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AN EXAMINATION OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICE IN FOUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Dissertation

By

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award to the degree of Doctor of Education (EdD) is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICE IN FOUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

This study explores leadership and management practices in four Dublin primary schools. The aim of this thesis is to explore the practice of leadership by those who hold formal leadership positions in schools, focusing on the current leadership and management model that exists in schools, namely In-school Management Teams (ISMTs), and also by those who lead informally. This is done with a view to illuminating the existence or non-existence of distributed leadership. A dearth of research, both nationally and internationally, in the areas of leadership practice and distributed leadership practice provides part of the rationale for this research. In response to the study's main research questions, this thesis documents four case studies that were conducted in varying schools to explore the practices of, and attitudes to, leadership in the schools. It also highlights the professional needs of those who lead. This research took a mixed method approach with data collected through the use of questionnaires, diaries and semi-structured interviews. Data on each school were analysed and was followed up by cross-case analysis, which allowed for a deeper exploration of this practice. Findings reveal that practice varies considerably between the schools, that factors including the size of school, type of culture, levels of communication and interpretation of roles and responsibilities all affect how leadership is practised and the attitudes that teachers and principals have towards it. This research was designed to take account of what is happening with leadership in these four Irish primary schools. It aims to inform discussion with a view to contributing to further research in this area and it makes several recommendations based on the main findings.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my cherished mentor Tony Conway - a remarkable man

whose interest in my research was a huge source of encouragement and support. I have

appreciated his insights and curiosity more than he will ever know.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

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Finally, words cannot express the gratitude that I have towards my husband Stephen, who even asked me to marry him during this doctorate. Stephen, you were there for all of the ups and downs of this and I'm so glad that I could share them with you. You have given unbelievable support to me and for that I am eternally grateful. I also do have to acknowledge that for an engineer, you know far too much about educational leadership! Thanks for all the dinners that you made, your listening ear, your unending encouragement, your hugs and more than anything, your belief in me.

Abbreviations

AP	Assistant Principal
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPPD	Continued Personal and Professional Development
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (disadvantaged status for schools)
DES	Department of Education and Science/Skills
DP	Deputy Principal
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network
ISM	In-school Management
ISMT	In-school Management Team
LDS	Leadership Development for Schools
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCW	Programme for Competiveness and Work
Qual	Qualitative
Quan	Quantitative
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SSE	School Self-evaluation
WSE	Whole-school Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines leadership practices in four Dublin primary schools. The aim of this thesis is to examine the practice of leadership by those who hold formal leadership positions in schools and also by those who lead informally, with a view to illuminating the existence or non-existence of distributed leadership. In response to the study's main research questions, this thesis documents and examines leadership practice and leader intentions in four schools, the attitudes of teachers towards this practice, and it highlights the professional needs of those who lead. A dearth of research, both nationally and internationally, in the areas of leadership practice and distributed leadership practice provides part of the rationale for this research. Justification also comes from education policy agendas that call for distributed ways of working and leading so that schools can respond successfully to challenges and change. Furthermore, distributed leadership practice has been advocated in leadership professional development circles for the past decade. The researcher aims to explore the extent to which this is a reality in the four schools.

Ireland has been facing huge challenges in the past decade. It has been acknowledged that the country is going through a period of rapid and constant change, facing more uncertainty about the future than ever before (Linsky & Lawrence, in O'Sullivan & West Burnham, 2011). Linsky and Lawrence make reference to the broader challenges that are being faced, including financial turmoil, environmental and climate changes and threats to our stability. It is within this context that education in

Ireland exists. They argue that "This is an extraordinary moment to be caring about education. The challenges have never been greater, the opportunities never more present, and the need for success never more critical" (2011, p. 5). These broader challenges facing society, including recession, high levels of unemployment, emigration and financial uncertainty have a bearing on education today, in how we educate our young people to live and work within uncertain contexts being of significant importance. Likewise, this constant change with its accompanying challenges has a bearing on how our schools are led.

School leadership and management are widely accepted as being key factors in achieving school improvement and have become a priority in education policy agendas internationally (O' Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011). Conceptualisations of leadership and management tending towards distributed and collaborative models are becoming more and more pervasive (Mulford, 2008; Southworth, 2004; Spillane & Diamond, 2007), and have been viewed as potentially promising ways of responding to the many complex challenges currently faced by schools (Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, 2009). Both national and international research has illuminated the positive relationship that exists between distributed leadership and school improvement (Leadership Development for Schools [LDS], 2007; Mulford, 2008; NCSL, 2006; O'Sullivan & West Burnham, 2011; Southworth, 2004; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Distributed leadership is not a new idea, although authors acknowledge that the concept has received considerable attention in recent years (Leithwood et al., 2009; Mulford, 2008; Spillane, 2006; Sugrue, 2009). One reason put forward for this popular attention is the awareness that schools face increasingly complex contexts and the

acknowledgment that professional expertise to lead in such contexts exists both within formal and informal positions. Another related reason is that it has been thought unrealistic that one person, the principal, can lead the complex organisation that the school has become without the assistance of colleagues (Copland, 2001; Sugrue, 2009).

This thesis is based on the belief of the author that leadership is not solely the work of the principal, nor for that matter, of those in other formal leadership positions. It is asserted that leadership can be the work of all teachers, both in formal and informal leadership positions. Similarly, leadership within schools can come from non-teaching members of staff, from parents and pupils. Hence, leadership opportunities exist for all stakeholders within the school community. This thesis explores leadership practice within four school communities, with a particular focus on the extent to which leadership is distributed among both formal and informal leaders.

A number of international and Irish studies have linked distributed leadership with possible advantages in terms of school improvement, enhanced learning and improved pupil outcomes (LDS, 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2008; Mulford, 2008). Research has also suggested that distributed forms of leadership can assist capacity building within schools, and that the distributed perspective offers a new and important theoretical lens through which leadership practices in schools can be reconfigured and reconceptualised (Harris, 2004). The contextual factors currently impinging on education in Ireland, as outlined above, highlight the idea that leadership that is distributed across the school can be an appropriate response to addressing the change and challenges that they bring. For example, recent policy calls for school self-evaluation [SSE] (DES, 2011a) and

improvement of numeracy and literacy among children and young people (DES, 2011b) give central importance to teaching and leadership that is based on collaboration and whole-school and distributed work practices. Along with a push towards distributed leadership, however, there exists a conflicting push towards instructional leadership that comes from "the top" (that is to say, the principal). The introduction of the aforementioned strategy towards improving numeracy and literacy, for example, with their accompanying target-driven, whole-school three year plans, has meant that principals are being forced to take control and lead in a very instructional way. Hence, principals and teachers are receiving mixed messages regarding how best to lead their schools in responding to the challenges that they face.

This study examines the leadership roles played by those in formal leadership positions, namely members of In-school Management Teams (ISMTs) (principals, deputy and assistant principals and special duties teachers), and also the roles played by those who do not hold formal positions. As mentioned, a lack of research into the practice of leadership within the context of Irish schools exists, making this study particularly timely.

Below is an outline of the aims and rationale of this study. The main research questions are highlighted and an outline of the structure of the thesis, which summarises the content of each chapter of the study, is presented.

Introduction to the Research and its Aims

The aim of this research is the examination and comparison of the practice of leadership in four Dublin primary schools, focusing on the current formal leadership and

management model that exists in schools, namely In-school Management Teams

(ISMTs) and also informal leadership roles within the schools. It also explores the extent

to which leadership practice is distributed.

Four case studies were conducted in order to document the practices and

intentions of, and attitudes to, leadership in these schools. Data were collected through

the use of questionnaires, diaries and semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, cross-

case comparisons allowed for a deeper examination of the leadership practice that was

in existence in the schools. This research was designed to take account of the practice

of, and attitudes towards, leadership practice in these four Irish primary schools and the

professional needs that exist around practice so as to inform discussion with a view to

contributing to further research in this area.

Rationale for Research and Relevance

Focus of the Investigation

The focus of this research was: (a) examination of the practices and intentions of

leaders (including both those who were members of the formal In-school Management

Team (ISMT) and also informal leaders) in four schools, (b) examination of attitudes

towards the leadership practice in these schools, (c) examination of the professional

needs of In-school Management Teams and of informal leaders, and (d) examination of

the extent to which leadership is distributed.

Purpose of Chosen Topic

The purpose of the chosen topic of this research is based on several factors. First, very little academic research exists that explores leadership *practice* [italics added] in Irish schools, and the extent to which it is distributed. Publications dealing specifically with leadership and ISM in Ireland remain quite limited and new Government policy and guidelines are long overdue (LDS, 2007). Reports in the last few years (LDS, 2007; OECD, 2008) have highlighted this lack of research, stating that it is urgently required. Similarly, Ireland's leadership professional development body, Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) has been advocating distributed leadership ways of working since its inception over a decade ago, recognising that distributed leadership practice is what is needed if schools are to respond to various Government policy agendas.

The movement towards school improvement in Ireland is accompanied by calls for those in formal leadership roles, and also those who are not, to lead policy initiatives in their schools. For example, policies relating to Whole-School Evaluation [WSE] (DES, 2006, 2010), the inclusion of children with special educational needs [SEN] (DES, 2000, 2005, 2006) and documents on professional ways of working together (INTO, 2000) all highlight the need to adopt "whole-school" and collaborative approaches to working and leading in schools. These policies and documents, along with their expectations, are discussed in the Literature Review. They encourage and highlight the need for leadership that comes from those holding formal positions and also those in informal positions.

These expectations come with a recognition of the challenges schools are facing, and that distributing leadership beyond the work of formal leaders is needed to respond to change. Thus, part of the rationale for carrying out this research is that, at present, a lack of research relating to leadership practice and distributed leadership practice in the Irish context exists. The above reports have asserted that in order to maintain quality leaders in the Irish education system, it will be necessary to examine possible changes in the current structures and practices in order to distribute responsibility and workload. This cannot be done without examining existing practices. Furthermore, an investigation into variation between schools may enlighten others as to the practice of leadership and ISM in other schools.

Second, authors (Mulford, 2008; Spillane, 2006) contend that much writing on leadership is purely conceptual and that it is important when considering school leadership that one is concerned with leadership *practice* [italics added]. Citing Heck and Hallinger (1999), Spillane and Zubini (2009) comment that "In-depth analysis of leadership practice is rare but essential if we are to make progress in understanding school leadership" (p. 377), and assert that examining daily practice of leadership is an important line of enquiry. This research seeks to explore leadership practice of both formal and informal leaders (through analysis of data from questionnaires, diaries and interviews), focusing on the action of the participants and the interactions that occur between them, and all the while taking into account each school's unique context (Spillane, 2006).

Third, economic conditions in the past few years have brought a moratorium on promotion to special duties posts and assistant principalships (with a small number of

exceptions). This research seeks to highlight what effect, if any, this moratorium has had on management and leadership practice in the four schools.

Finally, the practices of leadership, along with its challenges and varying roles, are of particular interest to the researcher, being deputy principal and a member of the ISMT in her own school. Furthermore, it is hoped that the study's findings would inform and potentially enhance practices in her own school.

Research Questions and Subthemes

The main research questions on which this study is based, examine how leadership is practised in four primary schools. They are

- Research question 1 - What are the practices (and intentions) of formal and informal leaders and how are they supported in their school?

- Research question 2 - What are the attitudes of principals, other members of the ISMT and non-members to the practices of leadership?

- Research question 3 - What are the professional needs of both formal and informal leaders?

Thus, the above research questions concentrate on examining leadership practice, attitudes towards it and professional leadership needs. They are discussed in detail in the Methodology chapter. Other areas for exploration, which stemmed from these questions, are presented in Figure 1.
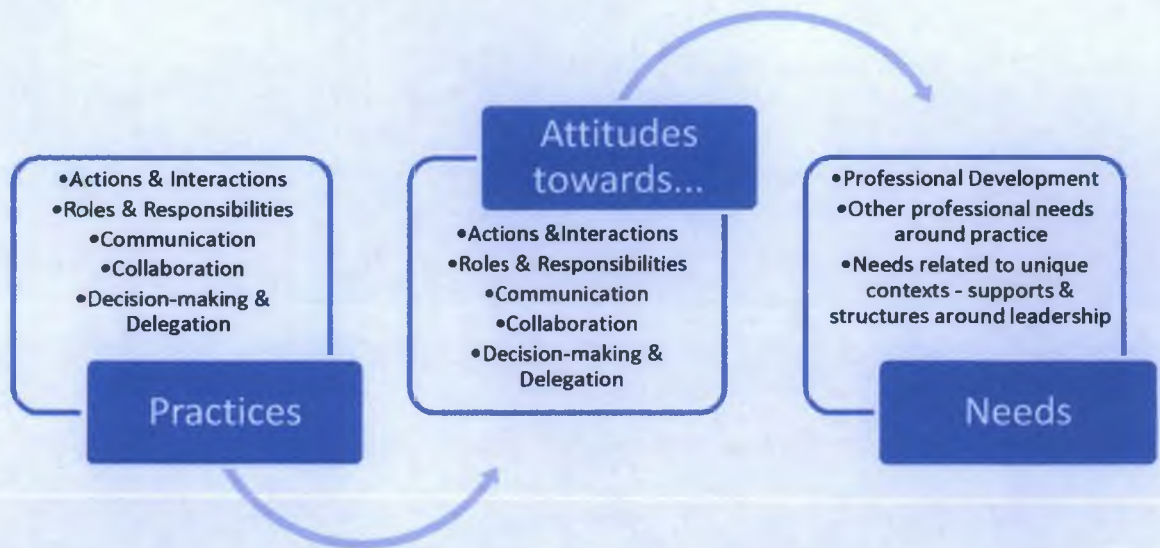
Figure 1. Areas of exploration based on main research questions

The instruments used in this research – questionnaires, diary templates and semi-structured interview schedules (see Appendices B, E and F) were designed to explore these subthemes, and the quantitative and qualitative coding of the data, which was done during the various stages of data analysis, was also based on these themes.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in four main parts. The Literature Review chapter explores and critiques both international and Irish literature with a view to presenting this author's theoretical framework for analysis. The literature review examines concepts that are central to the research and presents the framework on which this study is largely based. Key terms are defined and educational leadership within the Irish context is discussed. Furthermore, it explores other related issues including school

culture, the role of the principal, and barriers and challenges to distributed leadership practice. Current policy within the Irish context is also examined.

The Methodology chapter outlines the methodology adopted for this study and describes how the research was carried out. The main research questions are presented and discussed, linking them to the literature. The research design and methods of data collection are examined and a rationale for the research design is discussed. Details of piloting are outlined, as are the limitations of the research. This chapter outlines how the data gathered during this research project were analysed. The procedures of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis are discussed, and the instruments and techniques used are outlined and summarised. Finally, issues including ethical considerations, the role of the researcher and validity are addressed.

Data analysis and findings from the schools are highlighted and discussed in the Analysis and Findings chapter. A summary profile of each school is presented, thereby setting the scene of the research. Analysis of the three types of data (from the questionnaires, diaries and interviews) is briefly discussed and individual school findings are summarised. The chapter points to four appendices that present the findings from the four individual schools - including evidence of formal and informal leadership practices (or lack thereof) in the schools, the role of the principal, the structures and supports that were found to exist (or not) around leadership practices and the expressed professional needs of those in leadership roles. The chapter deals with key themes that emerged from cross-case analysis of the data from the four schools.

In the Outcomes and Recommendations chapter, the findings of the research are explored through discussion and by linking them to the literature. A summary of the main findings and themes that emerged are outlined. It synthesises the data and findings and presents the overall conclusions from the research. Implications for future action and recommendations for future research and policy are also provided.

Summary

This chapter has introduced the aims, rationale for and research questions underpinning this study and has outlined the structure of the thesis. It has highlighted that this study examines leadership practices in four schools, with a view to ascertaining the extent to which leadership is distributed. The author believes this research to be timely, as both national and international studies have been highlighting how distributed leadership practices correlate positively with pupil outcomes. A review of the literature points to the need for distributed leadership in schools, while also cautioning against viewing it as a panacea. This study focuses on how leadership roles are played out practically, as opposed to exploring leadership at a purely theoretical level.

This study contributes to the field of educational leadership and seeks to address some of the gaps that are highlighted in the leadership literature. These gaps are discussed in more detail in the Literature Review chapter. This study highlights that distributed leadership practice was rare in the schools and what when it was practiced, teachers felt motivated and affirmed in their work. This research has also highlighted factors that were seen to help or hinder the practice of those who led, or indeed desired to lead in the schools. Finally this research has considered leadership from the

perspective of practice by viewing the work of leaders through their actions, interactions and intentions. In doing so, this research has contributed a snap-shot of leadership in action and the conditions that are needed to support it, rather than examining leadership from a purely theoretical viewpoint. The final chapter outlines discussion and a number of recommendations for future practice and policy based on the main findings of this study. Thus, it may be of use to practitioners, professional development providers and policy-makers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

School leadership is widely accepted as being a key constituent in achieving school improvement and improved student outcomes (Harris, 2009; Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, 2009). Evidence from international research demonstrates the powerful influence and positive effect that school leaders can exercise on the achievements of students and the motivation and professional learning of teachers (Leithwood et al., 2009; Southworth, 2004). Research highlights that effective school leadership is essential in improving the equity and efficacy of schooling (OECD, 2008). Furthermore, evidence focuses on the influence that school leadership has on the school climate and environment. Thus, school leadership, viewed as critical to the success of schools has become an educational policy priority around the world (LDS, 2007; Mulford, 2008; OECD, 2008).

The leadership literature demonstrates that conceptualisations of leadership towards distributed and collaborative models are becoming more and more pervasive (Mulford 2008; Southworth, 2004; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). The distributed leadership literature focuses on the need for communities of learners and leaders, for real distribution of power and responsibility within schools and on the type of school culture that enables this type of leadership (Flood, in O' Sullivan & West-Burnham,

2011). Exploration of the literature on distributed leadership highlights that authors

increasingly believe that the empowerment of a broader set of stakeholders as school

leaders will enable schools to achieve the goal of continuous improvement (Hallinger &

Heck, in Harris, 2009).

Distributed models of leadership have been viewed as potentially promising

ways of responding to the many complex challenges currently faced by schools

(Leithwood et al. 2009; LDS, 2007; O' Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011; Mulford,

2008). Ireland is experiencing a period of great challenge and uncertainty. The past

decade has brought with it rapid and constant change. Likewise, it has brought with it

financial turmoil and threats to our stability. Schools, and those who lead within them,

are facing these challenges and uncertainties. This literature review explores concepts of

leadership within the Irish context, looking at Government policies and guidelines,

research and reports through a distributed leadership lens. It examines how leadership

practices that are distributed may assist schools in facing these challenges. Leadership is

also viewed from Wenger's Communities of Practice [COP] (Wenger, 2000)

perspective, a perspective that can help to understand leadership practice.

Conducting this literature review involved critical, in-depth evaluation of

research already undertaken on specific topics pertaining to this study and other relevant

literature. Its aim is to review and report on relevant literature so as to situate this

research within the context of the wider academic community. Topics including

leadership, leadership practice, communities of practice, school improvement, school

culture, distributed leadership and the role of the principal were the main areas of review

and evaluation. These areas were chosen based on their perceived importance towards framing the focus of this research and its design.

This chapter is presented in five parts. It explores and critiques both international and national literature. First it presents various definitions and concepts relating to educational leadership and leadership practice. Second, it looks to leadership and management within the Irish context. The current formal leadership structure in Irish primary schools, namely In-school Management is discussed and a chronology of developments that have occurred within the Irish context (in relation to leadership) is outlined. Furthermore, this section examines statutory and quasi-statutory Irish policy documents and reports that make reference to leadership and management in schools and also considers leadership towards school improvement. The third section defines and explores the concept of distributed leadership and examines various themes that relate to this type of leadership, including the role of the principal, teacher leadership and barriers to, and challenges of, working in this way in schools. It also relates school culture to distributed leadership practice. The fourth section draws on insights from this chapter, and considers implications of the review for framing this study. It re-states the research questions, frames the study in terms of the literature reviewed, outlines what is considered to be evidence of leadership practice and highlights how this study addresses gaps that are identified in the literature and empirical research in the area.

Educational Leadership

This section presents and discusses key terms that pertain to this research, including educational leadership and leadership practice, with a view to situating these concepts in the Irish context and aligning them with this study's research questions.

Educational Leadership - Definition and Discussion

Educational leadership is sometimes regarded as a separate entity to educational management and administration, although generally the literature encompasses the latter two as subsets within leadership (Cuban, 1988). In this study, educational leadership is taken to involve managerial, administrative and leadership roles. The educational dimension of educational leadership reflects the notion of leadership that is learning-centred – that school improvement and improved pupil outcomes are part of the vision of those leading (Flood, in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011). In this review, therefore, the term leadership is taken to mean educational, learning-centred leadership that encompasses managerial and administrative roles.

In the literature, leadership is viewed as a process of influence, as a behaviour, an activity, a practice, and also as a shared endeavour (Flood in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011; Day et al., 2000; Linsky & Lawrence, in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011; Mulford, 2008; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Southworth asserts, however, that much of the literature on leadership is theoretical and he advocates the exploration of leadership practice. He argues:

> Too much leadership writing is purely conceptual. Of course there is nothing inherently wrong with conceptual thinking, it is the mainstay of analysis, but the

important thing to keep in view is that when we consider school leadership we are actually concerned with leadership practice – with how it is exercised and transacted. (in Mulford, 2008, p. iii)

This study responds to this assertion by examining leadership practice, by exploring the interactions and actions of those who lead in four schools.

The notion of leadership as influence is central to many definitions of leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004; Flood in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Leithwood et al. (2004) state that, "While agreement about the precise meaning of leadership is nowhere to be found, the setting of meaningful directions and, the exercise of influence (or power) are central parts of virtually all perspectives" (p. 3). Varying definitions of educational leadership arise depending on the differences of perspective on such issues as to how meaningful direction occurs, what is the nature of that direction, the types of influence or power used in moving individuals, groups or organisations towards those directions, what sort of person/people exercise(s) such influence and power, and under what circumstances. As Leithwood et al. point out, insights about leadership are to be found in addressing such issues and questions (Leithwood et al., 2004). Linked with influence are leadership intentions and moral purpose. Leaders lead for various reasons and with varying intentions. Part of the rationale of this research is to examine the intentions of both formal and informal leaders in the schools - that is to say, it seeks to examine why leaders make certain leadership decisions and what their motivation is.

Leadership is also viewed as a shared endeavour. Spillane and Diamond's (2007) theory of distributed leadership (which is examined in more detail later) is partly based

on what they term the leadership plus aspect, arguing that leadership roles are played out by more than one person, both in formal and informal leadership positions. Linsky & Lawrence contend that leadership can come from any interested factions – that leadership "is not the exclusive prerogative of people in positions of authority" (in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011, p. 6). For the purpose of this review, then, leadership is considered as a role that can be taken on by different people at different times, that it is a shared endeavour. It is believed that equating leadership with the behaviours of one person is limiting. Rather, it is contended that in different situations, different leaders are needed - that situations require different kinds of leadership.

Within the Irish context, however, confusion can occur when this perspective is aligned with the current definition of educational leadership within the education system, and with definitions as to what encompasses an educational leader. The report, Improving School Leadership, OECD Project Background Report for Ireland (LDS, 2007), defines what is meant currently by educational leadership within the Irish context and paints a picture of how the role is viewed:

> 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. (p. 18)

The concept of educational leadership and the leadership role of the principal is a "relatively new phenomenon in Ireland and is described as the wider, more visionary aspect of managing the school" (LDS, 2007, p. 18). In discussion groups organised by

the LDS, teachers regarded principals as leaders as well as managers (LDS, 2003), stating that "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'" (LDS, 2007, p. 19). It is clear that the conceptualisation of leadership in Ireland is defined in relation to certain people or groups, for example the principal and the ISMT.

The Background Report for Ireland (2007) examines the various roles played by those other individuals and groups who are considered as having a leadership role in the school community, including the deputy principal, middle management post holders and the Board of Management. What is evident from the report is that there are varying interpretations of the leadership roles played by different members of the school community. It acknowledges that the concept of leadership "as a core activity in the effectiveness and development of schools in the Irish education system is now widely accepted", and that the role of the school principal has developed beyond that of administrator and manager, to include activities that reflect the learning-centred nature of the role (LDS, 2007, p. 61). It calls urgently for the role of the school leader, and that of other leadership roles in schools, to be articulated clearly.

Educational Leadership Practice within Communities of Practice

Part of the rationale for this study points to the dearth of research on educational leadership practice both nationally and internationally. Thus, one of the main aims of this study is to explore leadership practice in four schools and in so doing provide a cohesive picture of what leadership looks like in each school. In order to further understanding of leadership practice, Gronn (2003) suggests that we must ask the question as to what leaders do. He highlights that a focus on leading should invite a

consideration of process. Addressing this question, and ancillary questions that follow from it (including how do leaders go about or accomplish this doing? and why do leaders do what they do?) necessitates an analysis of action. Gronn (2003) asserts that action incorporates "the agency of social actors and an appreciation of context" (p. 30). He presents illustrations that highlight the need to explore practice rather than theory alone, commenting that "in order to get to the bottom of the division of labour, and what managers and leaders do, and how they accomplish it, researchers need to understand organisations in process terms, rather than as entities" (2003, p. 30).

Gronn's (2003) assertion is echoed in the work of Spillane and Orlina (2005) who use as their lens the interactions of those who lead and those who follow, all the while acknowledging the central importance of the context in which these interactions take place. They assert that there is a lack of research that explores leadership practice and also lament the great ambiguity that exists around what the term leadership practice actually means, concluding that it is therefore "difficult to improve that which has not been defined in the first place" (Spillane & Orlina, 2005, p. 18). In a later section, this literature review focuses on distributed leadership. According to Spillane and Orlina (2005), from a distributed perspective, leadership practice takes place in the interactions of people, their actions and their situations, thereby identifying the crucial importance of considering individual school context when examining leadership practice and that purely looking at the skills and behaviours required by school leaders "decontextualizes school leadership, masking critical interdependencies and requiring additional effort and assumptions when trying to restore the lost context" (2005, p. 22).

Lave (1988) too points to the importance of practice within a unique context (or "arena" as she terms it) and the experiences that take place within that arena (what she terms the "setting"). She defines the arena as a "physically, economically, politically and socially organised space-in-time" (p. 150). The setting is used to foreground subjective experiences within local contexts. In terms of leadership practice then, the settings (or subjective experiences of those who lead and those who follow) take place within the arena of the school, and settings are generated out of leadership practice.

Wenger's (2000) perspective of 'Communities of Practice' is a useful perspective through which leadership practice can be viewed. Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour (Wenger, 2000). Communities, such as schools, develop their practice through a variety of actions. They have an identity that is defined by a shared domain of interest. The community is cultivated by developing practice, community and domain in parallel. Schools and the actors within them, viewed as communities of practice are perceived in relation to their engagement in practice and the informal learning that comes within, rather than simply viewing the "more obvious structures" (Wenger, 2000). This is the intention of this study. This research seeks to examine the practice of leaders within their own unique contexts and through their interactions, actions and intentions. Hence it does not consider leadership in isolation -such as viewing leadership as a model or a list of leader characteristics, for example - rather it examines the practice of leadership within four communities of practice, exploring what that practice actually looks like.

The perspectives above point to the importance of the context in which practice takes place, with Spillane et al. (2005) and Gronn (2003) in particular focusing on the need to not only examine what leaders are doing but also the interactions that take place within their action. The understanding of leadership practice that underpins this research also draws from an ecological theory perspective - that if schools are to meet the challenges of teaching and learning within complex contexts, there needs to be a paradigm shift from what Sackney and Walker (2006) consider more linear perspectives of educating and their mechanistic tendencies "towards perspectives based on ecological and complexity theories" (p. 20). They argue in favour of a turn towards learning community and the creation of communities of practice that ... are based on social networks, and an awareness of learning in the face of mystery - as meeting the needs of the 21st century (Sackney & Walker, 2006, p. 21)". Ecological thinking views organisations as connections, relationships, living systems and contexts. An organisation is viewed as an integrated whole rather than as a disassociated collection of parts. Sackney and Walker (2006) assert that our world is not a world of distinct parts and separate events but instead, "a world of connectedness, interrelationships, interdependencies systems and mutual influences" (p. 2). They cite Bohm (1980) who believes that it is a world that must be viewed holistically, "because what appears to be separate and distinct at one level becomes unified at another level" (Sackney & Walker, 2006, p. 2).

The notion of ecology when applied to educational leadership practice implies an appreciation of dynamic connections, relationships, and mutual influences that impinge on teaching and learning. These shifts in perspective radically alter the focus from

distinct parts to thinking about holistic representations. As Sackney and Walker point out this shift in focus "acknowledges that individuals are not islands onto themselves and that people mutually influence one another ... These perspectives also acknowledge that shifts in one part of the system cause disturbances in other parts of the system" (2006, p. 18).

Drawing from the perspectives above, this study is based on an understanding of leadership practice that involves the actions and behaviours of leaders - what they do - and their interactions with others - who they lead or lead with - all within a unique context. Figure 4 in the Analysis and Findings chapter illustrates the understanding of leadership practice that underpins this research, showing practice as being inextricably linked to context, actions, behaviours and intentions of actors, interactions between actors and other influencing factors. This understanding of leadership practice strongly acknowledges the influence that both internal and external factors can have on practice, including individual values of actors and external pressures that have a bearing on schools. Gronn (2003) stresses factors such as these when he argues, "Leaving aside contentious issues concerned with the causal relation between action and outcomes ... the actions of school leaders are inextricably bound up with, and in large measure determined by, educational values and policy ends" (p. 71). Hence he calls for an understanding of "workplace realities", and asserts that "research into processes in natural settings" is highly relevant and necessary (p. 71).

The understanding of leadership practice that underpins this study shifts the unit of analysis from the individual actor or group of actors to the web of leaders, followers and situations that give practice its form. It moves beyond solely focusing on the action

of leaders, acknowledging that practice is about the interactions and inter-relationships between actors. With these interactions come important factors to consider, including the power, agency, and influence that exist within practice (see Appendix I). This study focuses in on the work of leaders/managers in four natural settings and aims to explore their interactions and actions and the context in which they act. Furthermore, it aims to reveal the division of leadership labour and the dynamic of leaders' work. Doing so responds to calls by authors such as Gronn for "evidence-informed judgements about practice" (2003, p.72).

The Irish Context: Outline of Key Terms, Structures, Chronology and Policies

The Irish In-school Management/Leadership Structure

Certain key terms and associated phrases are used in the Irish literature in relation to leadership. One such term relates to the current formal structure of leadership in schools, that is In-School Management (ISM). The Department of Education and Science's Circular 07/03 outlines that the principal, deputy principal and holders of posts of responsibility together form the in-school management team for the school. (DES, 2003). Assistant principals (AP) also form a part of the In-school Management Team (ISMT). The rationale for the development of school management structures is outlined in the above circular, including affording teachers the opportunity "to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff, and the academic and pastoral work of the school" (p. 1). Those who are assigned posts of responsibility (post holders) earn an extra allowance for performing their duties, they are index linked and are calculable for pension purpoes.

Internationally, terms encompassing leadership such as middle leadership have become more prevalent and widely used (NCSL, 2006; OECD, 2008), whereas the term In-school Management rather than In-school Leadership is still used within the Irish literature. Attention is drawn to this difference in language use because, as was mentioned earlier, the terms leadership and management can be seen as very different concepts. One could argue that the Irish literature continues to move to embrace the three concepts of leadership, management and administration under the term 'leadership' and that this might extend to the term 'In-school management'. With this change in language can come a new understanding of what is involved in the roles and responsibilities of the In-school leader as opposed to the manager. In this study, the term 'In-school management/leadership' is used, reflecting the fact that while the Irish literature has always referred to ISM, the current movement in the leadership literature in Ireland is towards use of the term 'leadership' (LDS, 2007).

Since the 1970s, posts of responsibility have been assigned in Irish schools and since then there have been various reviews of the structure, with led to subsequent developments and changes. The overriding rationale behind middle management was the drive on the part of the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) to improve the management of primary schools. Various reports throughout the 1980s and 1990s highlighted certain concerns relating to the posts, including the time needed to carry out duties, the nature of duties, the need for periodic review of posts (so that they would be closely aligned with the school's needs), and the criteria for appointment to posts (that competencies, merit and skill should be as much a factor for consideration as seniority).

Ryng (2000), in her review of middle management in primary schools, discusses

how these concerns and issues were highlighted in various reports and DES circulars.

Many of these were brought to the fore in the White Paper on Education, Charting our

Education Future (1995). Ryng (2000) comments that this document built on much of

the debate that had gone on in preceding years and that it outlined policy direction and

targets for future development, including significant organisational development. It

chartered the way forward for the redefinition of duties of all post holders in order to

best meet the management needs of the school.

Leadership structures within Irish schools continued to be developed following

negotiation between management bodies, unions and the Department of Education and

Science (DES). Following on from the 1996 Programme for Competitiveness and Work

(PCW) agreements and the 2000 Benchmarking Report, the subsequent DES Circular

(Circular P07/03) in 2003 outlined the most recent set of guidelines for ISM,

superseding other previous circulars relating to middle management and posts of

responsibility. The new arrangements dealt with eligibility, appointments and appeals

procedures, as well as including previous guidelines in relation to descriptions of the

duties and responsibilities of all promoted post holders and issues relating to pay. The

Background Report for Ireland (LDS, 2007) says of the aforementioned Circular:

> 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 school's leadership and management needs. (p. 36)

There is agreement (LDS, 2007) that while these changes were generally welcomed, in

practice they were not necessarily being embraced. In certain cases, the legacy of issues

such as those surrounding seniority and role definition remained. The report highlights

this, stating that "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" (LDS, 2007).

The Background Report (LDS, 2007), provides a timely review of the role of

formal leadership in Irish schools and puts forward important recommendations and

conclusions for future action on improving and supporting leadership roles. It calls for

review and changes to be made, arguing that:

To maintain high quality leaders in the Irish education system it will be

necessary to examine possible changes in 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. (p. 64)

Internationally, this viewpoint is reinforced in the OECD report, Improving School

Leadership: Policy and Practice (2008), Pont et al., reinforce the need for distributed

educational leadership and in the need to redefine the roles and responsibilities of

middle and senior leadership. One might suggest that In-school Management Teams,

along with teachers who are not part of the ISMT should consider working to move in

the direction of distributed leadership, based on the findings that highlight the benefits of working and leading in this way.

There have been no new guidelines in relation to the ISM/leadership structure since 2003. Furthermore, in 2009, worsening economic conditions in Ireland brought with them a moratorium on promotion and recruitment in the public sector. At the time of writing, this looks to be a reality for the foreseeable future. The measures have had an immediate impact on schools in relation to the filling of posts other than those of principal and deputy principal.

Policies, Reports and Expectations towards School Improvement

Various educational policies and documents have a bearing on leadership practice in Irish schools and suggest that leadership does not necessarily reside in formal leadership positions alone. For example, policies relating to Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) (DES, 2006, 2010), the inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN) (DES, 2000, 2011a), and documents on professional ways of working together (INTO, 2000), all highlight the need to adopt 'whole-school' and collaborative approaches to working and leading in schools. These are supported by The Teaching Council's Code of Professional Practice and Behaviour (2007). Such collaborative whole-school approaches look to include all stakeholders in the school community, including staff, parents, children, members of the community, partners in education and boards of management, with the aim of involving all of these groups in important decision-making and in creating a shared vision for the school.

The framework documents for WSE (2006, 2010) and the inclusion of children with SEN (2000) advocate a partnership approach, from teachers planning and learning together, to ensuring that parents and children have a voice in relation to their needs. These documents call for collaboration, joint decision-making and delegation. Clearly this has implications for leadership in schools. Leadership within the context of taking a whole-school approach requires a distribution of roles and responsibilities, teamwork and collaborative ways of working (LDS, 2007). Along with this push, however, there exists a conflicting pull towards instructional leadership that comes from "the top" (that is to say, the principal). Likewise, the recent introduction of strategies towards improving numeracy and literacy (Circular 0056, Initial Steps in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, 2011), with their accompanying target-driven, whole-school planning, has meant that schools are under increasing pressures of accountability, self-assessment and goal-setting. One could argue that, in responding to these challenges, principals and teachers must work together in leading change and improvement. At the same time, policy aspirations and school realities must be kept in mind. This literature review acknowledges the many challenges that currently face schools. With more limited resources due to the current moratorium on promotion, it no doubt follows that schools are becoming more hard-pressed to answer policy calls and aspirations. This research examines the extent to which the moratorium has had an effect on the schools and how the leaders in the four schools are responding to such challenges.

The aforementioned policies and documents towards school improvement communicate the expectation on the part of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Teaching Council and Teacher Unions, that all stakeholders should be afforded

the opportunity to work together to improve education provision for all pupils. Hence, it could be argued that with these expectations, come implications for the culture, practices and structures that exist in schools, and that the distribution of leadership within a collaborative environment is required if schools are to respond to these expectations, particularly within increasingly complex contexts.

While the documents and policies mentioned above do not explicitly use the terms distributed leadership or school improvement it is clear that much of what they advocate alludes to them. The following sections define these terms and discuss key themes pertaining to this study.

Distributed Leadership and Related Themes

Defining and Examining Distributed Leadership

Schooling has a long history of sole leadership with 'heroic leaders' being seen as the model held up for others to follow (Gronn, 2003, p. 27). Alternative approaches to the sole leader have been identified and considered, however, over the past few decades based on the general assumption that it is the relationship between the leader and followers that promotes or prevents the development of the school and the learning that takes place within. Those in formal positions therefore have to be prepared to share the power that traditionally comes with their position, be better able to develop and lead their team to improve what they do for pupils. In turn, other members of staff need to be encouraged to lessen dependency on those in formal leadership positions and accept their own leadership role.

The concept of distributed leadership is not new, although authors acknowledge that the concept has received quite considerable attention in recent years (Leithwood et al., 2009; Mulford, 2008; Spillane et al, 2009; Sugrue, 2009). This attention is partly due to the fact that schools are faced with increasingly complex challenges and contexts, and with this has come the acknowledgment that professional expertise to lead in such contexts exists both within formal and informal positions. Another related reason that has been put forward is that it has been thought unrealistic that one person, the principal, can lead the complex organisation that the school has become, without the assistance of colleagues (Copland, 2001; Corcoran, 2000, Sugrue, 2009). This section presents definitions and concepts relating to distributed leadership and is then followed by a discussion of some of its related features. Themes relating to distributed leadership were chosen based on the frequency with which they appeared in the literature and the emphasis that various authors in the field have placed on them in their empirical research in the area (Hallinger & Heck, in Harris, 2009; Harris, 2009; Humphreys, 2010; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane and Orlina, 2005).

Discussing distributed leadership in schools, Mulford (2008) points out that, "Despite much writing to the contrary, there is still a tendency to equate school leadership with the actions of the principal" (p. 43). He says that although principals hold a considerable amount of responsibility in schools, the leadership of schools is now too complex and demanding a job for one person and that instead, it requires more distributed forms of leadership. Distributed leadership concepts originated in the work of March and Sergiovanni in the 1980s and since then have gained many advocates. There is a concern, however, that the concept can be all things to all people (Mulford,

2008; Spillane & Diamond, 2007), and there is a danger that it can be over-simplified. As was discussed earlier in relation to leadership practice, the interconnectedness and interrelations between actors within different contexts must be considered. As Mulford (2008) argues, "Taking a distributed stance involves much more than acknowledging that multiple individuals take responsibility for leadership work. It also involves understanding how leadership practice unfolds in the collective interactions among leaders, between followers and their context" (p. 44).

Within the Irish context, Humphreys' (2010) timely doctoral research explores how distributed leadership is understood in the Irish post primary school context, with particular reference to its impact on teaching and learning. She found that a wide ranging definition of distributed leadership emerged, "that recognised that all teachers can be leaders, but the extent of their leadership functions varies from within their classroom to their influence over colleagues" (p. 161). Their understanding of distributed leadership was also shown to encompass "structural and cultural issues" (p. 161). Her study revealed that while in general teachers in each of the three schools perceived distributed leadership to be necessary and positive, this was not always matched by their experience of leadership practices. The term distributed leadership was understood to incorporate four dimensions: leadership roles (which may be formal or informal), individual traits (particularly those related to influencing others), having a sense of belonging to the school organisation and supporting the development of leadership capacity in individuals. Principals in the study highlighted the importance of developing individual leadership skills and talents among teachers and providing opportunities for the exercise of leadership in informal as well as formal roles and

actions. Evidence from the study suggests that development of leadership happens

through a combination of opportunity and nurturing, and that this depends on

consciously taking action (usually starting with the principal and DP setting the

example) and the concerted effort to "let go" when providing opportunities for others to

lead. Her study also outlines what the teachers in the three schools perceived to be traits

or qualities displayed by those who practised leadership in the schools and her research

calls for further empirical research to further explore what leadership practice looks like

within the Irish context, with particular focus on distributed leadership that involves the

practice of both formal and informal leaders.

Authors such as MacBeath (2004) and Duignan (2006) point to the ethical

dimension of distributed leadership, moving away from rigid hierarchical structures to

more democratic ways of sharing leadership. Duignan (2006) in particular places strong

emphasis on community, relationships, a sense of unity and shared vision. MacBeath

believes that distributed leadership is assumed on a democratic basis and contends that

distributed leadership regards influence "as a right and a responsibility rather than it

being bestowed as a gift" (2004, p. 34). He asserts that distributive leadership may be

seen as a value or an ethic, "residing in the organisational culture, exercised in different

places within a school" (2004, p. 34). Duignan (2006) argues that distributed leadership

practice is highly dependent on trust, and he promotes and encourages the development

of both formal and informal leaders within schools. He also strongly believes that by

distributing leadership in schools, leadership capacity and the quality of leadership in

the school can be greatly strengthened. The need for trust and a shared vision appears

frequently in the distributed leadership literature (Leithwood et al., 2009). This research

study examines the intentions of school leaders in their leadership practice. For example it asks, Are leaders distributing leadership and if so why, what does this look like in practice and what attitudes exist towards such practice?

In their article, Investigating Leadership Practice: Exploring the Entailments of Taking a Distributed Perspective, Spillane and Orlina (2005) articulate a distributed framework for investigating leadership, involving two aspects: the practice aspect and the leader-plus aspect. They argue that a distributed perspective offers a very particular way of thinking about leadership practice, and conclude that taking a distributed perspective entails thinking of leadership at the group level and examining the interactions that take place at this level. This is the main objective of this research - to examine the practice of leadership through interactions that take place. This research also examines how leadership is practised by both formal and informal leaders, and is closely aligned with the perspective of Spillane, who asserts, "Writing about school leadership and management from a distributed perspective has identified numerous individuals – both positional and informal leaders – in the school across whom the work of leadership and management can be distributed" (Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2009, p. 87, citing Camburn et al. 2003, Heller & Firestone, 1995, Spillane, 2006).

As an analytical framework for studying the practice of leadership and management, this study takes a distributed perspective, aiming to explore the practice of leading and managing and how it involves more than the actions of the school principal and/or those in formal leadership positions, all the while aware that taking a distributive perspective comes with certain caveats. Spillane and Diamond (2007) warn that the appeal of the distributive lens "lies partially in the ease with which it becomes many

things to many people", and also that the usages vary, with some using it "as though it were a blueprint or recipe for effective school leadership" and others as a way of conceptualising school leadership (2007, p. 1). They also caution that taking such a perspective does not intend to negate or undermine the role of the principal (2007).

Similarly, Sugrue warns against debasing "some valuable aspects of more traditional conceptualisations of leadership" (2009, p. 353). He acknowledges that a major strength of distributed leadership is that it focuses on leadership practice and the interactions between the various actors in schools, whether they hold formal leadership positions or not. He states that "It has potential to be empowering by releasing the leadership potential of all actors on the school scene, and this can be a major 'plus' for leadership capacity and density within a school community" (2009, p. 368). He warns, however, that, "more anarchistic and narcissistic versions of celebrity or 'designer' leadership have potential also to emasculate in ways that are likely to be tragic rather than producing the heroic leadership they are intended to supplant" (2009, p. 368). Such cautionary points warn against viewing distributed leadership as a panacea and highlight the central role that the principal, and other formal leaders, play in schools.

Finally, Spillane (in Leithwood et al., 2009) contends that the empirical research base in the area of distributed leadership is still relatively underdeveloped, with most empirical work involving small samples of schools and formal leadership positions within schools. Leithwood et al. (2009) have begun to respond to this gap, presenting and synthesising recent empirical evidence from a range of authors about the nature, causes and effects of distributed leadership, and common misunderstandings about it. Gaps that exist in empirical research are discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Drawing from both national and international literature, the following sections outline related themes of distributed leadership including, the role of the principal, teacher leadership and teamwork, barriers and challenges to distributed leadership practice and school cultural change towards distributed ways of working and leading.

Role of the Principal

Exploration of the literature on leadership practice and distributed leadership highlights that authors increasingly believe that the empowerment of a broader set of stakeholders as school leaders will enable schools to achieve the goal of continuous improvement (Hallinger & Heck, in Harris, 2009). The question could be asked as to what role the principal plays in such distributed contexts. The literature recognises the key role that the principal plays in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools, but also that he/she does not have direct influence on pupil learning (unless they are teaching principals), that the direct influence comes from teachers (Copland, 2001; Southworth in Mulford, 2008). The literature also highlights the central role that the principal has in influencing the work of teachers and the culture in which they work (Copland, 2001; Southworth in Mulford, 2008). Thus, the principal's role in leading learning lies in creating the conditions (such as supportive structures and a collaborative culture) in which teaching and learning are enhanced.

While the pivotal role of the principal is clearly acknowledged, the perspective through a distributed leadership lens looks to other leaders too. As was mentioned, Spillane (2006) puts leadership practice centre stage and points out that although authors have viewed leadership as a behaviour or an act for quite some time, generally their work has equated leadership practice with the acts of the individual. From Spillane's

distributed perspective, leadership practice takes shape in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situations - a way of thinking which he believes, is a departure from what has gone before. Viewing leadership practice in this way recognises, therefore, that there are multiple leaders.

Spillane, Camburn and Stitzel Pareja (in Leithwood et al., 2009), present findings of their research undertaken in a mid-sized urban school district in the US, which examined school principals at work from a distributed perspective. They examined the distribution of leadership across people from the perspective of the principal's workday, with the principals keeping daily logs of their practice and interactions with others. In relation to the role of the principal, they state that:

> Some commentators propose or construe a distributed perspective on leadership as downplaying the principal's role in managing and leading the schoolhouse. We do not subscribe to this view. As an analytical framework for studying the practice of leading and managing in schools, a distributed perspective is not intended to negate or undermine the role of the principal, but rather to extend our understanding of how leading and managing practice involves more than the actions of the school principal. (pp. 87-88)

Their findings highlight that the work of managing and leading in schools is distributed over multiple actors, by both those in formal leadership positions and those who do not hold formal positions, both alongside and separate to the school principal. The findings also highlight, however, that the leadership practice of these leaders varies, with principals engaged in far more administration-related tasks as opposed to teachers who take more responsibility for curriculum and instruction-related activities.

Thus, two important findings come from the literature in relation to the role of the principal. First, it acknowledges the key role that that the principal plays in improving student achievement (Southworth, in Mulford 2008), but that this influence is indirect. It highlights that the core work of the school - teaching and learning, is more directly impacted upon by teachers. Second, it acknowledges the pivotal role that the principal plays in supporting this work and the environment in which it takes place. As such it could be argued that leading for learning should be shared, and that the principal cannot, and should not work in isolation. Copland (2001) acknowledges the growing awareness that in order for schools to be effective and for principals to meet the challenges that schools are facing, leadership and management in schools must be shared. Similarly, Southworth (2004) communicates the importance of focusing on distributed leadership when considering the future of educational leadership, stating:

> Leadership needs to be exercised at all levels. If we seriously think that it is leadership which matters, rather than the leader, and that leadership is distributed and shared rather than centred on one person then ... we must encourage a team-based approach to leadership, as we can see in many schools today, but also a greater appreciation of what team-based leadership adds up to. (in Mulford, 2008, p. vi)

Thus, another key role of the principal is the acknowledgement of the expertise that exists among the staff and to afford opportunities to others to lead, and as Duignan (2006) says, let go of the idea that leadership must be hierarchically distributed.

The OECD report, Improving School Leadership (2008) also acknowledges that the position of the principal remains an essential feature of schools across the 22

participating countries, but warns that the position is facing a number of challenges. The report asserts that "As the expectations of what schools should achieve have changed dramatically over recent years, countries need to develop new forms of school leadership better suited to respond to current and future educational environments" (p. 31). The report advises that in order for this to happen, two sets of challenges need to be addressed – that support must be given and professional development provided for existing principals and also that countries need to prepare and train the next generation of school leaders (OECD, 2008).

Calls for more distribution of leadership does, however, come with a cautionary note from Sugrue (2009), who acknowledges the important role that principals play in schools. He warns against debasing these figures, asserting that, "many incumbents, mere mortals, do extraordinary work – these are ordinary everyday heroes and heroines and it is possible that in distributing leadership their worth, recognition and status are diminished, and potential principals are discouraged from applying" (p. 367). Hence, while some authors (Pont et al., OECD, 2008) have hailed distributed leadership as a potential way of ensuring the succession of future leaders in schools, it must be viewed from all perspectives and tailored to meet contextual needs.

Teacher Leadership

This review has highlighted that within both national and international literature there is an acknowledgement of the need for a paradigm shift to occur in order to meet the challenges of the knowledge society, with a move away from the traditional worldview of schooling. These challenges, it has been argued, could be extended to all stakeholders within the school community, rather than resting mainly on one school

leader. Copland (2001) highlights the way in which the literature has looked towards teachers as potential leaders, in both a formal and informal capacity. He argues "The rise of research and scholarship advancing teacher leadership, for example, signals a growing understanding of the need to identify leadership beyond the role of the principal" (p. 532).

As was stated earlier, the Background Report for Ireland (2007) points out that despite much writing to the contrary, there is still a tendency to equate school leadership with the actions of the principal. This is despite the fact that the concept of teacher leadership has, according to Lieberman and Miller (2004) "been the subject of a good deal of attention and scrutiny in the past two decades" (p. 15). Harris and Lambert (2003) describe teacher leadership as a model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organisation have the opportunity to lead (cited in Harris & Muijs, 2005, p. 17). A core concept of teacher leadership emphasises leadership in terms of teachers helping each other to improve classroom practice. In more recent years the term has been related to discussions on professional learning communities and distributed leadership (Harris and Lambert, 2003 in Harris & Muijs, 2005).

