don’t want to participate. They don’t want to ask questions so we can solve our problems, and there is nothing you can do to them”. Serena also noted, “any reasonable administration should work hand in hand with the teachers. The teacher is the first contact with the students. They have direct contact. The teacher has the ability to impact something positive on the student and perhaps influence the student more than the hostile administrator”. This participant absolutely feels that she does not have a
free hand to be able to make suggestions or to be listened to. Thus, she prefers to stay silent.

Moreover, all participants expressed that they are the ones who make students “feel better”. Although at some point during a student protests, especially when it is an administrative issue, “the target sometimes becomes the teachers”, noted Charles. This participant believes that when the students start demonstrating, they sometimes want teachers to rally behind them. And one of the ways to force teachers to do that is always to attack teachers, so that they (teachers) can evacuate the campus too, and the effect of the strike action is felt.

Charles also noted that leadership must start from the inside out: “you must have that zeal; that desire to lead. But in a context like ours that doesn’t allow for freedom of expression; no matter how motivated you are, you always have to watch your moves because all kinds of associations are subject to strict security scrutiny”. It may be useful to note that in the university under investigation, indeed, all forms of associations are being scrutinized. “If they see two or three people somewhere, that’s already a problem because they don’t know what you are planning”, noted Charles. These are the kinds of things that make it “difficult for us to intervene in students’ protests”, Serena added.

Maybe the time is now for this university to start looking at things from a complimentary perspective. “Peace needs to reign on campus”, Nancy noted. Peace in the sense that everybody should feel concerned. It should be student-centered. Participants unanimously expressed their concerns for the administration to bring people on-board. Everybody should contribute to that peace. “Even the cleaners have a part to play. They have something to say”, noted Zack. This means that all the stakeholders of the university need to be informed about ongoing student protests and the way forward. This also explains why the decision-making processes in this university should not only involve the administrators, but must include teachers
and students; even the non-teaching staff (cleaners, campus security officers, office workers, and secretaries) “Let them come and let’s dialogue” suggested Zack. What this means is that every teacher should consider herself a leader because the process of creating and nurturing productive higher education environments is not the responsibility of formal leaders alone. “Teachers must also participate, whether they are holding official positions or not. They are leaders in their own right”, stated Tony.

**Continues dialogue with students.** All participants insisted that there is not enough dialogue between the administration, the students, and teachers of this university. Charles noted “what we have is an institution with administrators who use brutal force to respond to issues. Some students have been arbitrary arrested and they are still languishing in jail till today”. According to the U.S. Department of State 2013 Cameroon Human Rights Report, security forces forcibly disrupted meetings and demonstrations of citizens, trade unions, political activists, and students throughout that year. The use of excessive force by security forces resulted in numerous injuries to demonstrators. For example, between October 2012 and May 2013, the State Department reported that the Cameroonian police arrested at least 40 students on the University of Bueacampus following clashes between students and university police. The report also stated that the students and members of this university’s Student Union staged a series of protests against the university leadership’s interference in their activities and called for self-management of the student union as well as better study and living conditions. Twelve of the students were convicted of disturbing public order.

Nancy noted “sometimes teachers themselves are helpless when students desire that certain things be done. If you are a teacher and you see your own student who was a very good student in class but they are destroying school property in exchange for freedom, what do you
do? You can only advise. If they bring the military in and the military starts doing what they do best, what do you do?” Comments like this are evidence that teachers in this university feel that being valued made them more likely to share in the school’s leadership. Ferdinand reiterated that he continues to advise students during violent protests, that “striking is not the best solution. A strike action should be the final attempt when all other attempts have failed. At this point, the students can now make their voices heard. But I don’t think that if we engage in dialogue, we will ever reach that level of strike and rampage which has engulfed this university since its creation in the 90’s”. It is important to note that these protests always start very peacefully, but always escalate to violence or at least become confrontational whenever police officers show up to disperse protesting students. When asked about the way forward for this university in terms of preventing this violence, Serena responded,

... here is the forward. First, the incoming students should be sensitized about the disadvantages of violent strike. When there is a violent strike, there is a loss on both sides. The students/family members and the government. And if for any reason there has to be a strike, there should be a forum for dialogue. Students should be able to say we are striking because of this and that. If things are done this way, we the students are going to back down. That is very important. And if for any reason, they have to continue the strike, there should be continuous sensitization of the fact that during a strike action, there should be no destruction of property. The teachers have to take this lead by having continues dialogue with the students as well.

The theme regarding continues dialogue [with students, teachers, and the administration] and advice was suggested as one of the most effective shared decision-making practice during a violent student protest situation in this university. This sentiment continued throughout the
interview with participants, as they consistently responded that teachers feel valued and appreciated when recognized by the administrators to lead during disruptive change. Charles stated, “I believe benefits to distributed leadership are a boost to a friendlier environment. And if the environment is friendlier, it is enabling for teachers to do research and to teach and for students to succeed, and for the administration to equally succeed. So, it’s a win-win kind of situation. When the environment is hostile, nothing good can take place in a hostile environment”. Along these lines, Zack emphasized, “distributed leadership is not just leadership, but leadership with other individuals who are part of the institution. Meaning that the students are involved and the teachers are involved. And for us to achieve that concept of sharing leadership, it means therefore that whoever is in a position of authority must be able to delegate, consult, and communicate in order to be able to see that you are open and democratic in your leadership style”.

According to this participant, the factors of communication, consultation and delegation will all lead to participation; and if administrators of this university can effectively utilize these factors, then teachers will be able to participate or take on leadership roles in preventing violent student protests. This opinion also validates the notion that being recognized makes teachers feel valued and appreciated, which will then motivate teachers to participate in shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in the university under investigation.

**Collegiality.** It is this researcher’s view that the challenges faced by higher education institutions in the 21st century cannot be successfully mastered, nor can the efforts of dedicated professionals be sustained when the actions of a faculty member are divisive, uncompromising, and inflexible. Discussion regarding the theme of collegiality was the most tensed during the interviews. Charles noted, “… I’m simply saying that there are teachers who are hostile towards
students and there are others who are more receptive. Those who are receptive are those who consider students as their children; they think they have a responsibility to make sure students succeed in life. On the other hand, we have teachers who are just there and think that their job is just to teach. I don’t know how many of them, but I think there is a good number of them who behave that way”. Garry also shared, “we know that last year some teachers, before students started a strike action, the teachers had a meeting with students in a particular place that I don’t want to disclose”. What these participants are stating is that there are two camps of teachers: there are teachers who actually sponsor or support the demands of these student strike actions or sometimes push students to go on strike, and there are some teachers who just want peace to reign on campus and/or support the administration’s strategy in containing violent student protests. This means that this university is characterized by an environment of uncertainty and unpredictability. When this researcher asked a follow-up question about Garry’s comment that the teachers of this university are divided, his response was:

… I’m telling you the truth. I have met colleagues whom I have personally asked, I won’t call any names. I said man how come we always have strikes in this university? He said man, this place [the university under investigation] is too calm. It needs to be hot a little bit. Can you imagine that? A colleague said this to me, and that colleague has a leadership role in this university. I don’t want to call names. It is from there that I began to understand that there are teachers in this university who are anarchists. So when everything is calm, they don’t like it. And some of the strikes that we had were due to the fact that students wanted money. The so called [Student Union Organization] were taking money from people who were doing business on campus. That’s the point where they banned [Student Union Organization]. It’s a group of selfish students who were extorting
money from others. When we banned [Student Union Organization], you see that for a while now we have not had any strike. There was no strike on campus until recently. Tony was even more vocal. He stated,

That's why I am telling you that on a social issue, it’s very difficult for everybody to be on the same page. Some will say join the strike, others will say no. Sometimes it will depend on self-interest. Don’t forget that the higher education system is political. Political not in terms of partisan politics. Political from the point of view that those interests are different, changing. Political from the point of view that resources are scarce. When resources are scarce, people have to compete for what’s available. And in the process, there will be winners and losers and sometimes people will take positions that are not necessarily in their best interests, but because they see something in it that will be beneficial for them.

Some participants hold the view that some teachers are the ones pushing students to protests, by misinforming them for political motives [to get promoted to an administrative rank—which comes with better financial benefits]. Jennifer insisted,

Some [teachers] even sponsor students to go on strike [give students money to go on strike]. It won’t be appropriate calling names. We also had administrators who leak information to students; classified information and students use it to their advantage --- to start a strike. Sometimes the administration is even surprised how the students get the leaks. Immediately after a senate meeting, students are on strike. Why are they on strike? A teacher who attended the senate meeting likely gave them that information to make sure that students go on strike so that a specific administrator shouldn’t succeed.
No matter how remarkable and stunning these points of view are, it is important to note that all participants agree that the teachers of this university are very divided on university management issues; who gets appointed by whom, and how management of the university should ensue.

