ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

FROM ASPIRATION TO SUCCESSION AND TRANSITION:

An exploratory study of the fundamental principles of sustainable leadership from the perspectives of newly appointed principals in Irish primary education.

By

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctorate in Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, 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

The purpose of this study is to examine organisational structures and practices in Irish primary school settings, in order to identify features which are in support of sustainable leadership. Sustainable leadership in this study is viewed as a contextual and adaptive construct, supporting leadership activities which help organisations to meet their needs in the long term. In accordance with the wider literature, the study proposes that sustainable leadership practices support school agency and improvement.

The study draws heavily upon sustainable leadership theory advocated in the wider international literature and also connects with research relating to Irish primary education in an era of unprecedented economic and social change. Specific issues are framed using the three fundamental principles of sustainability proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006). The core principles align with the early career stages of principal leaders and are categorised as; leading learning, succession planning and distributed leadership activities. The study seeks to investigate the perspectives and experiences of Newly Appointed Principals (NAPs) in Irish primary school settings, along their career trajectory from aspiring to novice principal leaders in schools.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies were utilised to investigate the key research questions devised in this case. A preliminary national survey of NAPs was administered. Perceptions and experiences relating to this population grouping were gathered using items linked to the three core principles of sustainability. These items were developed following a review of the wider literature. Informed by the survey data, in-depth interviews with NAPs were carried out. The aim was to complement and enrich the survey data. Both datasets were integrated to produce a rich body of evidence related directly to the concept of sustainable leadership.

The study contributes to existing research in Ireland and expands it by documenting evidence relating to a specific leadership sub sample. It examines also, aspects of early career leadership experiences and practices which have yet to be researched in the Irish education field. The findings indicate that there are a number of significant issues which inhibit sustainable leadership practices in Irish primary school contexts. These issues are framed and linked specifically to instructional leadership capacity, succession planning procedures and structures, and distributed leadership practices in this study.

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To my husband Paddy who has made sacrifices for me to complete this work and whose constant support, encouragement and love have fed my determination over the past four years. I love you very much and I promise you will soon get your wife back!

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my sister Deirdre, who has been my silent partner on this journey. She is greatly missed and a constant reminder to me that those of us who are still living should never delay our goals.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

List of Figures

List of Tables

Glossary of terms

Acronyms and abbreviations used in this thesis are explained as follows:

BOM   Board of Management (governing body of a school)

CPD   Continued Professional Development/ Career Professional Development

CPSMA   Catholic Primary Schools Management Association

DES   Department of Education and Skills

GAA   Gaelic Athletic Association

INTO   Irish National Teachers' Organisation

IPPN   Irish Primary Principals' Network

LDS   Leadership Development for Schools

NAP   Newly Appointed Principal

NAPQ   Newly Appointed Principals' Questionnaire

OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PDST   Professional Development Service for Teachers

SSE   School Self-Evaluation

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

There is a pervasive crisis in leadership documented in international and national literature, which threatens future improvement efforts in education at organisational level (Davis, Darling- Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Grummell, Devine & Lynch, 2009; Hartle & Thomas, 2004; Murphy, 2005; Smithers & Robinson, 2007). In virtually every public sector domain, not least in education, there is major concern relating to the capacity of organisational leaders in dealing with the complexities of the 21st century (Frankel & Hayot, 2001). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) surmise that "the past decade and more has seen the educational reform and standards movement plummet to the depths of unsustainability, taking educational leadership down with it" (p. 19). The pace of change has been relentless. The top ten jobs projected for 2010 simply did not exist in 2004 (Darling-Hammond, in Hargreaves *et al.* 2010, p. 506). In an era of unprecedented change, education hopes to accommodate a future that has not yet been invented. For change and improvement to remain sustainable, Hargreaves and Fink (2006), advocate that it is imperative to focus on the restoration of leadership to a position of primacy when it comes to constructing system-wide support for future educational improvements.

This introductory chapter outlines the aim of the thesis and highlights the concept of sustainability, and specifically the idea of sustainable leadership, as a relevant conceptual framework for exploring school leadership in contemporary Irish primary education at the present time. The iterative processes which guided the research approach at every stage in this study is outlined. The author's perspectives formulated in research and in practice are presented in order to narrate the research journey from theory to design formation. The author's ontological and epistemological views are laid

1

out as "the basic sets of beliefs" guiding action in this study (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.183). A defence of the conceptual framework aligned with the main research questions and the study rationale is offered in this section also. Finally, a brief outline of the contextual background conveying the relevance of this study is documented to anchor the theory of sustainable leadership as a guiding frame in this case. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

Research Questions and Purpose Statement

The aim of this study is to conduct an investigation of leadership preparation, recruitment and capacity in Irish primary schools and to capture information relating directly to experiences and perceptions of newly appointed leaders in primary schools. The Ontario Leadership Strategy Framework (OLF), defines a newly appointed leader as a "principal or vice principal in his or her first and/or second year of practise" (2011, p. 19). In this research study NAPs are categorised as principals who have been appointed within eighteen months or less from the commencement of this study. The guiding theory for gathering information is sustainable leadership in education. The idea is to ascertain the extent to which sustainable leadership practices are in evidence among newly appointed principals (NAPs) in Irish primary schools. This exploration is approached using questions aligned with specific components of the sustainable leadership framework outlined by Hargreaves and Fink (2006). The study in this case is restricted to the first three core principles which are drawn from Hargreaves and Fink's full model of sustainable leadership consisting of a total of seven principles or dimensions. These are: depth, length, breadth, justice, diversity, conservation and resourcefulness[1]. The model is devised around the following definition proposed by Hargreaves and Fink:

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[1] See Appendix 1 for diagram of the model of sustainable leadership proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006).

2

> Sustainable educational leadership and improvement preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefit for others around us, now and in the future. (p. 17)

Based on the sustainable leadership model, a broad ontological research question was devised as follows:

> Do leadership supports, structures and practices in Irish primary education, viewed from the perspectives of novice leaders reflect a leadership outlook that is sustainable in the long term?

The first three principles or dimensions termed as depth, length and breadth are categorised as the "fundamental components" of sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 22). It is proposed that these three components are the logical starting point for exploring leadership in this study since without these long term sustainability cannot be achieved.

The first principle, depth, denotes that leadership should promote deep and broad learning in organisations by placing learning to the fore as the central moral purpose of schooling. This vision of learning prescribes and preserves learning for all, for students and for educational partners. It is aligned with instructional leadership practices also referred to as 'leading learning' in this study. The second principle, length, preserves learning over time, from one leader to the next in educational contexts. It is associated with succession planning practices and procedures in this case. The third principle, breadth, promotes leadership that is shared among multiple partners in support of the school principal. This principle is linked with distributed leadership practices in this research study. By linking researcher assumptions with the framework for sustainable leadership advocated by Hargreaves and Fink (2006), a subset of research questions emerged. These questions relating to the three core principles are:

- Do principals have adequate opportunity to lead learning in their schools?

- Are there succession plans in place to adequately support leadership changes and leadership longevity in schools?

- Is leadership distributed among members of the school community in support of the school principal?

The central idea linking the epistemological assumptions with the theoretical perspective is that the core challenge for leaders in schools is not just becoming leaders, but sustaining leadership over time. As Allen and Hoekstra point out; "sustainability is not an absolute, independent of human conceptual frameworks. Rather, it is always set in the context of decisions about what type of system is to be sustained and over what spatiotemporal scale" (1992, p. 98).

The study draws upon the perceptions and experiences of a full sample of NAPs in Irish primary education at a specific point in time, so that a comprehensive picture of leadership preparation and initial leadership experiences and practices may be drawn out. The approach taken by the author is based on the perception that leadership roles are emergent and responsive and evolve and change over the extended period of a leader's career (Grummell, *et al.* 2009; Wildy & Clarke, 2008). The specific focus on the fundamental principles of sustainable leadership aligns with the earliest career stages of a principalship. These career stages are categorised in this study as the 'aspirational phase', 'the succession phase' and the 'novice practice phase' (Hobson *et al.*, 2003; Wallace Foundation, 2012).

It is argued throughout this study, that the lens of leadership sustainability is apt for exploring some of the key issues and challenges outlined in previous research and contemporary discourse on educational leadership in Ireland. An accepted assumption in this case is that if leadership in schools is not progressive and enduring, the potential

4

for schools to improve and adapt is significantly undermined (Borko, Wolf, Simone & Uchiyama, 2003; Cosner, 2009; Fullan, 2003).

Theoretical overview

Sustainability is strongly associated not only with endurance, but also improvement (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves, 2007). Certainly, in the case of this research study, sustainability and sustainable leadership are linked with development and improvement in schools. The link between sustainability and improvement is included in Fullan's definition which infers that "sustainability is the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" (Fullan, 2004, p. 2). This research uses a sustainable leadership outlook to explore structures and supports in Irish primary school settings which may direct leadership practice towards deep learning in schools. It is argued that any endorsement of approaches that sustain development and promote improvement moves organisations beyond maintaining standards, to platforms which encourage renewed energy, positive change and enduring progress. Sustainability is not simply a question of endurance it is about interrogating how progress and endurance may be achieved by addressing "how particular initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment, now and in the future (Hargeaves & Fink, 2003, pp. 2-3).