Lieberman and Miller (2004) believe that as a profession, teachers must "refashion old realities of teaching into new ones if we are to meet the demands of the new century" (p. 11). They propose various transformative shifts in perspective and practice, which they believe, can have a transformative effect on teaching and schools. They include shifts, "From individual to professional community, from teaching at the center to learning at the center, and from technical and managed work to inquiry and leadership" (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p. 11). Such shifts require the ability and

willingness to work collaboratively, and a culture of trust and openness, in which risk-taking and experimentation can become the norm. With these shifts, according to Lieberman and Miller, comes an expanded vision of teaching, "the idea that teachers are also leaders, educators who can make a difference in schools and schooling now and in the future" (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p.11).

Teacher leadership does not require a teacher to hold a formal leadership position in a school, rather it is leadership that acknowledges the skills, expertise and aptitudes of teachers and affords them opportunities to lead. It is recognition that expertise, both knowledge-based and the ability to lead, exists throughout the school and does not necessarily reside in those who hold formal posts of responsibility. Duignan (2006) recognises that distribution of leadership in this way is a more democratic and fluid way of assigning roles and responsibilities than the distribution that exists in tight hierarchical structures that consist of formal leadership opportunities alone. It is a way of opening the door to initiative-taking and the sharing of ideas to all teachers. Harris and Lambert (2003) point to the advantageous effect that this can have on the culture of the school, and also on the standard of teaching. They assert that, "Teachers who are engaged in learning with their peers are most likely to embrace new initiatives and to innovate", which, they believe, can also develop potential leaders (2003, p. 78).

Thus, the literature on teacher leadership suggests a type of leadership that is not necessarily aligned to a formal leadership role or function, but is leadership that relates more to the dynamic between individuals and within the school community (Harris & Muijs, 2005). It is premised upon the redistribution of power and more lateral (as

opposed to hierarchical) leadership structures, with the potential of different teachers emerging as leaders at different times.

Barriers and Challenges to Distributed Leadership

While this review of the literature has highlighted various advantages of distributed leadership, it is inevitable that there would be certain difficulties with, and barriers to, adopting and adapting to such ways of working in schools. One challenge that has been identified relates to the way in which the established hierarchy can be upset within schools, from the point of view of authority, ego and financial barriers. Harris and Muijs (2005) state:

> Clearly schools as traditional hierarchies with the demarcations of position and pay-scale are not going to be instantly responsive to a more fluid and distributed approach to leadership ... Consequently to secure informal leadership in schools will require heads to use other incentives and to seek alternative ways of renumerating staff who take on leadership responsibilities. (p.33)

Thus, a barrier to distributed leadership could be the reluctance on the part of formal leaders to relinquish control, especially if doing so is not something that they have been used to doing in the past.

Apart from reticence to distribute leadership due to a desire to maintain the status quo, principals may feel very reluctant to hand over responsibility due to external pressures of accountability that rest on them. As the OECD report (2008) points out, with increased accountability pressing down on schools, principals may well feel uncomfortable in relinquishing control and decision-making to others. The report

acknowledges that "Some of the barriers to effective distribution of leadership may be legal or regulatory barriers to implementing new models of practice or lack of resources" (p. 86).

Furthermore, the way in which leadership is distributed and the motives behind distributing leadership are important issues for consideration. The politics of the school must be taken into account and the extent to which, if used incorrectly, distributed leadership could be a means of social engineering within schools. Hatcher (2005), looking at the distribution of leadership and power in schools points out that if not executed properly, teachers might view distributed leadership as over-delegation or coercion. Similarly, if leadership is viewed as a "gift" to be bestowed and distributed from the top-down, principals may either intentionally or otherwise leave some teachers out. Hatcher (2005) therefore highlights the ethical considerations of taking a distributing leadership approach and highlights the democratic responsibilities that doing so entails.

Another potential challenge of distributed leadership practice is the allocation of time for staff to work together. Ovando's research (1994) highlights time as central to success in distributing leadership, and suggests that if teachers are to work collaboratively, dedicated time must be made available to do so. Hargreaves (1994) too points to lack of time as one of the profession's main constraints. Distribution of leadership is likely to add more workload onto teachers and therefore has the potential of being resisted. Furthermore, Mayrowetz (2008) asserts that the benefits of participation of teachers in, for example, decision-making, does not necessarily result in improved teaching practice.

Finally, a significant barrier to distributed leadership practice can come down to personalities of the staff and their relationships with each other. If a culture of mistrust exists, it is unlikely that distributed leadership practice will be successful. New distributed ways of working may leave some members of staff feeling threatened, insecure or estranged (Harris & Muijs, 2005). The importance of these interpersonal factors is evident, "both with respect to teachers' ability to influence colleagues and with respect to developing productive relations with school management, who may in some cases feel threatened by teachers taking on leadership roles" (Harris & Muijs, 2005, p. 35). The next section examines how the culture of individual schools may need to change in line with moves towards distributed leadership practices.

Changing School Cultures for Distributed Leadership

The Background Report for Ireland (2007) asserts that a change in culture is crucial if movement towards distributed leadership and working within professional learning communities is to become a reality in Irish schools, and also that contextual factors must be acknowledged and supported. The report does acknowledge that cultural shifts take time, but that a shift towards distributed leadership and collaborative ways of working has been happening in Irish schools, particularly at primary level (p. 37).

It is agreed generally that school culture is a vital part of school improvement, but one might ask the question as to what exactly school culture means. Furlong (2000) acknowledges that defining school culture is a difficult task, albeit an imperative one. She states "School culture is perhaps one of the most complex and important concepts in education today. The role it plays in changing our schools cannot be overestimated" (p.

60). The term culture and other similar concepts including climate, ethos, atmosphere and tone appear in the literature regularly and oftentimes form the crux of educational discourse (Furlong, 2000). Indeed school culture is central to the main themes discussed in this review, as it underpins the beliefs and values of the people concerned and the organisations in which they work, learn and lead.

For the purpose of this review, this author considers Schein's (1985) articulation of the essence of the culture of an organisation helpful. Furlong quotes Schein, who asserts that the essence of culture involves "The deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of any organization, that operate unconsciously and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment" (Schein, 1985 in Furlong, 2000, p. 61). School cultures can change, although change can take a long time and requires simultaneous structural change. This needs to be acknowledged in policy and to be addressed in professional development. Similarly, it must be supported in practice.

If the structures that exist presently in schools are to move forward and respond to the individual needs of the schools, the culture of individual schools must be explored within each school and strategically aligned with the structures that lead them. The literature on distributed leadership points to cultures that are collaborative, collegial and inclusive. Hargreaves (1999) points to the fact that such cultures are not necessarily the norm for schools, and that a cultural shift will depend upon involving all members of staff exploring the culture that exists, agreeing on positive directions for cultural change and collectively devising strategies in order to bring this about. As Furlong concludes "What we do and think is ultimately influenced by our values and beliefs.

Understanding those values and beliefs which underlie our school culture, though

difficult to reach, is therefore fundamental in moving towards innovation and change"

(2000, p. 71).

Implications of the Literature for Framing this Study

This section outlines the framework on which the research design is based and

within which the analysis and findings are presented. It recapitulates what the literature

says about leadership practice and highlights the implications of the literature review for

this research. It determines what counts as evidence of leadership practice in this study

and presents emerging considerations regarding leadership and distributed leadership

practice.

A review of the literature was carried out with the three main research questions

in mind: What are the practices (and intentions) of formal and informal leaders and how

are they supported in their school? What are the attitudes of principals, other members

of the ISMT and non-members to the practices of leadership? What are the professional

needs of both formal and informal leaders?

For the purpose of this research, certain assumptions about leadership are made.

First, when examining leadership it is important to do so by looking at the *practice* of

those who lead - their actions, interactions and behaviours and who and why they lead.

As was mentioned in this literature review, viewing practice within the Communities of

Practice perspective (Wenger, 2000) looks beyond more obvious structures and

perceives structures as defined by engagement in practice. Communities of practice are

formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of

human endeavour (Wenger, 2000). Communities, such as schools, develop their practice through a variety of actions. This study looks at how leadership practice is developed within school communities by examining the actions of those who lead. Evidence of leadership practice, therefore, lies in leadership activity - activity that involves the intention to lead others in certain directions (often with school/staff improvement objectives) and also the influencing of others in different ways (Leithwood et al, 2004). It is not assumed that leadership practice is always for positive reasons or objectives.

Second, examining leadership practice should take into account the unique context within which the actors lead and follow. No two contexts are the same and no two cultures are the same. Review of the literature points to the importance of acknowledging this (Gronn, 2003; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). Hence, this study does not seek to develop a one-size-fits-all model of school leadership. Rather it presents cross-case findings and conclusions based on the evidence of practice within the four schools with a view to highlighting how leadership is being practiced and what can support or hinder such practice.

Third, practice is examined through the interactions of those who lead and those who follow. The literature highlights that ecological thinking views organisations in terms of connections, relationships, living systems and contexts (Sackney & Walker, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane & Orlina, 2005), and considers organisations to be integrated wholes rather than as a disassociated collection of parts. The understanding of leadership practice that underpins this study shifts the unit of analysis from the individual actor or group of actors to the web of leaders, followers and situations that give practice its form.

Fourth, as an analytical framework for studying the practice of leadership, this study also takes a distributed perspective, aiming to explore the practice of leading and how it involves more than the actions of the school principal and/or those in formal leadership positions. Leadership is considered as a role that can be taken on by different people at different times, that it is a shared endeavour. It is contended that in different situations, different leaders are needed - that situations require different kinds of leadership. Thus, this research ensures that not only formal leadership practice is examined, but also the practice of informal leaders.

Finally, this literature review and the perspectives through which the literature is viewed support this study's research design. The assumptions outlined above have a bearing on all parts of the research process, including case selection, who the research participants would be, how data would be collected, what counts as evidence, analysis of the data (including decisions regarding which data are considered to be more important than other data), the reporting of findings and the presentation of conclusions. The next chapter deals with all matters relating to methodology in this study.

It is important at this juncture to outline how the literature provides a rationale for this study and highlights certain gaps that have been identified in the research on leadership practice and on distributed leadership. The Introduction chapter identifies that authors (Mulford, 2008; Spillane, 2006) contend that much writing on leadership is purely conceptual and that it is important when considering school leadership that one is concerned with leadership *practice* [italics added]. It also points to authors who strongly contend that analysis of leadership practice is rare but essential for understanding school

leadership (Spillane & Zubini, 2009). Such empirical research of leadership practice in Irish schools does not exist. This study starts to address this gap.

In relation to distributed leadership, Harris and Muijs (2005) believe that far more empirical evidence is required before any firm conclusions can be made. They state, "We need to understand much more about effective distributed leadership in action, how it can be nurtured, supported and developed" (pp. 35-36). They also call for research that addresses the issue of contextual differences between schools, and how this influences their ability to promote and implement distributed forms of leadership. This is exactly what this research sets out to do - to explore leadership in action in varying contexts and to explore what professional needs exist in relation to this leadership practice. Leithwood et al. (2009) acknowledge that what is now being learnt about distributed leadership is that "it appears in quite different patterns, includes the distribution of a potentially wide array of different leadership functions, and arises as a response to many different challenges" (pp. 280-281). They assert that recent empirical research has now begun to address some of the gaps that exist. In bringing some clarity to certain issues they believe that the stage has been set for a line of research about outcomes or effects, but emphasise that before now, research with such a focus would have been premature.

Conclusion

In this chapter concepts that are central to this research including distributed leadership and communities of practice were examined. Related issues including the role of the principal, school culture, and barriers and challenges to distributed leadership

practice were explored. A review of both national and international literature was presented, and key terms were explained. This review has also highlighted certain gaps that have been identified in the literature relating to leadership practice and distributed leadership.

In conclusion, a summary of what this literature review has highlighted in relation to key themes pertaining to this research includes a number of points. First, schools are becoming more complex places and are having to respond to a rapidly changing environment. Context matters, and this has serious implications for school leadership which will have to become more adaptive and responsive to both internal and external change. Second, the current formal leadership structure in Irish primary schools, the ISM structure, reflects a hierarchical and fixed model of leadership and it has been argued that future leadership structures needs to be more lateral and interchangeable, so as to fit the needs of the school. Evidence has shown that leadership that is distributed, both formally and informally, and in partnership with all stakeholders in the school community, can lead to improved student outcomes, a greater sense of ownership and belonging among stakeholders, and increased collaborative practice in schools. Perpetuating existing models of leadership is not conducive to dealing with the complex environments in which schools are finding themselves.

Third, distributed leadership practice involves a change in school culture to one that is more collaborative and trusting and that nurtures teamwork, partnership, collective problem-solving and shared expertise. This requires a shift in culture away from the 'top-down' model of leadership that has existed in Irish schools. Fourth, distributed leadership practice emphasises interaction between actors in the school

whether they hold formal or informal leadership positions. It is concerned with inclusivity, using the expertise available, and affording all individuals the opportunity to lead. Furthermore, distributed ways of working require structural support, including providing time, space and also professional development which provides specific professional learning opportunities in which each teacher is supported in their professional practice. Finally, distributed leadership practice can enhance leadership capacity within schools.

The final section has highlighted key assumption relating to leadership that form the analytical framework for this research. The main research questions for this research were restated so as to situate the foci of this study within the context of the literature and the gaps that exist. The Methodology chapter will explore these questions in more detail. Furthermore, the research design and methods of data collection will be discussed, and the four schools involved in the case study will be presented.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the thesis outlines the methodology adopted for this study and describes how the research was carried out. First, the main research questions are presented and discussed, linking them to the literature and highlighting the reason for their inclusion. The research design is outlined along with reasons for the choices made during the design process, and the case study method is examined. The data-gathering methods used in this study are described and their advantages and limitations are discussed. Details of piloting are outlined, as are the limitations of the research. The role of the researcher and ethical considerations are also addressed. Finally, this chapter is summarised and links are made to the subsequent chapter detailing the study's analysis procedures.

Research Questions and Subthemes

The aim of this thesis is to explore the practice of leadership by those who hold formal leadership positions in schools and also by those who lead informally, with a view to illuminating the existence or non-existence of distributed leadership. Identifying and defining the specific research questions was the first step in the research process. Following that, subsequent decisions regarding the form of the research, and the

direction it would take, were considered. The research questions that underpin this

study are presented in Figure 2 and are discussed below.
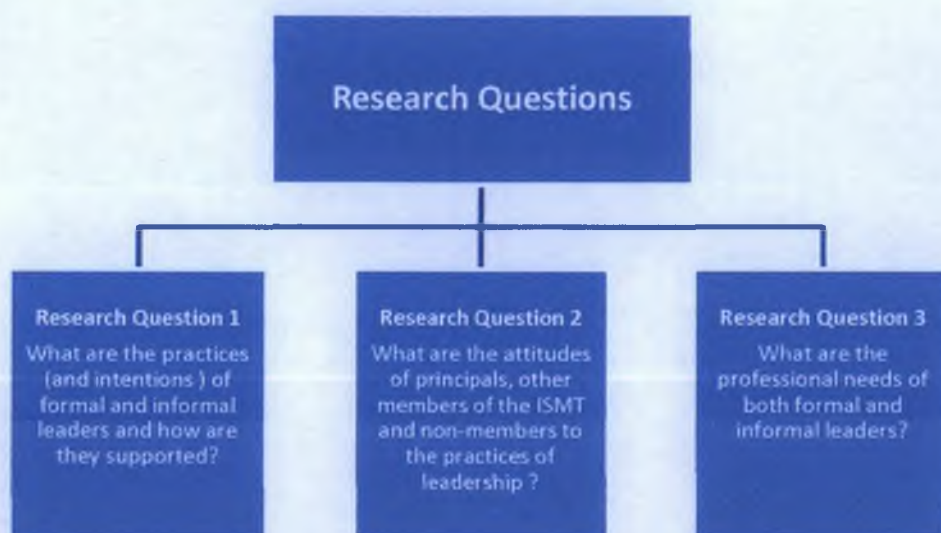
Figure 2. The research questions

Research Question 1

The first research question asks, "What are the practices (and intentions) of

formal and informal leaders and how are they supported?" As the literature review

illustrates, distributed leadership and collaborative cultures have been shown to have a

positive impact on student outcomes and teacher efficacy (LDS, 2007; Mulford 2008;

Southworth, 2004; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). This question sought to explore how

leadership is practised in the four schools, looking at those who held formal leadership

roles (for example, ISMT members) and also those who led informally (teacher leaders)

and what intentions lay behind their practices. It also aimed to examine the ways in

which formal and informal leaders act and interact, focusing on how they communicate,

collaborate, delegate and make decisions within their unique context.

Furthermore, the question sought to explore how leadership is considered by those in formal and informal leadership roles, and also the practicalities of leadership practice. It was viewed as paramount that the context of each of the schools be taken into account and explored. As Spillane and Diamond assert, "Scholars have long recognized that the situation is a critical consideration in investigations of practice, including leadership and management. The circumstances of schools influence what leaders do as well as the effects of what they do on followers" (2007, p. 9) Lave's (1998) sociocultural perspective view of learning - situational learning - provides a framework for examining practices and interactions. Their perspective recognises that "sociohistorical and political forces shape activities in schools", that those who act in social settings (for example, schools), bring with them social forces "as a consequence of their participation in a myriad of other social contexts" (Ivinson & Murphy, in Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006, pp. 163-166). This study examines leadership practice through the framework of situational learning, recognising that how participants act and learn is likely to involve "many peripheral features" of which the other participants and researcher is unaware, "but which collectively make sense to the learner" (Brown & Duguid, 1993 in Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006, p. 164).

Research Question 2

The second research question asks "What are the attitudes of principals, other members of the ISMT and non-members to the practices of leadership?" As was stated earlier, if schools are to respond to the complex challenges that they face, it could be argued that a collaborative and collective culture must exist in which supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions

and shared personal practice are central to all stakeholders (Hord, 1997). This research question explored how both members and non-members of the ISMT believe leadership practice, and in particular, the ISM structure works within the school community and their (both members and non-members) attitudes towards it. The question also examined the areas mentioned above (for example shared vision and values and shared personal practice). The role of the principal in relation to other members of the ISMT was also examined, looking at hierarchical structures and flatter leadership structures.

Research Question 3

The third research question asks "What are the professional needs of both formal and informal leaders?" The most recent reports published in the area of leadership and ISM in Irish schools, (discussed in the Literature Review), highlight the long awaited need for professional development for leadership practice. Existing provision of professional development (provided by the LDS) is limited to principals and deputy principals. This question explored the professional qualifications of members of the ISMT and those in informal roles, and sought to determine what they feel their needs are in order for them to act as leaders in their school now and in the future. It sought to examine how the practice of the ISMT and also informal leaders (teacher leaders) was supported within the context of their own schools. Finally, this question sought to determine any other perceived leadership needs.

With these research questions, which are broadly based on leadership practice, attitudes towards it and professional leadership needs, came other areas for exploration, as were presented in the Introduction chapter (Figure 1). The instruments used in this

research – questionnaires, diaries and semi-structured interview schedules (see Appendices B, E and F) were based on these subthemes, as was the quantitative and qualitative coding of the data which was done during the various stages of data analysis (see Appendices G and H).

Discussion

In qualitative research, researchers only state research questions and not hypotheses. These questions typically include a central question with several sub-questions, which are posed using exploratory verbs such as How? and What? and phrases such as discover, explore and understand. Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, "narrow the purpose statement through research questions (that relate variables) or through hypotheses (that make predictions about the results of relating variables" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 104). As is illustrated below, this research is predominantly exploratory and qualitative in nature. Hence, hypotheses are not put forward. Rather, the research began based on certain hunches (Robson, 2002). These hunches or themes emerged from the literature and also from anecdotal evidence from schools. They were emergent themes and were not determined a priori.

The researcher wanted to explore any variation between schools in how leadership and management are practised, for example the extent to which Special Duties posts meet the needs of the school, how the roles and responsibilities are decided upon, the ways in which leadership and management are distributed, and the ways in which leadership is practised informally. Similarly, she wanted to examine the variation

between schools as to the profile of members of the ISMT, the interactions among members of the ISMT and their interaction with other members of staff.

Based on the literature, it was thought that time-pressures may be an issue that affects leadership practice. As Hargreaves asserts "Teachers take their time seriously. They experience it as a major constraint on what they are able and expected to achieve in their schools" (1994, p. 95). The literature also highlighted that attitudes towards the practice of leadership often depend on the culture of the school and the way in which leadership and management roles are distributed and carried out. Thus, the researcher set out to explore this further. Furlong points out that "Though culture is rooted in both values and beliefs, it also develops through interaction" (2000, p. 62). This study examines leadership practice by exploring interactions within each of the schools. Nias (1989) contends that those who participate in cultures are in control of them, and that all stakeholders together make their own school. Thus, this study sought to examine the leadership practice of those in both formal and informal roles.

Furthermore, the researcher aimed to explore if school size, the number of special duties post holders and whether the school has an administrative or teaching Principal could also be factors that affect leadership and management practice in schools. Hargreaves (1994) highlights that school size can have a bearing on collaborative practice, contending that the type of collaborative structures that are often found in many smaller schools can create cultures that are conducive to collaborative and continuous improvement. He asserts that collaborative communities are much more difficult to establish and maintain in larger schools (1994, pp. 256-257). Thus, review of the literature led the researcher to approach schools of differing size, considering that

this could be an important factor when considering practice, interactions and their context.

The selection of cases, an outline of which is set out later, was based on the intention to explore leadership in four schools that were contrasting in various ways. The criteria for comparison included school size, number of members on the ISMT, whether the school had a teaching or administrative Principal, whether the school had a disadvantaged status or not, and number of years established.

Rationale for Research Design

According to Creswell (2003) three elements make up the theoretical framework for approaching a research problem. These three elements, although distinct, influence each other and must be considered in relation to one another. The three elements are (a) the philosophical assumptions, (b) the strategies of inquiry to be used in the project, and (c) detailed procedures of data collection, analysis, and writing, also known as the methods of inquiry. The three elements must complement each other. This section deals primarily with the philosophical assumptions that underpin this research.

The theoretical framework for this inquiry lies within the perspective of pragmatism and the mixed methods research process is based on a rationale of pragmatism. According to pragmatism, the truth or meaning of an idea lies in its observable practical consequences rather than anything metaphysical, that practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. In short, truth is determined by consequences (Biesta & Burbules, 2004). Pragmatism is itself a philosophical position with a history that goes back to the 1870s with the work of

Peirce, William James and Dewey. Robson (2002) points out that "For pragmatists, truth is 'what works'. Hence, the test is whether or not it is feasible to carry out worthwhile studies using qualitative and quantitative approaches side by side" (p. 43). They view "whatever works" as likely to be true and that the only way to determine truth is by practical results.

There is more than one form of Pragmatism. This study is closely aligned with both Peirce and Dewey's version. Peirce stressed the importance of human activity in gaining understanding and knowledge. He maintained that our inquiries are related to our concerns, both practical and theoretical and that truth is determined according to criteria appropriate to a mode of inquiry. He also asserted that no-one can claim to possess any final or ultimate truth because reality and truth are constantly changing (Biesta & Burbules, 2004). For the purpose of this research then, the truth or meaning of leadership practice lies in its observable, practical consequences rather than anything metaphysical. Pragmatists believe in practical solutions and empirical evidence. Thus, this philosophical perspective was suited to this study as it supported the use of methods that would best help answer the research questions.

According to John Dewey a person's mind is conditioned by the collective thinking of other people. Thus, the mind is a social phenomenon and truth is what works for the group. Pragmatism is the lens through which this study explores the leadership practice and social interactions that take place within that practice. Taking a pragmatic approach meant that whatever philosophical and methodological approach would work best for the study's particular research problem could be used (Robson, 2002, p. 43).

Discussing mixed methods research (whereby both quantitative and qualitative research methods are mixed within the same study), and worldviews associated with this approach, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, cited in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) suggest that a considerable number of authors embrace pragmatism as the worldview/paradigm for mixed methods research. According to Creswell and Plano Clark, pragmatism "draws on many ideas, including employing 'what works', using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge" (2007, p. 26). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), linking pragmatism with mixed methods research, argue that both qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used in a single study, that the research question should be of primary importance, more so than the method or worldview that underlies the research, and a practical and applied research philosophy should guide research methodological choices.

Within a mixed methods study, the research process is based on the making a number of pragmatic decisions. Armitage (2007, cited in Bryman, 2004) states that pragmatists link the choice of approach directly to the purpose and the nature of the research questions posed. Bryman (2004) puts forward a number of purposes for adopting a mixed methods approach to research, including (a) the logic of triangulation, (b) an ability to fill in the gaps left when using one dominant approach, (c) the use of quantitative research methods to facilitate qualitative research methods and vice-versa, (d) combining static and process-type features, (e) gaining the perspective of the researcher and the researched, and (f) to study different aspects of a phenomena. Taking a pragmatic perspective towards the research design allowed the research questions to be addressed more thoroughly than if relying solely on quantitative or qualitative methods.

Research Design: Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design

The research design is a blueprint or a framework for conducting the research. It details the procedures necessary to obtain the data outlined in research objectives (Denscombe, 2007; Bryman, 2004). The design is known as a mixed methods sequential explanatory design. It consists of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (Creswell & Plano Clark et al., 2003 cited in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Quantitative research generates numerical data, and only measurable data are gathered and analysed. Qualitative research on the other hand generates non-numerical data and focuses on the gathering of mainly verbal data rather than measurements. Information gathered is then analysed in an interpretative, subjective manner. In mixed methods research both quantitative and qualitative approaches are adopted. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) present four worldviews, including Postpositivism, Constructivism, Advocacy and Participatory and Pragmatism. Whereas Postpositivism is often associated with quantitative approaches to research, Constructivism and Advocacy and Participatory are more often associated with qualitative approaches. As was outlined above, this research is underpinned by pragmatism, a worldview which is typically associated with mixed methods research. Thus, it is pluralistic and is oriented towards practice and "what works" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

In a mixed methods sequential explanatory design a researcher first collects and analyses the quantitative (numeric) data. The qualitative (text) data are collected and analysed second in the sequence and help explain, or elaborate on, the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. The second qualitative phase builds on the first quantitative stage and first qualitative stage in the study. The rationale for this approach

is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general

understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data sets and their analysis refine

and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007)

Figure 3 below shows a visual representation of the research design (based on

Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 87). It shows that the design is sequential and also

that the qualitative data (in capital letters) is weighted more heavily than the quantitative

data (in lower-case letters). As can be seen, both data sets are analysed separately and

are also brought together at the end, where they are interpreted during cross-case

analysis.
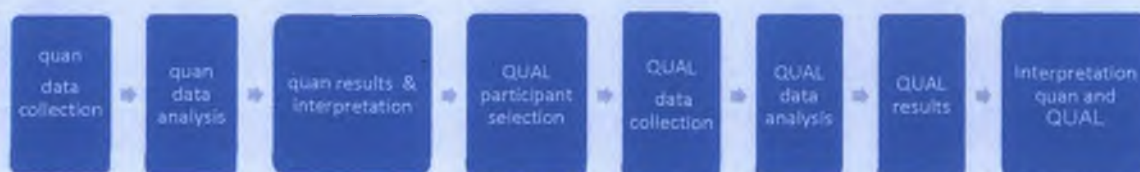
Figure 3. Explanatory design showing participant selection model (QUAL emphasised)

Rationale for using Mixed Methods

The decision to use a mixed methods strategy is based on how useful the

methods are for addressing the particular questions that are being investigated. It was

contended that the research questions could be addressed in a more in-depth manner

using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. "What works best", therefore, is this researcher's guiding principle of this research (Denscombe, 2007, p. 118).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) highlight the merits of taking a mixed methods approach and outline a rationale for doing so. Where this research is concerned, the author considers that the rationale for taking a mixed methods approach lies in the belief that: (a) a need exists for both quantitative and qualitative approaches (so as to access a greater number of people while also obtaining more in-depth information and opinions), (b) a need exists to enhance the study with a second source of data, (c) a need exists to explain the quantitative results, and (d) a need exists to triangulate.

As with all research approaches, taking a mixed methods approach can have its disadvantages. Firstly, the time that is takes can increase due to the combination of quantitative and qualitative phases, as can the cost. The researcher also has to have the appropriate skills to deal with more than one method. Denscombe (2007) also points out that there is a risk that the separation of the quantitative from the qualitative in the research design can tend to "oversimplify matters", that mixed methods researchers need to be aware that "the clarity and simplicity of the terms mask a more complicated reality" (p. 119). Finally, the underlying philosophy of pragmatism can also be misinterpreted, being taken to mean that the research is "pragmatic", and therefore "anything goes" within the research approach (Denscombe, 2007, p. 120). Thus, it is imperative that the meaning of pragmatism be explored within the study.

The Case Study Method

Shavelson and Towne (2002) outline two scenarios where case studies are applicable. Firstly, case studies are useful when the research addresses either a descriptive question ("What is happening?") or an explanatory question ("How/Why is this happening?"). Secondly, the case study method allows the researcher to get close to a particular situation and develop a detailed in-depth understanding of it. It also allows the researcher to collect data in natural settings compared to relying on "derived data" (Bromley, 1986, p. 23) and allows the researcher to "deal with the *subtleties and intricacies* of complex social situations" (italics in original; Denscombe, 2007, p. 45) such as that of a school community.

The type of case study used depends on the purpose of the research. Yin (2009) identifies three different types of case studies including exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies. Explanatory case studies are used in this research as it aims to analyse or explain how and why something happens (in this case, how leadership is practised in the schools and why leaders act). This method helped to illuminate leadership practice in the schools and allowed the researcher to get a closer understanding of it. By gathering data from the three categories of people, first-hand information on what was happening in schools from those who were experiencing it was obtained. The main benefit of using case studies in this project was that it allowed for the use of multiple methods in order to capture the various aspects being explored. This approach also fostered the use of multiple sources of data which facilitated the validation of data through triangulation.

Several potential limitations of the case study approach exist. It was important to be aware of these from the outset and to take measures in an attempt to minimise their potential limiting effects on the research. First, as Denscombe (2007) points out "The point at which the case study approach is most vulnerable to criticism is in relation to the credibility of generalizations made from the findings" (italics in original; pp. 45-46). This study makes no claims of generalisability from the research findings. Rather, it highlights practice and discusses findings based on the four schools. There is awareness that the small sample does not lend itself to making generalisations. Second, often case studies are "regarded as alright in terms of providing descriptive accounts of the situation but rather ill-suited to analyses or evaluations" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 46). Aware of this preconception this study challenges it by careful attention to detail and rigour as is outlined later in the Data Analysis and Findings chapters. Finally, there was an awareness that those being researched might behave differently from normal knowing that they were involved in research - otherwise known as the observer effect (Robson, 2002, Yin 2009). There is very little that could be done about this, although the researcher did attempt to minimise this by assuring all research participants of their anonymity from the outset.

Case Selection

The unique aspect of the case study methodology is the selection of cases to study (Yin, 2009). The cases selected are expected to represent some population of cases. The phenomenon of interest observable in the case represents the phenomenon at large. The cases are intended to be opportunities to study the phenomena. In collective case studies as in this research, balance and variety are important, as is the opportunity

to learn (Robson, 2002). In this study the researcher felt the need to employ the use of more than a single case study to ensure that the research design catered for the diverse nature of the research sample (Robson, 2002).

A researcher may jointly study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. Stake (1995) called this collective case-study while Herriott and Firestone (1983) termed it multi-site qualitative research. Individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic. They may be similar or dissimilar. They are chosen because it is believed that examining them would lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorising, about a larger collection of cases. It was intended that having multiple cases would strengthen the veracity of this study by allowing the researcher to look at variations of the schools under review (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006, p. 114). Multiple case studies also allowed for cross-case comparison, as is detailed later.

Data Collection Methods and Triangulation

Three main methods of data collection were used in this study - questionnaires, diaries and semi-structured interviews. No single source of data was suggested to have an advantage over another, although within this mixed methods research, more qualitative data than quantitative data was collected. It was intended that more than one source of data would help ensure the reliability of the study (Yin, 1994). The details of this study's data gathering methods are documented in the Conducting the Research section below. The logic for using multiple sources of data collection is for the triangulation of evidence. Triangulation increases the dependability of the data gathered

from the sources, the principle behind it being that the researcher gets a better understanding of what is being investigated if viewed from different positions. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) state that triangulation validates results and substantiates the evidence, asserting that mixed methods research lends itself very well to triangulation. Various types of triangulation methods exist (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Robson, 2002). This research used three triangulation methods including methodological, unit of analysis and conceptual.

The methodological method involves collecting and analysing multiple types of data. Methodological triangulation aided this study's collection process through administering questionnaires, having participants complete diaries and conducting individual interviews. Triangulation of the unit of analysis in this research involved using Microsoft Excel and NVivo 8 software to analyse both numeric and text-based data. Both instruments proved efficient and aided in providing detailed results of the collected data. The conceptual triangulation involved the integration of both qualitative and quantitative data within the NVivo 8 software to obtain results.

Conducting the Research

The Cases

Table 1 below indicates the different types of school in which the case studies were carried out. All four schools are in Dublin. They were limited to this area due to time and financial constraints, convenience and also due to willingness on the part of the schools to participate in the research when approached. Descriptions of the schools were

obtained from each of the principals and these helped to set the scene of the data

collection. Table 1 below introduces the four types of school in relation to their staffing,

location, socio-economic status, school size and type of principal. A more detailed

introduction is outlined in Table 5 in the Analysis chapter and also within Appendices J-

M (in which a profile of each of the schools is presented). The schools differ mainly in

size, whether there is a teaching/administrative principal and whether they have

disadvantage status or not. It was aimed to conduct the case studies in four sites that

differed from each other. With the exception of the difference in the size of the school,

however, the researcher chose the schools simply based on the schools' willingness to

participate in the study. The size of the school was the only criteria that the researcher

felt may have a bearing on leadership practice, as was highlighted in the literature.

Pseudonyms have been assigned to each school so as to protect their identity. They

include Oakley, Redwood, Sapling and Scoil Síorghlas (Irish meaning 'Evergreen

School').

Table 1

Four Cases (Schools)

Case (school)	Description (school year 2009-2010)
Case A – Oakley School	• Large school (292 children, 25 teachers) • Administrative Principal • DEIS 1 status (disadvantaged status) • Located in suburbs of Dublin • Co-educational
Case B – Redwood School	• Very large school (687 children, 40 teachers)

	• Administrative Principal • Administrative Deputy Principal • Non-DEIS status • Located in suburbs of Dublin • Co-educational
Case C – Sapling School	• Small to medium 'developing' school (165 children, 10 teachers including 6 mainstream, [1 shared with another school], 2 learning support and 2 language support) • Teaching Principal • Non-DEIS status • Located in suburbs of Dublin, recently built • Co-educational
Case D – Scoil Síorghlas	• Medium-sized Gaelscoil (teaching through Irish) (230 children, 11 teachers) • Administrative Principal • Non-DEIS status • Located in suburbs of Dublin • Co-educational

Sampling Procedures

Once the four schools were confirmed as research sites, a sampling procedure was put in place to determine the number of individuals that would be needed to provide data in order to address the research questions. Sampling procedures for qualitative and quantitative research differ. In qualitative research, the researcher purposefully selects the research participants and sites. The individuals selected are those "who have experience with the central phenomenon or the key concept to be explored" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 112). Sampling procedures in quantitative research aim to choose individuals who are representative of a population, with the intent that the results could

be generalised to a population. Unlike qualitative sampling, in quantitative sampling the researcher attempts to choose individuals randomly so that each individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected.

For the quantitative sampling in this research, it was intended to obtain a sample by providing all members of teaching staff in all four schools with the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire. These research participants were therefore, at the very least, representative of the population of the four schools that were being studied. By visiting the schools personally, it was hoped that this might help ensure that the sample size (that is to say, the number who would respond to the questionnaire) would be as large as possible.

For the qualitative sampling, purposeful sampling strategies were incorporated. Individuals who held different positions in the schools (for example, members and non-members of the ISMT and Principals) were purposely chosen, with the intention of exploring a broad range of perspectives. Based on data obtained from the questionnaires and emerging themes from the quantitative stage, the researcher also used maximal variation sampling (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), in which individuals were chosen who held different perspectives on the central phenomenon. Participants were identified who might provide in-depth information on the practice of, and attitudes to, leadership and ISM in their school. This purposive sample was made up of the ISMT who were asked to keep diaries. Finally, the samples for the semi-structured interviews were chosen based on the analysis of data gathered from the questionnaires and diaries. Twelve interviewees in total were identified (three interviewees in each school, including the principal, a member of the ISMT and a non-member of the ISMT).

In a mixed methods explanatory research design, it is important that the same individuals be included in both data collections. Thus, only those who participated in the quantitative stage of the research were considered for the qualitative stages since "the intent of the research design is to use qualitative data to provide more detail about the quantitative results and to select participants who can best provide this detail" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 122). Table 2 summarises the various activities carried out by the research participants. The method of referring to the research participant is, for example, as follows: (Oak, Int, NPH) refers to the interview with the non-post holder in Oakley School. Where there is more than one post holder in the same school, a reference will appear as follows: (Red, D, PH1), (Red, D, PH2), denoting references from the diaries of two different post holders in Redwood School.

Table 2

Activity of Research Participants

Research participant	Activity	Reference
Principal (P)	Questionnaire (Qu) Diary-keeping (D) Interview (Int)	Oakley School: Oak Redwood School: Red Sapling School: Sap Scoil Síorghlas: Síor
Member of ISMT (PH)	Questionnaire (Qu) Diary-keeping (D) Interview (Int)	Oakley School: Oak Redwood School: Red Sapling School: Sap Scoil Síorghlas: Síor
Non-member of ISMT (NPH)	Questionnaire (Qu) Interview (Int)	Oakley School: Oak Redwood School: Red Sapling School: Sap Scoil Síorghlas: Síor

Data Gathering

Mixed Methods Sequential Data Gathering

In mixed methods designs that are sequential, the two forms of data that are collected are introduced in two separate phases. In between these phases, the researcher decides how to use the results from the first phase and build on it in the second phase. Stage One involves the collection and analysis of the quantitative data. Stage Two and Three involve the collection and analysis of the qualitative data.

The quantitative phase of the research involved the use of questionnaires, while the qualitative phases involved the use of participant diaries and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire allowed access to a greater number of people in a shorter period of time than would purely qualitative methods. Its use was two-fold; to paint an initial, broad picture of leadership as it is practised by the ISMT (in particular), and attitudes towards it in the schools. The data gathered were then analysed with a view to highlighting emerging themes in relation to leadership and ISM in the schools. This analysis acted as the foundation for further exploration during the qualitative data gathering stages.

Before the qualitative phase of the research, the researcher reviewed the profile of the participants (from responses given in the questionnaire). Certain participants who held formal leadership positions (that is to say, members of the ISMT) were approached, as were some participants who did not. A small number of ISMT members were asked to keep diaries to log their leadership experiences and practices. Some of these participants were also asked to take part in semi-structured interviews in order to get a

deeper understanding of their experiences, as well as some participants who were not members of the ISMT.

Each instrument for data collection - the questionnaire, participant diaries and interview schedules, was piloted in advance of its use in the study, details of which are outlined below. Following that, the three methods are described in more detail including their strengths, limitations and attempts made to overcome their limitations. Three visits were paid to each of the four schools. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to get a feel for the school including its layout, the people in it and some of their routines and structures. It also gave an opportunity for the study to be introduced to the research participants and to discuss any queries or concerns regarding the questionnaires, diaries and interviews personally. Research participants were able to seek any clarification and ask questions during these visits.

Pilot Study

The first stage of any data gathering should, if at all possible, be a pilot study, which is done with the intention of highlighting some of the potential problems in converting the research design into reality (Robson, 2002). A pilot study was conducted before the commencement of this research. Conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success in the main study, but it does increase the likelihood of success. Pilot studies fulfil a range of important functions which provide valuable insights to the researcher, and to other researchers who may examine the study. The pilot study was used to test the questionnaire, diary-keeping and interview processes. It involved piloting the questionnaire with teachers and principals, discussion about diary design and carrying

out one interview with a principal, one with a member of an ISMT and one non-member. The pilot study was carried out in the researcher's own school one month before the research began, and then a fortnight before each of the data gathering instruments were finalised and used in the study. It involved a great deal of discussion with those who took part. The pilot study process helped to develop and test the adequacy of the research instruments. Furthermore, it assessed the feasibility of a (full-scale) study and whether the research protocol was realistic. The data obtained and issues identified by the pilot study were then, if appropriate, incorporated into the main study design. The possibility of making inaccurate predictions or assumptions on the basis of pilot data was acknowledged and therefore measures were taken, including seeking feedback from participants and being mindful that it was a pilot study. Details of piloting of the questionnaires, diaries and interviews are included below, alongside discussion of the data gathering methods used.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire was the first method used to collect data in the research. It was used as a method of collecting information "by asking a set of preformulated questions in a predetermined sequence in a structured questionnaire to a sample of individuals drawn so as to be representative of a defined population" (Fogelman & Comber in Briggs & Coleman, 2007, p. 125). The questionnaire was administered to all teaching members of staff in all four schools (see Appendix B for a copy of both the cover letter and questionnaire). It was given to 86 teachers in total and had a response rate of 58%. (The response rates varied from school to school, with 28% responding in Oakley School, 60% in Redwood, 100% in Sapling and 82% in Scoil Síorghlas). The

questionnaires were delivered personally to the schools, and both the questionnaire and the research process were discussed with the principal and teaching staff on these occasions. This also afforded an opportunity for the researcher to become more acquainted with the schools, to meet the staff and also to obtain information on the school. A letter, including an introduction to the research and clear guidelines (instructions and examples) for completing the questionnaire were included. Participants were made aware that the researcher would know who had filled out each of the questionnaires (so that the analysis of same could help in identifying possible research participants who might partake in further research stages).

A questionnaire was used in this research for several reasons. First, it was possible to access a larger number of teachers in the four schools within a shorter time-frame than if using purely qualitative methods. Second, the questionnaires were intended to paint an initial picture of the practice of, and attitudes toward leadership, and also to obtain professional profiles of the teachers in the school (for example number of years' experience, qualifications, whether they are a member of the ISMT). Third, at that earlier point in the research, fairly straightforward information was required, and the questionnaire is an ideal instrument for this type of data collection. It was anticipated that the questionnaires would lead the way to more in-depth qualitative enquiry using the diaries and the interviews. Finally, questionnaires were chosen for this stage in the research because there was a need for standardised data from identical questions, without requiring face-to-face interaction.

No methodological approach is without flaw, and there was awareness from the outset of this study of the limitations and disadvantages of using questionnaires. One

such disadvantage is that there is the possibility of a poor response rate. The researcher

tried to address this possibility by meeting the research participants personally,

explaining what the research was about and by providing an opportunity for them to ask

questions and seek any clarifications. Another documented disadvantage is that the

nature of answers is limited and shaped by the researcher (Denscombe, 2007; Berends in

Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006; Robson, 2002). In this study, however, the main job of

the questionnaires was to gather rather limited information that would support the

following, more in-depth qualitative phases. It was felt that the questionnaire would

provide sufficient data for this stage of the research. A third possible disadvantage of

using questionnaires is that answers can be left incomplete or poorly completed. Again,

the point of meeting the research participants was to go through the questionnaire to

reduce any potential ambiguity or problems that may arise. The follow-up analysis of

the questionnaires highlighted that most questions were answered and in a clear manner.

Finally, Denscombe highlights that another disadvantage is that the researcher cannot

check the truth of the answers (2002, p. 171). This is where the importance of

triangulation of data-gathering methods was of huge importance in the research. The

diaries and semi-structured interviews served to follow-through on information given

during this earliest phase. Furthermore, information given by the school at the beginning

served to corroborate answers given in relation to profile questions.

Piloting the questionnaire was very important to determine if any of the

questions were ambiguous or whether there were certain questions that should be

included or omitted. The questionnaire was distributed to all teachers and the principal

in the researcher's own school and an opportunity for individual feedback (written and

oral) was given. Decisions regarding content of the questionnaire and purpose for inclusion or omission were made and the questionnaire was altered in line with the feedback given. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of findings from the literature on ISM/leadership and distributed leadership. The questionnaires sought to explore the leadership practice of those who held formal leadership positions in the schools. They did so by examining the roles and responsibilities of post holders and principals. While roles and responsibilities of post holders are not evidence of leadership practice per se, exploration of roles of those who held formal positions in the schools was deemed important during the first stages of data collection. It was recognised by the researcher that the work carried out by post holders based on their post's assigned duties was potentially the means through which a post holder may act in a leadership capacity. Piloting the questionnaires highlighted that questioning about posts of responsibility and using the language associated with them (including 'duties', 'roles' and 'responsibilities') led to less confusion on the part of the research participants as to what was being explored, as such terms were understood by post holders and non-post holders alike. Questioning participants about their 'leadership practice' and the leadership practice of others was simply not concrete enough.

It was decided to focus solely on formal leadership during this first stage of the research for a few reasons. First, when piloting the questionnaire it became clear that the concept of informal leadership was not well known to the participants and that further explanation and definition would be required for the sake of clarity. It was felt that such explanation was beyond the scope of a questionnaire. Second, and similarly, the pilot phase highlighted that the research respondents found it difficult to answer questions on

informal leadership. One participant commented that formal leadership is "the kind of leadership that we're more definitely aware of ... informal leadership is not so definite". Finally, it was believed that enough data could be obtained during the first stage of the research (even if solely focusing on formal leadership) that could meaningfully inform the subsequent qualitative phases. Furthermore, the questionnaire sought to address the three main research questions in relation to formal leadership, although inclusion of the open ended question, and also questions based on the sharing of leadership, delegation and so on were included to potentially provide insight into informal leadership practice (or lack thereof) within the schools.

In choosing the data recording instrument (i.e. attitudinal scales), it was ensured that the questions on the questionnaire reflected the study's research questions, and that adequate scales were used to report the information (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 115). With the exception of two open ended questions, the questionnaire consisted of closed questions so that, as Denscombe (2007) states "structure imposed on the respondents' answers will provide the researcher with information which is of uniform length and that lends itself nicely to being quantified and compared" (p. 166). Although closed questions allow less opportunity for the respondents to give responses that reflect deeper thought on the topic, due for example to being limited to a scale, the aim of the questionnaire was to get initial information and to aid direction-setting. The subsequent qualitative research methods were intended to probe further than this. Microsoft Excel software was used to facilitate the analysis of data gathered from the questionnaires.

Section One of the questionnaire contained six questions which aimed to obtain a professional profile of the research participant. Questions related to number of years

teaching, qualifications, and whether the teacher was a member of their school's ISMT. Section Two aimed to explore attitudes towards ISM/leadership practice in each of the schools. Three questions focused on the respondent's awareness as to who the members of the ISMT in their school were, the duties of the ISMT and also the purpose of the ISMT. These questions were followed by seventeen statements pertaining to ISM/leadership and participants were asked to rate their agreement or otherwise with the statements using the Likert scale. Responses ranged from strong agreement to strong disagreement. There were five response options, including a neutral rating. By asking the respondents to indicate their degrees of agreement with the 17 statements, the researcher could ascertain the respondents' attitudes towards formal leadership structures within their school and thereby identify the key issues which they highlighted as being central to the practice of ISM/leadership by those holding formal leadership positions. The questionnaire included two open questions; the first asking members of the ISMT to detail their main roles and responsibilities, and the second asking the respondents to include any comments that they may wish to make in relation to ISM/leadership in their own school or in general.

In the case of each school, the responses to the 17 items on the attitudinal Likert scale (in percentage form) are presented in tables in Appendix C. Furthermore, Appendix D includes graphs presenting the demographics of the four schools (for example, the percentage of respondents who were members of the ISMT). The process through which the data from the questionnaire were analysed is outlined in the later section, Quantitative Data Analysis and an outline of the analysis story of the questionnaire data is presented in the Analysis chapter. Findings from the questionnaires

are also presented in the subsequent chapter detailing cross case analysis as well as in the four appendices based on the cases (Appendices L-M).

Diaries

The first of the two qualitative phases of the research built upon the themes that had emerged from the questionnaires. Data collection was through diary-keeping that was carried out by the research participants. Based on the data that was analysed from the questionnaires, possible research participants (post holders only) were identified who might agree to keep a log/diary over a week-long period. Each of the participants was provided with a structured diary template (see Appendix E).

The purpose of the diary entries was to gain a more in-depth picture of the experiences of the practice of leadership in the schools. Initially it was intended that diaries be used with both ISMT members and non-ISMT members. However, the pilot phase indicated that non-ISMT members were unable to fill in the diaries due to the low frequency with which they believed they acted as leaders during the week (including within their classroom) and the phase yielded practically no data. When the principals of the four schools were asked to consider whether or not the diaries should be used with non-ISMT members they believed it better to confine them to the ISMT alone.

As is explored in the Literature Review, Spillane and Orlina (2005) argue that taking a distributed perspective of leadership offers a very particular way of thinking about leadership practice, concluding that it entails thinking of leadership at the group level and examining interactions that take place at this level. The review also highlights the way in which the notion of influence is central to many definitions of leadership, in

the setting of meaningful directions and the exercising of influence (or power) -

focusing on who influences, why and how they influence and under what circumstances.

Thus, it was decided to use diaries to explore this practice. Research participants were

prompted to consider their actions and interactions undertaken during the day and to

comment on their leadership role/practice (if any) in their actions and within their

interactions. They were asked to document their interactions with other members of the

ISMT and the reason for interaction, communication with the teaching staff in general

(how, when, purpose), opportunities to act in a leadership capacity, and actions carried

out throughout the week relating to ISM/leadership. There was also a section for the

research participant to write personal reflections on the day/week in relation to

leadership. Clear guidance was given to all diary-keepers during meetings with the

researcher, as were opportunities for questions to be asked. As with all aspects of the

research, confidentiality was assured.

The researcher was aware that the diaries were only a snapshot of leadership

practice over five days (of the same week) and that it was very likely they were not

representative of what the post holders' leadership practices may entail at other times

during the year. Only one round of diary-keeping was possible due to constraints put

forward by the principals. It was felt, however, that at the very least they gave some

indication as to the type of behaviours, actions and interactions of the participants, and

also as to what they considered to be leadership practice. Furthermore, the personal

reflections helped the researcher to gain insight into the participants' perceptions of their

practice. Most participants made reference their roles and the roles of a post holder in

general in the reflections, as well as reflecting on their practice during the week in which

they kept the diary. Along with the analysis of the data from the questionnaires, the analysis of data from the diaries helped to finalise the three interview schedules that followed.