Ferdinand added,

Those teachers had their own private motives, not the educational motives. Nobody dissuades anybody from going to school. It’s the wrong thing that you can find in any situation. And to find that coming from teachers, it is an abomination. It’s an abomination to find teachers telling students not to go to school. Because if they close that school today, your job ends as a teacher and you will be the one to suffer. And so when you use education as a political weapon or a weapon to fight the government, you are shooting yourself in the leg and killing your own profession and killing the nation as a whole. And I think that teachers had their political agenda.

Some participants strongly believe that a good number of teachers who ask the students to go on strike are the same teachers who tell students not to come to school. Garry stated that he overheard a teacher addressing a student who showed up to class during a student protest: “what are you doing here? Go home; the university will not open till further notice, until we achieve our aims”. So unfortunately, the university is dealing with a very negative group of teachers as well. Serena went further and noted,

… Oh lord I am giving you an eye witness insider account. I am not saying this or that. I am presenting the facts as they are. So, at the level of the administration, they are divided. At the level of the students, they are divided. At the level of the teachers, they are also divided. And these divisions, some of them are genuine and some of them are for personal interests. And so, because they are divided, the different groups now go around
lobbying for support from different other fragments. Teachers who are divided, they have some group of students that will also support them. And so, these teachers will be saying, "satisfy the students, and give their money". And so, they may be supporting the students because they want the students to also support them.

Each comment shared reflected the view point that there is a huge divide among teachers in this university. To ensure a safe and productive work environment, teachers need to look beyond what is merely acceptable, and work to ensure that all their actions and interactions are genuinely respectful and supportive of everyone, and of the university’s mutual goals and needs. When asked how teachers can be brought together to work with the administration in preventing violent student protests, Nancy said, “we[teachers] can mobilize. When you form an alliance, when you lobby, when you form a coalition, you are not alone. You get the number of people who can articulate certain positions. If the critical mass gets significant, you articulate your own position. You will be heard by the students and the administration”. What this participant means is that university leaders should hold meetings with the teachers and the student leaders. They should also spend time and reflect on how they ought to organize a better life for students on campus in terms of their welfare. When peaceful protests turn violent, the first step should not be how they can contain the protest. Student protests do not just pop up from the air. The administration must start by identifying the indigenous and endogenous origins of the strike action. Serena shared,

One of the way forward is to eliminate politics and put education first. Put politics aside. If we are putting politics aside, we stand for what is right regardless of whether you are a teacher, a student or an administrator. The VC [Vice Chancellor] should be elected, and not appointed. We must respect our Anglo-Saxon tradition. I will also encourage the re-installation of the student union body. That also will help students to channel their
problems directly to the university. Sometimes the communication channel is too long. Before whatever grievances leaves the faculty/students, by the time it gets to the VC’s desk, the students are already on strike. So, this whole departmental or faculty leaders’ thing will not work. The student union eases this communication issue. The administrators should also hold meetings with teachers and the student union in advance to discuss solutions to student grievances before things escalate.

Although the idea of collegiality sounds attractive, participant’s comments look ever more pervasive, especially if it does not bring any financial benefits to them.

**Research question 1 summary**

Participants described specific ways in which they could execute shared decision-making practices during disruptive change. Respondents shared personal experiences in which they had witnessed and been influenced by practices that helped their leadership involvement during disruptive change. Those shared leadership practices that teachers perceive as having a positive influence on distributed leadership included recognizing and valuing teachers’ efforts, advise, caution and educate students, maintaining open lines of communication, continues dialogue with students, and collegiality.

**Research question 2: Findings and Analysis**

What do teachers perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of their efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university?

The second research question sought to understand the benefits and drawbacks of teacher’s efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university. The findings of the study identified ways in which teachers describe shared decision-making practices during a violent student protest situation (disruptive change situation) and provided
insight into the benefits and drawbacks of enacting or supporting this distributed leadership model.

The section that follows presents the benefits of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university. Themes that emerged from the interviews with participants will be presented first, followed by narrative comments that outline and further explain ways in which the participants identified and discussed those benefits and drawbacks.

The participants identified several key themes related to the benefits and drawbacks of teachers’ efforts to support or enact a distributed leadership model. Among the themes related to the benefits of distributed leadership include the following: (1) distributed leadership stimulates organizational change, (2) distributed leadership empowers teachers, (3) distributed leadership helps increase teachers’ sense of organizational commitment, (4) distributed leadership encourages more effective and responsive decision-making. Teachers perceive that these benefits significantly contribute to the success of a distributed leadership model in this university.

**Benefits of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model.**

Many of the benefits communicated by the participants regarding the benefits of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model were clear and simple, yet each message pointed to the divide that exists among teachers. Moreover, all participants noted that incorporating a distributed leadership model is the first and best possible way forward.

**Distributed leadership stimulates organizational change**

Teachers of this university understand that their own level of personal reflection is directly proportional to the success of the university’s ability to engage in open, honest communication. They also understand that change in distributed leadership environments happen slowly and vulnerably over time. They are reminded again, through their own personal and
professional lessons that shared vision starts deep within the leaders, before it is extended outward. Teachers modeling change for this university communicate that the past does not define the present, and that every day is figuratively and literally a new opportunity. This collective effort of teachers helps to lay new a foundation and build an improved framework for distributed leadership. Garry noted, “obviously, you need to have a shared vision, or you need to make your vision clear to your followers so they can follow you. We ought to work in a complimentary way in order to end violent student protests. We have to look at things from a complimentary perspective”. With this comment, it appeared evident that when people have opportunities to be involved and they realize the effects that their work has on influencing change, their investment in the school community increases. Paul explained, “leadership is about one setting standards and mobilizing people so that the people can follow. This means that there is something that you have that will help you to lead the people”.

When the leader and the organization are faced with challenges; the organization is ready to rise to uncomfortable and unexpected moments such as violent student protests. The truth is, none of this would be possible without the struggle and coherence-building process of sharing or distributing leadership. Modeling, encouraging and supporting introspection and inquiry; risk-taking and design thinking; and successes and failures make for not only well-rounded leaders (formal and informal), but also a resilient shared leadership culture that will stand the test of time with change and challenge as certainties in its future.

**Distributed leadership empowers teachers**

Teacher empowerment is often considered as teacher autonomy in the decisions making process (McGraw, 1992), making professional judgments vis-à-vis teaching (Bolin, 1989), and having a professional voice. Without a school leader who trusts his or her teachers, it is difficult
to convert pockets of innovation into a school culture of empowered teachers. One way of building that kind of unified school culture is through distributed leadership, the idea that no one person at the top of the hierarchy makes all the decisions. Serena shared “… instead, the school leaders should empower teachers to run crucial aspects of a school, such as cautioning and advising students to stay away from violent protests”. Participants unanimously agree that empowerment leads to long-range teacher investment and focused determination to take action. Participants shared this belief with the premise that when all members of a community are invited and encouraged to become involved in the community, the school community feels appreciated. Paul explained,

The benefits of distributed leadership are many. First of all, there is peace and harmony. There are achievements of organizational goals and there is development and the economy of time. Things are done in time. You get into the university and within three years you graduate. And the teacher too doesn’t teach students for five years when he is supposed to teach the student for three years. We can only be able to achieve when there is peace, when there is harmony and when there is mutual understanding and participation of everyone.

Participants believe that teachers want their leaders to ensure autonomy, consult, foster collegiality and fight for teachers’ and students’ rights. There is a consensus among the participants on the point of collaboration between teachers and university leaders to improve the effectiveness of the institution. Like other participants, Serena, the youngest of all participants has demanded opportunities for collaboration and involvement in the decision-making process, since participation in decision-making process has a positive impact on the job commitment and job satisfaction. Through distributed leadership, the participants suggested that they can be given
a sense of responsibility, ownership, colleagueship and fulfillment while building a cordial and collaborative relationship between teachers and other leaders at the university under investigation.

**Distributed leadership helps increase teachers’ sense of organizational commitment**

Diosdado (2008) notes that there is a positive relation between teachers’ participation in decision-making processes and their organizational commitment. Participants explained that they will feel motivated and acknowledged when asked to participate in decision-making issues that have to do with preventing student strikes. Nancy noted, “our [teachers’] participation in the decisions of the school will intensify your commitment to the decision-making process, and the university in general”. The opportunity to participate in decision-making in the university was expressed by all participants. However, some teachers perceived their participation in the school decisions as pointless and remarked that the university leaders did not take their opinions into account. This means that some teachers remained only leaders in their classroom, without participating in the broader school policy.

