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DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

Improving School Leadership

OECD Project

Background Report – Ireland

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Leadership
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Background Report – Ireland

Executive Summary

1. This country background report for Ireland, presented in the context of the OECD Activity 'Improving School Leadership', was prepared for the Department of Education and Science by personnel from the Leadership Development for Schools Programme (LDS), with support from an academic advisor. The compilation of this report involved consultation with partners in education so that a wide perspective was maintained on issues pertaining to leadership in education (Appendix 4). The task did not involve producing new and independent research, rather collecting and synthesising evidence and data already available. This process has also highlighted gaps in evidence and areas for possible future research and development.

2. The chapters in this report have followed the outline structure provided. Thus Chapters 1 and 2 present the National Context of Schooling and an Overall Description of the Irish School System. Chapter 1 outlines current developments in the Irish economy, demographic changes and trends in the economic and labour markets. Chapter 2 describes the structure of the Irish educational system, indicating the differences between primary and post-primary education and the range of schools that are funded in each sector. This chapter also outlines the funding provided to schools, the governance and regulatory framework for the system and the goals and objectives of the school system.

3. Chapter 3 discusses school governance and leadership, presenting evidence of the developing conceptions of leadership in education. This chapter also outlines the impact of recent legislation on the roles and responsibilities of school principals in particular. The chapter further addresses the wider challenges facing schools and their impact on the exercise of school leadership. It is clear that the impact of system and societal challenges falls heavily on the shoulders of the school principal and has consequences for the practice of learning centred leadership in schools. The development of leadership structures within schools, while system led, is not system wide and further work to develop structures of middle management or in-school management is necessary.

4. Chapter 4 describes the school leadership actions that support student learning in Irish schools. While policy statements express the significance, in terms of outcomes, of the role of principal in leading learning, concerns exist about the extent to which principals can engage in effective learning centred leadership given the range of managerial and administrative responsibilities attached to the role.

5. Chapter 5 addresses the issue of attracting potential school leaders to the role of principal in particular. The chapter notes the growing difficulty associated with filling the position of principal in Irish schools, compared with the interest shown in other promoted posts. System issues, such as access to data to properly quantify the availability of potential candidates and to assist planning for succession, system wide preparation for leadership, and the need to support the process for selecting school principals are highlighted. Issues of salary and working conditions are also highlighted.

6. Chapter 6 notes policy concerns around professional preparation prior to appointment to principalship, and professional development during employment as school principal. The

chapter outlines the range of courses available to school leaders and highlights the positive impact of professional development opportunities currently available. Two significant system gaps are noted; the absence of a programme of preparation for future school principals, and the need to situate continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers generally, including school leaders, within the national qualifications framework.

7. Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, draws together the issues arising from the report with a view to highlighting them as relevant to any debate on future policy development for leadership in education. The key issues highlighted in this chapter are: definitions and understanding of leadership; the impact of the devolution of responsibility to Boards of Management; the selection process for principals; the workload of the principal; the challenges to learning-centred leadership; the particular challenges for teaching principals in primary schools; gaps in system data; school level supports for leadership and management; and the development of Future School Leaders.

CHAPTER 1
THE NATIONAL CONTEXT OF SCHOOLING

1.1   The economic, social and cultural context of Irish education

1.1.1.   Over the past decade, the Irish economic scene has changed significantly. Ireland today has the lowest level of unemployment in the EU; the second lowest national debt; the second highest minimum wage and the highest investment in the EU on infrastructure. The annual GDP growth has been above 4% in recent years and growth of 5¼% is expected for 2006. The labour market remains buoyant, with further strong employment growth expected. The public finances are in a robust state, with a projected General Government surplus of 1% of GDP and a debt-to-GDP ratio of 25½% in 2006 – the second lowest in the Euro area. (*Pre-Budget Statement* Dept. of Finance Nov. 2006).

1.1.2.   Further growth in the Irish economy is forecast, reflecting the strength of domestic demand and a positive external environment. Growth in both GDP and GNP terms is expected to average 5% per annum during the next few years, almost twice the average OECD rate. However, Ireland's medium term economic prospects depend on improving competitiveness and on maintaining fiscal sustainability. Continued wage moderation and labour market flexibility are regarded as essential to support competitiveness. The implementation of the recent partnership agreement, negotiated between government and the social partners, "Towards 2016", and the adherence to the wage agreements agreed therein are regarded by government as critical to Ireland's ongoing economic success.

1.1.3.   Following a period of very high unemployment in the 1980s and early 1990s (the unemployment rate in 1993 was 15.7%), the situation has changed dramatically in the past decade. The current unemployment rate of around 4.4% is the lowest in the EU. Total employment continues to rise, and by the second quarter of 2006 the level of employment exceeded 2 million for the first time in the history of the State. Employment increases in the construction and services sectors were particularly strong, with annual increases of 8.6% and 5.9%, respectively, in the first half of the year. The labour force expanded at an annual rate of 95,000 (4.7%), mainly reflecting higher female participation rates and continued net inward migration. Non-Irish nationals now account for around 10% of the labour force.

1.1.4.   While the buoyant economy has resulted in significant income increases for a large proportion of the Irish population, the number living below the poverty line remains unacceptably high. There continues to be a significant disparity between the educational attainment of those from higher socio-economic backgrounds and those from less advantaged backgrounds. The rate of early school leaving, especially among those from less advantaged backgrounds, continues to be high. In spite of a series of initiatives by government to encourage and support students to remain on in school, about 18% of the age cohort leave school every year without completing senior cycle secondary school. And while, overall, 65% of those who complete second level school proceed to further or higher education, there are glaring disparities in access to higher education, with students from the most advantaged

backgrounds having third-level participation rates up to four times higher than those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

1.2   Demographic Context

1.2.1.   The population of Ireland (according to preliminary figures from the Census of 2006), is 4,235,000 - the highest recorded figure since 1861. This represents an increase of 318,000 persons (8%) since the previous census in 2002. The overall increase in population is not evenly distributed and schools in some area of the country are experiencing a fall in school enrolment (leading to greater competitiveness between schools in those areas) while others have difficulty in coping with the increase in demand for school places.

1.2.2.   Inward migration accounted for much of the population increase.   On average there were 46,000 more immigrants than emigrants annually over the period 2002-2006 compared with an annual excess of births over deaths of 33,000. Looked at from a ten-year perspective, Ireland's population increased at an annual average rate of 1.6 per cent between 1996 and 2006 – the largest population growth rate in the EU.

1.2.3.   While the annual number of births fell in the 1980s, there has been a steady increase in the annual number of births since 1994. The number of births registered in 1994 was 48,255 (or 13.4 per 1,000 population). The number rose each subsequent year and in 2004 there were 62,000 births registered. The Department of Education and Science (DES) has recently projected a continuing growth in the number of births per annum, projecting an increase to about 70,000 births in 2010.

1.2.4.   The implications of inward migration are significant for Irish schools. Until recently, the Irish school-going population, was to a large extent, culturally and ethnically monolithic. Within the past decade this has changed, and in recent years it is estimated that, overall, between 5% and 10% of pupils in Irish primary and second level schools come from families who have migrated to Ireland from the newer EU accession states and from non-EU countries[1]. It is estimated that a large proportion of these pupils do not have English or Irish as their first language and this creates new challenges for schools. The religious diversity among newcomer pupils is also a challenge for the Irish school system which is largely denominational and under the control of the Catholic and Protestant Churches, and which, until recently, did not have to cater for pupils of religions other than these.

1.2.5.   Moreover, the teaching profession in Ireland, especially at primary school level, is less culturally and ethnically diverse than is the case in other OECD countries. This is a result of a long-standing government policy, which requires that all teachers in primary schools are fluent in the Irish language and are qualified to teach through the medium of that language. While a small number of non-Irish nationals have been successful in meeting the Irish language requirement, this is a rare phenomenon. The Irish language requirement has recently been abolished for second level teachers and at that level the profession is slowly becoming more ethnically diverse. However, applicants to teacher education colleges at primary level are still required to satisfy the Irish language requirement i.e. to have attained a Grade C on the Higher Level paper in the Leaving Certificate examination. While recognised teachers from other EU countries are eligible to teach in Irish schools (under an EU agreement relating to mutual recognition of professional qualifications), this recognition is limited to a five-year period at the end of which they are required to demonstrate proficiency in the Irish language.

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[1] Recent statistics confirm that 8% of the workforce were born outside Ireland (National Report for Ireland on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006 – 2008)

1.3   Economic and labour market trends

1.3.1.   Ireland faces a number of major challenges if it is to retain and further enhance its current high living standards and its international competitiveness. A recent report by a government appointed Expert Group on Future Skills Needs entitled Towards a National Skills Strategy, forecasts a major expansion in the workforce over the next decade and a half from the current 2 million to 2.4 million in 2020 (Irish Independent 28 Nov. 06). The study warns that, without a radical change in education and training policies, Ireland will have an under-supply of third level graduates and fierce competition among the low skilled for fewer jobs.

1.3.2.   In a report published in 2004, the Enterprise Strategy Group predicted that current and future economic development in Ireland will be strongly influenced by the shift towards services as a major driver of GDP growth and the increasing role of knowledge as a driver of economic development. In the Foreword to the recently published *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation*, 2006-2013, An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, stated that it is essential that Ireland continue the drive to build a truly knowledge-based society. Such a society, he stated, will offer new opportunities for employment and social advancement. Success in the future, he added, will be strongly dependent on growing the skills of our population and ensuring that levels of scientific and mathematical literacy increase. The recently published Annual Competitiveness Report (2006) shows that despite strong commitment and investment from Government, much work remains to be done for Ireland to realise its ambition of becoming a world-leading "knowledge economy". In formal education, Ireland's pre-primary and PhD education sectors remain small in comparison with other European countries. In second level education, the computer-student ratio in Ireland is low by European standards. The ratio of computers to students in second level schools in Ireland is 1:9, as compared to an average of 1:5 in the EU overall. While the literacy levels of 15-year-old Irish pupils are above the OECD average, numeracy levels are at the OECD average and scientific levels are below the OECD average. These are issues which schools will be expected to address in the coming decades.

1.3.3.   As well as ensuring that pupils at primary and post-primary levels gain the knowledge and skills to be lifelong learners and to take their place in due course in a well educated workforce, schools in the coming decades will be under pressure to play their part in reducing the level of early school leaving, and in contributing to a situation where all young people will achieve the Leaving Certificate qualification or its equivalent within the National Qualifications Framework.

CHAPTER 2
OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

2.1   Main structural features of the Irish school system

2.1.1.   Attendance at full-time education in Ireland is compulsory for children between six and sixteen years of age. The vast majority of Irish children (about 98%) attend non fee-paying publicly funded primary schools (referred to until recently as national schools). This publicly funded school system consists of eight years of primary schooling (including two years infant education between the age of four and six). This is followed by five or six years of second level or post-primary schooling, comprising three years of Junior Cycle and either two or three years of senior cycle. Almost 95% of pupils enrolled in post-primary schools attend publicly funded secondary, vocational, comprehensive or community schools that are not fee-paying.

Primary Education

2.1.2.   There are just under 450,000 children enrolled in 3,157 primary schools in Ireland taught by 26,282 teachers (statistics relate to 2004-5. Appendix 1). Although children in Ireland are not obliged to attend school until the age of six, the majority of children begin school in the September following their fourth birthday. About 50% of four-year-olds and almost 90% of five-year-olds are enrolled in the infant classes in primary schools. It is estimated that the number of pupils enrolled in primary schools in Ireland will rise to about 500,000 by 2010.

2.1.3.   Within the Irish primary school system, schools are privately owned and controlled by patron bodies and publicly funded through the DES. This funding takes the form of direct payment of teachers' salaries, grants for running costs and resources, based on school enrolments, and grants for school buildings. 95% of schools are under the patronage and management of the Roman Catholic Church. About 4% are under the (Anglican) Church of Ireland, with a very small number run by the Presbyterian or Methodist Churches. There are two schools under Muslim patronage, and one Jewish school. There are 40 multi-denominational schools in the Educate Together network and over 50 Irish language schools under the patronage of An Foras Patrúnachta. In addition, there are about 130 special schools for intellectually and physically challenged children under the patronage of a variety of organisations and corporate bodies. (Although special schools in Ireland are designated as national (primary) schools, they cater for pupils up to 18 years of age). In addition to the special schools, there are 571 ordinary primary schools with special classes or special units attached to ordinary primary schools and catering for the learning needs of pupils with significant physical, sensory, emotional or learning disabilities. In addition many pupils with special needs are integrated into ordinary classes. In total there are 9,296 pupils with special needs in ordinary national schools (2005 data). This issue will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

2.1.4.   While the Irish language is a compulsory subject for pupils in all primary and second level schools, about 150 primary schools (referred to in the Irish language as Gaelscoileanna) teach all subjects through the medium of the Irish language and the normal language of communication is Irish. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, over 50 of these are under the patronage of An Foras Patrúnachta – the others are under the patronage of different Bishops. In addition to these, a further 140 or so schools in Gaeltacht areas (i.e. Irish-speaking areas of the country) also use Irish as the normal medium of communication and teach all subjects through Irish.

2.1.5.   Since the primary school system is privately owned and controlled, teachers and other staff are employed by each school's Board of Management. Hence while the salaries of teachers and principals are paid by the State, each school is legally autonomous in terms of hiring and firing staff and in terms of legal and compliance responsibilities.

2.1.6.   Because of the relatively scattered population in many rural areas, and the historical legacy of a denominational school system, almost three quarters of primary schools in Ireland have fewer than eight teachers i.e. they have fewer than one teacher per grade. Only schools with eight mainstream teachers or more are authorised to appoint an administrative school principal whose duties do not include full responsibility for teaching a class. In schools with fewer than eight teachers, the principal combines the dual role of class teacher with the role of principal. This has major implications for such principals, who have full-time teaching responsibility as well as the leadership and management responsibilities associated with principalship.

2.1.7.   In addition to their responsibility for leading the teaching staff of the school, principals are also responsible for providing leadership and for managing and co-ordinating other school staff, including specialist teachers (e.g. resource and special needs teachers, visiting teachers and teachers of English as a Foreign Language), special needs assistants, caretaking and secretarial staff, etc. The age profile of principals at primary level is uneven and skewed in favour of the upper age groups. 5% of principals are over 60 years of age; 15% are aged between 56 and 60 and 25% are aged 51 to 55. In other words, 45% of principals are over the age of 50 and 20% are over 55 years of age. If current trends in relation to early retirement of school principals continue, as is anticipated, almost half of all primary principals are likely to retire within the next ten years.

Post-primary Education in Ireland

2.1.8.   There are 742 post-primary schools in Ireland comprising 403 voluntary secondary schools (54% of total), 247 vocational schools and community colleges (33% of total), and 91 community and comprehensive schools (13% of total). There are 335,162 pupils enrolled in these schools, taught by 24,990 teachers. (Statistics relate to 2004/5. Appendix 1). It is projected that enrolments at post-primary level will remain more or less static over the next five years, with perhaps a marginal decrease in numbers by 2010. Enrolments are projected to grow after 2010.

2.1.9.   Voluntary secondary schools are privately owned and managed, and many of them date back to the 18th and 19th centuries. A small number are fee-paying but the majority are non fee-paying. The trustees of most of these schools are religious communities or boards of governors. State capital funding for voluntary secondary schools has been provided since the early 1960s and current funding from the State is available in the form of teachers' salaries and a capitation grant based on the number of students enrolled. In recent years there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of members of religious orders and congregations involved in education in Ireland. This has led to a situation where religious orders and congregations have had to withdraw from sole trusteeship and management of some schools leading to school amalgamation in some areas and closure of schools in other areas.   The number of secondary schools run by religious orders has fallen in recent years and the number of vocational schools and community colleges and of community and comprehensive schools has increased.

2.1.10. Vocational schools and community colleges are administered by Vocational Education Committees, which were set up following the 1930 Vocational Education Act in every county and county borough (30 in all).   Vocational Education Committees consist largely of democratically elected representatives of the local community and each VEC appoints a Chief Executive Officer and staff to administer and manage the various educational

activities carried out by that VEC, including activities carried out in the vocational schools and community colleges. Historically, vocational schools were funded by a combination of local rates and national taxes. Schools under the auspices of the VEC also have Boards of Management.

2.1.11. Community and comprehensive schools have a more recent history than voluntary secondary and vocational schools, having been set up after the introduction of free second level education in 1967, to ensure that second level education was accessible to all students throughout the country. Community and comprehensive schools are fully funded by the State and are managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions. Pupils in all three types of schools follow the same curriculum and sit the same State examinations.

2.2   Availability of public and private resources

2.2.1.   The vast majority of Irish pupils attend schools which are publicly funded. As indicated earlier, about 98% of primary school pupils attend publicly funded schools and at second level, almost 95% of pupils attend non fee-paying schools. (All vocational, community and comprehensive schools as well as over 90% of secondary schools are non fee-paying schools).

2.2.2.   In all categories of publicly-funded schools, the salaries of recognised teachers and of a specified number of other staff (e.g. special needs assistants etc) are paid by the State. In addition, State grants are paid towards the costs of heating, cleaning, maintaining, insuring and equipping schools as well as towards capital expenditure. However, the State grant is rarely sufficient to cover the full costs of running schools. This is particularly true in the case of primary and voluntary secondary schools, which are funded on a per (pupil) capita basis. Since the State grant for these schools does not usually cover all costs, a significant proportion of costs has to be raised by the schools through various fund-raising efforts. Vocational, community and comprehensive schools are funded on the basis of an annual budgeted figure and have a higher proportion of their costs covered by State grants.

2.2.3.   In 2004, total current State expenditure on primary education was €2319 million and current expenditure on post-primary education was €1900 million. 80% of current expenditure on primary education and 77% of post-primary education expenditure related to salaries and superannuation. Overall State expenditure on education in 2004 as a proportion of GDP was 4.4% which is lower than the OECD average of over 5%.

2.2.4.   The majority of teachers in both primary and post-primary schools are female (about 80% at primary level and 60% at post-primary level), and this imbalance will become more pronounced in the future as the proportion of female students preparing for both primary and post-primary teaching continues to increase (currently about 90% of students for primary teaching are female and 10% are male; at post-primary level about 80% are female and 20% are male). However, the gender balance among school principals does not reflect this situation. In primary schools 49% of principals are male and 51% are female. At post-primary level in voluntary secondary schools 70% of principals are male and 30% are female; in vocational schools and community colleges 65% are male and 35% are female; and in community and comprehensive schools, 80% are male and 20% are female. It remains to be seen whether this imbalance will change in the coming years.

2.3 Governance of and regulatory framework for the Irish school system.

This section provides a brief overview of the governance and regulatory framework for the Irish school system. Further details are provided in Chapter 3.

2.3.1.   As indicated above, all primary schools and the majority of post-primary schools are privately owned and controlled, in most cases by the Churches. The Patron of all Catholic and Church of Ireland primary schools is the Bishop of the Diocese in which the school is located. The Patron of multi-denominational schools is usually a Limited Company or other corporate structure. In the case of voluntary secondary schools, the Patron or Trustees are either the Religious Order or congregation which owns the school, or the Bishop (in the case of Diocesan Boys' schools) or a corporate body or individual (in the case of lay secondary schools).

2.3.2.   In all primary schools and in virtually all secondary schools, a Board of Management is set up by the Patron or by the Trustees. Essentially, the Board of Management is the legal employer of all school staff and carries considerable responsibilities as laid down in the Education Act (1998) and other legislation (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 2). At primary level, each Board is composed of two nominees of the Patron, two parents (a mother and a father) elected by the body of parents of pupils in the school, a teacher elected by teachers in the school, and the school principal. This Core Board then selects and invites two further members from the wider school community (neither parents nor teachers in the school) to act on the Board. The Chairperson, and all members of the Board are formally appointed by the Patron. At post-primary level Boards of Management are constituted differently in different sectors. For example, the Articles of Management for voluntary secondary schools state that teachers elect two members from the teaching body of the school; parents of pupils in the school elect two members and the Trustees nominate four members. As in the primary sector, the Trustees nominate the Chairperson and formally appoint all members to the Board. In other post-primary schools, the Board broadly consists of parents, teachers and nominees of the Trustees and in some cases, members of the local community. In the case of schools under the auspices of the Vocational Education Committees, (VEC) the Board of Management is a sub-committee of the VEC.