One advantage of diaries, it has been argued, is that the data from diaries can constitute substitute observation, with Morrison (in Briggs & Coleman, 2007), asserting:

> In educational research, where there may have been a tendency to privilege both the 'oral' and the 'observed' – what people say and do and what they are observed doing – over the literate, diaries provide an interesting counterpoint, since diarists are invited to write what they do and/or think ... diaries have specific uses in 'picking up' the minutiae of vicarious educational experiences in ways which the other major forms of solicited written information, questionnaires, do not. (p. 300)

This has implications for the diary design and use. Morrison (2007) forewarns that diary accounts have the potential to produce large amounts of data. To avoid this, a structured template was provided to the research participants which limited the amount that they could write.

"Diaries rest on the view that research informants are in especially advantageous positions to record aspects of their lives and work" (Morrison, 2007). They allow the researcher to access evidence that may not otherwise have been available to him/her, often for logistical or pragmatic reasons. In this study, the researcher was not available to observe the practices of the research participants. Thus, it was felt that diaries could help make information available to the researcher that otherwise would not have been.

Rationale for the use of diaries was to get a wider picture of the practices of the participants. Morrison (2007) asserts that diaries can be powerful data gathering tool, and that when combined with other forms of data collection and analysis, can provide a deep picture from the "inside" (p. 300).

As with all data gathering stages, the key issue in this study was the need for clarity about the research questions being addressed and their relation to diary use. The diary template was designed with the aim to maximise its usefulness in collecting data that would relate to and address the study's main questions. Because diaries are time-consuming, instructions to accompany diaries, and the layout and appearance of the diary are significant (Morrison, 2007). A great deal of thought was given to the diary design and other research in which diaries were used (Camburn, Spillane, & Sebastian 2010; Spillane & Zuberi, 2009) was examined to inform the template's design.

Piloting the diary template involved several teachers and the principal of the researcher's own school keeping the diary for a week and then providing feedback through a group discussion. The template was simplified to make its use easier. For example, the original template had looked for comments on the type of leadership practice that the participant was involved in (pastoral, curricular, instructional, and so on). Discussion on the template highlighted that this would, in fact, be a coding procedure for the researcher to undertake rather than a task for the research participants to carry out. Participants in the pilot phase agreed that the final diary template to be used in the research was clear and easy to use. The pilot phase also highlighted the importance of meeting the research participants in advance of the data gathering stage,

so as to discuss the template (see Appendix E) and also, as mentioned above, that diary-keeping might be limited to the ISMT members only.

The researcher met with post holders in each of the four schools (including principals) who were willing to participate in the diary-keeping. These meetings lasted approximately 30 minutes and took place either before or after school hours or during their lunch break. During this period, the researcher and post holders discussed the diary template and examined a sample template (see Appendix T for a copy of the diary template and the sample). The researcher took notes during these conversations as they provided insight into the participants' perceptions of leadership and the formal roles they held. They were opportunities to gather data that would feed into the analysis of the diaries. The participants were made aware that their discussion about the diary-keeping would feature in the write-up of the research.

It was important during the initial meetings with the research participants that various terms and concepts, including leadership and management, distributed leadership and leadership practice were discussed and that the participants had the opportunity to seek clarification on any aspect of the diary-keeping. In the case of all four schools, the researcher had noticed that a number of participants had used the term shared leadership when commenting in the open ended section of the questionnaire. The literature reflects some differentiation between distributed leadership and shared leadership (MacBeath, 2004) For example, he remarks that sharing is a "softer and fuzzier notion with implication of openness and trust", whereas if leadership is distributed, it can imply something about structure - that "sharing says more about culture" (p. 40). However, when the research participants articulated their own

definition of shared leadership, it was noted that their understanding of shared leadership was similar to the researcher's definition of distributed leadership. Hence, this term was used by some post holders during these meetings to convey leadership that is distributed.

The diary was given the name "Daily Leadership Practice Diary", in which the participants were to log their own practice of leadership on a daily basis (based on the work of Spillane and Orlina 2005). The diary was accompanied by one definition of leadership practice to help convey one way in which leadership can be framed. This was in response to the pilot phase of the research during which the pilot participants expressed the need for a definition to help express the essence of leadership practice. Thus, the researcher felt it may be helpful to use the following definition, based on Spillane and Zuberi's definition of leadership practice (2009):

> Leadership practice is defined as those activities that are either understood by, or designed by, staff members to influence the motivation, knowledge, and practice of other staff members in an effort to change the school's core work – i.e. teaching and learning. Leadership actions are viewed as social influence interactions, that is to say, any interaction that you have with a person/group that has influence over that person/group that influences their motivation/knowledge/practice where their work is concerned. (p. 379)

This definition was discussed with all participants who kept diaries and all of them said that they were satisfied that they understood what the purpose of the diaries was and their role in keeping them. In each school, these meetings provoked discussion about the role of post holders and the extent to which they considered or did not consider

themselves to be leaders in their roles as post holders. Four post holders including the principal agreed to keep diaries in Oakley School, five in Redwood (excluding the Principal due to unavoidable reasons), all three post holders in Sapling School and three in Scoil Síorghlas. Thus, there were 15 diary-keepers in total.

The participants were informed that they could fill out the diary at any stage during the day. The diaries were kept for 5 days in total (Monday to Friday) as the principals only agreed to this amount of time. There was additional space on the template for personal reflection on completion of the diary. On each of the days, the participant was asked to record if the day had been a typical one, so that the researcher could analyse practice that the participants themselves perceived to be relatively normal. Participants were asked to enter in the time of the action and/or interaction, what the action (practice) entailed, information as to who they had interactions with and the purpose of their actions and interactions. The data provided information detailing the various roles and responsibilities of the post holders (as perceived by them personally), all those who they interacted with and why. The process through which the data from the diaries were analysed is outlined in the later section, Qualitative Data Analysis and an outline of the analysis story of the diary data is presented in the Analysis chapter. Findings from the diaries are also presented in the subsequent chapter detailing cross case analysis as well as in the four appendices based on the cases (Appendices L-M).

Interviews

The third and final data gathering stage of this study involved conducting three interviews in each school - with the principal, a post holder and a non-post holder. Thus 12 interviews were held altogether. Interviews are one of the most important sources for

data collection in case studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Dexter (1970, cited in Briggs & Coleman, 2007), describes the interview as a "conversation with a purpose" (p. 207). For Guba and Lincoln (1981, in Briggs & Coleman, 2007) "of all the means of exchanging information known to man ... interviewing is perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most respected of the tools that the inquirer can use" (p. 207). The interviews allowed for a degree of interaction about issues and concepts that was not possible in responding to the questionnaire or diary. They also provided an opportunity to follow through on various findings that had emerged from earlier analysis. All 12 interviews were carried out before or after school hours and were held in April and May of the academic year 2009-2010. The findings of these interviews across the four schools are presented within each of the case chapters.

Interviews were used for this research because they are particularly good at producing data which deal with topics in depth and in detail and because, using this method "Subjects can be probed, issues pursued and lines of investigation followed" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 202). Interviews can be a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out. They can provide high credibility and can allow the researcher to probe for more details and ensure that participants are interpreting questions the way they were intended. The researcher wanted the opportunity to ask direct, face-to-face questions and to follow up on participant responses from the questionnaires and diaries.

As with the questionnaires and diaries, disadvantages of using interviews exist. One such disadvantage is that interviews can be quite daunting for people and that use of an audio recorder can inhibit the interviewee. It was endeavoured to make the interviewee as comfortable as possible. Furthermore, opportunities were provided

throughout the research for the staff to familiarise themselves with the research and the researcher. This was done through meetings with the research participants in advance of the data gathering stage. Similarly, as Denscombe points out, "The data from interviews are based on what people say rather than what they do. The two may not tally" (2007, p. 203). While the researcher did not have control over this, the data was triangulated with the questionnaires and diaries so as to help to give a truer picture than simply using interviews alone.

Another disadvantage of using interviews is that the method tends to produce non-standard responses (Denscombe, 2007) and that they can produce data that are not pre-coded and have a relatively open format. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were conducted, with an interview schedule that contained predetermined questions. Review of the literature and data analysis of the questionnaires and diaries contributed considerably to the writing of the questions. The questions were then put into main categories, such as collaboration, communication, professional needs and so on. (Themes such as these, and where they emerged from, are discussed in detail in later chapters). These categories were then used in the first stages of coding. Having predetermined questions and categories led to the responses being more standardised.

While conducting the semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions were used that allowed the interviewee individual variations in their response. This served to corroborate data previously gathered from the questionnaires and/or diaries. The interview schedules used provided a list of questions or general topics that the interviewer aimed to explore (copies of which are included in Appendix F). A schedule was used so as to make interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and

comprehensive and to help keep interactions focused. The interviews were audio-recorded so that they could be later transcribed. NVivo 8 software was used to aid in the analysis of the data gathered from the interviews. The stages of qualitative analysis are discussed in a later section below.

The interviews were piloted with the principal and teachers in the researcher's own school, and helped to indicate which questions may be confusing or unnecessary. The pilot phase also helped to gauge reactions to questions, to anticipate the appropriate length of time for the interviews, and led to the re-categorising of questions. It aided in deciding how flexible the semi-structured schedule should be, the recording procedures that would be used and where to probe for further information. After the pilot interviews were conducted, participants were asked for feedback regarding ambiguities and difficult questions. For example, a question that was initially believed to be ambiguous was "Has the ISMT changed how you view school leadership?" After discussion this was changed to "Have the workings of the ISMT changed your views of school leadership?" Participants also helped the researcher to organise the flow of the questions. The participants commented that the pilot schedules involved quite thought-provoking questions too early on, and that time was needed for the interviewee to "warm into the interview". This feedback aided in finalising the schedules to be used in the actual study.

Exploring leadership practice in this study involved examining the types of actions and interactions that took place between leaders and those who were led, the behaviours and traits of both formal and informal leaders, structures that surrounded their practice, the attitudes that were held towards leadership practice in the schools and

the professional needs relating to practice. Data from the interviews allowed not only for triangulation with the data and subsequent findings relating to practice that had emerged from the questionnaires and diaries, their semi-structure nature allowed the interviewer to explore the culture that the interviewees believed existed in their school.

As with the other data gathering methods, findings from the interviews are presented in the subsequent chapter detailing cross case analysis as well as in the four appendices based on the cases (Appendices L-M). A detailed outline as to how the interview data were analysed is also presented in the next chapter.

Role of the Researcher and Participants

In the human sciences the social researcher is concerned with exploring and understanding the social world using both the participant's and the researcher's understanding. This researcher acknowledges that she was not simply collecting views and opinions that are out there, but was, as a person, interpreting information, attitudes and practices and as such had a significant role to play in generating it. For this reason, it is important to reflect on where the particular research question comes from in one's own life (Ballenger, 1992) and discuss and reflect on this. She recognises that her own background has shaped her interpretation and acknowledges that both the findings and results are not void of her own assumptions.

Wagner (1997) asserts that "all educational research in schools involves cooperation of one form or another between researchers and practitioners", and he describes three different forms, with each one "reflecting different social arrangements, inquiry and reporting strategies, and operating assumptions" (p. 13). Overall, this researcher believes that this research project reflects what Wagner terms, a Data-

Extraction Agreement, whereby the roles are fairly distinct: that of the researcher and that of the research participant. The researcher is external to the school and is engaged in reflection, while the practitioners are within the schools, engaged in action. The research process involves direct, systematic inquiry designed, conducted and reported by the researcher. Overall, the researcher drives the research, being the agent of inquiry, while the practitioner is the object of inquiry.

There was also an element of Clinical Partnership within this research, however, particularly where the diary-keeping was concerned. With the diary-keeping, the practitioners engaged in the inquiry and were given an opportunity for reflection of their practice. This was an attempt, on the part of the researcher, to involve some of the participants on a deeper level, affirming them as potential change agents in their own work-place, rather than them simply being "passive accessories to research ... initiated by the researcher" (Wagner, 1997, p. 19).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were at the forefront throughout this research project. In proposing the research, an application for ethics approval was completed. Each research participant was presented with a Plain Language Statement (included in Appendix A) which described the research and ethical considerations. All participants read and signed the statement and were given the opportunity to ask questions or to seek clarification. It was ensured that participants' names remained confidential and that all data were kept secure. Participants were informed that no risks existed within the research study, and that participation was voluntary. They were also made aware that they could withdraw

from the research study at any time and that a copy of the research would be given to each of the schools that participated in the study.

Due to the fact that there were only four schools involved, and although no names have been disclosed, it is possible that the schools may be somewhat identifiable to those in the education sector in particular. Participants were advised of this before participating in the research. They were also made aware as to what to expect in the various stages of the research and were given contact details that they could use if they had any queries.

Another ethical consideration that was addressed was in relation to one of the methods used to validate the data analysis and reporting: that of peer review. A fellow researcher agreed to review some of the data input, analysis and representation at various stages during the analysis. She agreed to only discuss the study with the researcher and said that she understood that the purpose of peer review is to add to the validity of the study. This could be neither guaranteed nor measured, although this researcher believes that having this research reviewed shows that the need for transparency and accuracy were central to this work.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis in mixed methods research requires the use of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. Analysis of both types of data followed similar steps, although the procedures within those steps differed. The general procedures in data analysis include: (a) preparing the data for analysis, (b) exploring the data, (c) analysing the data, (d) representing the data analysis, and (e) validating the data

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 129). These procedures were followed in carrying out analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaires, diaries and semi-structured interviews. The details of these procedures are outlined below. The quantitative analysis procedures are outlined first and are then followed by the qualitative analysis procedures.

Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Quantitative Analysis Procedures

Analysis of the quantitative data began by converting the raw data into a form that was useful for analysis. With the data gathered from the questionnaires, preparation of the data involved coding the responses by assigning numeric values to them and importing them into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Numeric values were assigned to the non-text items. Text responses were typed up so as to input them into the qualitative software (NVivo 8) for analysis. The spreadsheet was organised so as to show responses from individual schools and also with the four schools together. With the codebook established and the data imported, exploration of the data began. This involved examining the data for emerging broad trends, reading through the data and making memos so as to develop a preliminary understanding of the database. This involved visually inspecting the data, conducting a descriptive analysis and checking for frequencies.

The next step was analysis of the data. The researcher was aware that statistical comparisons of the schools would have been meaningless, due to the fact that the schools had not been selected randomly. However, before looking at the data gathered in

detail, consideration was given to what comparisons could be made between the schools that might be significant. Consideration was given to the profile of the respondents - of both the ISMT and non-post holders and questions were posed (asking, for example, whether or not number of years' teaching experience had a bearing on attitudes towards certain leadership practices). Queries could be run on whether attitudes of both post holders and non-post holders were close in agreement on various statements put to them, and frequencies of agreement and disagreement could be obtained. Similarly, significant comparisons could be made between schools, for example as to whether there were significant differences in attitude towards leadership practices between schools of considerably different size.

The research design shows that the purpose of gathering data by questionnaire was twofold - first to obtain a profile of the research participants so as to get an accurate record of the school's demographics and also to identify potential participants who might keep diaries and partake in interviews during the qualitative phases. The second purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain the opinions and attitudes of the staff on leadership and management in their school. This was towards getting preliminary answers to the study's research questions.

Coding of the responses from the attitudinal scale in the second part of the questionnaire identified early themes and as such, the researcher placed the 17 Likert items into groups. These early groups/themes included collaboration, communication, delegation, professional development, leadership and roles and responsibilities. These themes provided the basis for the design of the diaries and the semi-structured interview schedules. Similarly, they were used during the broad thematic coding of the data from

the diaries and interviews (details of which follow later). Obtaining descriptive statistics was very useful in highlighting frequencies in the data, for example the percentage of respondents who felt that the ISMT communicated regularly with the rest of the staff. The findings from the analysis of the questionnaires are outlined later.

The next step in the analysis process was to present the results of the analysis in summary form. Representing the quantitative data analysis in this study involved presenting the results in statements of results and also providing results in tables and figures (see Appendices C and D). The data were validated by peer review, whereby a fellow researcher reviewed the input and representation of the data, checking for accuracy and transparency of methods and reporting. Furthermore, responses from the questionnaire were referred to in the interviews, with responses from the participants remaining quite consistent.

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

Qualitative Analysis Procedures

Preparation of the data obtained from the diaries and the interviews involved organising the data for computer analysis. The data from the diaries were typed and the interview data were transcribed verbatim. The collated data (both text-based and audio files) were then imported into the NVivo 8 software.

Initial exploration of the data involved reading and re-reading the text, making memos and developing a qualitative codebook. The NVivo 8 software aided the researcher to consider emerging themes garnered from research participants' contributions throughout the analytical process in an helpful manner. Use of the

software was also beneficial from a transparency point of view. The data management

software helped to maintain a clear audit trail, tracking all processes and stages of

coding. This facilitated clear demonstration of the rigorous approach taken in

conducting the analysis (Richards, 2009). Appendix H presents screen shots of various

steps taken during the analysis of qualitative data in this study. They show how an audit

trail was maintained during the different stages of analysis and also highlight the results

of queries that were run. Table 3 shows the qualitative analytical strategy that was used

for this study.

Table 3

Qualitative Analytical Strategy

Phase	Strategy	Description
1	Broad participant thematic coding	Using data from typed and imported diaries and interview transcripts, coding responses by category/question (automated through NVivo8).
2	Cross coding to gather prompted responses and unprompted responses	Allows participant responses to be coded to more than one question.
3	Coding-on to identify sub categories	Creating a hierarchy or breaking down of categories into subcategories. Involves interpretation of literal responses and how they relate to the research questions.

4	Re-organise, merge, distill and restructuring existing nodes into major themes. Coding-on by perspective	Discerning what the participant said or wrote on different occasions and merging them to existing categories.
6	Raising proposition statements	Making memos and annotations, proposition statements are raised by bringing all the categorised data together and interpreting them.
7	Validating proposition statements	Testing the proposition statements and seeking evidence in the data to support findings, alleviating subjectivity.
8	Synthesising proposition statements into a coherent and supported outcome statement	Final phase involving bringing summary notes, quotes and supporting data to write and present coherent findings.

Analysis of the qualitative data involved coding the data, assigning labels to the codes, grouping codes into themes, interrelating themes and abstracting to a smaller set of themes. The database design incorporated each participant's profile through recorded demographics (from the questionnaires), allowing for queries to be run on individuals and groups. The findings from the diaries and interviews have been represented through discussion of themes or categories. The findings are also presented using visual models, figures and tables. Various writing strategies were used to present the qualitative evidence including conveying subthemes, citing specific quotes, using different sources

of data to cite multiple items of evidence, and providing multiple perspectives from individuals to show divergent views (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). It was intended from the beginning that the cases would be written up under the main themes of analysis and in relation to the three different types of research participant - principals, other formal leaders and informal leaders (Appendices J-M). This is discussed further in following chapter, Validation strategies employed included triangulation and peer review, whereby various stages of the data input, analysis and representation were monitored and discussed for accuracy and clarity.

Validity

Validity serves the purpose of checking on the quality of the data and the results. The researcher not only has to be aware of validity issues surrounding quantitative and qualitative research but also, as Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) assert, "the very act of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches raises additional potential validity issues" (p. 145). Minimising the threat to the validity involved several actions, as recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007). First, only those who participated in the quantitative phase were considered for involvement in the qualitative phase. Second, there was a larger sample size for the quantitative data collection than for the qualitative data collection. Third, the pilot stages allowed for more rigorous development and validation of the instruments used. Fourth, where the analysis of data was concerned, only significant results or strong predictors to follow up on were chosen and finally, both quantitative and qualitative validity were addressed.

As was mentioned in previous sections, peer review was used to add to the validity of the study. This was used during all stages of the research. Additionally, using three different data collection instruments meant that the data were triangulated, thereby increasing the validity of the research further.

Summary

The Methodology chapter has outlined the research design of this study, along with the questions upon which it is based and the research methodologies used. It has provided an elaboration of the selected design and a justification for this selection with reference to methodological literature. It has focused on the theory and practicalities of taking a mixed methods, case study approach and has discussed how this approach is best suited to the research questions. Sampling procedures were outlined and the individual cases were briefly introduced. This chapter also elaborated on issues including piloting, triangulation, the role of the researcher and ethical considerations. Furthermore, it outlined the various procedures of data analysis that were followed during the research. It provided a report on how the researcher conducted analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data and dealt with issues around validity. The next chapter outlines the cross case analysis and findings from the four case schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND CROSS CASE ANALYSIS OF FOUR SCHOOLS

This chapter focuses predominantly on presenting the cross case analysis that was carried out during the course of this study and discusses the findings that emerged across the four schools. In doing so it examines how the findings answer the study's main research questions. First, however, it briefly outlines how the data from the questionnaires, diaries and interviews were handled and analysed and introduces the four case schools that were involved in this research.

Analysis of the Data and how Themes Emerged

Analysis of the Questionnaires, Diaries and Interviews

Details relating to how the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed are included in the Methodology chapter. The following section briefly outlines how various themes emerged from analysis of the questionnaires, diaries and interviews with a view to highlighting the part that the three data sources played in illuminating the study's findings. Tables 4 and Figures 4, 5 and 6 in this section illustrate the way in which the themes emerged and may prove helpful in providing background to the findings that are presented and discussed in the four case appendices (Appendices J-M) and the cross-case analysis below. The three data sources offered different perspectives on the whole and were considered together during cross case analysis of the schools. Each played their part in forming the overall picture of leadership practice - the questionnaires gave

breadth and context to the cases, the diaries gave depth by highlighting instances of

leadership practices (as they occurred and within context) and the interviews offered

insight into leaders' motivations, reflections and interpretation of leadership practice in

the schools. Hence, they were not separate strands but rather multiple facets of the

whole leadership practice phenomenon.

Analysis of the questionnaire data highlighted various emerging themes for

further exploration during the qualitative stages of the research. These included

examining both formal and informal leadership and management practice, collaboration,

communication, roles and responsibilities, delegation and decision-making and

professional needs. Issues for examination specific to the four schools are outlined in

Table 4 below. The results from the questionnaires provided sufficient indicators that

the respondents' attitudes towards ISM/leadership were mainly positive, with the

majority of them believing it to have relevance to them and that is was of benefit to their

school.

Table 4

Areas Highlighted by the Questionnaires for Further Exploration

School	Areas highlighted by the questionnaires for further examination
Oakley	• Issues surrounding roles of those in in formal positions (e.g. seniority). • Clarity relating to roles and responsibilities and the need for their review. • The perceived need for specific professional development for leadership roles. • Extent to which opportunities are afforded (if any) to non-post holders. • This school in particular demonstrated the need for qualitative methods to be used so that leadership practice could be

		examined to a greater extent (due to the low response rate to the questionnaire).
Redwood		• Clarity relating to roles and responsibilities and the need for their review. • The perceived need for specific professional development for leadership roles. • Issues around the need for clearer communication. • The place that informal leaders might have in the school. • Leadership practice in a very large school. • The effect of time constraints on leadership practice. • Attitudes towards how seniority rather than suitability can affect how leadership roles are assigned and how leadership is practised.
Sapling		• Clarity relating to roles and responsibilities and the need for their review. • The perceived need for specific professional development for leadership roles. • How leadership is distributed in smaller schools and their plans for future distribution of leadership as the school develops. • Examine ways of distributing leadership other than using formal structures (due to their having a very small ISMT). • How the small size of the school and its developing status impacts upon leadership practice.
Síorghlas		• The perceived need for specific professional development for leadership roles. • Issues relating to the effect of the moratorium on the ISMT structure and the resultant lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. The call for review of needs of school in relation to the role of the ISMT. • Extent to which leadership is shared with informal leaders as opposed to the extent to which non-post holders are delegated to.

Answers to the open ended question yielded responses detailing issues that were

not included within the attitudinal statements or profile questions. For example,

perceptions towards the impact of the current moratorium on promotion on the ISM

structure highlighted the concern of many respondents - the comments made by the

respondents highlighted new areas worthy of further exploration. These included the pressure of time constraints on leadership practice, the issue of seniority as opposed to suitability, and the effect that the current moratorium on promotion was having on the schools and how the schools planned on dealing with posts left vacant as a result.

An example of one of the main emerging issues raised in the questionnaire was in response to the statement relating to the need for professional development for ISM/leadership. This statement provided an insight into the respondents' views of the importance of on-going professional development for activity which they deemed important - that of leadership practice. Many acknowledged that initial teacher induction and teaching experience alone did not provide sufficient preparation for leadership roles and that the skills and knowledge needed for leadership could be very different. It was intended to examine this further by asking participants what topics or themes they felt would be important as part of professional development for leaders. It was thought that this would give insight into what the participants deemed as important skills, action and knowledge for leadership practice.

Another example of a theme of particular note from the questionnaires was the number of respondents who commented on the sharing of leadership in their school and the type of school culture that they felt is necessary to enable this. In Redwood School in particular there was a desire on the part of non-post holders to be given the chance to lead informally. In Sapling School this seemed to be happening as the norm. Overall 72% respondents agreed that the ISMT had shared leadership with other members of the ISMT and other members of the staff, leaving 28% who either did not agree or had no opinion. 76% felt that the ISMT delegated successfully. It was intended to probe further

into this practice and to get a sense if this was, in fact distributed leadership or more so delegation of tasks among ISMT members and to others.

Overall, there was no major marked contrast between the responses in the different schools, and all but Oakley School made numerous contextual comments which provided a richer understanding of leadership practice in these schools, even at this early stage of the research. This provided a rich database to work from in planning the subsequent qualitative stages of the research. The questionnaire was of great benefit in that it assisted in accessing a number of research participants' perspectives and provided a number of emerging themes to feed into the next stages. It was aimed that any differences between declared views in the questionnaire and *actual practice* in relation to the emerging themes such as the extent of shared leadership, the effectiveness of communication and so on would be noted in the next stages of the study. This practice was to be examined using the diaries and subsequently through the interviews. In response to the study's main research questions, it was also intended to extend the exploration of leadership practice to informal leadership roles, while continuing to examine the practice of those in formal positions. Thus, overall the findings from the quantitative stage set the agenda for further exploration in the next qualitative stage.

The diaries provided the opportunity to obtain a snapshot of the work of those in formal positions, having been designed to examine in more detail the leadership practice (if any) of these teachers and their attitudes towards their practice. Initial reading of the diary took the data at face value. In the initial phases, the researcher read and re-read the entries and made notes under the headings Practice, Interaction and Purpose. Next the relationship between practice and interaction was considered and also the ways in which

the post holders carried out these actions and interactions (focusing on their ways of

behaving and personal traits). Figure 4 below represents the areas that formed the basis

of analysis of data from the diaries. The three areas of exploration; including practice,

interactions and ways of behaving were all considered within the school's particular

context and, at a later stage, were considered within the broader context of leadership

practice in the four schools.
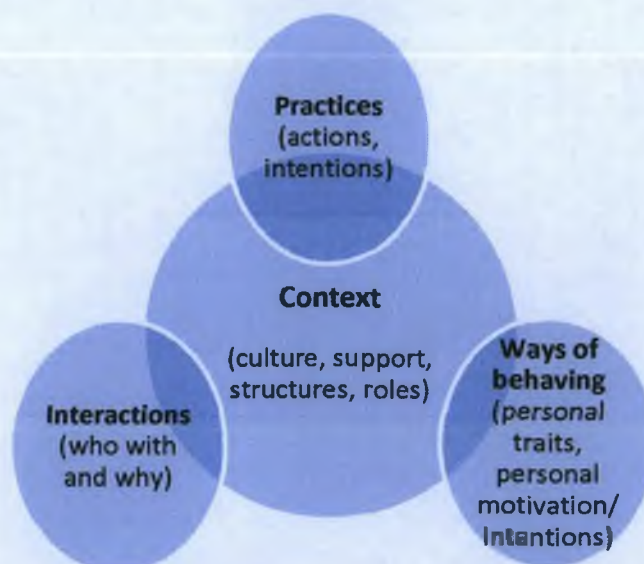
Figure 4. Exploring combination of interactions, practice and personal traits

Next the data were analysed based on knowledge of the post holders' designated

roles and responsibilities. It became apparent at this point that the practice of many post

holders extended beyond their designated duties. It also became clear that their actions

and interactions were on a spectrum of role-type; from a more individual, duty-related

type to a more distributed, collaborative and multi-task type of role. Figure 5 below

presents the spectrum on which the researcher placed the role-type of the post holders
who documented their actions and interactions in their diaries. This was done through
the various lenses that are presented in the Literature Review chapter. Actions,
interactions and intentions were considered through ecological and distributed lenses
and were reflected upon alongside the understanding of leadership that underpins this
research.

Diaries - Spectrum of Practice and Interactions

Group 1

Mainly task-based

Works independently (little collaboration)

Reactionary role (can be treated like a 'go-for' by colleagues)

Supports others (with knowledge & skills)

Others dependent on post holder's skills/knowledge

Takes responsibility

Little evidence of direction-setting towards learning-centred improvement

No clear influecne over others

Group 2

Shares some tasks and decisions

Occasionally collaborates

Supports others (with knowledge & skills)

Takes initiative

Takes responsibility

Others dependent on post holder's skills/knowledge

Exercises authority occasionally

Some dirction-setting

Some influence over others

Group 3

Distributes leadership

Exercises authority

Acts as role-model and influences others

Sets directions - vision of learning-centred improvement

Delegates

Shares decision-making

Builds capacity, enables others

Takes initiative

Approached by others

Supports others (with knowledge, skills & advice)

Works independently & with others

Regularly collaborates

Takes responsibility

Others dependent on post holder's skills/knowledge

Figure 5. Spectrum of practice and interactions undertaken by formal leaders

Many of the actions and personal traits included on the spectrum are based on a number of leadership practices and personal traits (as perceived by teachers in three secondary schools) as were highlighted by Humphreys (2010). It became clear from the data from the diaries that there was significant variance in practices and personal traits of post holders, and that these featured along the spectrum ranging from those that involved/required leadership to those that did not. Evidence of leadership practice was highlighted in how the post holders, who they interacted with and, importantly, their intentions behind their action/interaction. Hence, as Gronn calls for, analysis of the diaries involved analysis of action within natural settings that can would lead to "evidence informed judgments about practice" (2003, p. 72). Evidence of leadership practice was present in the intentions of actors to influence the actions and/or attitudes of others within a wider learning-centred vision. Leadership practice was therefore present in action that involved meaningful direction-setting (Leithwood et al., 2004) and the exercising of power/influence. The unit of analysis shifted away from solely focusing on individual actors. Analysis of the diaries considered the extent to which leadership was a shared endeavour and how it was distributed. The diary-keepers, in the main, documented their actions, interactions and intentions clearly and this data was made all the more rich due to the addition of individual reflections on practice. The latter gave considerable insight into practice (or lack thereof) in the school and helped to inform the final interview schedules. Findings from the diaries are presented in Appendices J-M within the context of the four schools.

Analysis of the data from the questionnaires and diaries led to findings based on various key themes. All of the themes were situated under the over-arching theme of

leadership practice, the attitudes towards it and needs around it. Thus, the first two stages of the research, based on the research questions and literature review, led to themes around the practice of formal and informal leaders (including their roles and responsibilities), structures and supports that existed around leadership practices in the schools and also various professional needs that were identified within the questionnaires and diaries. These themes emerged as areas for further examination and were areas around which the interview schedules were largely based (Appendix F). Figure 6 below illustrates how the themes emerged in response to the research questions during the three stages of data collection and highlights the main headings under which analysis and findings from the interview data can be viewed. It was considered important at this stage that exploration of leadership practices and attitudes towards them should involve examining the structures that existed around practice, how leadership practices were helped or hindered, and what conditions supported both formal and informal leadership practices. Analysis of the data from the interviews in particular centered around these themes and led to findings relating to them.
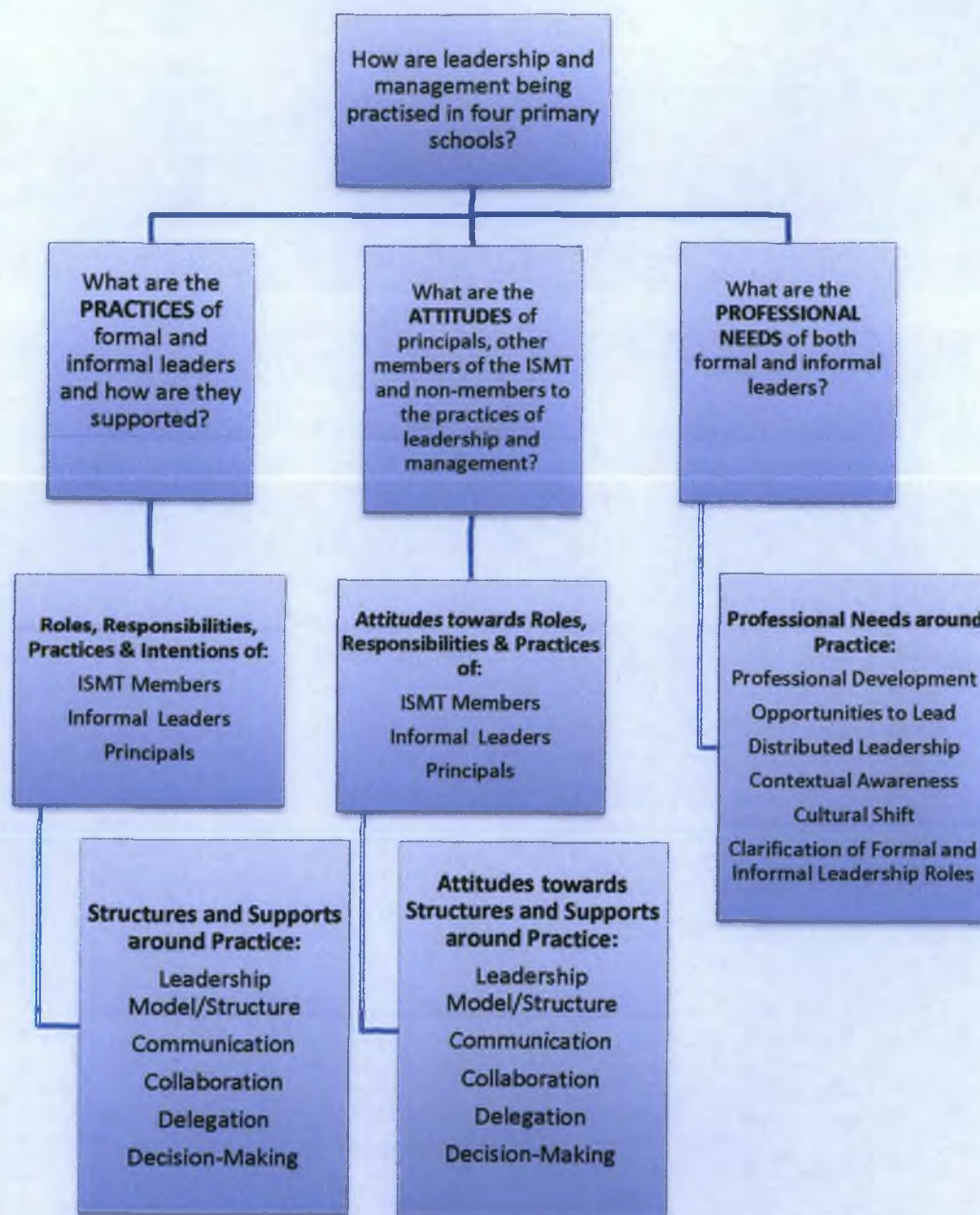
Figure 6. Interview data analysis and themes stemming from research questions

Hence, analysis of the three data sources led to rich accounts of leadership

practice in the four schools and to it. The next section briefly introduces the schools

involved in this research and outlines the main findings that emerged from the four

individual cases.

Introduction to the Four Cases and Summary of Findings

Appendices J, K, L and M present analysis and findings from the four individual

schools involved in this study. They outline how the themes emerged from the research

questions and the three stages of data analysis. They present findings relating to the

practice of leadership in the four schools and also attitudes towards practice by

examining the actions and interactions of both formal and informal leaders.

Furthermore, Appendices J-M examine the structures and culture that surrounded

leadership practice and the various perceived professional needs towards improving

leadership practice in the schools. Table 5 below presents an introductory profile of the

four schools and Table 6 highlights details relating to the research participants. These

are followed by short summaries of the main findings that emerged from the four

schools.

Table 5

Profile of the Four Schools

Profile	Oakley	Redwood	Sapling	Síorghlas
School Size	Large	Very large	Small to medium	Medium
Type of Principal	Admin	Admin & Admin DP	Teaching	Admin
Status	DEIS 1 (Disadvantaged)	Non-DEIS	Non-DEIS Developing school	Non-DEIS
Location	Suburbs of Dublin	Suburbs of Dublin	Suburbs of Dublin	Suburbs of Dublin

Gender of Pupils	Co-educational	Co-educational	Co-educational	Co-educational
Catchment Area	Mainly council housing & rented accommodation	Mainly made up of middle-class estates	Mainly made up of middle-class estates	Mainly made up of council/middle-class estates
Main Challenges according to the Principal	One third of children come from families where English is not the first language, moratorium on promotion, confrontational relationships among some teachers, lack of parental involvement, challenges that disadvantage brings	Moratorium on promotion, prefabricated nature of school building, lack of resources for teaching children with EAL and SEN	Moratorium on promotion, prefabricated nature of school building, rapidly growing size from year to year (being a developing school), lack of resources for teaching children with EAL and SEN	Moratorium on promotion, prefabricated nature of school building
More detailed Profile	Appendix J	Appendix K	Appendix L	Appendix M

Table 6 below outlines details as to who the research participants were at the three data gathering stages of the study in the four schools - the number of them and if they held a formal leadership position or not.

Table 6

Details of Research Participants in the Four Schools

	Number of Teachers in Total in School	Number of Post Holders (including Principal)	Number of Questionnaire Research Participants (PH = post holder, NPH = non-post holder, P = principal)	Number of Diary Research Participants	Number of Interview Research Participants
Oakley	25	9	7	4	3
			2 PHs, 4NPHs & P	3 PH, P	PH, NPH, P
Redwood	40	20	24	5	3
			12 PHs, 12 NPHs	4 PH, Admin DP	PH, NPH, P
Sapling	10	3	10	3	3
			All PHs, NPHs & P	1 PH, DP & P	PH (DP), NPH, P
Siorghlas	11	5	9	3	3
			3 PHs, 5 NPHs & P	1 PH, Acting DP & P	PH (Acting DP), NPH, P

Summary of Findings from Oakley School

Where the practice of formal leadership in Oakley School is concerned, the

evidence suggests that those in formal leadership positions did not recognise their

position as being that of a leadership one, rather the principal and the DP were the only

ones viewed as leaders. This was despite the fact that the diaries of three of the post

holders had shown action and interactions that clearly involved working in a leadership

capacity. The principal recognised that the legacy left by promotion based solely on

seniority was a factor that impeded practice, and also the way in which certain members

of the ISMT could be resistive and uncooperative.

The culture of the school was slowly changing and was becoming more collaborative in nature. This change in culture allowed for more opportunities to be afforded to those who showed an interest in leading informally. These opportunities for informal leaders were mainly on an invitational basis for fear that non-post holders would be viewed as interfering. The structure of leadership and management in Oakley school reflected a very definite chain of command which was accepted as the norm and a positive thing. While the principal acknowledged the importance of distributing leadership to all teachers, she recognised that significant cultural change towards collaborative ways of working would be necessary first. Thus, the context in which practice was situated was in a school where until recently, had been entrenched in a legacy of rather tight and narrow role definition and individual work practices rather than collaborative ways of working. The most acute need for Oakley School where leadership practice was concerned, therefore, was for a continued cultural shift towards collaboration and cooperation and also for professional development to improve leadership capacity of teachers, as was identified by the research participants.

Summary of Findings from Redwood School

Redwood School is the largest school in the study and the evidence suggests that its size could have a bearing on upon leadership practice. As a result of its large size a rather tight and inflexible hierarchical structure existed which often resulted in many decisions coming from the top-down rather than the bottom up. The hierarchy also highlighted the clear split that existed between those in senior management positions and special duties post holders. There was evidence that this split may have affected formal leadership practice, in that it communicated a message to some post holders that

they were not at the same level of leadership as others. The evidence suggests that while the ISMT was seen as beneficial to the school, and that the post holders were very hard working, there was a need to review their work so that it met the changing needs of the school. The diaries highlighted the fact that not all post holders behaved as leaders, despite holding a formal leadership position.

Very little informal leadership was evident in this school, and this was a source of frustration on the part of non-post holders. They felt that oftentimes they did not have a voice and that their opinions were not regarded. There also seemed to be very little evidence of distributed leadership in Redwood School, despite the fact that it could alleviate workload pressure of those in formal leadership positions. There was major variance in attitude towards the practice of leadership, with the principal and post holders unaware as to how non-post holders may feel about practice. Major needs that existed for this school included improved inclusion of all teachers, improved communication channels, collaboration and decision-making that would be welcome from the bottom-up and not solely from the top-down, and finally the need to consider the potential role that non-post holders could play.

Summary of Findings from Sapling School

Evidence of formal and informal leadership practice was very much in existence in Sapling School. Practice was in the context of an environment of trust whereby teachers were aware that it was acceptable to make mistakes. The teachers prided themselves on the way in which they all worked together collaboratively and recognised that this was not necessarily the norm in schools. The members of the small ISMT were

extremely hard pressed for time and had considerable workloads. As a result they were depending on informal leaders to get involved and take the initiative to lead. The encouragement and support of informal leadership practice was a priority that the principal made many references to, not only to help alleviate the pressures that the ISMT was facing, but also to ensure that teachers were getting opportunities to develop their own leadership skills.

The non-post holders appreciated these opportunities and also valued the way in which they felt equally involved in decision-making. Their enthusiasm may have been in part due to the fact that Sapling School was a developing school during the course of this research and therefore no negative legacies or issues around seniority existed. It may also have partly been due to the intention on the part of the young staff to enhance their future chances of promotion. Overall, however, a very positive picture emerged from Sapling School in relation to leadership practice and was a school that could be held up as an example where distributed leadership for the better of the school was part of practice.

Summary of Findings from Scoil Síorghlas

Findings from Scoil Síorghlas highlight that despite holding a formal leadership position, post holders in this school did not appear to act as leaders (in that their actions often lacked the intention of influencing others towards school improvement). There was not much evidence of informal leadership practice either, and this may have been as a result of opportunities to lead being perceived as potentially onerous from a workload point of view. The principal was the only one who displayed regular leadership practice. While she expressed awareness as to the potential benefits of distributing leadership to

both formal and informal leaders, there was little evidence of this practice also.

Furthermore, leadership opportunities seemed to be something that was given to

teachers from her as opposed to being something that others took the initiative towards

taking on themselves. Regarding the structures and supports that existed around

practice, the flatter, flexible hierarchy allowed for effective communication and a certain

degree of collaboration. Lack of underlying trust was seen to affect collaborative work

practices, however, as did the negative perception that teachers had towards delegation

and the considerable amount of pressure that they were feeling due to the moratorium on

promotion. Thus, one of the most pressing needs for Scoil Síorghlas was for open

dialogue (such as whole-staff discussions) around leadership practice so as to build trust

among the staff.

Cross Case Analysis and Summary Discussion on Main Findings

The following sections present this cross case analysis and discussion of the

main findings, thereby highlighting how they respond to the study's main research

questions. Cross case analysis across the four schools allowed for rigorous comparison

of the cases and led to a number of findings relating to practice. The questions relating

to leadership practices and attitudes towards practice are considered first and are then

followed by discussion relating to professional needs around leadership of schools.

What are the Practices of and Attitudes towards Leadership?

Flood (2011), outlining an historical perspective on leading and managing in

Irish schools asserts that there is need for leadership to be further examined within the

Irish context and that there must be common understanding by all those involved in the

education system relating to a number of aspects of leadership. He asserts that Irish research must examine who leads, how they practice leadership and how their leadership can be supported. This study responds to this call in its exploration of leadership practice - the behaviours and skills involved in the actions and interactions of those who lead and the structures needed to support and develop it.

In the present climate in Ireland, the development of leadership capacity of teachers is, perhaps, more urgent now than ever. The importance of leadership and management that is distributed beyond the principal was recognised by the government with the introduction of the ISM structure and continues to be recognised in numerous policy documents that arrive through the door of schools, many of which come with the expectation of whole-school collaboration, teamwork, shared decision-making and leadership that is distributed to both formal and informal leaders (DES, 2011a, 2011b). Yet over a decade later, the evidence from the four schools involved in this study suggests that while working collaboratively is becoming more common practice, distributed leadership certainly is not the norm. It is in this context that the present study aims to offer insight into the practice of leadership and the professional needs of those who lead in Irish primary schools. The following sections consider what the practice of formal and informal leaders looked like in the four schools and what attitudes existed towards this practice. Conclusions based on these findings and possible implications for future leadership practice will follow in the concluding chapter.

Formal Leadership Practice

Formal leadership practices were examined through the interactions and actions of those on the ISMT. Regarding the overall purpose of ISM/leadership, the majority of

participants considered it to involve a team that would support the principal and that would unite, coordinate and motivate the staff behind a common vision. Findings from this study suggest that the ISM/leadership structure can be of huge benefit to schools, with most participants expressing a positive attitude towards it. The evidence suggests, however, that there was considerable variation between schools in the post holders' perceptions of their roles. Some post holders held the belief that they did not have a leadership role in their schools, even though they displayed a number of leadership behaviours, including exercising authority and influencing others, collaborating, sharing decision-making, expressing a vision towards school improvement, capacity building and initiative-taking. Other post holders believed that they behaved as leaders in their school, although evidence from their diary entries did not support this. All participants, however, did show that they were conscientious in their roles and documented positive attitudes towards their post, but not necessarily leadership practices. The only negativity towards their posts was in relation to the fact that many of them felt that they never had enough time to carry out their duties.

One of the main findings to emerge as an issue in all of the schools is that of role definition and the need for duties to be reviewed to match the needs of the school. The data repeatedly present a picture of the ISM structure as a rather dated model of leadership and management, with a number of post holders involved in task/duty-based activity rather than leadership practice. Evidence from all four schools suggests that the roles and responsibilities of post holders were therefore in need of review, that they had been assigned based on needs that no longer existed or were no longer as pressing for the school. Frustration on the part of non-post holders in particular lay in the fact that

certain post holders were not pulling their weight, despite being paid an extra remuneration. Similarly, and without exception, all the schools pointed to the need for the roles of those in formal positions to be more clearly defined and communicated to all. This echoes the call by the LDS (2007) for clarification around this formal leadership structure. Some post holders felt that it would be very helpful if members of the ISMT could have a clear outline as to what was expected of ISMTs in general and what was expected of them in their own school. The principals in particular felt that definition from the DES is needed as to the role of the ISMT in order to give clarification as to what is expected of formal leaders, as well as the amount of time that post holders should spend carrying out responsibilities. It could be argued, however, that calls for clarification around areas such as time allocation gives an insight into how ISM continues to be viewed in schools - that it reflects how perceptions of the role of ISM centre more so around duties rather than the general leadership role of post holders.

As well as there being considerable variation in and between schools as to the extent to which post holders acted in a leadership capacity there was also variation in attitude towards the role of post holders. In Oakley School, Redwood School and Scoil Síorghlas, bar a few exceptions, a rather narrow perception of the leadership role of post holders existed (among both post holders and non-post holders), with their role definition largely focusing on the duties that were under the remit of their posts as opposed to their places as leaders in the school. While most participants mentioned the leadership aspect of the role, a number of them (both post holders and non-post holders) did not believe that the ISMT in their schools acted as or were leaders. The fact that this was a prevailing feeling that existed in three out of the four schools is a significant

finding of this study. It might be suggested that this narrow perception held towards the leadership role of ISMTs may have had a limiting effect on leadership practices and may possibly have had a negative bearing on leadership potential of formal and informal leaders.

This study suggests that not all post holders are leaders. Analysis of the diaries highlighted that documenting actions and interactions relating to a post did not necessarily highlight leadership practices. The evidence also suggests that the practices of those in formal positions can fall short of the objective of *Circular P07/03* (DES, 2003), in which the distribution of leadership roles is implicitly acknowledged - that formal, promoted positions would enable 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. Another clear finding highlights the lack of reference that post holders made to their role in school improvement and the enhancement of pupil outcomes. This lack of acknowledgment was glaringly obvious and begs the questions as to what post holders feel the purpose of formal leadership in schools is and also what do they consider is their role in school improvement? As the Literature Review points out, school leadership (and distributed leadership) have been linked positively with improving pupil learning and outcomes and also increasing teacher motivation and professional learning (Harris, 2009; Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, 2009; Southworth, 2004). Whereas a number of actions and interactions of those in formal positions were clearly carried out with the intention of school improvement, with the exception of the principals, post holders made very little (if any) reference to this core part of their activity.

Evidence from the four schools shows that practice of leadership very much depends on the personal traits of those who lead. It points to the way in which not all of those in formal positions showed leadership qualities. Their behaviours ranged on a spectrum of traits that ranged from actions that were task-based and oftentimes individual to practices that involved shared decision-making and direction-setting, influencing others and working collaboratively with others. There was considerable variation between and within schools in the leadership practices of ISMT members. Thus, it became clear that practices could very much depend on personality and the post holder's own interpretation of their role. In Oakley School there was uncertainty around the extent to which post holders felt they could or should behave as leaders, whereas evidence from Sapling School highlights the way in which the post holders' duties were not so clearly defined because the post holders were involved in general leadership practices as well as carrying out assigned duties. They identified times that called for them to lead and did so regardless as to whether the activity related to their post or not. Overall the evidence suggests that, with the exception of Sapling School, leadership practices by all post holders was not the norm, despite their holding formal leadership positions. Rather, practices could be quite duty-bound and many of their actions and interactions did not always appear to require them to call upon leadership skills or behaviours. Furthermore, any reported evidence of leadership practices tended to relate to the assigned post. Again, with the exception of Sapling School, it was generally only the principals who displayed leadership practices in the majority of their actions and interactions.