Under the university’s bureaucratic structure, opportunities for participating in decision-making are not feasible for teachers who are left with limited autonomy in many aspects. Typically, individuals demonstrate commitment to the organization in three ways: alignment and belief in the organization’s values; willingness to work diligently for the good of the organization; and fidelity to the organization. Paul noted “sharing leadership allows us to assume a variety of tasks, while enjoying creative freedoms to solve meaningful, complex problems such as the violence in this university”. Since organizational commitment is multidimensional and depends upon the leadership opportunities presented to the teacher, this university’s administrators should obtain knowledge of the interests and abilities of each teacher. Such
knowledge will allow the university’s administrators to distribute meaningful leadership to the teacher in the area of greatest strength. As a result, the teacher is more likely to make a significant contribution in preventing violent student protests.

**Distributed leadership encourages more effective and responsive decision-making**

The importance of including everyone in the decision-making process is a central tenet of the theory and practice of distributed leadership. Distributed leadership gained grounds on the idea that the complexity and nature of schooling necessitates that decision-making authority is spread to different degrees across the school organization. Administrators of this university make multiple decisions each day. The ways in which they make those decisions influence both the performance and culture of the organization. It is now up to the administrators of this university to find ways in which they can work with teachers to finally end the hostile relationship between the students and this university’s administrators. Tony noted, “the value of our involvement in decision-making in this university is somewhat dependent on the decision to be made. There are decisions that are urgent that the administration can take without our input. However, decisions like what we can do to prevent violent strikes in this university will obviously be decisions of quality and acceptance by the students because we talk to these students everyday”.

Conceptual and empirical research suggests that collaborative decision-making has many advantages. Some of them include a larger pool of information to contribute to the decision, greater efficiency for implementing the decision, and more diverse backgrounds and perspectives to inform deliberation. Distributing leadership to teachers therefore has a positive impact on organizations, especially when it comes to preventing violent student protests in this university.

The section that follows outlines the drawbacks of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model. Themes that emerged from the interviews with participants will be
presented, followed by narrative that further identifies ways in which participants discussed those drawbacks.

**Drawbacks of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university**

Data collected for this study revealed that the number of drawbacks of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model were significantly higher than the number of benefits. The degree to which participants identified and discussed the drawbacks of distributed leadership practices during disruptive change was notably more extensive than any of the discussions involving the benefits of such practices. Dominant themes that emerged from the data included (1) teacher safety, (2) misinformation (3) politics (4) trust issues, (5) hostile relationship with police officers, and (6) division among teachers.

**Teacher safety**

Part of the mission of public schools is to teach children what democracy is all about. This university, by its actions, must also exemplify what democracy means. It is very contradictory to teach students about the First Amendment and then not allow students to exercise their right to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly. Student protests in this university have almost always been under assault by the forces of law and order. Jennifer noted, “this university is like a war zone when students are protesting. No one is safe because you see the military everywhere on campus. It scares me a lot, to be honest. I have never seen this kind of thing in my life. Hearing the sound of a bullet is not fun at all. I’m scared”. The right to free expression is a human right and a basic freedom enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many instances throughout history have taught us that when freedom of expression starts to collapse, other basic freedoms can quickly suffer the same fate. In
this university, students are not allowed to assemble and express their views. Teachers sometimes stay away from involving themselves as mediators during violent student protests because of the hostile nature of students during demonstrations. Garry explained,

So, the first thing I do when students start protesting is to remove my car from campus. Because you know that students, when they go mad, things happen. They burn cars and destroy school property. So, the first thing I do is to remove my car far away from the students, then see if I can come back to talk to the few that I can talk to. Besides, I had already removed my car from the strike action location and I was no longer afraid of anything else. If they want to attack me I can run away. I could hide somewhere for safety. But fortunately, I was never attacked.

In this university, student protests always and easily turn violent, especially when military officers are called upon to disperse the students. Once the protest turns violent, the first reaction from every teacher is security and safety. Zack explained, “normally, when there is a student strike, most of the strikes are violent. So, once you meet a violent situation, the immediate reaction is for you to escape from the scene. Yes, it’s for you to escape from the scene because once the students become violent, you don’t know whom they may express that frustration on”.

Indeed, when violent protests erupt, students start destroying university property and so on. Teachers are essential participants in the exercise of basic freedom of expression, which is why the few teachers who tend to talk to students during violent student protests are “targeted by the administration and accused for sympathizing with the students”, noted Nancy. As a result, in order for these teachers to protect their jobs, they try as much as they can not to involve themselves with student protests in this university.
Misinformation

This university can adopt reasonable rules which regulate the time, place and manner of exercising free speech rights. At the same time, students cannot organize a protest if it will substantially disrupt the orderly operation of the school or if it will create the immediate danger of causing students to commit an act that is unlawful or in violation of school rules. Nevertheless, this did not prevent some teachers from accusing their colleagues for misleading the students to start violent demonstration. Garry noted, “… first of all, the first thing is to stop giving wrong information to students. Secondly, we need to advise the students. I do that. I tell students, you guys are here to study. Your job is to study. The state is paying me to teach you”. When this researcher asked Ferdinand about the major challenges he faced while working with his colleagues, Ferdinand explained,

The major challenges, I would start by saying the first thing was to get the students to understand that they were being misled by people who had political motives. The second was trying to get teachers to come back to school and teach and stop sympathizing with the strikers. And the third was to try to reorganize the academic year to recover from the time lost. And the fourth was to really make people understand that education is a very important aspect of human life and nobody in any position for whatever reason can use the students for his own political gains and perhaps to jeopardize the future of the students by making them loose their education.

It is not disputable that teachers must convey the correct information to students if it is necessary to do so. Overall, leaders of this university must also listen attentively to students and find out why students see protests (often violent) as the only way to make their voices heard. “We must have an honest dialogue with them and find out why they are doing this and what they are trying
to get across” noted Jennifer. University leaders will inevitably face challenges and questions based on the contexts in which they are working. It is difficult to craft a response that respects the multiple perspectives that members of the school community — faculty and staff, students, parents, school partners — may have about violent protests in this university. But one helpful avenue is to show support for students’ civic engagement.

**Politics**

The English speakers (Anglophones) of Cameroon, twenty percent of the country’s population, feel marginalized (including this researcher). Their frustrations surfaced dramatically at the end of 2016 when a series of sectoral grievances morphed into political demands, leading to strikes and riots right to this moment. The current crisis has increased support for federalism among the Anglophone population – which most probably was already high – and reinforced support for secessionism. This new configuration shows the depth of the “Anglophone problem” in Cameroon. As the population becomes more frustrated and disappointed, its desire for fair integration and willingness to coexist with the French speakers (Francophones) is eclipsed by aspirations for autonomy. Charles noted,

… and I think that I want to be blunt here with you. According to the text written in [this university], the university is supposed to run as an Anglo-Saxon system [modeled after the British system of education] … This means that in this kind of system, university officials are not appointed; they are elected. But since we are in a country that is modeled along the French policies practices, the government has imposed appointments on all universities including Anglo-Saxon universities.

On November 28, 2016, the crisis, which had until then been limited to the Northwest Region of Cameroon, has suddenly spread to the Southwest Region. Students of this university organized a
march on campus to call for the payment of the president’s achievement bonus, denounce the banning of the [Student Union Organization] in 2012 and protest the introduction of a penalty for late payment of education fees and the additional fees charged for accessing examination results. Ferdinand explained, “… the Vice Chancellor’s response was to call the police onto the campus. They brutally repressed the students and arrested some of them in their homes. Female students were beaten, undressed, rolled in the mud and one was allegedly raped”. Faced with the Anglophone crisis, the government of Cameroon and this university’s administrators seem to be comfortable with the status quo. Charles again explained,

   Well in order to lead, I think the first thing is that you must have that zeal, that desire to lead. But in a context like ours, that doesn’t allow for freedom of expression; no matter how motivated you are, you always have to watch your moves because all kinds of associations are subject to strict scrutiny. It may be useful for you to know that right now as I speak to you; all forms of associations are being scrutinized. If they see two or three people somewhere, that’s already a problem because they don’t know what you are planning. These are the kinds of things that make it difficult to lead because you lead people, you don’t lead yourself. If you have to lead people, you must communicate with the people. So how can you lead when your team members are not on the same page with you? You must talk with the people in order to lead. So those are some of the things that scare us. We don’t want to be seen as people who are out there to mobilize the population against the “powers that be”.

Trust Issues

   This study found that teachers need to feel safe in order to be open with sensitive information and to share their own ideas and strategies on how to prevent violent student
protests. Many of the teachers expressed trust issues when it comes to sharing their ideas with colleagues and the administration on how to handle violent demonstrations. Nobody wants to be looked upon as a traitor. The culture in this university is that the lesser you speak, the better your chances of getting promoted to an administrative rank (which comes with better monetary benefits) and vice-versa. Charles noted, “...to crown it all, appointments in this country seem to be a kind of compensation for allegiance. If you are somebody who openly supports government policies, then you are most likely to be appointed because the government operates on the principle of trust. It only appoints only those it can trust. If it doesn’t trust you, they cannot appoint you”. This means that teachers should be reliable in fulfilling their responsibilities, understanding that these actions would build trust and eventually lead to increased collaboration. However, without sharing sensitive information along with new ideas and strategies for preventing violent student protests, a team’s collaborative efforts are likely to be superficial and ineffectual.