2.3.3.   Members of Boards of Management of schools at both primary and post-primary levels serve in a voluntary capacity, and while they may have some expertise (e.g legal, human resources, financial accounting etc.) which is useful on a Board of Management, this is by no means a requirement. There is anecdotal evidence that as the legal responsibilities of Boards of Management have increased in recent years with additional legislative requirements, there is increasing reluctance on the part of parents (especially those professionally involved in areas such as law or accounting) to put their name forward for election to Boards, understanding as they do, the significant responsibilities that membership of a Board of Management entails. It is worth noting that since each school (primary and post-primary) has its own Board of Management, upwards of 30,000 individuals (parents, teachers and other members of the school community) are required to serve in a voluntary capacity on Boards of Management in schools throughout the country.

2.3.4.   The Education Act of 1998 provides the main legislative framework for Irish primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and for vocational education and training. This act makes formal provision for the education "of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs". It sets out the functions and responsibilities of all key partners in the schooling system. It legislates for the establishment of Boards of Management for all schools. It requires schools to engage in the preparation of school plans. Schools are required to promote parent associations. Accountability procedures are laid down. Attention is paid to the rights of parents and pupils.

2.3.5.   The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 provides a framework within which issues relating to the educational welfare of children, including the causes and effects of non-attendance at school can be addressed effectively. The Act also provides for the identification of children who are being educated outside the recognised school system and for a structure to ensure that the education that is being provided for them meets their constitutional rights.

2.3.6.   Other legislation which impacts on the role of school leaders includes the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004); Health and Safety Act; Equality legislation etc. The implications of these legislative measures for school leadership will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Quality Assurance

2.3.7.   In Ireland, there has been a growing recognition that quality in schools is best achieved when a range of measures work together to improve learning and teaching, and where everybody involved in the education system is focused on improvement. Schools themselves are responsible for some of these measures; others are organised by the DES or other agencies. At all levels of the school system, external evaluation by the inspectorate makes an important contribution to quality assurance, while system-wide evaluations, sometimes undertaken in co operation with other countries, provide valuable data and assist in policy development. The role of the DES's schools Inspectorate is outlined in the Education Act, 1998. The Inspectorate is closely involved with many of the initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning at first and second levels.

2.3.8.   A recent innovation in relation to quality assurance has been the introduction of Whole School Evaluation (WSE). Whole School Evaluation is a process whereby a team of Inspectors from the DES spends a few days in a school evaluating the overall work of the school under the following themes:-

     1) Quality of school management

     2) Quality of school planning

     3) Quality of curriculum provision

     4) Quality of learning and teaching in subjects

     5) Quality of support for students.

At post-primary level, subject inspections are also undertaken within the framework of the WSE process. Subject Inspections are also carried out independently of WSE, where the Inspectorate focuses only on specific subject areas. A school may have subject inspections and/or WSE.

2.3.9.   The evaluation process also involves preparatory communication and submission of documentation and post-evaluation verbal and draft written reports. Reports from these inspections and evaluations are posted on the DES website, accessible to all. While reference is made in general to quality, no objective evidence is provided in statistical form, e.g. examination results.

Partnership

2.3.10. Policy-making in education, as in other social areas in Ireland, is heavily influenced by partnership agreements arrived at three to five year intervals, between government and the social partners. The current agreement, Towards 2016 (see below), outlines the plans for development, changes in practice and policy implementation in the coming years. Trade union and employer agreement are considered an important aspect in the costing and implementation of these partnership agreements. A number of specialist agencies have been set up to assist and advise the DES regarding policy formulation. These agencies include the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the State Examinations Commission (SEC), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, and the Teaching Council. Changes in education policy and practice in recent years have been characterised increasingly by an intensive process of consultation between

the DES and the education partners (parents, teacher unions, Boards of Management etc.). The overall aim of this partnership approach is to have broad agreement on major areas of development in the education system. This partnership approach, both at wider social policy level and within the education system, provides a sound, and thus far successful, framework for policy development and implementation.

2.3.11.   In addition, various advisory committees (which include representatives of school management, teacher unions and parents) are set up from time to time to advise on aspects of education such as curriculum, special needs policies, education welfare, educational disadvantage, student behaviour etc.

2.4   Goals and objectives of the school system

2.4.1.   The government, in partnership with a wide range of social partners, including employers, trade unions, Children's Rights Alliance and voluntary agencies, recently agreed a ten year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2016, Towards 2016. This document reiterated a vision of Ireland (initially stated in the National Children's Strategy 2000) as a country "where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential". The following are among the goals which the Government and social partners will work together to achieve over the next ten years:

- Every child should leave primary school literate and numerate

- Every student should complete a senior cycle or equivalent programme (including ICT) appropriate to their capacity and interests

- Every child should have access to quality play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood

- Every child and young person will have access to appropriate participation in local and national decision-making.

2.4.2.   The Statement of Strategy 2005 – 2007 of the Department of Education and Science sets out the mission of the Department as follows:

> "The mission of the Department of Education and Science is to provide for high-quality education, which will:
> - enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and
> - contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development."

2.4.3.   The goals of the system as set out in the same Strategy Statement are:
- "to deliver an education that is relevant to individuals' personal, social, cultural and economic needs.
- to support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all.
- to contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness.
- to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education.
- to support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service."

2.4.4.   The goals and aims of the curriculum at primary and post-primary levels are drawn up by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment which includes representatives of teacher unions, school management bodies, parent bodies and other stakeholders. These goals and aims are then submitted to the Minister for Education for approval. The (1999) primary curriculum identifies three primary aims of primary education:

- to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual

- to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society

- to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

2.4.5.   The curriculum is learner-centred. It emphasises the importance of literacy, numeracy, and language, while at the same time responding to changing needs in science and technology, social personal and health education, and citizenship.

2.4.6.   Teachers in primary school usually teach the same group of students for all subjects. The length of the school day is five hours and forty minutes, including breaks and the length of the school year is 183 days. The agreed tuition time for students at post-primary level is twenty-eight hours per week and the length of the school year is 167 days. The Principal assigns teaching duties to teachers and takes responsibility for the design of the school timetable.

2.4.7.   The second level curriculum comprises a junior cycle and a senior cycle. The Junior Cycle (lower secondary education) lies within the compulsory period of education and is usually taken by students between the ages of 12 and 15. The Senior Cycle (upper secondary education) lasts either two or three years depending on whether or not a student takes the optional Transition Year following the junior cycle. Most students who begin junior cycle have spent eight years in primary school and the curriculum at junior cycle builds on the learning of the primary curriculum. An important aim of the junior cycle curriculum is to provide students with a broad and balanced programme of study across a wide range of curriculum areas in order to prepare them for transition to senior cycle education.

2.4.8.   Students usually commence the Junior Cycle at age 12. A state examination, the Junior Certificate, is taken after three years. The principal objective of the Junior Cycle is for students to complete broad, balanced and coherent courses of study in a variety of curricular areas, and to allow them to achieve levels of competence that will enable them to proceed to Senior Cycle education.

2.4.9.   The Senior Cycle caters for students in the 15 to 18 year age group. Transition Year, which has been one of the major innovations in Irish education, is an option which is now firmly embedded in the system. It follows the Junior Cycle and provides an opportunity for students to experience a wide range of educational inputs, including work experience, over the course of a year that is free from formal examinations. The aim of Transition Year is to educate students for maturity with an emphasis on personal development, social awareness and skills for life. During the final two years of Senior Cycle students take one of three programmes, each leading to a State Examination: the traditional (or established) Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

2.4.10. Students generally take between five and eight subjects for the established Leaving Certificate examination. The results from their best six subjects are converted into points which are the basis of entry to third level colleges. Throughout senior cycle, in addition to

their examination subjects, students participate in a range of additional activities; cultural, social and religious.

2.4.11. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) can be described as the established Leaving Certificate with a strong vocational dimension. It provides students with the opportunity to realise their potential for self-directed learning, for innovation and for enterprise.

2.4.12. The Leaving Certificate Applied, on the other hand, is a distinct, self-contained two-year Leaving Certificate programme which emphasises forms of achievement and excellence which the established Leaving Certificate had not recognised in the past. It is an innovative programme in the way students learn, in what they learn and in the way their achievements are assessed. It is student-centred, involving a cross-curricular approach rather than a subject-based structure. It has as its primary objective the preparation of participants for adult and working life through relevant learning experiences which develop areas of human endeavour, spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and physical.

2.4.13. Graduates of the Leaving Certificate Applied do not have direct access to Higher Education. However, those who progress to an approved further education award can become eligible for admission to some third level courses in the Institutes of Technology and following that to some degree courses in the Institutes of Technology and in the Universities.

2.4.14. The following table gives details of the numbers of students who sit the various State examinations. (The number sitting the Established Leaving Certificate includes those who sit a combination of subjects which make up the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme). It will be noted that, of the 54,000 candidates who sit the Established Leaving Certificate, more than 4,500 are described as "non-school candidates" i.e. they are not enrolled in recognised second level schools.

Table 2.1 Number of State Examination Candidates 2005

Junior Certificate	56,640
Established Leaving Certificate (ELC)	54,073
School candidates (of the above ELC number, enrolled in a post-primary school)	49,481
Non-school candidates (of the above ELC number, not enrolled in a school)	4,592
Leaving Certificate Applied	3,318
Total	**114,031**

2.5   Teacher Unions and Professional Bodies

2.5.1.   Teachers in Ireland are highly unionised, with 98% of primary teachers and 91% of post-primary teachers belonging to a teacher union. There are three main teacher unions in Ireland. The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), which was founded in 1868, represents virtually all primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland as well as some primary and second-level teachers in Northern Ireland. Virtually all primary school principals are also members of the INTO. The Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI), founded in 1909, represents second-level teachers in voluntary secondary schools and in some community and comprehensive schools. Many school principals in these schools are also members of the ASTI. The Teachers Union of Ireland represents teachers in Vocational

Schools and in some community and comprehensive schools. The three Teacher Unions have played a very significant role in Irish education since their foundation. As well as negotiating on behalf of their members in relation to pay and conditions of service, they have been central to discussions relating to curriculum and examinations, to the setting up of the new regulatory Teaching Council, and to other aspects of the professional role of teachers.

2.5.2.   Within the past decade, the setting up of two professional organisations for school leaders, the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) for primary principals and the National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) for post-primary school principals and deputy principals has been an important development. Both of these organisations provide advice, support and training for principals and have been welcomed by school leaders and by stakeholders generally.

2.6   Public perceptions about the role and quality of schools and the status of teachers and school leaders

2.6.1.   As indicated in the country background report for Ireland on Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Effective Teachers, the role of teachers in Ireland is respected by the Irish public and this respect and regard are deeply rooted in historical circumstances. Teachers have traditionally been regarded for their scholarship, the nature of their work and their roles in the community. Primary teaching continues to attract recruits from the top quartile of the student achievers in the Leaving Certificate examination, while competition is also very keen for entry to post-primary teaching, with many of the top degree achievers accepting a place on the post-graduate Diploma in Education – the required qualification for registration as a post-primary teacher in Ireland. Various attitudinal surveys have indicated that teaching is one of the professions most highly regarded by the public.

2.6.2.   There continues to be a high level of public trust and confidence in the school system. Those who graduate successfully are highly regarded by employers, and those who perform well at the school Leaving Certificate examination and enter higher education, in general achieve very well.

CHAPTER 3
SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

3.1   School Governance

3.1.1.   As outlined in Chapter 2, a variety of school ownership, governance and management models exist at both primary and post-primary level. Governance structures impact on school leadership in terms of the specific roles played by Patrons, Trustees, Boards of Management and principals.

3.1.2.   At primary level the Patron or Patron Body takes responsibility for issues pertaining to school ownership and the underlying ethos and philosophy of the school. Boards of Management oversee and take responsibility for issues pertaining to finance, employment and compliance while the principal takes responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school.

3.1.3.   At post primary level the governance structures impact on school leadership in different ways, depending on whether a school is under the auspices of the VEC or belonging to the Community and Comprehensive sector or the Voluntary Secondary sector.

3.1.4.   Legislation relevant to education, employment and health and safety applies to all schools equally, regardless of level or sector. However, the implications of the implementation of the legislation will vary in respect of school size, location, level and sector.

3.2   School leadership

3.2.1.   In general discourse, the school leader is considered to be the Principal. The word leadership, however, is often used collectively to include the Deputy Principal, and sometimes the teachers, the Board of Management, the Trustees or Patron or any other groups playing governance, managerial or administrative roles in the school. In the Irish language, the word Principal is *Príomhoide* which translates as "Principal Teacher". The title embodies the concept of *primus/a inter pares* (first among equals) and implies a collegial interpretation and a "flat" management structure. Throughout this document, the term "leader" will generally refer to the school principal, unless otherwise stated, but at the same time the leadership roles played by others will be recognised.

3.2.2.   There is a noticeable absence of the word "leader", or "leadership" in documents issuing from official sources. Education legislation tends to use "Principal" e.g. Education Act (1998); Education (Welfare) Act (2001); while the phrase "school management" is more in evidence in DES publications, e.g. *Looking at our Schools: An aid to self-evaluation in second level schools* (2003a), Circular Letters, and the DES website.

3.2.3.   Three phases in the evolution of principalship or *príomh-oideach* in Ireland*,* can be categorised as follows:-

> o   Prior to 1971 – predominantly administrative
>
> o   1971 – 1989 – predominantly managerial
>
> o   1990 to date – a growing emphasis on leadership in addition to tasks of administration and management. (Sugrue, 2003).

3.2.4.   The leadership role of the principal is a relatively new phenomenon and is described as the wider, more visionary aspect of managing a school. In recent focus group discussions (*LDS Focus Group discussion on the Strategic Plan* May 2006) teachers indicated that they

regard their principals as leaders as well as managers. In many instances, principals are also viewed as colleagues and fellow teachers. The leadership function of the principal is described as "seeing the bigger picture", "having a vision for the school" and "being involved in strategic issues". These concur with the view of leadership espoused by Seán Ruth (2006, p.16): *"The role of the leader is to step back, understand what is going on, understand the wider context and think about where things are going in the longer term"*.

3.2.5.   At post-primary level, the role of the deputy principal has been significantly enhanced and formalized in Circular 4/98 (DES, 1998), which delineates the role of the deputy principal as follows:

- *"The Deputy Principal acts as the Principal in the absence of the Principal, and assists the Principals in the fulfilment of the Principal's role.*

- *The Deputy Principal occupies a position of vital importance in the administration and development of the school.*

- *The Deputy Principal shall undertake responsibility under the direction of the Principal for the internal organisation, administration and discipline of the school.*

- *The Deputy Principal shall assist the Principal through the carrying out of the specific professional duties for which responsibility is delegated"*

Schedule One of the same circular outlines specific professional duties, responsibility for which may be delegated, in whole or in part, to deputy principals.

3.2.6.   At primary level, Circular P07/03 (DES, 2003, p. 1) outlines the rationale for the development of school management structures for deputy principals and other post holders as:

- *Match[ing] the responsibilities of the posts more closely to the central tasks of the school, and clearly specify[ing] responsibilities for the various posts,*

- *Focus[ing] on the provision of opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff, and the academic and pastoral work of the school,*

- *Establish[ing] selection procedures for Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals and Special Duties Teachers, with the aim of ensuring that the most suitable people are appointed.*

Section D (DES, 2003, p. 25) notes that

> *The Deputy-Principal is required to assist the Principal teacher in the day-to-day organisation and supervision of the school. In addition to his/her teaching duties the Chairperson [of the Board of Management] should assign the Deputy-Principal specific duties. Before assigning such duties to the Deputy-Principal the Chairperson should discuss the matter with the Principal teacher.*

A list of responsibilities which may be delegated is included in Section C (DES, 2003, p.24). This circular is currently under review and amendments are expected that will further strengthen the development of a culture of collaboration in allocation and fulfilment of duties and responsibilities among the school leadership at primary level.

3.2.7.   As indicated in Chapter 2, almost three quarters of principal teachers at primary level are "teaching principals" i.e. they combine the dual roles of class teacher and principal. This

dual role is very demanding and has been a cause of concern within the profession, especially in recent years. Following representation on behalf of teaching principals and arising from the recommendations of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary School Principal, provision is now made for release time for teaching principals for the purpose of undertaking 'administrative, leadership and management functions within the school'. Provision for release time is based on the number of mainstream teachers on the school staff and ranges from fourteen days per year in the smallest (one to three teacher) schools to twenty-two days per year for the principal of a seven-teacher school. (DES circular 20/02). Notwithstanding this development, a report published by the IPPN in 2004 argued that in the past decade there has been "a deluge of change and reform" in Irish education as a result of which "the burden on the teaching principal with near full teaching duties is immense". This publication quoted the earlier Report of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary School Principal (DES, 1999, pp 85-86) which stated:

> *Primary principals, particularly teaching principals, because of increases in management and administrative functions, cannot devote sufficient concentrated effort to leadership functions which have increased in importance due to the rapidity of change, changing mores and demands for curriculum innovation.*

Leadership Competencies

3.2.8.   Leadership of any organisation is a complex task. *The Report of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary School Principal* (1999) states:

> *A leader requires the ballast of a comprehensive range of management skills to meet the current challenges of principalship, to balance the need for continuity and stability within the school community with the increasing demand by policy-makers and the wider community for change, innovation and transformation.*

3.2.9.   Very little research has been carried out in Ireland on the competencies required by school leaders. The focus in both distant and recent past has been to articulate school leadership roles in terms of responsibilities and duties (DES Circular P16/73; Government of Ireland, 1998) without further elaboration on competencies (knowledge and skills required to fulfil responsibilities and duties). In the context of preparing programmes of professional development for school leaders some references have been made to their developmental needs and to the skills, knowledge and professional qualities that underpin leadership actions. Further work is currently in hand by the Leadership Development for School (LDS) teams in the context of investigating the development needs of teachers aspiring to be school leaders (see Chapter 6).

3.2.10. One report, by the HayGroup (2003), commissioned by the IPPN, provides an articulation of the accountabilities and key competencies required of the primary school principal. This expression of accountabilities and competencies was arrived at following a survey of primary school principals and is accepted by principals as an appropriate comparison with other public servants. A table provided in that report set out role accountabilities, success factors and key competencies required of the primary principals. The following is an abridged version of that table:

Table 3.1

ACCOUNTABILITY	KEY COMPETENCIES REQUIRED
Leadership: Create, communicate and deliver a vision for the school, taking account of the concerns and aspirations of all the stakeholders in the school	• Achievement Drive • Team Leadership • Strategic Thinking • Conceptual Thinking

Education: Deliver high standards of teaching and learning through personal teaching standards and the development, monitoring and coaching of teaching standards of others.	• Developing Others • Team Leadership • Professional Expertise • Inter-Personal Understanding • Challenge and Support
Resource Management Plan, manage and evaluate the use of the physical resources of the school	• Information Seeking • Financial Management Skills • Analytical Thinking
Human Resource Management Select, coach, develop and hold accountable the human resources of the school	• Team Leadership • Developing Others • Challenge and Support • Inter-Personal Understanding • Impact and Influence
Administration Comply effectively with the various reporting, recording and data management obligations to which the school is subject	• Information Seeking • Analytical Thinking • Initiative
Policy Formulation Research, draft and present policy documents and statements as required by legislation and policy provisions	• Strategic Thinking • Conceptual Thinking • Networking/Relationship Building
External Relationships Create channels of communication to support and facilitate effective relationships with external parties which impact on overall school effectiveness	• Networking/Relationship Building • Inter-personal Understanding • Impact and Influence • Analytical Thinking

3.2.11. An important aspect of leadership is the management of change. The education landscape has undergone a sustained period of change. Principal teachers have been and will continue to be key figures in managing this change at school level.

