OECD

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION

IMPROVING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RTU Regional Training Unit

Improving School Leadership in
Northern Ireland
OECD Report - Executive Summary
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.   NATIONAL CONTEXT (Northern Ireland)

1.1   The history of Northern Ireland (NI) during the past four decades has created new challenges for its government as well as exacerbating many problems that existed prior to this period of political turmoil and civil unrest. The Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement) was reached in 1998 setting out a plan for devolved government in NI on a stable and inclusive basis. A NI Assembly, Executive and Ministers were appointed.

1.2.   The Assembly was suspended in October 2002 in connection with the continuing argument about decommissioning. Since then the Secretary of State, assisted by his team of NI Office Ministers, has assumed responsibility for the direction and control of all NI government Departments, including the Department of Education (DENI). Legislation for NI has been processed through Westminster in the form of Orders in Council.

1.3.   In the last census (2001) there were 1.7 million people living in NI. The birth rate is the highest in the UK with an expected population peak of 1.8 million in the 2020s. The local economy, while growing, has only marginally converged on UK averages. Employment has expanded, but mostly in lower skilled and public service sectors. One person in 6 is affected by deprivation, and features of sectarianism, racism and paramilitary influence have added to NI's problems. Efforts and resources are focused on the most vulnerable groups in society, for example, people with disabilities, children living in poverty and lone parents.

1.4.   Community divisions and tensions require coordinated action in areas of employment, health and education. Education is second only to Health in government priorities. Education Reform is focused on a revised modern curriculum, an Entitlement Framework and the ending of academic selection. The new curriculum will provide broad educational and vocational pathways for 14-19 year olds, and deal with under-achievement and its consequences in social exclusion.

1.5.   The priorities within Education and Training are:
- to invest to create new opportunities for personal and community development;
- to improve standards whilst closing the gap between those who leave school with inadequate qualifications and those who achieve at the highest level in favourable comparison with other developed nations;
- to provide a schools' estate, appropriately sized and located with modern facilities, that deals with the existing surplus of over 53,000 places and the possibility of over 80,000 surplus places within 10 years if no effective steps are taken;.
- to co-ordinate provision in the 'Early Years' so that children start school as confident learners;
- to ensure that young people who require particular help receive the support they need and that there is appropriate education for those with special educational need; and
- to develop skills for work in the local and global economy;

1.6.   The reforms planned to meet these priorities are;

Curriculum Reform, new Post-Primary Arrangements (abolishing the Transfer Test and academic selection at age 11), a Pupil Profile (providing a holistic picture of a child's progress), Specialist Schools (building on particular curricular strengths and developing community links), a Curriculum Entitlement Framework (guaranteeing greater choice and flexibility for all 14-19 year old pupils), a Children and Young Peoples Funding Package (integrating support by various government departments

to ensure every child has the best start in life), a new approach to Early Years education (linking with the pre-school education programme), large scale ICT investment for schools, implementing the Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Order (SENDO), and re-structuring through a new Education and Skills Authority.

1.7   The general targets for the Education System by 2008 are:
- to improve educational attainment in English and Maths in Primary schools
- to increase the numbers obtaining 5 or more GCSEs or their equivalent and the numbers achieving 3+ A levels at grades A to C or their equivalent
- to reduce differentials in educational attainment in the most disadvantaged Primary and Secondary schools.

1.8   The nature of the school system in NI leads to resources being thinly spread and there is a much larger proportion of small schools than in the rest of the UK. With the current surplus of over 50,000 places rationalisation of provision is needed. This was the focus of the Bain Report in 2006 summarised as *'the inefficiencies manifest in the system need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.'*

2   THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE TEACHING WORKFORCE

2.1   In NI, schooling is compulsory from ages 4 to 16, with 7 years in primary education and at least 5 years in secondary education. The system is complex, with 11 statutory bodies and a range of voluntary bodies involved in management and administration. These include two government departments; the Department of Education (DENI) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL); five regional Education and Library Boards (ELBS); the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS); the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA); the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards; and the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI). Voluntary and promotional bodies include Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (The Council for Irish-medium Education) (CnaG); The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE); The Transferor Representatives' Council**,** which brings together representatives of the Transferor Churches; and The Association of Governing Bodies (of Voluntary Grammar Schools) (GBA). From April 2008, many of the functions of these bodies will be drawn together within a newly established Education and Skills Authority whose focus will be on the operational delivery of educational services.

2.2   Schools funded by the state in NI are known as grant-aided schools.

(a) Controlled schools are managed by the ELBs through Boards of Governors.
(b) Voluntary: (Maintained) Schools are managed by Boards of Governors that include members nominated by trustees (mainly Roman Catholic). The employing authority for Catholic Maintained Schools is CCMS. Schools that teach through the medium of Irish fall into this voluntary category but in their case the Board of Governors of each school is the employing body.
(c) Voluntary: (Non-Maintained) Schools are mainly voluntary grammar schools managed by Boards of Governors consisting of persons appointed as provided in each school's scheme of management.
(d) Grant Maintained Integrated Schools (GMI) are promoted through NICIE, but the Board of Governors of each school constitutes its employing body.

Secondary education retains largely a selective system with pupils going to grammar schools or secondary schools according to academic ability, determined by a Transfer Test; the Education Order of 2006 has removed this form of transfer pending a restoration of the NI Assembly.

2.3   The total number of full time equivalent teachers in NI's 1291 grant-aided schools in 2004/2005 was 20,198 compared with 20,747 in 2001/2002. The total number of teachers registered

with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland in 2006 was 26,151 and include many who are not actively seeking employment. Of that total 19,489 were women (74.5%) and 6,662 were men (25.4%). The number of teachers with a permanent contract or a temporary contract for a minimum of one year was 19,796.