The data-sets often highlighted variance in attitudes towards formal leadership practices within the same school, and not all participants were aware that considerable differences in opinion sometimes existed. For example, in Redwood School, while both the post holder and principal believed that the ISMT matched the needs of the school and that communication between post holders and non-post holders was effective, the non-post holder had a very different opinion and expressed her belief that other non-post holders shared the same opinion as her. In the interviews with the principal and post holders in Redwood School it was clear that neither felt that others may feel discontented towards the practices of those in formal positions. Likewise, in Scoil Síorghlas, there were hugely varying opinions relating to delegation of tasks or responsibilities. Where the principal viewed delegation as teacher leadership opportunities, non-post holders perceived it more negatively as adding to their workload (Síor, Int, P; Síor, Int, NPH1). Such variance in attitude highlights the importance of opening up dialogue between the different layers of management, both from the top-down and from the bottom-up. The existence of tight hierarchical structures, lack of trust and "difficult personalities" (Oak, Int, P) were shown to have a negative impact on leadership practice and were definite hindrances to establishing the sort of open environment that would allow for this sort of two-way dialogue.

The issue of seniority was seen to be a contentious one in three out of the four schools. The allocation of posts based on seniority (rather than suitability) was seen as unfair particularly when the posts of the ISMT did not match the needs of the school or when there was clear uneven distribution of workload among post holders. Issues relating to seniority had left a bitter legacy in Oakley School in particular. Evidence

suggests that huge variation in the practices of post holders existed in Redwood School and Oakley School in particular, both in the extent to which some did or did not carry out their roles and responsibilities and the positive or negative attitudes held by them towards their posts. There was a feeling expressed that there should be more flexibility within the ISM structure and that a review of posts should happen far more regularly, with all members of staff having their say. The assigning of posts was also seen as something that should be considered again, both at DES policy level and at an individual school level. As the Literature Review points out, the LDS (2007) highlights that the establishment of ISMTs in schools and the process through which leadership and management was to be distributed brought with it the intention that individual school staff and management would engage in a dialogue relating to the school's leadership and management needs. They point out, however, that in practice this is not necessarily being embraced, particularly where the legacy of issues around seniority remain. Findings from this study back this up and highlight a need for this to be addressed.

Finally, in relation to formal leadership practices in the four schools the research sought to ascertain the extent to which those in formal positions distributed leadership to others. Evidence suggests that leadership distribution by ISMT members was very rare in all four schools and that leadership opportunities were generally only distributed by the principal (or in the case of Redwood and Sapling Schools, the DP and AP). The interviews highlighted that the main reason for this was probably down to the way in which those in both formal and informal leadership positions viewed the ISM role. Regardless of whether the post holders saw themselves as a leader in their school and indeed acted in such a capacity, none of the interviewees (with the exception of the

principals) considered the distribution of leadership to others to be part of the post holder's role.

Informal Leadership Practice

Review of the literature highlights the transformative shifts that various authors believe must take place if schools are to be enabled to respond to the complex challenges that are facing them and will face them in the future (Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Southworth in Mulford, 2008). Such shifts require a move away from individualism and isolationism. They also require the ability and willingness to work collaboratively and a culture of trust and openness, in which risk-taking and experimentation can become the norm. With these shifts, comes an expanded vision of teaching, "the idea that teachers are also leaders, educators who can make a difference in schools and schooling now and in the future" (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, p.11). One of the aims of this study was to explore the practices of those who did not hold formal leadership positions in the four schools and the extent to which leadership opportunities were distributed among them. It sought to ascertain the reasons why informal leaders led, how they took on their leadership roles, their attitudes towards informal leadership practices in their own schools and the factors that could help or hinder such practices.

There was evidence of varying experiences among the four schools where informal leadership practice is concerned. Attitudes ranged from considerable discontent to great satisfaction in relation to opportunities to lead informally. Overall, the non-post holders interviewed in all four schools expressed a wish to be afforded more opportunities to lead, and those who had been given these opportunities commented that

these experiences had improved their confidence and their belief that they were part of a team and that they had a contribution to make. In Redwood School the non-post holder expressed the frustration that she and other non-post holders felt at not being given this chance. On the other hand, the flatter and more flexible structure that was in existence in Sapling School allowed for distributed leadership practice, where responsibility and authority were distributed to all teachers within the school and where leadership opportunities were not only confined to those holding formal positions. Thus, a clear finding emerged that showed that informal leadership experiences among the schools was very varied and that the lack of opportunities to lead was often linked with the feeling of lack of ownership, "not having a voice" (Red, Int, NPH1; Síor, Int, NPH1) and also being "kept out of the loop" (Red, Int, NPH1; Síor, Int, NPH1). On the flipside of this - teachers who had taken on leadership roles felt affirmed in their role, believed that they had an important part to play and were developing their own leadership role.

The principals in particular stressed the shared opinion among them that informal leadership could and should play an *important part in* future school improvement. They gave different reasons as to why they felt leadership should be distributed in their schools. Reasons ranged from the more practical reason of needing more manpower to respond to challenges facing the schools on a day-to-day basis to more visionary reasons, including building leadership capacity in teachers (by giving them opportunities to lead) and the longer term reason of preparation of leaders for future leadership succession. They all stated that they were very much in favour of encouraging informal leadership practice in their school, with consensus among them that distributing leadership to others is becoming increasingly essential in responding to

the policy call for school self-evaluation and improvement planning. In line with this, a positive finding suggests that many non-post holders desire a chance to play their part and lead informally when situations call for them to do so. All of the principals referred to the lack of time that they had to be engaged in learning-centered leadership, with each of them remarking that this was both a concern and regret of theirs. All four also acknowledged that distribution of leadership was vital and that dependence on others to lead had to reach beyond ISMTs, recognising that responsibilities and leadership should be distributed to all teachers. This study suggests that the attitude of the principal is important in the distribution of leadership. This is coupled with the importance of affording genuine leadership opportunities and not just delegating tasks or jobs to be done. Thus, a principal's encouragement, positive attitude and support must be coupled with action and an underlying atmosphere of trust.

Despite the fact that all four principals in this study communicated their wish to distribute leadership more, the non-post holders in Redwood School and Scoil Síorghlas did not feel that they had been given the opportunity to lead. The evidence also suggests that taking on a leadership role was generally done in response to an invitation to do so rather than the non-post holders taking the initiative themselves. This echoes Flood's assertion (2011, in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham) that, "the distribution of leadership in the Irish educational context remains a largely invitational process" (p. 54). Many non-post holders acknowledged the pressure that their school was under due to the currentmoratorium and that all staff members had the responsibility to play their part. However, with the exception of the non-post holder in Sapling School, they did not

identify this as a potential opportunity to take on a leadership role, rather it was done in order to lighten the workload of their colleagues who were under pressure.

Giving opportunities to those outside the post of responsibility structure can enhance individual teachers' professional opportunities and can also serve to build leadership capacity in the system (LDS, 2007). This study shows that when describing times when they had led others, the non-post holders felt more confident, affirmed and that what they had to say mattered. The distribution of leadership to informal leaders was a rare occurrence, however, in three of the four schools and generally it was only the principal who led in the distributed leadership. The evidence suggests that post holders distributing leadership may have been rare due to the ways in which those in formal positions viewed their own roles, as few of the post holders considered the distribution of leadership to be part of their posts. Similarly, the interview with the non-post holder in Scoil Síorghlas highlighted that non-promoted staff sometimes viewed this distribution as over-delegation, even though they themselves were often hard-pressed for time as it was. Hesitancy to take on leadership roles reflected their reluctance to take on a heavier workload, especially considering the fact that extra work did not result in extra pay. Not taking on leadership roles was also linked with fear of interfering or "stepping on toes" of post holders (Oak, Int, NPH1; Red, Int, NPH1; Síor, Int, NPH1) and this hesitancy was apparent in the schools where a degree of mistrust existed.

The most positive picture of informal leadership practices emerged from Sapling School. The evidence suggests that informal leadership thrived because there were very few hindrances to such practices and also that they were actively encouraged by those in

formal leadership positions. Bennet et al. (2003) describe distributing leadership as "a way of thinking that challenges many current assumptions about leadership and the community in which it occurs" (in Flood, p. 56). The culture of Sapling School, which was collaborative and open, enabled teachers to take risks thereby giving them the confidence to take the initiative and put themselves forward to lead, rather than doing so on an invitational basis or in response to being "given" a leadership role. The atmosphere of trust, and how it impacted so positively upon informal leadership practice was one of the main factors that made this school stand out from the others. Informal leadership was viewed as a priority in Sapling School, not only for practical reasons but also because different teachers, regardless of position, were viewed in terms of the particular talents and skills they could bring to the school. They were therefore given the space to play their own role in the context of a supportive environment. From the non-post holder's point of view, and unlike the experiences of some non-post holders in the other schools, leadership opportunities were viewed as a positive, confidence-building and affirming part of their work rather than a gift to be bestowed or instances of over-delegation.

Overall, the distribution of leadership to informal leaders was not particularly common. Where leadership opportunities *were* distributed to informal leaders, their role could sometimes be somewhat limited. This finding finds resonance in Flood's assertion that "the model of leadership in most Irish schools remains largely hierarchical and atomised, with a focus on the distribution of tasks rather than responsibility" (2011, p.53). As Elmore (2006) asserts, in order to move beyond this, schools will need to view the improvement of practice as a collective endeavor with leadership more focused on

the improvement itself and less on the role of the individual. This is discussed further in the concluding chapter of this study.

Principal's Leadership Practice

Study of leadership practice in the four schools highlights the pivotal and central leadership role that the principal plays in decision-making, goal-setting, supporting, delegating and distributing leadership. A considerable number of references were made to the role of the principal and teachers in all four schools considered it to be highly influential, regardless as to whether he/she were working within a tight hierarchical structure or a flatter, more loose arrangement. The principals were portrayed as being in a unique position to influence the work that others did and the way in which others led. They clearly had influence over the vision and direction-setting of the schools. The principals themselves held positive attitudes towards their roles and they were seen positively by their colleagues too. They were also viewed as the ones with ultimate authority.

The Literature Review highlights the key role that the principal plays in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools, but also that they do not have direct influence on pupil learning - that the direct influence comes from teachers (Copland, 2001; Southworth in Mulford, 2008). The literature also points to the central role that the principal has in influencing the work of teachers and the culture in which they work (Copland, 2001; Southworth in Mulford, 2008). The principal's role in leading learning lies in creating the conditions (such as supportive structures and a collaborative culture) in which teaching and learning are supported. The four principals acknowledged the important part that they play in leading learning and recognised the

indirect nature of this role. However, all four principals also drew attention to the considerable workload that they had and expressed regret that time pressures impacted upon their practice - that they did not have enough time for learning-centred leadership and that the administrative aspect of their work was particularly cumbersome and time-consuming.

The literature (LDS, 2007; OECD, 2008) highlights that part of the rationale for the distribution of leadership is that it is unreasonable to think that one person, the principal, can be the only one to lead, particularly considering the huge workload and increased challenges facing schools. The principals in each school acknowledged that distribution of leadership was vital and that dependence on others to lead had to reach beyond ISMTs, acknowledging that responsibilities and leadership should be distributed to all teachers regardless of position. Hence, the four principals expressed their desire to distribute leadership to a greater extent than they were already doing, partly for practical reasons - that the moratorium on promotion had put pressure on the schools, and also that principals needed help in responding to the challenges that the schools were facing. The literature draws attention to this, highlighting that the principal alone cannot be expected to lead within increasingly complex contexts (Linsky & Lawrence in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011). Another reason that they gave in favour of distributing leadership was that they recognised that doing so could develop leadership skills in both formal and informal leaders. All four principals acknowledged with appreciation the way in which they had been given opportunities to lead earlier in their career and that those opportunities were formative occasions in developing their own leadership skills and identity. They recognised that they themselves play a central role in

providing structures to enable others to exercise leadership and also in affording opportunities for teachers to lead.

Despite being under considerable pressure, the evidence suggests that there was great variation among the principals in the extent to which they looked to others for leadership support. While each of them wanted to distribute leadership more beyond the ISMT, oftentimes this was not done for a number of reasons. In Scoil Síorghlas there was evidence that the principal sometimes found it hard to "let go" of responsibility and also that there had been poor uptake of leadership opportunities by non-post holders in the past (Síor, Int, P). In Oakley School, the principal was hesitant to distribute, recognising that such action could be viewed negatively by certain individuals. In Redwood School, the tight hierarchical structure coupled with the large number of post holders that the school had resulted in the principal not recognising the desire on the part of non-post holders to take on leadership roles. Finally, in Sapling School, where distributed leadership was the norm, the principal still acknowledged his hesitancy to distribute if it might end up burdening teachers who were already under considerable pressure. Hence, this study suggests that the practice of distributed leadership by principals, and sometimes the lack thereof, was very varied and was/was not done for a number of different reasons. This was in spite of the fact that they all acknowledged how beneficial this way of working can be and expressed their wish to make it more common practice in their school.

The principals in this study were seen to play a central role in most aspects of school leadership. The evidence suggests that very few decisions were made without the principal's approval. A number of references were made by participants regarding the

way in which they regularly consulted him/her and asked for his/her go-ahead. In relation to their practice, the diaries kept by the principals documented page after page of actions and interactions that involved leadership skills and qualities. They considered that much of their work called on them to act as leaders and they reflected on this to a great extent. Their role-type was generally reflective of the actions and traits outlined in Group 3 on the spectrum in Figure 5 above. Furthermore, the diaries highlighted that the principals were confident in labelling much of what they do as "leadership practice" and all had strong belief in themselves as leaders. Exploration of the interactions between the principals and others provided clear evidence of the principal's leadership practice. Within the space of one week, their actions and interactions displayed practice involving decisiveness, the ability to support others (with their knowledge, skills and advice), the ability to collaborate but also exercise authority depending on the situation and also behaviours such as role-modeling, capacity-building and initiative-taking.

More so than with post holders, the principals tended to look to their DP for support, guidance and shared decision-making and the principals spoke highly of the significant role that the DPs played in supporting them. The evidence suggests that part of the reason for the importance attached to the DP's role was due to the way in which the principals viewed the position - that the role of DP came with the expectation of someone who had the ability to deputise and therefore lead when needed. In the case of Oakley School, for example, the DP's role clearly had expectations of leadership attached to it, more so than the position of a post holder. The role of the DP was also sometimes regarded as a conduit between staff and the principal, more so than members of the ISMT were. Hence, the DP's role was highly regarded by the principals and again

the need for trust and collaboration were deemed as crucial aspects of the principal-DP relationship.

Overall, the leadership practice of the four principals highlighted different leadership styles among them, and these were reflected in the different cultures of the schools. The principal in Oakley School was very much acting as a heroic leader, despite her expressed unease at having to lead in this way. She showed great awareness of her school's context and was slowly striving towards a change in culture that would allow for more collaboration and distributed leadership practice. The principal of Redwood played the role of overseer and supervisor. He was clearly at the top of the leadership pyramid in the school, although he too said that he recognised the importance of distributing leadership. The evidence suggests that the large size of Redwood School may have moulded his leadership style to be that of a decisive leader albeit somewhat lacking in awareness of the views of non-post holders. The principal of Sapling School had a leadership style that was facilitative, supportive and collaborative. For him, leadership was not about his role but about the collective leadership role of all teachers on the staff. At the same time he displayed traits of heroic leader despite the way he looked to others for support and felt comfortable in distributing leadership and responsibility to others. Finally, like the principal of Oakley School, the principal of Scoil Síorghlas was a heroic leader, who admitted that she found it hard to let go of responsibility to others and that she felt the need to be in control of everything. She was seen as the one with ultimate authority "at the top", and teachers tended to look to her for her approval (Síor, Int, PH1). She was aware that distributed leadership practice

would be of benefit to the school but she too lacked awareness as to the views of the non-post holders.

What are the Professional Needs of both Formal and Informal Leaders?

Exploration of leadership practices involved examining the structures that existed around them, how practices were helped or hindered, and what conditions existed to support them. Questions surrounding the professional needs of leaders pointed to a number of similar needs across the schools. The findings show that they ranged from the individual and group need for professional development to improve leadership skills and competencies (to enhance practice), to more overarching needs such as a cultural shift towards collaborative work practices. The following section summarises the main findings of this study that respond to the question relating to the professional needs of formal and informal leaders.

The evidence suggests that leadership practice must be nurtured, supported and encouraged, not solely by the principal but also by post holders and by those who lead informally. Evidence of the importance of this was seen clearly in Sapling School, where many references were made to the way in which the teachers worked as a team and took personal responsibility for leadership. Nurturing of formal and informal leadership greatly enhanced practice in this school. It was clear that the talents and strengths of all teachers were recognised and supported and that this led to a positive view of distributed leadership. On the other hand, in Redwood School the non-post holder's perception that support and encouragement were lacking hindered her ability to put herself forward to lead. Linked with this is the need for all teachers to be given real ownership of their leadership practice. The perception that all decisions (even small

ones) require the approval of the principal was seen to stunt leadership practice potential somewhat (in Redwood School and Scoil Síorghlas). Thus, there was a need to occasionally "let go" on the part of principals so that leadership practice could flourish.

Another need identified was for more trust, particularly where the encouragement of informal leadership is concerned. This reflects O'Sullivan's findings whereby she asserts that "building understanding and 'growing' trust is ...the first level of professional learning" (2011, p. 116) The evidence from Sapling School points to the way in which teachers were encouraged to lead regardless of whether they held a formal position or not. Talents and strengths were very much recognised and opportunities to lead were given (by the principal and formal leaders) to those who were suited to do so. In Scoil Síorghlas, while there was evidence that the principal wished to move towards this way of working, lack of trust and not wanting to "step on toes" could hinder leadership practice. Hence, lack of trust had led to hesitancy and uncertainty which in turn affected practice. Furthermore, awareness of the importance of trust was not enough - its presence had to be felt.

Exploring leadership practice in the schools involved examining what structures were in place to support those who lead. The four case appendices (Appencies J-M) highlight that the leadership structure within the schools varied from a rather tight and inflexible hierarchical structure (in Redwood School) to a flatter, more distributed leadership structure (in Sapling School). A chain of command was evident in all of the schools, with the principal "at the top" (Red, Int, NPH1). Some viewed the hierarchical type of structure positively considering it to be "the norm", (Oak, Int, PH1) while others viewed it negatively (Red, Int, NPH1; Síor, Int, NPH1), believing it to stifle informal

leadership opportunities and the chance to develop ideas independently. Flood's (2011) acknowledgement that models of leadership in most Irish schools remain "hierarchical and atomised" thereby creating barriers to true distribution of leadership (p. 53) was seen to be true for three out of the four schools in this study, to varying degrees. The evidence suggests that flatter structures of leadership allow for more ownership and enable opportunities for both formal and informal leaders to lead, whereas tighter and more inflexible hierarchical structures appear to limit practices such as taking the initiative and decision-making. Similarly, collaboration was sometimes hampered by the existence of tight, hierarchical structures. Whereas hierarchical structures in themselves did not necessarily have a negative impact on leadership practice, inflexibility and the exclusion or separation of those who did not hold formal leadership positions appeared to stunt practice and/or leadership potential in others. Thus, a need existed in some of the schools to move towards flatter, more flexible and open structures to encourage the involvement of all, regardless of position and more fluidity across and between positional layers.

The size of the school varied among the four schools, with Redwood School being by far the largest and Sapling School the smallest. A number of references were made in these schools to their size and how it could have a bearing on practice. It was generally agreed that the bigger the school, the more likely it was that leadership practice could be hindered (Red, Int, NPH1; Red, Qu, NPH4; Sap, Int, NPH1; Sap, Int, P). The principal of Sapling School acknowledged that he was aware that as the school developed, the more difficult it may be to maintain the high level of collaboration and communication that currently existed (Sap, Int, P). However, findings from the four

schools suggest that school size may not have been as much of a help or hindrance to leadership practice as other factors were such as the underlying culture in the school and the supports that did or did not exist around practice. These are discussed in more detail in the next section detailing professional needs around leadership practice.

This study found that a narrow interpretation of the ISM/leadership role and accompanying assigned duties could potentially limit leadership practice, as could uncertainty around the extent to which post holders felt they could or should behave as leaders. Not all ISMT members, despite holding formal positions acted in a leadership capacity. The post holder in Oakley School even expressed her opinion that ISMT members were probably not considered by non-post holders to have a leadership role or to have authority. Rather, she felt that it is the principal alone who had, and should have authority (Oak, Int, PH1). Considerable variation existed between schools in the attitudes towards the roles, responsibilities and purpose of their ISMT, with Sapling School showing the most positivity towards formal leadership roles. This contrast may be in part reflective of the evolution of the system, with younger and/or less experienced teachers more likely to consider themselves to be leaders than older and/or more experienced teachers, who may have become part of ISM when the principal role was the only one synonymous with a leadership role. Whereas in Oakley School, the post-holders expressed their opinion that they did not consider themselves to have a leadership role, the post-holders in Scoil Síorghlas were strongly of the opinion that they had a leadership role to play. This was despite the fact that the post holders in Oakley School appeared to act in a leadership capacity more so than those in Scoil Síorghlas. Thus, a need existed for encouragement and support for formal leaders in schools so that their leadership role could be developed and strengthened.

Linked with this is the finding suggesting that an urgent need exists for clarification around the roles that formal leaders are expected to play in schools in general. The non-post holders who identified this need felt that it was important and believed that lack of certainty could hinder the relationship between the non-post holders and the ISMT. Some post holders felt that it would be very helpful if members of the ISMT could have a clear outline as to what was expected of ISMTs in general and what was expected of them in their own school. All four principals stressed the need for clarification from the DES regarding time, ISMT duties and expectations for those in formal leadership positions. It begs the question as to why the principals and the Boards of Managements of the schools did not move to address this need rather than looking to the DES for clarification. It could be suggested that the principals who were aware of this pressing need in their school and did not address it lacked leadership in this area.

Gronn (2003) highlights that leadership practice is affected by external pressures and at the time of this study, the current moratorium on promotion was proving to present huge challenges to three out of the four schools. The accompanying pressures highlighted to principals, post holders and non-post holders alike that there was a need for more distribution of leadership and that more informal leadership roles and responsibilities would be required. The principals in particular believed that the reduction in staffing meant that they would have to delegate duties and distribute leadership to a greater extent in the future. The general feeling was that the cut in positional posts had put considerable pressure on the ISMTs and non-post holders to fill the gap that was left, and there was evidence of non-post holders volunteering to do

work that others had previously been paid extra for (in Scoil Síorghlas, Oakley and Sapling Schools).

Aside from the moratorium, time pressures had been highlighted, with the post holders and principals expressing the need for more time to carry out their own duties. They acknowledged that the moratorium was bringing an extra workload that was difficult to sustain. Thus, continued opportunities for informal leaders, along with more support, would be a necessity. This is a finding that is supported by other Irish research. As O'Sullivan (2011) argues, "Although all the directives from DES and the Teaching Council in Ireland strongly recommend collaborative practice in schools, it remains a mystery how collaboration can effectively happen when there is no scheduled time to do so" (p. 118). As a result, it is left to schools leaders to find ways of making time for meetings and other collaborative practice. This issue of lack of time was mentioned in all four schools and regularly stood out as a considerable hindrance to leadership practices.

Policy expectations that require whole-school collaborative work practices have also drawn attention to the need for more distributed leadership. The aforementioned call from policy advocating whole-school self-evaluation and improvement plans had not gone unnoticed by principals in particular, who acknowledged that teamwork and collaborative work practices would soon have to become the norm in their schools, if they were not already in existence. The culture of the school can greatly hinder leadership practices as was evident in Oakley School. Evidence from Sapling School, on the other hand illustrates how a collaborative culture based on openness and trust is vital in supporting the leadership practices of both formal and informal leaders. Clearly a

need existed, to varying degrees in three out of the four schools in this study, for a shift towards highly a collaborative culture that would involve all members of staff.

Evidence from the interviews suggests that the degree of leadership distribution, and how it occurs, very much depends on a number of factors including the existence or not of a collaborative culture that could support it, the desire on the part of principals in particular to distribute leadership and the willingness of teachers to respond to opportunities to take the initiative to lead. The principals highlighted the positive effects that they felt distributed leadership could bring to schools, including a more open and cooperative way of working, the enhancement of the professional life of the teacher and also the reduction of the workload of positional leaders. With this positive attitude towards the practice of leadership distribution, however, there is a need for action and support so that distributed leadership can thrive.

The existence of personalities who deliberately resist collaborative work practices, as was evident in Oakley School, shows the way in which a legacy of contentious issues and difficulties can hinder leadership practice. While such personalities will always exist, how they are dealt with matters. Thus, a need existed in some of the schools for these issues to be addressed and resolved and also for all leaders to be contextually literate. There was variance as to the extent to which the principals in this study were contextually literate. For example, there was some evidence of lack of awareness towards the attitudes of non-post holders in particular. Hence there was a need to actively seek out the views of others, something that could be done through whole-school dialogue around leadership and other whole-school matters.

Examining the structures that support leadership practice in this study highlights that regular and effective communication is central to leadership practice, as is embracing collaborative work practices, shared decision-making and genuine delegation and distribution of responsibility. As was mentioned above, various factors were seen to hinder such supports and structures, including lack of trust, difficult personalities, feelings of isolation and not being heard and the inability to communicate and collaborate or resistance to doing so. Where these hindrances existed, distributed leadership practice was not the norm. Only in Sapling School was there clear evidence of this practice due, no doubt, to the way in which the leadership practice of both formal and informal leaders was seen to be fostered, embraced and encouraged by the principal and the rest of the staff and also due to the way the supports such as those mentioned above were working well, existed in an environment of openness and trust, and were responding to the school's needs.

Review of the distributed leadership literature highlights considerable references to the importance of collaborative cultures in schools and open communication so as to enable communities of learners and leaders, and the distribution of power and responsibility in schools (Flood, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2009; Southworth, 2004; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). The majority of research participants identified the ability to communicate and collaborate as the most important leadership skills, and many of them identified a need for improvement in these areas in their schools. The evidence suggests that communication and collaboration that were viewed as "successful" or "effective" came down to two main factors - first the individual's ability and willingness

to communicate and collaborate and second, the culture of the school in which these were a priority.

The principals especially made a number of references to the importance of clear and open communication and also collaborative work practices, and they discussed the need for this environment if distributed leadership were to flourish. Collaborative teamwork, they believed, was an ideal way of honing the leadership skills of both formal and informal leaders. However, in both Oakley and Redwood Schools, despite the existence of structures to support communication and collaboration, the ability to collaborate and communicate better with others was regarded as a professional need for the IMST in particular, with the majority of the interviewees acknowledging that acting in a leadership capacity can require different skills and competencies to those that teaching requires. In Scoil Síorghlas, sometimes the principal had to get the "buy-in" of staff before moving to establish a more collaborative culture. All four principals made clear, however, that they did not want to force this on the staff either, believing that genuine collaboration happens as a result of individual motivation and sometimes when invited or encouraged to do so. Similarly, the evidence points to the fact that effective communication and collaborative practice depends on having underlying trust between staff members. The absence of trust was seen to break down communication, leading to hesitancy towards working with others. Communication that was effective enough to ensure that all members of stakeholders were kept "in the loop" was viewed as an acute need in Redwood School and Scoil Síorghlas. Where communication was lacking, teachers felt frustrated, left out and without a say. Thus, a significant need for these two schools was to ensure that these gaps in communication were addressed.

Shared decision-making was identified as a desire and need of non-post holders especially. Whereas they respected that someone (usually the principal) was often required to make final decisions, it was felt that including all teachers more regularly and giving them more of a voice could improve teaching and learning. For example, the post holder in Redwood School felt that she lacked any influence in decisions that were made, including what she considered to be minor, class-related decisions such as the location of class outings (Red, Int, NPH1). The principal of Sapling School had identified the importance of this and made many references to the way in which all staff members were included, in so far as was possible. The knock-on effect was that all teachers felt valued and respected, even if their personal decision was not acted upon (Sap, Int, P). In Redwood School and Scoil Síorghlas on the other hand, a certain amount of frustration was evident, occasionally to the point of resentment.

Another factor that was seen to have a bearing on leadership practice was the extent and use of delegation. Two main types of delegation were evident in the schools. The first type involved the delegation of roles and responsibilities so as to distribute leadership to informal and formal leaders. The second type involved the delegation of jobs to be done. The evidence suggests that teacher's attitude towards the use of delegation differed hugely among the schools. While some non-post holders in particular communicated their wish to be more involved and for the ISMT to delegate roles and responsibilities to them, others had a negative attitude towards delegation, feeling that it could increase their workload considerably. There was, however, clear reluctance on the part of the ISMTs to delegate to non-post holders, possibly because of the extra pay that they received for carrying out their duties. The evidence also suggests

that delegation and joint decision-making were viewed as a vital way of dealing with the strain that the moratorium had put on some of the schools. Furthermore, both the principals and post holders identified that delegation was a vital part of distributed leadership, so that teachers could be afforded the chance to try to do things and learn by their mistakes and their successes. The view held by principals in particular was that without giving opportunities to lead, delegate, make decisions and so on, a school was not fostering the development of leaders. The need existed, however, for awareness around the amount of delegation that was occurring so that it would be viewed by teachers as leadership opportunity as opposed to an attempt to overload them with more work.

The evidence from all schools points to the need for professional development for those on ISMTs, to help them develop their leadership skills, increase confidence and also to give them the opportunity to reflect upon and enter into dialogue around leadership and management in their schools. Participants in all schools agreed that this was an acute need. Many felt that initial teacher induction and teaching experience alone did not provide sufficient preparation for leadership roles and that some of the skills and knowledge needed for leadership could be quite different to those required for teaching. While the INTO does offer CPD, few participants had engaged in any leadership-specific courses/training. The literature points to the critical need for CPD that acknowledges the importance of developing future leaders (OECD, 2008). The willingness of informal leaders to step up and share work was seen as vital in all schools. With awareness of an increasing dependency on the involvement of informal leaders, participants highlighted the need that existed not only for formal leaders but

also informal leaders to receive CPD. Skills such as communicating with others, conflict resolution, time-management, organisation, delegation, decision-making and teamwork were all identified as important skills to be learned and developed. The principals spoke about encouraging a continuum of learning among the staff, and that non-post holders too should be encouraged to develop leadership skills.

Summary of Findings

The above sections have provided insight as to how leadership was being practised formally and informally in the schools and the extent to which leadership was distributed. The various needs that were expressed in the schools around practice were also outlined and discussed. Table 7 below presents a summary of the findings from this study.

Table 7

Summary of Main Findings

Leadership Practices and Attitudes towards them	Professional Needs around Leadership Practice
ISMT members were not necessarily leaders Leadership could often be dependent on personal traits and intentions of actors There can be considerable variation in formal and informal leadership between schools	There were a number of factors that were seen to hinder leadership practice. These included the presence of difficult personalities who were intentionally uncooperative, negative legacies (such as issues around seniority), lack of time to meet and collaborate, lack of trust, need for clarification around roles and the existence of a non-collaborative culture
Distributed leadership was not the norm although the potential benefit of doing so was recognised (by principals in particular)	There were a number of factors that were seen to support leadership practice. These included effective communication, a collaborative and open culture,

When leadership was distributed to informal leaders they generally felt affirmed and valued members of a team	underlying trust, teamwork, shared decision-making, shared vision, delegation of responsibility to others and having genuine ownership
Leadership that was distributed appeared most successful when it was viewed as being afforded a genuine opportunity to take responsibility and ownership as opposed to it being seen as a delegated task	Leadership practice required on-going support and nurturing, from the principal and other formal leaders
	Teachers expressed the need for professional development towards development of leadership roles for both formal and informal leaders
Distributed leadership practice was rarely seen. Where there was evidence of distributed leadership, teachers appeared to be motivated as a result and it appeared to affect their work ethic in a positive way	The ISM structure in general appeared to be in need of review
	Whole-school dialogue relating to cultural and leadership issues was important for supporting leadership practice
The principal (and sometimes the DP) played a central role in promoting and supporting both formal and informal leadership practices. The attitude of the principal was quite powerful in how it supported or hindered practice of both formal and informal leaders	Whether the school had a tight hierarchical structure or a flatter arrangement, flexibility and fluidity across and between layers was necessary for building trust and distributing leadership
Those who were not in positional roles expressed their desire to be afforded opportunities to lead occasionally	The size of the school may have had some bearing on leadership practice but school culture and the existence of supports appeared to have been more important factors
Narrow perception of formal leadership role (either personal perception or those of others) could stunt practice	
More opportunities needed to be provided for informal leadership	

The findings of this study throw light on the practice of leadership in four

schools. In doing so, it is suggested that they contribute to an overall understanding of

what leadership practice looks like, what can help and hinder practice and how

leadership practice might be supported. Further discussion of these findings follows in

the concluding chapter, along with recommendations that are made based on them.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored how leadership is being practised in four primary schools and the extent to which leadership is distributed within each school. It has outlined factors that impede and support leadership practices in the schools and what professional needs exist for those who lead. This research has interpreted and analysed both the actions and interactions of principals and teachers (those who held formal leadership positions and those who did not) and has also highlighted their attitudes towards these leaderships practice. The aim of this chapter is to present conclusions based on the findings and to discuss the significance and possible implications of this research for future practice and policy.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Practice - Possibilities and Policy

The following sections present conclusions based on the findings of this research. Four key areas focus are ISMT leadership practice, distributed leadership, the leadership practices of Principals and DPs and finally future possibilities for practice, policy and research in relation to these areas in Irish primary schools.

Leadership Practice of Middle Leaders

Several conclusions regarding the practice of middle leadership can be drawn from the findings of this study. This research has shown evidence of conditions that can help or hinder formal leadership practice and has presented evidence that illustrates formal leadership practice that was considered effective and less effective. For example, the post holders in Sapling School practised leadership, one could argue, in a way that was intended when the ISMT structure was established in primary schools. The practice of formal leaders in Sapling School highlights some important features of practice that fed positively into teacher motivation and general work ethic. While this study did not endeavour to measure the impact of leadership practice on pupil outcomes, it did determine the impact that leadership practice could have on the practice and attitudes of the teachers in the school. Examining the findings from all four schools underscores what can impede or enable practice in different contexts. This study acknowledges that. adopting any model of leadership requires appreciation of a school's unique context-that is to say, that models of leadership cannot necessarily be transplanted onto other schools and be guaranteed to work. It might be suggested, however, that key features of practice that work well, along with the structures that support them, may prove helpful to school leaders. Some of these are presented below.

Since the future of the formal leadership structure in Irish schools is under question due to the moratorium on promotion, which currently only allows for promotion to principal and DP positions in the majority of schools. Retirements in particular have resulted in the loss of a number of posts of responsibility in some schools. The question could be asked as to where the future lies for formal leadership in

Irish schools. This research has explored the formal leadership practice of post holders within the ISMT structure. While the author is aware of the uncertainty that surrounds the future of this current structure, it is felt important that recommendations around formal leadership practice in general be presented here.

The current moratorium on promoted posts reflects the fact that it is a time of significant change and increasing challenges for school leaders, and it may be suggested that a meaningful re-organisation of posts of responsibility is required. This study has highlighted that lack of definition exists around the roles of members of ISMTs and the call for them to be redefined and brought in line with the current leadership needs of schools. Any review of, and changes made to the ISMT structure might include altering the way in which these teams function at school level, reviewing the understanding of the roles they play including the leadership element of their roles and exploring alternate selection and appointment arrangements to formal positions.

It might be suggested that the structure be altered in a way that allows for rotation of expertise and shorter fixed tenure. This study has shown that leadership practice works well when the person who is best suited to the job is given the space to lead. A future middle leadership structure could involve calling upon teachers to take on a leadership role for a limited time, and when the need of the school has been met, new needs could be reviewed and those with expertise in the area could step forward for the post. For example, as part of the school evaluation process, an area for improvement may be identified and a whole-school approach be taken to setting targets and identifiable success criteria (DES, 2011b). Then those interested in the post could go for interview. Unlike the current arrangement, teachers would not necessarily hold a post

based on seniority, thereby diminishing the sense of entitlement towards promotion. It may also help to ensure that teachers are continuously encouraged to up-skill so that they are more likely to be promoted.

Such a structure could very possibly respond to some of the weaknesses that are clearly present in the current arrangement. Potential benefits include the fact that a regular review of posts could ensure that the needs of the school are at the centre of such review (rather than the post holder) and it could provide an equal opportunity for all teachers to put themselves forward for a leadership position. Such a structure would not be as rigid as the one that presently exists, and potentially not as costly. It could also respond to the question of leadership succession in schools, seeing as those teachers who desire the chance to lead could get the opportunity to develop their leadership role along with the skill-set that goes with it. This middle leadership arrangement would thus make leadership accessible to the all teachers and could be a means by which school leadership could develop school capacity. It might also put the importance of strong leadership centre stage in schools and help to develop a clear concept of what is expected of teachers in leadership roles. It is important also that working as a leader within a team would continue to be encouraged. Findings from this study provide a rationale for examining ways in which the current ISMT could be improved and it is suggested that there may be merit is exploring how the model described above could lead to a more dynamic and leadership-focused structure.

If the current structure is to remain, however, a reconceptualisation of what it means to be a post holder in terms of leadership potential will have to be considered. Findings from all four schools point to the need for review of the duties of post holders.

It could be suggested that such a focus on the duties or responsibilities of post holders, as opposed to their leadership roles, may serve to narrow the scope of posts of responsibility rather than opening them up to more general leadership practices, including distributing leadership to others. Furthermore, the practices of formal leaders can have a bearing on the way in which informal leaders perceive their own place as leaders, and this will need to be taken into account when/if the ISMT structure is to be reviewed and changed. For example, the evidence points to the way in which those who were not in formal positions were sometimes wary of "stepping on toes" and that they felt they were not always welcome to lead in an informal capacity. Whole-staff professional development could focus on broadening understanding of formal leadership positions, to consider the important roles that they could play in delegating to others, collaborating and distributing leadership to others.

Certain features of formal leadership practice worked very well in one school, and it might be suggested that other schools consider some of these elements towards improvement and enhancement of their own formal leadership practice where lines between levels of management were blurred in the school and their management/leadership structure was much flatter than the more hierarchical and less flexible structures that were seen in other schools. Leadership could come from the top-down, bottom-up and across layers of management. This set-up enabled those who were best for the job to lead, regardless of position. Hence, in Sapling School, getting the job done was not always duty-bound or reliant on a post holder. This flexibility was made possible by the underlying trust that existed, as well as the collaborative, team-oriented culture that underpinned their practice. Where the ISMT is concerned, formal leaders

reported that they felt affirmed and appreciated in their roles, that they were given the space to lead and that they considered their role to be flexible - a role that could be facilitative and collaborative one day and more definitive and decisive the next. In this way they responded to the task at hand and were not afraid to delegate to others if they felt it would be more effective to do so.

While this research argues for the distribution of leadership to those who do not hold formal positions in schools, it is also recognised that middle leadership can hold promise for responding to the challenges that face schools, relieving the burden on principals and DPs and also capitalising on a wider range of expertise (OECD, 2008). Findings from this research suggest, however, that there is huge variation in the practice and attitudes and needs of ISMTs. On the one hand there is evidence of formal leaders who fulfil (and go beyond) the original expectations of ISM/leadership as were outlined in *Circular P07/03* (DES, 2003). On the other hand, there is evidence of contentious issues impeding the practice of post holders, lack of understanding and/or narrow perceptions of roles and lack of leadership on the part of post holders. Any recommendation for future practice of those in formal positions emanates from the necessity for review and articulation of formal leadership. Thus, this study argues for a clearer understanding and definition of the leadership role of post holders in the broader school context, believing that it could lead to a more effective and dynamic structure. In this way, leadership would be put at the centre of these positions rather than them being dictated by the post holder and his/her assigned duties.

Distributed Leadership and Informal Leaders

Review of the leadership literature highlights the way in which a shift needs to occur in schools from over-reliance on individual, heroic leaders (principals) to leadership that is distributed among many stakeholders in the school community (Sackney & Walker, 2006; Spillane, 2005; Spillane & Orlina 2005). This comes with recognition that schools are operating in increasingly complex contexts. It also comes with recognition that different leaders may respond better than others in different situations. This study has shown evidence of leadership practice by informal leaders and has highlighted what type of actions and interactions they were involved in. Findings from this research point to the fact that many non-post holders desired the chance to lead from time to time and that they welcomed opportunities to make decisions, have their voice heard and contribute voluntarily to work that would lead to school improvement. A recommendation for future practice would be that individual schools review leadership practice within their own context and broaden the discussion to consider the part that informal leaders can play.

This study has found that in order to ensure that potential leaders are given opportunities to develop and hone their leadership skills, certain conditions are key. The non-post holders (through both the questionnaires and interviews) referred to the importance of having their views taken into consideration and every so often being involved in decision-making. Also important to them was feeling that their contribution was acknowledged and knowing that making mistakes was acceptable. Evidently, all four principals in this study strongly recognised how opportunities to lead informally that they had had earlier in their careers had helped hugely in moulding them into the

leaders that they are today. It could be argued that this capacity-building aside from formal leaders must continue, but on a more agreed whole-school basis. Thus, there is a need for teachers/schools to review existing power relations within their school setting and, subsequently, take positive action to empower those who do not hold formal positions to lead.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that review and change towards the distribution of leadership to informal leaders might also involve understanding the difference between the delegation of tasks and genuine distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities. This would involve thinking about distributed leadership beyond the level of delegation so that the informal leader is enabled to make a contribution and exercise initiative when the situation calls for him/her to do so. Thus, it might be suggested that the giving and taking of opportunities to lead becomes the norm, regardless of position or status in the school. In doing so, this may allow for the development of individual skills and talents among teachers (as was very much evident in Sapling School), may give them a sense of ownership, and over time enable them to establish their own leadership roles and develop their potential. The importance of teamwork and the desire to work collaboratively were themes that emerged strongly from the research - concepts that extended beyond individual classrooms to working together as a school community in having a shared vision. This finding is reflected in the literature that advocates an expanded view of teaching - a shift that requires the ability and willingness to work collaboratively, and a culture of trust and openness, in which risk-taking and experimentation can become the norm (Lieberman & Miller, 2004).

Hence, it could be argued that it is timely that the enthusiasm and willingness of those who want to lead informally be harnessed.

Leadership Practice of Principals and DPs

This research has found that the principals in all four schools were viewed as playing a central role in all aspects of leadership and were seen by others as having strong influence and ultimate authority in the schools. This finding supports the literature which highlights the core role that the principal has in influencing the work of teachers (albeit in an indirect way) and the culture in which they work (Copland, 2001; Southworth in Mulford, 2008). The four principals in this study acknowledged the influence they have while also expressing the importance of distributing leadership to others. They were aware of their unique position in creating the conditions that would allow for the development of multiple leaders, thereby enhancing teaching and learning in their schools.

Evidence from this study suggests that it is important that principals see the responsibility that they have to provide opportunities for teacher leadership potential to be unlocked. They can do this by putting structures in place that enable and support teachers to work together, to lead and to influence each other. This research has highlighted that various factors can hinder collaborative work practices, such as poor communication, difficult and resistive personalities and a lack of trust. It could be argued then, that it is important for the principal to be contextually literate and aware of the barriers that stand in the way of collaboration and leadership distribution in his/her school. From this awareness, essential supports can be put in place to provide

opportunities for participative decision-making and teamwork. Principals must also consider the issue of lack of time. There was evidence in this study that distributed leadership practice could often take place out-of-school hours. As the literature points out, time is central to success in distributing leadership and that the need for dedicated time for practice is essential (Hargreaves, 1994; Ovando, 1994). This issue of time for .practice is a significant and pressing one in Irish schools today (LDS, 2007). Hence, if distributed leadership practice is to be supported, the time needed for practice will have to be addressed.

Alongside contextual awareness and establishing support structures, the importance of teacher leadership beyond promoted leadership posts needs be genuinely acknowledged by principals and also that empowering teacher leadership often requires principal teachers to reconceptualise their own role and devolve power and autonomy to the teacher. This may prove challenging for some principals but is necessary if distributed leadership among informal leaders is to be enabled. Southworth (2004) acknowledges that good school leaders recognise that their influence on both pupil and teacher learning is indirect - that it is mediated through their teachers. The implication of this for the leadership practice of the principal, therefore, is that they recognise the importance of distributing leadership so that teachers can influence colleagues in a way which may be impossible for they themselves to do so. This will require a move away from the role of the heroic leader (something that was seen in the role of all four principals in this study) in the direction of one who models, supports, facilitates, monitors and also follows others in their leadership endeavours, whether that leader holds a formal leadership position or not. As the literature highlights, schooling has a

long history of sole leadership with 'heroic leaders' being seen as the model held up for others to follow (Gronn, 2003, p. 27). This study underscores the need to look towards alternative approaches to the sole, heroic leader.

Findings from Sapling School in particular highlight that development of leadership happens through a combination of opportunities to lead and nurturing of practice and also depends on consciously taking action (usually starting with the principal), in setting the example by being aware of the need to devolve responsibility and to provide opportunities for others to lead. Findings from Redwood School suggest that teachers who wish to lead may not necessarily take the initiative to do so. Rather they may await invitation. As was seen in Sapling School, over time the non-post holders felt affirmed by leadership opportunities given to them and as a result felt more confident to take the initiative to put themselves forward. The principal was mentioned in all four schools as being the main person to provide leadership opportunities. Thus, a recommendation from this research is for principals to recognise the important role they play in encouraging others to lead and to enable distributed leadership practice in their school.

Certain features of the principal's practice were seen to encourage distributed leadership. In Sapling School the principal played a central role in recognising the strengths in others and supporting and encouraging their work. He regularly played the role of facilitator and co-ordinator, and encouraged shared decision-making and professional development. All the while he was ever-mindful of the heavy workload of the teachers in the school and was hesitant to put more pressure on them. He clearly moulded his leadership style around others and in so doing showed awareness of the

school's own unique context and situation. This in turn had a bearing on his actions. As a result, staff members reported to feeling affirmed and an essential part of a team. This principal recognised, as does the literature, that the principal's role in leading learning lies in creating the conditions (such as supportive structures and a collaborative culture) in which teaching and learning are enhanced. At the same time, while the principal recognised that "A school is only as good as its teachers" (P, Sap, Int), the evidence points to the importance of a principal's practice that would incorporate some of the features mentioned above.

Finally, this study found that the principals relied on their DP for various reasons and viewed them as a crucial part of their leadership team. Oftentimes the DP acted as a sounding board, advise-giver, leader and also as a conduit between the staff and the principal. Three of the principals commented that the DP plays a crucial role in their school and that it had evolved over the years to involve an arrangement of partnership and mutuality. The evidence suggests that the DP's position was regarded as one that is expected to take co-ownership for leadership and all that that entails, including vision-setting, leading and distributing leadership, decision-making, delegating, communicating and being well-informed. All the while the principals expressed their expectation that the DP be adaptable, trustworthy and dedicated. These traits and competencies reflect calls from the publication *Giorraíonn Beirt Bothar* (2007), which focuses on the role of the DP and its potential in Irish schools. Findings from this research present a positive picture of the direction that the role is taking and underscores the importance that principals place on further development of the position.

Future Possibilities - Implications for Practice and Professional Development

As Firestone and Martinez assert, "The growing interest in distributed leadership reflects an effort to re-conceptualise leadership in schools by exploring how leadership is spread across a variety of roles and to explore the process of leadership" (in Leithwood et al., 2009, p. 61). A strong finding of this research clearly points to the need for schools to enter into dialogue around the particular leadership needs of their own school and for all teachers to be involved in discussion around role resonceptualisation. If this is to be done successfully, another need - that of an atmosphere of trust - will need to be established and nurtured. Some of the schools needed to work on breaking down perceptions towards the ISMT as a superior group if true distribution of leadership was to become common practice. They also needed to work on encouraging risk-taking and collaborative work practices. This would require varying degrees of cultural shift for three out of the four schools.

One might be correct to assume that the four schools involved in this study are not alone in the way in which there can be over-reliance on leadership that emanates from the principal, despite the fact that a formal structure (ISM) is in place. It may be recommended that part of the school-evaluation process might involve drafting school-based policy that acknowledges that different people can and are welcome to lead at different times and in response to varying leadership needs. Discussion around the use of diaries highlighted the fact that many teachers welcome an opportunity to reflect on their practice and that many of them called for improvement in leadership practice. This desire could be made more explicit by opening up dialogue around the school's changing leadership and management needs within their own particular context and by

subsequently translating this into coherent whole-school policy. It could be recommended that dialogue at the school level as to what teachers consider are the professional qualities of schools leaders - the attributes, knowledge, competencies and skills that they consider are important to the role of the leader - could help in articulating and clarifying what is expected of those who lead in their school.

The leadership landscape is changing in Irish schools as a result of the current moratorium on promotion. It has meant that for the foreseeable future, posts of responsibility will not be filled when post holders retire or leave a school for other reasons. Thus, there will be fewer formal positions in schools. This will have a bearing on leadership practice in schools. Informal leaders are now having to "fill the gap" that has been left in schools, carrying out duties that others were previously paid extra to do. Hence, it could be argued that now is a crucial time for individual schools to review the leadership practice that exists in their own school and to assess whether this practice is enabling the school to respond to the challenges that they face. The time is ripe for schools to examine the leadership potential of the teachers and to decide on ways in which leadership can be practised. Review of the literature and findings from this study highlight that there can be barriers and challenges to distributed leadership practice. Assessing leadership practice in one's own school will need to address these. For example, if hitherto a school has had a very tight hierarchical arrangement, discussion around the potential of informal leaders will need to be addressed, as well as discussing structural and cultural changes that will have to occur. Dialogue will need to address the perceptions of teachers and principals towards leadership and address those that may limit potential leadership practice.

This study has highlighted the importance that school culture plays in creating the climate that allows for multiple teachers to exercise leadership (Hargreaves, 1994; Sackney & Walker 2006; Spillane & Orlina, 2007). The findings of this study suggest that most teachers support the concept of collaborative work processes such as planning and reviewing their work, contributing and sharing ideas and participating in joint decision-making around whole-school issues. The development of an interactive, trustworthy, healthy and supportive environment is crucial. The implication for teachers is that they need to come to realise that the culture of the school can either hinder this type of practice or can offer powerful opportunities to engage in leadership practice. Consequently, as was stated earlier, schools will need to critically review and revise their practice.

Ecological thinking views organisations in terms of connections, relationships, living systems and contexts (Sackney & Walker, 2006), and considers organisations to be integrated wholes rather than a disassociated collection of parts. This thinking is backed up by findings from the diaries used in this research, which have pointed to the way in which leaders practise leadership though their interaction with others. Those who documented instances of leadership practice showed how their actions and interactions depended upon connectedness with others, and that leaders and followers were often interdependent. Sackney and Walker ask the question as to what this means for leaders to be working "in the complex eco-systems we call schools?" (2006, p. 19) One of the first tasks, it could be argued, is that schools will need to build a sense of shared vision and purpose together. Another task is to develop the culture that encourages learning at the individual, interpersonal, and organisational levels. With the ecological view in

mind, it could also be argued that schools as a whole might do well to adopt a flatter structure/model of leadership that allows for the involvement of the more than those who occupy formal leadership positions.