Instead of incapacitating people’s ability to problem-solve or try new ideas—which is what fear does to teachers, research on school reform strongly suggests that school leaders should be encouraged to take a more humane approach. Paul noted, “trust among us [teachers and the administrators] comes down to one thing: psychological safety. By this I mean safety to speak one’s mind, to discuss with openness and honesty what is and isn’t working, to make collective decisions, to take risks, to fail—all things researchers tell us are required for deep organizational change and transformation”. What this means is that even though trust-building may seem like an uphill battle, in the end it pays off. In the end, the ultimate beneficiaries are the students. Thus, teachers and administrators must depend heavily on cooperative endeavors in order to solve the crisis situation in this university.
**Hostile relationship with the police officers**

The police are hostile to students and vice versa. The teachers also have a distrust of the police because they do not trust the police. Hence, they would rather stay away from intervening during violent student protests. All sides feel embattled and victimized. All sides are angry. The sad truth is that there are good reasons for all sides to feel the way they do. Meanwhile, the consequences of this mistrust are draining and pernicious. Charles noted,

“I have watched on TV pictures showing the students protesting and shouting, “no violence”. They want peace but they want their problem to be solved. But given the brutality of the forces, it appears they [the police] thought that by using force and intimidation, they were going to quiet the uprising and force the students to submission but unfortunately, it precipitated and that let to so many students being arrested, some taken away and locked up in police barracks and so on”.

What this participant means is that the safety of officers and civilians depends, in large part, on the strength of the relationship between the police and the public. Public distrust of the police can decrease cooperation with law enforcement, which can, in turn, lead to an increase in violent crime and resistance.

Police distrust of the public, in turn, can lead to an increase in officer misconduct and the use of force, as well as the adoption of aggressive “zero tolerance” tactics that further exacerbate the tension, perpetuating a downward spiral. Garry noted, “…when I say violence, it’s from both sides; the side of the students who destroy property and from the forces of law who are there to do their job because the students have no right to engage in violence, neither on property nor human subjects”. Tony also explained, “the government’s response to what is commonly known as the ‘Anglophone Crisis’ has become increasingly violent, resulting in the deaths of several
protesters”. The fractured relationship between the local police and the community ultimately endangers hundreds of officers and thousands of civilians, resulting in millions of CFA francs of damage. Maybe one potentially important factor that may help explain policing policy positions is the extent to which the actors involved are perceived as threatening.

Division among teachers

A distributed perspective is seen as a desirable way for staff in this university to work with the administration to prevent violent student protests. However, such objectives do not necessarily reflect the realities of some teachers’ professional aspirations, identities and practices. Teachers in this university are vastly divided on the issue of preventing student protests. Even though none of the participants called for violence during student protests, the data however revealed that there were some teachers who are in support of the students’ demands while others were clearly against student protests or at least support the administration’s current strategy (which is to call the police to stop students from protesting). Charles noted, “… I’m simply saying that there are teachers who are hostile towards students [anti student protests in any shape or form] and there are others who are more receptive to students[pro students]. Those who are receptive are those who consider students as their children, they think they have a responsibility to make sure students succeed in life. On the other hand, we have teachers who are just there and think that their job is just to teach. I don’t know how many of them but I think there is a good number of them who behave that way”. Other participants also noted that teachers are against any form of student protests because of conflict of interests. Conflict of interests in the sense that if they align with the administration, they may get promoted to an administrative rank which comes with financial benefits. Tony explained,
The main challenge you are likely to face is with colleagues who pretend, whom you know how they feel, but in public they don’t want to actually express their honest opinions. It’s not uncommon for a colleague who is bigger than you in terms of academic grade to be quiet on very critical issues that they ought to voice an opinion. Quite often, it’s easier for assistant lecturers, those who are just beginning, to ask the tough questions. Whereas their big brothers and sisters who are now associate professors or professors; I don’t know, they may be looking for appointments into “the system” and they want to be “the good guy”. They want to be looked at in a very favorable light because they may be appointed as the Dean, the Vice-Dean, and they start compromising their integrity. When you start looking at things from that perspective of an appointment, it’s very unlikely for you to be a good teacher leader.

What Tony means here is that some teachers will rather align themselves and express their support for the administration during a violent student protest rather than express honest opinions or suggest a reasonable solution to violent student protests, which can make a difference for this university. Garry further noted,

There are two camps actually. The camp of teachers who hate seeing violence; and generally, those who hate the strike or the tension between the administration and the students are those who helped to build this university. And when you see teachers who just joined the university recently, and they are supporting student strike actions; this drives me crazy. Now there is the camp of those who do not care; who don’t feel part of this system. You know there are many people here who love their job. When you love your job and you are spending all your time on research, you don’t even have the time to
be counseling or advising students to go on strike. What you want is peace. And many of us here what we want is peace.

These comments reveal that the university under investigation could be characterized as a political arena where instability in the environment can trigger a conflict about future courses of action. Participants shared specific examples of personal experiences working with the administration. Tony reflected on a past experience and shared, “a hierarchical superior can make life difficult for a teacher in this university. So that’s what you should be careful about. How do you operate within such a culture? How open can you be? That decision is yours to make. There are many variables you have to consider. First, your own professional growth within the system. And your professional growth within the system will depend on the most part for you to be seen as a good guy”.

**Research question 2 summary.** Participants revealed several benefits and drawbacks of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university. Data for this study revealed that there are many benefits of enacting a distributed leadership model in this university. Among the greatest benefit for teachers included the idea that distributing leadership stimulates organizational change. Other benefits included the ideas that distributed leadership empowers teachers; helps increase teachers’ sense of organizational commitment; encourages more effective and responsive decision-making.

Among the greatest drawbacks included the concern that there are some teachers who are pro-students while others are in support of whatever decision the administration takes to stop violent student protests. Some teachers shared their discomfort in getting involved in any conversation that has to do with student protests by citing safety concerns. Safety concerns in the sense that when these student protests turn violent, everyone, including the teachers become a
target. School property is destroyed, and cars are burnt. Other drawbacks included the idea that some teachers spread false information in order to agitate students who then start a protest in order to make an administration look bad. This in turn benefits those teachers who leaked these “false information” to students as they are eventually offered top ranking administrative positions.

Obstacles also shared by participants included trust issues among the teachers and a hostile relationship towards the police. Some participants shared that their efforts to enact a distributed leadership model might not be fruitful because they do not feel comfortable expressing an honest opinion for fear of being considered a traitor by the administration. Others noted that they might become a target by the police if they get involved in any mediation talks with the students. Even in the course of advising a student during violent protests, no teacher wants to be identified with a student during such times for fear of being accused of promoting violence.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study show that it is crucial for administrators of this university to consider teachers’ perception of distributed leadership, which they believe to have a positive or negative influence on distributed leadership. Teacher perception as it relates to the benefits and drawbacks of teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university is important when seeking ways in which to strengthen distributed leadership in a university. Data for this study revealed that the majority of teachers overwhelmingly believe that it is important for university administrators in this university to support teacher participation in distributed leadership especially when it comes to preventing violent student protests. The data also revealed that teachers strongly support the idea that this university’s culture of violent
student protests needs to include the opportunity for the growth of distributed leadership practices and that these leadership practices should align with the school’s goals, vision, and mission.

The two research questions were explored through interview data. The first research question, “How do teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change?” revealed that the following practices are likely to be present if distributed leadership is implemented in the university under investigation: recognizing and valuing teachers’ efforts; advise, caution and educate students; maintaining open lines of communication; continues dialogue with students, and collegiality. The second research question, “What do teachers perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of their efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in this university” revealed that distributed leadership stimulates organizational change, empowers teachers, increases teachers’ sense of organizational commitment, and encourages a more effective and responsive decision-making. Obstacles shared that could potentially interfere with teachers’ efforts to enact and support a distributed leadership model in preventing violent student protests included teacher safety, misinformation, politics, trust issues, hostile relationship with police officers, and division among teachers.
Chapter V: Thesis Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, this researcher provides a summary of the study including a synopsis of the problem of practice, the methodology used, summary of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework, summary of the findings in relation to the review of literature, and the implications of the study in terms of leadership practice and leadership development in universities. The purpose of this descriptive case study was to examine how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during a disruptive change situation, and to examine the benefits and drawbacks of teacher’s efforts to enact and support a shared decision-making (distributed leadership) model in a university in Cameroon.