2.4   The total numbers of pupils in schools (excluding hospital and independent schools) in 2005/2006 were 333,702, compared with 348,065 in 2001/2002. The main increases have been in places in Early Years provision; there have been significant decreases in the number of Primary School pupils (approximately 11,000) and in Secondary (non-grammar) pupils (3,500).

2.5   In the division of responsibilities for the delivery, administration or promotion of education;

(a)   DENI is responsible for the central administration of all aspects of education and related services in NI - excepting higher and further education.

(b)   The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) provides inspection services for three departments of government. The Inspectorate is DENI's principal source of advice on all professional educational issues as well as on standards in schools, colleges and grant-aided institutions. ETI's evaluations and knowledge are derived from regular and systematic visits and inspections.

(c)   CCEA takes the lead in designing and reviewing the curriculum. It also acts as an Awarding Body for GCSE and GCE examinations.

(d)   The ELBs, in addition to their role in governance, provide advice and support for schools on aspects of the curriculum and associated matters through its own Curriculum, Advisory and Support Service (CASS).

(e)   GTCNI is the independent body representing the professional interests of teachers. It is responsible for the registration of teachers; the development of a Code of Professional Values and Practice, and disciplinary functions relating to professional misconduct. It advises DENI and employing authorities on the training, career development and performance management of teachers; standards of teaching and registration issues; and standards of conduct for teachers.

(f)   CCMS is the advocate for the Catholic Maintained Schools sector in NI. It represents Trustees, schools and Governors on issues such as the school estate, employment and improvement of standards It is the largest employer of teachers in NI (8,500 teachers).

(g)   NICIE is a voluntary organisation promoting Integrated Education with the principle that by bringing together children of Catholic, Protestant, other faiths and none, they can learn to understand, respect and accept their differences. There are over 17,000 pupils in 56 grant-aided integrated schools

(h)   DENI under the *Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998*, has a statutory duty to encourage & facilitate support Irish–medium education and has established a promotional body Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (The Council for Irish-medium Education) to promote and support the strategic development of the sector. There are 3,208 pupils in 21 stand-alone Irish-medium schools and 12 Irish-medium units attached to CCMS English-medium host schools

(i)   Boards of Governors of schools identify their requirements for teachers to ensure that the statutory NI Curriculum is covered. Delegation of budgets enables them to decide on the number/type of teachers they will employ. Teacher promotion is the school's internal business.

(j)   DENI determines the level of intakes to teacher education courses. There are no difficulties in teacher recruitment. All the initial teacher training courses are over-subscribed. The calibre of intake is high. In the past, most newly qualified teachers could expect to obtain permanent posts. The proportion of initial permanent appointments has declined, though most of the temporary appointments are made permanent.

(k)   Under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) (1991) the Board of Governors of every school receives a delegated budget. Funding for schools is largely distributed through the new Local Management of Schools Common Funding formula (replacing 7 previous formulae) which was introduced in April 2005 Controlled and maintained schools are funded through the ELB in

whose area the school is located, while voluntary grammar schools and GMI schools are funded directly by DENI.

(l)   DENI consults widely about changes affecting the profession. There are five recognised trade unions, which together make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC). Three of the unions are organized on a national basis:- the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT); the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT); and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) , while two are organized on a local basis the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) and the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU). The unions between them claim membership of almost 20,000, representing some 80% of teachers.

(m)   RTU is the education service's Leadership and Staff College in NI. Its role is to develop current and future leaders for the whole education community. This includes emergent leaders as well as principals and other senior leaders.

2.6   A number of options are open for the professional development of teachers. These may be within school – supported by school management/colleagues; or by the ELBs' CASS or other outside agencies; through the Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) scheme; through support/INSET course provided by each of the ELBs; through courses and programmes provided by RTU, in particular through the Professional Qualification for Headship (PQH)(NI); and through Postgraduate Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees provided by the Higher Education Institutions. The increasing trend in schools is to tie professional development closely to the schools' own development plans. There are no formal links between professional development programmes and maintenance of certification to teach, salary rises and career pathways. PRSD is designed to ensure that all teachers and principals have an opportunity, as of right, to reflect regularly on their work with the help and support of other professionals. It has the potential to make a substantial contribution to school improvement as well as to the professional development of both teachers and school leaders.

2.7   As part of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers the Early Professional Development (EPD) stage provides continuity for the development of student and beginning teachers. It encourages reflection on practice, and supports professional development in the first years of teaching. GTCNI has recommended that 27 new teacher competences should replace the existing 92 competence statements and that the new competences should provide the foundation for an extended professional development framework beyond EPD allied to professional milestones.

2.8   The PQH(NI) programme, available through RTU, signals readiness for headship but does not replace the selection process. It offers three routes that take account of candidates' varying experiences of management and leadership and provides a baseline from which newly appointed principals can develop. It is underpinned by the National Standards for Headteachers (NI). Over 1100 candidates have been involved in PQH(NI). Although the qualification is not yet mandatory there is substantial evidence that PQH(NI) graduates are moving into headships.

2.9   There is no formal probationary period for teachers in Northern Ireland. Once student teachers complete their initial teacher education successfully, they are deemed eligible to teach. The initiatives in education have increased the need for the professional development of teachers. This often means participation in out-of-classroom courses and seminars and the absence of teachers on such courses is a major reason for the employment of substitute cover. Recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on the use of residential conferences and the use of ICT, including managed Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), for professional development.

2.10   Just over 40% of teachers surveyed in the Teachers' Health and Well-Being Survey (2002) had thought of leaving the teaching profession to the extent that they had sought alternative employment. A higher proportion of teaching principals and heads of department had done this compared to other teaching grades. At secondary level, more teachers leave non-selective schools than grammar schools,

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where the numbers leaving are very small. The main causes of stress reported by teachers are: having too much work to do, too much administration and work after school hours.