Collaborative cultures are not always easy to develop or maintain and barriers to working together were evident in three out of the four schools. An implication for schools is that all teachers are made aware of and examine what factors may be militating against collaborative work practices and a shared sense of community. This study illustrates that for teachers to feel valued and supported in their practice, a climate of trust and a sense of community are important. Hargreaves (1999) asserts that change in school culture can take a long time and requires simultaneous structural change. He points to the fact that highly collaborative cultures are not necessarily the norm for schools, and that a cultural shift will depend upon involving all members of staff exploring the culture that currently exists, agreeing on positive directions for cultural change and collectively devising strategies in order to bring this about. A recommendation for future practice, therefore, is that any moves towards school evaluation and improvement address the cultural changes that will be required.

A major finding of this study is that CPD for leadership is required. It hardly needs to be emphasised that schools alone cannot assume full responsibility for the development of leadership capacity of formal and informal leaders. Evidence from this research suggests that professional development would be best carried out on a continuum from initial teacher education and then to continue throughout a teacher's career, regardless as to whether he/she holds a formal leadership position or not. Clearly if the DES is serious about asking schools to work in a collaborative, whole-school

manner it will be necessary for those who are expected to lead such work practices to be up-skilled and supported in doing so. Policy based on CPD for leadership will have to recognise that teachers need to be enabled to lead learning, lead people and sometimes lead the organisation. Findings from this research emphasise that CPD needs to pay attention to the role that informal leaders can play as part of the wider leadership/management structure and also must pay further attention to the roles and practices of formal leaders. Thus, as is reflected in the literature (OECD, 2008), supports should be put in place to facilitate/develop present and future school leaders. It is apparent that, if leadership is to be developed in Irish primary schools, the Teaching Council must take action, and this will require guidance, resources and professional development. In short, it will need to make it clear that it is genuinely serious about the development of leadership in Irish schools.

At the same time, schools can be proactive in developing their own leadership capacity. O'Sullivan (2011) asserts that a huge amount of learning can and should take place internally 'on the job' and within a school's own context. As this study points out, this requires a culture that will support change and strong leadership to steer it. Whether CPD happens within the school or externally, this research suggests that there may be some merit in exploring some form of structured CPD for the teaching community. This may involve all teachers being obliged to engage in a couple of days CPD on an annual basis, and that such CPD would have a strong leadership dimension, as well as focusing on school self-evaluation and other important areas for development. Separate to this, existing models of CPD for DPs, principals, middle or aspiring leaders could be maintained and further developed. It is believed that emphasis on leadership could move

the climate to a different place, where teachers would recognise that they have a responsibility to their profession to consider leadership in their schools. As there are no colleges for school leadership currently in Ireland, it may be that the Teaching Council would be most suited to taking charge of such CPD for teachers, so that development would reflect the existing *Codes of Professional Conduct* (2007) that were drawn up as part of the remit of this body.

Future Possibilities - Implications for Policy

Findings from this research have implications for educational leadership policy. For example, this study has highlighted that the culture of the school plays a very important part in creating the climate that allows multiple teachers to exercise leadership. Future policy would do well to recognise that schools may need support in establishing and maintaining a culture of teamwork. This study has outlined some of the factors that can hinder and support leadership practice. It has highlighted the key role that the principal plays in the distribution of leadership and in the provision of structures and encouragement that support practice and so on. Attitudes towards leadership practice have drawn attention to factors such as the importance of trust and openness if leadership practice is to flourish. A number of professional needs that pertain to leadership practice have been summarised. Thus, it is highly recommended that policy makers take heed of such findings in the establishment of future policy in the area of school leadership.

Policymakers can oftentimes hugely underestimate the considerable discretion and relative autonomy that teachers and principals have in relation to the implementation of policy (Lipsky, 1980; Stone, 2002). Schools are important policy

implementation sites, where policies are (or are not) negotiated, modified and implemented to suit contextual factors. Oakley School highlighted the way in which certain post holders point blankly refused to cooperate with other members of the IMST and resisted communication and collaborative work practices in general. This was despite policy calls from the DES that advocate the importance of collaborative processes in the work of the school and also despite the way in which the principal was making huge efforts to shift the culture of the school in such a direction. While this may have been an extreme case, it does highlight the way in which the intentions of policy do not always play out in practice. Teachers, as street level bureaucrats are the ones who decide to implement policy or not and how to do so (Lipsky, 1980). This research has shown that the principal plays a central role in establishing and monitoring structures that can support leadership. Thus, the implementation of future policy in relation to leadership will first require the "buy-in" by the principal, communication of recommendations for practice to teachers and finally the acceptance and implementation on the ground on the part of teachers (either individually or at group level).

The LDS assert that a culture of discussing policy documents is not a feature of primary schools, that teachers perceive that they have a limited contribution to policy formulation and cannot influence policy development (LDS, 2007). Several factors serve to constrain such discussion and reflection. These include the structure of the school day and the demands of attending to their teaching role as well as their leadership responsibilities. As a result many policies may remain largely un-interrogated. Above all, policy may not be perceived by participants as something which has a direct connection to teaching or leading or which can guide action. This research concludes

that future school leadership policies would do well to bear this in mind and put structures and supports in place to allow time for policies to be absorbed into schools and subsequently into practice. Policymakers will also need to question the extent to which there is shared interest in and commitment to reforms which are dictated from the top and into which teachers and principals may feel they have little input. Furthermore, the degree to which central policy influences local practice will depend on the extent to which the government engages all partners in education in the policymaking process.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

It is appreciated that there are limitations to this study. This study was specific to primary schools and limited to participants who agreed to participate. The number of research participants and the amount of time available to conduct the research were limitations of the study. The results from the small sample are not reflective of teachers and principals around the country and this research did not seek to extrapolate quantifiable results to the population at large. Rather, the objective was to examine the experiences of educational leaders, including their practices, attitudes and professional needs. Evidence of distributed leadership practice was not in abundance in this research study. It could be argued that distrusted leadership practice within national and international research remains an important line of inquiry. This study has highlighted that when leadership was distributed, it was seen to have a positive impact on teacher motivation and work ethic. This research has also highlighted factors that can help or hinder distributed leadership practice. Further research would do well to continue to focus on the practice of distributed leadership - how this is done, what supports it and its impact on teaching and learning.

It may be suggested that further research might be conducted. It is proposed that a follow-up to the present study, such as a quantitative and qualitative longitudinal study of a larger number of schools be conducted in order to give an in-depth insight into the practice of leadership and the professional needs of leaders in Irish primary schools. A collaborative research project involving teachers and researchers may prove insightful, particularly as this study found that teachers and principals were generally very welcoming of research into their practice and that they were happy to reflect upon it. Furthermore, it could be argued that the use of observation of actions and interactions would help to strengthen participant diaries and other types of data collection methods. This would facilitate further insights into the experience of formal and informal leaders in their own unique context and could potentially have much to recommend to policymakers and practitioners alike.

It may be suggested that continued research that focuses on leadership practice and also distributed leadership is crucial within the Irish context. Review of the literature (Mulford, 2008; Spillane & Diamond, 2007) highlights the call for exploration of leadership practice rather than examining leadership from a purely conceptual standpoint, and this is a central part of the rationale for this study. Flood (in O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011) highlights the need for doing so in the Irish context, asserting that "It is difficult to see how there can be any clear direction to the role of school leaders today until there is national consensus on the purpose of leadership, the skills, qualities, behaviours and practices of those who lead" (pp. 52-53). It could be argued that research that further examines the research questions posed by this study in

different contexts would be beneficial. Such contexts could include second level schools and primary schools outside the suburban Dublin area.

It is important to note that this research was conducted in the academic year 2009-2010, in the midst of economic decline which has shaken Irish society. The replication of this research in a period of more economic prosperity and security may yield different but equally important results. The challenges that this study has highlighted in relation to leadership practice cannot be avoided and must be addressed, as a matter of urgency, if schools are to be empowered and supported to respond to the challenges that they currently face and will face in the future. With the current moratorium on promotion, it became clear in three out of the four schools that a need existed for those not in promoted posts to take on work voluntarily. Further research could examine the perceptions of those who have done so and the extent to which they feel their roles are leadership ones or more simply task-completing ones. Further insights could also be gained by examining the role of informal leaders and the conditions that support their leadership practice. It is also recommended that further research on teachers' understanding of distributed leadership be undertaken to gain insight into the processes through which this practice can be enabled. The findings of this research would provide useful information to policymakers about capacity building for schools in the future and would outline the incentives which make a difference to schools.

This study offers valuable insight into the practice of leadership in four particular primary schools in Ireland. It is recommended that the teachers and principals be mindful of the findings that pertain to both their own school and others with a view to

taking action on the recommendations towards practice. A copy of this research will be given to each of the schools that participated in the study. Thus, it is anticipated that these findings will motivate the teachers and principals involved to reflect on how leadership is practised in their schools and initiate a degree of change for the better.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore what leadership practice looked like in four primary schools and the extent to which distributed leadership occurred. It drew attention to the attitudes that teachers in those schools held towards this practice and illuminated the professional needs that existed around leadership practice. A summary of this study's main findings was presented in Table 7 in the previous chapter. It is suggested that this study and its findings offers meaningful insights into teachers' and principals' leadership practice and has made valuable recommendations towards future practice, policy and research in the area of school leadership. Finally, it is suggested that this research serves to contribute to an emerging literature (both from the Irish context and internationally) on the importance of leadership that is distributed beyond formal positions.

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Appendix A

Plain Language Statement and Consent Form

Plain Language Statement and Consent Form

Plain Language Statement

The aim of this project is to explore the practice of In-school management and leadership (i.e. the work of Principals, Deputy and Assistant Principals and Special Duties Post Holders) in four primary schools. The researcher will conduct four case studies in different primary schools to document the practices of, and attitudes to, In-school management/leadership in schools.

All teachers (including the Principal) in the schools are asked to complete a questionnaire which will be sent to schools in November 2009. Clear guidelines and instructions will be attached with the questionnaire. Participation is greatly appreciated. The identity of those filling out the questionnaires will be known to the researcher only. Certain members of the In-school management team (i.e. Special Duties Post Holders, including the Principal) will then be asked to keep a diary documenting any experiences of In-school management/leadership practices for one week in December 2009 and one week in February 2010. Clear guidelines will be given to diary-keepers and the researcher will be contactable if there are any queries/questions. Finally, in May/June 2010, those who completed the diary entries, and also a non-member of the In-school management team, will be asked to participate in an interview. These interviews will be audio-recorded. Again, confidentiality and anonymity will be paramount and all participation in the research is very much appreciated.

Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used both for the name of the schools and those who partake in any part of the research. Raw data will also use pseudonyms where possible (for example, when interviewing participants). Due the fact that the sample size will be relatively small, it may be impossible to guarantee anonymity/confidentiality regarding participant identity. However, every effort will be made to ensure that the identity of the participants will be protected. Data collected will not be used for any purpose other than that flagged at the outset of the project without the permission of participants. The data will be destroyed after the findings of the research have been written up and passed. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

Involvement in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator, Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities,
St Patrick's College,

Drumcondra,

Dublin 9.

Tel 01-884 2149

Informed Consent Form

I.   Research Study Title

'Exploration of the Practice of In-school Management and Leadership in Four Primary Schools: A Mixed Methods, Case Study Approach'

II.   Purpose of the Research

The aim of this project is to explore the practice of In-school management and leadership (i.e. the work of Principals, Deputy and Assistant Principals and Special Duties Post Holders) and also of other informal leaders in four primary schools. The researcher will conduct four case studies in different primary schools to document the practices of, and attitudes management and leadership in schools. Data will be collected through the use of questionnaires, diaries and interviews. This research is designed to take account of what is happening with management and leadership in these four Irish primary schools, to inform discussion and lead to further research with a view to informing future policy in this area.

This research seeks to:

- Examine the practice of In-school Management (ISM) and leadership in four schools
- Explore attitudes towards the practice of In-school Management and leadership in these schools
- To highlight the needs of formal and informal leaders

III.   Requirements of Participation in Research Study

All teachers (including the Principal) in the schools are asked to complete a questionnaire which will be sent to schools in November 2009. Clear guidelines and instructions will be attached with the questionnaire. Participation is greatly appreciated. The identity of those filling out the questionnaires will be known to the researcher only. Certain member of the In-school management team (i.e. Special Duties Post Holders, including the Principal) will then be asked to keep a diary documenting any experiences of In-school management/leadership practices for one week in February 2010. Clear guidelines will be given to diary-keepers and the researcher will be contactable if there are any queries/questions. Finally, in May/June 2010, those who completed the diary entries, and also a non-member of the In-school management team, will be asked to participate in an interview. These interviews will be audio recorded. Again, confidentiality and anonymity will be paramount and all participation in the research is very much appreciated.

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is Voluntary

I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V. Confidentiality

Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used both for the name of the schools and those who partake in any part of the research. Raw data will also use pseudonyms where possible (for example, when interviewing participants). Due the fact that the sample size will be relatively small, it may be impossible to guarantee anonymity/confidentiality regarding participant identity. However, every effort will be made to ensure that the identity of the participants will be protected. Data collected will not be used for any purpose other than that flagged at the outset of the project without the permission of participants. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

VI. Participant – Please complete the following:

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

Have you read the Plain Language Statement?	Yes/No
Do you understand the information provided?	Yes/No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes/No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes/No

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. The researcher has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

Appendix B

Questionnaire Cover Letter and Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

An Exploration of In-school Management and Leadership

To Whom It May Concern:

Many thanks for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Your time and thoughts are greatly appreciated. The questionnaire should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Before filling out the questionnaire (attached), please fill in your name and school in the spaces provided below. The information and opinions given in these documents, as well as your identity, will be protected. No information will ever be shared with any member of staff of your school or any other school without your prior consent. As soon as the questionnaire is returned to me, I will assign a number to it, and your name will be removed from the document. The reason that I need to know the identity of the respondent is that part of the purpose of the questionnaires is to help me identify possible participants who may partake in diary-keeping and/or an interview at a later date.

Remember that you are under no obligation to partake in any other part of my research and that you are entitled to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Again, many thanks for your participation.

Regards,

_____

Anna Jennings
B.Ed., M.Ed.

Name: _____

School: _____

QUESTIONNAIRE
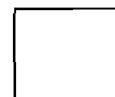
Please note: The In-school Management Team (ISMT) refers to those members of staff who are Special Duties Post Holders <u>as well as</u> the Assistant Principal(s), the Deputy Principal and the Principal. Please bear this in mind when answering the questions below.

SECTION 1	**Teacher Profile**

Please tick (✓) in the spaces provided:

1. Gender
Male_____ Female_____

2. How many years have you been teaching?
0-5 _____
6-10 _____
11-15 _____
16-20 _____
Over 20_____

3. Are you a member of your school's In-school Management Team (ISMT)?
Yes _____ No _____
(If you answered 'Yes' to Question Three, please answer Question Four and Five)
(If you answered 'No' to Question Three, please proceed to Question Six)

4. As a member of the ISMT, what are your main roles and responsibilities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. How many years have you been a member of your school's ISMT?
0-5 _____
6-10 _____
11-15 _____
16-20 _____
Over 20_____

6. What qualifications do you have?

B.Ed.   _____
Diploma   _____
Masters   _____
PhD./Ed.D.   _____
Other   _____ (Please Specify) _____

SECTION 2	**In-school Management in your School**

1. Do you know which <u>members</u> on your staff comprise the In-school Management Team (ISMT)?

   Yes _____   No _____   Unsure _____

2. Are you aware of the <u>duties</u> of the In-school Management Team (ISMT)?

   Yes _____   No _____   Unsure _____

3. Are you aware of the <u>purpose</u> of the In-school Management Team (ISMT)?

   Yes _____   No _____   Unsure _____

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(Please tick in ONE box only per question and not between two boxes)

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The purpose and duties of the ISMT are clearly defined.					
The ISMT communicates regularly with all teachers.					
Communication between the ISMT and teachers is effective (i.e. helpful/effectual).					
The ISMT generally delegates successfully.					
The ISMT shares leadership roles with each other and other members of staff.					
The ISMT has contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in your school					

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The ISMT takes responsibility for Curricular Leadership.					
The ISMT takes responsibility for Instructional Leadership (e.g. advising on teaching methodologies)					
The ISMT takes responsibility for Pastoral Leadership (i.e. care/welfare, for example mentoring, supporting staff & pupils).					
The ISMT takes responsibility for Staff Development.					
The ISMT takes responsibility for Management.					
The roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school.					
The ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their management/leadership role.					
The ISMT is beneficial to your school.					
The duties held by the ISMT need to be reviewed					
I can voice my concern easily if I disagree with any decisions made by members of management.					
The ISMT has no relevance to me.					

Are there any comments that you would like to make about In-school Management/Leadership either in your own school or in general? Please use the space provided below (and/or overleaf).

_____

_____

Appendix C

Questionnaire Responses to Attitudinal Scales

- **Oakley School**

- **Redwood School**

- **Sapling School**

- **Scoil Síorghlas**

- **All Schools**

Questionnaire Responses to Attitudinal Statements - Oakley School

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
The purpose and duties of the ISMT are clearly defined.	0.00%	42.86%	0.00%	42.86%	0.00%	14.29%
The ISMT communicates regularly with all teachers.	0.00%	85.71%	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%
Communication between the ISMT and teachers is effective (i.e. helpful/effectual).	14.29%	71.43%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT generally delegates successfully.	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT shares leadership roles with each other and other members of staff.	0.00%	57.14%	28.57%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in your school	0.00%	71.43%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Curricular Leadership.	14.29%	85.71%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Instructional Leadership (e.g. advising on teaching methodologies)	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Pastoral Leadership (i.e. care/welfare, for example mentoring, supporting staff & pupils).	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Staff Development.	0.00%	71.43%	14.29%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Management.	14.29%	42.86%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%
The roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school.	0.00%	57.14%	42.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their management/leadership role.	57.14%	42.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT is beneficial to your school.	14.29%	85.71%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The duties held by the ISMT need to be reviewed	28.57%	14.29%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	14.29%
I can voice my concern easily if I disagree with any decisions made by members of management.	0.00%	71.43%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has no relevance to me.	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	71.43%	0.00%	0.00%

Questionnaire Responses to Attitudinal Statements - Redwood School

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
The purpose and duties of the ISMT are clearly defined.	16.67%	62.50%	4.17%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT communicates regularly with all teachers.	8.33%	75.00%	4.17%	8.33%	4.17%	0.00%
Communication between the ISMT and teachers is effective (i.e. helpful/effectual).	12.50%	75.00%	0.00%	8.33%	0.00%	4.17%
The ISMT generally delegates successfully.	0.00%	70.83%	12.50%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT shares leadership roles with each other and other members of staff.	8.33%	54.17%	8.33%	29.17%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in your school	16.67%	70.83%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Curricular Leadership.	25.00%	62.50%	4.17%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Instructional Leadership (e.g. advising on teaching methodologies)	0.00%	54.17%	8.33%	33.33%	0.00%	4.17%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Pastoral Leadership (i.e. care/welfare, for example mentoring, supporting staff & pupils).	8.33%	70.83%	12.50%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Staff Development.	4.17%	66.67%	8.33%	20.83%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Management.	4.17%	79.17%	4.17%	4.17%	0.00%	8.33%
The roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school.	12.50%	75.00%	8.33%	4.17%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their management/leadership role.	50.00%	41.67%	4.17%	4.17%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT is beneficial to your school.	41.67%	58.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The duties held by the ISMT need to be reviewed	20.83%	41.67%	12.50%	20.83%	4.17%	0.00%
I can voice my concern easily if I disagree with any decisions made by members of management.	8.33%	58.33%	16.67%	12.50%	4.17%	0.00%
The ISMT has no relevance to me.	0.00%	4.17%	0.00%	58.33%	37.50%	0.00%

Questionnaire Responses to Attitudinal Statements - Sapling School

| Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
The purpose and duties of the ISMT are clearly defined.	0.00%	60.00%	20.00%	10.00%	0.00%	10.00%
The ISMT communicates regularly with all teachers.	30.00%	70.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Communication between the ISMT and teachers is effective (i.e. helpful/effectual).	30.00%	60.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT generally delegates successfully.	20.00%	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT shares leadership roles with each other and other members of staff.	40.00%	50.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in your school	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Curricular Leadership.	20.00%	70.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Instructional Leadership (e.g. advising on teaching methodologies)	0.00%	90.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Pastoral Leadership (i.e. care/welfare, for example mentoring, supporting staff & pupils).	30.00%	70.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Staff Development.	10.00%	90.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Management.	30.00%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%
The roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school.	20.00%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%
The ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their management/leadership role.	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT is beneficial to your school.	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The duties held by the ISMT need to be reviewed	20.00%	40.00%	30.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%
I can voice my concern easily if I disagree with any decisions made by members of management.	30.00%	70.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has no relevance to me.	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	80.00%	0.00%

Questionnaire Responses to Attitudinal Statements - Scoil Síorghlas

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
The purpose and duties of the ISMT are clearly defined.	33.33%	44.44%	0.00%	22.22%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT communicates regularly with all teachers.	33.33%	55.56%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Communication between the ISMT and teachers is effective (i.e. helpful/effectual).	55.56%	44.44%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT generally delegates successfully.	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT shares leadership roles with each other and other members of staff.	44.44%	44.44%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in your school	55.56%	33.33%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Curricular Leadership.	33.33%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Instructional Leadership (e.g. advising on teaching methodologies)	11.11%	77.78%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Pastoral Leadership (i.e. care/welfare, for example mentoring, supporting staff & pupils).	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Staff Development.	33.33%	55.56%	0.00%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Management.	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school.	55.56%	33.33%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their management/leadership role.	22.22%	77.78%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT is beneficial to your school.	77.78%	22.22%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The duties held by the ISMT need to be reviewed	22.22%	0.00%	33.33%	44.44%	0.00%	0.00%
I can voice my concern easily if I disagree with any decisions made by members of management.	55.56%	33.33%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has no relevance to me.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	22.22%	77.78%	0.00%

Questionnaire Responses to Attitudinal Statements - All Schools

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
The purpose and duties of the ISMT are clearly defined.	14.00%	56.00%	6.00%	20.00%	0.00%	4.00%
The ISMT communicates regularly with all teachers.	16.00%	72.00%	4.00%	6.00%	2.00%	0.00%
Communication between the ISMT and teachers is effective (i.e. helpful/effectual).	24.00%	66.00%	4.00%	4.00%	0.00%	2.00%
The ISMT generally delegates successfully.	12.00%	64.00%	12.00%	12.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT shares leadership roles with each other and other members of staff.	20.00%	52.00%	12.00%	16.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in your school	28.00%	60.00%	12.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Curricular Leadership.	24.00%	66.00%	2.00%	6.00%	0.00%	2.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Instructional Leadership (e.g. advising on teaching methodologies)	2.00%	66.00%	8.00%	22.00%	0.00%	2.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Pastoral Leadership (i.e. care/welfare, for example mentoring, supporting staff & pupils).	18.00%	66.00%	8.00%	8.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Staff Development.	10.00%	70.00%	6.00%	14.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT takes responsibility for Management.	18.00%	66.00%	4.00%	6.00%	0.00%	6.00%
The roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school.	20.00%	62.00%	12.00%	2.00%	4.00%	0.00%
The ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their management/leadership role.	46.00%	50.00%	2.00%	2.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The ISMT is beneficial to your school.	48.00%	52.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
The duties held by the ISMT need to be reviewed	22.00%	30.00%	20.00%	24.00%	2.00%	2.00%
I can voice my concern easily if I disagree with any decisions made by members of management.	20.00%	58.00%	14.00%	6.00%	2.00%	0.00%
The ISMT has no relevance to me.	0.00%	4.00%	4.00%	44.00%	48.00%	0.00%

Appendix D

Demographics - Profiles of Questionnaire Respondents (all schools together)

Demographics - Profiles of Questionnaire Respondents (all schools together)

Gender

Years of Experience

ISMT Members
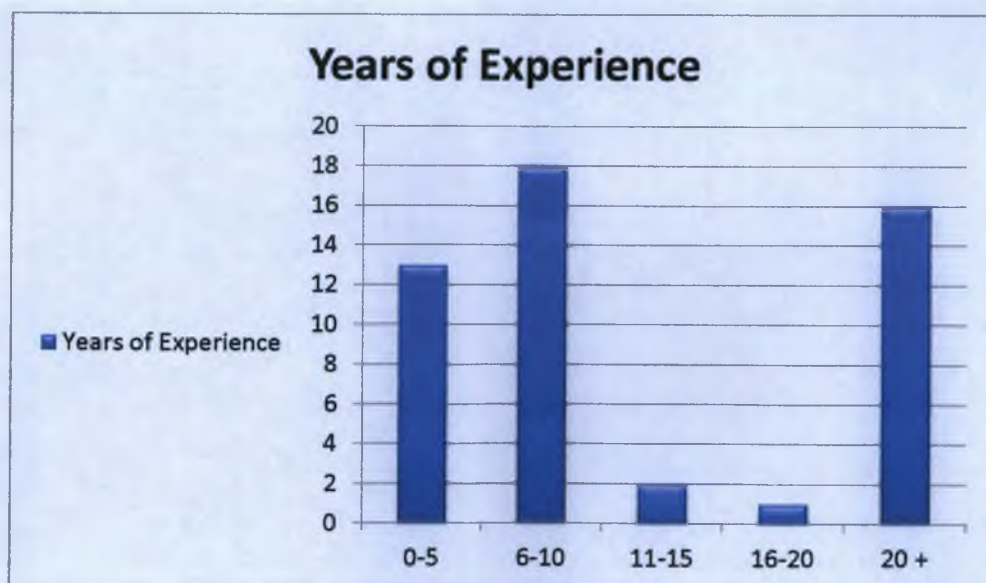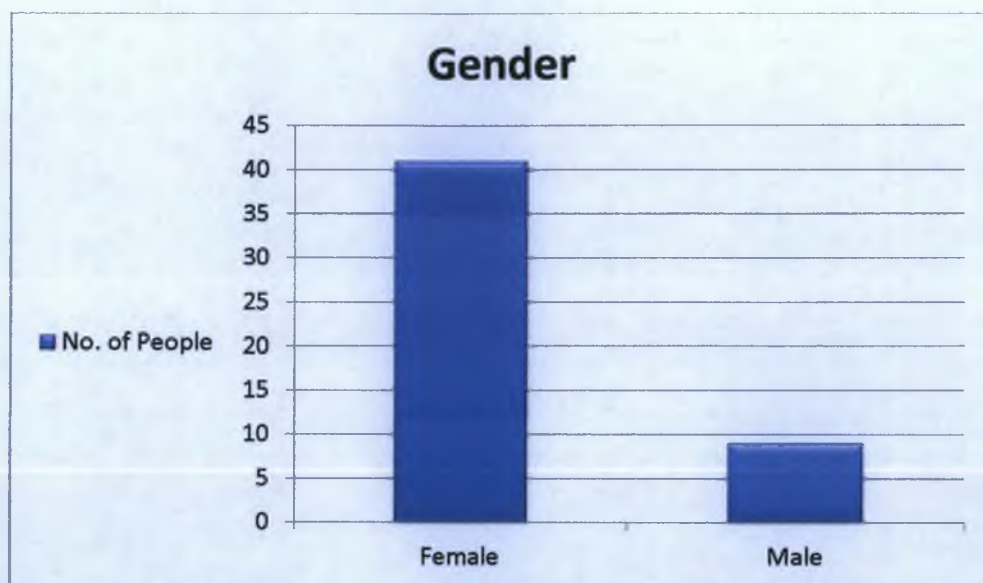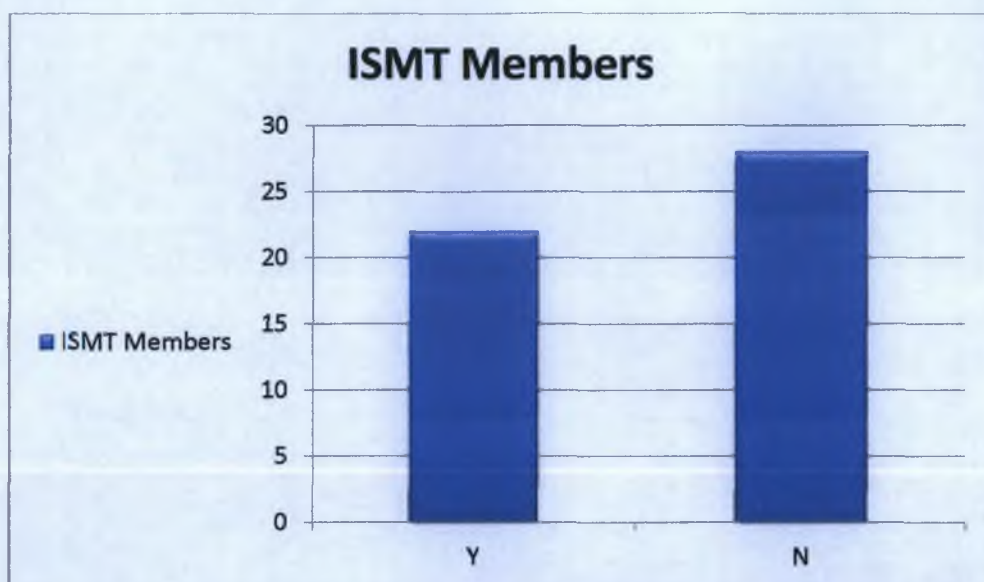
Appendix E

Definition of Leadership Practice Discussed with Participants,

Diary Templates and Sample

Definition of Leadership Practice Discussed with Participants,
Diary Templates and Sample

Daily Leadership Practice Diary

Practice of <u>your</u> Leadership Role in your School

<u>Definitions:</u>

For the purpose of this diary, 'leadership' is defined as a **practice**. 'Leadership practice' is recognised as those activities that are understood by by, or designed by, staff members to influence the motivation, knowledge, and practice of other staff members in an effort to change the school's core work – i.e. teaching and learning.

Leadership actions are viewed as <u>social influence interactions,</u> that is to say, any interaction that you have with a person/group that has influence over that person/group that influences their motivation/knowledge/practice where their work is concerned.

(Spillane & Zuberi 2009)

Daily Leadership Practice Diary - Practice of your Leadership Role in your School

Day of the Week:			Date:		Time(filling in diary):
Was today a typical day? (Please tick)	Yes	No	If no, please explain:		

SECTION 1

Actions and Interactions Undertaken During the Day and Type of Leadership:

Time of Day (approx.)	What? (action)	Who with/for/from? (Interactions)	Why?

Time of Day (approx.)	What? (action)		Who with/for/from? (Interactions)	Why?	

SECTION 2

Personal Reflection:

Daily Leadership Practice Diary - Practice of <u>your</u> Leadership Role in your School

Day of the Week:	Monday		Date:	22 March 2010	Time (filling in diary):	3.00pm (although I logged a few incidences during the day)
Was today a typical day? (Please tick)	Yes	No	If no, please explain:			
	✓					

SECTION 1

Actions and Interactions Undertaken During the Day and Type of Leadership:

Time of Day (approx.)	What? (action)	Who with/for/from? (Interactions)	Why?
8.50am	Mentioned to teacher that I had reviewed new software & that she should have a look at the maths software for her class level	5th Class teacher	The school is trying to use ICT as another methodology for teaching various subject areas
11.00am	Phone call to Forás na Gaeilge to order	Outside agency – Forás na Gaeilge	To promote Irish during Seachtain na Gaeilge.

Time of Day (approx.)	What? (action)=	Who with/for/from? (Interactions)	Why?
	materials for Seachtain na Gaeilge	Gaeilge on behalf of the school	
12.00pm	Wrote message on notice board suggesting a short meeting for Green School's Committee	For Green School's Committee	As co-ordinator of the Green School's Award, we need to have a meeting to assess how we're getting on
2.00pm	Meeting with Learning Support teacher and SNA.	Learning Support Teacher, SNA	Monthly meeting to review progress of children attending LS. Wanted to re-think IEP template.
2.45pm	Conversation with EAL (English as a Second Language) teacher to review the timetable	EAL teacher	Review of timetable because of change of grouping of children attending EAL
3.00pm	Dealing with request from teacher to visit a Discover Primary Science site	2nd Class teacher	Looked for my advice re. the Discover Primary Science Award, knowing that I'm interested in the area.
3.15pm	Newly qualified teacher looking for advice re time allocation for different subjects	Senior Infants teacher	He had a query re how to use discretionary time as it's laid out in the Revised Curriculum

Appendix F

Interview Schedules - Non ISMT Member, ISMT Members and Principal

Interview Schedules - Non ISMT Member, ISMT Members and Principal

Interview Questions – Non ISMT Member

Introduction

1. Do you know who the members of your school's ISMT are and what their main roles and responsibilities are?

2. Do you think that all the teaching staff is aware as to who the members of the ISMT are and what their main roles and responsibilities are?

3. What, do you think, is the purpose of ISM/leadership?

Communication

4. Do you know how often does the ISMT meet and where?

5. How often does the ISMT communicate with other staff members? How does it communicate with them?

6. How would you describe the effectiveness of communication between the ISMT and other staff members?

7. What helps or hinders communication throughout the school?

8. Do you think staff members find it easy or difficult to voice concerns if they disagree with any decisions made by members of management?

9. Do you think that the ISMT welcomes input from other members of staff?

Roles and Responsibilities

10. Do you feel that the roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school?

11. Do the duties of the ISMT need to be reviewed?

12. Has there been a recent review of the posts of responsibilities in the past year/few years?

13. If so were all staff members involved in this review?

14. Who decides on whether there should be a review?

15. Do you think that the weight of the posts is evenly distributed among post holders?

Collaboration

16. Does a culture of collaboration exist among the teaching staff in the school and the school community?

17. In what way does the ISMT foster and develop this collaborative culture?
18. Are you consulted in important matters within the school?

19. Does your school make any use of committees/planning groups? How?

Leadership and Management

20. Do you feel you have any informal responsibility for management or leadership in your school?

21. Do you see yourself as a leader in the school? What way, if any, do you function as a leader?

22. Where does your role lie in leading learning?

23. Have you ever been encouraged to be improve your leadership skills? How?

24. If you do not see yourself as a leader, why not?

Delegation

25. What duties, if any, are delegated throughout the school?

26. Has any work/responsibilities been delegated to you from the ISMT? Can you give an example?

27. Has the ISMT been successful in use of delegation skills? If so can you give me an example?

28. When the principal is out of the school can others fill in to keep things running smoothly?

Curriculum

29. Does the ISMT share in curricular development and implementation? How? In what way?

30. Does the ISMT share new ideas with staff members?

31. Is there a designated coordinator to lead and facilitate specific curricular areas?

32. What changes, if any, would you make to the curricular duties of the ISMT?

Pastoral

33. Does the ISMT take responsibility for pastoral duties within the school?

34. What factors help or hinder the carrying out of these responsibilities?

35. What changes if any would you make to the pastoral duties of the ISMT?

Instruction

36. What role does the ISMT play in instruction (for example teaching methods teaching, teaching resources, teaching plans or policies and new approaches) in the school?

37. In what way, if any, has the ISMT contributed to improvements in the quality of instruction in the school?

38. What factors help or hinder this work?

Staff Development

39. Are there any procedures in place in the school for the induction of new teachers?

40. Does the ISMT help in the induction of a new teacher? How?

41. How effective is the training you have received to date?

42. To what extent is professional development or training encouraged within the school?

43. Would you welcome an opportunity to undertake further training or professional development?

44. Do you think the ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their leadership/management role?

45. What topics/themes do you feel would be important in such professional development?

46. What, would you consider are the needs of the ISMT in your school?

47. In what way has the moratorium on promotion affected your school?

48. In what ways, do you think, could the ISM structure be improved, both in your school and in general?

Conclusion

49. Do you feel there are any aspects of ISM structure that have not been covered that you would like to mention?

Interview Questions – ISMT Member

Introduction

1. Can you tell me who the members of your school's ISMT are and what their main roles and responsibilities are?

2. Do you think that all the teaching staff is aware as to who the members of the ISMT are and what their main roles and responsibilities are?

3. What, do you think, is the purpose of ISM/leadership?

4. Can you give me a brief outline of your own roles and responsibilities?

Communication

5. How often does the ISMT meet and where?

6. How often does the ISMT communicate with other staff members? How does it communicate with them?

7. How would you describe the effectiveness of communication among the members of the ISMT?

8. How would you describe the effectiveness of communication between the ISMT and other staff members?

9. What helps or hinders communication throughout the school?

10. What helps or hinders communication among members of the ISMT?

11. Do you think staff members find it easy or difficult to voice concerns if they disagree with any decisions made by members of management?

12. Do you think that the ISMT welcomes input from other members of staff?

Roles and Responsibilities

13. Do you feel that the roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school?

14. Do the duties of the ISMT need to be reviewed?

15. Has there been a recent review of the posts of responsibilities in the past year/few years?

16. If so were all staff members involved in this review?

17. Who decides on whether there should be a review?

18. Do you feel that the weight of the posts is evenly distributed among post holders?

Collaboration

19. Does a culture of collaboration exist among the teaching staff in the school and the school community?

20. In what way does the ISMT foster and develop this collaborative culture?

21. Are you consulted in important matters within the school?

22. Does your school make any use of committees/planning groups? How?

Leadership and Management

23. Do you feel you have a responsibility for management of your school?

24. Do you see yourself as a leader in the school?

25. What way, if any, do you function as a leader?

26. Where does your role lie in leading learning?

27. Have your leadership skills improved or have you been encouraged to be improve them? How?

28. Have the workings of the ISMT changed your views of school leadership?

29. If you do not see yourself as a leader, why not?

30. Before becoming a member of the ISMT, did you ever lead in an informal way?

Delegation

31. What duties if any are delegated throughout the school?

32. Has the ISMT been successful in use of delegation skills? If so can you give me an example?

33. When the principal is out of the school can others fill in to keep things running smoothly?

34. Has any work been delegated to you from senior management? Can you give an example?

Curriculum

35. Does the ISMT share in curricular development and implementation? How? In what way?

36. Does the ISMT share new ideas with staff members?

37. Is there a designated coordinator to lead and facilitate specific curricular areas?

38. What changes, if any, would you make to the curricular duties of the ISMT?

Pastoral

39. Does the ISMT take responsibility for pastoral duties within the school?

40. What factors help or hinder the carrying out of these responsibilities?

41. What changes if any would you make to the pastoral duties of the ISMT?

Instruction

42. What role does the ISMT play in instruction (for example teaching methods teaching, teaching resources, teaching plans or policies and new approaches) in the school?

43. In what way, if any, have you or any member of the ISMT contributed to improvements in the quality of instruction in the school?

44. What factors help or hinder this work?

45. How important is leadership in this section of the post?

Staff Development

46. Are there any procedures in place in the school for the induction of new teachers?

47. Does the ISMT help in the induction of a new teacher? How?

48. How effective is the training you have received to date?

49. To what extent is professional development or training encouraged within the school?

50. Do you think the ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their leadership/management role?

51. Would you welcome an opportunity to undertake further training or professional development?

52. What topics/themes do you feel would be important in such professional development?

53. What, would you consider are the needs of the ISMT in your school?

54. In what way has the moratorium on promotion affected your school?

55. In what ways, do you think, could the ISM structure be improved, both in your school and in general?

Conclusion

56. Do you feel there are any aspects of ISM structure that have not been covered that you would like to mention?

Interview questions – Principal

Introduction

1. Can you tell me who the members of your school's ISMT are and what their main roles and responsibilities are?

2. Do you think that all the teaching staff is aware as to who the members of the ISMT are and what their main roles and responsibilities are?

3. What, do you think, is the purpose of ISM/leadership?

4. Can you give me a brief outline of your own roles and responsibilities?

Communication

5. How often does the ISMT meet and where?

6. How often does the ISMT communicate with other staff members? How does it communicate with them?

7. How would you describe the effectiveness of communication among the members of your ISMT?

8. How would you describe the effectiveness of communication between the ISMT and other staff members?

9. What helps or hinders communication throughout the school?

10. What helps or hinders communication among members of the ISMT?

11. Do you think staff members find it easy or difficult to voice concerns if they disagree with any decisions made by members of management?

12. Do you think that the ISMT welcomes input from other members of staff?

Roles and Responsibilities

13. Do you feel that the roles of the ISMT match the needs of your school?

14. Do the duties of the ISMT need to be reviewed?

15. Has there been a recent review of the posts of responsibilities in the past year/few years?

16. If so were all staff members involved in this review?

17. Who decides on whether there should be a review?

18. Do you feel that the weight of the posts is evenly distributed among post holders?

Collaboration

19. Does a culture of collaboration exist among the teaching staff in the school and the school community?

20. In what ways does the ISMT foster and develop this collaborative culture?

21. To what extent is the ISMT involved in whole-school leadership and management decision-making?

22. Does your school make any use of committees, planning groups? How?

Leadership and Management

23. In your role as principal, do you feel that the managerial, administrative and leadership aspects are equally distributed?

24. Where does your role lie in leading learning?

25. Have your leadership skills improved during your time as principal? If so, how?

26. Did you hold a position on an ISMT before becoming principal?

27. In what way, if any, did it help prepare you for principalship?

28. When you didn't hold a formal leadership position, in what ways, if any, did you lead in an informal way? (Were you given opportunities to lead in an informal capacity?)

29. Have the workings of the ISMT changed your views of school leadership?

30. What leadership/management roles and functions do teachers have in your school?

31. In what ways, if any, do you think a school can prepare for succession of leaders?

Delegation

32. What duties, if any, are delegated or devolved throughout the school?

33. Has the ISMT been successful in its use of delegation skills? If so can you give me an example?

34. When the principal is out of the school can others fill in to keep things running smoothly?

Curriculum

35. Does the ISMT share in curricular development and implementation? How? In what ways?

36. Does the ISMT share new ideas with staff members?

37. Is there a designated coordinator to lead and facilitate specific curricular areas?

38. What changes, if any, would you make to the curricular duties of the ISMT?

Pastoral

39. Does the ISMT take responsibility for pastoral duties within the school?

40. What changes if any would you make to the pastoral duties of the ISMT?

Instruction

41. What role does the ISMT play in instruction (for example teaching methods, teaching resources, teaching plans or policies and new approaches) in the school?

42. What factors help or hinder this work?

43. How important is leadership in this section of the post?

Staff Development/Need of ISMT

44. Are there any procedures in place in the school for the induction of new teachers?

45. Does the ISMT help in the induction of a new teacher? How?

46. Would you welcome an opportunity to undertake further training or professional development?

47. To what extent do you encourage professional development or training among the staff in your school?

48. What, would you consider, are the needs of the ISMT I your school?

49. Do you think the ISMT should have specific professional development to help them in their leadership/management role? Why/why not?

50. What topics/themes do you feel would be important in such professional development?

51. Considering your own school context, what would you say are your leadership challenges?

52. In what way has the moratorium on promotion affected your school?

53. In what ways, do you think, could the ISM structure be improved, both in your school and in general?

Conclusion

54. Do you feel there are any aspects of ISM structure that have not been covered that you would like to mention?

Appendix G

Main Themes, Subthemes and Number of References in Interviews

Main Themes, Subthemes and Number of References in Interviews

Main themes	Subthemes	Number of references
Roles and Responsibilities	Role definition and review Distribution and weight of posts Culture and context Effect of the moratorium ISMT & staff professional development	81 87 104 18 35
Collaboration and Communication	Collective creativity ISMT and collaboration Need for collaboration Shared personal practice Shared vision and values Supportive and shared leadership Supportive conditions and structures Effectiveness Help and hindrances Structures	58 135 71 70 60 106 112 75 59 75
Decision-making and Delegation	Consultation Devolution and delegation	34 52
Leadership	Distributed leadership ISMT and leadership Leadership challenges Leadership needs Leadership succession	121 117 23 38 15
Professional Needs	Communication and collaboration Cultural and contextual challenges Effect of the moratorium Professional development Time Roles (definition & review) Resources	101 133 22 50 44 103 7

Appendix H

Screen Shots Showing Analysis

Image 1 – Organisation of Data – Linking Diaries and Interviews

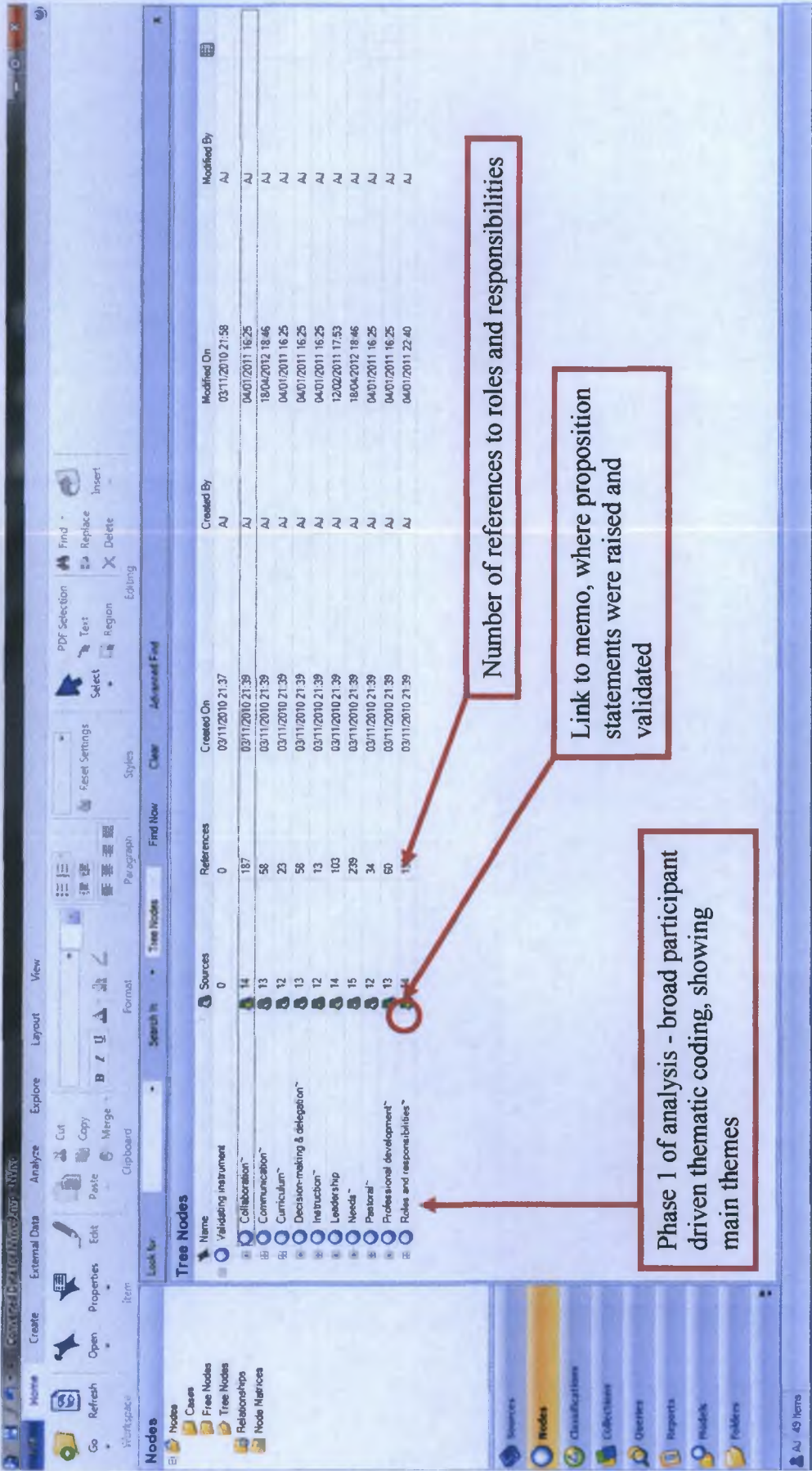Image 2 – Thematic Coding of the Node (theme) 'Communication' from Interviews

Image 3 – Validating Instrument – Phase 1 of Qualitative Analysis

Image 4 – Annotations made by Researcher during various Stages of Coding

Image 5 – Phase 3 – Coding to Identify Sub Categories

Image 6 – Coding Hierarchy of Validation Instrument

Image 7 – Coding Hierarchy of Validation Instrument (continued)

Image 8 – Raising and Validating Proposition Statements

Image 9 – Running Queries on Data

Image 1 – Organisation of Data – Linking Diaries and Interviews

Image 2 – Thematic Coding of the Node (theme) 'Communication' from Interviews

Image 3 – Validating Instrument – Phase 1 of Qualitative Analysis

Image 4 – Annotations made by Researcher during various Stages of Coding

Coding hierarchy showing
cross coding (phase 1 – 3 of analysis)
Phase 4 – Re-organising, merging, distilling and
restructuring existing nodes into major themes

Link to identity

Nodes/
'themes'

Image 5 – Phase 3 – Coding to Identify Sub Categories

Coding leading to tree of main themes and sub categories

Validation through analysis trail – broad coding, cross coding, sub categories and memos

Image 6 – Coding Hierarchy of Validation Instrument

Coding leading to tree of main themes and sub categories

Validation through analysis trail – Broad coding, cross coding, sub categories and memos

Image 7 – Coding Hierarchy of Validation Instrument (continued)

Memo based on data from interview with non-post holder in Redwood School

The researcher made notes on the data during and after coding and running queries. This is where proposition statements were raised and validated

21/11/2010 18:46

The non-post holder commented a number of times (both prompted and unprompted) or communication and collaboration in the school and where she feel her role lies (or does

I got a sense that, due to the size of the school and the fact that she doesn't have a form leadership role, she doesn't have much of a voice. She doesn't feel that the ISMT foste develops a collaborative culture in the school either.

She said

In what ways, if any, does the In School Management Team foster and develop this collaborative culture?

They don't. Well I don't think so. I mean we have meetings, the odd time, now at this time of year, they would pop in to our meetings and be like, oh we'll just make a list of what you need for next year and that kind of thing. But during the year we've very little contact with them, if at all, and that's during our meetings. Again, as I said, the only time I'd see them during the year is at staff meeting when they're telling their little bit like

Are you consulted on...