3.2.12. In a recent development, in December 2001, four experienced school leaders were seconded from their schools to review international trends in school leadership development and to gather responses from interested parties among the stakeholders in Irish primary and post-primary education. The initial outcome of this research was the publication of School Leadership – A Profile (2002). This document did not take an explicit competencies approach to defining leadership, rather describing leadership under four broad categories that encompass the actions of Irish school leaders at primary and post-primary level, as follows.

Figure 3.1 School Leadership: A Profile (LDS, 2002)

Personal Leadership

3.2.13. The principal teacher has responsibility for building good relationships among staff, pupils and the wider community. S/he is expected to promote policies, practices and interpersonal relationships which respect the values and sensitivities of all members of the school community. S/he inspires confidence and promotes an atmosphere of trust and interdependency among the education partners.

Transformational Leadership

3.2.14. The principal teacher as leader of the school community must enable that community to function effectively by developing teamwork and by inspiring the team to work collaboratively towards common goals and ongoing improvements. The principal ensures the effective distribution of leadership throughout the school. The transformational aspect of her/his leadership has a direct impact on individual, team and school performance. It affects school culture, and has a direct impact on feelings, attitudes and beliefs. It encourages the school community to work towards common goals through collaborative structures and team building.

Instructional Leadership

3.2.15. Instructional leadership (more recently referred to as learner-centred leadership) is one of the most crucial factors in determining the overall success of the school and in providing a quality education for the children. The role is more than a management and administrative function. It requires a professional and educational leadership, which is unique to education and schooling. Instructional leadership incorporates:

- Managing the curriculum, curricular change, curricular planning, pupil attainment and assessing and recording pupil progress.

- Developing and promoting a culture for learning within the whole school community.

- Creating the conditions for optimum learning through the provision of support, adequate facilities and resources both human and physical.

- Creating structures for staff development.
- General strategic planning.

The principal is pivotal in creating a shared vision for the curriculum in the school and in providing dynamic and inspirational curriculum leadership. This instructional leadership is what makes the role of principal unique, as it requires the specialist skills of a teacher, as well as those which are required for leadership in other contexts. The instructional aspect of the leadership role is critical in determining the success and effectiveness of the school and in providing quality education for the children.

Organisational Leadership

3.2.16. Organisational leadership involves being skilful in organisational and strategic management. School leaders are required to make decisions, plan, organise, co-ordinate, schedule and delegate.

Distributed Leadership

3.2.17. There are varying interpretations of the leadership roles played by different members of the school community. In the revised In-School Management arrangements, agreed for all schools in 1998, and reviewed for primary schools in 2003, there is an implicit recognition of the need to share leadership, managerial and administrative duties across members of the school teaching staff. "*The Principal, Deputy Principal and holders of posts of responsibility together form the in-school management team for the school.*" (DES circular 4/98). Developments of leadership roles across the school community, with teachers assuming leadership roles in curricular and organisational areas, reflect developments in other systems. The challenge for the system resides in the need to define distributed leadership, itself a contested term, and to situate the role of the principal in developing a culture that supports distributed leadership.

3.2.18. The importance of shared leadership is supported in the literature on school leadership as quoted by Travers and McKeown (2005):

> "*A key issue in leading a professional staff is the distribution of leadership and expertise to empower others to change, learn and build capacity (Spillane et al 2003). They argue that school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, stretched over the school's social and situational contexts. It is not simply a function of what a school principal, or any other individual leader, does….*" (Travers and McKeown 2005)

3.2.19. Work by Emer Smyth of the ESRI in Ireland in 1999 also highlighted the importance of shared leadership:

> "*As the demands on schools increase in scale and complexity, greater attention should be paid to the development of middle management structures*"(Smyth, 1999).

3.2.20. Various submissions received in the context of the preparation of this report suggested that it would be helpful if a clearer definition of leadership were agreed. This may warrant further investigation.

3.3 Roles, responsibilities and legislation

3.3.1. The roles and responsibility of school principals are well summarised in the Report of the Public Service Benchmarking Body, (Department of Finance, 2002) as follows:

- *Principals hold prime responsibility for the successful running of the schools and management of its resources, including budget. To this end they must motivate, lead by example and guide staff to ensure that pupils are educated to the best of their abilities. Teaching principals must balance teaching requirements of their particular class with the responsibility of managing the whole school.*

- *Principals lead a team of staff, which includes Teachers, secretaries, caretakers, substitute teachers, special needs Teachers and student Teachers. The Principal is key to setting long-term strategies for the school and ensuring its future success.*

- *High levels of communication / interpersonal skills to influence and persuade both within and outside the classroom are crucial. Principals must ensure the school has a team of motivated and valued staff. Principals need to work with and influence, on behalf of the school, the Board of Management, Parent Committees, and the Department of Education and Science. Principals are often required to intervene fairly in disputes between Teachers, parents and pupils.*

3.3.2. The most significant piece of legislation, providing the regulatory framework for Irish primary and second-level education, is the Education Act (1998), which includes a clear definition of the functions of a school and the roles and responsibilities of the school principal. The act places very strong responsibilities and duties on the principal and the Board of Management:

> *The Principal… and the teachers…..under the direction of the Principal, shall have responsibility, in accordance with this Act, for the instruction provided to students in the school and shall contribute, generally, to the education and personal development of students in that school.*

In addition to this Act, other legislation, and DES Circulars contribute to the articulation of the roles and responsibilities attaching to school principalship and other leadership positions in schools.

3.3.3. Section 22 of the 1998 Education Act 1998 sets out the functions of the principal, stating that s/he has responsibility for instruction and is obliged to:

- *encourage and foster learning in students*

- *regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents*

- *promote co-operation between the school and the community which it serves*

- *carry out the duties assigned by the Board, subject to the terms of any collective agreement and contract of employment*

3.3.4. Section 23 outlines additional obligations for the principal, stating that s/he should:

   a) *be responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and be accountable to the board for that management*

   b) *provide leadership to the teachers and other staff and the students of the school.*

   c) *be responsible for the creation, together with the board, parents of students and the teachers, of a school environment which is supportive of learning among the students and which promotes the professional development of the teachers. (Section 23 Education Act 1998)*

   d) *under the direction of the board and, in consultation with the teachers, the parents and, to the extent appropriate to their age and experience, the students, set objectives for the school and monitor the achievement of those objectives and*

   e) *encourage the involvement of parents of students in the school in the education of those students and in the achievement of the objectives of the school.*

3.3.5.   The Education Act (1998), along with the Articles of Management (1989), Deeds of Trust (1971), Vocational Education (amendment) Act 2001, Boards of Management of National Schools – Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure (DES, 2003b), and Deeds of Variation (1997) outline the statutory duties, rights and responsibilities of the Board of Management. Section 15 of the Education Act 1998 states:

It shall be the duty of a board to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and their parents and to provide or cause to be provided an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility

The functions of Boards of Management, as outlined in the, Section 15, include management of the school, implementation of DES/Ministerial policy, definition of the school's ethos in consultation with Trustees and responsibility for its implementation, publication of the school's admissions policy, in accordance with democratic principles promoting respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society, ensuring efficient use of resources, and making reasonable provision for students with special needs.

Other sections of the Act outline the Board's responsibilities in relation to accounts and records (S18), supply of information about the performance of the Board's functions (S19), procedures required for providing information to parents (S20**),** arrangements to be made by the board for the preparation, review and updating of the School Plan (S21), appointment of staff (S24), the role of the Parents' Association (S26), information to students and Student Council (S27), appeals procedures against decisions of teacher/other staff (S28) and procedures for appeals against exclusion, suspension, enrolment (S29).

Boards of Management are also required to ensure that issues relating to the welfare of all students comply with the Education Welfare Act (2000) and that students with special needs are provided for in accordance with the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN)(2004). Boards of Management require considerable expertise in order to fulfil their legislative responsibilities.

3.3.6. **The Education Welfare Act** (2000) aims to provide a comprehensive, national system for ensuring that all individuals of school-going age attend school and/or receive at

least a minimum education. It requires schools to adopt a proactive approach to student attendance at school. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established in 2002 with functions assigned by the Act. The NEWB has a statutory function to ensure that every child either attends a school or otherwise receives an education. In particular, the Board has a key role in following up on children who are not attending school regularly, and where there is a concern about the child's educational welfare. It is the responsibility of the school to report individual concerns about school attendance to the NEWB, in addition to providing an annual report.

3.3.7.   The Education Welfare Act (2000) requires a school to:

- Establish and maintain a register of all pupils attending the school each day.

- Maintain a record of attendance / non-attendance of each pupil on each school day and inform the appointed educational welfare officer of cases of high non-attendance.

- Submit an annual report of attendance to the appointed educational welfare officer.

- Develop strategies to promote school attendance.

- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour with a view to enhancing attendance.

This Act also increased the minimum school leaving age from 15 to 16, with significant consequences for schools in terms of curricular provision and student behaviour. The statutory responsibility for ensuring compliance under the Act falls to the Board of Management and Principal and has impacted significantly on the workload of principals and teachers.

3.3.8.   The statutory requirements of the **Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act** (2004) are wide-ranging. While not all sections of the act are in force, those already impacting on schools include:

- Section 2 - The provision of education for children with special educational needs in an inclusive environment

- Section 14 – The obligation on schools to co-operate with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

3.3.9.   The following legislative requirements will be introduced, in accordance with the NCSE's implementation plan:

- Arrangements for assessment in accordance with the Act (Sections 3, 5).

- The preparation and review of education plans in accordance with the Act (Sections 3, 8, 9, 11).

- Ensuring that parents are informed and consulted with regard to all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education (Section 14).

- Co-operation with a mediation and appeals mechanism established under the Act (Sections 3,4, 6,10, 11,12 and 38)

Again, the ongoing impact of this Act on the workload of school personnel is significant, in terms of statutory responsibility, resource organisation, and interaction and consultation with a range of professionals. An INTO (2006) response to the Act notes that 'it must be recognised that while the principal teacher may delegate the responsibilities conferred on

them to another teacher, the provisions of the Act will have an enormous impact on the role of the principal teacher'.

3.3.10. **The Teaching Council Act** (2001) and the Teaching Council (Amendment) Act (2006) provide a legislative framework for regulating the teaching profession. The Act is designed to "*promote teaching as a profession; to promote the professional development of teachers; to maintain and improve the quality of teaching in the state; to provide for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers, ... to provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to enhance professional standards and competence…..*" (Teaching Council Act 2001)

3.3.11. The Teaching Council, established under the terms of the Teaching Council Act (2001) and the Teaching Council (Amendment) Act (2006), is charged with promoting and developing teaching as a profession at primary and post-primary level. Specifically the functions of the Teaching Council are as follows:

- To promote teaching as a profession.
- To promote the continuing professional development of teachers.
- To establish and maintain a register of teachers.
- To establish, publish, review and maintain Codes of Professional Conduct which include teaching knowledge, skill and competence.
- To regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers and
- To maintain and improve standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence.

The work of the Council is specific to teaching as a profession and to the conduct of teachers as individual professionals. The Act does not include any reference to a specific role for school principals or school leaders in the promotion and development of professionalism among teachers. However, principals are encouraged to arrange group discussions with their teachers on the draft Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers, which make reference to collegiality, collaboration, care and cooperation as core values for the profession.

3.3.12. As employer of teachers and other staff, the Board of Management is required to comply with a wide range of employment and equality legislation, in addition to ensuring compliance with other recent legislation such as the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005), the Data Protection Act (1988) and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003). The impact of these responsibilities on a Board of Management comprised of volunteers is significant, and increasingly boards depend on the school principal to guide and support their work within the administrative constraints of the school context. Consequently, in primary schools, voluntary secondary schools, community and comprehensive schools, the responsibility for compliance with these legislative requirements falls directly to the principal on a day-to-day basis, whereas in the VEC sector an administrative structure exists to deal with legislative and administrative requirements.

3.3.13. The impact of this de facto assumption of responsibility can create considerable stress for the school principal, on the one hand, and, on the other, allow the development of inappropriate power structures within the management of the school. The following extracts from DES circular letter 4/98 define the authority of the post-primary principal and his/her relationship with the Board of Management:

> "*The Principal has overall authority under the authority of the Board of Management/Manager for the day to day management of the school. The Principal controls the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school, including the assignment of duties to members of the teaching and non-teaching staff.*

> *"Principals' contracts are governed by the principles set out in the Introduction .... The Principals are accountable to their Boards of Management/Managers for the execution of their duties."*
>
> *(DES Circular 04/98)*

3.3.14. Circular P16/73 similarly outlines the relationship of the primary principal to his/her Board of Management. Thus there are clear articulations of the management structures of primary and post-primary schools. Nevertheless, in practice it can be the case that principals assume too much authority and responsibility, or, conversely, are prevented from discharging their statutory responsibilities. Factors that can influence the principal's role and the level of responsibility include:

- o   School sector and level
- o   School size (determines number of staff / teaching duties etc.)
- o   Governance structures (trustees' / patron's level of engagement)
- o   School status
- o   Historical context.

Interestingly, while all teachers have a contract of employment, and local contracts are provided for those who hold posts of responsibility, there is no agreed contract for school principals.

3.3.15. To conclude, the impact of recent legislation on school leadership, whether Board of Management, principal or other school leader, has been significant in terms of added responsibility and the challenge of compliance. In a system that has developed within an ethos of trust, care and commitment, the explicit nature of legislative responsibility presents a challenge. While guidelines and advice are provided to assist schools in the discharge of responsibilities, the issue of resources (time, finance, personnel) has not been addressed. Consequently, Boards of Management, principals and other school personnel are attempting to fulfil the legislative responsibilities of a 21st Century Ireland within a mid-20th Century administrative context. The effect is of a devolution of educational responsibility and decision-making from central sources (i.e. Department of Education and Science) to local (i.e. school) level, without a concomitant devolution of resources. The issue of resources, expertise and structures to enable schools to comply fully with recent legislation will have to be addressed as will the need to provide training, support and legal advice for Boards of Management, principals and others responsible for ensuring compliance with recent legislation.

3.4   Challenges facing School Leaders

3.4.1.   In 2003, a report by HayGroup Management Consultants outlined the challenges in the role of the primary principals as follows:

> *Principals face a range of challenges in effectively delivering the key elements of the role …… Some of these challenges derive from a lack of clarity about the various elements in the role and other derive from a lack of support for Principals in a variety of ways.*

Dealing with these challenges in an effective way requires a range of leadership and other competencies. These are the kinds of competency that would normally be seen in leadership and senior management positions and require high levels of inter-personal and organisational skills.

3.4.2.   Some of the specific challenges facing school leaders are outlined as follows in *School Leadership – A Profile (LDS, 2002)*[2]:-

1.   ***Promoting teaching and learning***

The increased emphasis on whole school improvement and management of the quality of teaching and learning in the school impacts significantly on the role of school leaders. The centrality of the instructional leadership role demands that school leaders provide optimum learning opportunities for all.

2.   ***Societal change***

The economic, social and cultural background of students attending Irish schools is changing rapidly. Students present to schools with alternative lifestyles and varying expectations. School leaders need to reflect on how they can support and empower staff, students and parents in this changing environment. While the Irish economy is buoyant, there are families living in poverty. Schools are also expected to deal with family breakdown, abuse of drugs, obesity and other social issues. Schools are often seen as the centre of the community – a place where people turn in times of crisis. In this context, schools now deal with many external agencies, e.g. social services, health officials, psychologists, Gardai etc.

3.   ***Facilitating change and school improvement***

Effective management of change necessitates the distribution of leadership and the empowerment of colleagues. A school leader has a pivotal role to play in identifying and facilitating innovation that sustains genuine benefits for students. This involves collaborating with the whole-school community in the creation, communication and sharing of vision.

4.   ***Globalisation***

In a society increasingly dominated by market forces, school leaders, while protecting core educational values, need to encourage students to take advantage of the global opportunities available to them, particularly within the European context.

> "In a globalised knowledge society it is inevitable that the factors impacting on teaching and learning will become ever more numerous and influential and that demands made of schools and teachers will continue to increase in intensity and complexity." (TUI p.28)

5.   ***Risk taking***

Risk taking should not be perceived as something to be avoided but rather as an integral part of the change process and as an opportunity for learning. School leaders need to provoke and guide staff to explore all options in addressing students' needs and to provide a safe environment for risk taking.

6.   ***Continuous Personal and Professional Development (CPPD)***

The changing school environment and the needs of the "learning school" will require an ever increasing breadth and depth of talents, skills and capabilities among staff

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[2] This document was published by the Leadership Development for Schools team in 2002 as part of the professional development programme for newly appointed school leaders.

members. The challenge for school leaders is to initiate and support CPPD for teachers and other staff members and to facilitate structures that support those who aspire to leadership roles in schools.

7. ***Gender equality***

Policies relating to gender equality in schools, such as teacher awareness, classroom interaction, class structure and curriculum provision, allocation and choice, need to be formulated and adopted by the whole school community.

Inclusion

3.4.3.   Schools are increasingly enrolling pupils with a wide variety of educational needs. As has been indicated in Chapter 2, the school population in Ireland has become more diverse in recent years and this trend is likely to continue. Arising from the major increase in immigration to Ireland in recent years, schools now cater for a level of cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic and intellectual diversity which is unprecedented. In addition, school enrolments include a growing number of pupils from the Traveller community, whose school attendance in the past was sporadic and irregular. The inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms adds to the diversity within the classroom. A culture of inclusion in schools requires that all pupils are respected and supported and their needs met.

3.4.4.   Newcomer children, (not born in Ireland) whether asylum seekers, convention or programme refugees or children of migrant workers between 4 and 18 have the same right to primary and post-primary education as the rest of the Irish population, and are required to attend school between the ages of 6 and 16. Schools have a pivotal role to play in integrating the newcomer students into schools and into society by developing a more inclusive, intercultural classroom environment and by providing children with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in the multicultural Ireland of today.

3.4.5.   The important role played by schools is recognised by the DES in the recently launched *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (NCCA, 2005; NCCA, 2006). These guidelines, which were drafted by the NCCA state that:

> "*Education not only reflects society but also influences its development. As such, schools have a role to play in the development of an intercultural society. While education cannot bear the sole responsibility for challenging racism and promoting intercultural competence, it has an important contribution to make in the development of the child's intercultural skills, attitudes, values and knowledge. An intercultural education is valuable to all children in equipping them to participate in an increasingly diverse society. Equally, an education which is based on only one culture will be less likely to develop these capacities in children.*"

3.4.6.   Some schools provide for greater numbers of newcomers because of their geographical location, less restrictive enrolment policies and/or a commitment to community responsiveness. In a small number of schools, more than a third of the pupils were born outside Ireland, whereas other schools have virtually no newcomer pupils.   The DES provides additional resources to schools to support language learning for students whose first language is not English. Until recently, the maximum support received by any one school was an allocation of forty-fours teaching hours per week, provided they had 28 or more newcomer students in need of language support. Each student was entitled to language support for a maximum of two years. A recent announcement by the Minister for Education (January 2007) that the support for schools will be improved is a positive development as this issue

constitutes a major challenge for school leaders in the growing number of schools with a high concentration of pupils for whom English is a foreign language.

3.4.7. Participation and retention of Traveller children at primary and post- primary level continue to increase. *Guidelines on Traveller Education* (DES, 2002; DES, 2003a) were issued to primary and post primary schools by the DES and emphasise the importance of interculturalism within the school. The guidelines stress the two elements of intercultural education: appreciation of diversity and the challenging of inequality.

3.4.8. As indicated in Chapter 2, the absence of a culturally diverse teaching profession can militate against the development of inclusion. The challenges in recognising non-Irish and non-European citizens as teachers needs to be addressed, especially at primary level. The situation regarding eligibility criteria for teaching in primary schools and the issue of work permits must be addressed if Ireland is to provide role models for all pupils in an inclusive school environment.