2.11   It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to evaluate their teachers' performance and decide on renewal of employment. All schools must use the PRSD process to monitor and review teachers' progress. If an ineffective teacher is identified the school must provide a programme of support. In more extreme instances, where the school's support has not resulted in improvement, or where the teacher involved has not participated in the support programme, the Board of Governors will consider invoking the Unsatisfactory Teachers Procedure. Matters of promotion and career diversification are the responsibility of the management of individual schools. There are a wide variety of opportunities for promotion. For example teachers can take on additional responsibilities for aspects of pedagogy, subject or key stage management, extra-curricular or administrative duties and in other areas of the work of the school.

2.12   Teachers' pay and conditions of service in Northern Ireland have traditionally maintained a contextualised parity with the situation in GB. However, in Northern Ireland, matters relating to teachers' pay and conditions are negotiated through the Teacher Negotiating Committee (TNC), which is made up of representatives of the employing authorities, the teaching unions and the Department of Education.

3   SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

3.1   Conditions of service for teachers are defined in the Terms and Conditions of Employment Regulations of 1987. Three categories of teachers are defined i.e. 'principal', 'vice-principal', 'qualified teacher'. In official terms 'School Leadership' is defined as a 'Leadership Group' that currently consists of principals and vice-principals. They are distinct from other 'classroom' teachers both in terms of salary structure and terms and conditions of service. Subject to general accountability to the employing authority, or the Board of Governors, the principal is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and offers leadership in these respects.

3.2   In many schools some aspects of the functions of the principal, especially in 'management', have been delegated to vice-principals. This also may extend to aspects of 'leadership' roles. Leadership roles evolved in response to various initiatives or requirements set out by central government. The position of these newly identified leaders was underpinned by the award of allowance points above the normal salary scale. Leadership has therefore become more broadly defined. The view now is that the complexity of the job of school leader cannot be overstated and that the principal as the 'heroic leader' cannot single-handedly lead and manage the changing nature of a school's provision and practice.

3.3   School leaders face considerable challenges as they seek to educate and develop the young people of Northern Ireland to the highest possible standards, providing equality of access to all. The school system itself will be radically changed by the Education Order (Northern Ireland) 2006. The Curriculum Entitlement Framework and the revised NI curriculum will be introduced on a phased basis from 2006. This reform and other recent changes such as Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 put extra demands on school leaders, schools and the employing authorities, for example to improve accessibility of the school building, curriculum and information to pupils with disabilities and to make all plans available for inspection. Child Protection issues have been to the forefront since 1999 and all working in a school must be subject to a criminal background check to ensure suitability for access to children. In the case of Extended Schools, the government wishes to establish the school as the hub of its local community, engaging proactively with other schools, and with statutory, voluntary and community sector organizations. In such changes the school leader has become part of multi-agency provision with accompanying high levels of public expectation and accountability.

The introduction of PRSD reviews the principal's performance in a more structured way than previously. Boards of Governors must determine the extent to which the principal's vision, leadership and sense of direction for the school have brought success, or significant improvement in teaching and learning, and the extent to which the principal has developed personal knowledge, understanding and performance. The relationship with stakeholders is scrutinised, as are the principal's planning, management of staff and resources, and monitoring of teaching and learning.

Legislation since 1979 has increasingly given school governors the role of making important decisions with regard to the policies and running of the school. The governing body in a school with a delegated budget is legally responsible for the strategic direction of the school. It occupies a boundary position between the internal operation of the school and the community. Its composition is not accidental. All the main stakeholders from both outside and inside the school are meant to have a voice. Principals and other school leaders need the support that an enthusiastic and informed governing body can bring to their roles. Managing and giving a strategic direction to the school should be derived from a professional partnership between Governors and Principal.

3.4   Roles and responsibilities in school leadership resulting from governance structures are directly related to the schemes of management of schools as outlined in section 2.2 above. In Voluntary Grammar Schools the issues for leadership are similar to those in all grant-aided schools, with the additional factor of direct control of finances and the challenges of managing often extensive school estate. In controlled schools leadership occupies the middle ground between the ELB, as the employing body, and the Board of Governors. In the Voluntary Maintained Sector the leaders in both the Catholic Maintained schools and the Irish Medium schools have the duty to promote their particular ethos in addition to achieving the highest possible standards of learning and teaching. In GMI schools the Boards of Governors, as the employing authorities, promote the concept of integration of Roman Catholic and Protestant children in one schooling system and must maintain a numerical balance between the groups. In Special Schools the accountability of the school leaders, who must work within a Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, to various stakeholders is both widespread and set at a high level. In smaller Primary schools, especially those with a teaching Principal, greater teamwork may be required to deliver all required roles and responsibilities.

3.5   Most Boards of Governors are aware of the standards achieved in their school through external assessment, but some are not involved in setting targets or are aware of the processes used to monitor pupils' progress. Governors require comprehensive training to give them the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to demonstrate good governance in improving provision and raising standards of achievement for learners. In effect Boards of Governors delegate, either formally or informally, very many aspects of a school's provision to the Principal or other senior School Leaders. This places the School Leaders in positions of enormous influence, 'de facto' if not 'de jure', in determining what happens currently in some schools.

3.6   Core competencies required of school leaders do not vary to any great extent from school to school, irrespective of sector or size. It is generally held that school leaders must be able to articulate a vision of what can be achieved in their school, to be shared with and understood by all stakeholders. As the leading professionals they must promote agreed thinking about the nature of learning and teaching. They must successfully implement the PRSD scheme, both to manage performance and support professional development. They must distribute leadership and develop the 'leadership capacity' in individuals and in the school as a whole. They must, in working with other staff, manage the significant change agenda in Northern Ireland, including those inherent in the Review of Public Administration, the Government's Strategy for good relations in Northern Ireland 'A Shared Future' and the introduction of the new NI curriculum.