Image 8 – Raising and Validating Proposition Statements

Image 9 – Running Queries on Data

Appendix I

Themes from the Literature Review that Underpin this Study

The following figure illustrates the understanding of leadership practice that underpins this research, showing practice as being inextricably linked to context, action and behaviours of actors, interactions between actors and other influencing factors. This understanding of leadership practice strongly acknowledges the influence that both internal and external factors can have on practice, including individual values of actors and external pressures that have a bearing on schools. It highlights the importance of contextual factors and puts practice (including actions, interactions and behaviour) at the centre.

Appendix J

Case A: Analysis and Findings from Oakley School

Introduction to Oakley School

Oakley School is over 30 years in existence and is located in the suburbs of Dublin. It is situated on large grounds with big green areas around it. It is a large, co-educational school with 292 children in total (from Junior Infants up to 6th Class) in the school year 2009-2010, 25 teachers (nine post holders including the principal) and 10 Special Needs Assistants. The building appears to be in quite a segmented arrangement. It is split into three separate main blocks – junior, senior and administration, with two pre-fabricated buildings at the rear. The school and its environs are neat and tidy, with well-tended green spaces and flowers planted around the buildings. Children's framed artwork adorns the corridors and photos of projects and outings are on display in all buildings. The principal and teachers encourage the children to dress neatly and come to school in their correct uniform (this was evident in various comments made to children when the researcher was in the school). They are also encouraged to greet adults and children who they encounter with respect and courtesy, behaviour that is rewarded regularly by the principal.

Oakley School is the only school in the study that has DEIS (disadvantaged) status, with the socio-economic status of the families of the majority of the children being that of disadvantaged or working-class. The main catchment area(s) around the school are a mixture of middle-class privately owned estates and council houses. Most children attending the school come from the council estates and those from other estates attend their sister (non-disadvantaged) school in the parish. One third of the children are international, coming from homes where English is not their first language, and many live in rented accommodation nearby. There are also a number of children from the Travelling Community attending the school.

During the school year 2009-2010 the principal, who had an administrative position, was in her second year working in Oakley School and had slowly but steadily been introducing changes to various aspects of school-life (including their code of discipline, more regular meetings of the ISMT, improved internal communication, encouraging the involvement of parents, to name but a few). This was her first principalship, having taught in another school for a number of years before. The age/experience profile of the staff ranged from a group of teachers who newly qualified, to a sizeable group that had been working in the school for more than 15-20 years. The ISMT was made up solely of teachers from this latter age-bracket.

The large staffroom is divided by four circular tables. Teachers tend to sit in the same place every day and there is clear division between experienced teachers and NQTs, where their seating arrangements are concerned. A small number of teachers endeavor to sit in different places each day. While the atmosphere in the school in general is quite welcoming, the atmosphere in the staffroom is not entirely relaxed. A small number of teachers sat separately from all the other teachers and their body language seemed to suggest that others were not welcome to interact with them. Messages are communicated to and from staff on a whiteboard and through a cubby-hole system in the staffroom.

The principal and the majority of teachers welcomed this research being carried out in their school although a small minority of teachers expressed their opinion that they were not in favour of it being carried out and that they were not prepared to participate (reasons unknown).

Formal Leadership Practice in Oakley School

The first data collection method - the questionnaires - asked respondents about the roles and responsibilities held by members of the ISMT and sought their opinion towards the work of ISM post holders with the aim of getting initial insights into types of actions those in leadership positions may be involved in. With a response rate to the questionnaire of only 28% in Oakley School, however, it was not possible to establish any thorough perspective in the earlier stages towards formal leadership in Oakley School as it was in the other three schools. Very few comments were made in the open ended section of the questionnaire, so it was difficult for the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the respondents' attitudes towards leadership practice. Using the data that was obtained it was, however, possible to gather some indicators towards further exploration that would take place through the diaries and interviews.

Overall the questionnaires highlighted a generally positive attitude towards the work of most ISMT members, although it was clear that the work that was being referred to mainly involved task-based duties requiring a more administrative role than a leadership or management one. For example, 100% of respondents agreed that the ISMT took responsibility for curricular-based duties but did not take much responsibility in other areas such as staff development and management. The questionnaires also revealed the need for the duties of the ISMT to be reviewed as they were no longer perceived as matching the needs of the school. This was a common finding across the other schools.

The aim of the diaries was to continue to explore the actions (including roles and responsibilities), interactions and behaviours of the post holders as expressed in

their own words. Four post holders, including the principal agreed to keep diaries in Oakley School. The Deputy Principal regretted that she could not keep a diary as she was away from the school during that time. They met with the researcher before school started (although the principal was not present at this meeting). With the exception of the principal, each of the post holders had been working in the school for over 15 years and were long-standing members of the ISMT. The meeting held before the diary-keeping highlighted some interesting insights into attitudes towards leadership and management. More so than the post holders in the other three schools, the participants in Oakley School spent a considerable amount of time discussing their perceptions of their positions as post holders. The post holders present expressed the opinion that they did not consider themselves to be leaders in their school, and that they would never presume to have such a role. This was reflected in one of the personal reflections of the post holders who asserted:

> I am a post holder, not an assistant or deputy principal, therefore I would never presume that I have a leadership role. Regarding interactions, I would therefore never discuss any issue from a management point of view with a colleague. I would feel presumptuous if I were to do so. I see myself as a post holder and feel comfortable giving assistance and advice in that area. Any other area I might discuss would be as two equal colleagues - it would not be in my mind that I had any management role - nor do I feel I have. (Oak, D, PH1)

Unlike in the case of the other three schools, there was considerable hesitancy by the post holders to acknowledge any sort of leadership role that they may have. It was intended that this would be explored further during the interviews.

Of note, however, is that despite this hesitancy to affirm their leadership roles, each post holder (as per their diary) displayed leadership traits in their actions and interactions with others.

Figure 5 in the Analysis and Findings chapter presents the spectrum on which the researcher placed the role-type of the post holders. Many of the actions and personal traits included on the spectrum are based on a number of leadership practices and personal traits (as perceived by teachers in three secondary schools) as were highlighted by Humphreys (2010). It became clear from the data from the diaries from the four schools that there was significant variance in practices and personal traits of post holders, and that these featured along the spectrum ranging from those that involved/required leadership to those that did not. On the basis of this spectrum, the actions and interactions that were documented in the diaries of the post holders in Oakley School mainly fell into Group 2. At the very least, their actions and interactions showed that they were all taking responsibility for their assigned duties, that they played a supportive role for their colleagues and that others were somewhat dependent on their skills and knowledge. As well as these practices, a number of their actions, interactions and behaviours reflected leadership practices. For example, each of the post holders shared some tasks and decisions and collaborated with colleagues. They also displayed initiative-taking. Occasionally, teachers came to the post holders for advice and support, oftentimes regarding issues that did not necessarily pertain to the post holders' duties. Thus, of note in Oakley School was that while they had expressed in their diary reflections that they did not perceive themselves as a leader in their role as a post holder, they did in fact display leadership traits in their actions and interactions with others.

Each of the post holders communicated regularly with other members of staff and looked for their opinions. They also concerned themselves with looking for feedback from their colleagues. One post holder (PH1), who had organised a Maths Week (involving setting up activities for the classes, having a facilitator visit the school to work with the teachers, organising whole-school planning and timetabling), sought the opinions and advice of her colleagues before and after the event. Prior to the event she wrote in her diary, "Discussed suitability of Maths Week activities with colleagues and also the pros and cons of having dedicated weeks". On the last day of Maths Week she wrote, "Discussed Maths Week and the workshops with my colleagues to get their reactions to both".

Another post holder (PH2), who also held the belief that she did not have a leadership role in the school, displayed a number of leadership behaviours in her actions and interactions, including exercising authority, collaborating, making decisions, sharing decision-making, initiative-taking and communicating. It was clear that her colleagues very much depended on her knowledge and skills that related to her post (Special Education and Assessment). Not only did her colleagues come to her for advice and guidance, she also was concerned with capacity-building among the staff. She did so directly by enabling and supporting teachers in their work, and also by role-modelling practices and behaviours herself. She entered into her diary, "Approached by teacher concerning a child's behaviour interfering with his and other children's learning" (Oak, D, PH2). Later that day she wrote, "I observed the child in question and wrote notes to discuss with the teacher and SNA later". She later met with the teacher and SNA, gave advice and suggested ways of working around the disruptive behaviour. She also recommended keeping notes, as she had done, so as to keep a record of their observations. She predicted that the

child in question would later be referred for assessment. Furthermore, in relation to role-modelling, she also believed that, "ISMT members should lead by example regarding staff punctuality, behaviour management and so on".

The third post holder (PH3), writing in the reflection section of her diary, communicated her very definite view of what leadership involves, highlighting in particular the importance of communication and collaboration. She asserted:

> Leadership involves great communication and relationships. The role of the leader is not to be an engineer of change or to provide answers but to facilitate collaborative processes that bring many ideas together and develop responses. A facilitative form of leadership is needed to build trust. Leaders set the tone. They facilitate or block change. (Oak, D, PH3)

Of note is the fact that she did not believe that this type of leadership was being practised in her school, nor, for that matter, in primary education in general. Hence, she felt that her diary would not prove helpful in a study exploring educational leadership. She concluded that, "This facilitative type of leadership is not the case at present in this school and in the Primary Structure/System in Education. Thus, my Leadership Diary is of little use!" (Oak, D, PH3)

This post holder too displayed a number of leadership qualities through her actions and interactions. Within the space of one week, she was involved in several meetings with a number of different members of staff, including teachers, the principal and deputy principal, parents, the secretary and a number of outside agencies. She was involved in policy review, communicated regularly with her colleagues and shared decision-making. Others were clearly dependent on her, as she too was approached for advice, support and guidance and in responding to her

colleagues, she attempted to build capacity. Her view of leadership meant that she did not consider herself a leader in her school, despite her formal leadership position and the extent of her actual leadership practice as was recorded in her diary.

Thus, it was clear to the researcher that leadership did not feature in the perceptions of the post holders where their own practices were concerned. It was also clear that in Oakley School in particular, they asserted that they did not believe that their formal positions brought with them leadership responsibility. Of note from the diaries was that none of the post holders delegated tasks to others, nor did they practise distributed leadership. While their practice involved working with others and working individually, delegation and distribution were not at all evident. Evidence from the interviews reinforced this finding. The evidence does suggest, however, that this may have also been due to the fact that there was a relatively new principal in the school and that the well-established ISMT members wanted to be seen to be doing *their* duties, while leaving leadership to the new principal. One of the post holders alluded to this when she commented, "She (the principal) has different ways of doing things which we're all getting used to. I suppose she just has a different managerial style to the last principal" (Oak, Int, PH2).

The interviews highlighted a number of findings that centre on the roles and responsibilities that both formal and informal leaders played in the schools. Formal leadership roles and responsibilities were focused on initially and then the interviews asked the respondents to consider the informal leadership roles and responsibilities that teachers held. Interviewing post holders and principals helped to further explore findings that had emerged from the diaries in relation to their own role and to gain understanding of their perception of their own leadership practice. The interview

with the non-post holder allowed for exploration of attitudes towards formal leadership structures from the perspective of those who did not hold formal leadership positions. Overall, interviewing the three provided varying perspectives on formal leadership practice within the school's own context.

In general there were positive attitudes towards the work of post holders, although as had been previously highlighted in the questionnaires, there were issues around the way in which the roles and responsibilities did not always match the needs of the school. All three interviewees expressed the opinion that the work of the ISMT needed to be reviewed, as certain "assigned duties" had become "stale" (Oak, Int, NPH). The general purpose of ISM/leadership, according to those interviewed in Oakley School and the other three schools, was to have a team that would support the principal and would unite, coordinate, motivate and lead the rest of the staff behind a common vision. Evidence from the interviews in particular, however, highlighted that this was not a reality in all schools.

The Literature Review highlights the opinion that leadership practice takes place in the interactions of people, their actions and their situations, thereby identifying the crucial importance of considering individual school context when examining leadership practice (Gronn, 2003, Spillane & Orlina, 2005). Evidence from the interview with the post holder and principal in particular gave insight into the context in which those in formal positions were now working. The moratorium on promotion had, according to the principal, affected the school, in that one permanent post and two "acting-up" posts had been lost over the last two years. She believed that this has impacted negatively on organisation and planning within the school and as a result they had to, "shelve certain areas of development or concern"

(Oak, Int, P). She commented that it had also added an extra workload to her own schedule. In order to "fill the gap" that the moratorium has left, the school had to reassess the school's own needs and had to prioritise areas to be covered by the ISMT. She commented that "This prioritisation has meant that we cannot engage in all the activities we would wish to this year" (Oak, Int, P).

Also relating to the area of roles of those in formal leadership positions was the issue of seniority. There was evidence in Oakley School that historically, formal positions were given on the basis of seniority (sometimes with a sense of entitlement on the part of the post holder) and that this was a contentious issue for some teachers who did not hold a post. The non post holder believed it to be unfair, particularly when the post holders' duties no longer matched the needs of the school. Thus, there was a call for greater definition and clarification of post holders' roles in all schools, and also clarification in relation to the amount of time that post holders should spend on their duties.

It became clear from the interviews that there were also contentious issues around the work of certain post holders. A number of references were made to issues around seniority. The three participants highlighted a definite hierarchy, or "chain of command" (Oak, Int, PH) that existed in the school, which was established over a relatively long period of time and was based on the way in which teachers became post holders in line with seniority. The post holder in Oakley school regularly referred to the central role that the principal played in leading the school, and once again stated on a number of occasions that she did not see herself as a leader in the school. She, in particular, also referred to a very definite hierarchy that existed and expressed that this worked well. She asserted, "There's a chain of command, and

that's the way it should be. So no, I wouldn't see myself as a leader, because I think that if I were a leader I'd be the principal" (Oak, Int, PH). Interestingly, evidence from the principal's interview highlighted that while the post holder had not considered herself to have a leadership role, the principal was of the complete opposite opinion to her, asserting that this particular post holder showed excellent leadership skills and that her role was a huge asset to the school.

While in general the three interviewees spoke positively about the work of the ISMT, it became clear that there were certain members of the team who were not carrying out their duties adequately and that there was a lack of role definition in relation to some ISMT members. These opinions were in line with the evidence from the questionnaire data. There were also issues around the weighting of posts, with the interviewees believing that the weight of some posts was heavier for some than others. The non-post holder commented that the work of some ISMT members was "ideal for past times but not now that the school has changed. The work that some of them do is no longer in touch with where we're at" (Oak, Int, NPH). Speaking about unfair weight distribution of their work, she asserted:

I think that some post holders can get away with more ... that there are certain posts that you don't have to be seen to do a whole lot but you're still being paid for it. That's a bit unfair, particularly seeing as there are some post holders who are very hard working. (Oak, Int, NPH)

Evidence suggests that huge variation in the practice of post holders existed in this school - in the extent to which some did or did not carry out their roles and responsibilities and the positive or negative attitudes held by them towards their posts. This variation was most prominent in Oakley School. The principal spoke of

the unwillingness of certain post holders to attend meetings and their lack of communication with others. When asked if the ISMT communicate with other staff members and how they communicate, the principal asserted that it depended on which member of ISM one was talking about. While some communicated on a daily basis, others did so very rarely. She remarked that she could not stress enough the difference that existed among post holders in relation to the roles, responsibilities, actions and attitudes of those who held posts in the school. Also very apparent from the interviews in Oakley School was that leadership practice by those holding formal positions was almost always limited to the principal and a small number of the post holders, while other post holders were barely carrying out their assigned duties (of their post), let alone taking on any leadership role.

Informal Leadership Practice in Oakley School

It was only through the interviews that a clear picture emerged as to the leadership practice of those who did not hold formal positions in the school. The interviews sought to ascertain the extent to which teachers who did not have a formal position acted in a leadership capacity in their schools and to explore whether they ever identified themselves as leaders. The interviews also sought to ascertain the extent to which opportunities were afforded to them to lead. The evidence suggests that certain non-post holders did occasionally act in a leadership capacity, although this was done generally in response to an invitation to do so rather than on their own initiative.

The non-post holder who was interviewed in Oakley School felt that she had been afforded the opportunity to lead informally. When asked if she had taken the initiative to do so or if the opportunity was given to her by someone, she commented

that while she would feel comfortable going to the principal with an offer to take on and lead something, she said that it was generally the principal who approached and encouraged her (and her colleagues) to take on a leadership role. She considered herself to have acted as a leader when mentoring NQTs and also when taking the school choir. When asked what type of leadership practice this involved she mentioned the way in which she had supported others, taken the initiative and responsibility for the work in hand and the way in which she had collaborated and made decisions with others. She used terms such as "steering", "leading" and "spearheading" to describe this work (Oak, Int, NPH). This perceived leadership role was in stark contrast to the lack of leadership role that the post holders had expressed.

Evidence of note from this non-post holder's interview regarding her own leadership practice was a view that was held (to varying degrees) by the non-post holders interviewed in other schools. The evidence suggests that despite an eagerness to take on a leadership role, the non-post holder often felt that she should be careful not to be seen to be "stepping on toes" of the post holders or, in other words, taking on a role that belonged to somebody else (Oak, Int, NPH). It would appear that the context of the school had quite a bearing on creating this attitude. In Oakley School there seemed to have been a legacy that had been built up over a number of years that reinforced a mentality whereby one knew his/her place and that "doing someone else's work" was seen as "stepping out of your place" (Oak, Int, NPH). Clearly this culture had been sending messages to those who did not hold a formal post that they were not to interfere. It could be surmised, that it was for this reason that informal leadership practice may have been in response to the go-ahead or invitation from the principal rather than risking taking the initiative and potentially being seen as

interfering. The culture in Oakley was, however, slowly starting to change in this regard. The principal remarked that the general atmosphere in the school was "good, warm and welcoming", although "some traditions are hard to break or change" and that these were embedded in the school's culture (Oak, Int, P). She commented that the existing culture could, however, sometimes still be viewed as "difficult, confrontational and judgemental". She acknowledged that the culture was slowly starting to change as new members of staff were employed.

The evidence suggests that the practice of distributed leadership in Oakley School was not the norm. The main reason for this, according to the principal, was mainly due to the challenging and resistive behaviour of certain post holders as was referred to above. She felt strongly that leadership could only be distributed to informal leaders successfully within the context of a collaborative and cooperative culture. She also contended that such practice also depended on the willingness of teachers to respond to opportunities to lead. As was mentioned above, the school was slowly moving in this direction but that at the time of interview, the degree of distributed leadership in Oakley School was minimal.

Despite this, evidence in support of distributing leadership to informal leaders was very strong from the point of view of the principal in this school. She said that she was very much in favour of encouraging informal leadership practice. She referred to the lack of time that she had to be engaged in learning-centered leadership, remarking that this was both a concern and regret of hers. She argued that administration and management consumed most of her time. Furthermore, the principal was of the opinion that informal leadership could and should play an important part of future school improvement. She asserted that this was a necessity

for her, as she could not depend on the ISMT alone. She therefore looked towards other staff members for support in her own leadership and also to take on leadership roles of their own. The evidence suggests, however, that despite the willingness and perceived need to distribute leadership to informal and formal leaders, this was not yet happening in practice in this school.

Principal's Leadership Practice in Oakley School

This section presents findings on the leadership practice of the principal in Oakley School. Although the principal holds a formal leadership position it is considered separately (in each of the case Appendices J-M) and in the Conclusions chapter) to the section on Formal Leadership Practice due to the sizeable amount of data that was gathered that pertains to the unique role of the principal and also due to the fact that one of the main findings of this research is that, unlike the ISMT, the principal plays a central role in most aspects of school leadership, including its distribution. Evidence from both the diaries and the interviews in Oakley School reinforce this finding. The principal's diary documented page after page of actions and interactions that involved leadership skills and qualities. She considered that much of her work called on her to act as a leader and she reflected on this to a great extent in their diary. Her practice was very much reflective of the actions and traits outlined in Group 3 on the spectrum in Figure 5 in the Analysis and Findings chapter, as she was involved in all types of action, interaction and behaviours, from distributing leadership to acting as a role-model.

Her diary also highlighted that, unlike the members of the ISMT, she had a strong sense of herself as a leader and that she was confident in labelling much of what she did as "leadership practice". Exploration of the interactions between the

principal and others provided clear evidence of her leadership practice. Within the space of one week, her actions and interactions displayed practice involving decisiveness, the ability to support others (with her knowledge, skills and advice), the ability to collaborate but also exercise authority depending on the situation and also behaviours such as role-modeling, capacity-building and regular initiative-taking. Thus she clearly influenced others, had a vision for school improvement and her intention was to impact upon the work of others.

Furthermore, her diary reflected a leader who displayed acute awareness of her school's context and the situation at hand. For example, while she did not show hesitancy towards delegation and the practice of leadership distribution, she did admit that she only engaged in this practice occasionally for fear that she would add too much onto the workload of others. She also commented that she tended to "test the water" to see if the delegated task/role was welcome from the recipient. She wrote in her diary, "Met with 6 members of the Student Council and one SNA to discuss purchase of 'wet day' games used by money raised by the Student Council in a fundraiser. Left them to write up a list and decide on purchase, knowing that they were more than happy to do so" (Oak, D, P). She also distributed leadership to her colleagues. She recorded a conversation that she had with one of the teachers of infants regarding a new reading programme, "Agreed we would investigate piloting and implementing the programme. She had already received training. She agreed to lead it among the other infant teachers" (Oak, D, P).

In her personal reflection, the principal gave insight into her role and how demanding it could be, stating, "There always seems to be a queue outside my door with people seeking answers, direction, approval, help, funding etc. Some days I

actually don't make it as far as my office door until everyone has gone to class".

Lack of time was a major issue for her and it was clear that she was always on the

go. She said of time constraints and her leadership practice:

> I could have gone on here for more and more pages. It is literally a different
>
> issue every 5 minutes, with some leadership element attached … from
>
> sympathising with a staff member with a medical problem to dealing with a
>
> staff member's disciplinary issue, to the all-important leading learning which
>
> so often gets thrown to the bottom of the list as other issues are dealt with.
>
> (Oak, D, P)

Findings from her interview reinforced her desire to be involved in leading learning

to a greater extent and that the administrative aspect of their role was particularly

cumbersome and time-consuming. However, although she was under considerable

pressure it was clear that she rarely looked to the ISMT for support or help, with the

exception of the deputy principal (DP). In Oakley School, the principal seemed to be

acting as a heroic leader, even though it became apparent later (during the interview)

that it was not her wish that she had to act as such. She later expressed her feeling

that change to more distributed ways of working and leading would take time but

that it was very much her vision for the school.

The principal expressed her wish that the ISMT practice leadership more. Her

vision for ISM/leadership clearly centered around a team that would unite,

coordinate and motivate the rest of the staff, a team that would take responsibility for

core areas of the curriculum, implementing the plans and the vision for the school,

and also that would play a supporting role for the principal too. She felt, however,

that this was not a reality in the school, and that she had no choice but to do most of

this work herself, with the exception of being able to depend upon the DP and a few post holders. Of note in Oakley School was the importance that the principal placed on the role of the DP. More so than with post holders, she tended to look to the DP for support and guidance and she spoke highly of the significant role that the DP played in supporting her. She had regular interactions with the DP, during which she shared decision-making, sought and gave advice, expressed concerns and delegated certain tasks. It was clear from her interview that this role clearly had expectations of leadership attached to it, more so than the position of a post holder.

In Oakley School, the central role that the principal played in leading the school was referred to regularly in the interviews, particularly by the post holder. Once again she said that she was content with the hierarchical structure that existed in the school where the principal was "at the top". She was very strong in her opinion that such a structure is "the way it should be". When asked about her own role as a leader in the interview, she again stated said that she did not believe that she was a leader, just as she had written in her diary reflection. She said of the principal:

> I very much see the principal as the one with ultimate authority, and I think that other people still see the principal as having ultimate authority. I think that those who don't have posts wouldn't consider members of the ISMT to have authority. I feel that because of the way the school is set up and because of the structure of the ISMT and how it came about, because there were not any clearly defined roles or any training, or even a sort of acknowledgement as post holders being leaders. (Oak, Int, PH)

Overall, the leadership practice of the principal was clearly impacting upon this school, particularly in endeavouring to bring about a cultural shift towards more

collaborative work practices. Her vision, flexibility and also her knowledge as to where she could find support for her leadership were core features of her leadership practice.

Structures and Supports around Leadership Practice in Oakley School

The following section briefly examines structures and supports around practice in Oakley School, examining the ways in which leaders and followers communicated and collaborated and the ways in which decisions were made and roles and responsibilities were delegated. In other words, it explores the context of practice in Oakley School.

Evidence from all three data sources suggests that a small degree of collaboration did exist but that some teachers were not used to working in that way. The post holder was the most positive in relation to collaborative practice, and spoke about the way in which some teachers worked together enthusiastically. She did however, highlight that this was only the case among some members of staff. It was the principal who pointed out that some members of staff did not collaborate at all and that they resisted this way of working "as much as they can" (Oak, Int, P). Collaborative ways of working were encouraged by the principal in particular, with the non-post holder saying that it was the principal rather than the ISMT who fostered and developed a collaborative culture. She commented that, "I don't think that the ISMT really encourages a collaborative approach. It was the principal who set up planning meetings and initiated a more collaborative approach, but the team as a whole didn't" (Oak, Int, NHP). It is clear that the principal had not wanted to force collaboration, that she had not wanted what Hargreaves (1994) terms contrived collegiality. Rather, she recognised those whom she could approach and who could

genuinely collaborate together. At the same time, she gave considerable thought as to how to include those who had shown reluctance, such as regular planning meetings where everyone was expected to get involved. She remarked that such meetings were "a less intimidating way of bringing people who don't necessarily want to be brought in" (Oak, Int, P).

Regarding communication both among the members of the ISMT and between the ISMT and other teachers, there was almost unanimous agreement in the questionnaires and interviews that it was improving. This was in spite of the fact that the principal had expressed her opinion that the layout of the school building could make communication very difficult and was "not conducive to physically unifying the staff as a team" (Oak, Int, P). Clearly communication was an area that was being worked on. Once again, however, it was clear from the interview held with the principal that what hindered communication the most were "the confrontational and difficult personalities of certain teachers" (Oak, Int, P). When asked to elaborate, she said that the effectiveness or not of communication depended on the person:

> Again it's down to the personality of the person, some of them don't communicate, it's just personalities, it's engrained, I suppose, the way they have been in the school, for many years way before I came. They don't communicate unless they absolutely have to. And there would be no interaction even around their posts or the bare minimum. Whereas with the other members who are approachable and willing to work with everybody, it's fine, they communicate very well with the rest of the staff. (Oak, Int, P)

The principal explained that this lack of communication and collaboration also existed between members of the ISMT due to certain individual's determined

effort to resist working in this way. While speaking about communication and collaboration, she highlighted the challenge that some post holders had presented:

> In between the In School Management Team there is reluctance amongst a couple to interact at all with the rest. They will resist being asked to do anything or any interaction at all around anything in the school basically. They're very difficult to move forward … And the other middle management members would know not to ask because they won't be told or not to try to interact because they'll get cut short. (Oak, Int, P)

She said that there were some members of staff who would be afraid to approach certain members of the ISMT, that they would avoid them. She recognised that this reticence was holding some teachers back from giving their opinions or asking questions at staff meetings. Hence, she had devised a questionnaire that would be sent around to all teachers before the meetings so that they could bring any issues that they had anonymously. She remarked, "It's my way of getting a voice for the people who are afraid to speak up at staff meetings and would like to say something but know that they will either be laughed at or knocked back" (Oak, Int, P). It is clear that the principal had been endeavouring to improve communication and collaboration despite the "challenging culture" that existed but was determined to change this. All three interviewees identified the ability to communicate and collaborate as hugely important leadership skills for all teachers, and acknowledged that improvement in these areas was needed badly in this school.

Thus in Oakley School, the evidence suggests that the legacy of a rather non-collaborative culture was a strong factor that impeded collaborative work practice and by association, according to the principal, both formal and informal leadership

practice. Certain individuals had a huge bearing on the culture in the way they

resisted collaboration. It is clear that a considerable amount of tension existed among

the staff and that certain "personalities" had created a tense environment which, the

principal asserted, was not conducive to collaboration and trust (Oak, Int, P). She

again made reference to certain individuals who created considerable cultural

challenges for the school. Dealing with "these certain difficult personalities" was,

she believed, her biggest challenge. During the interview she admitted that she was

"choosing her words carefully" and "being diplomatic" when expressing her

thoughts on them. The interviews with the post holder and non-post holder did not

make as much reference to these challenges, but certain comments were made that

highlighted them, for example remarking that working collaboratively very much

depended on "the personality" (Oak, Int, NPH).

Both the principals and post holders identified that delegation was a vital part

of distributed leadership, so that teachers could be afforded the chance to try to do

things and learn by their mistakes or by their successes. As a review of the literature

points out, various educational policies and documents (DES, 2000, 2006, 2010,

2011a, 2011b; INTO, 2000) call for joint decision-making and delegation in schools

as part of the whole-school approach that is being advocated. It also highlights the

fact that leadership within the context of taking a whole-school approach requires a

distribution of roles, responsibilities and decision-making opportunities (LDS, 2007).

As well as examining the nature of communication and collaboration in the

interactions of the teachers, the diaries and interviews in particular also explored the

role that the teachers had in making decisions and delegation. The interviewees were

asked to describe how decisions are made in their schools, as well as who makes the

majority of the more important decisions. Furthermore, they were asked to describe

the nature and extent of delegation - what is delegated, by whom and to whom. Both delegation and decision-making - within the context of leadership practice - arose as themes to be explored from the literature review, and also from earlier findings relating to influence that had emerged from the analysis of previous data.

In Oakley School it became clear that there was considerable reticence on the part of the ISMT to delegate any duties or responsibilities to either other ISMT members or non-members, and it appeared that only the principal had delegated to certain people who communicated an interest in doing something. As was mentioned earlier, even the principal had used delegation carefully and did not do so very often. She recognised in her interview, however, that delegation was vital for distributed leadership - "affording people the chance to take on something and to learn by their mistakes or by their successes" (Oak, Int, P). She argued that if there was no delegation, others could not take on responsibility, which was central to honing leadership skills. She also asserted that teachers could only develop their leadership role if given the chance to take on responsibility and to make decisions. Her view was that without giving opportunities to lead, delegate, make decisions and so on, a school was not fostering the development of leaders. In saying that, she commented that, "Delegation definitely does not happen in this school by others, although I know who I can delegate to" (Oak, Int, P).

Certain comments made by all three interviewees highlighted the hesitancy on the part of the ISMT to delegate, fearing that, "non-post holders may feel that the post holders were not doing the job that they were being paid extra for" (Oak, Int, PH). There may also have been reluctance on the part of non-post holders to input their ideas and opinions. The principal highlighted this by saying, "I have seen things

snatched out of people's hands because they tried to help somebody doing something to do with their post" (Oak, Int, P). She said that at the same time other post holders would be "absolutely thrilled" and would welcome the input of others. Another comment made by the principal touched on the way in which certain post holders actively resisted working with others, even when those teachers were volunteering to go on committees and work to move forward. She spoke of one individual:

> He doesn't want to work with a group, we have volunteers to go on a committee to work with him and to do a lot of work for the good of the school but he isn't interested, couldn't be bothered with it, likes to work on his own. The problem is that the work then isn't done and others become disillusioned. (Oak, Int, P)

Regarding decision-making, it became very apparent that the principal had been the ultimate decision-maker and that others had shown a reluctance and lack of confidence towards doing so. The principal identified herself as the one to have the last say, but that she tried not to do so without consulting with others. As with the delegation of tasks and responsibilities, she remarked that she would like to be able to "hand some decisions over more" but that such distribution of leadership had not been possible as "the culture of the school has not allowed for that yet" (Oak, Int, P).

Professional Needs around Leadership Practice in Oakley School

The questionnaires and the interviews asked participants questions relating to leadership practice and how it might be improved in their school. All interviewees identified various professional needs particular to their school and acknowledged that meeting these needs would certainly help towards addressing some of their

leadership challenges and towards moving leadership practice towards more distributed and collaborative ways of working.

Regarding those in formal leadership positions, participants (the interviewees in particular) pointed to the acute need for clarification of roles and role definition. The post holder said that it would be very helpful if members of the ISMT could have a clear outline as to what was expected of ISMTs in general and what was expected of them in their school, echoing the principal's opinion relating to an unequal distribution of workload that existed in the school. She also pointed to the importance of the willingness of informal leaders to step up, share work and "not let the children down" and mentioned that this was vital considering the effect that the moratorium had had on posts (Oak, Int, NPH1). The principal was strongly of the opinion that definition of the role of the ISMT from the DES was a very real need, not only for leadership in Oakley School but for all schools. She asserted, "They need to tell schools - this is the role, this is what is expected of a formal leader ... to give clarification as to what their duties and responsibilities are, and the time that they should spend on them" (Oak, Int, P). She felt that more definition from the DES would give her leverage in making changes to the ISMT - that most members would be more likely to adhere to rules coming from "on high".

As with the need for clarification from the DES regarding role definition of the ISMT, the principal identified a similar need for clarification on the time that formal leaders should be spending in carrying out their roles. She mentioned that if this clarification came in the form of a DES directive, it would help her to insist on the time being spent on duties. While she recognised that leadership practice and roles of responsibility are not the same thing, she felt that the carrying out of duties

was one channel through which ISM members could act in a leadership capacity and that in some cases more time was needed to do so. The moratorium on promotion had affected this school. Thus there was a need to distribute the work of previous post holders which could be a challenging thing to do. It was clear that more distributed ways of working and leading were needed in order to respond to the challenges facing the schools.

In Oakley School a change in culture was also an acute need. Old and inhibiting opinions and negative attitudes needed to be challenged if changes were to be brought and so that all members of staff could feel welcome to get involved, to take the initiative and to lead if desired. The fact that monitoring challenging behaviour among staff was regarded by the principal as her main leadership challenge highlights the difficult context in which the staff had been working. The principal considered that five out of the 25 teachers created this incredibly tense working environment. Despite this, however, she strongly believed that there was a team behind her. Once again she linked this problem to issues surrounding original promotion based on seniority. She remarked:

> It was expected that you would get the rise in salary and you would get the post. That doesn't create for a dynamic team at all. So there's still that attitude around it and the culture, some people who have graduated up into those positions, there's a sense of entitlement. So to actually get them to move and do something for the money that they would view is actually their entitlement because of seniority is very difficult. And that's where the personalities here would be complicated. (Oak, Int, P)

Thus, there was a strong need for change in this school, and all interviewees were aware of this. The principal was also aware, however, that the pace of change would be slow. She identified that another need of the school was that distributed leadership become part of practice, and that negative and limiting opinions such as "not getting involved so as not to step on toes" had to be challenged, so that all members of staff would feel welcome to take the initiative and to lead.

The willingness of informal leaders to step up and share work was seen as vital. With this increasing dependency on the willingness of both formal and informal leaders to get more involved, the interviewees highlighted the need that existed for both formal and informal leaders to have professional development to help them in their leadership roles. The perceived need for professional development for leadership and management had also been very evident from the data from the questionnaires. Skills such as communicating with others, conflict resolution, time-management, organisation, delegation, decision-making and teamwork were all identified as important skills to be learned and developed. Generally it was the principal who encouraged professional development in the schools. In the questionnaires, comments were made identifying the need for professional development for ISM members in particular. One of the respondents (a post holder) remarked that "More support and development is needed as professionals to aid with management skills" (Oak, Qu, PH3). There was 100% agreement that the ISMT should have specific professional development to assist them in their leadership role. This belief was strongly reinforced by the three interviewees. The principal clearly believed that it was the most important need where leadership in the school was concerned and she spoke about it at length. The non-post holder also identified the need for professional development and acknowledged the principal's role in

encouraging this. She commented that the ISMT needed to learn how to collaborate with each other, as well as other skills for leading and managing. The post holder also spent considerable time talking about the need for CPD, and gave an insight into previous work practices, saying "Well yes, I think that we could definitely do with professional development. Up to recently, teachers were often just expected to work in their own space, in their own class. They really have not had the opportunity or have not enjoyed, maybe, working closely with other teachers" (Oak, Int, PH).

The rather large size of the Oakley School brought with it its own challenges, including the negative effect that it could have on communication and collaboration. Furthermore, the layout and temporary nature of school buildings was identified by the interviewees in all four schools as a huge factor that could hinder communication. The principal in Oakley School in particular recognised the "rather serious" lack of communication and cooperation that had existed among some staff members and said that she had tried to model positive communication herself. She commented:

> I would make a point of modeling how I think everyone should interact with each other. I might have a teacher shouting in my face today about whatever, but tomorrow morning I'll still come in with a smile and say 'how are you?', it's just like with the children, we wipe the slate clean and we start anew the next day. I try to make sure that good communication is ongoing. (Oak, Int, P)

All three interviewees identified better communication as a professional need with the post holder mentioning that some staff members were not used to working collaboratively and communicating with others and reaffirmed her opinion that the

ISMT in particular needed professional development to improve communication skills.

Appendix K

Case B: Analysis and Findings from Redwood School

Introduction to Redwood School

Redwood School is located within a housing estate in the suburbs of Dublin. The main building (1970s style) has 16 classrooms within and rooms for administrative purposes. 10 classes and 12 learning support classes are located in prefabricated buildings. Consequently, there is very little playground area. A new school, which is badly needed due to the temporary layout of the majority of classrooms, is to be built in 2013.

The school is a very large co-educational Junior School (from Junior Infants up to 2nd Class). In the school year 2009-2010 there were 697 children in total enrolled, 40 teachers (including an administrative deputy principal and 20 other post holders, including the principal) and 19 Special Needs Assistants. The socio-economic status of the families of the majority of children in the school is that of middle class. There are some children in rented accommodation and there are two halting sites for members of the Travelling Community within the area. The catchment area is made up mainly of middle-class estates with an approximate population of 15,000.

In the school year 2009-2010, the principal had been in his position for a number of years and clearly prided himself on the good reputation that the school has for quality education. He regularly acknowledged the importance of nurturing the school community within the wider community. As in Oakley School, the age/experience profile of the teachers was very mixed, ranging from a number of NQTs to teachers who had been working in Redwood for more than 15-20 years. In fact, the profile questions in the questionnaire highlighted a very considerable gap in numbers of years teaching among the respondents, with 50% teaching ten years or

less and 50% teaching for over 20 years or more. No respondent fell into the middle categories of 6-10 years and 11-15 year's teaching experience. The ISMT was well established, with 62% being members of the team for over 6 years.

Despite the somewhat sprawling and segmented nature of the school building, the general feeling one gets is that of a welcoming environment. The culture of the school seems to be busy and happy. As in Oakley School, children's projects, artwork and photos are displayed around the corridors and children are encouraged to be mannerly and courteous. Space is very limited and they make the most of a small amount of free space for their library and computer room. It is clear that the lack of space puts pressure on the school and the new building is eagerly awaited.

The staffroom is small considering the large number of staff and space for gathering and communicating as a staff is clearly tight. The atmosphere is relaxed and comfortable, with teachers appearing to blend well together. The teachers seemed to welcome this research being carried out in their school and were also encouraged to do so by the principal.

Formal Leadership Practice in Redwood School

Having gathered a considerable amount of data in Redwood School, a clear picture of the practice of those in formal positions emerged. Findings included issues surrounding the need for review of posts and more even weight distribution, teachers having posts based on seniority, the lack of distributed leadership practice. Other findings included hugely varying attitudes towards leadership practice between post holders, the principal and non-post holders and the degree to which some post holders behaved as leaders and others did not. There were also findings relating to a

perceived power split between those who held more senior formal leadership positions and those who were Special Duties post holders. Negativity towards the clearly hierarchical structure that existed in the school among the non-post holders was also an issue that arose. This section presents these findings in more detail.

During the school year 2009-2010, the number of teachers holding a formal leadership position in Redwood School amounted to half of the staff. The principal pointed out that there were 20 members altogether on the ISMT, including six assistant principals, and this size enabled the ISMT to consist of a special duties post holder for each subject (along with a few other duties) and for two ICT coordinators, while senior management held "more administrative-type posts". These administrative posts included responsibility for areas such as enrolments, parental involvement, children with special educational needs and record-keeping. The school also had an administrative DP for a number of years. Several issues were highlighted by the non-post holders in particular in relation to the practice of those in formal leadership positions, both through the questionnaires and the interview, issues that were not highlighted by any post holders or the principal.

In Redwood School, the questionnaire was distributed to 40 teachers (including the principal). A total of 24 questionnaires were returned, representing a 60% response rate. A fairly equal number of respondents were and were not members of the ISMT (13 respondents were ISMT members and 11 were not) and therefore it was possible to obtain a rather balanced perspective on formal leadership practice. Almost all respondents knew who the members of the ISMT were and what the purpose of ISM is, although 20% were either unsure or did not know what the duties held by the ISMT were. Overall, there is no doubt that the majority of

respondents were satisfied with the work of the ISMT, with strong agreement that the work they did was important and beneficial to the school. This overall satisfaction was clear both from the response to the attitudinal statements and other general comments that were made in response to the open ended question.

A number of respondents also commended the hard work of the ISMT, using phrases such as "work to capacity", "try their best to cater for the needs of our school, given its size", and "work is on-going behind the scenes". In general there was a belief that the ISMT was an essential part of the school, particularly due to the way in which the post holders "alleviate time pressure", "contribute to the flow of ideas" and "enable the smooth running of the school". At this point the researcher questioned the extent to which this work had a leadership dimension to it and planned to explore this further through the diaries and the interviews. Despite the feeling that the work of the ISMT was beneficial to the school, negativity surrounded certain aspects of it. 63% of respondents believed that the assigned duties of the ISMT were in need of review, and comments included in the open ended section also highlighted a perceived unfair distribution of weight where duties of ISMT members were concerned. One post holder stated:

> The ISMT works very effectively in our school. However, I believe that duties held by individual members need to be reviewed as I feel that the workload in some areas is not fairly divided amongst individuals, with some posts being more heavily loaded than others. (Red, Qu, NPH)

Evidence from the three interviews in Redwood School highlighted variance in attitudes that was sometimes considerable in relation to various aspects of practice. This was very much the case with attitudes held towards the practice of

ISMT members. For example, there were clearly differing views regarding the aforementioned need for the work of post holders to be reviewed and more evenly weighted. While the post holder and principal believed that the posts matched the needs of the school, and that they were "constantly trying to tailor them so that they would" (Red, Int, PH1), the non-post holder asserted the opposite, commenting, "I think there is definitely a need for change. I think we're maybe stuck in a rut in this school" (Red, Int, NPH1). When asked to elaborate, she asserted, "I think that certain posts definitely need review, especially the ones that haven't been reviewed in a while. Some people are great and they'll revamp things, but then there's others … it's just quite stale, really" (Red, INt, NPH1). Similarly, in response to the question as to whether the weight of the posts is evenly distributed, the non-post holder argued that it is easy to identify those who have a lot more work involved in their post than others. The post holder commented, however, that the posts were quite onerous and felt that they were quite evenly distributed. She also said that over the years more duties had been added to posts, making them "quite sizeable responsibilities" (Red, Int, PH1). Her opinion was supported by the principal, who said that he would be happy to review posts if he felt there was a need, but he did not identify such a need. He also felt that the weight of the posts was evenly distributed. Neither felt that others might feel discontented towards the practice of those in formal leadership positions.

Issues around having a formal leadership position based on seniority rather than suitability were central to many comments made by a number of non-post holders both in the questionnaires and the interview. One respondent commented that all teachers should be given the opportunity to lead and that she did not feel that she had an opportunity to do so in the school (Red, Qu, NPH2). Another non-post

holder, commenting on seniority, also referred to affording others a chance to lead. She stated:

> From what I've heard, many schools give teachers a post based on seniority or "who is next in line". I feel that posts should be given to people who have specific interests, skills or talents in the area for which the post is being advertised rather than the current system. Everyone should be given the chance at holding a post, even if for a short time and swap to another area of interest if desired. While some post holders are excellent at carrying out duties, others tend to keep low profiles. Therefore I would question the fairness of this entire system. I personally would like to see more encouragement to take on a leadership role in this school. (Red, Qu, NPH3)

Several respondents to the questionnaire commented on the nature of the duties held by the post holders, believing them to be task-based in nature, with one respondent commenting "I believe the function of post holders is essential and in a way alleviates pressure and 'little jobs' from the principal and vice principal" (Red, Qu, NPH2). Whereas 83% were in agreement that the ISMT takes responsibility for management, it seems that the duties of the post holders were not regarded in the same esteem as that of the work done by those in more senior leadership roles (that is, the assistant principals, deputy principal and principal). It was anticipated that data from the diaries would shed some light on the nature of the post holder's practice, and would aid in ascertaining the extent to which the practice of those in formal positions could be considered leadership practice.

In total five post holders agreed to keep diaries in Redwood School. The post holders ranged from the administrative DP to one of the assistant principals (AP) to

Special Duties post holders. The principal regretted that he did not have the time to keep a diary due to several work commitments that week. There was quite a range in the number of year's experience on the ISMT from 2 years to over 10 years. Some of the post holders had been working in the school for over 20 years. The data highlighted considerable variance between post holders where leadership practice is concerned. While the practice of some post holders extended beyond their designated duties to include actions and interactions that required leadership skills, this was not the case for all post holders. Evidence of 'leadership practice' as opposed to 'carrying out of duties' was apparent from a two angles in particular. First, those who showed evidence of leadership expressed through their practice their vision or intention of leadership of others. Second the objective of their actions and interactions was so that they could influence the work or attitudes of others. The evidence suggests that there was sometimes a difference between this type of practice and the practice of those who were, on a seemingly different level, carrying out the assigned duties to their post. Such practice was sometimes seen to lack influence over others and also to lack leadership intention and vision.

When considered in relation to the spectrum in Figure 5 in the Analysis and Findings chapter, the actions and interactions documented in the diaries ranged from more individual, duty-related types to more distributed, collaborative and multi-task types of practice. Thus, there was considerable difference between the types of actions and interactions that they documented. It was clear that the work of 2 of the participants was rather limited to the first type of practice such (Group 1 on the spectrum), whereas the other 3 participants regularly displayed actions, interactions and behaviours that required leadership qualities and skills and therefore fell under the other two categories of practice-type (Group 2 and 3). Two of the post holders

(both of whom were Special Duties post holders and were in their roles the shortest length of time) displayed limited leadership practices in their interactions and behaviours compared to their colleagues. Their practice was mainly task or duty-based, they rarely collaborated with other staff members (although they were very much on demand to carry out duties for their colleagues) and their role was somewhat reactionary, in that they responded to problems or task requests from their colleagues. It was clear that these post holders were very conscientious in their role and worked both within and outside school hours to carry out duties under the remit of their posts. Similarly, they all showed that they were taking responsibility for their assigned duties and that others depended on their knowledge and skills.

Evidence from a number of diary entries highlight the difference between those who appeared to act as leaders and those who did not. The majority of the actions and interactions recorded by the post holders who did not seem to play a leadership role were mainly carried out in order to complete an administrative-type task or to carry out a function. For example one reported, "Went to colleague's classroom to investigate non-working password on computer", "Looked for 1st Class digital camera for teacher", "Answered teacher's request for laptop", "Returned laptop to safe for absent teacher" and so on (Red, D, PH2). At first the researcher considered that different posts (such as this ICT related one) may naturally involve more technical, functional-type tasks than others. However, another of her colleagues, also holding a post of responsibility for ICT, not only got involved with technical issues but behaved like a leader in her actions and interactions with others. As opposed to the aforementioned post holder, her work was more closely aligned with definitions of educational leadership that are presented in the Literature Review, in that she recorded incidences whereby she was setting meaningful directions and

was exercising influence (Leithwood et al., 2004). For example, some of her entries included, "Called to Computer Room to give advice on restart after the holidays. Gave (younger) colleague advice regarding time management and groupings when working with the computers", "Discussed with principal and colleague regarding how to instruct all staff members in maintenance of new projectors", and "Gave colleague tutorial on use of the school camera when taking photos for upcoming Heritage Week" (Red, D, PH3). In her personal reflection, this post holder remarked, "I had no idea how many times I am called upon during the day for advice or knowledge. I feel my post is mostly knowledge or expertise based, although some weeks, as a member of senior management, I am much more involved than this in pastoral/leadership issues" (Red, D, PH3).

Those who did appear to act in a leadership capacity demonstrated through their actions and interactions behaviour that included supporting others through advice, knowledge and skill, acting as a role model to colleagues, being approachable, initiative-taking and building capacity of colleagues by enabling them to work independently. Distributed leadership practice was also evident, but only on the part of the DP and one of the APs, both of whom delegated, shared decision-making and gave ownership to others. They wrote about leadership regularly and clearly perceived themselves as leaders in their roles. One post holder commented, "My leadership role is important to me, and I definitely feel that it has made me more confident. I feel that I have a lot to give and that I contribute to change in this school" (Red, D, PH4).

Hence, a core finding of case emerged during the analysis of the diaries; that some members of the ISMTs, though holding formal posts, were not necessarily

leaders in their school and that holding a post of responsibility did not automatically make somebody a leader. The diaries showed that while all of the participants interacted with others and undertook numerous duties as per their post, they did not all behave as leaders. Certain post holder's practice lacked a leadership dimension, while on the other hand the actions and interactions documented by other post holders highlighted evidence of practice that required leadership qualities, including the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively, take the initiative, act decisively (independently and with others), delegate and exercise authority. On top of this, some post holders distributed leadership, were concerned with building capacity of their colleagues and showed that they were approachable for advice, guidance and support.

Evidence from the interviews reinforced this finding from the diaries. The post holder made many references to her practice and the practice of other post holders. She considered that practice varied from person-to-person and she felt that the extent to which one led was "very much dependent on one's personality, and whether or not one's interpretation of their role was broad or narrow" (Red, Int, PH1). This post holder touched on another finding that arose from this research - that holding a narrow interpretation of one's role could limit leadership practice potential. If post holders did not see themselves as a leader in their school, oftentimes their role was self-restricted to being more duty-based in nature. Evidence from the diaries of those who did act in a leadership capacity reflected the strong leadership role that they felt they had.