Review of Problem of Practice

The view that leadership is vested in formal leaders has been challenged and has led to practitioners, reformers and educational theorists calling for a re-conceptualization of school leadership (Spillane, 2009). In the new paradigm of leadership, leadership is viewed as a practice whose responsibilities are shared by everyone in an organization. Leithwood et al. (2006) view distributed leadership as a social distribution of leadership where the leadership function spreads over the work of multiple individuals. In this instance, leadership practice entails interdependency rather than dependency and embraces the sharing of responsibilities.

Wallin (2010) argues that higher education leaders now face a very different set of challenges that necessitates new forms of leadership. For example, the rise of global and international partnership, the need for new business models, and greater accountability pressures around college completion and learning outcomes. Given this current era of significant change in higher education, there is growing attention to the importance of understanding the leadership required to guide campuses successfully. In a distributive environment, teachers take on greater
leadership responsibilities. This raises the question of the role of teachers during a disruptive change situation. By exploring teachers’ perceptions of shared decision-making practices during disruptive change, this researcher was able to identify leadership practices that promoted distributed leadership and those that hindered distributed leadership. Since university leaders face the challenge of implementing more changes than ever in a shifting economic, social, and political landscape shaped by complexity, shared approaches to leadership that capitalize on the broader knowledge of the institution and foster learning are needed moving forward.

**Review of Methodology**

The descriptive case study was most applicable to this study because the goal of this study was to understand how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change as a result of their experience. Utilizing this qualitative approach to data collection and analysis helped participants to describe their experiences freely without being bound to the more rigid structure of quantitative research (Creswell, 2009). A descriptive case study is typically qualitative in nature, resulting in a narrative description of behavior or experience. The main characteristics of case study research are that it is narrowly focused, provides a high level of detail, and is able to combine both objective and subjective data to achieve an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. This descriptive case study analysis employed semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data collection. Data was then recorded, transcribed by this researcher, and reviewed by all participants for the purpose of member checking. The themes that emerged from the data were then coded and measured in relation to each research question.
**Review of the Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework**

Distributed leadership (shared leadership, collective leadership) was the theoretical lens used for this study. Distributed leadership is characterized as a form of shared or collective leadership in which expertise is developed by working collaboratively. Most importantly, distributed leadership does not mean that there is not anyone responsible for the overall organization. Instead, it requires that organizational leaders understand the synergistic relationship between leadership and organizational structures, school vision, and school culture (Elmore, 2000). The purpose of this study was to explore teachers’ perception of distributed leadership during disruptive change, while also developing an understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of the theory of distributed leadership.

The participants of this study informed the research questions by providing their personal intuition into the ways in which they can work with the administration to prevent violent student protests, and what prompted them to get involved in the way that they described their shared decision-making practices. Participants were very forthcoming with their perceptions and they made connections between present and past experiences. When asked, “At the time of the strike action, where there any specific steps you took in person to respond to the crisis?” Tony, a sixty-year-old Professor of Education shared,

I take steps as a teacher. If I see students protesting and they come to my office, I don’t just talk to them. I advise them. I happen to be a member of statutory committee meetings of Deans and Directors and the Senate. And during Senate meetings for example, some of these issues are discussed. And what you do is express an honest opinion. Where that leads you is a different ball game. If you express an opinion that comes back to hunt you, it sends a chilling message to you and other colleagues to watch out what they say. There
are other instances where a strike has resulted from my own perspective, from an inability of those concerned to be a little bit flexible. They flex muscles. The administration is flexing muscles, the students are flexing muscles and it always ends up in somebody dying. Things, property destroyed and that kind of stuff. So sometimes strikes have resulted from the inability of hierarchical superiors generally listening to colleagues.

This participant is suggesting that for distributed leadership to be effective in this university, university administrators need to act in ways that accord with their position. While making their own contribution to the university’s mission and vision in this regard, it is the responsibility of senior leaders to set an appropriate organizational framework to help prevent violent student protests on campus. They need to create and/or allow opportunities for various approaches and strategies to be pursued to allow distributed leadership to flourish within such a framework and within well-understood and accepted boundaries. As major decisions are implemented, well led interconnected networks, or teams of teachers, administrators and student leaders allow better outcomes for all concerned as all stakeholders work in an environment of mutual respect and support towards common goals.

Distributed leadership highlights leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals. This contrasts with leadership as a phenomenon which arises from the individual. Gronn’s work is helpful in explicating and elaborating this. Where people work together in such a way that they pool their initiative and expertise, the outcome is a product or energy which is greater than the sum of their individual actions. In this university unfortunately, some teachers have little or no hope that teachers can work together with the administration to prevent violent student protests. Jennifer shared,
...student strikes have resulted from colleagues pretending to think the way their hierarchical superiors do, rather than be honest. Of course, when you say what they want to hear, they become myopic [the administration]. They think that they are doing the right thing because they have support. Whereas in natural fact; these are just people who want to be perceived as the good guys and it ends up not helping the student protest situation. We do not honestly confront our issues. Listening to the bad, and listening to the good, we don’t do that.

Distributed leadership suggests openness of the boundaries of leadership. This means that it is predisposed to widen the conventional net of leaders, thus in turn raising the question of which individuals and groups are to be brought into leadership or seen as contributors to it. Of itself, the notion of distributed leadership does not suggest how wide that boundary should be set. However, there are no limits built into the concept. If distributed leadership is to be seen as distinctive from other formulations of leadership, it must be looked at, as an emergent property of a group or network – which will underpin it. From this perspective, distributed leadership is an important analytical tool for thinking about leadership and re-orientating thinking about its nature.

From a distributed leadership perspective, leadership practice is viewed as an interaction between members of a community, where the members find themselves intertwined. In this study, participants expressed ways in which this participatory form of leadership contributed to personal and professional growth, while benefiting the entire university community. When asked what teachers can do to promote distributed leadership during a disruptive change situation, Paul, a sixty-nine-year-old Professor of Sociology suggested, “We need spaces for reflection and collaborative action. For us to contribute in preventing violent protests in this
university, we [teachers] need a collaborative space to negotiate our practices’ meanings and share context learning as a community of practice”.

What this reveal is that any reform that attempts to prevent student protests or ensure access and achievement of all students is possible when leadership is shared widely among members of a school community. Ryan (2006) argues that successful implementation of any school reform requires three leadership practices. First, it needs to be a cooperative process that ensures all individuals work together in diverse ways for educational institutions to succeed. Second, it should create fair opportunity for all members of a school community to influence decisions, policies and practices. Third, it should aim to achieve inclusion in all areas of the school and beyond and follows the process which is itself inclusive. These three leadership practices are consistent with the distributed perspective on leadership. Zack noted, “interpersonal and group dynamics are vital to this process: listening respectfully, concern to know and understand others, efficient communication, teamwork, involvement in continuous dialogue, and creation of forums in which everyone has a voice are crucial”. These values are realized through actions that enable teachers to lead innovation and contribute to the development of professional knowledge (Frost, 2008). A great deal of this success could be attributed to the positive interactions between and among teachers. Through these interactions, teachers have gained the confidence to take the risks necessary to strengthen and benefit the university. This type of participatory leadership encourages interactions between teachers who seek to share their individual talents to strengthen the university’s mission.

As evidenced by this study, distributed leadership in a school community contributes to feelings of empowerment as teachers seek to be part of the decision-making process. Additionally, the distributed leadership model increases a sense of connectedness and belonging,
which in turn increases teachers’ shared vision to prevent violent student protests on campus. When responding to the question, “What factors might encourage teachers to take on leadership roles in preventing violent student protests in this university?” Ferdinand shared,

I can talk about three factors, but all of them will lead to one. The factor of communication, the factor of consultation, and the factor of delegation, which all will lead to participation. And if all of them [teachers and the administrators] can participate with all of these three main factors, then teachers will be able to participate or take on leadership roles in preventing violent student strikes. Also, some teachers choose not to take on leadership roles because not everybody can be a leader and there are some people who are born leaders, some people are made leaders, and some people acquire leadership along the line. And no matter what government authority you have, if you are not a good communicator, you will not be able to be a good leader. No matter the laws and the decrees and the ministerial texts that guarantee your leadership. If you are not a good leader, you can never succeed in administration.

Though the theory of distributed leadership was not presented to participants as a vehicle through which to gain information about distributed leadership, it did provide a lens through which this researcher conducted this study. It allowed for an exploration of interactions perceived by teachers to be instrumental to their work in this university. The shared leadership practices perceived by teachers during disruptive change, along with the associated benefits and drawbacks of these shared leadership practices were explored using the lens of Distributed Leadership Theory. This was accomplished in order to gain a better understanding of distributed leadership in this university, an understanding that undoubtedly informed this research study.
The findings of this study align with the fundamentals of distributed leadership - a participatory approach to leadership. This type of leadership promotes the sharing of leadership functions and roles between and among individual members of an organization. The purpose of this research study was to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon. The theory of Distributed Leadership postulates that this distribution of leadership can be successfully accomplished only when clear, observable, and measurable goals are identified. Once these goals are established, distributed leadership can occur, as this type of leadership promotes the interactions between individuals in an organization. Distributed Leadership Theory offered the lens through which to reflect upon leadership, as it related to the experiences of teachers of this university.