3.7   The view expressed by ETI is that 'quality leadership and management is the key to school improvement'. For this to occur there must be shared language, shared evaluation, shared vision and

shared practice. The National Standards for Headteachers in Northern Ireland provides the framework to which all the core competencies for successful school leadership can be aligned. These Standards may reasonably be expected to inform ETI in its evaluation of the quality of leadership and management in schools.

4   ENHANCING LEARNING AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

4.1   There are no widely reflected concerns as to the quality of education in Northern Ireland. The ETI Chief Inspector's Report (2002-2004) stated *'The provision within education,.....is meeting well the general expectations of pupils and young people, their parents, and the community at large'*. Issues for the system were noted as:

The changes to the primary and post-primary curricula that need to be managed along with existing commitments and improving standards. Vocational education will be developed in a more coherent framework. The current political impasse, new economic opportunities, societal changes, and falling rolls will impact on the education sector. School leaders are expected to respond positively to on-going change. Success in public examinations is better than ever, but there is a need to support those young people not now well served by the education system, who leave school and training ill equipped for employment. There are recurring themes and areas needing improvement; including special educational needs; catering for individual difference; ICT; monitoring and evaluation; and helping young people to make positive contributions to society.

The Chief Inspector's Report has indicated clearly areas in need of improvement but the role of school leadership in achieving these improvements is much less clear. A report (2000) by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency on 'Improving Schools through Purposeful Leadership' found that all principals found administration of low importance in terms of leadership. The three elements of their work most highly valued by them were good teaching, identifying and developing the school's professional capital, and dissemination of good practice. In practice school leadership must successfully implement changes within a new curricular framework replacing one with which they were familiar since 1989. How this curriculum is to be taught and how children will learn is largely to be decided at the level of each individual school. Schools and their leaders have developed their own policies on teaching and learning. All schools recognise the importance of learning outside the formal curriculum. There is justifiable pride in extra-curricular provision but little analysis of what children may learn through it.

The school's leader(s) with its governing body determines procedures for internal assessment and monitoring of pupils' work. The requirements for external assessment at the end of key stages have changed to leave schools with more power to decide on appropriate forms.

4.2   The highest level of accountability of schools is to central government through the employing bodies to whom funding has been delegated. Apart from this, schools are responsible to parents and their pupils to provide an education in line with the current statutory requirements, for example in matters relating to the curriculum, behaviour, pastoral care and child protection. Parents must be given regular information about the curriculum, the progress of their children - through written reports - and on other matters affecting the school. An Annual Report is required from the Board of Governors indicating how the school's delegated budget was used, and describing measures to strengthen community links. Additional information on school activities and successes is often given in a principal's verbal report and through school internet websites. After any inspection of the school by ETI, the Board of Governors must provide the parents of all pupils at the school with a summary of a general inspection report or the full report of a focused inspection. In these processes school leaders are held accountable on a regular basis, both internally to the Board of Governors and externally to DENI. It is from school leaders that the Board of Governors will draw information for its Annual Report. The quality of their leadership and management is now a focal point in any inspection of the school.

4.3   The processes for monitoring curriculum development and implementation have historically been undertaken by ETI. An ETI evaluation (1999) of how the 1989 NI Curriculum was implemented

in Post-Primary Schools concluded: schools needed to involve teachers and governors more closely in drawing up their curriculum policies and give more guidance on teaching and learning strategies; a small number of schools had failed to provide the requirements of the NIC for all of the pupils in KS4; a minority of schools needed to ensure a balanced curriculum for all pupils and important key skills were not being developed; and ICT was underused as a management tool and senior leaders needed to ensure that all teachers knew the implications of the initiatives on literacy, numeracy and ICT for their work.

The developments since 1990 brought important benefits particularly in terms of equality of access and breadth of experience for pupils, at the same time they posed challenges to teachers as individuals, and a degree of upheaval to schools as organizations. Since 1998 CCEA has been involved in a lengthy process of curriculum review and revision. The changes agreed included: flexibility for schools to decide what is best for their pupils; more emphasis on developing children's 'thinking' skills; personal social and health education as a legal requirement; adding education about citizenship and employability to the curriculum; connecting what is taught in different subjects; and moving from spasmodic assessment to continuous assessment on a basis which updates the 'Pupil Profile'. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 which became law on 19 July 2006 provides the broad legislative framework to implement the revised statutory curriculum.

4.4   Under terms and conditions of service a principal may be involved in teaching pupils including providing cover for absent teachers. In small schools, it is common for principals to take full-time class teaching responsibilities. They may also take on the role of co-ordinating work in subject areas or of a particular Key Stage. At secondary level some principals take on a limited teaching role. School leaders who are involved in leadership teams will usually have some reduction in timetabled commitments to fulfil their leadership roles. Vice-Principals, for example may have no more than a half timetable in large Secondary schools, while in small Primary schools they will inevitably teach full-time.

4.5   The PRSD programme replaces the School Development and Performance Review (SDPR) scheme as the agreed review process in which all teachers and principals are required to participate as part of their conditions of service. Lesson observation has been accepted practice over many years in schools and has been used spasmodically to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Until the advent of PRSD, however, it was neither required nor widespread. Although there is much evidence of the value of both coaching and mentoring there is no system-wide approach to the mentoring of school leaders nor to supporting school leaders in undertaking roles as coaches or mentors.