3.4.9. In line with international trends, it is national policy to educate children with special educational needs within the mainstream school setting, with a continuum of provision from special schools to full integration in the mainstream classroom. In recent years this policy has been more vigorously pursued by the DES and is underpinned by legislation (Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, EPSEN Act 2004,). At primary level, the DES has introduced a General Allocation model of support for children with special education needs (Circulars 24/03 and 2/05). This is a significant development in the Education System. This model allocates resources on the basis of school enrolment, to support children with learning support needs, children with mild general learning disability and other high incidence learning needs. The rationale for this development was to ensure that the teaching and learning opportunities for children with high incidence needs are not compromised by undue waiting time for resources. This development also ensures that schools can plan provision for SEN teaching and support in advance and can offer some security to their SEN personnel. Children with physical, sensory and emotional disabilities, more profound learning needs and multiple disabilities are provided resources under the provision for low incidence special needs. The determination of these needs involves collaboration with support service personnel and the Special Needs Organiser (SENO) and requires significant input from school personnel, generally led by the principal or senior teacher. While this model is working satisfactorily at primary level, it is not an appropriate one to use at post-primary level. As staffing issues at post primary level are more complex, the provision for SEN pupils is negotiated at school level with reference to the school staffing context. As a system response to local and individual needs, considerable input from the principal or senior teacher is required.

3.4.10. In relation to the special educational needs of pupils, school principals face the challenges of:

- keeping themselves informed of their obligations under legislation and under their own school ethos and values

- putting systems in place to identify students who may have special needs

- accessing assessments of these students

- finding suitably qualified teachers,

- arranging, with these teachers, a suitable timetable for each student with special needs

- agreeing, with the whole staff, a system which best meets the needs of all students

- looking for appropriate support for the students

- providing opportunities for the professional development of all staff to assist them in dealing with the range of abilities and needs in the mainstream classroom.

3.4.11. The increased enrolment in mainstream schools of pupils with a variety of special educational needs has imposed a significant volume of additional work and legislative responsibility on principals and teachers. The uneven distribution of students with special needs across schools means that in some schools there are higher than average concentrations of special educational needs. This situation poses a challenge to the schools and to the system as individual schools, proactive and innovative in addressing special educational needs, are presented with further challenges risking dilution of services and further ghettoisation of children with special needs.

Legislative Change and Policy Development

3.4.12. An extensive range of legislation governing schools has been described in the previous section. Observations received for this report from teacher unions, management bodies and principals' professional associations have emphasised the unreasonable demands that much of this legislation imposes on school principals, without adequate resources being provided to enable them to fulfil their new responsibilities under this legislation.

This view has been supported in research carried out by the JMB in 2005, where 82% of the respondents indicated that changes in management practices, brought about by legislation, have seriously increased their workload. This report stated:

> "*The need to keep updated on changing legislation, along with the demands made by this new legislation and the amount of paperwork attached to same, together with the requirement of the DES for policies to be put in place, without any consideration of the time given or resources required to do these tasks has seriously increased the workload*". (The Workload of Principals in Voluntary Secondary Schools. JMB Report 2005)

Teachers share this view[3]. They acknowledge that much of the legislation has strengthened pupil and parent entitlements. This, while in itself a positive development, has resulted in increased workload, additional responsibility and greater accountability for all teachers as well as for school principals.

The Principal's workload

3.4.13. Some of the most frequently cited challenges facing school leadership in Ireland relate to work overload at both primary and post-primary level and the difficulties of the teaching principal at primary level. Work overload has been documented in a number of recent documents including the JMB Survey of Secondary School Principals conducted in 2005 (The Workload of Principals) and the NAPD survey conducted in the same year. Over 90% of principals in the JMB survey stated that dealing with legislation has had a significant effect on their work. The biggest challenges stated by principals in the JMB survey are:-

- Time Management
- Administration
- Personnel management

3.4.14. Maintaining the school building and grounds also falls within the remit of the school Principal. A recently introduced, and much welcomed, scheme, The Summer Works Scheme,

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[3] Submission from Teachers Union of Ireland to the Benchmarking Body (2006)

allows schools to apply for funding for minor building works. This funding, to date, has contributed very positively to improving the state of school buildings. It does, however, carry with it an extra burden of work for the principal. In the absence of "plant managers" or "business managers" in schools, it becomes the responsibility of the principal to see that the work is progressed on a day-to-day basis, and, as the name of the scheme implies, this work is usually carried out during the summer holidays. A small number of schools are run as public-private partnerships (PPP) with the private partner providing such management support under the terms of the agreement.

3.4.15. The introduction of Student Councils and other democratic decision-making processes has led to a change in the school culture. Debate and challenge are more evident. While this development is welcomed, it takes time to organise the necessary structures and activities for its successful implementation.

Technological change

3.4.16. The introduction of new technologies has impacted on schools across all levels, sectors and range of activities. The promotion of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning is encouraged in Ireland and will be an area of ongoing development. The increasing use of ICT in teaching and learning has implications for teachers and for principals as leaders. However, as has been noted in Chapter 1, Ireland is still some way behind other OECD countries in pupil access to computers within schools and in scientific literacy generally, and this will be an increasing issue for teachers and principals in the future years.

3.4.17. At administrative level, the changeover from manual, paper record keeping to computer-based records in the school has implications for the school in terms of training of staff, provision of the necessary hardware and software and compliance with the Data Protection Act. In terms of official communication between schools, the DES and other agencies, Ireland is currently in a "transition" phase. At post-primary level, some data, reports and information are transmitted electronically, while others are sent in hard copy. Integrated communication systems should make administrative work in a school easier, but many schools have not yet been provided with sufficient financial or technical support or the training needed to facilitate this changing culture. At primary level no systems exist as yet for the electronic transmission of data.

3.4.18. To conclude, the role of the principal is becoming increasingly complex. The publication of this report is a timely opportunity to highlight the challenges for principals and to begin the articulation of a concept of school leadership and principalship that is relevant to the Irish education system. The present lack of clarity leads to the perception that principals must be responsible for a wide range of issues, while principals themselves, in the absence of formal structures and supports, assume additional responsibilities leading to stress, burn-out and ineffectiveness in their role.

3.5   Responsibility for Decision-Making

3.5.1. In comparison with most other OECD countries, decision-making in the Irish education system has traditionally been highly centralised. Most of the major policy decisions relating to education are made by the DES in consultation with the social partners, and reflect legislative developments, and economic and social priorities. While policy development and decision-making are centralised, the implementation of policy is a matter for each school or Vocational Education Committee (VEC) within a framework of accountability and legislative compliance. The DES continues to deal directly with all primary schools and with voluntary secondary schools and community and comprehensive schools. The exception is in the case of schools in the vocational sector (vocational schools and community colleges). The primary source of funding for all schools is the DES (see Chapter 2). The majority of schools receive

their funds directly from the DES by means of a series of designated grants throughout the year. Again, the exception to this is the VEC sector, where DES funding is granted to each VEC, which then disburses the grants to the schools within their respective jurisdictions. While decisions regarding the spending of funds for school running costs are made locally, increasingly, specific grants are made to schools with prescribed rules as to how they will be spent and accounted for. Thus the system is highly centralised, in terms of prescription, but devolved to the extent that schools or VECs can implement policy in the context of local needs. This devolution also confers responsibility and accountability to the local management in respect of decisions made about funding, curriculum and school organisation.

3.5.2.   The curriculum is designed by the NCCA, a statutory body advising the Minister on all matters relating to curriculum and assessment from early childhood to completion of senior cycle (ages 0 – 18). Within the overall framework designated by the DES (Rules for National Schools; Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools; DES, 1998), schools have some flexibility in the programmes they offer to students. At primary level, the school principal, in consultation with staff and the parent body and under the direction of the Board of Management, is expected to produce plans for teaching and learning in all curricular areas. While this responsibility may be delegated to post holders on the staff, the responsibility for decisions made rests with the principal. It is unusual that a Board of Management would question curricular decisions made. In addition to the teaching time allocated to curriculum subjects, schools are free to offer additional activities of their choice. Most schools at both primary and post-primary levels offer some extra-curricular and after-school activities for students, ranging from games and sport to music, drama, debating and a variety of civic/social activities. Student participation is optional and, in many cases, the teachers (or other adults) providing these activities do so voluntarily.

3.5.3.   Issues relating to the professional development of teachers and school leaders will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. As indicated in that chapter, there are support services to provide professional development for teachers, principals and deputy principals. The DES provides for paid substitution cover for attendance at some of the courses provided, particularly at post-primary level. However, school Boards of Management and principals often have difficulty in finding replacement teachers and a major concern at present is the loss of teaching time for students when their teachers are attending professional development courses. At primary level, courses are generally offered for the whole staff, necessitating school closure. While decisions regarding the timing and availability of such courses are made by course providers, the responsibility for attendance, local organisation and communication with parents rests with the principal.

3.6   Autonomy, accountability and student performance

3.6.1.   Historically, the private ownership of most schools in Ireland meant that there was a significant amount of local autonomy. This continues today in the selection of personnel, in the organisation of curriculum and school policies, and in some of the choices that may be made with regard to school funds. More recently, the autonomy enjoyed by schools in the past has been affected by legislative change and the impact of accountability measures. This is evidenced in appointments to posts of responsibility, school planning measures, enrolment and other policies, and budgetary controls. As mentioned elsewhere in this document, schools are also becoming increasingly more accountable for student performance through the process of whole school evaluation and inspection. The publication of these reports on the DES website is an indication of the accountability to which the DES itself is subject. The tension between traditional autonomy and imperatives for accountability is evident in the following statement:

> "... *schools are complex institutions in which change can only come about through internal acceptance by staff and management both of the school's*

strengths and of the need for action in those areas of activity where further development is desirable."

<div align="right">(DES, 1999b, p.49.)</div>

While the term "accountability" may have negative connotations for some, there is an acceptance of the school's role in evaluation and development. Within the context of traditional autonomy, some schools have been proactive in self-evaluation using the DES publications *Looking at our Schools* (DES Inspectorate, 2003; 2003a). It is generally the school principal who will drive such an approach to addressing accountability.

3.6.2.   Schools are required, under the provisions of the Education Act (1998), to engage in the process of school planning. The principal is responsible, with the staff and the broader school community, including parents, for defining key educational goals and outcomes, which are appropriate to the needs, aptitudes, interests and abilities of the pupils within the school. Such planning includes establishing an effective system for monitoring and assessing pupil performance. This is further developed in the next chapter.

3.7   Organisation and leadership structures within a school

3.7.1.   Leadership structures within Irish schools have been developed following extensive negotiation between Unions, Management Bodies and the DES (DES Circulars PP04/98; P07/03). Distribution of leadership roles is implicitly acknowledged in these In-School-Management agreements. Under this system, each school's entitlement to posts of responsibility (deputy principal, assistant principals, special duties teacher) is based on the number of teaching staff in the school (full-time teachers at primary level, whole-time equivalents at post-primary). Reference has already been made to the large number of small primary schools in Ireland. A school must have at least 14 teachers to have an entitlement to the post of assistant principal. Since only around 10% of primary schools fall into this category, the vast majority of primary schools do not have assistant principal posts. Post holders receive a financial allowance, in addition to their salary; over €5,000 per annum for special duties teachers, over €8,000 per annum for assistant principals, and a graded allowance for deputy principals. These new arrangements were intended to focus on the provision of opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff and their development and the academic and pastoral work of the school. The process also offered individual school staff and management a chance to engage in a dialogue around the schools, leadership and management needs. While this change was generally welcomed and many schools embraced the opportunity to address the issue, in some schools the selection mechanisms were not always conducive to best serving the managerial, administrative and leadership requirements of the school, as initially envisaged. The arrangements for middle-management structures at primary level are currently under review.

3.7.2.   At post-primary level, Circular PP05/98, setting out the procedures for filling posts of responsibility, states that "*In allocating the duties to posts, the duties should be inclusive so as to be open to applications from all eligible members of the teaching staff*". (1.4 Cir 05/98). The requirement that duties should be "inclusive" militated against individual teachers being afforded the opportunity to use their specific abilities, interests and strengths for the good of the school. Perhaps more significantly, however, was the requirement that *"The Board of Management/Manager shall appoint the most senior suitable applicant to the post." (*3.2.2 Cir 05/98*).* This has meant that schools might not always be free to choose the best person for the job. At primary level, appointments to posts of responsibility must give equal weighting to length of service in the school, capability to perform duties and willingness to perform duties (DES Circular P 07/03).

3.7.3.   While a review of the posts of responsibility system was promised, to date no review has been carried out at post-primary level. The report of the review at primary level is imminent. At a time of significant change and increasing challenges for school leaders, it is generally accepted that a meaningful re-organisation of posts of responsibility is required. The functioning of these teams at school level, the understanding of the roles played and the selection and appointment process is in need of review.

3.7.4.   Notwithstanding the difficulties associated with the implementation of Circulars P07/03 and PP05/98, the development of a culture of middle management is gaining ground in the Irish education system, albeit stronger in some sectors than others. At primary level in the smallest schools, the engagement of the principal with post holders has seen the workload made somewhat more manageable; a sense of collegial support develops; and there is an assumption of responsibility on the part of post holders. Similarly, successful implementation in larger primary schools has seen the development of team approaches, distribution of responsibility for curricular areas and for organisational development, and has reduced the isolation felt by the principal. The organisation of these posts involves allocation of duties concomitant with the allowances paid. These duties are negotiated at school level and involve consultation with the teaching staff as to the planning and development needs of the school. Duties may be reviewed.

3.7.5.   In successful implementation at primary level, duties generally include responsibility for a curricular area (curriculum leader) and for an organisational area or areas, together with a commitment to meeting general pastoral needs or one specific pastoral area. It is up to the principal to effect the delegation of duties and responsibilities attaching to these posts and to ensure that they are carried out. This is a significant leadership skill which requires development and support. Apart from a small number of deputy principals, all post holders at primary level have full-time teaching duties. Duties attached to the post and meetings with colleagues or with the principal must be carried out after the school day ends. At post primary level, post-holders may have responsibility for administrative, pastoral or curricular duties. The level of engagement between principal and post holders with regard to the implementation of these duties varies considerably between schools and across the sectors. In some schools, particularly VEC and Community and Comprehensive schools, teachers with assistant principal posts generally have a reduction in teaching hours. This is the agreed practice, but schools are not allocated additional teaching hours; the school principal allocates time for performance of post duties from within existing resources. Traditionally, this has not been the practice in voluntary secondary schools. The duties assigned to each post are determined by the Board of Management, following consultation with the teaching staff. Again, there is considerable variation across schools with regard to the amount of work attached to each post. Perceptions of post holders as members of the senior management team in the school is a growing phenomenon and, with further development, could have an increasingly positive effect on the school culture, enhance the professional life of the teacher and contribute to reducing the workload of the principal.

3.8   Learning- centred v managerial responsibilities

3.8.1.   A number of studies carried out in the Irish context have highlighted the tensions between the relative weights given to different leadership responsibilities in schools. Increasingly, principals find it very difficult to give the amount of time they would like to leadership and educational issues. Research studies have shown that principals and deputy principals are habitually burdened with an administrative workload that absorbs most of their time and energy (Leader and Boldt, 1994; DES, 1999; IPPN, 2003).

3.8.2.   Surveys by the Second Level Support Service (McManamly, 2002) and the Joint Managerial Body (JMB 2005) have concluded that the administrative burden and the non-

educational responsibilities of school principals continue to increase. Sugrue (2003, p. 9) quotes Dimmock (1996) when he says that:

> *For many Irish principals, there is a constant tug between the more routine administrative chores, particularly in the absence of consistent secretarial and caretaker support, management responsibilities and the kind of leadership that is implied in much of recent literature*

3.8.3.   The demands of administration often leave little time for school leadership to focus on teaching and learning issues. The tension for principals and deputy principals in trying to balance administrative/managerial tasks and learner-centred leadership is very acute. This imbalance was recognised by the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D. at the first NAPD Conference she addressed in 2004:

> *"the emphasis on the administrative/managerial tasks remain very heavy, to the detriment of the role of school leaders in the area of teaching and learning"* (NAPD 2006).

3.8.4.   Fullan (2006, p. 16) reminds us that '*improvements in the positioning of principalship would have significant impact on both teacher and student learning*'. He further goes on to argue that principals working with teachers '*are essential to the development of [the] collaborative cultures*' on which the learning requirements of the knowledge society depends.

3.9   Collaborative Networks

3.9.1.   An important development in recent years has been the setting up of Professional Associations for Principals and Deputy Principals (referred to in Chapter 2). The Irish Primary Principals Network and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals play a significant supportive and developmental role for its members.

3.9.2.   Historically, school leaders and teachers have formed formal and informal networks both within and outside of their schools. The composition, structure and nature of these networks vary, but generally aim to provide a safe, supportive environment where members can exchange information, share ideas, clarify and enhance their understanding and gain affirmation for their practice. Many of these collaborative networks, at both primary and post-primary levels, are organised, administered through, or facilitated by the twenty-one full-time and nine part-time Education Centres throughout the country.

3.9.3.   At both primary and post-primary levels there are other collaborative networks of teachers such as Home School Community Liaison teachers and Special Needs Teachers. At post-primary level there are professional associations related to the subjects on the curriculum, the LCVP programme, LCA and TY Co-ordinators. In the voluntary secondary sector, networks are organized by the Trustees of the schools. These are often served by an Education Office, or by individual members of the religious congregation involved. Some of the current re-structuring of Trusteeship will lead to the formation of new networks, where a number of religious congregations are amalgamating their Trustee functions. Already there is evidence of this in networks for school principals, deputy principals and Boards of Management. Under the umbrella of the post primary management bodies or VEC, there are regional networks for principals, deputies and/or Board of Management chairpersons. At primary level, the Catholic Primary School Managers Association (CPSMA), the Church of Ireland Board of Education, Gaelscoileanna and Educate Together provide invaluable support and information for school leaders. The three teacher unions also provide support for teachers through their Branch networks throughout the country.

3.9.4.   Given the very significant legal and other responsibilities which fall to Boards of Management, it is essential that high quality training and support is resourced and made

available to Boards. In this respect, the recent funding made available by the DES to management bodies for training for Boards of Management is very welcome. A systematic, capacity-building approach to such training is required in order to ensure that schools can call upon personnel with the high-level skills required to comply with legislation and ensure the efficient and effective governance of schools.

CHAPTER 4
ENHANCING LEARNING AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

4.1 Policy concerns about teaching, learning and assessment

4.1.1.   In general, there is a positive attitude towards education in Ireland. Both providers and participants believe in the value and importance of education. While it is recognized that there is scope for improvement, the quality of the Irish education system is highly regarded. *"Ireland's schools are largely seen to produce the goods, in terms of measurable grades* (OECD 2003, Table 5.2 in National University of Ireland-Maynooth, *"Voices from School"* p.2). An on-going concern, however, is that the system is not catering for the needs of all pupils (approx 18% leave school before completing the Senior Cycle). During the past decade the State has introduced a number of initiatives, including curriculum reform and other interventions, to support students to remain in school until the completion of the Leaving Certificate examination and to achieve their academic potential. However, to date, these initiatives have not achieved the hoped-for outcomes and the proportion of pupils who drop out of full-time schooling before sitting the Leaving Certificate remains the same today as it was 15 years ago.

> *" The process of curriculum development will allow the principal, together with the staff, to identify educational goals that are both relevant and realistic and that will reflect the needs, aptitudes and circumstances of the pupils, and the unique character of the school and its environment. Achieving these goals requires a deep understanding of, and a commitment to, the principles underpinning the curriculum and the approaches to teaching and learning that are inherent in it. It also requires the development of procedures and structures within the school that will facilitate a process of consistent curriculum and organisational planning. This should include the delegation of relevant responsibilities to deputy principals, assistant principals, and special-duties teachers"* Primary School Curriculum – Introduction (DES, 1999a, p. 19).

4.1.2.   Curriculum changes have taken account of recent research regarding the nature of learning. Recognising the outcomes of research on different learning styles and pupils' multiple intelligences, the revised (1999) primary curriculum encourages the use of a variety of active teaching and learning methodologies. Similarly at post-primary level, the various revised subject syllabi, particularly at junior cycle, are designed to encourage students to be active agents in their own learning.