**Summary of the Findings in Relation to the Review of Literature**

Even though there is widespread use of the term “distributed leadership”, it is important to note that definitions of the term vary. Part of the appeal of the term distributed leadership is that it means different things to different people. Storey (2004) notes that it is frequently used as a short hand way of describing shared or collaborative leadership practice. For this study, the contemporary definition of distributed leadership includes both theoretical and the normative interpretations. In a normative sense, distributed leadership assumes a set of direction-setting and influence practices potentially “enacted by people at all levels rather than a set of personal characteristics and attributes located in people at the top” (Fletcher and Kaufer, 2003, p. 22). Here, leadership is a form of concerted action which constitutes the additional dynamic that occurs when people work together. It is a form of lateral leadership where the practice of leadership is shared amongst organizational members and where decision-making is governed by the interaction of individuals (Gronn, 2002). In a theoretical sense, distributed leadership is best
understood as a “practice distributed over leaders, followers and their situation and incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals” (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 20). This theoretical framing implies that the social context and the inter-relationships therein, is an integral part of the leadership activity.

Harris et al. (2007) note that current studies on distributed leadership are focusing upon the different forms of distributed leadership in schools, and explore how different patterns of distribution affect organizational change and organizational outcomes. Findings have also shown that the configuration of leadership distribution is crucial and that certain patterns of distribution have a positive effect on organizational development and change. Contemporary literature on distributed leadership also points to some of the practical difficulties associated with distributing leadership in schools. This shows that distributed leadership can result in competing leadership styles, conflicting priorities, and targets. Tony noted,

… It is difficult for everyone to think that the students have gone too far. People will be divided. It is a difficult situation. I will like to believe that some teachers will even want to join students to protests. Teachers have gone on strike too. So, it is not only students. Teachers too have gone on strike. Not once, not twice. So, going too far is a perception of people who may be benefiting from the status quo. Those who are benefiting from the status quo may say you guys have gone too far. Others may even believe that the demonstrations have not even started.

In any higher education institution, the teachers, students and other non-academic staff want and need to be part of the bigger picture, to be able to work together effectively and productively in ways that achieve organizational success, meeting the larger, collective purpose of the university. The role of leadership is to create the commitment, alignment and direction to enable this to
happen (Drath, 2003). However, because of increasing challenges and complexities which are often unpredictable, it is now believed that more inclusive, collective leadership is required (Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2004). This university is no exception. Distributed leadership or rather the idea of multiple leaders, is not a new phenomenon. Schools have traditionally had multiple leaders as has any hierarchical organization. Where this concept differs is that it concerns a sharing of the leadership in relationship to organizational change and improvement, not simply a sharing of tasks as may previously have been the case with team leaders, heads of departments (HOD) etc (Spillaine and Sherer, 2004). The distributed perspective is a conceptual framework for thinking about and studying school leadership and management. It is an analytic tool for studying leadership and a diagnostic tool for practitioners and those who seek to intervene inside schools. Much prior work focuses on what leaders who hold particular leadership positions do in general terms – they sell a vision of leadership, they monitor instruction, etc. The distributed perspective in this research study allows us to understand how leadership activity gets accomplished in a disruptive change situation.

Culture, as well as context, affects the view taken on leadership. In their study of leadership in American Indian culture, Warner and Grint (2006) define leadership as influence. The concept of leadership as other than a set of tasks can also be found in other literature. Leadership has been seen as function rather than role. In order to understand this new concept of leadership there is need to think of leadership (individual & collective) as a process that is used to accomplish a set of leadership tasks. In distributed leadership, the tasks are distributed but it is possible for traditional hierarchy or formal roles to remain (Spillane and Sherer, 2004).

The social and cultural context of distributed leadership is very significant. It can act in a positive way to create and sustain the conditions for distributed leadership to flourish, or have a
negative influence. The cultural history of an organization is a major factor, with the potential to create circumstances in which attempts to generate more participation or values of trust and cooperation result in apathy or even resistance from the staff or members of the community involved. Wider societal values are also a significant part of the context, a point which this study was able to draw from studies concerned with non-Western cultures. Implicitly, this raises the question of whether distributed leadership is possible in a hierarchically ordered society with so much power vested in the hands of a few appointed political leaders, as is the case of this university. To substantiate this point, Jennifer notes, “We have to start by asking the Higher Education system in Cameroon to elect its own leaders. That way you will be listening to the voices of those who elected you, not the voices of those who appointed you. That's just one perspective. There are many things we can do”.

According to Spillane (2005), the term distributed leadership is usually used interchangeably with “shared leadership”, “team leadership” and “democratic leadership”, all which refer to leadership as an organizational quality. As the term’s name suggests, from a distributed point of view, leadership is shared, namely there are more than one single leader in a group, as described by Paul:

…Obviously, you need to have a shared vision, or you need to make your vision clear to your followers, and identifiable to people, so they can follow you. So, distributed leadership to meis a kind of interactive or common attitude towards achieving a common goal. For example, if am a leader or leading a service such as a Vice Dean of Student Affairs, it means I need to take my workers and collaborators somewhere. It means we have an objective which is not personal but rather institutional. The teachers, the
university all have an objective and my role is to achieve that objective using input from my collaborators.

Throughout this study, teachers communicated their desire to collaborate with one another, while working toward common goals. When asked to share the perceived benefits of distributed leadership, Tony shared, “In order to promote distributed leadership, our administrators must make the teachers part of the vision. We [teachers] need to feel part of the goal in order to work with the administration to attain its goals.” This participant’s comment demonstrates the power and influence of school climate on shared leadership. Shared leadership recognizes the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice, regardless of whether or not they assume formal leadership roles. This view of leadership coincided with distributed leadership that promotes the fluidity of leadership and moves away from the idea that leadership is individually fixed and where people within the organization are assigned specific roles that do not change (Gronn, 2003).

The distributed perspective is not a type of leadership but a framework to understand all types of leadership and management. While prior school leadership research tends to emphasize the behaviors and traits of positional leaders such as principals, and to view organizational contexts and environments as a backdrop on which leadership practice unfolds, the distributed perspective emphasizes how leadership practice is constituted in the interactions among school leaders, followers, and their situations. Much of this literature emphasizes how the individual members of an organization must share a common understanding of its aims and ways of working. This resonates with the tenets of distributed leadership, and with Gronn’s emphasis on distributed leadership as “concertive action through relationships”. All members of a school community need to establish a common sense of purpose and agreed ways of working if they are
to be successful. Shared decision-making practices work best in an open climate, with both intra-group and inter-group relations based on mutual trust and open communication in a supportive organizational climate. As Ferdinand points out,

All of us must come together for [this university] to achieve its objective. This means that coming back to the question, sharing leadership when it comes to sharing, it’s not just leadership but leadership with other individuals who are part of the institution. Meaning that the students are involved, the administration is involved and the teachers are involved. And for us to achieve that concept of sharing leadership, it means therefore that whoever is in a position of authority must be able to delegate, consult, and communicate to be able to see that you are open and democratic in your leadership style.

This study used the distributed perspective and demonstrated the ways that teachers co-construct leadership activity, how leadership practice connects and fails to connect with organizational change, why teachers heed or ignore the guidance of school leaders, and how leadership is practiced differently in a different setting from the United States or Europe. The distributed perspective brings coherence to leadership activity and helps ground our understanding of leadership practice in the daily activities that constitute it. Hulpia and Devos (2010) point out that the distributed perspective is not a type of leadership but a framework to understand all types of leadership and management. While prior school leadership research tends to emphasize the behaviors and traits of positional leaders such as principals, and to view organizational contexts and environments as a backdrop on which leadership practice unfolds, this study utilized the distributed perspective to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices (interactive decision-making practices) during a disruptive change situation.
Implications for Leadership Practice and Leadership Development in Universities

This study provides a number of insights about how this university’s administrators can leverage the complex structure of a university to develop and support a distributed leadership framework in a higher education institution. The study outlined a number of shared decision-making practices exhibited by teachers that could facilitate distributed leadership practices during disruptive change, and also identified several barriers and challenges to those practices. The findings of this study raise several implications for teachers and leaders who wish to encourage or support distributed leadership practices during a disruptive change situation.