Prior to PRSD the requirement for principals to promote the professional development of their staff was often discharged on an 'ad hoc' basis. For example current needs of the school were assessed by the principal and members of staff identified to receive appropriate training. Alternatively those staff with particular responsibilities might become aware of training or development opportunities, including those leading to further qualifications, and then seek support, usually in terms of time, to allow their participation. Performance management has now become the linchpin of effective staff development. This involves having whole-school policies on teaching and learning that integrate personal and professional development, PRSD and school improvement. School leaders need to know which staff development activities have a direct impact on learning and teaching and be aware of how their own professional development is linked to that of the whole staff. Principals need to be the 'lead learners' in the school and ensure that leadership development is integrated with staff development. They must distribute leadership, support reflective enquiry and promote collaborative learning as integral to continuous professional development. When making decisions about the professional development needs of teachers there is often a tension between national/regional expectations, the school's requirements and the individual teacher's perception of his/her need. It is the lack of synergy in the system which causes this tension and there is a need to align the thinking about CPD and thus sharpen the focus.

4.6　　　　Policies to support leadership focused on the improvement of teaching and learning have emerged from three sources.

    (a) A common view has emerged from CASS that school leadership, if it is to have a real impact on teaching and learning, must extend beyond the Principal and the Senior Management Team ie that leadership must be 'distributed'. The policy is to support and develop leadership at all levels in the school. Leadership is now held to be a function of the work of any teacher, whatever their formal status in the school might be, as they have responsibility for the work of other teachers in any aspect of school improvement. In this way the capacity for leadership in individuals and in the school as a whole, can be built. This change takes time and for some schools it takes more time than others. Getting school leaders to acknowledge this is often a major challenge and there is a tendency for schools to take on too much in an unrealistic timescale.

    (b) The DENI School Improvement Programme (SIP) has the aim of raising standards in schools. It provides those schools involved in the programme with between 3 and 5 years of professional and financial support for improvement measures. It places strong emphasis on the quality of school leadership and management, perceiving it to be crucial to the school's success and capacity to improve. Where there is ineffective leadership and no improvement following action by way of support and re-training the Board of Governors will consider invoking the 'Unsatisfactory Teachers Procedure'.

    (c) RTU undertakes a specific responsibility for the management and leadership training needs of principals and senior staff in schools and colleges. In its policies and practice to develop high quality school leaders, improved teaching and learning have become central tenets. This leads to extended programmes such as leadership for learning, self-evaluation in leaders and by their schools, and conferences on leading learning that are accessible by every school principal.

5.　　　　　　THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

5.1　　　　In Northern Ireland there is no crisis in the supply of school leaders. The overall standard of the teaching profession is high, demand for training places remains strong and the quality of entrants is very good. There is, however, some concern that some individuals with the greatest potential may not seek to fill future leadership posts. In a minority of existing schools ETI state that ' *the management and leadership are ineffective and the principals have a limited understanding of the quality of the learning and teaching'*. This has led to a focus on the quality of leadership and management during inspections by ETI. The need for quality in school leadership and management in implementing change has also been highlighted in the Bain Report. A problem arises from difficulties in persuading or enabling a larger proportion of those who come into teaching to apply for senior leadership positions, especially as principals or vice-principals.

5.2　　　　There is broadly a sufficient pool of talent to meet leadership needs in schools but there are some concerns about the number of applicants for leadership posts in small rural primary schools; the under-representation of women in senior posts, especially in post-primary schools; and the attractiveness of leadership of primary schools and of teaching as a profession for men.
Since 1999 a significant number of potential principals have gained the PQH(NI) qualification. For example of the 41 principals appointed in the Catholic Maintained sector in 2005-06, almost 50% have graduated in PQH(NI) or are completing the qualification.

5.3　　　　The age profile of principals indicates that there is a significant number of principals aged over 50. 400 Primary principals and over 125 Post- Primary principals (excluding those employed in Voluntary Grammar schools) will move to retirement in the next decade. All available evidence suggests that this will be sooner rather than later. The problem for succession planning is that there is

no clear indication of how long a principal will stay in post. There are fewer than 40 principals in all types of schools in NI who have remained in post past their 60th birthday and all evidence suggests that very few will continue in post until they reach the retirement age of 65. The main determinant of retirement appears to be the achievement of maximum pension rights through 40 years total service or enhancement of terms.

5.4   The introduction of PQH(NI) was linked to the need for improved school leadership identified in the School Improvement package launched by the Department of Education in 1998. Although having rights through RTU to contextualise for NI materials being used for the NPQH in England and Wales it developed as an entirely separate model, reflecting NI's varying circumstances, including differences in the education system, the types of schools and the curriculum. The concept was that PQH(NI) would create a pool of leaders qualified to undertake headship at or above a satisfactory threshold level as measured against the National Standards for Headteachers (NI). Applicants must have completed the EPD stage and those selected for PQH(NI) will have leadership and management experience in whole-school issues. The qualification has proved to be very popular and has attracted a total of 1787 applicants to date with over 1100 funded candidates from 749 schools, ie 62% of all grant-aided schools. Candidates have been drawn from 55% of all Primary Schools, 88% of all Special Schools, 89% of all non-selective Secondary Schools and almost 100% of all Grammar Schools. Within the next two years the total number of graduates will have more than doubled.

5.5   NI has a significant number of small schools. According to the Bain Report *'More than one-third of primary schools have an enrolment of fewer than 90 pupils. Approximately one-sixth of post-primary schools have an enrolment of fewer than 300 pupils and nearly two-fifths have an enrolment of fewer than 500 pupils'.* It was agreed, however, from the introduction of PQH(NI) that leadership and management skills and competencies remain the same irrespective of setting, and that differences relate more to scale and context rather than any difference of substance. Hence, a single PQH(NI) model is provided, with activities relevant to leadership in all types and sizes of school embedded in the programme.

5.6   Many of those teachers who aspire to headship in NI schools do so with the firm belief that *'it would be a privilege to hold such a position'.* At one level headship is seen as a vehicle for personal fulfilment through putting into practice deeply held beliefs about the nature of education. For others the move to headship is seen as taking the next logical step to the ultimate post in the profession. For the great majority the role of headship is seen to offer both personal challenge and fulfilment, and the means to make a positive impact in the lives of pupils. The statement by one PQH(NI) candidate -*'I seek the ultimate responsibility and privilege of headship, for an effective headteacher is intrinsic to a successful school'* -may fairly summarise the general motivation of those who aspire to headship.