Sustainable leadership is concerned with leadership action that focusses on sustaining learning as the central moral purpose of schooling (Fullan, 2005). Sustainable leaders are leaders of learning. Sustainable leadership is a broad concept which is not only concerned with whether development will last; it is concerned with the supports, structures, initiatives and targets that are set out to ensure that development and improvement stands a better chance of lasting. A sustainable leadership framework

presents a long term rather than quick fix approach to learning and improvement. "Slow knowing" according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), "curbs our tendencies towards being fast school nations" (p. 32). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) propose that sustainable leadership is progressive as it interrogates modes of leadership that are more widely spread and mutually understood and as a consequence are more likely to endure. Sustainable leadership also challenges conventional leadership programmes which are removed from the lived experiences of leaders in practice. Strong leadership, according to Wildy and Clarke (2008), involves persistence and flexibility and "requires a rich and thorough understanding of the context and skills in working with staff and community" (p. 470).

Author's Perspective

As an Irish primary school teacher, my experiences in the field of practice have influenced my attitudes and opinions and pushed my practice well beyond the theoretical pedagogy I gleaned as a trainee. The fifteen years I have spent as a mainstream teacher have been both rewarding and exhausting. I am sensitive to the constraints placed upon practitioners who seek to keep pace with a host of common pressures in an era of heightened change and innovation in the Irish education sector (Anderson, Brien, MacNamara, O'Hara & McIsaac, 2011). The challenge to renew and review practice, to develop new skills and to promote a positive atmosphere of learning in schools falls collectively on the shoulders of practitioners and leaders at organisational level (Lillis & Flood, 2010). I believe that leaders in schools are the marshals of change and that school leadership is a central lever for innovation and renewed improvement linked specifically to instruction and learning. The focus on change, renewal and performance that prevails in Irish primary education has led to my

6

specific interest in school leadership and school leaders as the "gatekeepers" of change in the public arena of educational practice (NCCA, 2014, p. 16).

I advocate that responsibilities can be dispersed among all stakeholders in schools since leadership in education is a complex and onerous responsibility. Leadership like learning, is a shared responsibility in schools (Lambert, 2003; Nussbaum- Beach, 2012). New conceptualisations of school leadership reject leadership soloists or "lone ranger" leaders in the field of practice (Fullan, 2006). However, I am cognisant of the fact that the principalship is a positional leadership role and that principals are appointed in order to lead. To lead, as defined by the Collins dictionary, is to "to show the way to an individual or group; to induce or influence" and a leader is "a person who guides or inspires others".[2] Throughout this study the terms "lead" and "leader" are used in line with these definitions and associated directly with the work of school principals as guides or positive influencers in schools. As positional leader, the school principal is presented as the director or orchestrator of devolved action in schools throughout this study. The principal is the visionary who plays a pivotal role in teaching and learning, and, subsequently, school improvement (Fullan, 2011). Strong leaders, however, do not stand alone. It is asserted that the principal is the lead agent in schools, who is buoyed and supported by partners[3] in the organisation, through artful and conscious co-leadership.

Ontological Perspective

The term ontology concerns itself with the reality of existence; "the study of being" (Crotty, 2003, p. 10), or in researching terms, the core beliefs about the nature of the world, which guide researchers on pathways to inquiry (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013;

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[2] In *Collins dictionary.com*. Retrieved November 11th, 2013, from http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english

[3] School partners are outlined in Appendix 2

Wand & Weber, 1993). The core viewpoint guiding this study is the belief that leadership is a contextual construct shaped by incessant interchangeable factors including; time, human interaction, culture, politics, society and so on. The ontological stance which permeates this study is distinctly sociological. The pioneer of the sociological approach to education is Émile Durkheim (1858-1917). A major theme in Durkheim's teachings was that schools are mirrors of society, or micro-societies (Pickering, 2001). Like Durkheim, Ogawa views organizational leadership and educational leadership specifically as a "potent expression of human agency" (2005, p. 91). This perspective links with the ideologies of social constructionism, which views knowledge as constructed through socialisation. According to Flanagan (1992), social constructionism:

> Is the claim and viewpoint that the content of our consciousness, and the mode of relating to others, is taught by our culture and society; all the metaphysical quantities we take for granted are learned from others around us. (p. 386)

Based on this perspective it is assumed that all realities are socially constructed, and are varied and variable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 2000). The definitive feature of the social constructionist philosophy, which marks it out from the closely related discipline of constructivism, is that knowledge is not constructed singularly, but through social groupings or collective community beliefs. That is not to say that individuals do not have independent ideas, but that these ideas are given meaning by their social context (Warmoth, 2000). Leadership has a significant impact on organisations (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Starratt, 2001) and so has important meaning for those who are actively involved in the organisation. School leadership grounded in organisations which are micro-societies is, therefore, viewed from a social ontological perspective throughout this study, beginning with the research design process.

8

Emergent Research Design.

Social constructionism is firmly anti-realist viewing knowledge as relative, not absolute. Loyalty to this position means that social constructionist researchers must carefully consider how knowledge may be accessed so as to derive meanings from multiple realities and in turn multiple interpretations of those realities. A social constructionist viewpoint recognises and acknowledges that research is not value free (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). The aim in this study is to broaden the understanding of sustainable leadership by presenting a relativist interpretation of reality. The constructionist approach values lived experience over expert knowledge, a perspective which fits with a qualitative methodological stance.

Within the Irish system, schools operate across a wide diversity of contexts and the particular circumstance of each individual school setting presents unique challenges for school leaders and school communities (LDS, 2002). In order to capture some sense of the diversity of settings and the complexity of leadership across multiple boundaries, it was clear that a quantitative methodological approach would be a necessary information seeking component in this study. The unique educational leadership context was also an essential consideration in formulating the research design from the outset of the study. Professional experience in the field of education has confirmed that organisational practices have been greatly influenced by the socio-political climate in Ireland in the past two decades. The quantitative design aims to identify some of the unique challenges that present in Irish primary schools as a result of the socio-economic context. A quantitative design component was considered pertinent also because a lack of research relating to school leadership has been identified in the Irish educational context (Anderson *et al.* 2011; OECD, 2008). The exploration of sustainable leadership specifically is a new area of inquiry in Irish education.

A sequential mixed methods research approach was developed which was directed by core beliefs and theoretical perspectives (See Figure 1.1). The preliminary quantitative component of the study aimed to capture consensus issues from a large population of NAPs, and the qualitative component sought to access contextualised accounts of novice leaders in practice. The qualitative research strand was employed to complement and lend greater meaning to the quantitative data gathered. The mixed methods rationale aimed to explore sustainable leadership as a contextually grounded, social phenomenon.

Figure 1.1: Outline of Theoretical and Conceptual Framework leading to Research Design

Core belief: Leadership is central to school improvement

Contextual Background

Economic austerity | Educational reform

Ontology

Social ontological perspective | Assumption: | Leadership is socially constructed

Theoretical Perspective

Interpretivism | Sustainable leadership | Leading learning | Succession planning | Distributed leadership

Conceptual framework

Fundamental principles of sustainability | Depth | Length | Breadth

Methods

Sequential Mixed Methods | QUANT ⟹ Qual | Complementary | Integrated results

Presenting sustainable leadership as a relevant contextual framework

As previously stated sustainable leadership in education, according to various authors, can be identified as having an impact on school development and improvement (Brown-Ferrigno & Allen, 2003; Davies, 2009; Fullan, 2002, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hill, 2006). Leadership is at the nucleus of public sector reform and the challenge of a hopeful future since, according to Osborn, Hunt & Jaunch (2002) change cannot progress without effective leaders. Any efforts at reform are doomed if the leadership challenge is not adequately addressed (Ali, 2007; Fullan, 2002; McCarthy, Grady & Dooley, 2011). Many authors confirm that school leadership directly improves the quality of teaching and through teaching indirectly improves student learning (Fullan, 2014; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach 1999, MacBeath, 1998; Starratt, 2004). Though all parties are engaged in the business of improvement in schools, leaders accept a central role. Effective leadership within an organisation is an essential prerequisite for the development and review of long term improvement planning in organisations such as schools (Haygroup, 2003; Hopkins, Ainskow & West, 1994; OECD, 2008). According to research by Leithwood (1997), principal leadership is the strongest independent influence on school planning, organisational structures, school mission and school culture. Since leadership is associated with school improvement and development, sustained leadership then is likely to support sustained development. Hargreaves and Goodson (2004) report that leadership sustainability is a key force in dealing with long term change.

Leithwood *et al.* (1999) announce that "truly productive leadership depends not only on engaging in commonly helpful practices, it also depends on recognizing and responding to the unique challenges and features presented by particular types of organizational contexts" (p. 23). A sustainable approach to school leadership honours the productive account put forward by Leithwood *et al.* (1999). An examination of sustainable

leadership, spotlights the conditions in schools which help to promote continuous and persistent improvement. The sustainability aspiration is sought through a shared commitment to a singular purpose by accessing the specific talents and abilities of those working together in unique settings. If leadership is sustained then, it positions the school leader as catalyst for change and improvement, guiding innovative practice based on combined expert knowledge (Fullan, 2001; Lambert, 2003).

There is a paucity of literature on sustainable leadership in education as the concept is as yet in it's infancy in the sector. The earliest literature on the topic can be dated to an article by Fullan in 2002, entitled: "Leadership and Sustainability." Since then, four models of sustainable leadership have been proposed by academic authors in the field of education (Davies, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Hill, 2006).[4] A review of each model reveals some parallels between them. For example, each model emphasizes that leadership linked with school improvement is a long-term objective and that enduring leadership is spread at all levels of an organisation. Each model is also underpinned by a moral dimension which retracts from performance indicators as the focus for learning improvements. Despite the commonalities between models, there are a number of features in some proposed models which produce an uncomfortable fit with the specific Irish educational context explored in this study.