Proponents of distributed leadership advance that sharing leadership is required since educational institutions are too complex to be managed with only one individual. Thus, responsibility for managing various complex tasks in organizations is distributed among a myriad of individuals. The university under investigation could be characterized as a political arena where instability in the environment can trigger and engender future courses of action. University administrators and teachers are therefore challenged to attend, simultaneously, to demands for internal cohesion and stability and to external pressures for adaptation and accountability. Just as effective teams need to have ways of facing and resolving conflict, so do teachers and the administrators need distributed leadership in action. However, these may need to operate across far wider areas than formal departmental heads, Student Affairs Administrators or the Vice/Deputy Vice Chancellors of this university. The nature of these means of shared leadership practices will vary depending on the source of the distributed leadership initiative and the extent to which senior leaders are able to “let go” of their overall control.
The way in which distributed leadership is talked about by participants draws sharp attention to the need for both top-down and bottom-up leadership, not just as an ideal but as a necessity given the nature of academic work in universities. The distribution of leadership in Higher Education thus becomes a dynamic negotiation and exchange between those in the top, including Heads of Departments and amongst informal networks of colleagues and peers. By focusing on both outcomes and processes, the democratic and distributed leadership model, if implemented in this university, will have many benefits. It will advance the efficient implementation of decisions, maximize the range of knowledge and experience that go into school administration, make all key administrative decisions visible to all, hold everyone accountable for the effective management of the school, promote harmonious administration, and cultivate the civic goals of schooling. These benefits advance the quality of school life and thereby foster student development, student performance, and collegiality.

Despite a broad recognition of a distributed approach to leadership during disruptive change, however, most participants still expressed the need for formally recognized leaders to provide a clear vision and direction to prevent violent student protests. When asked how teachers could work with the administrators to help solve the growing violent student demonstrations in this university, Nancy shared,

That is not my role. If I find a violent mob, do you have time to talk to a violent mob? There are people whose job is to talk to the students. We need a channel if there is a violent student protest. University administrators negotiate strikes to end because the Administrative Affairs office manages the personnel. If students want to riot, they just call it strike. Immediately the students want to riot, the first thing they do is carry it to the streets and it becomes a disruption. So, I am just saying that the Vice Chancellor is the
Head of the Institution. He can either talk to the students individually or ask teachers to help him.

This participant’s comment reveals that having visionary and inspirational leadership at the top of educational institutions is as important as cultivating a culture of distributed leadership. Clear vision and direction that comes from a formal leader, it seems, is one of the prerequisites for distributed leadership to work in practice. A clear vision and direction from a formal leader gives teachers the confidence to explore new opportunities. Such an approach from senior administrators can create an enabling environment in which teachers feel empowered to act.

This study has identified actions needed to enable a distributed leadership process that is genuinely aimed at engaging teachers in influencing leadership decision making. Considering what we know about distributed leadership, it would seem that university administrators in the future will require the ability to re-establish trust with teachers in order to maximize the potential for distributed leadership to prevail in rapidly changing circumstances. Trust will become a central feature of leadership activity in a context where the ability to adapt and innovate will be the key to lasting peace on campus. It is also clear that the role of institutional leaders within a distributed leadership framework is no longer one of absolute control. Distributed leadership implies sharing of power and decision making, hence, at times, university leaders may not have positional or expert authority especially when it comes to communicating directly with angry students. If the distributed leadership framework is one premised on the broad-based involvement of teachers in decision-making, then the role of university leaders has to change. The changed or redefined role of university leaders will be chiefly concerned with creating the conditions for teachers to lead rather than leading from the front. This is not to suggest that university leaders no longer set the strategic direction for the university, but rather to argue that
the role of university leaders is now to orchestrate the leadership capabilities and talent of teachers to move universities towards achieving a shared vision.

This shift in the role of university leaders is significant in a number of ways. First, it requires some relinquishment of power and authority which will be difficult for this university’s leaders to undertake, since they are appointed by the President of the Republic of Cameroon and are expected to be loyal to the President and execute his orders. Second, it requires a shift away from “leadership as position” to “leadership as an interaction between leaders, followers, and the situation”. How university leaders interact with the teachers to collectively solve institutional problems will be more important than the role they occupy. Third, it again requires a high degree of reciprocal trust to successfully negotiate the fault lines of formal and informal leadership practice. Harris (2011) notes that inevitably, “there will be those with formal and paid responsibility to fulfill a leadership role, meanwhile there will also be those with ability, talent and capability to lead who are not in formal leadership positions”. Effective university leaders will be able to harness both and will ensure that the blend of distributed leadership practice and activity, particularly during a disruptive change situation will contribute to school change.

Strong university leaders with exceptional vision and action do certainly exist, but unfortunately, they do not come in sufficient quantities to meet the challenges of African universities. Transforming the system will not be achieved by leaders acting alone. Much will depend on the formation of partnerships, new networks and alliances to share leadership knowledge, expertise and collectively address problems. Much will depend on successive generations of university leaders that are adaptable enough to function, leave politics aside, and connect within new and challenging environments.
Furthermore, both the trait and skill-based perspectives of leadership relied solely on individual leaders for developing leadership. With this shift in perspective in mind, distributed leadership practices during a disruptive change situation underscore the need for leadership development programs to shift their sole focus from the identification and cultivation of individual leadership skills to an examination of the organizational structures, relationships, and processes that promote shared leadership and collaboration. Training for positional leaders interested in fostering distributed leadership on their campuses should therefore focus on how leaders can create the structures and processes that foster these conditions. Positional leaders also need to learn how to empower teachers and diffuse authority so that individuals at multiple levels do not feel hindered to act as leaders.

How can existing leaders in higher education promote more collaborative and shared forms of leadership on their campuses? Leaders should start by identifying critical complex challenges at their institutions—thorny issues such as violent student protests that have not been well served by traditional or existing strategies. Once such challenges have been identified, pull together a cross-functional team of teachers from across campus. When creating such a team, think about how to bring in knowledge from across the institution—for example, faculty, student affairs, institutional research, registrar, and more. There are potential untapped reservoirs of expertise in unexpected places that could help solve problems. After a team has been established, it is critical for university leaders to establish support structures and delegate authority so that the team is empowered to think and act creatively to solve the crisis. Support structures could include clearly specified roles for team members, and explicitly defined channels of communication and accountability. University leaders must be prepared to grant the team
autonomy and meaningful input into decision-making so that team members remain incentivized and motivated to continue their engagement with shared leadership practices.

For higher education institutions to really amass the benefits of more democratic forms of leadership, university leaders should be willing to thoughtfully re-examine their own conceptions of what it means to be a successful leader. If a Vice-Chancellor or Provost continues to think of leadership as a sequestered, heroic pursuit, any efforts to establish distributed leadership structures will not create meaningful change. If higher education leaders are willing to experiment with these new approaches, universities stand poised to meet these complexities and challenges head-on.

**Recommendation for Further Research**

The results of earlier studies on distributed leadership indicate that the interpretation and application of distributed leadership is heavily shaped by the social-cultural contexts. Thus, the findings of this research study cannot be regarded as universal truths but should be examined in various contexts to obtain broader verification. Further research into the use of shared decision-making practices during disruptive change is therefore needed to identify whether this potential of distributed leadership is realized. There is no doubt that university leaders are ultimately responsible for distributing leadership opportunities to teachers, but how this distribution is best accomplished should continue to be studied. More research on the process of distributed leadership in higher education needs to occur in a) the roles that can be shared, b) the events that trigger distributed leadership c) the most conducive influence approach in preventing violent student protests, and d) facilitation factors for distributed leadership to be effective. In addition, more studies that measure outcomes, limits, liabilities, and pervasiveness of distributed
leadership will aid our understanding of this leadership approach. Future research also needs to
examine how the leadership styles of university leaders affect teachers’ ability and motivation to
be self-directed and share leadership. University leaders can make coordinated and task
appropriate use of their collective resources in preventing violent student protests on campus.
Thus, there is need for continued exploration regarding the specific ways in which university
leaders can best support collaborative work and strengthen the school’s culture.

Distributed leadership is a leadership approach that warrants further examination and
research, particularly as it relates to teachers’ shared decision-making practices during disruptive
change. Further research on the practice of distributed leadership will help confirm the findings
of this study and contribute to the understanding of this approach to leadership. It is
recommended that studies be conducted similar to this one, where teacher perceptions of
distributed leadership are carefully considered, including practices that help or hinder distributed
leadership. Such studies will further advance the understanding of the circumstances and
conditions under which distributed leadership is effective (or not) as an approach to institute
change in universities.
Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that those shared leadership practices that teachers perceive as having a positive influence on distributed leadership included recognizing and valuing teachers’ efforts, advising students, cautioning and educating students on the consequences of violence, maintaining open lines of communication, continues dialogue with students, and collegiality. Findings also suggested that teachers collectively perceived that there are many benefits to distributed leadership, and acknowledged that while there are drawbacks, those drawbacks can be remedied by providing teachers with the appropriate resources needed to participate in distributed leadership (trusting teachers to direct students to stay away from violence, rebuilding student relationship with police officers, erasing politics from issues that concern the well-being of students, teacher empowerment, and shared purpose or goal in preventing violent student protests on campus). Even though the degree to which participants identified and discussed the drawbacks of distributed leadership practices during disruptive change notably outweighed the discussions involving the benefits of such practices, teachers and university leaders need to carefully consider ways in which distributed leadership practices are developed, assessed, and sustained over time.