5.7   Factors that may be deterring applicants for leadership posts in schools, particularly at the level of principal and vice-principal are as follows:

   5.7.1   The changing education landscape represents a significant challenge to existing and aspiring school leaders. In addition there are particular categories of schools e.g. small rural schools, schools in areas of social deprivation, schools with rapidly declining enrolments, which present added challenges to school leaders.

   5.7.2   Concerns about the impact of demographic trends, the outworkings of the Bain Review, pay differentials, career progression, recognition of their value to society, work/life balance and increasing levels of accountability may also deter some individuals from applying for leadership posts.

   5.7.3   Men still hold the majority of leadership posts in all sectors and types of schools.

5.7.4   The position of women in school leadership is problematic. Although there has been an increase in women applying for senior posts this has not been in line with the fact that they constitute 73% of the profession. In the sample figures given by CCMS for 1995-96 compared with those for 2005-2006, out of the same number of applications (284) in both periods, the percentage of females had risen from 31% to 48%. The percentage of females appointed rose from 35% to 48%.

5.7.5   Currently the NI system does not offer clear pathways into more senior leadership posts. Therefore some applicants for PQH(NI) do not aspire to principalship but seek to use the programme as the best professional development opportunity available. There is a need to cater more directly and appropriately for such potential school leaders.

5.8   The increasingly accepted view is that the role of the principal as the leader of the future school has become so challenging that it cannot be effectively discharged by one person. Thus leadership must be in some sense 'distributed'. Schools will grow their leaders at an earlier stage in their careers as young teachers lead extremely well when given the opportunity to do so. The emergence of teachers into leadership roles does not create major difficulties except that their work is often not reflected by their position in the hierarchy. This implies new thinking about the career pathways that should be open to potential school leaders from the end of EPD to the point where they can enter PQH(NI) as aspirants to headship.

The opportunities arising from PRSD system for mentoring to become embedded practice in schools need exploitation. An essential element in strengthening the role of the school leader at all levels is the clear identification of their professional development needs and the delivery of these, through a range of mediums including individual mentoring and coaching. School leaders should also act as mentors for others and have the entitlement to be mentored themselves.

5.9   Senior leadership in schools could become more attractive in a number of ways:

5.9.1   High quality performers need to be recognised and rewarded, not only through the normal pay and conditions of service arrangements but also through greater public acknowledgement of the importance of the role of school leadership to society. Their career structure must offer progression with distinct possibilities for working in other areas of the education system.

5.9.2   Senior school leaders need support to develop their own leadership capacity and that of their schools. There needs to be clarity about the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, with an emphasis on the proactive and not defensive aspects of their roles.

5.9.3   There must be a shared understanding of what school leadership is, and a common language developed to describe it. The National Standards for Headteachers (NI) 2005 edition provides a very useful starting point.

5.10   Leadership generally and headship in particular must be seen as attractive to those with the greatest potential if the necessary improvements are to be achieved in the Northern Ireland education system. Those who apply for and are appointed to leadership positions must receive the support they need and recognition given to the contribution that these school leaders can make to not only education but also to the social capital of the community they serve and to society at large.

6.   TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LEADERS

6.1   The preparation of school leaders and their professional development had a low priority in the NI system until the 1990s when the ELBs established a Regional Training Unit to take forward common issues of training, both of teachers and Board personnel, on a regional basis. In the 1990s training

focused on management skills. After 1999 the broadening of the management of RTU to include a wider range of education partners led to the belief that school leaders needed both preparation and support in the discharge of their leadership function as well as in their management of schools.

6.2   There are no clear pathways by which teachers move into leadership except through the PQH(NI), which is designed for those aspiring to headship Increasing numbers of PQH(NI) graduates have been successful in gaining appointment to headships.

6.3   An alternative route to headship has been through the acquisition of higher degrees, diplomas or other qualifications in education provided through the higher education institutions. Until recently employers have often included a requirement for good honours or higher degrees in their specifications for principal posts. This may be enhanced to include further professional qualifications such as Masters degrees or diplomas in various educational studies. An additional essential criterion has been the length of experience in other leadership posts, particularly vice-headships and there is always a stated requirement that the applicant must hold a teaching qualification. Schools publicly advertise principal or vice-principal posts, except in exceptional circumstances, for example where there is the amalgamation of schools. For middle management it is common practice to advertise internally any leadership posts below the level of vice-principal. This results in little transfer of potential or emergent future leaders from school to school and it is difficult to move out of particular sectors or phases. The route for the further development of these teachers will therefore be through the structures of each individual school.

6.4   The Principal is responsible, with the Board of Governors, for constructing leadership opportunities. These should relate to increasing the capacity for leadership within the school. In the past the length of teaching experience and of service to the school was often the single greatest determinant for appointment to leadership posts. Increasingly leadership opportunities have been given to younger teachers on the basis of their skills and potential. In some schools two-thirds or more of the staff are involved in the leadership of other teachers. Many will undertake short-term projects related to school development involving responsibility for the work of other teachers and a level of accountability at whole school level. They now need to be given the required knowledge, skills and opportunities to lead effectively.

The work of GTCNI is important in promoting a range of standards and competencies throughout a teacher's career. Individual teachers should accept that there is an obligation to undertake leadership in aspects of the school's provision and practice. There is a need to increase the awareness of how the skills and experience gained through what might be temporary and short-term leadership roles can contribute to a professional portfolio that could lead to accreditation. This in turn might qualify for entrance to PQH(NI).