Fullan's model for instance, is more aptly applied to educational settings in the USA and Canada since a core component: "intelligent accountability, capacity building and vertical relationships", relates specifically to district level administration which is a feature of North American systems (2005, pp. 19-22). Similarly, Hill's model (2006) focusses on accountability and relationships with school governors as a central tenets of sustainable leadership. Davies (2009) presents a concise model consisting of six clear

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[4] A table of component parts of the four models of sustainable leadership is included in Appendix 11.

13

principles (See Appendix 11). This model, however, focusses on leadership as a broader construct in schools and is framed around collective responsibility without emphasizing specifically the role of the school principal as a key change agent. The principal as lead learner or steward of change is a core assumption advocated in this research study.

Following a review of the models for sustainable leadership put forward in the literature, it was clear that the work of Hargreaves and Fink (2006) provided an appropriate framework for exploring sustainable leadership in this case. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) acknowledge that while leadership for change and improvement should not be dependent on individual leaders in schools, principal leaders, however, may be the catalysts for change. Leadership according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006) is a contextually bound and adaptive phenomenon and focusses on the school's learning imperative as the primary moral purpose. The model presented by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) is founded on a primary study of eight Canadian High schools by Hargreaves and Goodson (as cited in Hargreaves and Fink, 2003), exploring change and continuity in educational organisations over a three decade period. Hargreaves and Goodson (2003) concluded that an essential lever to enduring improvement in schools is leadership sustainability. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) reframed the concept of sustainable leadership using seven concise principles: sustainable leadership matters, spreads, lasts, is socially just, is resourceful, and promotes diversity. Continuing their work Hargreaves and Fink (2006) promoted depth, breadth and length as the core tenets of sustainable leadership which are reinforced over time through justice, diversity, resourcefulness and conservation. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) in their book, *Sustainable Leadership,* advocate a vision of sustainable schooling that values slow and in-depth learning rather than a hurried curriculum or quick fix approaches to school improvement. They argue that this can be achieved by exercising prudence and resourcefulness in conserving the past in systems that are saturated with innovation and

14

change (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). The sustainable leadership model proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) respects and builds on the past in the quest for a better future in schools.

The sustainable leadership model put forward by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) provides an appropriate framework for exploring novice leadership in the Irish context as it aligns with a number of priori assumptions which underscore this study. Firstly, this model acknowledges that school leadership is a complex and adaptive phenomenon and is shaped and reshaped in human environments in response to changing needs and circumstances at given points in time. Secondly, this model accepts that principals, as leaders of learning, have a central role to play in enduring improvement in schools. Positional leaders are challenged to recognise and utilize the talents and potential available in their schools by promoting shared leadership as a vehicle for authentic change. Thirdly, Hargreaves and Fink's model prioritises learning as the central moral purpose of schooling and articulates that student learning is buoyed and enhanced in organisations where all members of the school community are active and continuous learners. Finally, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) claim that the three core principles of depth, length and breadth are the foundational components of sustainable leadership. This provides an ideal starting point for any study of sustainable leadership, since it can be argued that without these central principles there is no solid basis for long term sustainable leadership in organisational contexts. These core principles have been selected as the framework for this study and are aligned with the unique educational context in Ireland in the section that follows.

Grounding sustainable leadership in the Irish context

The contemporary issues laid out in previous Irish research present a strong case for selecting Hargreaves and Fink's model of sustainable leadership as a guiding lens in this study (2006). These issues are aligned with the fundamental principles (See Figure 1.2 overleaf) proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) to highlight that sustainable leadership is an area which needs to be reviewed in Irish education (McDonald, 2008). School leadership as a priority issue in Ireland should be valued and protected as a core component of lasting improvement and progressive reform (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Flood, 2011). The use of the sustainable leadership framework as the guiding theory in this study allows an interrogation of primary school leadership that moves beyond anecdotal evidence relating to issues spotlighted in the Irish field (McDonald, 2008; OECD, 2008). The study aims to explore the foundations of leadership sustainability by identifying features and structures that may benefit school leadership in the long term.

Figure 1.2 presents inter-related principles that characterise the proposed meaning of sustainability in relation to leadership development and early career leadership practice. The use of a specific framework aligned with the issues illuminated in national and international educational research provides a useful map for plotting leadership sustainability. The fundamental principles aligned with contemporary issues also provide a schema for developing the key research questions regarded as pertinent in this case.

Figure 1.2: **Aligning the contemporary issues with the conceptual framework**

Concept	Theory	Irish Context
First Principle *Depth* *Leadership should focus on school wide learning above all else.*	Instructional Leadership	• The role of school principal is not clearly defined (IPPN, 2002; Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2008). • Principals feel overwhelmed by the burden of responsibility and there is little time for leading learning in schools (IPPN, 2006; O'Hanlon, 2008).
Second Principle *Length* *Stimulating leadership succession and supporting transition processes for leaders in schools*	Succession Planning	• There are issues relating to selection and appointment processes in the Irish education system (Grummell *et al.*, 2009). • Preparation and training of leaders in the Irish context falls short when it comes to developing successful school leaders (Anderson *et al.* 2011; Morgan & Sugrue, 2005; OECD, 1991; Travers & McKeown, 2006). • There is a reluctance on the part of potential candidates to take up principal positions (Anderson *et al.* 2011; McGuinness, 2005).
Third Principle *Breadth* *Distributing leadership responsibilities to include all members of the school community*	Distributed Leadership	• There is inadequate professional development support for serving principals whose roles are increasingly complex (Darmody & Smyth, 2011; Morgan & Sugrue, 2005; Sugrue, 2009). • Distributed leadership practice in support of the principal has failed to make an impact in Irish schools (Humphreys, 2009; MacDonald, 2008; OECD, 2008).

Principle 1: Leading learning in Irish primary schools

The role of the principal, in the recent era of performance related change and innovation, has grown in complexity with the result that "pressures and international 'social movements' have been impacting on the realities of principals' lives and work" (Morgan & Sugrue, 2008, p. 9). Principals are pushed to the extreme limits of capacity, operating as they do in divergent zones of practice (Lillis & Flood, 2010). Unfortunately, as yet, "the lives of too many principals, especially new principals are characterised by churn and burn" (Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 14). It is reported that "in many countries principals have heavy workloads; many are reaching retirement, and it is getting harder to replace them. Potential candidates often hesitate to apply, because of overburdened roles, insufficient preparation and training, limited career prospects and inadequate support" (OECD, 2008, p. 5). The role of school principal is excessively complex and the traditional administrator of decades past is out of place in the schools of today (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2005; Kemmis, 2005). Lee Sherman's summation of the diverse role of the school principal is as relevant today as it was a decade and a half ago:

> The job calls for a staggering range of roles: psychologist, teacher, facility manager, philosopher, police officer, diplomat, social worker, mentor, PR director, coach, cheerleader. The principalship is both lowly and lofty. In one morning, you might deal with a broken window and a broken home. A bruised knee and a bruised ego. A rusty pipe and a rusty teacher. (2000, p. 2)

According to Sugrue (2003) principals often struggle to incorporate into their daily practice a mode of leadership that is responsive to the needs of their school. Yet in the midst of change related chaos (Abrahamson, 2004), principals need to lead capably, since "good principals are the key to successful schools" (Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry & Hill, 2003). The educational research community has been particularly sensitive to the growing complexities and challenges of the working worlds of school principals, who occupy "the swampy lowlands where dangers and hazards continuously lurk in the

shadows of everyday life in schools" (Sugrue, 2005, p. 4). With exponential increases in the complexity of the role, comes increased ambiguity relating to the exact prescript of the principalship.

Instructional leadership promoted by the DES has been a feature in Irish schools in the last two decades (OECD, 2008). Instructional leadership incorporating a more co-operative style of leading learning which is sensitive to the contextual needs of the school is advocated in Circular 6/97 by the DES (1997). Schools in Ireland are challenged to promote structures designed to both "match the responsibilities of posts more closely to the central tasks of the school" and "focus on the provision of opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership" (DES, 1997, p. 1). The IPPN acknowledge that instructional leadership practices are central to the role of leader and is an approach that "demands that school leaders provide optimum learning opportunities for all" (2002, p. 6). The vision of instructional leadership advocated by the DES incorporates: promoting a positive culture for learning, promoting conditions for optimum learning, and management of curriculum, as leadership functions (IPPN, 2002). According to the OECD (2008), instructional leadership is failing in Irish schools and the capacity and scope to lead learning is an emerging concern.

Principle 2: Succession planning in Irish primary schools

An urgent concern in many jurisdictions is that the manic condition of the principalship is proving detrimental to the leadership pipeline (Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Fink, 2010). Associated factors include an upsurge in principal retirements and limited succession planning for dealing with recruitment demands (Fink, 2010). In Ireland, according to Anderson *et al.* (2011), the school leadership crisis is pervasive and enduring. The Irish

19

socio-political and economic climate provides a unique canvas for painting sustainable leadership as a guiding theory for this study. Ireland has been in the midst of an enduring economic recession with direct implications for all public sector organisations, not least for education. At the time that this study commenced, there was an exodus of long serving teachers and principals in Irish primary education, as incentivised early retirement schemes came to fruition in public service systems (ISER, Circular 12/09). A report in the *Irish Independent* newspaper in November 2012 indicated that one in five Irish primary school principals had retired since 2007 (Walshe, 2012). The unprecedented number of retirements coincides with a range of education cuts which, according to the IPPN (2009), are decimating the primary education sector. The effects of such an exodus of experienced personnel has yet to be explored. However, early retirements have impacted directly at organisational level in terms of leadership capacity.