The interviews also suggest that for change to be effective, even within the distributed leadership construct, there remains a hierarchy of leadership and university leaders need to act in ways that accord with their position. While making their own contribution to the university’s mission and vision in this regard, it is the responsibility of university leaders to set an appropriate organizational framework to help prevent violent student protests on campus. They need to create and/or allow opportunities for various approaches and strategies to be pursued to allow distributed leadership to flourish within such a framework and within well-understood and
accepted boundaries. Leaders at all levels also need to be encouraged and supported to see how their own leadership skills can be enhanced and how they can build leadership capacity in others.

Further, while this study has focused on a description of distributed leadership within a particular context (shared leadership practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon), evidence from the reflective data indicates that the enabling resources for distributed leadership are capable of application across Cameroonian institutions of higher education. The findings also revealed that in order to improve the life chances of students of the university under investigation, this will require changing the university system and the leadership styles that are simply not helpful to the educational community. Meeting the educational needs of 21st century universities will require greater leadership capacity and capability within our university systems. It will demand that university leaders concentrate their efforts on developing the leadership capacity and capability of teachers to solve complex problems that could tarnish the reputation of Higher Education Institutions. The issue of disruptive change in this university is not just an issue of teachers, the students, the police, or the government but rather one of leadership quality. The findings of this study provide growing empirical support for the development of broader, more distributed leadership practices within and across universities. The paramount challenge now is to continue to develop and foster new, diverse and distributed models of leadership that can transform universities characterized by violent student protests.
References


Baez, B. (2002). Confidentiality in qualitative research: Reflections on secrets, power and agency. *Qualitative Research, 35–58.*


Distributed Leadership According to the Evidence. New York: Routledge, pp.17-44.


Appendix A

Guiding Interview Questions

Introduction:

• This is a conversation to discuss some of your ideas about the topic of distributed leadership.

• I’d like to remind you that what we discuss is totally confidential and will not be used for any other purpose than to inform this study. I am interested in learning about what teachers think and feel about shared decision-making practices during a student strike situation, and I encourage you to be as open and honest as possible. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, and there is no expectation regarding “how much” you should know or say about this topic.

• Throughout our conversation, please feel free to refer back to questions in order to elaborate upon or revise your comments.

• Do you have any questions before we begin?

1) If someone asked you what distributed leadership means, what would you tell them?

2) How would you respond to someone who said to you “It’s the school administrator’s job to lead, and the teachers’ job to teach?”

3) What does leadership mean to you?

4) Who are the formal and informal leaders?

5) What constitutes a leadership task?

6) Describe in as much detail as possible a student strike situation that occurred.

a. Describe where you were and what you were doing when you learned of the student strike

b. Discuss the steps you took to respond to the crisis.

c. Talk about what you were you hoping to achieve through your actions.

d. What were the major challenges that you faced while working through the crisis?

e. Describe additional challenges you faced after the crisis.

f. How did you know what to do?

7) Considering the unique nature of the phenomena you experienced, please explain what you have learned about your own leadership.

8) Can you describe an occasion when your reflection on this student strike situation shifted your perception of leadership?

9) How, if at all, has your leadership been changed as a result of leading your school community through this crisis?
10) Why do you think teachers assume leadership roles in their school?

11) What factors might encourage or support teachers in taking on leadership roles in their school? What additional supports, if any, would be helpful to teachers?

12) Why do you think teachers choose not to take on leadership roles in their school?

13) What obstacles might discourage or prevent teachers from taking on leadership roles in their school?

14) What benefits do you think might come from teacher participation in distributed leadership practices?

15) What difficulties do you think might result from having teachers participate in a distributed model? What measures do you think could be taken to remove or minimize such obstacles?

16) What do you think are the benefits of distributed leadership?

17) What do you think are the drawbacks of enacting or supporting a distributed leadership model?
Appendix B

Consent Form

Northeastern University, Department: College of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator(s): Principal Investigator’s name: Kristal Clemons. Student Researcher’s name: Bernard Nkem

Title of Project: Teacher Perspective of Distributed Leadership During Disruptive Change. The case of a University in Cameroon

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this study because you are a teacher at this university.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change at this university.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will require that you sign this form, and then conduct a face-to-face interview with you. You will be asked open-ended questions such as “Why do you think teachers assume leadership roles in their school?” during the interview. Participants may be asked (during the interview) to respond to questions in detail and qualify or clarify responses. Each interview should last approximately one to two hours. Each interview will be recorded on audiotape, and then transcribed by the researcher. A note-book will be used to take comprehensive notes during the interview. The interview notes and audiotapes/transcripts will be kept in a locked safe in my home office and will be destroyed after the study.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

You will be interviewed on campus, or in your own home, or at a time and place that is convenient for you. Each interview should last approximately one to two hours.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort for participating in this research study. In case of any unanticipated risks, this researcher will make a concerted effort to minimize any anxiety or discomfort by providing opportunities to review the audiotapes and the transcripts to ensure that responses are
accurately captured, and participant intent is understood by me throughout the study. Participants will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**
There are no direct benefits for participants. However, a potential benefit to others will include the advancement of scientific knowledge to society.

**Who will see the information about me?**
Your identity as a participant in this study will not be known. That means no one, not even the researchers, will know that the answers you give are from you. All data records will be maintained by the researcher and kept securely in the researcher’s personal computer and private home office. All names will be replaced with a code (number, letter, symbol, or any combination) to secure the identity of participants. All audiotapes will be destroyed upon conclusion of this study and participant generated data returned to the participant or destroyed upon their request. Paper records will be shredded. Records stored on my computer hard drive will then be erased using commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**
You do not have to participate if you do not want to, and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**
There is no foreseeable risk for participating in this research study. Thus, no special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of participation in this research.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a teacher.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Nan Regina, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Natalie J. Perry (n.perry@northeastern.edu), the Principal Investigator.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**
None of the participants will be compensated financially.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
It won’t cost you anything to participate in this study.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**
N/A

I agree to take part in this research.
Depending upon the nature of your research, you may also be required to provide information about one or more of the following if it is applicable:

1. A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject (or to the embryo or fetus, if the subject is or may become pregnant) which are currently unforeseeable.
2. Anticipated circumstances under which the subject’s participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject’s consent.
3. Any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research.
4. The consequences of a subject’s decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject.
5. A statement that significant new finding(s) developed during the course of the research which may be related to the subject’s willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject.
6. The approximate number of subjects involved in the study.
Appendix C

Request to Participate in Research

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Name of Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristal Clemons

Student Investigator: Bernard Nkem

Title of Project: Teacher Perspective of Distributed Leadership During Disruptive Change. The case of a University in Cameroon

We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to explore how teachers describe shared decision-making practices during disruptive change in a university in Cameroon. This research will also examine the benefits and drawbacks of shared decision-making practices (distributed leadership).

We are asking you to take part in this study because of your passion in bringing change to the university under investigation. The concept of distributed leadership operates from the premise that leadership should be dispersed widely throughout a school. Thus, developing the leadership potential of all staff members is imperative.

This study will include interviews with teachers. The interviews will take place in the university campus or any location of your choosing and will last about one to two hours. During this time, you will be answering questions and commenting on distributed leadership.

The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes only. You will also be invited to review the transcript of the interviews to help ensure accuracy and clarification of
content. Your confidentiality will be ensured throughout the process. If you determine that you are willing to participate in this research project, we will select a date for an interview at your convenience. Wherever possible, I will come to your preferred location and conduct a one to two hours interview with you.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study. I will make a concerted effort to minimize any anxiety or discomfort by providing opportunities to review the audiotape and the transcripts of the interview in order to ensure that responses are accurately captured, and participant intent is understood by me throughout the study.

The results of this study will create an opportunity for educational leaders to learn from the experiences of their colleagues on what they can do in a crisis situation such as a student strike action. This may ultimately improve a collective activity of this university’s administrators and teachers in preventing future student strike actions.

Your participation in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will not identify you, the school or any individual as being of this project. All audio-recordings will be destroyed following transcription and analysis.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate, and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

You will not be paid for your participation in this study. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Bernard Nkem, the person mainly responsible for the research at 718-576-8265 or nkem.b@husky.neu.edu. You can also contact Dr. Kristal Clemons, the Principal Investigator overseeing the research K.Clemons@northeastern.edu
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu

I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bernard Nkem
Appendix D

Protecting Human Subjects

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Bernard Nkem successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 11/25/2015

Certification Number: 1926132