6.5   Leadership development in a school implies forward movement not just the maintenance of tradition or the acceptance of present standards. Thus it should enable all leaders to manage change. If it is accepted that school leadership must be distributed and developed at all levels within the school, then new forms of professional development must be determined. To a large extent this must be school-based because of the potentially large numbers of teachers involved and the key requirement to align leadership activity with school improvement.   This makes the principal the key figure in building the leadership capacity of individual staff and of the school as a whole. Each school must develop a coherent, widely understood programme for the development of staff, including their skills in leadership as well as in their traditional role as managers. It must encourage the reflection necessary for the development of new approaches to teaching and learning. The principle of voluntarism must remain but there is a need to encourage teachers to believe they have potential in leadership. A major component of a leadership programme should be the entitlement for support thorough individual mentoring.

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Such school-based leadership programmes will have considerable impact in the context of each school's work as it seeks to improve children's learning and develop towards its preferred future. It may even assist the succession planning that will be required to maintain improvement in each school.

6.6 PQH(NI) plays a significant role in the attainment of headship. It is also seen as a key professional development route from middle management into other senior leadership. It is influential as a paradigm for effective training, through a blended model that contains supported self-study, face-to-face tutoring and distance learning through a VLE. Its impact on the system has been considerable in the number of teachers who have completed the programme, or are in process of so doing and in the number of schools who have supported candidates as they have taken on leadership in a great variety of school improvement projects.

6.7 PQH(NI) has also provided a template from which other training programmes from RTU have been developed. The experience of such a large sample of candidates in using a VLE is unique in the NI school system, this has assisted the introduction of VLEs in other RTU programmes, and provided a benchmark against which the Learning NI VLE for schools can be promoted

(a) PQH(NI) is offered as an entitlement to those serving principals, in their early years of headship, who have not already gained the qualification. Those applying are offered an accelerated route lasting for one year.

(b) In the early stages of PQH(NI), its implications for candidates and their schools were not clearly understood by principals. A programme, known as Advancing School Leadership (ASL), has over the past three years promoted the understanding among principals of how schools, as well as the candidates, can benefit from the school-based improvement work required in PQH(NI). Participants in ASL come to understand the requirements of PQH(NI) and the support they need give to candidates, including aspects of coaching and mentoring.

(c) The 'On Leadership' section of the RTU's website makes resources drawn from PQH(NI) available to all principals in Northern Ireland who register for online access. The resources consist of the PQH(NI) study materials, an explanation of how these materials can assist principals in relation to initiatives in the NI system, the template of the National Standards for Headteachers; and a Principal's Professional Development Record (PPDR) which is completed against the statements on the key areas of headship.

6.8 All newly appointed vice-principals and principals are given entitlement to induction programmes delivered through RTU's Leadership College. These are organised on a phase basis but include newly appointed senior leaders in all school sectors. They are based on a series of residentials followed each time by support in schools through the CASS professional officers in each ELB. They have become increasingly aligned to the National Standards for Headship (NI) and encourage on-line support. The methodology is similar in all courses. It includes individual reflection and review, individual assignments; paired and small group activities such as case studies and role-play; short presentations; small group and plenary discussions; and school-based projects.
The ELBs provide additional induction programmes for senior leaders in their early years in post. These largely deal with management issues relating to governance, finance and human resources.

6.9 After the induction phase there are numerous options for further professional development by school leaders. Unlike induction programmes, which are part of an entitlement with an expectation of participation, these further options are voluntary. Thus the further professional development of principals can be spasmodic or at least episodic, where the provision is often taken up on a 'need to know' basis. Where this attitude exists principals may become effective managers of the current and short term development in their schools but less confident in their strategic leadership. Some options

allow principals to lead their schools through strategic and organisational development programmes that allow for external accreditation for the school.

6.10   Since the introduction of the National Standards for Headteachers (NI) their major use in leadership development has been in their application to PQH(NI) and its linked programmes as outlined in 6.7 above. The Standards are, however, applicable at all stages in headship and have been used as the basis of new modular programmes provided by RTU. In 2007 these will deal with the key areas for headship of 'Shaping the Future', 'Leadership for Learning', 'Strengthening the Community' and 'Managing the Organisation'.

6.11   Leading the development of ICT in schools is a complex challenge. School leaders need to articulate and share a vision of how ICT will be effectively used to support learning, teaching and school administration. The programme offered through RTU gives school leaders in all types of schools a greater knowledge of leadership and management issues relevant to ICT in their schools. It aims to give principals insight into the added value of ICT in raising achievement of pupils within schools through improved teaching and learning, and allows them to develop their personal ICT capability and establish networks to share good practice.

6.12   There is an identified need for schools to develop their own leaders to allow them to meet successfully the challenges occurring in the Northern Ireland education system. In 2007 RTU will begin a 'Building Leadership Capacity' (BLC) programme to support principals as they develop the capacity for leadership in their respective schools. This builds on the existing support given through the 'Advancing School Leadership' programme to those principals who have PQH(NI) candidates.

7.   CONCLUSIONS

The Report covers issues of school leadership in a complex system that retains a high level of public confidence although containing a number of tensions. This is the product of the history of NI during four decades which has created many challenges, not least to enhance social and economic capital through its education system. The high priority given to education has produced agendas for change, in the curriculum content and entitlement, training and provision, early years education, extended schools, the transfer system, and the development of new types of schools.

In this change there is acknowledgement that good 'leadership and management' of schools is of vital importance. Despite the fact that leadership development is concentrated on improving learning, principalship is sometimes interpreted within a narrow managerial paradigm. There is no longer a confidence that a heroic leader can single-handedly drive forward school improvement and manage necessary changes. The position of 'middle leaders' remains unclear and there is a need for clarity in their development towards more senior leadership roles. It is encouraging that a constructive approach to leadership has been developed in some schools where many teachers have undertaken leadership roles, if only in limited areas and on a short term basis.