An obvious implication is the depletion of leadership experience and expertise in schools (Chapman, 2005; IPPN, 2009). The surge in retirements has now reached a crisis point in Irish schools according to the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (*NAPD*) press release in April, 2014. This specific issue has been further compounded in Ireland by the imposition of a moratorium on promotions in schools in 2009 (Circular22/09), an embargo described by the Department of Finance as "equivalent to promotions in the case of teachers" (Department of Finance, 2009). The moratorium has resulted in the indefinite cessation of middle-management positions in all educational institutions. The cessation of middle management positions in education is likely to seriously undermine leadership potential in schools and increase the burdens of responsibility placed on school principals at one of the most difficult times in the economic history of the state.

20

Principle 3: Distributed leadership in Irish schools

The OECD Report *Improving School Leadership: Policy and Practice* (2008) and *the Irish Country Background Report: Improving School Leadership* (LDS, 2007) both acknowledge the enormously complex environment in which learning is taking place in the schoolrooms of Ireland. These reports also emphasize the heavy burdens placed upon school leaders in dealing with these complexities. Both reports recognise the pressing issue of inadequate leadership supports at organisational and at system level. The middle management system is referenced as a crucial buttress for school principals by devolving duties and responsibilities more widely in schools. According to the OECD, "middle management embodied in both formal and informal roles and teams, seems to hold much promise for relieving senior management burden and capitalising on a wider range of expertise closer to the locus of its application" (2008, p. 20). Coupled with the complexities brought about by a rapid turnover of school principals and the restriction of devolved leadership responsibilities via middle management, primary schools are grappling with a series of new mandated policies issued at department level (*Literacy and Numeracy for learning for life 2011-2020, School Self Evaluation 0039/2012, Public Service Stability Agreement 0033/2013*). Teachers and school leaders are being asked to increase their commitments and to work under tighter budgets, with eroded resources.

The OECD (2008) points to organisational leadership strategies which could potentially strengthen leadership potential in schools. Strategies such as distributed leadership and teacher leadership for example, can conceivably impact upon learning and improvement in schools as well as augmenting the capacity of school principals to lead changes in schools (OECD, 2008). The framework for sustainable leadership reflects these recommendations by advocating more widely distributed models of leadership at school levels. The sustainable leadership framework also places issues like principal

succession to the fore. It can be argued, therefore that the sustainable framework for school leadership is an appropriate model for examining school leadership in Irish schools in the present socio-political context.

Delimitations

This study does not propose to resolve or indeed engage with the complex debates about leadership models, styles and theories. It is argued that school leadership is continually influenced by many contemporary conceptualisations in educational research and an infinite number of contextual and social factors. It is proposed that school leadership should be interrogated in terms of the structures and supports that will arguably sustain leaders and guide best practices over time. The contention is that leadership is not prescriptive. Rather, it is reflexive and reactive to contextual influences. Leadership should be buoyed by a range of organisational and systemic supports. Leaders in schools require preparation and on-going support that goes beyond experiential learning or "learning on the job" (Fink, 2010; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2007) to a contextually rooted practice framework that supports leadership capacity in the long term.

Outline of the thesis

The remainder of this work is presented in six chapters. In chapter two, the literature associated with sustainable development theory, leadership and school improvement, and sustainable leadership in education will be reviewed. The fundamental principles of sustainable leadership in education (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) will be detailed. This chapter also outlines the contemporary Irish educational context. Chapter three will outline the methodological approach used for gathering and analysing data. The use of a mixed methodological, progressive design will be justified and linked with the core ontological assumptions which guided the research approach. In chapter four the integrated data from the quantitative and qualitative components of the study will be

presented. In chapter five, the key research findings are discussed and linked where appropriate to the wider leadership literature. The final chapter draws conclusions from the research and outlines key implications and recommendations. This chapter also proposes some key areas for future research relevant to educational leadership in Irish primary education.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Informed by a corpus of literature based on international research, this chapter aims to consolidate and review the fundamental tenets of the concept of sustainable leadership in education. The chapter is arranged in three parts. The first section examines historical accounts of the role of the school principal. It explores aspects of the role linked to both national and international political and social changes which have shaped educational leadership in recent decades. School improvement and school reform movements are included in this section, contextualizing the landscape in which sustainable leadership in education has emerged. The second section discusses in some detail the overarching theory of sustainability and the contemporary concept of sustainable development. These ideologies are reviewed in order to explore the wider context of economic and natural resource management and environmental conservation from which the relatively immature ideology of sustainable leadership in education has emerged (Lambert, 2012). The concept of sustainable leadership in education is reviewed in the third section of this chapter. The review of sustainable leadership focusses exclusively on the fundamental principles expounded by Hargreaves and Fink (2006). These three principles are linked with three key areas in contemporary educational discourse, namely instructional leadership, leadership succession planning and distributed leadership. A brief summary concludes the chapter.

A review of school leadership and the role of the school principal

In the 19th century, school principals, who were predominantly male, "were broadly coterminous with the prototype of the gentleman" (Gronn, 2003, p. 11). Through birth-right and disposition, they were "naturally fitted" to become leaders in tightly managed

schools (Gronn, 2003). Leadership roles evolved further in post-industrial societies due to a shift in thinking as leadership became regarded as a skill which could be acquired or learned, substituting knowledge and ability for countenance and pedigree (Gronn, 2003). Prior to the mid-1980s, research on school leadership focused on the activities of a single member of the school community, the school principal, and on the merits of instructional leadership involving the management of teaching and learning for school improvement (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). More recently, at the turn of the new millennium a drive towards standards based education witnessed the evolution of the "designer leader" who was groomed and developed for the position of principal (Gronn, 2003, p.11). In the last two decades, researchers have called for the role of school principal to be remodelled and restructured to keep pace with the rapidly changing landscapes in which education systems are grounded (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000).

In contemporary literature leadership has been regarded as a highly complex, multi-faceted construct which is devolved either organically or formally throughout an institution and is organized on the premise that no man or woman is an island (Gleeson & Knights, 2008; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Spillane, 2001). In other words, the growing complexity of the role has led to more widely distributed leadership models in schools in support of the school principal. This approach to leadership recognises the need to devolve duties among all members of the school community in order to promote leadership experience and alleviate the burden of responsibility historically placed on the shoulders of individual principals. Fisher (2011) summarizes the heightened expectations for school leaders in schools, stating that:

> Principals are expected, more than ever, to deal with pedagogy, i.e. they are
> expected to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational
> visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts and
> disciplinarians. They are also expected to carry out general managerial tasks and
> be experts as administrators. (p. 95)

Traditional ways of thinking and working are off the agenda for leaders in schools, who are now revered as "the catalysts of change" (Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991). Riley & MacBeath (2003) have acknowledged that "leadership has become an urgent policy issue, an integral component of the drive for more effective schools, raised achievements and public accountability" (p. 173). A prescriptive agenda for leaders in practice cannot succeed when so many transient variables combine to create the conditions under which leaders strive. In this light a perspective which views practice as local and particularistic is aptly applied to the study of a leadership model rooted in complex human environments. Sustainable leadership is one such perspective as it acknowledges school leadership as a contextual and adaptable construct (Fullan, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

A Contemporary Perspective

All conceptualisations of leadership in any field are value-laden, tied up in "conflict, confusions and contradictions (Dempster, Carter, Freakley & Perry, 2004, p. 450). According to Avolio *et al.* (2004), authentic leadership is emotive and motivational. Leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon as it is not restricted to the behaviours of a single individual. It is both personal and interpersonal (Kernis, 2003). Leadership behaviour is guided by the construction of a reality that is subjective, shaped by experience and located in a frenetic human environment where actions and interactions are constant and often uncalculated (Penuel, Riel, Krause & Frank, 2009).

Seeking a prescriptive framework for school leadership is neither feasible nor desirable (Leithwood *et al.* 1999; Warren & O'Connor, 2000) since leadership is shaped by immeasurable interactions in specific spaces and times (Yukl, 1994). Fullan (2003) is correct to point out that:

> Even the most advanced examples of the new role of the principal fail to grasp
> what will be required for fundamental breakthroughs. If we go beyond the
> principal as competent manager to principal as instructional leader, the role is
> still too narrowly defined. (p. 26)

MacBeath, Moos and Riley (1998) propose that school leaders need to be able to draw from a catalogue of styles depending on context and culture and any "talk about 'the' or 'one' effective leadership style is certainly unrealistic and inherently dangerous" (p. 57). Researchers should abandon the chase for a consensus about effective leadership, according to Riley and MacBeath (2003). Similarly, Bennis (1993) articulates the uncertain science that is leadership theory by stating that "of all the hazy and confounding ideas in social psychology, leadership theory undoubtedly contends for the top nomination. Probably more has been written and less is known about leadership than any other topic in the behavioural sciences" (Bennis, 1993, p. 259). Fidler (1997) also asserts that the leadership imperative alters when new challenges occur. Riley and MacBeath (2003) agree that "there is no one package for school leadership, no one model to be learned and applied in unrefined forms, for all schools, in all contexts, no all-purpose recipes" (p. 174).