4.1.3.   Assessment of student learning at both primary and post primary level is a matter for on-going consideration and review. There has been no national testing in Ireland at primary level since the Primary Certificate examination was abolished in 1967. Schools take responsibility for assessing their own students and reporting their progress to parents. The centrality of assessment in the learning process is recognised but the emphasis is on assessment practices and policies that will contribute to the individual child's learning and development, rather than to compiling national statistics on standards.

> *"Using assessment strategies that are directed towards the identification of children's needs, and providing experiences that will fulfil these needs, adds enormously to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process"* Primary School Curriculum – Introduction (DES, 1999a, p. 11).

On a school-by-school basis, teachers are encouraged to use a variety of assessment methods, including standardized testing in subjects such as English and Mathematics, and in general,

assessment is formative as well as summative. It is the practice that the majority of Irish primary schools use standardised tests for literacy and numeracy in some or all classes However, these are not formally reported in the system and it is not possible to draw up league tables or to make inter-school comparisons by pupil achievement in primary education in Ireland. The policy of eschewing the reporting of systematic national testing at specified age levels, as is the practice in some other OECD countries, has been endorsed by successive Ministers for Education and strongly supported by the teaching profession over the past four decades. A recent development has seen the publication of Circular 0138/2006 requesting that standardised testing be implemented in all primary schools on an annual basis in the first and fourth classes in English Reading and Mathematics beginning in the calendar year 2007.

4.1.4.   Information regarding schools and student attainment is publicly available in the form of Inspection reports on the DES website. Results from Ireland's participation in recent PISA projects on literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledge are also available. Irish pupils scored well in these PISA projects and the results have been widely publicised in national newspapers.

4.1.5.   At post-primary level, the quality of teaching and learning is measured by students' results in the state examinations (Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations) as well as by the recently introduced Whole School Evaluation. Since the state Certificate Examinations are largely once-off written examinations, they reward forms of learning that encourage recall and the ability to organize and write answers to examination questions in the relatively short time-scale of the examination.   It has been argued that this type of assessment tends to reward lower order skills such as recall and understanding, rather than higher order skills such as synthesis and evaluation, although there is no recent research evidence to support this contention. It is clear however that the emphasis on written examinations militates against experiential learning, especially during the year of the examination itself (usually the pupil's third and sixth years in second-level school). Recent and proposed syllabus revisions recognise the value of using more than one assessment mode; for example, along with a written paper, orals, aurals, practicals, projects or logbooks.

4.1.6.   As is the case at primary level, examination results at post-primary level are not made available in aggregate form in such a way as would enable the creation of "league tables" to compare overall pupil performance from school to school. In spite of this, and despite continued objections on the part of the schools and successive Ministers for Education, the media annually compile a table of schools, ranked in order of the number of students from each school who gained access to third level universities and colleges on the basis of the results of the Leaving Certificate examination the previous year. As universities are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (1999), they are required under legislation to release this information.

4.1.7.   An emerging concern in recent years is the extent to which opportunities are available to Principals to play a significant role in leading learning (variously called instructional leadership, curriculum leadership, learning-centred leadership, educational leadership). Research has identified a strong relationship between positive school leadership and institutional effectiveness, and describes the successful principal as providing skilled instructional leadership to staff, creating a supportive school climate, with particular emphasis on the curriculum and teaching. (NEC 1994 p.42). This view is articulated specifically in the introduction to the Primary Curriculum:

> "The principal is pivotal in creating a shared vision for the curriculum in the school and in providing dynamic and inspirational curriculum leadership" (DES, 1999a).

However, instructional leadership was deemed to be the most neglected aspect of the principal's work in school (NEC, 1994, p.45; DES 1999 p29). The JMB also suggests that principals do not have sufficient time to dedicate to leading teaching and learning due to the time spent on administrative tasks (JMB 2005).

4.1.8.   On the one hand it is widely acknowledged that the principal's central role is leading learning but on the other hand, it is also widely acknowledged that this role is neglected. The following were suggested as possible reasons contributing to the neglect of instructional leadership:-

- the administrative and legislative requirements leading to shortage of time

- lack of clarity regarding the implications of instructional leadership

- the prevailing culture in Irish schools

- autonomy of teachers

- perceptions of credibility

(NEC, 1994; DES, 1999; JMB, 2005; IPPN, 2006)

4.1.9.   One of the challenges facing principals is to mediate the autonomous and isolated role of the teacher, (this independence is often highly valued) with overall school improvement in the context of teaching and learning. If leading learning is considered to be important then it deserves serious consideration in terms of exploring the concept and examining the implications particularly in terms of the balance between it and other administrative and managerial tasks carried out by the principal.

4.2 School accountability and student learning

4.2.1.   School accountability in Ireland takes many forms. All schools are subject to inspection by the Department of Education and Science. These inspections vary in structure and format but generally include some or all of the following; classroom visits, discussion with teachers, management, other staff, students and parents. In some instances, the evaluation or inspection focuses on one aspect of the school, e.g. a specific subject, (Subject Inspection) whereas in other instances, it focuses on a wider range of issues (WSE). An important innovation in relation to accountability is the recent introduction of Whole School Evaluation – described in Chapter 2. Reports on WSE are published and are accessible to the general public on the website of the DES.

4.2.2.   From a school leadership perspective, inspections and evaluations are generally considered to be a positive experience for the school. This may be due to the model of evaluation used by the DES that is positive, affirming and developmental rather than punitive or negative. The evaluations are time-consuming in that all necessary documentation must be presented and submitted in advance, time must be made available for teachers, management, Board of Management, parents and students to meet with the inspectors and, following the evaluation, a de-briefing meeting takes place. However, schools often benefit from the affirmation of good practice and from the recommendations for further improvement and future direction of the school. The school Board of Management is invited to issue a response to the evaluation report. This response is also published on the website. Positive comments welcoming the report and indicating the school's willingness to "*to put a plan of action in place to tackle the issues highlighted" (DES website Jan 2007)* are not uncommon.

4.2.3.   Under the Education Act (1998) (see Chapter 3), school leaders are required to report on student progress in school. With the assistance of the School Development Planning support teams, some schools have drawn up policies on for the teaching of curriculum

subjects. Many post primary schools are also requested to submit annual reports to their trustees. Some of these reports may include reference to student learning and achievement.

4.2.4. Primary and post-primary schools arrange meetings between parents and teachers on a one-to-one basis at least once a year. In addition, schools issue written reports to parents on their children's progress and attainment. This practice varies from school to school with post-primary schools generally sending reports home three times per year and primary schools sending them home once or twice. All relevant teachers contribute to the report and the principal, or a designated teacher, oversees the co-ordination and administration of this process.

4.3   Discipline

4.3.1. Monitoring of students' behaviour, learning progress and outcomes have traditionally been an internal school matter. National data is not gathered on individual student behaviour or learning. Since 2004, schools report student attendance to the National Welfare Board, who, compile statistics for the country as a whole.

4.3.2. In 2005, the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, T.D., set up a Task Force to review student behaviour in second level schools. This followed surveys carried out by the Teacher Unions which indicated that there were behavioural issues which needed to be addressed at system level. For example, in a study carried out by the ASTI in 2004, 71% of teachers reported that they had taught classes in the school year of the study in which some students engaged in continuous disruptive behaviour (ASTI 2004). This study also showed that teachers believed that school leadership plays a very significant part in creating the climate in schools that fosters good learning and minimises disruptive behaviour. 91% of teachers surveyed in the study agreed that more support from principals was necessary to make discipline policy effective. (ASTI 2004)

4.3.3. The report from the Task Force to review student behaviour also highlighted the importance of good leadership, stating that

> *The central importance of effective leadership in schools cannot be overstated. Whatever the educational setting, a major determinant of a school's success and provision is the quality of leadership exercised by senior management, and in particular, that of the Principal. (Ch 7, p.77).*

4.3.4. The report went on to outline the importance of the school's capacity to form positive relationships as a critical factor in determining patterns of behaviour and emphasised the central role played by teachers, not just within their subject-domain but in their caring attitude towards their students.

> *It is through the building of wholesome, respectful and supportive relationships between students and their teachers that much that is conducive to good discipline is accomplished. (ibid p.81)*

4.3.5. Following the publication of the Report of the Task Force, the Minister for Education and Science announced a series of actions to deal with serious behaviour issues in second level schools. (DES Press Release 14th March 2006). This included the establishment of a Behaviour Support Service in September 2006.

4.4   Curriculum implementation

4.4.1. The NCCA is the statutory body for curriculum design. However, its remit does not extend to implementing or monitoring the implementation of the curriculum in individual schools. Within each school this responsibility rests with the principal and Board of

Management, with the principal playing a major role in implementation. As indicated earlier, schools have flexibility in the implementation of national curricular guidelines at both primary and post-primary levels.

4.4.2.   In consultation with teachers and stakeholders, and with the approval of the Board of Management, the principal ensures that the educational programmes, are organized within a structure and timetable. The principal allocates teachers to classes and, at primary level, co-ordinates various educational activities and organizes the use of shared facilities, e.g. hall, general-purpose area, computer room etc. At post primary level, the Principal also determines the number of class period per week per subject, the duration of the periods, e.g. single or double, and whether classes will be "blocked", i.e. all 5th year English classes at the same time.

4.4.3.   The important role played by the principal in curriculum implementation has been highlighted in research[4]. The importance of the role of the Principal in mediating the delivery of education has also been recognized by the DES (DES 1999) and at a local level the importance of a principal is recognized by a type of shorthand whereby the school is frequently described as John X's school or Mary Y's school rather than by its official title. (ibid p.i)

4.5   Principals and teaching

4.5.1.   As already indicated, at primary level, almost 75% of principals carry out their management and administrative duties in addition to full-time teaching duties. At post-primary level, principals of VEC schools may be required to teach up to five hours per week while principals of voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools are not required to carry out teaching duties. However, in smaller schools, the principal often teaches a small number of classes. In larger schools, principals may choose to teach in order to maintain classroom contact with students, as well as keeping in contact with pedagogy and syllabus content. However, as the job of principal becomes more complex and demanding, it is increasingly difficult for them to be meaningfully engaged in teaching duties. In a recent survey, 70% of post-primary principals reported that they do not teach scheduled classes. This represents a significant change in the last ten years where it was indicated in the Leader and Boldt (1994) survey that 45.8% of principals did not teach scheduled classes at that time (JMB 2005).

4.5.2.   However, in the case of both primary and post-primary schools, eligibility for application to the post of principal includes a requirement that the applicant is a qualified and recognised teacher and that s/he has had significant teaching experience (usually a minimum of five years).

4.5.3.   There are no formal structures, arrangements or requirements in relation to teacher observation, coaching or mentoring. Newly appointed primary teachers are on probation during their first year of appointment and are subject to a series of inspections by the DES Inspector before being fully recognised. Newly appointed teachers at post-primary level also undergo a probation period during their first year, prior to their registration as fully-qualified teachers. Individual schools organize this probationary period in different ways, but generally the arrangements include meetings between the principal and teacher from time to time during the year.

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[4] Dr Dympna Devine and Prof Desmond Swan (1997) found that one of the most important factors contributing to the effectiveness of a school was found to be the principal who actively promotes a particular ethos or vision, an emphasis on positive staff relations, and open contact with the parent body.

4.5.4. Some schools arrange a mentoring programme for newly qualified teachers. The nature and structure of the programme varies – in some situations there is a formal procedure, with written guidelines and an agreed modus operandi between the teachers involved. In other schools, mentoring happens informally, with teachers of the same subject helping new teachers to identify appropriate resources, sharing information about the school traditions and ethos, classroom management, disciplinary procedures, preparing tests and completing reports. While there is no tradition of teacher observation, peer coaching or mentoring in Ireland, there have been a number of pilot projects involving groups of schools and Education Centres in which different approaches to mentoring have been monitored and researched.[5]

4.5.5. At primary level there has been a long tradition of evaluating teacher performance through teacher and school inspection, dating back to the mid nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the salaries of primary teachers were paid on the basis of pupils' performance at oral examinations carried out in every school by the Inspector. During the same period, grants to secondary schools were also computed on the basis of pupils' examination results. This practice was referred to as Payment by Results. Throughout the twentieth century, teacher and school inspection remained a central plank in Irish primary education and the practice of inspection continues to date although in more recent years, apart from the probationary teacher, the focus has been on the school (WSE) at both primary and post-primary levels, rather than on the individual teacher. There is no formal role for the school principal in individual teacher appraisal or evaluation, although this issue is currently the subject of some debate. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the recently set up Teaching Council has responsibility for regulating the teaching profession and in due course this Council is likely to have a role in determining fitness to teach.

4.5.6. Currently school leaders use informal methods to make judgements about teacher performance. These include informal feedback from students and parents, dialogue with the teacher and observation of time-keeping, record keeping and general classroom management. At post primary level, examination results and completion of student reports may also be indicators of teacher performance. However, the informal nature of the above gives only anecdotal or impressionistic views.

4.5.7. Just as there is no formal system of evaluation, there is also no formal system of reward. There are no systems in place currently for additional remuneration or promotion on the basis on excellence in teaching performance.

4.5.8. Since 1999, there are Grievance, Disciplinary and Complaints procedures, agreed between the management bodies and the teachers' unions at post-primary level. The school leader, teachers or parents, as appropriate, may invoke these procedures.

4.5.9. Continuing professional development for teachers is widely available from a variety of providers. Since the late 1980s, the Department of Education and Science has systematically provided in-service support for national syllabus changes and the implementation of new programmes at post-primary level. The introduction of the Revised Primary School Curriculum in 1999 saw the beginning of systematic whole-school teacher in-service that continues to the present. Formerly organised via the In-career Development Unit (ICDU) of the DES, this professional development is administered by the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES. The TES does not provide in-service directly; they set up National Support Services, staffed by teams of practicing teachers seconded from their schools on a short-term basis. Teams are led by a National Co-ordinator and generally administered from one of the twenty-one Education Centres around the country. These programmes and support

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[5] Fionbarra O Murchu, (UCC project), DES Pilot Project UCD and St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Geraldine Mooney Simmie (UL project), Bernie English and Mary Burke (St. Pat's)

services constitute part of the process of implementation of policy and change within the system. For example, curriculum change developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, is implemented in schools with support, at primary level, from PCSP and, at post- primary level, from SLSS. Similarly, the School Development Planning support service works with all schools to review, design, implement and evaluate their planning process, thus assisting with the fulfilment of the requirements laid out in the Education Act (1998) that all schools have a school plan. (See Appendix 3 for a list of TES Support Services).

4.5.10. Teacher professional development for the facilitation of system change and development, and for policy implementation is provided in different forms; organised by the support service and provided to schools, organised by the schools within the parameters of a programme and facilitated by support service personnel, or organised by the school within general programme objectives and facilitated by school personnel or facilitators chosen by the school. This professional development occurs during normal school opening times (term time). Depending on the programme and objectives, professional development may be offered to individual members of staff, to small groups of staff or to the whole staff. In the case of professional development timetabled as part of an approved programme, substitution cover is generally provided to cover the classes of individual teachers while they are absent. Replacement cover is not provided for the non-teaching duties of principals or deputy principals. When such courses are provided to the whole staff, the school is closed to pupils. Increasingly, personnel from the support services are available to work with individuals and teams within the school to facilitate staff development; school planning and curriculum review. These facilitators may be invited to the school by the principal in consultation with the staff..

4.5.11. In addition to the national programmes, there are a wide variety of short courses and extended accredited courses available to teachers from a range of providers; Education Centres, management bodies, teacher unions, VECs and third level colleges. Award-bearing post-graduate courses include certificate, diploma, masters and doctoral programmes. Increasingly, such courses are being made available on a distance-learning basis often using online learning techniques. Participation in such courses is the individual choice of each teacher. Substitution cover is not provided and course costs must be borne by the participant. It is possible to apply for a subvention towards such costs from the DES[6]. Where a course leads to accreditation and to a higher-level qualification (e.g. at Masters level), participants may qualify for additional salary allowances.

4.5.12. As participation in most of the above mentioned professional development opportunities is at the discretion of individual teachers, there is seldom any overall co-ordination relating to the continuing professional development of staff within a school. However, in some situations, under the leadership of the principal, deputy principal or designated teacher, and through the school development planning process, particular professional development needs might be identified and provision made to meet these needs.

4.6   Effective leadership practices in promoting learning in schools

4.6.1.   The OECD report *Teachers Matter* (2005, p110) highlighted the importance of leadership practices which "build a climate of collegiality and quality improvement within schools". In the past decade, there have been a number of small-scale projects, usually university-led, in Ireland, which support school principals in identifying appropriate practices to improve teaching and learning and to strengthen the instructional leadership approach of the principal. These projects include Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century (TL21) led by NUIM and Bridging the Gap, led by UCC.[7]

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[6] The Teachers' Refund Scheme

[7] See Interim Report of TL21 and annual evaluation reports of Bridging the Gap 2002 - 6.

4.6.2. A number of reports, such as the National Evaluation of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme (2001) highlight the importance of enhanced teamwork and co-operation, induction of new teachers and in-career development. School leaders are expected to facilitate and manage such recommendations.

4.6.3. At Primary level, the whole school approach to the implementation of the revised Curriculum (DES, 1999) attempts to facilitate collaborative approaches to teaching and learning in schools. The Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) provides whole-staff inservice, followed by time and personnel resources allocated at school level. This approach has the potential to support learning-centred leadership. At in-service days and during planning support, facilitated by PCSP personnel (cuiditheoirí), the role of both principal and, where relevant, curriculum leaders is highlighted and supported. The main challenges in this approach relate to time issues for ongoing planning, coordination and evaluation.

4.6.4. The most recent major national policy initiative to support learning-centred leadership in Ireland has been the setting up by the DES of the Leadership Development in Schools (LDS) initiative in 2000. This initiative is described in detail in Chapter 6. Observations received by the authors of this report, suggest that stakeholders generally, especially the leaders themselves, would welcome a strengthening of policy and support for learning-centred leadership. As already indicated, there is an urgent need to address the issue of balance between the administrative /managerial leadership role and learning-centred leadership. The Minister for Education and Science, Ms Mary Hanafin T.D., recognised the need to address this issue, as indicated in the following statement made by her to the NAPD conference in 2004:

> *"It is not our intention that you should be administrators. It is the intention that you will be leaders of education in your school. I am going to work with you over the next year to ensure that we can reduce the burden, to review ways in which we can reduce the bureaucracy, while meeting our obligations, just to make sure that you can get on to do the job that you are employed to do."*
>
> *(NAPD Conference 2004)*

CHAPTER 5
THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL LEADERS' ROLE

5.1   Supply of school leaders

5.1.1.   There are increasing concerns in Ireland about the difficulty of attracting potential school leaders to the role of school principal. As indicated in an earlier chapter, less than three applications were received for every post of primary principal in 2006. Ten years earlier, the comparable figure was 5.5 applications for each post.   While there has been no published research to indicate reasons for this decline in interest, the topic is the subject of lively debate within the system.   Management bodies, professional bodies and teacher unions suggest that the reason for the decline in the number of applications is related to the difficulties of attracting applications to positions of leadership in smaller more isolated schools and in schools perceived to be in difficult situations or with little or no status attached; the increasing feminisation of the profession and the impact of the demands of the position on personnel, male and female, who have caring roles in addition to their job commitments; the heavy workload attached to the position, with statutory and legal responsibilities increasingly shouldered by the principal who both informs and is supported by a voluntary Board of Management; and the perception that, as appointment to principalship is permanent, there is no effective escape (other than retirement) from the situation of principal if it proves to be unattractive or untenable.

5.1.2.   There is no evidence to indicate that the quality of school leaders in Ireland is problematic. However, the concern referred to in par 5.1.1 about a shrinking pool of potential candidates raise the issue of quality into the future. In particular, a situation where there has been only one applicant, or no applicants, for a principalship post, highlights the need within the system to develop a pool of potential candidates for school leadership positions. An INTO study (2006) indicates that 9.2% of primary school principal positions were not filled in the first competition and many of these were teaching principalships. An IPPN study (2006, p. 15) of attitudes and aspirations to principalship indicates that the major reason why teachers would not apply for a principalship at some stage in the career was that 'combining the role of class teacher and principal means that both roles suffer'. When one considers that, at Primary level, almost three quarters of all principals have full-time teaching duties, it would seem that the largest group of schools have available to them the smallest pool of potential candidates for principal.