The development of one's leadership role in Redwood School may have been attributable, in part at least, to another finding that emerged across the three data-sets

- that a tight hierarchical structure was in existence in this school, with the principal clearly at the top and with non-post holders at the bottom. Furthermore, another related finding emerged that identified a split that existed within management. During the interview with the principal, it was learned by the researcher that the ISMT was split into two groups in this school, with one group including special duties post holders and the other group including senior management post holders (that is, APs, DP and principal). In general, the principal only met with the latter group, although all post holders were expected to communicate with colleagues at staff meetings. The researcher posited that this may have been communicating a message to the former group – that their roles were to carry out the duties of their post, but that the latter group were both post holders and fellow decision-makers regarding issues that the principal considered important. The staff was very large with 40 teachers. The principal felt that this was the most practical way of sharing decision-making. Within the context of the diaries, however, it became clear to the researcher that the post holders were aware of the different levels of leadership and management that existed. One post holder, who was not part of senior management commented:

> I enjoy my post, it gives me the chance to interact with my colleagues and to play a supportive role. With the go-ahead "from above" I have implemented some changes that I consider positive for the school. My colleagues have told me that they are delighted with some of the work that I've done, which feels good. (Red, D, PH2)

Similarly, a member of senior management referred to this hierarchy when she remarked:

As a senior member of staff, junior staff members also regularly ask me for
advice and help with children presenting with difficulties. An awful lot of
what might be considered "leadership practice" is done on an ad hoc basis
rather than set out as part of my official duties. I enjoy my leadership role,
and knowing that it is recognised and supported by the principal, I'm happy
to go over and beyond the call of duty. (Red, D, PH5)

Evidence suggests that this hierarchy impacted upon the potential of some teachers
to practise informal leadership. It also highlights the central role that the principal
played in other's leadership practice. This finding and others relating to informal
leadership in Redwood School are presented in the next section.

Informal Leadership Practice in Redwood School

Data from the questionnaires and interview (with the non-post holder in
particular) highlighted to what extent teachers in Redwood School acted as leaders in
an informal capacity and the degree to which leadership was distributed to (and
among) them. Overall, a rather negative picture was portrayed by the non-post
holders regarding the lack of opportunities to lead informally. Many participants
made reference to the fact that they had never been given a chance to lead in an
informal capacity, despite their desire to do so. Distributed leadership practice
seemed like a rare occurrence in this school according to the non-post holders.

In order to get an initial sense of the practice of distributed leadership in the
school, the questionnaire sought attitudes towards the extent to which the ISMT had
shared leadership responsibilities with others in the past. The responses appeared
consistent between attitudinal statements and comments made at the end. Some non-
post holders felt that they had not been encouraged to share in the leadership practice

of those in formal positions. 30% disagreed that the ISMT shared leadership with each other and other members of staff, and 8% had no opinion. When prompted at the end to make any further comments, respondents touched on this, with a non-post holder arguing that:

> All staff, whether on the ISMT or not should be involved in decision-making and their opinions should be valued. Their roles should be shared with others who take an interest and have the skills that could enhance their post. (Red, Qu, NPH5)

This same non-post holder made reference to the way in which the tight hierarchy could impede informal leadership opportunities. She wrote, "It's like we all have a position here and if you're not officially part of management you can forget acting like one!" (Red, Qu, NPH5) The evidence at this early stage suggested that there was some desire among non-post holders for opportunities to lead or to share leadership. There was also evidence that the non-post holders viewed the opportunity to lead informally as something that is only taken on if given to them, on an invitational basis only, rather than viewing potential informal leadership practice as depending on the individual teachers taking the initiative. Again, there was an element of fear of "stepping on toes", with one respondent writing, "I've so many ideas that I'd love to see implemented but I sometimes feel that it's not my place to interfere with their (the ISMT's) duties" (Red, Qu, NPH 4). In her interview, the non-post holder reinforced evidence from the questionnaires by expressing the frustration that she and other non-post holders felt in not being afforded any opportunities to lead informally and she made sure to emphasise that she believed she held the same view as her other non-post holder colleagues.

In Redwood School in particular, the tight hierarchical structure seemed to be a considerable factor that impeded distributing leadership among those who did not hold formal posts. Many processes seemed to be supervised by the principal, from delegation to decision-making and evidence from the questionnaires and the interviews suggest that the non-post holders in particular felt that they did not have ownership or very much freedom to make their own decisions or take on a leadership role. The post holder on the other hand, commented on the freedom that the middle and senior management post holders had to develop their own ideas and the opportunity to lead others and share their ideas. What is very clear from the evidence, therefore, is that the structure was tight and definitive with the principal very much at the top of the pyramid overseeing processes and decision-making. A major drawback of this structure for this school, it appears, is that ideas and opportunities to lead were coming from the top-down almost exclusively and not from the bottom-up. The non-post holder, like her colleague's comment above on the questionnaire (Red, Qu, NPH5) remarked that this impacted negatively on non-post holder's involvement in decision-making, sharing their opinions and "having a say". She argued:

> Personally I would feel that young teachers wouldn't have a huge say. Like if a decision is made by a post holder or the principal, if we went to query it we wouldn't have a huge say I don't think. I think a lot of decisions are made outside of the circle of staff. Definitely maybe the post-holders might go to each other about decisions but I don't think people who are new in the school would have a huge say in decisions in different areas. I think it's very much top people who have been here the longest will have a say, not us. (Red, Int, NPH1)

When asked if she had ever acted in a leadership capacity, she remarked that she had once been "given the chance to order ICT equipment" although she felt that the only reason that she had been given this "job" was because she had completed a masters degree in ICT in Education and "he (the principal) might have thought I was more qualified for the job" (Red, Int, NPH1). This may well have been a time when the principal was endeavouring to encourage informal leadership, as even a job such as ordering stock can encompass leadership as it can be both direction-setting and influential in nature. While the non-post holder gave this as example of a time that she led others, she was quick to add she was not able to recall any other occasion when she may have had acted as a leader. The evidence, therefore suggests that the rigidity of the hierarchical structure that existed made it more difficult to create a shared sense of community that nurtured active and more spontaneous engagement in shared professional learning and collaborative problem-solving and decision-making.

Also of note in Redwood School is that the principal and non-post holders had completely opposing opinions on the extent to which distributed leadership existed within the school. The principal spoke about the school as a "professional community of learners" and mentioned ways in which he had made sure to provide leadership opportunities to informal leaders in the past. Both he and the post holder identified how important such opportunities were in their own career and in the development of their own leadership skills. As was mentioned above, the non-post holder felt that she had absolutely no responsibility for leadership or management in the school and evidence from her interview suggests that informal opportunities had not been given to non-post holders for a considerable amount of time. Another non-post holder similarly remarked on his questionnaire, "I wouldn't say that the ISMT

shares leadership. I suppose it comes down to them having their role and us having ours" (Red, Qu, NPH7). The evidence from the post holder's and principal's interviews suggests that the distribution of informal leadership roles had been more frequent in previous years. In complete contradiction to the non-post holder's opinion, the principal spoke about distributed leadership and informal leadership roles positively, saying:

> The teachers who don't have formal leadership positions, virtually every one of them, maybe not all the time but at certain times in their lives or certain times in the year, take on leadership roles ... Most of the people here would be very giving of their time and I would feel that they would think a lot about improving the school and if they would like to share their ideas with their colleagues that's great and if we feel that the idea is worth any merit we give them free rein to go and try to implement it. (Red, Int, P)

When asked in her interview to consider any potential that may exist for informal leadership in her school, the non-post holder was strongly of the opinion that in very large schools such as Redwood, only those with "strong personalities get their say" (Red, Int, NPH 1). The evidence from her interview suggests that only those who had the confidence to assert themselves and push their ideas forward were given the opportunity to lead. She did not see this changing any time soon and she spoke of the need for a shift in culture to one that was more welcoming towards those who wanted to be informal leaders, using terms such as "stuck in a rut" and "inflexible" (Red, Int, NPH1). The very large size of the school, along with the tight hierarchical structure and the lack of change where the potential of informal leaders

was concerned, seem to have been considerable hindrances to the practice of informal leadership in this school.

Principal's Leadership Practice in Redwood School

Although the principal of Redwood School was unable to keep a diary, he spent a great deal of time discussing his own leadership practice and both formal and informal leadership in the interview. One very strong finding that came from the three data-sets is that the principal clearly played a role as supervisor and overseer. Despite having two very clear levels of managament, it is apparent from the data that the principal was very much the dominant force in the school, overseeing both senior and middle management. The central role that the principal played was evident in the data from the diaries of post holders, and once again emerged as a main finding from the interviews. Both the non-post holder and the post holder reinforced this viewpoint, referring to the fact that they ensured to "get the nod from above" (Red, Int, PH) and "get the go-ahead before decisions are made" (Red, Int, NPH). While the principal did relinquish control to the ISMT, it was clear that he expected to be kept informed and oftentimes to have the final say on matters. The post holders had pointed to this in their diary entries, and thus it was brought up for further exploration in the interviews. Many references were made by both the post holder and non-post holder to the principal's role and the way in which they would not decide on anything without making him aware and getting his approval, feeling that they were "expected to do so" (Red, Int, PH1).

The principal, however, did not portray his role as such. He believed that he had a strong ISMT whom he could depend on and he felt that he gave ISMT members the flexibility and freedom to "lead in their area" (Red, Int, P). He

expressed the importance of doing so - that post holders should be given the opportunity to use their post in helping them to develop their leadership capacity. He spoke of his own previous experience of leadership before he became a principal and pointed to the importance of being allowed to take ownership and "run with ideas". His own early experiences of leadership were very positive and they helped him "to develop a personal leadership style". He asserted that being given the chance to lead and "sometimes make mistakes" helped mould his leadership role and he therefore made sure that he was affording the teachers on his own staff the same opportunity to lead (Red, Int, P).

When asked about the opportunities that teachers who did not hold formal positions had, he said that he encouraged all teachers to take on leadership roles. He gave some examples of times when teachers had practised leadership in an informal capacity over the years that he was principal. What became apparent is that those who had led informally had taken the initiative to do so - they had gone to the principal with an idea and had been given the nod of approval to lead it. The non-post holder's interview had touched on two similar points - that only confident and assertive people were given the chance to lead informally and that one had to be given permission to do so. Evidence would suggest that the principal was not aware that certain teachers wished to lead. His style was to give the go-ahead to those who took the initiative, came forward and looked for his approval. He said that he took pride in the influence that he felt he had had in the careers of teachers who had gone on to become principals in other schools and saw the encouragement of leadership succession as a crucial part of his role.

When asked about the extent to which leadership was distributed to both formal and informal leaders in his school, he remarked "very much so" and said that he depended on distributing leadership so as to "respond to all of the challenges that face the school on a daily basis" (Red, Int, P). He referred to the lack of time that he had to do all that he wanted to do and said that aspiring to take on everything by himself would be "ridiculous" (Red, Int, P). He said that he was hugely dependent on the ISMT and the DP and expressed his concern that the moratorium on promotion would, over the coming years, impact very negatively on the school. He did not mention the role that informal leaders could play in alleviating some of the pressure, but made many references to the support that he depended on from those in formal leadership positions. Evidence from his interview, therefore suggests that while he acknowledged the importance of distributing leadership to others, in reality the "others" that he referred to did not include those beyond the ISMT (Red, Int, P). He did make a few comments about the huge benefit of having an administrative principal in the school. He remarked:

> She's incredibly hard-working and we thankfully have a shared vision for the school. Being an administrative principal makes all the difference. She can tackle and lead things that I simply can't get around to and is a critical member of our senior management team" (Red, Int, P).

The central role that the principal plays, where formal and leadership practice is concerned, is one of the findings of this case. The evidence suggests that the principal in Redwood School played a central role in maintaining the hierarchy that existed, and thereby excluded those who may have leadership potential and who desired leadership opportunities. The evidence suggests that while he had

encouraged teachers in the past to come forward and lead informally, this had not happened for some time - and certainly not in the time that the non-post holder (who was interviewed) had been working in the school. Overall, the leadership practice of the principal in Redwood School reflected a leader who was decisive, assertive, but somewhat authoritarian and lacking in awareness of the needs and feelings of others.

Structures and Supports around Leadership Practice in Redwood School

Any exploration of leadership practices and attitudes towards them should involve examining the structures that exist around practice, how leadership practices are helped or hindered, and what conditions support both formal and informal leadership practices. Analysis of the data from all three data-sets centered around these themes and led to findings relating to them. The following section briefly examines the context of practice in Redwood School - the structures and supports that existed around leadership practice, examining the ways in which leaders and followers communicated and collaborated and the ways in which decisions were made and roles and responsibilities were delegated.

The interviews and diaries in Redwood School both reinforced the opinion within the Irish literature that the model of leadership in most Irish schools remains very much hierarchical, with a focus on the distribution of tasks rather than responsibility" (O'Sullivan & West Burnham, 2011). This study examined the leadership structures that existed and explored what bearing (if any) the structure had on leadership practice and interactions. In Redwood School in particular, the data repeatedly built a picture of a tight managerial structure within the school. Very definitive senior management (including the principal, DP and APs) and middle management structures (special duties post holders) existed within the school as

recognised by the non-post holder, the post holder (an AP) and principal in particular. The three interviewees saw these two groups as separate entities, pointing to the fact that those in senior management had a higher status in the school. This was evident in the way in which senior management members attended meetings with the principal while the middle management post holders did not, and that the former were approached for joint decision-making by the principal more so than the latter were. Hence, the tight organisational structure provided senior management with more leadership roles and autonomy, whereas the special duties post holders were provided with curricular leadership opportunities in the main. The principal, commenting that he did not feel that there was any need for middle management post holders to meet, highlighted this hierarchical split:

> There are no meetings of the special duties post holders in this school at any time during the year, they just attend staff meetings and they give reports on what work they're doing and if an individual among the twelve special duties post holders wishes to consult with other members of the ISMT they just do it informally. Each one's role is pretty well-defined and I don't feel it's necessary for somebody who has coordination of Maths to be sitting down meeting somebody who has coordination for Religious Education, for example. If they need to meet they can do so informally ... But the senior management team, in an ideal world, meets once a month. I feel that's important. (Red, Int, P)

The post holder too acknowledged the hierarchical split, commenting, "Senior management is a different level with a whole different set of responsibilities. I would

think that all teachers are aware as to who the members of senior management are" (Red, Int, PH1).

The teachers were very much aware of the roles and responsibilities held by all those in formal leadership positions, due in part it would appear, to the clear hierarchical structure and the way in which the two main groups - middle and senior management were split. The three interviewees made numerous references to this structure, and did not feel that they needed any clarification on the roles that different teachers had. This clear, if somewhat rigid structure, brought with it certain disadvantages however, including the lack of flexibility that it has afforded teachers (in particular those who are not in formal leadership positions) to develop ideas independently. This was evident from data from the questionnaire and the interview with the non-post holder. As one questionnaire participant remarked, "There are plenty of leaders in this school - we have lots of post holders. Not being one of them, my role is simply teaching in my classroom, although I wouldn't mind taking something more on from time-to-time" (Red, Qu, NPH11). Thus, it may be suggested that top-down structures seemed to impede the development of distributed leadership practice, as it militated against teachers' independence and taking on leadership roles. As was mentioned earlier, evidence from the interview held with the non-post holder highlighted her opinion that leadership opportunities were confined to those holding formal positions and she communicated her frustration in not being given the chance to ever take the lead (Red, Int, NPH1). From the perspective of the non-post holder, the presence of definite separate management groups seemed to challenge distributed leadership practice, where all teachers are ideally distributed responsibility and authority within the school.

There were mixed feelings regarding communication in the school. There was a notable difference between declared views regarding regular, effective communication and comments that were made in the open ended section. Whereas 20 out of 24 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that communication was regular and effective, a number of respondents (including some from within that group of 20) commented on the need for more meetings or more communication in general. One respondent (a non-post holder) stated:

> I know that there are regular meetings in our school with the ISMT and the principals, however, the rest of the staff would rarely be informed what they are discussing - perhaps if we did we could speak to them before the meeting to voice our own concerns on the matter. (Red, Qu, NPH3)

Some respondents commented that the lack of staff meetings where all staff members are involved could seriously hinder communication, particularly considering the size of the school. The very large size of the Redwood School contributed to the necessity for a clear communication system to be in place to ensure that all members of staff were informed of the workings of the school. The principal in particular made reference to the challenge that the school's size and physical layout presented for communication and collaboration, although he was confident that the structures that were in place to counteract these challenges, including internal phones, e-mail and memos, were sufficient and working well (Red, Int, P).

Thus, evidence from Redwood School highlights certain hindrances where communication was concerned and it was clear from certain diary entries that this could sometimes have a bearing on leadership practice. For example, one post holder

commented in her diary that she had been unaware of decisions that had been made in relation to organising an event and that this had resulted in her "wasting quite a bit of time" (Red, D, PH3). Similarly, another post holder, referring to the size of the school mentioned in her diary that her leadership practice was often challenged by the number of teachers in the school and "trying to keep everyone up-to-date and informed" (Red, D, PH5). Certain issues around communication, therefore, needed to be addressed so as to support leadership practice rather than hinder it.

The principal considered communication to be "quite effective" and he believed the structures in place ensured that everyone was "kept in the loop" (Red, Int, P). This was once again in in stark contrast to the opinion of the interviewed non-post holder, who asserted that she and other teachers regularly felt that they were not informed and that, using the same term as the principal, they were "left out of the loop" on a regular basis. The evidence suggests that communication sometimes got lost between those in senior management and those who did not hold formal positions. While there was a considerable amount of communication among the senior management post holders, there was not the same between them and middle management, nor for that matter, between senior/middle management and non-post holders. The non-post holder highlighted this in her interview, as well as the fact that there was considerable variation among post holders as to the extent to which they communicated with non-post holders. Communication was seen by many questionnaire respondents as one of the most important skills for leadership. It was important for this school, therefore, to ensure that their communication structures and channels were enabling and supporting the required amount of communication at all levels.

Where collaborative work practices were concerned in Redwood School, it is clear that the principal strongly encouraged teamwork among "class levels" (for example, all the Junior Infant teachers planning together), and worked hard to put structures in place to allow for this to happen. The non-post holder was most positive about this in her interview, commenting that the opportunities to plan and collaborate together were "very effective" and "extremely important" (Red, Int, NPH1). She felt, however, that this collaboration did not extend beyond these teaching and planning meetings to whole-school issues. As is evident in the literature review, much educational policy has been communicating the expectation that schools work in a collaborative, whole-school manner DES, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, DES, 2011a, DES, 2011b, INTO, 2010). The non-post holder highlighted her belief that this was not happening in her school. Both the principal and post holder spoke about the committees that used to exist in the school. These committees were set up to review and develop various curricular areas, and both post holders and non-post holders were involved in these. They both felt that they had worked very well. Analysis of the data highlighted, however, that that there were some newer members of staff who had never experienced working in these groups, and therefore felt that there were no other ways of collaborating with others. Hence, from the perspective of some NQTs (according to the non-post holder), there was little history of collaboration beyond their class groupings. This had been verified by the questionnaires, in which the only references made by the non-post holders to their own collaborative work practices referred to class-level planning.

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire either agreed or strongly agreed that the ISMT has contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in their school. This opinion was further reflected in positive comments made by a number of

respondents, including phrases such as "good collaborative atmosphere", "mutual respect and collegiality", and "has contributed to unity within our staff". The principal also reinforced this view stating, in the open ended section, that:

> Success of implementation of the Revised Curriculum and response to legislative framework is directly attributable to our highly effective ISMT, as well as deeply committed teachers and SNAs (Special Needs Assistants) in our school and the way in which they work collaboratively together. (Red, Qu, P)

Evidence from the non-post holder's interview, however, suggests that the structures that were in place to facilitate collaboration were rather limited. She expressed the opinion that post holders rarely collaborated with other staff members and that they generally only communicated with them at staff meetings:

> During the year we've very little contact with post holders, if at all ... The only time I'd see them during the year is at staff meetings when they're telling their little bit, but they don't tend to approach us to collaborate on anything or to get our input or feedback. (Red, Int, NPH1)

On the other hand, both the post holder and principal felt quite positive as to the effectiveness of collaboration, and both regarded the culture of the school to be collaborative. This variance in attitude once again reinforced the considerable gap in opinion that existed between those who held formal leadership positions and those who did not. As is clear from the interview with the non-post holder in particular (and to an extent from the other non-post holders' questionnaires), this variance in attitude in turn impacted upon informal leadership practice, as she felt that those who were "higher up" were not always in touch with the needs of those who wished to

lead informally and that they were therefore unaware of their desire to work collaboratively with them (Red, Int, NPH1).

In Redwood School, the interviews highlighted differing opinions on the role that the teachers had in making decisions and delegation. The evidence clearly suggested that where decision-making and delegation were concerned, the principal played a central and pivotal role. The post holder spoke about the fact that the principal generally "makes and signs off on the more important decisions" (Red, Int, PH1). While she said that she did feel that she had a valuable leadership role to play in the school, she still highlighted the fact that most decisions rested with the principal. When asked if she was consulted regarding important matters and involved in decision-making she replied:

> I would say yes. But sometimes his mind might have been made up. He does consult the ISMT and he really does listen. If I have a particular contribution to make, I feel very free to make it and I feel that it is valued, and often acted upon if it's correct, and if not, he would go to an awful lot of trouble to explain to you why it wouldn't be going to happen. For overall decisions, however, I would think that we're not very much involved though, and I'm including the DP in that too. (Red, Int, PH1)

The principal, on the other hand, believed that the majority of decisions were made by all members of staff and that he rarely made decisions without getting the buy-in from all teachers. He did point out, nevertheless, that there were times when "executive" decisions had to be made by himself and the DP, and that "having too many decision-makers can complicate matters" (Red, Int, P). The non-post holder believed that the involvement of all staff in decision-making was not a reality in this

school, however. She was strongly of the opinion that she had very little say and again suggested that other non-post holders probably felt the same way. She commented:

> I think it's very much the top people who have been here the longest who will have a say, and I don't think that the younger teachers would be confident to speak up. They just feel ignored, like if we wanted to go against what they'd decided, we wouldn't really have the courage to. (Red, Int, NPH1)

When asked to elaborate, the non-post holder highlighted her discontent with the way in which she had not been given much freedom to make her own decisions about (what she considered to be) "fairly basic class-related matters" (Red, Int, NPH1). When asked if she was consulted on important matters within the school, she replied:

> No. Not really at all. I mean sometimes at meetings there might be a show of hands for something but in general not on the big decisions in school, they're made for you. Like even for the school tours we were barely allowed to decide ourselves, a simple thing like that, do you know what I mean? Everything is kind of handed to you. So no, I don't feel like I have much of a voice. (Red, Int, NPH1)

This was neither refuted nor supported by the questionnaires, however, and so the comments above remain the opinion of one non-post holder alone.

Although the evidence demonstrates how the principal was involved in most leadership decisions made in the school, there was some evidence of delegation of

duties. This delegation, however, was mainly towards those in formal positions. According to the post holder, there was strongest evidence of delegation "from above" from the principal to the senior management level. The non-post holder backed this up by asserting that despite her desire to "be delegated to", it "doesn't really happen" (Red, Int, NPH1). Once again, the non-post holder expressed her discontent that "young teachers simply don't have a say" and that a huge number of decisions were made by those in middle/senior leadership positions, and thereby "excluding some of the staff" (Red, Int, NPH1), and she was backed up by two other questionnaire respondents. There is evidence that she had very much desired involvement and spoke of her ideas for informal leadership positions, for example that there would be a "spokesperson" for each class level who could bring concerns to management and who could be involved in decision-making. She recognised that this would require leadership skills and "a strong personality". She commented, "The role wouldn't need formal duties assigned to it, I just think that the stronger personalities would be able to talk up for the teachers who don't have a voice" (Red, Int, NPH1). The post holder explained, however, that there was hesitancy on the part of the JSMT to delegate, due to the fact that they are paid extra for carrying out their duties. She was not aware that some non-post holders desired being included and that they identified improvement in delegation as a particular need of this school. Clearly this pointed to a need that existed in this Redwood School - for post holders and non-post holders alike to discuss leadership in their school so as to clarify the roles that both formal and informal leaders play or do not play and how this might change.

Thus, the majority of delegation and decision-making only seemed to occur from the top-down, and again, this seemed to be impacting upon informal leadership

practice by limiting potential. It possibly also affected formal leadership too, in that most post holders in their diaries showed evidence of this leadership being somewhat curbed by the perceived need to get the final say from the principal. It was clear from the data that the structures in existence in schools can either support or hinder formal and informal leadership practice. The next section considers the needs that existed in Redwood that would require addressing if leadership practice (including distributed leadership practice) were to be further supported.

Professional Needs around Leadership Practice in Redwood School

As was the case in the other schools, the research participants were asked to reflect on leadership practice in their school and how it might be improved. The following section presents the various professional needs that were identified in Redwood School.

All three interviewees asserted that professional development for leadership was very much a need for teachers in this school. 100% of respondents to the questionnaire believed that there was a need for specific professional development to help the ISMT in their management/leadership role. Both the post holder and non-post holder felt that leading requires a particular skill-set, including the ability to communicate, collaborate, make decisions, delegate and so on. They believed, along with the principal, that specific training to develop such skills would be very beneficial to the school. The post holder did identify, however, that there are some people who like to be led (and do not want to be leaders) and also that not everyone is a leader, and that even with professional development, some people do not have leadership qualities, suggesting that leadership is innate (Red, Int, PH1). She also acknowledged a finding from the diaries - that not all post holders were leaders. This

need was also commented on by a post holder, asserting "I feel that teaching duties and leadership duties are very different and that ISMTs should get professional development for leadership regularly, to aid them in effectively leading their colleagues" (Red, Qu, PH4). The principal felt very strongly about the need for professional develop also, but only mentioned it in relation to those who already held formal leadership positions. He asserted:

> I think there would be a need for some training for Assistant Principals and maybe for Special Duties post-holders because, I mean, the workload is quite significant and they've no difficulty carrying out the workload, but sometimes where I feel training would be required would be with people, just simple people management skills, you know, just because you're trained to teach a class in a primary school doesn't mean that you're trained to be able to deliver professional development to forty colleagues or indeed to get a good decision from forty colleagues. So a bit of training there for post-holders, it's regrettable that that hasn't happened to date. (Red, Int, P)

Another need that was identified in Redwood School in particular, was the need to provide opportunities for informal leadership to all teachers, as was articulated by the non-post holders the questionnaires and the interview. When asked about how the school allowed for the development of leaders (and the succession of future leaders), the principal had asserted that he strongly believed that all teachers were given the opportunity to lead if they so wished and that this was important for leadership development. This, however, was not the perceived reality for those who did not hold formal leadership positions, according to some non-post holders. While the middle and senior leadership and management levels reflected the principal's

vision to promote leadership in teachers, there was little evidence of the freedom or opportunities required to lead for those who did not hold formal leadership positions. The interviewed non-post holder expressed that she did not feel that she was included and therefore, it appears, that there was no platform on which she could develop a leadership role.

Thus, in Redwood School, while the principal and post holders were aware of the benefits of distributed leadership for their school, and there was some evidence of the practice of distributed leadership in the data from the diaries and the interviews, there were some members of staff who felt excluded from these practices. The evidence suggests that as this staff had become established over the years, opportunities to lead and to be involved in decision-making were afforded to those who showed a willingness to do so and applied for it. However, with such a large staff, certain NQTs felt that they were not getting the same experience. Hence, a need for this school was for the staff as a whole to take stock of the talents and willingness of non-post holders and for opportunities to be given to them to lead.

The very large size of Redwood School brought with it certain challenges, including the negative effect that it could have on communication and collaboration. Furthermore, the layout and temporary nature of school buildings was identified by the interviewees as a huge factor that could hinder communication, due to the way in which the buildings were laid out. A need existed for more awareness of the isolation that some of the newer teachers felt and to ensure that communication channels were open from the bottom-up and not just from the top-down. In the open ended section of the questionnaire, one of the non-post holders referred to the need for more collaboration in the school, mentioning that she felt isolated from the other class

levels and that she only had contact with those teachers of the same class level as she. She commented, "I suppose in smaller schools collaboration is much easier, but here that's not the case. I'm here five years and I still don't know all the teachers. I feel a bit detached, and I can't imagine collaborating with them" (Red, Int, NPH6). The evidence suggests that while most research participants appreciated that the size of the school required strong management, and that the predominantly hierarchical structure that existed had worked in this size a school, a need existed to ensure that communication channels were open from the bottom-up as well as from the top-down.

Finally, the pressure of time was a big issue for those who held formal leadership positions in Redwood School and many of them mentioned it in their entries or within their personal reflections. One post holder commented:

I continuously juggle my teaching duties with my A post duties ... I feel very strongly that my post is almost a job in itself, not an extra duty to be carried out between teaching duties. I do a considerable amount of work at home, outside of school hours. I don't mind, as I'm aware that things can be so much more chaotic if I don't prepare during this time. There is no way that I could justify doing a lot of my post during school hours. (Red, D, PH3)

Many of the post holders commented on the pressure that they were under, and while they acknowledged the extra pay that they received for their post, some stressed that they regularly felt somewhat overwhelmed in their role. In her diary reflection, one of the post holders stated:

Writing this diary has been an interesting task. It is only when you write down each interaction during the day that you realise how much time your

post can take up in the working day. Obviously this can vary, as some days there may be no work involved in your post, and then other days you feel like the post is your main job, not teaching! (Red, D, PH2)

Another post holder, in the open ended section of the questionnaire highlighted this pressure:

> I can't stress the time factor enough. We simply don't have the time to meet, liaise and collaborate in the way that we need to. We don't have time to give feedback and then to act on that feedback. We really are expected to do a huge   amount of work in a time slot that simply doesn't exist.

The principal, also recognising that both he and others in formal leadership positions were under considerable pressure, identified the need for more time for formal leaders to be freed up for their leadership practice. He compared primary schools to secondary schools and emphasised equality where time to practice leadership is concerned:

> It's not that I mean freeing them up to carry out their duties because they are being paid extra money for this but no more than the people in the post primary, the reason they have free time is to communicate with people, they tend to be used in post primary as Year Heads and needless to say a Year Head needs to meet the pupils that he or she is trying to manage. So same scene here, you know, we would feel that there would be lots of the responsibilities of the senior management team that we find difficult enough to deliver when we haven't any formal time free from teaching duties. (Red, Int, P)

The principal also expressed his concern that the moratorium on promotion would, over the next few years, start to seriously impact upon the school and formal leadership practice. While it had not emerged as yet, he was aware that with retirements and other post holders leaving (for example on career break, maternity leave, and so on), he could see huge challenges as a result. He commented that the school relied on the amount of work that the ISMT does and without it they would be very hard-pressed. He asserted, "I could see that we would struggle without the management team that we've got in place. We've come to greatly depend on it. I know many other schools are struggling with that problem, so thankfully it's not one I've to embrace at the moment" (Red, Int, P). It seems that a need, therefore, existed for this school to embrace distributed leadership practice, particularly seeing as there was already willingness there on the part of non-post holders to get involved. This could, at the very least, help to alleviate some of the time and workload pressures that were being felt.

Appendix L

Case C: Analysis and Findings from Sapling School

Introduction to Sapling School

Sapling School is located within a housing estate in the suburbs of Dublin. The principal was a teaching principal during the school year 2009-2010 and considers the school to have been a "small" school during that year (there were 165 on roll, 10 teachers [3 post holders, including the principal] and 5 SNAs), although it has continued to grow into a "medium" sized school. The school building is made up completely of connected prefabricated units, configured in a layout of nine classrooms, four learning support rooms and a staffroom. The prefabricated units do not look too bad due to the fact that they have only been there a few years. They have a small yard, and are awaiting the go-ahead for their new school building. The catchment area is suburban and is mixed from a socio-economic perspective. All but a few children live within one kilometer of the school.

The moratorium on promotion has affected the school. In the school year 2009-2010 the ISMT continued to consist of the principal, DP and one post holder, even though it is a developing school and would have been entitled to two more posts had it not been for the moratorium. This seems to have been a big challenge facing the Sapling School and there was awareness that as the school continued to grow, the shortage of post holders would become all the more apparent.

The school has a strong Parents' Association contributing to school policy, fundraising and in-school support. They have an interested school community who wish the new school well and help out in many different ways. They pride themselves in the expertise available in their special needs area, and their teachers have completed many courses and have a strong in-class team-teaching arrangement

in place. The principal is clearly proud of the school's good reputation and works hard at ensuring that he is seen to have an open-door policy.

The school corridors are colourful and full of children's work. Achievements and awards that the school has received are also on display. As in Oakley and Redwood Schools, the environment feels happy and busy and both staff and the principal were are welcoming. Space is exceptionally limited in Sapling School, with the staffroom doubling up as a learning support room. They also have very little playground space. Consequently, the new permanent building is eagerly awaited. The staff appears to blend very well together. They are generally very light-hearted and refreshing in their approach to their work. All research participants communicated their enthusiasm at being involved in the research.

Formal Leadership Practice in Sapling School

In Sapling School, the evidence suggests that both formal and informal leaders worked alongside each other easily, with the focus on the work to be done as opposed to the person who was leading it. There was strong collaboration in this school and the teachers and principal clearly enjoyed working in this way together. The main challenge to those who practised formal leadership was the pressure that the moratorium had put on the school. The lack of post holders meant that those who held formal leadership positions were under considerable pressure as a result. These findings relating to formal leadership practice are presented in more detail below.

The questionnaire was distributed to 10 teachers in the school (including the principal), and there was a 100% response rate. The profile questions highlighted that 7 out of the 10 respondents were relatively newly qualified, with 0-5 years

teaching experience, while the other 3 respondents had over 16 years teaching experience. No respondents fell within the ranges 6-10 and 11-15 years of teaching experience. The ISMT was newly established, with only three members. The principal was the only member who fell into the range of 6-10 years of ISM experience. The other two members of the team included the DP and AP. There were no special duties post holders as a result of the moratorium on promotion.

Where the work of the ISMT was concerned, there was major satisfaction with ISM/leadership practice, with all respondents to the questionnaire believing ISM/leadership to be of benefit to their school and 100% feeling that ISM/leadership had relevance to them personally. All of the respondents knew who the members of the ISMT were and also were aware of the purpose of ISM/leadership. There was, however, some uncertainty regarding the duties held by the post holders. In the interviews, the attitudes of all three interviewees towards formal leadership practice were very much in agreement. Very positive opinions were held towards the work of the post holders and the collaborative and trusting atmosphere that underpinned the work that they did. There was full awareness, however, that having only three ISMT members was a small number considering the growing number of teachers in this developing school.

While the hard work of the ISMT was acknowledged by all respondents there was some disagreement that the roles matched the needs of the school. Six respondents agreed that the duties of the post holders needed to be reviewed. There were 3 respondents who had no opinion on the matter, while only 1 disagreed that they needed review. Despite of this expressed need for review, the AP acknowledged:

Because of the small size of our school there is a climate of "all hands on deck" about general school initiatives, which means that those not part of ISM make a very significant contribution and those of us who form part of the ISMT carry out many other duties not specified and are happy to do so. (Sap, Qu, PH2)

The roles and responsibilities of those on the ISMT were shared out quite evenly, according to both the principal and post holder. Each of the posts carried a heavy workload. The interviews highlighted the positive attitudes that the ISMT members had towards the work but also how they were extremely grateful that the other members of staff were very willing to "pitch in and help out" (Sap, Int, PH2). The principal acknowledged the huge amount of work that the other two members of the ISMT did, especially considering that a developing school had many issues that differed from year to year. Hence, the roles of the ISMT were reviewed at the end of every year to ensure that they were still in line with the main needs and priorities of the school. The principal reckoned that other members of staff were probably somewhat unclear as to the duties of the ISMT as a result, and hoped to tighten up on this, considering that "they are entitled to know what the roles of the ISMT are as these teachers get paid extra for these responsibilities" (Sap, Int, P). He felt, however, that they had very limited scope for extending roles and responsibilities formally, and therefore acknowledged the way in which non-post holders were making up for that:

IMS/leadership in a new, small, developing school has a very pragmatic approach to delegation of duties. The duties were identified using criteria of DES. Unfortunately, the kind of formal structure that I think the ISM needs

to be has been stalled by the moratorium. Whereas we could have many areas under the responsibility of an ISM, we have to share out the duties and call on the help of other staff members. (Sap, Int, P)

Being a relatively new school, there was awareness that the school had, as the principal put it, "developed like a family" (Sap, Qu, P). As such, much leadership practice had been shared with non-post holders. In response to the questionnaire, the respondents agreed that the ISMT shared leadership with non ISMT members. Alongside this, there was strong agreement that the ISMT had been successful in delegating to non-post holders. There was no variance between declared statements and comments made in response to the open ended question. In her diary, one of the post holders acknowledged the work done by those who did not hold formal leadership positions. She commented:

> There are not enough posts of responsibility allocated to the growing needs of the school. The school would not function as well as it does at present if 'non' ISMT members did not work so hard outside classroom hours to facilitate all the work that needs to be done ... They are happy to take the lead in areas that interest them ... leading to alleviation of pressure and the talent going to where it's very much appreciated! (Sap, D, PH2)

This notion of team-work and of everyone getting involved was mentioned by all of those who made comments in the questionnaires, using phrases such as "depending on the goodwill of non ISM", "all hands on deck", "muddle through" and "cobble together own solutions". One respondent commented "ISM in my opinion is far more effective in a smaller school" (Sap, Qu, NPH2). Thus, it was apparent to the researcher that leadership opportunities were afforded to teachers other than those in

formal leadership positions and that this was engrained in the culture - partly out of necessity and also with awareness that, oftentimes, informal leaders may be the most suitable people for the task at hand. The evidence in Sapling School suggests that there was whole-school awareness of the various talents of teachers and the way in which different people matched different leadership requirements at different times. This finding was reinforced in the diaries and the interviews and is discussed further in the Informal Leadership Practice section. Of course, this positive picture of 'we are all in this together' may have been premised on an expectation that when the moratorium is lifted, the most co-operative might be the strongest contenders for the 'new' posts. Even if this were the case, however, the collaborative culture was clearly important to all the research participants.

The three post holders in Sapling School all agreed to keep diaries. When reading the diaries in the initial stages of analysis, the researcher was very aware of the considerable workload of each of the post holders in carrying out assigned duties that were under the remit of their post and also additional tasks/duties that were not formally assigned to them. The three post holders documented leadership practices, interactions and behaviours which fell under the Group 3 on the spectrum in Figure 5 in the Analysis and Findings chapter. Their roles extended beyond taking responsibility for their duties and supporting others. They also collaborated regularly both with each other and non-post holders, shared decision-making, delegated tasks and distributed leadership. It was also clear from the diaries that others were very much dependent on their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, various entries highlighted some of the ways in which the post holders built capacity of their colleagues and enabled them in their work. For example, the DP, acting as mentor to a newly qualified teacher (NQT) recorded, "Had a meeting with a NQT. We

discussed areas to be worked on as were highlighted by her inspector. Gave advice and suggested approaches" (Sap, D, PH1). On another occasion she wrote, "Conversation with Senior Infant teacher (NQT) regarding the school's writing programme and particular writing copies. She came looking for guidance from me as mentor to NQTs" (Sap, D, PH1). Likewise, the principal documented a few instances where teachers (in particular NQTs) approached him for advice and support.

The principal looked to the ISMT for support, practical help "with a wide range of duties", advice and reassurance. He also made reference to the way that the ISMT worked together, modelled collaborative practice to other staff members and a way of working that involved everyone equally:

> I think it's a support to me, it's giving me ideas and it's supporting those ideas, and it's bringing that idealism to the rest of the staff as well. So it's a conduit between me and the staff, and it's also letting them see that I appreciate their ideas so that, springing forward, other teachers and new teachers in the school see that new ideas and trying things out is very important. (Sap, Int, P)

He commented that the ISMT was very approachable, that they "certainly do go way over and beyond the call of duty", and that they never tried to appear "different or more superior" to other staff members. On the contrary, he believed that the ISMT was enriched by the other members of staff, as well as vice-versa. The DP reinforced this opinion, remarking that "It's a two-way process" (Sap, Int, PH1).

Thus, what is palpable from the evidence gathered in Sapling School in relation to formal leadership practice is that leadership was embedded in many of their actions and interactions, regardless as to whether they were carrying out

assigned duties or interacting with staff in general. Those in formal positions acted as leaders when situations called for them to do so. This was backed up by evidence from the diaries, which highlighted regular instances of leadership practice and the leadership traits that the ISMT members displayed. Unlike in the other three schools, (with the exception of some need for review of posts) no issues around the roles, responsibilities and practice of ISMT members were highlighted by any of the interviewees. Rather, as was clear from the evidence from the questionnaires, a positive picture of leadership practice on the part of those in formal positions was portrayed.

Informal Leadership Practice in Sapling School

Evidence from the three data-sets highlights the fact that leadership opportunities were afforded to teachers other than those in formal leadership positions and it is apparent that this practice was the norm. Importantly, the evidence repeatedly suggested that such leadership opportunities were more than simply tasks to be delegated to others - these opportunities were spoken about in terms of giving someone the chance to lead and influence others and to bring one's vision to fruition. As was mentioned above, the support of informal leaders was needed in order to respond to the challenges that were facing the school. As well as this, however, and as the following section highlights, informal leadership practice was encouraged in this school as it was recognised that the skills and knowledge of informal leaders oftentimes made them the most suitable people to lead. It was also felt (by those in formal leadership positions) that the only way in which teachers could develop as leaders was to give them experience of doing so. These findings were reinforced time and time again in the questionnaires, diaries and interviews.

Of note in Sapling School, is that much insight was gained into the informal leadership practice of teachers and the collaborative culture that existed from the diary entries of the post holders. It was clear not only from the data relating to collaborative action, interaction and behaviour, but also in the way in which the post holders recorded their practices in their diaries. All three regularly spoke about their role as a collective (using the words "we" and "our"), as the references below highlights:

> This was a busy week, with a great deal to do on top of my regular teaching. Everything that needed doing got done, however, because we all work well as a team and are happy to help each other out. Our teachers are very supportive and are always looking to see where they can land a hand or lighten the load by taking something on themselves. We're very lucky indeed to have such a great bunch working alongside us! (Sap, D, PH1)

Another reference made by the principal in his diary illustrates this further:

> We are more than aware of the importance of giving ownership to all staff members and therefore encourage those who wish to take the lead to do so. This way of working is crucial in our school, seeing as we are under-resourced and are under pressure of time. (Sap, D, P)

It is clear from the evidence that the principal recognised the role that all members of staff played in the school and made the concerted effort to encourage and support the unique role that he believed they could play. He asserted that, "The school is only as good as the staff behind it." (Sap, Int, P). Clearly, this recognition was very much appreciated by the non-post holder who was interviewed. She said that she felt she spoke for her colleagues when she commented, "Most of us are quite

young on the staff and everyone has ideas to share ... and everybody is

acknowledged" (Sap, Int, NPH1). She was very aware that this was an ideal situation

and that this was not necessarily the case in other schools. Comparing Sapling

School to the one in which she had worked previously, she said that not only were

her and other younger teachers' opinions taken on board, they had never been

disregarded:

> So for example, with a meeting we had there about sports day, everyone was
>
> acknowledged and maybe if a suggestion was given they'd tell you why it
>
> mightn't work, maybe because it hasn't worked before, so you don't feel like
>
> it's just shrugged off. And even as this school gets bigger, I don't think
>
> things like that will change. (Sap, Int, NPH1)

The interviews highlighted evidence of established and regular distributed

leadership practice by (and to) both formal and informal leaders. The teachers were

given ownership of tasks and were given opportunities to lead. The researcher

questioned as to whether distributed leadership practice was solely invitational from

those in formal positions or if the non-post holders took the initiative themselves to

go forward and lead. The evidence suggests that as early as possible in their careers

in this school, the teachers were encouraged or invited to take on leadership roles. It

appears, however, that in taking ownership and gaining leadership experience, the

teachers had gained confidence in their role as leaders and were now taking the

initiative to lead rather than being asked or invited to do so. The evidence also

highlights that this development of leadership took place in the context of a

collaborative and trusting environment. In her interview, the non-post holder spoke

about this leadership development when she stated:

At first I was a bit nervous of taking on the music for the Sacraments because there's a lot of responsibility involved. But I saw how other teachers had taken on big things like this and had really enjoyed being able to put their own stamp on it. So I gave it a go and I'm now really confident doing it. Other teachers come to me for advice and help and I'm delighted because I know it's partly because I proved that I can take on something and lead it well. Now if I see something that would benefit the school, I put myself forward. So do the other young teachers, because we know it's ok if it doesn't work out. (Sap, Int, NPH1)

The post holder made a number of references to distributed leadership practices, including the following one that highlighted the informal leadership prospects that existed:

All teachers get equal opportunities to lead - the principal makes sure of that, and we are all very much supported and encouraged in these roles. I'm including our NQTs in that. They come from college with fantastic energy and ideas. We try to channel that energy and enthusiasm into appropriate leadership opportunities and I think that that's a great way of building their confidence and helping them to establish themselves in the school. (Sap, Int, PH1)

In the questionnaires, other non-post holders acknowledged that opportunities to lead had been distributed to them and one commented on her own leadership and the way in which she put herself forward to lead occasionally, saying "I find being in charge every so often very enjoyable and I like to take things on and lead others. We're always encouraged to do things like that". She did, however, acknowledge

that "it has to manageable" (Sap, Qu, NPH3). Thus, the evidence suggests that informal leadership opportunities were open to everyone and that all teachers were encouraged to "sign up to get involved" (Sap, Int, NPH1). Another non-post holder in her comments in the open ended section of the questionnaire said that she too had enjoyed being approached about areas of interest to her and she gave another example whereby another teacher had come looking for her advice on teaching a class level that she had not taught before. She clearly felt affirmed by these experiences, which gave her confidence so that she too could approach her colleagues when she needed to. Thus, an atmosphere of trust underlay the work of the school, and added greatly to the collaborative atmosphere. This trust had, in turn, enabled distributed leadership practice on the part of both formal and informal leaders.

When asked about informal leadership practice in his interview, the principal asserted that affording opportunities to lead had to be along a continuum - that the learning never stops. He commented, "It's about encouraging the staff to share their ideas, to share their experiences, one or twenty years of that experience ... because I think that this leads to a building of confidence and to a very positive building of staff expertise" (Sap, Int, P). He was very strong in his opinion that a variety of perspectives and expertise could help in creating and developing curricular policies in particular. At the same time, however he felt that the school needed more formal leaders too, again lamenting the fact that they did not have the manpower that is needed to lead such work. He stated:

> I'm just very reluctant to add any more duties on to those two post holders.
> Certainly we need more people with special duties and ISM responsibilities

... Not to feel sorry for ourselves, but in a hugely developing school at that rapid pace, formal leadership positions are an absolute requirement ... The teachers should be rewarded for the stellar work that they do here that goes far beyond their remit. (Sap, Int, P)

Speaking about the development of leaders in general, he firmly believed that former opportunities were vital for developing his own leadership skills and that he was determined to give the same chance to the staff, asserting:

I think that it's hugely important to give them the chance to lead. I make sure to give time to people, encourage them to take on their tasks, get stuck in and make it their own and see how it goes for them. Certainly that's how I learned how to lead. (Sap, Int, P)

The principal acknowledged the importance of distributing leadership and expressed his desire to continue to make this way of working the norm in the school. He commented that some informal leaders were carrying out duties that had been "lost due to the moratorium ... they're doing it out of the goodness of their hearts" (Sap, Int, P). He was strong in his opinion that it was very necessary therefore to encourage distributed leadership practice in the school. He commented that he was aware that the moratorium could affect the potential of non-post holders to get an opportunity to lead in a formal capacity in the near future and he therefore stressed the importance of developing informal leadership roles in the school. Hence, developing a culture in which distributed leadership was the norm was, according to the principal, a priority of his (Sap, Int, P). The evidence from the questionnaires, diaries and interviews shows that his vision had become a reality.

Thus, as result of these opportunities to lead, as well as the reinforcement and encouragement that they received within an environment of trust, the participants in Sapling School seemed to view themselves as leaders and showed little hesitancy in viewing themselves in this way. It was apparent to the researcher that leadership was a word and concept that was part of the discourse of both post holders and non-post holders in this school, something that was a need for other schools in this study. This is discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter.

Principal's Leadership Practice in Sapling School

In Sapling School there was, as was mentioned above, a real sense of ownership on the part of all staff members, and it was clear that this had been facilitated hugely by the encouragement and support that the principal gave to his colleagues. He considered that the most important part of his role was the leadership part, and he often dealt with the administrative and management side of his role, when possible, outside of school hours. He was a teaching principal at the time of the interview, and said that he was very aware of his responsibility towards the children he was teaching. The upside of being a teaching principal, he felt, was that it kept him very much in touch with the curriculum and "classroom matters", but the downside was that he never had enough time during school hours to "get everything else done" (Sap, Int, P).

The researcher questioned the extent to which his teaching role impacted upon his leadership practice and also questioned whether he was sometimes viewed at the same level as the rest of the staff, seeing as he too was teaching and therefore not removed from the classroom. Lipsky's (1980) concept of street-level bureaucracy, whereby "policy implementation in the end comes down to the people

who actually implement it" reminds policy makers and leaders that very often it is

the decisions made by those at the chalk-face that make the difference in practice (p.

18). It was suspected that the principal in Sapling School was viewed by his

colleagues as being the same as them due to the fact that he shared in the challenges

and rewards that teaching presents. At the same time, it was suspected by the

researcher that, given his role as principal, he may also have been seen as the one to

have ultimate say on matters. The questionnaires, diaries and interviews all affirmed

these suspicions. The lines between levels of management were blurred, with

different people practising leadership when required. At the same time, the principal

was, without a doubt, seen to play a central leadership role. He made a number of

references himself to the way in which staff decisions and changes that were made

had direct bearing on his own teaching, just like the other teachers. He felt that his

input into decisions was probably accepted more readily by other staff due to this

and he liked the way he was therefore "not seen as pushing change from the top"

(Sap, Int, P)

The principal in Sapling School remarked that he thoroughly enjoyed the way

in which he could devote a lot of his time towards learning-centred leadership, and

evidence from his diary confirmed that many of his actions and interactions that took

place during the school day centred around teaching and learning matters as opposed

to administrative or management issues. The downside, as mentioned earlier, was

that he had a heavy workload, particularly after school hours when he had "to catch

up" and therefore felt under considerable pressure "most of the time" (Sap, Int, P).