A strength of the NI system has been and still is the quality of its teaching workforce and the new entrants to the profession are very well qualified. There is a surplus of registered and qualified teachers over the number of posts available. The reports of ETI generally affirm satisfactory or better standards of teaching and achievement in schools. School leadership and management, especially in improving standards of learning and teaching, have been identified as a particular area of focus in future inspections. The report suggests that a firm and consistent basis for judgement is to be found in the National Standards for Headteachers (NI) which can provide a commonly shared understanding of the skills, professional knowledge and actions required in school leadership.

The performance of teachers and school leaders is subject to scrutiny under PRSD. The aspects of the scheme that deal with continuous professional development, including that of school leaders, need to be

supported and exploited. A logical extension to the identification of further professional needs, where staff at all levels will want to know how to move forward and improve their performance as teachers or leaders, would be an entitlement to be mentored and an obligation to act as mentor for others.

The changes in the system are such that what was perceived as the role of school leadership five years ago is now anachronistic in a society emerging from almost forty years of conflict, where levels of poverty are high, and there is still considerable underachievement by many school leavers. School leaders have become the subject of sharp focus, not just in external inspection but also directly through the PRSD scheme.

The Local Management of Schools scheme has given extensive powers to boards of governors which, have the legal responsibility to determine the strategic direction of schools. The level of accountability of principals to the boards of governors and other stakeholders has increased and the extent to which the principal can actually 'lead' the school rather than 'manage' it on behalf of the governing body is limited 'de jure' if not 'de facto'.

There is no concern about the quality of the teaching workforce but there is some disquiet that leaders with the greatest potential are not naturally emerging from that workforce and some concern that in a minority of schools leadership is ineffective. The general level of interest in principal posts, although masking differences by sector and area, is adequate with overall ratios of approximately 8 per post at Primary level and approximately 4 to 5 per post at Secondary level. It would appear that some small rural schools face difficulties in recruiting suitable leaders and the proportion of women applying per post does not reflect the fact that they constitute almost three quarters of the teaching workforce.

The number of graduates from the PQH(NI) programme, is increasing, as is the number of schools providing candidates. For those entering PQH(NI) there is a high degree of motivation to enter headship and to note how applicants envisage their role as future leaders of our schools is often inspiring.

Concerns about the impact of demographic trends, the outworkings of the Bain Review, pay differentials, career progression, recognition of their value to society, work/life balance and increasing levels of accountability may deter some individuals from applying for leadership posts.
There needs to be clarity about the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, with an emphasis on the proactive and not defensive aspects of their roles. Leadership generally and headship in particular must be seen as attractive to those with the greatest potential if the necessary improvements are to be achieved in the Northern Ireland education system. Those who apply for and are appointed to leadership positions must receive the support they need and recognition given to the contribution that these school leaders can make to not only education but also to the social capital of the community they serve and to society at large. Increasing priority has been given to the preparation of school leaders since 1999. There is a shift in emphasis from training focused on good management practice to 'training today's leaders for the schools of tomorrow'. There is no clear pathway into school leadership except through PQH(NI) which is designed for those aspiring to headship. Its success as a training model has also made it attractive to teachers who may not wish to enter headship but will undertake other leadership roles in schools. The traditional alternative route to headship through the acquisition of higher degrees or diplomas in education, allied to experience of leadership at particular levels, still exists. Employing bodies are increasingly aligning what they require from their school leaders against the National Standards for Headship (NI) and PQH(NI) graduates are advantaged in that they have already been deemed to meet these standards at threshold level or above.

There need to be clear pathways into leadership from the end of the early professional development stage to the point of entry to PQH(NI).. In schools where leadership is being 'distributed', those teachers who are willing to take on leadership roles need to be given the necessary knowledge, skills and opportunities to be effective. This process, which must also involve the principals of such schools as they build the capacity for leadership, should be externally supported and formally validated. Those

emerging as leaders should have opportunity for accreditation of their work, for example through a portfolio of evidence of their achievement that could provide the basis for their entry to PQH(NI).

PQH(NI) has become an important route for the professional development of school leaders. It is not only a route into headship or other senior leadership posts but through its candidates contributes much to the process of school development planning and school improvement. The blended nature of the programme, including supported self-study, personal tutoring, extensive face to face training and compulsory use of an online VLE, is unique to Northern Ireland. It provides a template for other training programmes and has led to the development of three related programmes for those who are already in headship.

There is a robust suite of training programmes offered through RTU, in conjunction with partners in the CASS service and CCMS, to first time principals and vice-principals as a major part of their entitlement in the induction phase. The programmes are increasingly aligned to the key areas of headship outlined in the National Standards. The Standards are the basis of a suite of Modular programmes provided through RTU. Each programme is based on a key area of headship, demonstrating the importance of the Standards as an appropriate framework for the professional development of school leaders from the stage of aspiring to headship, through the induction period, into that of experienced headship. Principals have the opportunity to lead their school through Strategic and Organisational Development programmes that can lead to external accreditation. These are most useful to schools involved in self-evaluation and the formative processes of development planning. They may extend the professionalism of school leaders but are not targeted at this individual level.

There is no complacency in the NI system that supposes that schools can meet current needs and anticipated future challenges without good leadership and management. Much good practice in leadership development already exists but there are areas which would benefit from improvement.. There is undoubted quality available in the teaching workforce that should be channelled and attracted into school leadership. This requires a radical re-evaluation of the concept of leadership and its importance for schools and consideration of how it can be empowered and rewarded.

A consistency in approach across the system can be derived from shared understanding of the key areas of leadership; these are stated already in the National Standards for Headship but will need contextualisation for leadership at other levels. Opportunities will exist in the setting up of the Education and Skills Authority for strategic long-term planning for the continued improvement of school leadership. School leaders have made an immense contribution to the education system during the periods of tension and civil strife and will continue to do so as they create and develop the schools of the future for the well-being of those who live in Northern Ireland.