5.1.3.   Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to gender imbalance in principalships. Whereas the majority of teachers at both primary and post-primary levels are female, the majority of principals are males. This is particularly true in the case of post-primary schools. However, this trend appears to be changing. A small-scale study carried out by the INTO (2006) shows that in the years 2004-2006, the ratio of female to male principals appointed was three to one. Similarly, data provided by the Voluntary Secondary Sector (JMB, 2006) indicate that in that year more females than males were appointed to the position of principal.

5.1.4.   Within the educational system, there is no formal process for monitoring the supply of potential school leaders versus the demand. As appointments are made by the individual school management or VEC, monitoring of supply versus demand is a localised activity. The overall number of vacant positions that are likely to occur in any given year is not available until notice has been given by incumbents of intention to resign or retire. This must happen on or before the 31st May in the year of resignation, at which stage there is one month to advertise and fill the position before schools close for the summer break. In recent years a trend has developed of indicating intention to resign or retire up to a year in advance. This is more likely to occur at second level and in larger primary schools, though not exclusively. At

system level, the supply of potential candidates for the role of school principal is generally an unknown also, though at school level, potential candidates may signal in advance interest in an upcoming position. A significant shortcoming arising from the lack of information about supply and demand of school leaders is the impact on succession planning for school principals.

5.1.5.   The relatively low level of interest in the position of school principal is in contrast to the interest in other promoted positions within the school. In general, the positions of Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and Special Duties Teacher are considered attractive. With the exception of the position of deputy principal in second level schools of seventeen teachers or more, selection to these positions is by closed competition from among the school staff. Significant weight is given to seniority on the school staff in this selection process, which is highly prescribed. Data from a survey of 1,538 Primary teachers (IPPN, 2005) indicate that teachers in promoted posts are no more likely than their unpromoted colleagues to apply for a position as school principal. The same survey indicated that one quarter of the respondents were likely to consider the position of principal during the course of their career. Less than half of this number stated a definite intention to apply for the position of principal. It may be simplistic to conclude that the attractiveness of these promoted positions vis à vis principalship lies in the clarity of role definition and boundaries attached to the former, and its prescribed selection process. Nevertheless, the contrast offers potential for further investigation and research.

5.2   Employment and Working Conditions

5.2.1.   The DES, which funds salaries, determines the vacancies for school leadership positions, including principal, deputy principal and other promoted posts. On confirmation of DES approval, the vacancy is advertised by the school's Board of Management, on behalf of the Patron Body, or by the VEC as relevant. All vacancies for principalship are advertised nationally, as are vacancies for appointment to deputy principal in second-level schools with seventeen or more teachers. Other vacancies for leadership positions are advertised internally to the school teaching staff. Applicants for these positions, whether internal or external, make an application in writing, including their curriculum vitae and references. Candidates are selected by interview. Thus, while the DES determines and funds the leadership positions in any school, the employer is the local Board of Management, VEC or school owner. Movement from a leadership position in one school to another school involves making individual application in response to advertised vacancies.

5.2.2.   As indicated in Chapter 3, teachers in positions of leadership are paid an allowance in addition to their basic teacher's salary. Teacher unions and professional bodies for school leaders, argue that the salaries, benefits and working conditions of school principals and deputy principals compare unfavourably with those of cognate grades in the public service. Anomalies in the allowance structure are a further cause for negative comment. For example, a principal in a five-teacher school is paid only marginally more than an assistant principal and less than the deputy principal in a fourteen-teacher school (IPPN, 2006). There is no national system of performance related pay in publicly funded schools. Reward and recognition for effective leadership are generally intrinsic.

5.2.3.   Leadership posts, generally, are occupied to retirement age, which is normally 65. However, teachers, including principals and other school leaders, appointed to the public service before 2004, may retire on reaching their 55th birthday and are eligible for reduced public service pension on condition they have completed at least 35 years' teaching service. Many teachers, including principals, make provision through AVC (additional voluntary contribution) schemes to retire before age 65. An early retirement scheme is available to a limited number of teachers each year and a small number of principals apply to the DES to be considered under this scheme.

5.2.4.   Principals who choose to leave their positions and return to classroom teaching lose their principal's salary allowance and additional pension entitlements. They also lose their seniority rights within the school, should they remain in the same school. As a result, appointments to the position of principal, deputy principal and other promoted posts are considered long-term career commitments and end with retirement. This situation might be regarded, either as providing stability for the school and the system, or as ensuring that schools and the system are protected from change. A small number of principals who wish to return to full-time teaching positions are reported as feeling trapped in the position of principal for financial reasons.

5.2.5.   Formal evaluation of school leaders is undertaken in the context of Whole School Evaluation (WSE). WSE reports on the effectiveness of the schools' leadership, including the role of the principal, the organisation and functioning of the schools' middle management team and the work of the Board of Management.

5.2.6.   As already indicated in Chapter 3, notwithstanding the fact that promoted posts exist in all schools, the burden of responsibility for school leadership and management tends to fall to the principal. Historically, in convent and monastery schools, members of religious orders filled the role of principal. In schools with close ties to this past, and where the view of the principal as responsible for all aspects of school life persists, real delegation is unusual. Further, promoted posts (deputy principal, assistant principal and special duties teacher) prior to 1998 were essentially considered as rewards for long service to a school. There was minimal expectation on the part of the Board of Management, principal or the teacher him/herself that meaningful or key duties would be attached to the position. Despite changes in the selection process, contracts and payments for promoted posts since 1998, the culture of an earlier era has persisted in some schools. Many principals report being too busy with mundane tasks to engage in the potentially more beneficial exercise of changing culture and developing effective structures for middle management or distributed leadership.

5.2.7.   An aspect of the changing landscape of the Irish education system has been the increase in numbers of non-teaching staff attached to schools. These include Special Needs Assistants (SNA) assisting with the care needs of SEN pupils; Childcare Workers in Early Start (pre-school) Units; caretakers and clerical staff. In Special Schools, and in mainstream schools with SEN Units, there can be more ancillary staff employed than teaching staff, with no increase in the allocation of promoted posts. All schools now receive funding for caretaking and clerical support. This funding is linked to school enrolment and the Board of Management employs the personnel to undertake the relevant duties. Because of funding constraints, smaller schools are more likely to have a part-time secretary and caretaker. The principal is charged with the management and coordination of ancillary staff. While this duty may be delegated to senior post holders, in practice it rarely is. The challenges in the management and leadership of ancillary staff are most acute in smaller schools with teaching principals, in some very large schools and in special schools.

5.2.8.   With respect to the challenges noted in 5.2.7. above, many school principals at both primary and post-primary level report their frustration at the level of administrative support available to them. It is generally agreed among unions and professional bodies that administrative workload issues are a significant disincentive for teachers who might consider applying for the position of school principal. Managerial bodies, unions and professional bodies, all consider the level of funding provided for administrative support to be inadequate. Current funding allows for basic clerical and caretaking support. It does not take into account the increasing complexity of the school as an organisation; the increased accountability within the system; and the demands created by the development of specialisms such as science and technology, IT, or special education needs provision.

5.3   Retention of school leaders

5.3.1.   There is no data available to indicate the number of school leaders leaving the profession each year. Nor has any research been carried out on school leaders who retire early or on their reasons for doing so. There is a further gap in data with regard to attrition rates in school leadership from different posts, different types of schools and locations. This lack of evidence is a limitation to planning, as it impacts on the system's capacity to address leader retention and support issues. There is anecdotal evidence of principals 'handing back the keys' for reasons of workload, impact on health and family life and / or as a result of interpersonal difficulties with staff, parents and/or local management. In a small-scale study of principals who had left their positions (Ryan, 2003), 88% of respondents cited inadequate remuneration as their reason for leaving. At primary level, a recent INTO survey (INTO, 2006) indicated that 68.9% of resigning principals had reached retirement age, 11.4% had transferred to principalship in another school and 3.9% reverted to teaching duties only. Among the remainder were principals who had moved to employment elsewhere within or outside the education sector, who were on career break or who had taken early retirement, sick leave or had died. A limitation in this study is the understanding of retirement age as noted above.

5.3.2.   Management bodies, professional bodies and unions have long highlighted the value of professional development opportunities in the retention of school leaders in the system and the need to develop such opportunities. Such opportunities include access to leadership training, support and development; involvement in mentoring and support groups; engagement in system development; personal study; secondment to education initiatives within the system; and career breaks. One suggested development, which does not yet exist for school leaders at primary and post-primary level, is the opportunity to take sabbatical leave. The launch of the DEIS Programme (DES, 2005), an initiative for addressing issues of disadvantage, promised a policy of sabbatical leave for long-serving principals in the most disadvantaged schools. The details of this initiative have yet to be finalised or implemented.

5.4   Policy initiatives and challenges

5.4.1.   A significant policy initiative assisting the recruitment and retention of principals at second-level was the award of a benchmarked pay increase in 2002 that reflected the size of school (Department of Finance, 2002). Increases of 13% were awarded to principals of schools with less than 23 teachers, rising to 17.6% for principals of schools with over 40 teachers. This compared with an average increase of 13% to teachers generally, including primary school principals.   However, the issue of remuneration for school principals, particularly at primary level, continues to exercise unions and professional bodies, as well as individual principals who consider their work undervalued by the level of salary attached to the role. A second benchmarking process is currently in progress and unions representing principals and teachers at primary and post-primary levels have made submissions to this benchmarking body. Documents prepared and research undertaken by professional bodies representing principals have also been considered by the benchmarking body.

5.4.2.   In respect of school leaders below the level of principal, a review of the appointment procedures and conditions of employment of deputy principal, assistant principal and special duties teachers at primary level is currently underway. In the future, the implementation of revised middle management structures, arising from this review, will be fundamental in ensuring that school leadership is effectively distributed through the school. Nonetheless, the issue of culture change in individual schools will still need to be addressed. While robust and agreed procedures will assist this process, the leadership skills of individual principals and support from the wider system are also required.

5.4.3.   The need to ensure the quality and effectiveness of selection procedures indicates a priority in the development of skills and procedures for interview and selection. As all appointments in schools are made by the Boards of Management, often under the guidance or advice of a managerial body or its representatives, the development of appropriate skills and competences among those involved in selection boards is a matter for these bodies as well as for the DES. While procedures for interview and selection are agreed between the partners and governed by employment law, there is no clear structure for the development of skills among those who sit on selection boards, or for the quality assurance of these boards. This is a further challenge that will need to be addressed.

5.4.4.   Future plans at policy level to support potential school leaders with a programme of pre-appointment training and development for leadership are at an early stage. It is acknowledged that a system deficit is the lack of any system-wide provision for the preparation for leadership in education (see Chapter 6). In the context of the greater interest shown in the position of principal in systems that offer such provision and the potential for such a programme to provide opportunities to engage with the role of principal, it is further considered that professional development for leadership for teachers not currently in leadership positions offers potential to attract greater numbers of quality candidates to the role.

CHAPTER 6
TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LEADERS

6.1   Policy concerns

6.1.1   Concerns about the preparation and development of school leaders arise from an increasing awareness of the international discourse on school leadership and leadership development, recognition of the significance of school leadership for pupil learning outcomes, the growing perception of the lack of attractiveness of the role of school leader, and acknowledgement of the increasing challenges attached to the role. The need for training for the role of principal was highlighted in the report of the National Education Convention (NEC, 1994) and again in the report of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary School Principal (DES, 1999). The former report considered that such training would equip principals to become effective instructional leaders with a clear grasp of management theory and practice (NEC, 1994, pp. 44-45), while the latter outlined the skills needs of principals as clustered around instructional leadership in the development and implementation of curriculum, administration and management, and communications and relationship within and outside the school (DES, 1999, pp. 93-98).

6.1.2   The rationale for the development of programmes for training and professional development of school leaders in developed countries emerges from the acknowledgement in the literature of the impact of leadership on school outcomes (Fullan, 2006; Leithwood et al, 2004; Silins and Mulford, 2002). Within this acknowledgement there is recognition of the indirect positive influence of leadership on pupil learning through the direct influence on school organization, culture and climate (Leithwood et al, 2004; Silins and Mulford, 2002). Thus successful programmes focus on supporting school leaders in developing their knowledge and understanding of their role in leading learning and teaching together with support in the development of key organizational and management skills. When we speak of school leadership we acknowledge, on the one hand, the leadership actions and managerial responsibilities of the principal (Gronn, 2000) and, on the other, an understanding of the term 'leadership' that goes beyond the positional leadership of principal and deputy principal to embrace a distributed leadership perspective (Gronn, 2002; Fullan, 2003; Spillane et al, 2005). As outlined earlier in this document there is a need to further explore the term leadership both in its descriptive and normative use. Distributed leadership has recently entered the discourse on leadership in Ireland but has not been explored to any great extent. We acknowledge that leaders may be both formal and informal. Informal leaders emerge in different contexts and at different stages, arising from the influence they have over the actions of others with whom they work. Such informal leadership may be actively encouraged, nurtured and fostered by some principals. Formal leadership positions may be assigned to teachers through the Post of Responsibility system. The extent to which they engage in school-wide decision-making varies significantly from school to school and sector to sector(see chapter 3). However, it is generally agreed that the lack of training for formal leadership is an issue of concern which urgently needs to be addressed.

6.1.3   In the context of increasing parental and societal expectations of schools and the growing complexity of schools as organisations, the role of the principal has come under increased scrutiny; challenging school principals, Boards of Management and others within the system. These expectations have developed in response to the social and economic demands facing school pupils. Young people who are growing up at a time of rapid social change must also contend with the reality of an economy where employment is increasingly found at the upper end of the value chain and where less opportunities exist for low- or un-

skilled labour. Schools must move beyond serving only those with the most powerful advocates to a real commitment to providing a high-quality effective education to all (Fullan, 2003).

6.1.4   With respect to the professional development of other school leaders and teachers, the NEC (1994) placed that responsibility with the principal. The report of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary School Principal (DES, 1999) recommends that professional development for leadership be made available to deputy principals and post-holders, in addition to aspiring principals. In the context of preparation for, and discharge of duties, both reports highlighted a need to articulate the roles of school leaders - principal, deputy principal and post-holders – with the report of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary School Principal (DES, 1999, p. 85) noting that 'review, rationalisation, reconceptualisation and refocusing are timely if the position is to continue to attract high quality candidates and if its occupants are to continue to make a considerable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning in Irish primary schools'.

6.1.5   In their review of the Misneach Programme[8], Morgan and Sugrue (2005) sought responses on access to pre-service training and the perceived level of preparedness for the role of principal among participants. Over half the respondents had no training or preparation for their role either before appointment or since, until contact with the Misneach Programme (See section 6.3.1). Only 18% of respondents considered that they were well prepared or very well prepared for their role as principal. This lack of self-confidence in their own capacity on the part of newly appointed principals may provide part of the reason for the decline in interest among teachers in applying for the position of principal.

6.1.6   Access to professional development for school leaders, particularly principals, has improved with the initiation of Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) in 2001 (See section 6.3.1). This system-wide development has ensured professional development opportunities, initially for newly appointed principals, and, more recently, for experienced principals and deputy principals and newly appointed deputy principals. Attendance at these programmes is supported and funded by the DES. LDS programmes are now extending to provide leadership development training for teachers holding posts of responsibility. At a recent Conference, the Minister for Education and Science announced the further expansion of services to support teachers who may aspire to leadership positions such as principal or deputy.

6.1.7   Leadership training for newly appointed principals is also provided by management bodies at primary and post-primary levels (CPSMA, Educate Together, JMB, ACCS, IVEA, An Foras Patrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán Ghaeilge). The advent of professional associations for principals (IPPN, NAPD) has further increased opportunities for professional development, with professional conferences, invitational speakers, and on-line and mentoring services among the supports available. Teacher unions have also developed professional development services for school leaders. Post-graduate Diploma and Masters courses in Educational Leadership offered by the education departments of Third Level Colleges offer yet further opportunities for professional development. Other DES initiatives, specifically the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI-Post-primary) and School Development Planning Support (SDPS-Primary), facilitate actions designed to develop capacity building within schools and the system. An emerging policy concern, in this context of multiple providers, is the need to articulate a rich national understanding of school leadership as a construct that is agreed by all stakeholders in the system.

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[8] A programme of professional development for newly appointed Principals, provided by LDS (See Section 6.3)

6.1.8   Boards of Management are now required to play a significant role in schools, as highlighted in Chapter 3. The role envisaged for Boards is one of leadership and management in dealing with strategic development of the school as well as dealing with issues pertaining to employment of staff, compliance with legislation, preserving the characteristic spirit of the school, and ensuring the students receive the best possible education. Increasingly, as the implications of the legislation begin to impact on Boards there is an urgent need to ensure training for board members generally, and for those with specific responsibilities. The recent increase in available funding, as outlined in Chapter 3, will enable management bodies and others to provide more comprehensive training programmes for Boards. There is an urgent need for capacity building in the system so that, every three years, when new Boards of Management are being set up, there are people available who have the knowledge, skills and willingness to sit on these Boards.

6.1.9   A further emerging concern in this context is the need to provide certification for leadership courses. At present, courses other than those offered by third-level colleges rarely lead to certification. It is clear that the growth in participation among teachers and school leaders in Masters and Doctoral study in the area of school leadership will contribute to raising awareness within the profession of the significance of leadership to educational outcomes and to the development of a body of Irish literature in the field. However, the issue of providing certification for professional development courses offered by bodies other than higher education institutions needs to be addressed.

6.1.10   The numbers of teachers, deputy principals and principals participating in the School Development Planning Diploma course, offered by the SDPI team in conjunction with NUI Galway, is an indication of the growing interest in participating in accredited professional development courses. The Second Level Support Service (SLSS) also offers a small number of accredited courses in conjunction with other universities and other DES professional development teams are investigating possibilities of accreditation. It is a matter of concern that there is no overall coherent approach to accreditation throughout the professional life of a teacher. Issues such as recognition for prior learning and experience, portfolio development, and a continuum of professional development would support the principle of lifelong learning that is espoused but often not realised.

6.2   Preparation of school leaders

6.2.1.   As previously noted, the only pre-requisites for appointment to principalship, or any position of leadership in schools, are a teaching qualification and five years experience as a teacher. This rules out the possibility of people from outside the education sectors becoming school leaders without first obtaining a teaching qualification and the required experience. With seniority as one of three criteria used in the selection of post holders and some deputy principals, length of service in the school is significant for teachers who wish to achieve leadership positions below that of principal. At second-level, candidates applying for principalship tend increasingly to have a Master's degree and some experience as a middle leader in their school (deputy principal or post-holder). It is sometimes suggested that teachers in the VEC and Community and Comprehensive schools have more opportunities to exercise leadership throughout their careers and are therefore better positioned to apply for and be appointed to positions of principal and deputy principal. This is sometimes attributed to the tradition and culture of the schools and the system whereby seniority is only one of many factors in the selection of candidates for Posts of Responsibility. Although there are no research statistics available, it seems that many principals and deputy principals appointed to Voluntary Secondary Schools come from VEC or Community and Comprehensive schools.

6.2.2.   The table below shows the positions of responsibility held prior to their appointment to principalship

Table 6.1: Positions of Responsibility Held by Principals (Morgan and Sugrue 2005)

Position	
Deputy Principal	*36%*
Assistant Principal (A-Post)	*13%*
Other position of responsibility	*45%*

6.2.3.   The DES has set the requirements for appointment to principalship, as noted above. Other criteria, for specific positions, are agreed by the selection committee, which is appointed by the individual Board of Management or, in the case of VEC schools, by the Committee. These criteria reflect the needs and context of the school and will generally include evidence of leadership skills and experience along with a commitment to the ethos of the school. While additional qualifications in leadership are increasingly considered by selection committees, evidence indicates that, particularly at primary level, the majority of newly appointed principals do not have any training or programme of study directly relevant to the work of principal prior to appointment (Morgan and Sugrue, 2005).