Enduring traditions

Despite new visions of leadership as selective rather than prescriptive, the traditional image of authoritarian leader is an enduring feature in schools (Gronn, 2003; Sugrue, 2005). School principals in the norm are elevated to positions of high status within their organizations and it is a given that in assuming the role of 'head'[5] or principal, a successful candidate is agreeing to take the lead. Sugrue (2005) outlines the prevalence of deferential school principals in Western education systems who administer prescriptions meted out from above. Hierarchical leaders are viewed as commandeers

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[5] See Appendix 2 for clarification of terms associated with the school principal

who create the moulds and push others to fit them (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Gronn (2003) points out, "when commentators try to define leadership, almost invariably they have to invoke influence to help them" (p. 61). Gronn (2003) holds on to a leader-follower idea of leadership claiming, to lead is to influence and so leadership has much in common with power. Without followers there are no leaders and vice versa. They both lend meaning to each other.

Traditional top-down, leader-follower norms has been heavily criticised by contemporary researchers who favour a more devolved, shared approach to educational leadership (Hatcher, 2005; Mayrowetz, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Helterbran (2010) reports that "it is clear that traditional, top down leadership falls short of effecting the systemic, meaningful reform necessary to meet the needs of students in the new and challenging world they will face" (p. 364). Fitz and Lee (2000) claim that centralized policies exert pressures on individuals and organisations, which stultify innovation and creativity in classrooms and work directly against the professional autonomy of teachers and school leaders. Hierarchical styles of leadership obstruct the engagement of teachers in leadership (Harris & Muijs, 2003) and such styles will not advance a transition from follower to leader in teaching.

The research picture relating to school based leaders is widely framed. The articulations of leaders' profiles, roles, styles and perceptions produce an abundance of conflicting images of leaders and managers. Adding to the complex mesh are new conditions of intensification which have arrived on the tides of New Public Management (NPM) in education. Under NPM, leaders' role demands have become administratively large and exceedingly complex. The constraints faced by principals are extensive and imposing, with the result that in many instances "the opportunities for widespread influence and transformative agency ...have been minimised" (Gronn, 2003, p. 84). Rewards and sanctions affecting principals, along with policy intensification, have become an

enduring feature in contemporary education systems, particularly in the US and in some cases professional standards are utilized for determining principals' salary grades (Davis *et al.*, 2005).

Fink (2010) contends that there is an urgent need to reassess and restructure the role of principal, and that only modest attempts have been made to create different leadership approaches that will help leaders to manage the demands heaped on them and on their schools. Fink argues that so far "few authors have had the temerity to question current educational policies and to argue for a change in the very nature of school and district leadership that would make the jobs doable" (2010, p. 42). Leaders need to be supported in order to effectively exercise change. Reformers, however, continue to make the error of assuming that human energy is infinitely exploitable (Fink, 2010). Mulford adds that "the trick in these days of constant change is not to think about the direction society and its educational institutions are taking but merely to hang on" (Mulford, 2003, p. 3). Riley and MacBeath (2003) report that "the context and emphasis of school leadership may vary but increasingly it is the individual - the headteacher or school principal - who is placed in the spotlight" (p. 175).

Ehrich (1997) argues that principals need to reclaim the policy agenda relating to leadership development to ensure that the individual needs of schools and teachers are being met. The predominant emphasis on schools as units of change in the last quarter of a century has resulted in the evolution of a highly complex role for school leaders (DiPaola, 2003). As Thomson (2004) points out, "there is widespread agreement in the scholarly and professional communities that principals' work has become more removed from educational matters, and much more concerned with accounting, 'human relations' and planning and accountability" (p. 50). It is clear that a new approach to educational leadership is called for, which places practitioner development and student learning at its centre (Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 2010).

A Review of Sustainability Theory

The idea of sustainability is as old as time. The origin of the word sustainable comes from the Greek verb 'sunistanai' meaning to cause to stand together. Sustainability then, is a term that is associated with systems or groups (Bell & Morse, 1999; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith & Kleiner, 1994). Systems by virtue of their diversity are designed to last. Sustainability practice can be associated with the earliest working systems and relates to environmental, social and economic resources linked with groups in human history. The Iroquois Indian tribe for example, subscribed to the ideology of sustainability in their "seventh generation philosophy" which mandated that tribal decision makers considered the implications of their actions and decisions for seven generations into the future (Walker, 2010, p. 21). Walker (2010) views sustainability as an inspirational ideal. Sustainability can be regarded as a moral and spiritual obligation because it is motivated by the greater good (Walker, 2010), the good of all and of future generations (Bell and Morse, 1999) and the good of our planet (UNESCO, 1997).

Sustainability is an abstruse term (Spangenberg, 2005; Walshe, 2008), and definitions of sustainability are criticised for being vague (Jacobs, 1999; Josh, 2002; Opp & Saunders, 2013; White, 2013). It is as abstract as truth or justice (Schaller, 1993). These constructs are also universally regarded as 'good' (Bell & Morse, 1999). Sustainability according to Bell and Morse (1999) is both abstract, because it regards the future, and subjective because it pertains to a given place, at a given time by a given group of people. Adding to the complexity of the term is the notion that sustainability means different things to different people across different fields and contexts (Allen & Hoekstra, 1992). MacFarlane and Ogazon point out that "the sustainability movement from the grassroots to the global level has been both enriched and hobbled by the many different versions of sustainability articulated in scholarly and popular writings, town hall forums, and international conferences" (2011; p. 85). Bell and Morse (1999) argue

30

that the flexibility of the concept of sustainability adds to its mainstream popularity and allows it to cross many fields of inquiry. Elliott (2001) comments that there are more than seventy definitions of sustainable development borne out in a wide diversity of fields and flowing from a range of different perspectives. Despite this, studies of sustainable development have a relatively short history. One of the earliest and most cited definitions is accredited to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)[6] which states that sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987, p. 43).

Although there is little consensus among policy makers and professionals regarding specific definitions, it is widely accepted among academics that sustainability and sustainable development can be examined across three interrelated dimensions. These are environmental protection, economic progress and social equity and are sometimes referred to as the three Es, or the three pillars (Bottery, 2012; Carstens, 2010; MacFarlane & Ogazon, 2011). Although these dimensions are interrelated, research tends to focus individually on environmental, economic or social conceptions, according to Opp and Saunders (2013). Development plans at many levels of operation in private and public enterprise are employed across a wide diversity of jurisdictions and are founded on these three pillars (Atieno & Simatwa, 2012; Kajikawa 2008; Lubell, Feiock, & Handy 2009; Nijkamp & Pepping 1998; Schoolman, Guest, Bush & Bell, 2012; Wheeler & Beatley 2009). The United Nations has adopted these tenets to guide sustainability as a socially just and ethically acceptable aspiration for all into the future (Hansmann, Mieg & Frischknecht, 2012).

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[6] The Commission was formed by the United Nations in 1984, as an independent group drawn from member states of both the developing and developed worlds. The commission was challenged to identify long-term environmental strategies necessary for sustainable development in the future.

White (2013) suggests that the most generic meaning of sustainability is a mutually accepted shared vision of the future among members of the organisation, system, community or environment in which sustainable development is being pursued. Sustainable development may be best viewed as the pathway to sustainability and is therefore about actions and behaviours rather than a condition or state of being (Harris, 2003). It is difficult to frame as "it depends on an individual's or group's measurement mind-sets which are not fixed and can alter and change" (Bell & Morse, 1999, p. 12). According to Robinson (2004) sustainability denotes the "ability of humans to continue to live within environmental constraints", whereas development places emphasis on growth (2004, p. 370).

Conceptualising Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, recognised as a global challenge, was prioritised in the 1990's in response to a dramatic decrease in world economic growth rates and unprecedented levels of social and environmental change (Elliott, 2001). Increased globalisation led to increased mobility of people and resources and subsequently to rapid changes brought about by multi-regional interactions and trans-national economics. Relentless change and development pushed sustainable development to the fore as a universal challenge in multiple contemporary fields (Allen & Hoekstra, 1992). Sustainable development according to Elliott is ultimately about "reconciling development and the environmental resources on which society depends" (2001, p. 34). Rectifying the adverse effects of unsustainable development and protecting the environment for an indefinite future is the challenge which is faced by decision makers at all levels in developed and developing nations (Elliott, 2001). The rapid depletion of natural resources, caused by an insatiable human appetite for progress and productivity is an enduring dilemma and the sustainability challenge is often associated with the survival of our planet which is arguably the greatest dilemma of all:

32

> The nub of the matter is that nine billion humans cannot live current western lifestyles, at current levels of resource depletion and pollution, and maintain a habitable planet: climate stability is clearly being undermined, and this and other pressures may then accelerate the ongoing loss of biodiversity, so that the whole biosphere starts to unravel. In popular parlance, it is sometimes said in response that 'we must save the planet'. (Ekins, 2011, pp. 629-630)

At the turn of the 21st century an increased focus on the relationship between people and their environment and the resources that go into the productive processes engaged in for survival, gives rise to a broader definition of sustainable development than simply caring for the environment. Sustainable development has emerged as a broader philosophy in the last two decades, bridging multiple spheres of influence: economics, sociology, politics, culture and education. The key to development, according to MacFarlane and Ogazon (2011) is educational awareness which leads to management and planning for change. Hargreaves and Fink remark that "the prominence and urgency of having to think about and commit to preserving sustainability in our environment highlights the necessity of promoting sustainability in many other areas of our lives" (2006, p. 2). The ontologies for sustainable development have been adopted across numerous fields of human practice and are most recently according to Bottery (2012), beginning to make their mark in education. Sustainable leadership according to Hargreaves and Fink (2003; 2006) is an urgent challenge in education systems presently.