He asserted:

The administrative and managerial burden seems to be ever-increasing and this is really where I could do with more post holders. Sometimes I wonder what is expected of the role of principal ... it just seems to me that we are to be all things to all people. That's where, thankfully, the staff in this school make getting the job done possible, and in a way that's satisfactory to us. (Sap, Int, P)

He spoke at length about his own leadership practice and the leadership practice of principals in general. He acknowledged the central role that the principal plays in schools and believed that his own main role lay in the way in which he recognised strengths in others and encouraged and supported their work, and acknowledged that somebody needed to facilitate and coordinate this. He felt that being approachable to staff and parents, as well as making time for them, was crucial. Thus, he had worked very hard to create an atmosphere of trust. Furthermore, he recognised that he had a central role in giving reassurance and support. He commented, "It's giving reassurance to teachers, giving the nod, that's important. I want to communicate that everything that is done, is on a basis of trust and that we're all working together with a common vision" (Sap, Int, P). This did not go unnoticed by those who were interviewed. The non-post holder made frequent references to "working closely" with colleagues, and "working as a team" (Sap, Int, NPH1). The post holder also remarked that "There is a wonderful sense of collaboration, a good spirit where everyone mucks in!" (Sap, Int, PH1)

Commenting on informal leadership, the principal acknowledged the importance that having informal leadership positions himself had played in his early career. He highlighted the support and encouragement that he had received from the

principal and the way in which he was given responsibility to lead certain initiatives. As a result of his own positive experience, he had endeavoured to encourage and support those who were interested in leading in Sapling School. He remarked that he tried very hard to ensure that many informal leadership opportunities were made available to the staff and he encouraged them to make decisions and also to receive professional development to help them in the areas in which they were interested (Sap, Int, P).

In his interview, the principal communicated the fact that he would like to be able to delegate and distribute to an even greater extent, but was hesitant to do so, as he was aware that the staff were working very hard as it was. He commented in his personal reflection that much of his leadership practice happened along the corridor incidentally and said, "I have found that the post holders have a significant work-load, so I can't divest any more work onto them" (Sap, D, P). Looking to the other members of staff, he wrote:

> It would be great if I could divest the managing of curricular areas over to teachers, which would allow more time for "thinking aloud", which needs to happen so teachers are part of the plan for the school. Ideas are bounced off one another and these form the discussion for school development. (Sap, D, P)

Giving an example of one such occasion in his diary, he wrote:

> Met with the two Junior Infants teachers to discuss ideas for the summer concert, with the intention of encouraging the talent and expertise that I know is available in the school. The teachers were encouraged to take the lead and

agreed that they would prepare short presentations for the end of the year plays. (Sap, D, P)

Thus, the leadership practice of the principal in this school was carried out by a leader who was very much aware of the importance of having a team working alongside him and how crucial an atmosphere of trust was in order to enable this. He showed awareness of his own strengths and the strengths of others and worked hard to mould his leadership style around those whom he worked with. Furthermore, his belief in teamwork and collegiality meant that Sapling School was clearly working in a collaborative way.

Structures and Supports around Leadership Practice in Sapling School

The evidence suggests that the leadership structure in Sapling School was not a tight hierarchy. This may have been partly due to the smaller size of the school, but numerous references that were made relating to ownership and affording opportunities to lead, suggest that there was a flatter leadership structure due to the deliberate attempts made to create and maintain such a structure. It was in the context of this structure that distributed leadership was encouraged and practised. There were many supports around leadership practice in this school, including effective communication, the ability and willingness to work collaboratively together, and also the way in which everyone had a say and was viewed as an important part of the team. These are discussed in more detail below.

Clearly there had been effective and regular communication in this school which, according to a number of respondents to the questionnaire, was due to the school's smaller size. They all agreed that there was regular communication between the ISMT and other teachers. The intervieweed backed this up by highlighting that

communication was both effective and regular and that there was a balance between formal and informal communicative structures. The principal and post holder did both identify, however, that maintaining this would prove quite a challenge as the school continued to grow and recognised that more formal structures would soon have to be put in place to "ensure that no-one is left out" (Sap, Int, P). Up to now, meetings of the ISMT had been on an informal, rather spontaneous basis, partly due to the fact that the principal was very concerned with communicating to those who were not on the team that they had as important a role to play and that what they had to say was as important. He asserted:

> I don't think that we should formalise ISMT meetings. We all can say our piece at staff meetings. At a staff meeting if there was another layer of management I think it slows down progress and it means that you're also alienating other members of staff, maybe, who might be experts in a particular area who might feel that they have to go through the ISMT before speaking up. Doing so certainly wouldn't encourage any informal leadership, in my mind. (Sap, Int, P)

The post holder held the same view, asserted that everything was discussed at staff meetings and that "everything is open for discussion, so that anything that's relating to school management is done on those days too" (Sap, Int, PH1). The non-post holder felt that communication was very satisfactory and remarked that, "You always know what's happening, it's not word of mouth or anything. Communication is usually directly from the person" (Sap, Int, NPH1). The growing size of the school, as recognised by the post holder and principal meant, however, that such

direct, one-to-one contact would not always be possible and that the more informal communication would have to become more structured and formal.

The existence of regular and effective communication was also highlighted a number of times in the diaries. All three post holders made reference to the importance of clear communication in their interactions, not only with staff members but with parents, children, outside agencies and so on. The principal commented on the importance of communication with the staff and said of staff meetings:

> Staff meetings are very important, although there is so little time to discuss everything that needs to be discussed. Preparation for the meetings needs to be perfect. It's important to send the agenda to all staff early so that the best time can be made of the short staff meeting. The participation of all staff members is encouraged. (Sap, Int, P)

Similarly, in her personal reflection, the AP made reference to the developing nature of the school and the importance of clear communication. She stressed again that as the school has been getting bigger, the post holders had a responsibility to continue this level of communication. She wrote:

> We have to make even more of an effort to ensure that all staff members are kept "in the loop" and feel that they are given opportunities for input. It was much easier to ensure that this was happening when the school was smaller. We recognise that good communication is central to the work of the school and take it on ourselves to encourage it. (Sap, D, PH2)

Working in collaboration with others was seen as vitally important by all the research participants in Sapling School and all three data-sets illustrate that a very

collaborative culture existed. The evidence suggests that such ways of working were constantly encouraged and supported by the principal and the other formal leaders. All teachers acknowledged that the ISMT had contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in their school. This culture had been embraced since the school opened a few years ago and there was a determined effort on the part of all the teachers to continue working in this way. Both the post holder and non-post holder in their interview reflected on their previous experience in other schools, where such a culture did not exist. The small size of the school and the fact that it was a developing school were both seen as factors in allowing for a collaborative culture, although each of the interviewees acknowledged that all staff members worked hard to create and sustain this positive atmosphere.

The collaborative culture was largely helped by the aforementioned flatter structure of leadership and management that existed. Again, this seemed to be aided by the smaller size of the school but also by the way in which the principal and the ISMT endeavoured to include all teachers (and also other stakeholders, including parents, the Board of Management and SNAs) in the sharing of ideas and the way opinions were very much encouraged. Even when articulating what she thought the purpose of ISM/leadership was, the post holder mentioned "including others" as one of the main purposes, commenting:

> I think the purpose of leadership is to have a team at the top of something to show example and to lead the way for other people, to set out policies and targets, but most importantly to bring people along, to get people to work with you and share their ideas. And it's not only the ISMT who's encouraged to lead like this. (Sap, Int, PH1)

The three interviewees made reference to the collegial way in which the staff, teachers, pupils and members of the community worked together. The post holder spoke enthusiastically about this work saying that it led to great camaraderie and openness (Sap, Int, PH1). The non-post holder, also commenting on this practice said, "A lot of collaboration goes on here. It's very much like whatever is going on we'll always help out who's there and it's very good, it makes a good community atmosphere in the school as well" (Sap, Int, NPH1). As the questionnaire data showed, the teachers in Sapling School took pride in the way in which they all "got stuck in", regardless of formal position or not. In her diary, the DP mentioned a number of occasions when she felt that she was working collaboratively with her colleagues. Writing about one such occasion, she wrote that while she had organised to meet a few teachers to review policy, she simply saw herself in a facilitative role and that she felt that they were successful in their task due the positive way in which they worked together (Sap, D, PH1).

Describing the culture of the school, the principal commented "At the moment it's very co-operative, with everyone willing to learn from those who have expertise in an area" (Sap, Int, P). When asked if he thought that the culture was changing in any way, he observed that it is more difficult to expect all new staff to adapt into a school culture of co-operation "specifically now that we are obliged to hire teachers who are entitled to a job above those who are most qualified for the job. The panel arrangement is detrimental to building and preserving school culture" (Sap, Int, P). Thus, he anticipated that the school would have to continue to actively work on maintaining their positive work and leadership practices.

The collaboration in Sapling School clearly was not forced upon the teachers, with the non-post holder confirming that, "Collaboration is definitely promoted and encouraged, but it certainly isn't forced or overpowering" (Sap, Int, NPH1). Collaborative work practices were in fact desired by the staff, with the non-post holder acknowledging, "It's so important because then everybody can work together or knows what page everyone is on" (Sap, Int, NPH1). Evidence from the post holder's interview reinforced the opinion that building and sustaining a collaborative culture was much easier in a new school. She argued:

> Because we started off small, and we were able to start off with a
>
> collaborative approach, it's easy to build on it. It's much more difficult if, for
>
> example, new management come to an already set up situation, to change it
>
> to work more collaboratively - it takes much longer. We're lucky to have
>
> been able to build it from the beginning. (Sap, Int, PH1)

Despite her positive view, she was also very aware that good communication and collaboration had to be constantly worked on. She remarked:

> I think it's very good, but it's down to each individual. We give feedback at
>
> meetings and have informal meetings. But it's up to the individual. You
>
> could, in theory, lie low but I don't believe this happens. At the same time
>
> though, it probably could be said that ISMT as a group used to be a lot better
>
> at communicating and collaborating with each other. That needs
>
> improvement. It's important not to become complacent. (Sap, Int, PH1)

Delegation of work and responsibilities was common practice in Sapling School, and each of the interviewees spoke about it positively. They also discussed it from a practical viewpoint, considering how the ISMT's duties are "overburdened as

it is" and that delegation was necessary to get everything done (Sap, Int, P). The post holder commented, "A lot of the day-to day work is delegated among the staff. We have a great staff. They do take on a lot of work" (Sap, Int, PH1). This view was echoed by the principal who asserted, "I have a very supportive staff that will always say yes no matter what the request is, but it just takes time to organise for that delegation" (Sap, Int, P). The non-post holder when referring to delegation commented that it happened rather informally, possibly because of the small size of the school and also because of the "teamwork ethos" that underlined their work. Similarly, she believed that the ISMT knew that what they delegated would be "taken on board quite happily" by those who they were delegating to (Sap, Int, NPH1).

Delegation did not only come from the top-down. The non-post holders had been encouraged to share out tasks when they needed to and to look for the support of their colleagues. The non-post holder referred to an Induction Day that was held for incoming Junior Infants which she was very involved in and spoke about the way in which she looked to other staff members for help and support. She remarked that it was easy to ask for help when other teachers were aware that she too would do the same for them (Sap, Int, NPH1). The post holder too remarked that she was very open to delegation, saying that "You help out when it's needed and you dish it out when you need to! And I couldn't thank the staff enough for the way they respond to that. They all chip in and take different areas at different times." (Sap, Int, NPH1). The principal was equally appreciative, commenting that he delegated a great deal and was grateful that it was so well received (Sap, Int, P).

As with delegation, the three interviewees believed that decision-making worked well in the school and again, that all staff members were involved and their input was encouraged. The post holder considered the school to be very democratic when it came to decision-making and that there were no difficulties with this. She said, "Well so far decisions have really been taken on a whole-staff basis, everything is discussed at meetings … like I really can't think of any decision that hasn't been made democratically" (Sap, Int, PH1). Linked with this, something that was very evident in the other schools was that the non-post holders in particular made a number of references to "having a say" and to "having their voice heard". This was the case in Sapling School too. The non-post holder expressed that she liked the way her input was not only welcome but strongly encouraged (Sap, Int, NPH1). She remarked that she felt a sense of ownership for things that happened in the school because she was involved in decision-making and because oftentimes her suggestions and opinions were considered. When asked if the ISMT welcomed input from other members of staff she replied enthusiastically:

> Yeah, absolutely! It's definitely something that this school does really well. The school I was in before, there was a bigger staff and we were the new teachers and we didn't really get to say as much. We didn't have a say in what was going on in and it was really noticeable that we were expected to just go along with what was already in motion, and only those on top really had a say and made all the decisions. But this school, it's great, much better. (Sap, Int, NPH1)

She made many references to the younger teachers, and how she believed they too felt grateful for the opportunities that they were given to have an input into decisions

made. Those not holding formal leadership positions felt as though they were regarded as equal decision-makers, and this too was confirmed as a reality during the interviews with the principal and post holder.

Thus, as the evidence highlights, a very positive picture emerged of the structures that supported both formal and informal leadership in this school and the findings presented above give some insight as to why formal and informal leadership practice, and the practice of distributed leadership were thriving in Sapling School.

Professional Needs around Leadership Practice in Sapling School

The most acute need that was identified in Sapling School was for more posts of responsibility as a result of the school's continued growth in size and moratorium on promotion. While each of the interviewees acknowledged the great work that was going on already without extra posts, they all expressed the view that the school was finding it very hard to continue this level of work, particularly as it continued to develop. The post holder argued that, "The moratorium had seriously affected the school. I think that we need a lot more people on the ISMT. I think we're really stretched at the moment and we've really missed out in not getting the extra posts" (Sap, Int, PH1). She felt too that a greater amount of delegation would probably have to occur in future years, and that the bigger the school got "the more complicated things will become, especially where communication is concerned" (Sap, Int, PH). The principal too made a number of references regarding the impact that the moratorium had had. He said that "It has made school development as a new school extremely challenging, with more pressure not just on the existing ISMT but also on all teachers" (Sap, Int, P). When asked if there were any structures in place to "fill the gap", he remarked "We are very fortunate to have a staff who are willing to take

on new tasks and to get fully involved in school planning with no complaints" (Sap, Int, P).

Thus, as was the case in the other schools, the need for more time to carry out duties was identified, particularly as they felt so hard pressed already. The principal remarked that he certainly did not want to ask any member of staff to put any more extra time in than they did already, but could not "see a way around the time issue" (Sap, Int, P). The principal asserted that they had worked so hard to build up a positive reputation in the area, and that this was down to the hard work of the staff. He was concerned that there was only so far that the staff could be pushed, however. He remarked "We would like to think that what we do, we do well. We have good feedback about our school and have attracted a lot of pupils who would have traditionally considered the established schools in the area". He added "We worked on our school ethos during the year and we have begun to constantly refer to it in all we set about doing. We want to maintain this, but are finding it all the more difficult due to being under resourced" (Sap, Int, P).

In Sapling School, the lack of space and the layout and temporary nature of the school building were identified by the three interviewees as being huge factors that could hinder communication due to the lack of space in which the staff could meet and the way in which the building was laid out. The principal commented that staff members had very little privacy as the staffroom was shared with a learning support area (Sap, Int, P). The post holder also referred to the lack of space and remarked that a new building to accommodate their growing size was becoming an urgent need of theirs (Sap, Int, PH1). Furthermore, the bigger the school became, the

more formal the communication structures would have to become and the principal identified this as an impending challenge for him and the staff.

Finally, the need for professional development was also mentioned by the three interviewees. This came from the positive perspective that it was very important to continue to build on skills. Whereas in the other schools, the need for professional development was sometimes identified because of a perceived lack of leadership skills, the need for development in this school came from the desire to build upon existing skills, "so that they can take their expertise to the next level" (Sap, Int, P). Both the principal and post holder believed that this should not be reserved for those on the ISMT, highlighting their views that informal leaders played a role in the school and therefore should be "given a chance to develop their skills and knowledge base like the rest of us" (Sap, Int, P). The non-post holder acknowledged that the principal regularly offered staff members the opportunity to go on courses, but for the time being, she recognised that the personal experience that she was getting, along with the help and expertise of her colleagues, was the type of professional development that she felt she required the most.

Appendix M

Case D: Analysis and Findings from Scoil Síorghlas

Introduction to Scoil Síorghlas

Scoil Síorghlas, like the other schools is located in the suburbs of Dublin close to a number of housing estates. It is a medium to large sized Gaelscoil, meaning that the children are taught predominantly through the medium of Irish. In the school year 2009-2010, 230 children were attending the school and there were 11 teachers (6 post holders, including the principal) and 2.5 SNAs. The school is made up of four separate prefabricated buildings that are spread over the school yard, an arrangement that appears to be highly segmented. The aging prefabricated buildings are not aesthetically pleasant, and do not contribute to the warm, welcoming feeling that one gets from meeting and interacting with the staff and children.

The main catchment areas around the school are a mixture of middle-class privately owned estates and council houses. The majority of the children who attend the school come from these local estates and the socio-economic status of the families of the majority of the children is predominantly working or middle class. An effort is made to brighten up the corridors with children's work, class photos and awards. As in the other schools, the children are encouraged to show respect to those whom they meet.

The principal, who has been in the position for three years, had been the deputy principal prior to her appointment. She speaks proudly and fondly of the school but also communicates the challenges that it faces on a daily basis. The main challenge at the time of this research was the pressure that the perceived moratorium had brought due to the fact that the school was not able to fill posts temporarily while teachers were out on maternity leave. The school's strong Irish ethos is

palpable and the photos and achievements that are visible show the huge emphasis that is placed on Irish culture and language.

The teachers display camaraderie and light-heartedness and appear to mix well and comfortably together in the staffroom. The atmosphere around the school is busy and friendly. The research was welcomed by the staff and the principal went out of her way to send questionnaires to those who were out on leave.

Formal Leadership Practice in Scoil Síorghlas

Examining formal leadership practice in Scoil Síorghlas highlights certain findings that this school has in common with other schools in this study. These findings include general satisfaction with the work of the ISMT but also the need for review and clarity regarding the work of the post holders and issues around post allocation based on seniority. Exploring formal leadership through the diaries led to the finding, however, that it was mainly the principal who acted as a leader and that the actions and interactions of the non-post holders tended to be at a more administrative or task-based level. Thus, the relatively positive attitudes of the staff towards the work of post holders did not reflect leadership practice *per se*, even though their practice was labelled as such by those both in formal and informal positions.

Attitudes towards formal leadership practice were first expressed in the questionnaires which were distributed to 11 teachers (including the principal). Three of the questionnaires were passed on to teachers who were not in attendance at the meeting. A total of nine questionnaires were returned, representing an 82% response rate. The profile questions highlighted a much higher male to female ratio than in the

other schools, with 4 male respondents and 5 female. The respondents all had under

15 years teaching experience, with the majority (6 respondents) falling within the 6-

10 year range. 4 out of the 9 respondents were members of the ISMT, none of whom

had more than 10 years' experience within ISM. As was stated above, attitudes

towards formal leadership in Scoil Síorghlas were generally quite positive, with all

of the respondents believing that the ISMT had relevance to them and also that the

ISMT was beneficial to their school. One of the post holders commented that "ISM

is essential in the effective running of our school. The team helps to take pressure off

the principal" (Síor, Qu, PH2). The majority of respondents were aware as to who

the members of the ISMT were and also the purpose of ISM. There was some

uncertainty, however, as to what duties the post holders held. While the post holder

believed that the weight of posts was evenly distributed, the non-post holder stated

that he reckoned, "some do more than others" (Síor, Int, NPH1).

In Scoil Síorghlas, there were three members on the ISMT at the time of the

interviews as opposed to the usual five. The duties of the ISMT had been

redistributed among the post holders due to two teachers being out on maternity

leave, posts which could not be filled due to the moratorium on promotion. The post

holder interviewed was the DP in an acting-up capacity at the time. Prior to this, he

was a Special Duties post holder. Both the post holder and principal made reference

to the challenge that the moratorium had presented to the school. The post holder

commented, "Everyone has kind of mixed up their roles this year ... so it's all a bit

up in the air. Basically it's the same amount of jobs divided up between a smaller

number of people" (Síor, Int, PH1). The principal highlighted the loss of posts a

number of times, arguing, "We've lost a lot there. We had very fixed roles last year,

but because of what has happened we're all trying to work as a team to divide up a

lot of tasks. It has really had a detrimental effect" (Síor, Int, P). The evidence suggests that this loss was felt on a practical level, with the principal remarking that they were now "lacking pairs of hands to get jobs done" (Síor, Int, P). It was noted, however, that no reference was made as to how the moratorium had resulted in a loss of leadership or management personnel. Rather, their loss were referred to in terms of the duties and tasks that they used to carry out but that now required redistribution among other staff members.

The questionnaires highlighted that there was lack of clarity as to what the assigned duties of the ISMT were. One respondent explained that there might be some lack of clarity due to the effects that the moratorium was having on the school. He remarked that, "It is quite difficult to decipher who is in charge of what aspects of management at the moment ... I'm not sure what happens with the responsibilities of those on leave. Before the moratorium it was much clearer" (Síor, Qu, NPH3). A number of respondents also felt that the duties of post holders should be reviewed. One respondent commented on the fact that as the needs of schools change from year to year, so too should posts of responsibility (Síor, Qu, NPH1). Another respondent felt that while some of the duties were very helpful a few years ago, the same needs no longer existed and that new duties should be introduced to reflect the school's current needs. He gave the example of post holders who were in charge of curricular policy as part of their duties. He argued:

> Now that the policies are written and working well, all that's needed is to make sure that they're reviewed from time to time. The posts could be used to lead in other, more pressing areas. (Síor, Qu, NPH2)

Most of the duties of the ISMT centred around curricular areas, although the principal ensured that all posts had a pastoral, instructional and staff development dimension too. The post holder believed that most staff knew what the duties of the ISMT were due to the fact that post holders were expected to report at staff meetings (Síor, Int, PH1).

The non-post holder who was interviewed also mentioned that the roles needed to be reviewed, believing that some priorities in the school had changed and that the posts did not reflect them. He gave the example in relation to the area of ICT and the fact that there was no post to oversee, what he considered to be a "growing and important area," and one which involved a considerable amount of professional development for the staff (Síor, Int, NPH1). He asserted that it was important that any review would take the opinions of all staff into consideration so that the needs and priorities of the school could be highlighted. While he believed that some of the roles matched the needs of the school, he felt that they were not clearly defined, even before the moratorium had resulted in changes (Síor, Int, PH1). On the other hand the principal said that reviews generally took place annually, and that all members of staff were involved in the process (Síor, Int, P). The non-post holder, however, was not aware of any review of posts, commenting, "Not to my knowledge. It could have happened at senior level and I don't know about it, but not to my knowledge anyway" (Síor, Int, NPH1). Thus, it was clear that attitudes differed between those in formal positions and those who were not as to the need for review of existing posts.

Of note in Scoil Síorghlas is that 100% of respondents to the questionnaire agreed (4 strongly) that the ISMT has been generally successful in delegating. There was a sense from the open ended comments, however, that while they had delegated

successfully, some respondents felt that this was done too much. One respondent made the observation that the ISMT certainly welcomed ideas and encouraged input and help, although he remarked, "Sometimes you have to be careful in case you end up being lumped with a job that was theirs in the first place!" (Síor, Qu, NPH3). The post holder who was interviewed spent some time reflecting on this and expressed his hesitancy towards showing an interest for fear that his workload would increase considerably, as it had done in the past. When he was asked whether he would consider this delegation as an attempt on the part of the ISMT to share leadership opportunities with non-post holders, he felt strongly that it was not, replying, "No, I don't really think so! It's more an attempt to share work than leadership!"(Síor, Int, PH1).

Three post holders agreed to keep diaries in Scoil Síorghlas, including the principal, acting DP and a Special Duties post holder. With the exception of the principal, the other post holders did not record instances where they called upon leadership skills or behaviours in their actions and interactions with others. While the post holders clearly took responsibility for the duties assigned to their posts, and the diaries showed that others were happy to go to them occasionally for their knowledge and skills, there was not much evidence of the leadership practice. Only the work of the principal reflected the type of practice that falls into Group 3 on the spectrum in Figure 5 in the Analysis and Findings chapter, while both of the post holders' actions and interactions mainly reflected those in Group 1 on the spectrum. For example, both of these post holders rarely shared decision-making or tasks and worked, for the most part, independently of others, despite the fact that they did (as was mentioned above) delegate work to others. The acting DP recorded a few instances where he had delegated tasks to others and was occasionally approached

with queries from his colleagues. There was little evidence of initiative-taking, or exercising of authority, and while they did communicate quite regularly with other teachers, they rarely worked collaboratively with them. Furthermore, their interactions with their colleagues did not seem to have the purpose of capacity-building. Overall there was little or no evidence of leadership practice and neither post holder mentioned any leadership role that may have played in their diary reflections.

A clear finding from this school suggests that post holders are not always leaders. This was illustrated in the diaries and subsequently during the interview with the post holder in Scoil Síorghlas. As acting DP the post holder acknowledged his new role and remarked that there were expectations that he felt came with being "at this level of management", that he felt that he had far more responsibility and that his opinion was sought by the principal on a more regular basis (Síor, Int, PH1). The evidence suggests, however, that his role was rather narrow and was at more of a management/administrative level than a leadership one, as had been evident in his diary entries. When asked about his leadership role, he identified "having knowledge of my subject" as the most important element of his role, which was sport. He stated:

> Just generally like knowing what I'm talking about. Because that's what people want, like they come to you and they want an answer, I just give it to them, like if it's sport-specific I usually have an answer for them straight away, and if I don't I go and get back to them on it. (Síor, Int, PH1)

He clearly felt confident in this Special Duties role, although spoke about the importance of "saving face" by being "up-to-speed on your subject" (Síor, Int,

NPH1). When probed further as to what leadership role he played as acting DP, he replied, "Again it's about stepping up, being more professional and knowing your stuff" (Síor, Int, PH1). In his description of his role, both in relation to his sport post and as DP, there was not much evidence of practice that involved leadership. Much of his practice centered around completing task-based activities such as managing resources and less so on vision-setting, the setting of meaningful directions and the influencing the actions/behaviours of others (Leithwood et al., 2004). Although in an acting DP position, he did not appear to lead others, and he alluded to the fact that he did not consider leadership to be part of his role. Rather he appeared to consider leadership as being the principal's job. This was particularly clear in one reference that he made when commenting on the central role that the principal played in the school. He remarked:

> Yeah … she plays an important role and she's definitely the one with ultimate authority. I suppose her job is to lead the troops, whereas the other post holders and me, we lighten the load and try to make her job a bit easier. (Síor, Int, PH1)

Finally, the way that formal positions had been given based on seniority alone was an issue that was commented on by the non-post holder in his interview. While, the post holder spoke very positively about his fellow post holders, remarking that, "The people we have in the roles are specifically strong at their post, which is important" (Síor, Int, PH1), the non-post holder stated that roles had been given on a seniority basis and that if there were ever to be a review of middle and senior leadership in Ireland, that reducing the importance of seniority towards promotion would be "very beneficial to future leadership" (Síor, Int, NPH1). Having had a post

himself in his previous school, and being relatively new to this staff, he commented that:

> The staff is quite young, and I kind of feel that everything goes on seniority rather than ability, in other words you're given your middle management role based on how long you've been in the school ... In which case then, the role is made to fit the teacher's abilities as opposed to vice-versa. So you're tailoring to meet that person's needs in which case would mean it would not necessarily be always beneficial for the school. (Síor, Int, NPH1)

In spite of these feelings, the non-post holder asserted that he was more than happy to lead informally and that he felt that his own role lay in bringing his "own talents to the staff on a more informal level" (Síor, Int, NPH1). He also acknowledged the pressure that the school was under and that all staff members had the responsibility to play their part (Síor, Int, NPH1). The effect of the moratorium is discussed further in the next section detailing informal leadership in Scoil Síorghlas.

Overall the evidence suggests that, with the exception of the principal, leadership practice by post holders was minimal in this school, despite holding formal leadership positions. Rather, practice was quite duty-bound and their actions and interactions did not require them to call upon leadership skills or behaviours.

Informal Leadership Practice in Scoil Síorghlas

A clear picture emerged as to the practice of those who did not hold formal positions in the school during the interviews. The main finding relating to informal leadership practice highlights the central importance of trust in the relationship between formal leaders and those who wish to lead informally. Another finding in

this school is that opportunities to lead sometimes appeared as a gift to be bestowed on teachers. Taking the initiative appeared to be a prerequisite to taking on informal leadership opportunities. In Scoil Síorghlas, the evidence suggests that non-post holders refrained from taking the initiative to lead, however so that they would avoid adding to their workload.

The principal of Scoil Síorghlas, having studied educational leadership a few years earlier, commented that she was very aware of the benefits of distributed leadership practices in schools and that the longer she was in the principalship, the more she felt that the school was ready to embrace this way of working. She spoke of giving opportunities to informal leaders, acknowledging the talents and expertise that were among the staff. She commented, "We try to give everyone a kind of teacher leadership role as well so they've a chance to lead" (Síor, Int, P). She also felt that the involvement of informal leaders with the work of the ISMT should be encouraged, saying, "We try to get other people who are non-post holders to come on board as well. The most important thing we found from giving teachers a chance to lead is that it keeps up the level of trust so they know what's going on and it's more of an open atmosphere" (Síor, Int, P). Despite her awareness of the importance of informal and distributed leadership, it was noted that every time she referred to this practice, it was viewed on her part as something that was "given" to teachers. She never mentioned her role in encouraging informal leaders to take the initiative to lead so that the desire to lead might come from them as opposed to being given to them by her or the ISMT. For instance, commenting on involving all staff in writing curricular policies, she asserted that:

Everyone should be involved in putting the policies together. Besides, it's

another way that I can get non-post holders to lead a bit so I would be very

determined to approach them and offer them the chance to take on a

leadership role. (Síor, Int, P)

Of note in Scoil Síorghlas is the number of references that were made to the

importance of building and maintaining trust so that leadership practice could

flourish. This is evident in the former reference made above by the principal. The

post holder and non-post holder also spoke about instances that highlighted the

importance of trust, without always labeling it as such. A finding that emerged from

this school is that, despite many references to its importance, a lack of trust was

sometimes evident. Phrases such as "fear of stepping on toes" (Síor, Int, NPH1) and

"being careful not to overstep the mark" (Síor, Int, PH1) were used by both the post

holder and non-post holder in their interviews regarding duties, roles and

responsibilities of those in formal leadership positions. The evidence suggests that

lack of trust could hinder leadership practice in the way in which it could break

down positive communication and collaboration between some members of staff.

Another finding relating to informal leadership practice is that despite the

principal's effort to distribute leadership to non-post holders, the latter did not regard

these invitations as leadership opportunities. This finding emerged from the

questionnaires and the interview with the non-post holders. In the open ended section

of the questionnaire, whereby respondents were asked if they had any comments that

they wished to make about formal leadership in their school or in general, three

remarks made by non-post holders suggested that the leadership opportunities that

had been afforded to them were not recognised as such by the non-post holders. One respondent wrote:

> In-school management is important in schools because there's always so much to be done beyond teaching. It's a pity that the moratorium has affected promotion because I know that for the foreseeable future, I won't get a chance to try my hand at leadership or management. (Síor, Qu, NPH2)

Another non-post holder, commenting on the ISM structure, asserted that it does not always allow for teachers to put themselves forward to lead. He commented, "One of my areas of interest is already covered by a post, so there's no point in two of us leading in that area" (Síor, Qu, NPH3). A third non-post holder only identified the leadership opportunities as tasks that were being delegated to him, and not a chance to take ownership and lead and this was backed up by example of 'tasks' that he was given. Indeed none of these tasks seemed to have a leadership dimension about them - they did not have the objective of influencing others and impacting upon the actions, interactions or attitudes of others. Recognising the pressure that the ISMT was under, he commented:

> We've all been asked to chip in and take some of the pressure off ISM. I have to say that we all play our part in helping them out and taking on some of their work, even if it means that we are under more pressure ourselves. (Síor, Qu, NPH4)

The evidence from Scoil Síorghlas in particular led to a core finding of this study relating to the use of delegation by those in formal leadership positions. The evidence suggests that delegation could sometimes be regarded by non-post holders as increased workload rather than the opportunity to take on a leadership role. This

may sometimes have been simply about a state of mind on the part of the non post-holders, although as highlighted above, the evidence does suggest that 'leadership opportunities' were not always such. This is discussed in more detail later in the Supports and Structures around Leadership Practice section.

The evidence suggests that these issues around delegation of duties and non-recognition of leadership opportunities hindered informal leadership practice in Scoil Síorghlas. The principal, recognising the expertise that was in the school, did acknowledge that it was sometimes a challenge to, "extract that untapped internal expertise out of people" (Síor, Int, P), and she remarked that leadership opportunities were not always taken up by non-post holders. It seems that she was unaware as to how the non-post holders were regarding these "teacher leadership chances" (Síor, Int, P) and that lack of uptake and involvement was more than likely due to negative attitudes that existed towards delegation - that being afforded an opportunity to lead was overshadowed by the perception that taking on the role would increase workload.

When questioned about his own informal leadership role in the interview, the non-post holder said that he believed that he had sometimes acted as a leader, in the way he had "brought ideas to the table", had influenced the direction that others had gone in and was approached by others for guidance (Síor, Int, NPH1). His reluctance to lead, however once again came down not wanting to take on a huge amount of work. This was particularly obvious when he made reference to the way he had clearly identified a need of the school - the need for someone to facilitate professional development in ICT, and that he had a "huge interest in that area," and yet decided not to do anything about it. He argued, "I know if I'm to step up and say

'I'll do that', I'll get lobbed with fixing computers. To be honest, I'd sooner forget it" (Síor, Int, NPH1).

As was the case with formal leadership practice, there was little evidence of informal leadership practice in Scoil Síorghlas. The evidence suggests that non-post holders felt that they were doing enough in taking on some of the duties of the ISMT and they did not recognise opportunities for leadership that were being given to them. Rather they viewed such opportunities as delegation of work. The need for trust-building was clearly a priority in this school, as several references highlighted how the lack of trust had led to a degree of reticence towards distributing and sharing leadership. This is discussed further in the Professional Needs section.

Principal's Leadership Practice in Scoil Síorghlas

The principal's diary was quite lengthy and illustrated a wide variety of leadership behaviours, as are mentioned below. She was the only one in a formal leadership position who, through her actions and interactions showed evidence of regular leadership practice (thereby falling into Group 3 on the spectrum in Figure 5 in the Analysis and Findings chapter. She documented regular communication and collaboration with colleagues, parents, outside agencies and so on. She was approached on a daily basis for advice, support and knowledge and she made it her business to build the capacity of the staff. Commenting on her leadership practice in her personal reflection, she wrote, "I found that there were various actions and routines that I did during the day that had a leadership role, where as I would not have considered that these actions had a leadership element to them without reflecting on them" (Síor, D, P). She concluded, "On reflection, all of my actions and interactions had a leadership element, although often, not of an obvious nature"

(Síor, D, P). She gave the example of interaction that she had with a group of parents in relation to an upcoming fundraising event. She commented that the discussion ended up moving from a conversation about fundraising for books to focusing on literacy in the school and their ideas as to how it could be improved. On reflection, she commented, "What was actually happening here was that I was actively leading a discussion that reflected an important part of our school's vision. I didn't actively realise that I was leading here until I thought about it!" (Síor, D, P).

The principal's diary also highlighted the time pressures that she was under. She commented that she regularly felt hard-pressed for time to do everything, remarking, "Some practice that had been scheduled to take place on some of the days did not occur due to various interruptions - telephone calls, unscheduled visitors, meetings and so on" (Síor, D, P). She highlighted that oftentimes she had to take work home to complete and commented that leadership practice does not stop at the end of the school day. She felt that this was a particularly onerous part of her job. She considered that non-curricular leadership roles consumed a greater part of her day than she would have assumed, and she too expressed her regret that her time to lead learning was very limited.

It appears clear from the evidence that the principal in Scoil Síorghlas played a central part in relation to the organisation of ISMT duties, including their review and distribution and also in attempting to provide leadership opportunities to those who were not post holders. She commented that she appreciated the input of the ISMT and felt that they helped to "move the school forward collectively" (Síor, Qu, P). The evidence also shows that she was perceived as very hard-working but she admitted that she found it hard to relinquish control, even though she was very aware

of the importance of doing so. When speaking about the roles of the ISMT she

commented, "As principal I suppose I feel that I've responsibility for all of them"

(Síor, Int, P). She admitted that when she got the principalship position three years

previously, she felt that she had to be in charge of everything and that this was what

others expected of her. Hence, a great deal of her work involved, as she put it,

"balancing between having control over everything" to "trusting others and 'letting

go'" (Síor, Int, P). She remarked that this had been a challenge for her, but that she

had relaxed in her role over time, asserting:

> Now I mean you have to let go and you can't hold on to everything yourself
>
> but I definitely feel that I've a finger in all the pies, or try to keep it there but
>
> at the same time … I suppose the fine line is when you can let go and give
>
> that responsibility, give people the chance to lead. (Síor, Int, P)

From the diaries, it is also evident that the principal was playing a central role

in the delegation of tasks and sharing decision-making. On a number of occasions,

she met with the acting DP or the ISMT to discuss various matters. On two

occasions, during which time she was delegating or sharing a task with teachers who

did not "have a formal leadership role" she wrote that her interaction with those

teachers had the purpose of "providing teacher leadership" (Síor, D, P). On reflection

of her use of the word "providing", the evidence once again suggests that she viewed

leadership as something to be given to others. Her diary, as in the diaries of other

principals, showed that her colleagues very much depended on her and that

leadership opportunities were seen to come from her. The two post holders

mentioned the principal quite regularly, and it would appear from the diaries, that a

top-down hierarchical structure seemed to exist in this school. While the principal

seemed happy to distribute leadership, others clearly saw her at the top, and sought her approval and regularly ran things by her.

There is no doubt that the principal in this school was aware of the type of leadership practice that would benefit the school. There is, however evidence of variance in attitude towards the leadership practice that existed and how it was perceived by those who were and were not in formal leadership positions. Similar to the need for trust-building, the evidence suggests that a need existed for more heightened awareness as to the experiences of all those on the staff.

Structures and Supports around Leadership Practice in Scoil Síorghlas

As was mentioned earlier, exploring the context in which leadership practice took place in Scoil Síorghlas and the supports and structures that surrounded that practice highlighted that a top-down structure existed, although an open culture and relatively effective communication appeared to enable a looser arrangement. Furthermore, evidence from the interview with the principal highlights that it was mainly her attitudes towards leadership that played the most important part in moving away from a tight hierarchy. Her awareness of the benefit of flatter structures, along with her determination to move the school in this direction were very evident when she made references such as, "I think it's important not to have an autocratic type of leadership coming from me or the ISMT. We can't go dictating to staff, telling them what to do and how to do it, nor would we want to" (Síor, Int, P).

It is noteworthy that despite the aforementioned need for heightened awareness as to the experiences of all staff members, the teachers were clearly very satisfied with communication in the school. According to 100% of the respondents,

communication was very effective, with 8 of the 9 questionnaire respondents agreeing that it was on a regular basis, both among members of the ISMT and among the ISMT and non-post holders. Two respondents commented on how important communication was, with 1 remarking that "it is important to keep non-post holders informed as to what's happening at management level" (Síor, Qu, NPH3). It is clear that the principal had had effective and regular communication high on her agenda, leading to satisfaction among teachers. Commenting on this she stated that "Communication is key when it comes to the ISMT and staff who do not hold formal leadership roles" (Síor, D, P).

The principal also made references to the importance of effective communication in her interview, as she had in her diary entries. She recognised that having an "open door policy" was part of this, so that her colleagues could see her as approachable (Síor, Int, P). Communication was through formal and informal structures, from "*ad hoc* chats on the corridor" to monthly staff and ISMT meetings, the latter of which were held on the morning of the staff meetings (Síor, Int, P). She said that staff meetings and the ISMT meetings played a central role in keeping communication channels open. She referred to the way in which the ISMT reported to all staff at the meetings, saying:

> A lot of our agenda for the staff meeting would be based around the ISMT ... Prior to the staff meeting, you know we would bring up major issues between us, they're normally things that the rest of the staff would agree on anyway, and then we'd discuss them as a whole-staff. (Síor, Int, P)

In spite of the apparent 100% satisfaction regarding communication, however, the non-post holder remarked in his interview that he sometimes felt that decisions had been made by the ISMT in advance of the meeting. He said of the ISMT:

> I guess when they're planning something they maybe haven't got all the teachers involved in the planning of it in which case then difficulties may arise due to lack of communication. If there's planning done at senior level that affects everybody without maybe being discussed with everybody then this can be a problem. Sometimes we can be left out of the loop, even regarding matters that concern all of us. (Síor, Int, NPH1)

Overall, however, the non-post holder felt that communication was "pretty decent", and he too drew attention to the fact that it was probably easier to have effective communication in a relatively small school such as this one (Síor, Int, NPH1). The post holder referred to the fact that he preferred to communicate in an informal manner with his colleagues but that "reporting at staff meetings is expected" (Síor, Int, PH1).

All three interviewees in Scoil Síorghlas considered the school to have a "reasonably" collaborative culture (Síor, Int, PH1). They all used terms such as "rowing in", "helping out" and "teamwork" when talking about the way they worked together. The post holder acknowledged the collaboration that took place and made reference to the way in which the school made the most of individual talents, asserting, "People row in to achieve whatever is needed at different times for varying reasons, or people have different aptitude for stuff in which case they would help if needed" (Síor, Int, PH1). He also believed that the smaller size of the school enabled

collaborative work practices and compared it to the larger school that he had taught in previously, in which collaboration was not the norm.

The school made use of committees in the past although this was not as regular as it used to be. The principal commented that committees were a great way of getting teachers to collaborate together and also to afford leadership opportunities to informal leaders in particular (Síor, Int, P). The non-post holder acknowledged the collaborative work involved in these committees and highlighted that while it was the principal who was generally the one to establish them, no-one was ever forced to go on one - that they were not an example of contrived collegiality. He asserted:

> She'd put it out there constantly for people to get involved ... but she wouldn't force it ... she would recognise that help and expertise were needed and very welcome. (Síor, Int, NPH1)

When speaking about collaboration, the principal again made several references to the importance that she put on building trust among the staff, believing that collaboration could only happen in an environment where trusting relationships existed. She said that she encouraged teachers to take risks, commenting, "I let them know that if they make mistakes it's fine. We can learn from them and move on" (Síor, Int, P). Despite the principal's efforts to communicate this message, however the evidence from the post holders' and non-post holders' interviews suggests that occasionally lack of trust did hinder collaborative work practices. For example, when asked if they felt that they could voice concerns, both interviewees expressed fear of being "shot down" by someone (Síor, Int, PH1 & NPH1). The post holder commented that it could be harder to voice concerns in a smaller school because "you don't want to be falling out with colleagues in such a close environment" (Síor,

Int, PH1). Similarly, the non-post holder remarked that while there were structures in place to voice concerns or criticisms and that the staff was quite open, he believed that some teachers did not do so, "for fear that it would seem like you're complaining about someone and that they would take it personally" (Síor, Int, PH1). Likewise, when asked if they felt that the ISMT welcomed input from other members of staff, the post holder commented that he himself welcomed input, but that there was hesitancy on the part of non-post holders to give their input. He said:

> I definitely do welcome it, it's great to get ideas, but I don't know how willing they are to come forward at times because they see you have a post and maybe don't want to appear to be stepping on your toes. I understand, like I wouldn't want to go suggesting stuff to someone and then have it shot down either. (Síor, Int, PH1)

In relation to decision-making, the three interviewees confirmed that most decision-making was open to all members of staff. At the same time, the non-post holder pointed out that while decision-making was a collaborative process among the staff, "the buck stops with her (the principal), in which case she would take everyone's advice and then go and make decisions based on that" (Síor, Int, NPH1). The principal also played a central role in decision-making from the point of view of ensuring that all were involved and felt that they had a voice. She spoke about the way in which NQTs, for example can be relatively quiet at first and that involving them in decision-making communicated to them that their opinions were valued, and that it also helped them to realise that that they "have a voice that is both welcome and heard" (Síor, Int, P). Overall, each of the interviewees felt very positively towards the way in which decisions were made in their school.

The evidence suggests that the three interviewees believed that the staff was generally working towards a common vision and that there was awareness of the importance of working as a team. It was clear that Scoil Síorghlas, however, was not quite working as a PLC. Evidence from the interviews with the post holder and non-post holder highlighted that there was still a level of isolationism in the way that they worked and learned. For example, both of these interviewees made reference to "doing my own thing" and "fending for myself" (Síor, Int, PH1 & NPH1). Overall, there were mixed feelings about the supports and structures around leadership practice in this school, and there were a few instances where evidence from the questionnaires, for example, was not reinforced by the interviews. This was particularly noticeable in relation to opinions towards collaboration. While data from the questionnaires had indicated that there was general agreement that the staff worked collaboratively and as a team together, data from the interviews detailing feelings of mistrust and isolationism suggested that collaborative practice was not necessarily the norm. It may be suggested that issues around mistrust and isolationism had a knock-on effect on both formal and informal leadership practice, with post holders feeling more comfortable to simply carry out the duties assigned to their post and with the non-post holders feeling hesitant to interfere or take on a heavier workload.

Professional Needs around Leadership Practice in Scoil Síorghlas

As in the other three schools, several needs were highlighted in Scoil Síorghlas around leadership practice. A clear finding that emerged is that the teachers felt strongly when it came to the need for specific professional development for those in ISM to assist them in their leadership roles. 100% of respondents to the

questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. One respondent, who had a qualification in management elaborated in the open ended section stating:

> The skills and knowledge needed for teaching can and do differ significantly from the skills and knowledge needed to lead and manage people. It is essential for the future of leadership in schools that teachers are not only encouraged into leadership positions but also that they are equipped to do so. Of course this will take investment, so unfortunately it'll probably remain shelved for the foreseeable future. (Síor, Qu, NPH1)

The principal also identified the importance of professional development in her interview, and said that she very much encouraged the staff to go on courses and develop their skills. She also said that she led by example, feeling it important that teachers saw that she too was always learning. The post holder and non-post holder, however, did not feel that they had been encouraged towards professional development and improvement and that they had chosen to do so independently. The post holder said, "I'm not sure that I've been encouraged to improve my skills. I decided myself to do so" (Síor, Int, P).

As the literature review highlights, various policy documents call for collaboration and open communication within the context of a whole-school approach, and that leadership within such a context requires not only a distribution of roles but also teamwork and collaborative ways of working. While a degree of collaboration was evident in this school, it is clear from the evidence that certain factors had hindered this practice. Data from the interviews highlighted an emerging theme - that "effective" communication and collaborative practice depended on having underlying trust between staff members. The absence of trust was seen to

break down communication, leading to hesitancy towards working collaboratively with others. There was a clear need in this school to address issues around trust, possibly by opening up dialogue between those who held formal positions and those who did not. Such dialogue could be in the form of meetings involving all stakeholders, whereby all would be involved in recognising both the things they are doing well and also the things that need to change.

The data from the diaries from Scoil Síorghlas had highlighted that a great deal of work and responsibilities has been delegated in this school, and this finding was reinforced by each of the interviewees. The principal acknowledged the extent of this delegation saying, "I suppose there's an awful lot. All the curricular areas are, and the polices as well, so everything really, there's nothing that I can think of that isn't" (Síor, Int, P). She viewed delegation positively, particularly from her own point of view, considering that the way in which she felt she had to control everything. Her reason for delegation was to afford teachers opportunities to lead and take on some responsibility. Another reason for delegation was to respond to the intense workload of the school and to distribute this work to all staff. She acknowledged that without the help of the non-post holders, the ISMT could not possibly "get through everything" (Síor, Int, P). Lack of time to do everything meant that delegation was, therefore, for practical reasons too.

Analysis of the interview with the non-post holder led to the new finding that two types of delegation were being used in the school - the first involving the delegation of roles and responsibilities so as to distribute leadership to informal and formal leaders, and the second type involving the delegation of tasks or jobs to be done. In his interview, the non-post holder did not consider delegation in this school

to mean the first type, rather he felt that delegation meant being "lumped with a lot of extra work to do", and that it involved others giving out work to be carried out. (Síor, Int, NPH1). He felt very strongly about this, made a number of references to it and commented that he was aware that other non-post holders shared this view. Thus, the non-post holder (and possibly other teachers) did not have a positive attitude towards delegation in the school despite the fact that both the principal and post holder viewed it as a commendable feature of their leadership practices.

The need for clearer role definition of ISMT members was also mentioned in Scoil Síorghlas. The non-post holder asserted, "I guess it would be helpful to make it all more clear-cut and defined. To define exactly who's in charge of what and who you can approach and on what level, for what, and for what support" (Síor, Int, NPH1). Echoing the opinions of those in the other three schools, he felt that this was important and believed that lack of certainty hindered the relationship between the non-post holders and the ISMT. There was a sense that the non-post holders wanted to be clear as to the roles that post holders played so that the former could consider their own potential leadership role within the overall school leadership context. Linked with clearer role definition were issues around the way in which posts of responsibility did not always meet the needs of the schools. This had been highlighted as something that had to be urgently addressed in the questionnaire responses, and was reinforced by most of the interviewees as something that must be looked at by the staff as a whole.

The moratorium on promotion also affected Scoil Síorghlas with the principal asserting:

> We've really been affected by the moratorium. Last year our roles were well defined and nicely weighted among ISMT members. This year, we're all trying to compensate for the missing posts and have to divide up a lot of tasks. We're also depending on non-post holders to help out which isn't necessarily fair. (Síor, D, P)

The pressure that the moratorium had brought was regarded as a very challenging situation by all three interviewees. In her diary, the Special Duties post holder also commented on the fact that she often felt under pressure of time in her role as a teacher and that the extra duties of her post added to this pressure considerably. She wrote:

> I don't think people fully realise just how difficult and time-consuming the job of a teacher is. We don't seem to have enough hours in the day to do all that needs to be done. Not only are we in charge of our own classes, but we are also in charge of (in conjunction with the principal) the running of the school on a day to day basis, to ensure that it all goes smoothly. (Síor, D, PH2)

There was a need for the moratorium to be reversed, but with this unlikely, it was clear that more distributed ways of working and leading were needed in order to respond to the challenges facing the school. Alongside this, however, there was a need in this school to work on the negative perception that some members of staff had towards the delegation of duties, roles and responsibilities.

In Scoil Síorghlas, the evidence suggests that the school was moving away from a tight hierarchical structure to a flatter structure of leadership, but that some barriers still existed, such as the fear of being "shot down" and not wanting to "step

on toes" and a hesitancy to get involved for fear of taking on an increased workload. A need existed in this school for more awareness of these feelings (for example towards delegation) if distributed leadership based on an atmosphere of trust and collaboration were to become a reality in this school and, as was mentioned earlier, for the staff to engage in dialogue around their leadership and management needs.