6.2.4.   Historically, attendance or certification in a programme of preparation for school leadership has not been a pre-requisite for appointment to positions of school leadership. Nor, in the past, has it been a system priority to develop such programmes for potential school leaders. To date, the only certified programmes that are considered to offer preparation for school leadership are Diploma and Masters degrees with school leadership as a component. Many of these university based courses were not designed specifically as programmes of preparation for leadership though they have standing among teachers who wish to progress their careers, and among selection committees, who consider achievement of such qualifications as evidence of ability and commitment to learning.

6.2.5.   An evaluation of the initial years of the Misneach Programme (Morgan and Sugrue, 2005) has highlighted the programme's impact on calling attention to leadership and its significance for school outcomes. This evaluation draws attention to the lack of training prior to appointment. Respondents were asked to say what kind of training they had in Leadership/Management, both before their appointment as principal and since their appointment. 57% of respondents indicated that they had no training prior to appointment. Of those who did have some training, the most common form was either a short course of a week or less, or a Diploma in Educational Management. It is interesting to note that almost 10% had a Masters Degree with a specialisation in Educational Management prior to appointment.

6.2.6.   This evaluation further notes that, in the absence of any programmes of pre-service for school leaders, a programme such as Misneach is necessary to prepare and support newly-appointed principals in dealing with the range of issues that arise in the early years of appointment. The impact of the programme on addressing isolation and supporting the creation of professional networks was also noted.

6.2.7.   Other, sector specific, programmes are provided for newly appointed principals with funding from the TES. These programmes are organised by management bodies, trustees and by professional associations. At primary level, the teachers' union (INTO) runs an introductory course for newly appointed principals.

6.2.8.   LDS has provided training and support for newly appointed deputy principals in second level schools since 2005. The Tánaiste (Gaelic translation of deputy) Programme has recently been extended to include newly appointed deputy principals at primary level.

6.3. Development of school leaders

6.3.1.   As already indicated, a range of professional development options is available to school leaders through a variety of providers. In 2002, the DES recognised the need for a

systematic nationally supported programme of professional development by setting up the Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) team. Many documents in the previous decade had highlighted the importance of positive school leadership, the pivotal role of school principals and the related need for training both before and after appointment (DES Green Paper 1992, NEC 1994, DES 1999).

6.3.2. The LDS team, consists of full time members, seconded from leadership positions in schools, and associates, practising school leaders who commit time to LDS each year. Initially the LDS team consisted of four full-time members, expanded after one year to include 12 Associate (part-time) members. In January 2007, there were thirteen full time and 41 associate members.

6.3.3. In one of its early publications, the LDS team outlined a framework, a set of principles and a strategy for the development of school leaders (LDS 2003). The aims were articulated as follows:

- To develop and support school leaders in their schools

- To enhance and improve the learning opportunities of all children

- To involve and support the teaching staff of schools in the leadership process and strengthen schools as learning organisations

- To facilitate the further development and improvement of schools

- To strengthen links between the various educational partners in schools.

6.3.4. LDS aims to develop the capacity of school leaders through the enhancement of knowledge, skills and competencies, attitudes and values, and behaviours. A multi-model approach to delivery includes instructional inputs, sharing of knowledge and experience (networks), reflection and school-based action and research.

6.3.5. The programme methodology involves the participants as active learners acknowledging that the experience, which participants bring, is an essential element of programmes. As adult learners, participants are expected to take charge of their own learning and develop critical and reflective thinking. This effectively means that the participants themselves have a role in influencing the content and the methodologies employed on the programmes.

6.3.6. The LDS programmes include:

  o Misneach

  o Forbairt

  o Tanaiste

  o Cothú

  o Spreagadh

6.3.7. **Misneach** is a programme of induction and support for newly appointed principals, and has been offered by the LDS since 2003. Misneach (Gaelic translation of *courage)* is available to all newly appointed principals at primary and post-primary level, during their first two years in the position. Principals attend four or five residential courses during these two years, and are offered a mentoring service. An ICT component for the programme is under development.

6.3.8. The knowledge and skills needs developed in the Misneach modules reflect those highlighted by the Report of the Review Body of the Primary School Principal, with the

addition of a personal development component. The Misneach programme is based on *School Leadership – a Profile* (LDS 2002) and incorporate a range of modules within the following themes:-

- Unpacking Leadership

- Leading Learning

- Leading People

- Leading the Organisation

- Relationship Building

- Enhancing Personal Leadership Skills

6.3.9.   The programme assumes minimal prior exposure on the part of participants to professional development for leadership. However, the LDS team maintains links with other sector specific programme providers to ensure complementarity.

6.3.10. **Forbairt** (Gaelic translation of *development*) is a programme for experienced principals and their deputies, which focuses on identifying and developing the leadership capacities needed to respond to the challenges and complexities of school life in Ireland today. Based on the concept of leading learning through leading people, Forbairt focuses on building capacity in school leaders to enable them to build capacity in others. Experienced school principals and their deputy principals participate in three residential sessions over the period of one year and a minimum of one cluster meeting between each of the sessions. One additional session may be held the following year. During the programme the school leaders engage in a school based development project. A further aspect of the programme is the development of project-focused clusters with sets of participants working in action learning groups.

6.3.11. The **Tánaiste** (Gaelic translation of *deputy*) programme for post primary deputy principals was introduced in 2005. This programme looks at the role and identity of the deputy principal in an interactive manner, conscious of the variations that exist between school sectors and individual schools.   The programme consists of three two-day residential sessions, one of which takes place following appointment but before the school year begins.

6.3.12. This programme aims to support Deputy Principals in their role of working with the Principal and other school leaders to efficiently and effectively facilitate high quality teaching and learning in the school. The aims include:

- Develop a supportive networking system which will help Deputy Principals to develop the skills and capacities necessary to operate confidently in their new role

- Develop a clearer understanding of the role and identity of the Deputy Principal within their individual school contexts

- Develop a clearer understanding of the centrality of the role of leadership in promoting the continuous advancement of quality teaching and learning

- Develop leadership capacity both personally in their school context and systemwide

- Create a learning culture of accountability based on capacity-building and student data with the principal as lead

6.3.13. In December 2006 the Tánaiste programme was introduced for Deputy Principals of primary schools. While having similar aims and approach to the post-primary programme, its

programme content, reflecting the main concerns of Deputy Principals in primary schools, includes:

- The evolving role of the Deputy Principal in leading learning in the school
- Working collaboratively as part of the Leadership Team
- Interpersonal relationships - emotional intelligence
- Communication skills and managing conflict

6.3.14. **Cothú** (*Nurture/Nourishment*) is a programme for Principals of Special Schools. This programme was first introduced in 2005 in response to the recognised specific needs of principals in these schools. It aims to strengthen the skills and competencies of leaders/managers in the specific context of the special schools.

6.3.15. The programme consists of the following:

- Legislative issues relevant to special schools
- Participation in Case Conferences and other team meetings
- Motivating and Leading People
- Managing Self
- Curricular issues
- Policies and Procedures

6.3.16. Participants attend two Residential sessions of two days. A notable feature of this programme is the active involvement of a small number of the participants in the design and delivery of the programme.

6.3.17. **Spreagadh** is a unique programme in the LDS portfolio in that it is based on a collaborative partnership model involving I.P.P.N., LDS, and the Local Education Centre. It differs in structure from the other programmes in that there is no residential aspect. Participants attend three one day sessions.

6.3.18. The aims of the course are:

- To provide professional development to primary school principals based on expressed needs.
- To enable school principals to look at their leadership/ management styles so as to clarify the issues impacting on the teaching and learning in their schools.
- To encourage Reflective practice and networking.
- To use a partnership collaborative model in meeting local needs.

6.3.19. Other programmes are organised by management bodies, professional bodies and unions, and post-graduate programmes offered by third-level colleges. These opportunities can be categorised as addressing the development of the individual leader, building leadership capacity within the school and system, or supporting other initiatives through the development of leadership skills. DES programmes are fully funded by the Department's TES. Other programmes may receive support funding from the TES, while participants themselves fund post-graduate programmes offered by third level colleges. There is no obligation on school leaders – principals, deputy principals and post-holders – to attend any such courses or programmes. From the late 1980's, and in the absence of any other

opportunities for professional development for principals or potential principals, many universities instituted diploma and masters courses in school administration and management, some facilitating distance learning. These initial courses developed to include a wide range of CPD opportunities from modular Diploma and Masters courses to Doctoral level study. Incentives exist at national level for the completion of Masters and Doctoral degrees in the form of an increase in the qualification allowance in the teacher's salary. In addition, in some cases, participants who pay fees to attend post-graduate courses may claim tax relief on the costs. They may also apply for a DES grant to cover part of these costs, under the Teacher Refund of Fees Scheme. Primary school leaders may also attend one-week long summer in-service courses, generally paid for by the participant, for which they may claim three personal leave days (EPV days) during the following school year.

6.4   Relevant research studies

6.4.1.   All DES programmes engage participants in a process of feedback; asking them to provide responses to the course content, relevance, methodology and presentation. These responses are used in the ongoing development of programmes and are reported to the programme Management Committees. An independent evaluation of the Misneach Programme (Morgan and Sugrue, 2005) specifically addressing the need for the programme and its achievement of stated objectives was the first such external evaluation. While this evaluation study has been referred to above, it is important to highlight that it is one of very few relevant research studies examining the effectiveness of leadership training programmes in Ireland.

6.4.2.   Below are some findings from the **Misneach** evaluation.

- o   The programme should continue to be available to all newly appointed principals

- o   Over 90% of participants felt that the Misneach programme should have a follow-up meeting the following year (subsequently introduced), should facilitate continuing contact with colleagues on the course and should be an accredited course.

- o   Over 90% of respondents agreed that it helped them to develop ideas about their role as a leader, it motivated them to learn more about leadership and helped them to think about the main priorities in their own school.

- o   The Misneach modules (outlined above) were all rated satisfactorily by over 77% of respondents, with over 90% satisfaction rating on the Communication and the Unpacking Leadership modules.

- o   The factors contributing to the success of the programme included the credibility of the presenters, the opportunity to talk frankly about problems, affirmation of participants and the blend of professional and personal input (all rated by over 90% of the respondents).

6.4.3.   Research on the effectiveness of professional development opportunities would have the potential to clarify the concept of leadership and identify and prioritise the aspects of leadership which might contribute to the best development of our schools.

6.5   Policy initiatives

6.5.1.   The establishment of LDS, followed by the initiation of the Misneach Programme was a significant policy initiative in 2002. Prior to this the DES made funds available to professional bodies, unions and management bodies to support their work in developing leadership capacity. This support continues and is instrumental in ensuring lively participation of principals and other school leaders in development opportunities. The communication

between TES and these bodies has also contributed to the development of awareness of the challenges and possibilities for the development of leadership capacity in the Irish school system. The continued expansion of LDS programmes (noted above) has contributed to the development of leadership capacity within the system and also to highlighting leadership within educational discourse.

6.5.2.   Support programmes and initiatives funded by the DES to address school and system development needs in such areas as curriculum (PCSP, SLSS), school planning (SDPS, SDPI) and special education needs (SESS) take account of leadership and leadership development and work closely with LDS to support this.

6.5.3.   A policy priority currently under consideration is the provision of development for potential school leaders in the Irish education system (see Chapter 5). Internationally, the needs of potential principals and school leaders are being addressed to prepare for the challenges of leading and managing in a knowledge society. The work of LDS with current school leaders has further highlighted the need for systematic development of aspiring school leaders.

6.5.4.   The demand for accreditation of professional development courses needs to be addressed in the context of the government's commitment to lifelong learning and to the national qualifications framework.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

7.1.   Introduction

7.1.1.   The concept of leadership as a core activity in the effectiveness and development of schools in the Irish education system is now widely accepted. The role of the school principal has developed beyond that of administrator and manager to include actions and behaviours that reflect the learning-centred nature of the role along with legal and financial responsibilities and significant human resource functions. The challenge in this development is to clearly articulate the role in the context of school and system needs and in the context of other possible roles and responsibilities.

7.1.2.   Among the strengths in the Irish education system with respect to educational leadership are the positive regard in which education, teachers and school principals are held by wider society; the requirement that a principal must be a qualified and experienced teacher; the quality of the teaching profession; the access to the drivers of policy development and implementation within the education system; the initiation of professional development supports for school leaders; and the development of the schools inspectorate with a focus on evaluation in the context of system research, development and improvement. Particular strengths in current policy on school leadership are situated in the development of professional development and training opportunities; engagement with the challenges faced by teaching principals; a 'whole school' focus in school evaluation (WSE) that encourages the development and strengthening of collaborative planning and leadership practice; a level of autonomy that allows for some diversity of provision to meet local needs; the availability of support services which enhance teacher skills in relation to curriculum and planning; a commitment to developing the effectiveness of a middle-management structure in schools; inclusion at system level of the voice of school principals and teachers in the development of policy.

7.1.3.   While recognizing the strengths in the system, it must be acknowledged that teaching principals in small primary schools face specific challenges and their particular contexts must be taken into consideration in determining future policy. Gaps and weaknesses in the system with regard to policy on school leadership have been highlighted. These weaknesses are evident in the impact of increasing accountability and legislative compliance at school level; the challenges associated with the voluntary nature of boards of management and the level of legal responsibility which they carry; the gaps in provision for technical, clerical and caretaking support; deficits in funding for school running costs and other resources; and gaps in data available for system planning. The weaknesses in respect of current policy on school leadership also reside in the lack of focus on system data for planning for leadership; the lack of planning and preparation for leadership succession at school and system level; the lack of professional development for leadership prior to appointment; the drive to devolution of responsibility to school level without sufficient analysis and support; the complexity of school governance in Ireland and the implications for demarcation of roles; the seemingly open-ended nature of the role of the principal; the lack of defining parameters and the lack of specific contracts and conditions of employment for school principals.

7.1.4.   The following paragraphs will discuss issues arising from the body of the report with a view to these issues being considered in the debate on future policy development.

7.2   Defining Leadership

7.2.1.   One of the challenges in the preparation of this report on school leadership in Ireland has been an articulation of the definition of the term leadership. Models of school leadership such as instructional leadership, distributed leadership, organisational leadership, etc have been imported to our system and need to be interrogated in the context of the needs and realities of schools and the system. In Ireland, when one speaks of the leader in the school context it is generally taken to refer to the principal. Traditionally, the role of the principal as "primus/a inter pares" has been valued, and is further supported in the spirit of the Education Act (1998). The current rhetoric of learning-centred leadership supports and values the experience of teaching as a pre-requisite for the role of the principal as school leader.

7.2.2.   Increasingly teachers with specific roles and responsibilities within the school, such as deputy principals, teachers with curriculum development responsibilities, school development planning co-ordination or pastoral responsibilities and year heads at second level are referred to as leaders in the system. Indeed, all teachers may be seen as leaders within their classroom. What is required, however, is a clearer analysis of the leadership roles and functions which teachers play at different levels within the school organisation. Do they take responsibility within a limited spectrum of the school? To what extent are they involved in whole-school leadership and management decision-making? Such exploration has the potential to illuminate the effectiveness of the school and also to explore the leadership capacity-building opportunities available to teachers and, ultimately, the system

7.2.3.   At school governance level, a tight hierarchical structure and significant legal responsibilities require Patron bodies to assume leadership within the system, communicating with their appointed leaders at school level, the chairpersons of the Boards of Management. Others with leadership roles within the system include the inspectorate and other DES personnel, professional bodies and teacher unions, researchers and providers of training and professional development. The extent to which these leadership roles are fulfilled impacts on the effectiveness of the leader at school level. It is clear that the conceptualization of leadership needs to be undertaken at system level, so that a clear articulation of a shared understanding of leadership in education forms the basis for policy making and implementation in the field.

7.2.4.   A second challenge faced by schools and the system is a gap in the articulation of what are the professional qualities of a school leader; what attributes, knowledge, skills and competencies are required for the role; what actions should a leader be expected to engage in; and which aspects of school and system organisation and development fall within the role. One can debate the relative merits of defining qualities, standards, skills or competencies. Currently, such debate arises in the context of appointing people to leadership positions, and in the design of professional development programmes for school leaders. The debate could also be held in the context of whole school evaluation – exploring the type of leadership that best serves a school in a particular context. Any strict definition along the lines of a set of competencies runs the risk of being overly prescriptive and not in keeping with the flexibility within the Irish system. The added dimension of private ownership of schools leaves greater responsibility / freedom with Patrons and Trustees to define their own criteria regarding the professional qualities of school leaders. LDS documents (LDS 2002) provide a starting point for the discussion but further development of this work could provide a framework for an agreed articulation of role definition and standards for school leaders.

7.3   System challenges

7.3.1.   The organisation of the Irish education system is highly centralised. The funding of schools; sanction of teaching posts and conditions of employment; curriculum guidelines; enrolment of pupils; and legislative accountability all fall under the control of the DES. At the

same time, due to the private ownership of most schools in Ireland, schools have a significant amount of autonomy with regard to the selection of personnel, organisation of the curriculum and teaching time, and how money is spent. The partnership between schools and the DES and the recent legislative requirements have seen a movement towards giving schools more responsibility and accountability for their day-to day management, with the Board of Management at the interface between DES and the individual school. However, at a time when schools are experiencing difficulty attracting members of the local community to serve on Boards of Management, and when board members themselves often lack the knowledge and skills required, increasingly the burden of compliance and accountability falls to the principal. The effects of this situation are that undue power and responsibility are placed in the hands of individual principals; and the balance in the role of principal between management / administration and learning centred leadership is skewed to the former. Such issues are particularly acute when the principal also carries out teaching duties.

7.3.2.   The impact of the devolution of responsibility to school level, at a time when volunteerism is under threat in our society, needs to be examined. At present a member of a school Board of Management, an unpaid volunteer, is neither guaranteed nor obliged to attend any course or receive any guidance for their role. The significant legal responsibilities attaching to the role of Chairperson of the Boards of Management require that this position receive particular attention in the development of training opportunities for board members. In conjunction with the Trustees and Patrons an exploration of factors governing the successful operation of Boards of Management should be undertaken urgently. While the functions of the Board are clearly stated in the Education Act, the perception of their specific role varies. In practice, it is not always evident whether particular responsibilities lie with the Board, the Trustees or the principal. Further clarification and/or heightening awareness around the specific responsibilities of the Board, could lead to more focussed professional development and clearer operation at school level. It would also inform future policy on the structures and operation of Boards.

7.3.3.   In addition to training for Boards of Management, this report would suggest that expert advice should be available to Boards at all times. The legislation, particularly as outlined in chapter 3, highlights the legal responsibilities that rest with the Board. The functions of the Board, as outlined, place an obligation on them to deal with issues pertaining to the law, finance and Human Resource Management. Therefore, professional advice in these areas would be invaluable as the Board plays its role in the governance and management of the school.

7.3.4.   The selection of candidates to the position of principal is of central importance to the development of leadership in the coming years. Historically, school principals in congregational, privately-owned post primary schools, were selected by the "Superiors" (Leaders) of the congregation. Such appointments were made privately and, rarely were they publicly contested. The move from religious to lay principals has been an evolutionary process and perhaps the full impact of the centrality of the selection process is only now becoming evident. The philosophy and ideology of the selection process has not been fully developed. In some cases, guidelines on the selection procedures have been articulated, but very little attention has been paid to the selection and training of the selection and interview panels. Considerable employment legislation has also impacted significantly on the selection process of principals. While respecting the autonomy of Trustees and Patrons a more professional approach to selection is now required. Non-prescriptive guidance, with particular reference to setting up and training suitable selection boards, would be a welcome development in this regard.

7.3.5.   Statistics in chapter 5 suggest a worrying trend in relation to the number of applicants for principalship into the future. If the number of applicants for the position of principal is very small, the chances of selecting high calibre individuals to the position may be

diminished. Such concerns need to be addressed. Some of the factors affecting applications have been explored in chapter 5 and it is suggested that small schools, isolated schools and schools with challenging circumstances suffer particularly in this regard. Such issues as information available to potential candidates in advance, access to formal and informal information, the teaching principal, local perceptions of the school and the prevailing culture within the teaching profession should be included in such a review. More complete statistics would be beneficial in exploring this issue further. There appears to be a suggestion that the low number of applicants is not universal. Why will one school have plenty of applicants while another, perhaps only ten miles down the road, have few or no applications? Are there inequities in the system? Is there a perception that some principals have a heavier workload than others? Are the levels of support greater for one principal than another? Are additional incentives, such as bonus payments, accommodation or other "perks" attracting more applicants to schools that can offer such incentives? Does this contribute to inequity or is it acceptable in a predominantly privately owned system?