Sustainable school improvement

Sustainable development according to Hargreaves and Fink, respects the past without becoming engulfed by it so that practitioners can engage with it in an "urgent and activist way" (2006, p. 187). This is not a straightforward process, as noted by Davies who acknowledges that "sustainability may be considered as building on the past but also leaping forward to new ways of learning and organisational performance, in a way that enhances organisational and human resources and does not deplete or demoralize

33

them" (2001, p. 13). Leaders of sustainable improvement consider past successes and

past mistakes, in developing explicit plans for a more meaningful, enduring and

evolutionary learning future. The idea is to start slowly but advance persistently, to

spread leadership responsibility and to cultivate future leaders who learn through doing

rather than saying (Collins & Porras, 1994).

There are many enduring dilemmas which colour the way in which public systems are

developing. There is great global disruption and economic collapse. According to

Hargreaves et al:

> insecurity is everywhere and some are even saying that globalization is going
> into reverse, it is a time in economic and educational life to either pare down our
> budgets, reduce our ambitions, turn in on ourselves and keep outsiders at bay or
> to embark on a new course that can lead us toward a better place, a new high
> point of inclusiveness, security and prosperity. Education is an essential part of
> the second path". (2010, p. xi)

Reinventing old habits will not serve a changing people in changing times (Fullan,

2006). Reformers and policy-makers stand to learn a great deal from innovations that

have worked in the past and also those that have not (Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005).

In education, according to Luyten, Visscher and Witziers (2004), no discipline has risen

so rapidly and subsequently fallen so drastically as the school effectiveness and school

improvements (SESI) movements. These movements have subscribed too much to the

pursuit of academic achievement rather than embracing broader educational goals

(Elliott, 1996; Luyten, 2003; Thrupp, 2001). According to Reynolds (2010) in reference

to models of standardisation and reform "as fast as the doors opened to it in the 1990s,

they closed to it in the 2000s" (p. 1). Hargreaves *et al.*, (2010) challenge those involved

in education to be creative, innovative and flexible in challenging times. Learning from

the past should involve taking stock of the fact that one-size fits all or standardisation in

schooling does not allow educators to remain flexible to the changing needs in their learning contexts (Reynolds; cited in Townsend, 2007).

The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce in 2007 reports that America's fixation with standardised testing is stifling economic creativity and competitiveness. This point has been reiterated also in reports which confirm that the most "assessment-obsessed" nations, the UK and the USA, rank last and next to last on UNICEF's 21 country list relating to child well-being published in 2007 (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2010). These results are troubling if Cuban's assertion that the best rating of an effective school is the satisfaction levels of its students and community members, is accepted (2003). Policy- makers and school reformers should place more emphasis on flexibility and innovation as the key features of schooling (Luyten, Visscher & Witziers, 2004). Hargreaves *et al.*, warn that:

> In the face of global and economic collapse, the dubious path of narrow standardisation is now one that only educational and economic ostriches and lemmings will follow as they blindly race over the edge of an economic precipice. (2010, p. xv)

In recent decades evidence has replaced experience and "data-driven instruction and improvement have become de rigeur elements of Anglo-American approaches to educational reform" (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2010, p. xvi). Data has been used to draw comparisons: past to present; school to school; region to region; boys to girls; minority students to majority students; and the list goes on. School performance data has been used to set agendas and targets and to inquire into attainment for students and accountability for teachers (Leithwood; cited in Townsend, 2007). Data collection has become "obsessive and excessive" and has resulted in short- term visions by focussing on aspects of education that are readily assessable (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2010). Learning, however; which is the real work of schools, is infinitely more complex than the ticking

of boxes and comparing of league tables (Silins & Mulford; cited in Townsend, 2007). Leithwood (2007, in Townsend) warns that accountability and performance driven models for school effectiveness have a dark side as they can promote a culture of competitiveness which pushes the student out of the learning. Hamilton (2003) claims that prescriptive practices are cultivated in schools that are performance driven and the practice of teaching to the test becomes a priority approach.

Richard Elmore in his contributory chapter in the OECD 'Improving School Leadership' study entitled; *Leadership as the practice of improvement,* (OECD, 2003) analyses the accountability policy experience in the US and the connections or disconnections between accountability policies and leadership in practice. His overriding argument is that accountability can lead to an under investment in knowledge and skill in educational practice and to an over-investment in standards testing and normative control. Student attainment figures and school achievement tables do not present an accurate account of the learning that goes on in schools. Davies (2001) asserts that "short-term accountability demands tend to require the replication of information with some attributes of complex learning, but assess little of the learning on the complex to deep end of the spectrum" (p. 156).

School efficiency models do not interrogate the work of the organisation from a deep, broad or long term trajectory. Education is everyone's business and should focus on the personal development of the individual as well as the academic. Davies (2001) reminds us that " successful learning can be seen in how children achieve academically, socially, spiritually, physically and emotionally; it is children being all that they can be" (p. 155). This rounded view of learning, however, falls at every evaluation and measurement post. Education is after all "more than preparing students to make a living, although that is important; it is also about preparing them to make a life" (Fink, 2010, p. 21).

International Models of Improvement

Important lessons can be learned from other jurisdictions. For example, in Finland there are no standardized systems of assessment for schools and yet Finland attracts more highly qualified educators who are awarded a high degree of professional trust. This system relies entirely on the expertise and accountability of a trusted workforce who are knowledgeable and committed to their students (Sahlberg, 2007). Finnish schools consistently produce high levels of achievement (Hargreaves, Halosz & Pont, 2008; OECD, 2000). In Singapore, the government's "Teach Less, Learn More" (TLLM) initiative was introduced in 2004. The purpose of the initiative was to move teaching in schools away from traditional rote learning to a model of education which interrogates learning and encourages students to learn for themselves. This framework urged teachers to focus on the quality of learning and the incorporation of technology into classrooms and not just the quantity of learning and exam preparation (Sclafani, 2008). Singapore's education system is described as 'world leading' (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010; Cheng & Dimmock, 2014) and Singapore has been placed at the top of the educational achievement table in the latest OECD PISA Report (2012/13).

Clearly, how learning is viewed and supported is the key to school improvement. Individual teachers and school leaders are essential change agents in learning organisations (Moos & Huber, cited in Townsend, 2007). Class level, as opposed to school level or system level levers are the most significant influences on student achievement (Cuban, 2003; Slavin, 1996). Class level instruction and learning is influenced directly by professional development activities, problem solving approaches to teaching, mutual and collaborative learning approaches and collective agency (Garet et al., 2001; Reynolds, 2007). The most effective place to improve learning is through teaching (Reynolds, 2007; Leithwood, 2007; Scheerens, 1993) and the best way to

improve teaching is through leadership (Marzano, in Townsend, 2007; Silins & Mulford, 2007).

Linking Leadership to School Improvement

Purposeful leadership is acknowledged as a key constituent of effective schools (Hopkins, Ainscow & West, 1994; Hopkins, Mortimore, Sammons & Hillman, 1997; Reynolds & Cuttance 1992). Effective leaders exercise an indirect but significant influence on school effectiveness (Davis *et al.*, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001; Nir, 2008). While teacher effect is accepted as the most significant determinant of student learning and school success (Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 2003), leadership exerts positive influence on teacher motivation and development and consequently, the quality of teaching in classrooms (Bush & Jackson, 2002; Harris & Day, 2003; Mayrowetz, 2008). Some authors argue that capable leaders are the measure of capacity in schools as they strongly influence how effectively internal agency is developed and utilized (Elmore, 2003; Riley & MacBeath, 2003).

The value placed on leadership in education is reflected in a steady flow of empirical findings and a substantial research drive in recent decades (Scheerens, 2012). Many authors interrogate leadership theories, styles, traits, practices and skills, yet the literature has failed to produce an omniscience of what counts as effective practice when it comes to leaders in schools (Harris & Day, 2003). The definitive model of the 'good leader' is every bit as elusive as that of 'the good teacher'. Debates about school leadership are ubiquitous, yet there is scant research relating to the processes which uphold and support good leadership. Davis *et al.* (2005) and Fisher (2011) confirm that research has established that principals play a key role in influencing school effectiveness however, "little is known about how to help principals develop the

capacities that make a difference in how schools function and what students learn"
(Davis, *et al.*, 2005, p. 4). Harris and Day (2003) confirm that "much of the literature
omits the importance of the contexts in which people construct social events and share
meaning" (2003, p. 90). From a policy-makers viewpoint leaders can be seen as holding
the key to resolving the contemporary issues that appear to be facing schools (Riley &
MacBeath, 2003). Fullan (2001) comments that "the litmus test of all leadership is
whether it mobilizes people's commitment to putting energy into actions designed to
improve things" (p. 9). Leaders then can be regarded as the central agents when it
comes to disseminating policy mandates at organizational level in education.

Sustainable Leadership in Education

Sustainable organisations are living systems which are open and capable of change but
they depend on information for growth (Wheatley, 1995). Hargreaves and Fink present a
literal interpretation of sustaining as meaning "to hold up, bear the weight of; be able to
bear (strain, suffering and the like) without collapse" (p. 23). Hargreaves and Fink (2006)
believe that the ruthless drive for performance and results in education is counter to the
creation of learning systems which are learning oriented in the long term:

> A commitment to sustainable leadership must move us beyond the
> micromanagement of standardisation, the crisis management of repetitive
> change syndrome, and the all-consuming obsession with higher and higher
> performance standards at any cost into a world where we can bring about
> authentic improvement and achievement for all children that matters, spreads
> and lasts. (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 20)

Standards reforms and performance targets in education are contrary to sustainable
change according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006). Hargreaves argues that educational
reform in recent years "has sacrificed depth of learning to the achievement appearances

of standardised testing' and that this has prevented the "ability to plan for a more sustainable future" (2007, p. 224).

A system that emphasizes efficiency at the cost of all else will succeed in producing outcomes of short term value, with little enduring quality (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Fast moving organisations are producing the goods at such speeds that the results cannot be digested. Practitioners are moving from target to target and grand goals are dissected into short term objectives. Knowledge is a commodity that needs to be gathered quickly. The result is "instant gratification, testable goals and short term band- aids" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 47). In education this treadmill approach to learning produces what Elkind has referred to as "the hurried child" (1993, p. 9). Fullan (2001) contends that the key to sustained improvement in schools is "slow knowing" which respects "the complexities of situations that do not have easy answers" (p. 123). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) advocate a sustained approach to school improvement which resists quick fix reactions to prescribed change. They concede that "slow knowing is cooked, not microwaved, tasty instead of bland, grown and prepared locally rather than delivered from afar" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 51).

The sustainable leadership model proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) outlines a set of "orienting concepts" for renewed leadership practice, rather than a prescriptive guide for leadership action (Hargreaves, Halàsz & Pont, 2007, p. 10). Leaders must resist the call "to follow the bouncing ball of other people's scripts" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 52). Fink and Brayman (2006) acknowledge that there is substantial inquiry relating to how leadership is distributed and disseminated throughout organisations either through established formal mechanisms or more natural informal processes, however much less is known about the "equally significant issue of how leadership is arranged and articulated over time" (p. 64). Sustainable leadership, a long term approach, is built upon a three dimensional base consisting of depth, length and

breadth.[7] A study of the fundamental principles of sustainable leadership examines how leadership may be arranged over time. Advocating these principles respects that:

- *Sustainable leadership matters*: it promotes, protects and preserves leadership for learning and "leadership for caring for and among others" (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 225)

- *Sustainable leadership lasts:* it preserves and enhances the most valuable aspects of leadership, from one leader to another

- *Sustainable leadership spreads*: it is sustained by and depends on the leadership of others, leaders cannot lead without help.

The three principles of sustainable leadership are developed further using the wider leadership literature relating to instructional leadership, leadership succession planning and distributed leadership in schools.

Principle 1, Depth: Leading Learning in schools

Sustainable leadership matters because it puts learning first (Fullan, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) contend that "sustainable leadership, like sustainable improvement, begins with a strong and unswerving sense of moral purpose" (p. 23). If there is no clear meaning behind our actions, then there is no depth to our behaviour. The central moral purpose of schooling is learning which is accepted and valued by all (Fullan, 1993; Davies, 2001; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Fullan (2003) places this purpose as central to the health and well- being of an organisation and is adamant that "you don't have to go very far into the question of the role of public schools in a democracy before discovering that moral purpose is at the heart of the matter" (Fullan, 2003, p. 3). The consideration of central purpose should also be fixed

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[7] A diagram of Hargreaves and Fink's model of sustainable leadership is included in Appendix 1.

on the long term prospects for the organisation in order for objectives to be accepted as meaningful or worthwhile.

Moral purpose in all its guises; shared vision, purpose, values and beliefs, is advocated as fundamental to change and improvements in educational organisations (Fullan, 2003; 2011; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, Fink, 2010). In education, most expressions of moral purpose assume a shared belief, since purpose refers to an organisation or group and not to individuals (Cuttance, 2003; NCSL, 2006; Fullan, 2003; MacBeath, 2006). Despite widespread agreement about the centrality of moral purpose in educational organisations, Bezzina (2012) reports that there is a distinct lack of open and explicit dialogue relating to moral purpose among educators leading learning in schools. Bezzina (2012) connects moral purpose to the success of schools and directly to the work of their leaders. Frick (2011) points out that "moral leadership and ethical administrative decision making require more than the mechanical application of existing rules, regulations, and various levels of school and school-related policy" (p. 527). A school vision is not 'visionary', it is realistic. It is based on a feasible plan for continued action and is firmly grounded in context.

School vision can be viewed as the translation of a moral purpose into a menu for action which places learning at the fulcrum (Cuttance, 2003; Sutcliffe, 2013). Learning should underscore every aspect of school life and reach into every corner of the organisation. This learning is valued and accepted by all in the organisation as a life-long process (Leithwood, 1997). Students' learning comes first and everyone else's supports it (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). MacBeath, Moos and Riley (1998) recognise the need to broaden conceptualisations of learning by acknowledging the need to develop a much wider definition of exactly who learners are in schools. There are echoes of the Deweyan democratic ideal in this argument which posits that a democratic community

"must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equitable and equal terms" (as cited in Curren, 2007, p. 48). The "all" in this statement may be interpreted as 'all' students. However, this is a narrow interpretation since it is the adults in a learning community who are required to develop the knowledge and skills to remain flexible and adaptable so that education stands some chance of remaining relevant and responsive in the future. Student learning comes first, but it is not the full story. All who enter the path of engagement as educators must surely accept that if learning is the central purpose of education, then it follows that educators are also active learners. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) see teacher and student development as reciprocally related. This view could be extended to include principals in addition to teachers and students, in a mutually dependent cycle of learning and development.

Hargreaves and Fink are clear that learning for all is a core purpose within their sustainable leadership outlook and they place "learning at the centre of everything leaders do" (2006, p. 27). Darling-Hammond *et al.* agree that leaders in schools should be sowers and reapers of this learning (2007). The constant pursuit of deep and broad learning as a central purpose is fuelled by the realisation that no matter how satisfied we are with the work that goes on in schools, there is always scope for improvement. Slower schooling according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), begets deep learning by resisting "fast paced karaoke curricula" and leads away from yearly achievement targets to a realisation that learning is not instant (p. 52). Good returns over time may be obtained in systems that slow down and savour learning. It is asserted that broad and deep learning cannot be definitively measured as it involves academic, social, physical, emotional and spiritual learning, according to Davies (2001).

Instructional leadership theory

It can be argued that approaches to leadership which cross the boundaries between, instructional, distributed, organisational and transformational styles may be advocated in service to the characteristics and needs of individual schools. The sustainable leadership approach may cross multiple boundaries between theories, models, definitions and styles of leadership. Leadership is accepted as an adaptive construct in this study. Instructional leadership practice is also accepted as an important facet of the complex practice of leading because it is firmly directed towards leading learning in context, which is a fundamental tenet of sustainable leadership in education.

Instructional leadership is not a new phenomenon and has been promoted in schools since the turn of the century, according to Hallinger (2005). In fact the "instructional period" has been witnessed in schools for the past twenty- five years (Fullan, 2014, p. 11). Despite its maturation, instructional leadership has been a difficult construct to embed in schools (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Wiseman, 2004). Instructional leadership according to Hoy and Miskel (2008) involves procedures and practices which focus school leaders on the teaching and learning that occurs in schools. Instructional leadership does not grow organically or incidentally in schools. It involves a team of leaders who are actively participant in the improvement of instruction, with the principal engaged as the leader of leaders (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Instructional leadership encourages a focus on learning and teaching as the main work of the school, within the fluid arena of educational practice. This broad leadership approach promotes long term visions by: defining the purpose of schooling; setting school-wide goals; providing the resources needed for learning to occur; supervising and evaluating teachers; coordinating staff development programmes; and creating collegial relationships with and among teachers (Hopkins, 2000; Wildy & Dimmock, 1993). The role of school leader has been redefined to comply with both the administrative and

instructional aspects of the job (Hallinger, 2005; Prytula, 2013). Instructional leadership is a "people centred approach" to the work that goes on in schools (Schleicher, 2008). Instructional leadership approaches have been valued by policy makers and reformers who have acknowledged the empirical evidence which has linked this style of leadership with positive school effects (Creemers, 1994; Hallinger, 1992; Sheppard, 1996).

The instructional approach to teaching and learning aligns with sustainable leadership theory because it involves a shift away from isolated teaching practices, towards a more collaborative and mutually devised approach to learning. Instructional leaders are involved with a much broader and non-normative approach to learning than the latent features of accountability which capture public attention. As instructional leaders, school principals are expected to be experts in new pedagogies and engaged with the instructional processes that occur in classrooms throughout their organization (DuFour, 2002; Leithwood et al. 1999). At the same time, instructional leaders acknowledge the fact that the teachers in their organisations are pedagogical experts and utilizing the talents and expertise of this readily accessible pool of leaders is a critical element of the instructional approach. The principal then, becomes a leader of leaders. The approach is characterized by the collegial and reciprocal process of sharing knowledge and is directed towards empowering key players to improve teaching and learning (Hopkins, 2001, Southworth, 2009).