7.3.6.   What other incentives might encourage more applicants to principalship positions? Having explored the challenges facing school leaders in Ireland and the role of the principal in chapter 3, the authors suggest that workload and level of responsibility which, in practice, falls to the principal, acts as a disincentive to apply for principalship. Issues such as increasing the number of administration days for teaching principals, along with the impact of clustering schools to provide substitution cover for the principal could be explored further as an incentive to potential applicants. Perhaps in a modern, economically successful nation of the 21st century the shift towards consumerism and away from vocationalism impacts negatively. To maintain high quality leaders in the Irish education system it will be necessary to examine possible changes to the current structures and practices in order to distribute responsibility and workload. Before such actions could be taken, one needs to look at the priorities in terms of leadership – if it is not possible for the principal to do everything then which aspects of school life should the principal focus on? If learning-centred leadership is the priority, then one must look at the administrative and managerial tasks being undertaken by the principal at present and explore the possibility of providing additional support in these areas. It is interesting to note that, as highlighted in chapter 5, applications for the position of deputy principal at post-primary are in a healthy state. As indicated in 7.3.7 below, data on the number of internal and external candidates applying, and on the trend of internal and external appointments, would assist in the analysis of this phenomenon.

7.3.7.   A significant weakness in the compilation of this report is the lack of system data available to support observations and concerns. Specifically, data indicating future demand and supply of school leaders; highlighting the age, gender and ethnic profile of school leaders; analysing the leadership challenges in particular school environments; indicating career progression of school leaders and future intentions of current school leaders, including reasons for leaving the position, would allow a clearer picture of the challenges in attracting and retaining school leaders. The lack of system data available to support policy development has already been highlighted in the report *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (2003).

7.3.8.   Some of the changing demographics of Irish society have been highlighted earlier in this report. Significant increase in the number of migrant workers and in the diversity of the population is impacting on the school population. Increasingly, schools are welcoming newcomers and looking for ways in which they can be positively integrated into the school and derive maximum benefit from the education system. One of the issues highlighted in chapter 3 was the level of support for language learning and the need to provide a better balance in the allocation of teachers to schools in accordance with real language learning needs. In addition, we need to look at the teaching force in the context of our multi-cultural society. The teaching force in Ireland has been identified as being predominantly Irish and the current requirements for entry to the teaching profession present a serious obstacle to most

newcomers. The selection of teachers, and by implication, future principals and deputy principals needs to reflect the multi-cultural nature of Irish society. The current requirements may need to be examined in the context of a changing pupil profile and the creation of the inclusive school

7.4   Supporting leadership

7.4.1.   Section 7.2 above raises issues in relation to our understanding and conceptualisation of the term leadership. The open-ended nature of the current role of the principal requires further examination and further work needs to be done on developing a contract for principals that would provide parameters for their role.

7.4.2.   In post-primary schools, the procedures agreed in 1998 for the appointment of deputy principals has generally enhanced and strengthened school leadership. Increasingly, the principal and deputy principal work together as a team and support each other in the leadership and management of the school. This needs on-going support and encouragement.

7.4.3.   The legislative responsibilities of the principals and the devolution of decision-making, as well as the care and development challenges outlined in chapter 3, lead the authors to emphasise strongly the urgent need to review the existing support structures within school for the day-to-day management of the school. Specific consideration may have to be given to how these issues are different in small schools with teaching principals The issues emerging from this report should be examined from three perspectives:-

1) assigned management/leadership roles (as in post of responsibility structure)

2) administrative responsibilities (secretarial and technical support)

3) teacher leaders.(development opportunities for individual teachers to the benefit of the school)

7.4.4.   Structures for in-school management/middle leadership require exploration in terms of defining the purpose of such structures and the expectations of all concerned. Development of a clear concept of leadership and a clarification of the management functions of post holders would contribute to the current debate regarding these structures. The current system of assigning / selecting teachers for posts of responsibility is not conducive to creating an effective management team. Some of the criteria for selection militate against teachers working to their own strengths. A number of issues impinge on the process, including the absence of time for performance of duties and absence of structured meeting times during the school week. However, it is more than that – to create a meaningful management team within the school, assistant principals must be in a position to take responsibility and make decisions within the framework in which they are operating. This has implications for training for all concerned; principals, deputy principals and assistant principals.

7.4.5.   The administrative responsibilities of schools have expanded in line with legal and procedural requirements. While prudent schools have always kept records, the detail and amount of record-keeping has expanded significantly. The Data-Protection Act, as mentioned in chapter 3, places the responsibility on schools to keep appropriate records safely and make them available in accordance with its stipulation. Health and Safety statements, Code of Behaviour and the requirement under several other legislative Acts, require schools to have written documentation regarding their policies, procedures and practices. In addition, the implications of Sections 28 and 29 of the Education Act (appeals in relation to enrolment, suspensions and expulsions) are that detailed records must be kept as evidence of procedure. The WSE process also means that schools need to have documented evidence of all their work. This is a change for the majority of schools which, in the past, would have had verbal agreements regarding policies, procedures and practices. Hence, the workload for schools has increased and additional secretarial or administrative support is required to meet these needs.

7.4.6.   The concept of teacher-leadership was mentioned in chapter 3 and tribute was paid to the DES initiative of providing support services to ensure that teachers were provided with opportunities for professional development. The work of these teams, along with the changing culture within schools, has contributed to the development of leadership skills within the teaching profession. Many teachers, outside of the post of responsibility structure, now play leadership roles in relation to programme co-ordination or subject department co-ordination at post-primary level and / or curriculum development at primary level. Such opportunities have enhanced individual teachers' professional opportunities and they have also served to build leadership capacity in the system. Empowering teacher leadership often requires principal teachers to reconceptualise their role, devolving power and autonomy to the teacher.

7.4.7.   The role of the principal in enhancing learning was explored in chapter 4. Learning-centred leadership is a challenge for today's school leaders. While the Education Act (1998) suggests that this is the desired and appropriate priority for principals, subsequent legislation and externally imposed requirements placed competing demands on principals' time. However, the issue is more complex than the allocation of time. In the Irish school culture, what does learning-centred leadership look like? What are the new knowledge, skills and competencies that learning-centred leadership requires? In schools where teachers enjoy and value their relative autonomy and where visits to the classroom by principals are relatively rare, where does the principal's role lie in leading learning? As mentioned in chapter 4, principals allocate teachers to classes and generally have a very strong influence on the timetable (at post-primary) but for some, that is the extent of their learning-centred leadership role.

7.4.8.   Principals are also uniquely positioned to have an overview of a student's experience in the school. Discussing assessment results and reports with students, teachers and parents is one example of an opportunity for principals to actively lead learning. The provision of resources and a school environment which is conducive to learning is another. This area merits further exploration, including the possibility of further professional support for principals in curriculum theory and pedagogy. Principals do not, however, have an official role in monitoring teacher performance. The Teaching Council is currently drafting a Code of Professional Practice and a Code of Professional Conduct. The issues arising from this consultation process and the implementation of the agreed Codes will, no doubt, raise further questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of school leaders; for Boards of Management as the employer and for the principal as the person delegated to operate the school on a day-to-day basis and charged with the responsibility of ensuring that each student receives an appropriate education.

7.4.9.   Given the increased complexity of school life, as outlined in chapters 3 and 5, the issues of time for administrative duties for the teaching principal at primary level are an on-going matter of concern. Teaching principals have equal responsibility with administrative principals to ensure that students have every opportunity to develop their full potential. They are also bound to comply with current legislation and regulation. The number of days allocated to administration is limited but also, the nature of the work of the principal, particularly in their HR role, health and safety requirements and code of behaviour issues, mean that their presence may be required at any time to deal with urgent and pertinent matters.

7.4.10. Investment in improvements to school buildings and facilities is very welcome. In recent years, many schools have enjoyed the benefits of new or refurbished science laboratories, additional classrooms, enhanced ICT facilities and many other additional resources. Increasingly, schools are moving to use modern technology as a pedagogic and administrative tool. Recent curriculum and syllabus revisions have moved towards a more experiential form of learning and self-directed learning is a skill towards which we aspire for

our students. These changes mean creating a learning environment that looks very different from the traditional classroom where didactic teaching was the norm. Our current schools need properly trained staff to maintain the building itself and all its facilities. In particular, schools require technical support for IT; technicians and maintenance arrangements for all the practical subjects; librarian support; and adequate caretaking and clerical support.

7.5 Professional development for school leadership

Preparation for school leadership

7.5.1.   Chapter 5 raised concerns pertaining to the insufficient number of applicants for positions of school principals currently and into the future. Chapter 6 referred to reports which highlighted the need for training for principalship. Throughout the report, reference has been made to developing leadership capacity in schools. It is timely that the issue of leadership succession is raised. If we wish to continue to have high quality school leaders into the future then we need to become proactive in ensuring this will happen. There are many questions that need to be addressed; is there agreement at state level to invest in the development of potential future leaders? If so, who should receive training; who provides the training; how will it be structured; what should the content include and should formal accreditation be included? These are but the starting points for discussion in relation to a formal and articulated policy on preparation for school leadership, with a particular emphasis on preparation for principalship.

7.5.2.   It would be remiss of us, however, not to acknowledge the current professional development undertaken by individual teachers in their own time and at their own expense to prepare themselves for leadership positions in schools. This has enhanced professional satisfaction and promotional opportunities for these individuals and has contributed to improved practices in schools and better learning outcomes for students in many cases. Any new system should recognise existing good practice in this regard in addition to provision of new programmes.

7.5.3.   The concept of whole-school-leadership is one where a wide variety of leadership roles are recognised. As mentioned in previous chapters, professional development which enhances understanding of leadership and management functions throughout the school, will help to strengthen and build capacity in the system. Central to this, is the role the principal plays in encouraging and fostering both informal and formal leadership opportunities within schools.

Induction of newly appointed leaders

7.5.4.   Chapter 6 outlined the professional development opportunities available to newly appointed principals. The programmes offered by a range of providers vary in their focus. These programmes have the potential to support principals in their day-to-day activities and also to encourage strategic and visionary thinking. The Mentor system provides a link with an experienced principal to guide the newly appointed principals in their practice and reflection on practice. However, for many, this may be their first and only experience of training in leadership. They are trying to improve their skills, vision and function while at the same time dealing with the full responsibilities of running the school. For newly appointed teaching principals, this poses a particular challenge, which might be addressed by providing additional non-teaching time in the first years in the role.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

7.5.5.   Again, as outlined in chapter 6, the LDS team, and others, provide opportunities for professional development for experienced school principals, deputy principals and Boards of

Management. In particular, the professional associations at both primary and post-primary level have been instrumental in providing additional support for school leaders and also as a lobby group for better state professional development.

7.5.6.   Professional development opportunities are now being extended to teachers holding posts of responsibilities in schools. While this growth and development is very welcome in the system, it is time to look at the overall continuum of professional development. The Education Act (1998) places the onus on school principals to ensure that there are opportunities for staff professional development. Structuring and supporting a system of continuing professional development (CPD) within a school raises many questions. Perspectives on CPD will vary – individual teachers as professionals should have as part of their career path, opportunities to update their skills, reflect on their practice, challenge their thinking and share their experiences. In terms of their professional career, the Teaching Council will play an advisory role. A second perspective is that of the school – what are the professional training needs required within the school in order to ensure effective teaching and learning into the future? Issues in relation to this question are many and varied, such as creating a shared vision for the school, creating or finding relevant opportunities for professional development, selecting participants, sharing information and knowledge with the whole staff, time away from the classroom to attend courses etc. A belief in the value of professional development and a commitment to invest time and money are essential features of CPD which serves the needs of the school.

7.5.7.   A third perspective is that of meeting system needs. Since the early 1990s the DES has invested considerably in professional development, in setting up the In-Career Development Unit, now called the Teacher Education Section (TES). The work of the various support teams under the TES and often linked to the Education Centres, has been acknowledged earlier in this document. The challenge now lies in the coherence of approach – the drawing together of the strands. Perhaps linking to the schools' perspective (see previous paragraph) would assist in deriving maximum benefit from all the opportunities available. The range and diversity of providers of CPD is a positive development in Ireland and gives rise to philosophical issues such as a shared understanding of leadership and whether leadership training should be generic or specific to particular school contexts. Links between providers will be necessary to explore these questions so that the system can benefit fully.

7.5.8.   The preliminary work in developing leadership programmes for middle leaders (post of responsibility holders) at post primary has begun, with a number of small pilot, exploratory programmes being offered in 2006-2007. It can be anticipated that there will be continued expansion of current provision for CPD for assigned school leaders, i.e. principals, deputy principals, assistant principals and special duties teachers. In this context, it will be appropriate to investigate the development of a structure for continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and school leaders in the context of life-long learning.

7.5.9.   The National Qualifications Framework now provides a framework within which accreditation for leadership development can reside. As outlined in chapter 5, there are no formal qualifications in school leadership required to become a principal or deputy, beyond those required to become a recognised teacher. However some selection Boards take cognisance of additional qualifications and value them as evidence of continuing professional development. Currently, LDS courses do not offer accreditation, although preliminary work is in progress in this regard. As programmes extend to middle leadership and future leaders the impetus for accreditation becomes more acute.

7.5.10. This report has raised many issues pertaining to the role of the school principal as leader. Chapter 3 highlighted the challenges facing schools today and outlined the responsibilities conferred on principal through legislation and through practice in meeting

these challenges. It explored the desired emphasis on learning-centred leadership, but also examined the issues that militate against this. Even with only limited data, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Ireland may face problems appointing school principals in the future. Discussion on preparation for leadership, induction into the role of principal and continuing professional development recognised the positive developments in recent years and explores possibilities for a more structured approach into the future, including the possibility of formal accreditation for programmes attended. Within this, there is scope for mapping out the career path of a school leader which might include the possibility of sabbatical leave for principals within the continuum of professional development.

7.5.11. The particular challenges of the voluntary nature of the Boards of Management and the responsibilities attached to the roles of particular members suggest that management and leadership training for members of Boards of Management should be further developed.

7.5.12. In summary, leadership is increasingly being recognised as central to any education system. Leadership policy in Ireland is evolving as part of the overall and on-going changes in the education system. Governance structures in Ireland are complex and policy respects the past traditions, current trends and future expectations of schooling. Leadership does not reside with one person at the top, but, rather is part of every teacher's work. Future policy might recognise this in a more formal way and provide the training and support required for leadership to be developed throughout the education system.

APPENDIX 1
Number of students, teachers and schools.

Table A.1   Number of full-time students in institutions aided by the Department of Education, 2004/2005

Level	No. of Students
First Level	**449,508**
Second Level	**335,162**
Secondary	185,026
Community and Comprehensive	52,443
Vocational	97,693
Third Level	**133,691**
Institutes of Technology/Technological Colleges	52,229
HEA Colleges (excl. RCSI)	78,970
Other Aided (incl. teacher training)	2,492
Total	**918,361**

Table A.2   Number of schools aided by the Department of Education 2004/2005

Level	No. of Schools
First Level	**3,284**
National Schools	3,157
Special Schools	127
Second Level	**742**
Secondary	403
Community and Comprehensive	92
Vocational	247
Total	**4,026**

Table A.3   Number of teachers/academic staff in institutions aided by the Department of Education 2004/2005 (full-time equivalent)

Level	No. of teachers/academic staff
First Level	26,282 (refers to teaching posts)
Second Level	24,990
Total	**51,272**

The following table gives details of the number of primary schools by Teacher Size of school in 2004/5:

Table A.4   Number of National Schools by Teacher Size of School 2004/2005

Size of School – No of teachers	Number of Schools
1	17
2	544
3	445
4 - 7	1,076
8 - 11	403
12 - 15	307
16 - 19	177
20 and over	188
Total	**3,157**

APPENDIX 2
Legislative Acts

Table A.5 Main legislative acts passed since 1989 which apply to schools.

1.	Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989
2.	Industrial Relations Act 1990
3.	Children Act 1991, 2001
4.	Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1993, 1997
5.	Employment Act (Protection of Young Persons) 1996
6.	Organisation of Working Time Act 1997
7.	Employment Equality Act 1998, 2004
8.	Education Act 1998
9.	Education Welfare Act 2000
10.	Equal Status Act 2000
11.	Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act 2001
12.	Teaching Council Act 2001
13.	Ombudsman for Children Act 2002
14.	Unfair Dismissals Act, 1977, 1993
15.	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
16.	Child Care Act, 1991

Source: JMB Survey: The Workload of the Principal 2005.

APPENDIX 3
Support Services set up by the Teacher Education Section, Department of Education and Science.

Table A.6

Primary	Post Primary
School Development Planning Support (SDPS)	School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)
Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP)	Second Level Support Service (SLSS)
Leadership Development for Schools (LDS	Leadership Development for Schools (LDS)
Special Education Support Service (SESS)	Special Education Support Service (SESS)
	Behaviour Support Service (BSS)

APPENDIX 4

Improving School Leadership - Ireland

Country Background Report - Process

2005	**Ireland agree to participate in Activity – Improving School Leadership**
May 2006	**LDS charged with preparing Ireland's Country Background Report**
June 2006	**Two team members from LDS appointed with an academic advisor to prepare report**
July –September 2006	**Preparatory meetings**
September 2006	**Contact with partners in Education to inform them of the process and request observations**
	Listening exercise with practitioners – LDS Team and Associates
October 10th 2006	**Symposium in the Clock Tower, Department of Education and Science, Marlborough Street, Dublin. All partners were invited to send representatives. Before engaging in discussion, the symposium heard presentations on chapters three to six from:**

- **Dr. Dympna Devine, UCD**
- **Professor Kathleen Lynch, UCD**
- **Mr. Ciaran Flynn, ACCS**
- **Dr. Ciaran Sugrue, St. Patrick's College**
- **Dr. David Tuohy**

Oct-Nov 2006	**Further observation submitted by partners**
	Initial draft
January 2007	**Consultation meeting - LDS Team**
	Consultation meeting – DES Inspectorate
February 2007	**Circulation of Draft**
March 2007	**Consultation meetings**

- **Managerial Bodies**
- **Professional Bodies**
- **Unions**
- **DES Bodies**

March 30th 2007	**Present Country Background Report to OECD**

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Abbreviations used in this report

ACCS: Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools

ASTI: Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

CPD: continuing professional development

CPSMA: Catholic Primary School Managers' Association

CSO: Central Statistics Office

DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

DES: Department of Education and Science

EPSEN: Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs

ESRI: Economic and Social Research Institute

EWO: Education Welfare Officer

FETAC: Further Education and Training Awards Council

HEA: Higher Education Authority

HSCL: Home-School-Community Liaison

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

INTO: Irish National Teachers' Organisation

IPPN: Irish Primary Principals Network

IVEA: Irish Vocational Education Association

JCSP: Junior Certificate School Programme

JMB: Joint Managerial Body (for voluntary secondary schools)

LCA: Leaving Certificate - Applied

LCVP: Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

LDS: Leadership Development for Schools

NAPD: National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NCSE: National Council for Special Education

NEC: National Education Convention

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service

NEWB: National Educational Welfare Board

NPC: National Parents' Council

NQAI: National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PCSP: Primary Curriculum Support Programme

PLC: Post-Leaving Certificate

SCP: School Completion Programme

SDPI: School Development Planning Initiative (Post-primary)

SDPS: School Development Planning Support (Primary)

SEN: Special Education Needs

SENO: Special Education Needs Officer

SESS: Special Education Support Service

SLSS: Second-Level Support Service.

SSP: School Support Programme

TUI: Teachers' Union of Ireland

VEC: Vocational Education Committee

WSE: whole-school evaluation

WTE: whole-time equivalent