It is important that teachers and school partners, who are also acknowledged as learners, are supported adequately to progress learning in ways that are responsive to the changing social landscape which is mirrored in our schools (Pickering (2001). Day and Leitch (2007) are adamant that we cannot expect expertise to grow organically in schools and that growth of expertise is not contingent upon age and experience. If new constructs of leadership and learning in schools involve teams of learners and teams of

45

leaders (Hall, 2002) then investment in the development of these teams through continuous professional development is essential. Modern conceptualizations of professional development in education perceive learning to be a continuous and sustained process (Feiman- Nemser, 2001; Borko, 2004). Professional learning is characterised by collegial rather than autonomous professionalism, which according to Hargreaves (1994) has major implications for how best to prepare teachers. Continued development in education depends not just on individual- level factors but also upon a school climate that is conducive to individual and whole-staff development (Printy, 2008).

Continued Professional Development (CPD) depends also on the degree to which the leadership within the school accommodates and encourages professional development and how it is disseminated among staffs (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins. 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Feiman-Nemser, (2001) commented that "what students learn depends on what and how teachers teach; and what and how teachers teach depends on the knowledge, skills, and commitments they bring to their teaching and the opportunities they have to continue learning in and from their practice" (p. 1015).Teachers can provide the ingredients out of which success stories are composed if they are given the space and opportunities to do so.

School principals as lead learners

Principals according to Lambert *et al.*, (2002) have a profound influence on organisational learning; both directly, by demonstrating a strong commitment to the learning that goes on in schools at all levels, and indirectly through their influence on teachers who are committed to student learning. There is no longer any debate about the influence of leadership on school learning and improvement according to Fullan (2014). It is generally accepted that "the principal is second only to the teacher in terms of impact on student learning" (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom.

46

2004, p. 5). Leaders who foster organisational learning are catalysts for change and can empower school communities to apply expert knowledge to enhance collective improvement (Leithwood *et al.*, 1999). The principal's role is pivotal in the school improvement equation according to Fullan (2003) who sums up this contention by stating that "there is no greater moral imperative than revamping the principal's role as part and parcel of changing the context within which teachers and students learn" (p.11).

Fullan (2003) views the school principal as the agent for change and improvement. School principals are repeatedly cast as the main orchestrators of organisational purpose, the catalysts of change (Golem, Boyatz & McKee 2002) or change leaders (Fullan, 2002; Miller, 2001). The role of the principal in leading learning should be a central consideration in education. In turn, definitions of learning need to be broadened so that learning is accepted as including active adult learning communities as well as student learning communities in schools. The principal, as lead learner in schools, is often cast as an instructional leader. Instructional leadership models are advocated by authors in the field who realign the focus of responsibility on the learning and teaching in schools (Caldwell, 1999; Elmore, 1995; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement (Cotton, 2003). The instructional leader according to Fullan (2014) does not represent a full image of the school principal, but includes instructional guidance as an essential aspect of the complex role of school leader.

Principle 2, Length: Succession Planning in schools

Succession has an "overwhelmingly important influence on the sustainability or unsustainability of educational change" (Hargreaves, cited in Fink, 2010, p. xv). Strong leadership should exert itself not only beyond the individual leaders within the school community, but also beyond the individual leader across the years, from incumbents to

successors (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). A successful leader ensures that the successes they have created among students and the school community out live them, according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006). Fullan (2003) claims that the principalship is as much about the legacy you leave behind as the work carried out during the course of tenure. This is especially true if commitment to a long term vision is a responsibility which is guarded as a key aspect of the role. Reform and improvement agendas stand some hope of enduring over time if they are buoyed by leadership stability and continuity, according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006). Stable and well guided leadership in schools is the obvious gateway to maintaining improvements over time "yet few things in education succeed less than leadership succession" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 57). Succession planning is an integral element of sustainability and is essential to the viability of the other core components, leading the learning and broadening mutual aspirations through distribution of leadership practice.

Effects of poor succession planning

The leadership succession research indicates that in spite of the teaching and learning that goes on in schools, unplanned principal succession is one of the most common sources of school stagnation (Brooking, 2008; Fink, 2010; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2007) and school failure (Leithwood *et al.,* 2008). Effective leadership succession planning ensures that there is a leadership pipeline which maintains a fluid stream of capable leaders at every level in learning organisations (Hartle & Thomas, 2003). Lasting improvement in schools is constantly hindered by poor succession planning (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Fink (2010) reports that leadership succession in schools is seldom planned or prepared for and that many schools and outgoing school principals fail to recruit leadership successors. Fink (2010) asserts that there "is a silence about these

enduring issues of succession and it is time to break it" (2010, p. xii). Succession

planning in schools adopted through formal procedures ensures that leadership does not

become static over time and "takes account of the fact that as the pace of change

continues it is increasingly difficult to predict the shape of specific leadership roles and

the qualities required to do them effectively" (Hartle & Thomas, 2003, p. 8).

The challenges associated with principal recruitment

Principal shortages are well documented in leadership literature and can be traced back

to 2001, when the American National Association of Secondary School Principals

(NASSP) and the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) both reported an aging leadership

workforce and a critical shortage of qualified candidates to fill the impending gaps. The

1990s, according to Fullan (2003) was a bleak time for principals, who were smothered

by prescriptive mandates and starved of legitimate training and support. This created a

leadership deficit as "the principalship was becoming increasingly unattractive, even to,

or one could say especially to, those who wanted to make a difference" (2003, p.xiii).

Fullan, remarks that the leadership crisis being faced by systems well into the new

millennium should have been predicted, since little or nothing was being done to

cultivate strong leaders for schools

> The system is in deep trouble. There is a huge need for new leaders, and at the
> same time there is a set of conditions that makes the job unattractive- conditions
> that are well known to anyone working in schools. There has been such a lack
> of attention to leadership development that there is difficulty filling vacancies at
> all, let alone filling them with people who possess highly developed leadership
> qualities. (2003, p. 24)

The problems which are clogging leadership pools in education run much deeper than

the notion that there are too many jobs and not enough candidates to fill them. Some

studies have reported the real issue is leadership reluctance not candidate shortfalls

(NASSP, 2001; Papa, Lankford & Wyckoff, 2002). In 2003, the Wallace Foundation

was commissioned to investigate the alarming reports in the US of a leadership shortage crisis and concluded that indeed the real issue was leadership reluctance, which may be more difficult to identify and to remediate. Early reports of the impending leadership shortfall in some jurisdictions have been associated with a number of extenuating circumstances, including stress, lack of funding, juggling management and instructional duties, new standards reforms, and increased socio-economic and student diversity issues (Brookings, Collins, Cour & O'Neill, 2003; Gronn & Rowlings- Sanaei, 2003; OPC, 2001). More recently, the leadership literature signals that the leadership succession issue has been elevated to a full scale crisis (Fink, 2010; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2007; Lillis & Flood, 2010; Breault & Breault, 2010; Anderson *et al.*, 2011; McCarthy, Grady & Dooley, 2011). Brooking (2008), questions not only the quantity but also the quality of leadership candidates. It is abundantly clear that this is an issue that is not going to fade away and will presumably continue to grow and spread in many education systems unless some treatment is applied to the roots.

There is no doubt that the demographic of an aging workforce and in particular the recent increase in the pattern of early retirements of school principals is posing an urgent and significant challenge in many education systems worldwide at the present time (Boerema, 2011; Darling- Hammond *et al.* 2007). Addressing leadership reluctance is a complex agenda. Meeting the succession challenge according to Fink (2010) needs to involve more than "filling some jobs with warm bodies" (p.140). Fink (2010) demands that a change in the international policy environment should ensure that leadership is developed and spread in ways that produce rich pools of candidates who are well primed to become capable leaders of learning in schools. Leithwood *et al.* (2004), claim that the appointment and retention of school principals is one of the most successful strategies for turning around struggling schools. This claim carries a strong

message not only about the importance of leadership in schools but by extension the importance of succession planning to secure able leaders in the first place. Studies by Macmillan, (2000) and by Fink & Brayman, (2006), report negative effects caused by unstable succession, especially on initiatives intended to increase student achievement. Succession is described by Fink and Brayman as "a chronic process rather than an episodic crisis" (2006, p. 62).

Effective management of leadership succession

Succession management in schools is dependent on five critical factors, according to Fink (2010). These are: effective recruitment procedures; leadership development and support; formal selection procedures; induction procedures and leadership appraisal (Fink, 2010, pp. 100-109).

Leadership recruitment boards should carefully consider the professional characteristics and motivations of aspiring leaders. Serving principals, according to Fink (2010), should be proactive in identifying and nourishing leadership qualities in potential candidates early on in their teaching career. Leadership development can take many forms, from training and certification to leadership experiences as middle managers or informal leaders in schools. Fink (2010) proposes that more rigorous or creative selection procedures may secure suitable candidates for principal leadership positions in specific schools. The selection through interview alone may not help identify the best candidates in a given context. Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1994) advise that pre-service programmes for aspiring school administrators should form an integral part of the leadership selection process. These programmes should entail both knowledge of the job through critical engagement with leadership theory, and knowledge on the job through practice experiences (Leithwood *et al.*, 1994). Candidates should be awarded

opportunities to gain experience in settings where "high quality, supervised practice can be readily undertaken" (Leithwood *et al.* 1994, p. 194). In their review of pre-service preparation for aspiring administrators in Canada and the US, Leithwood *et al.*, (1994) recommend that programmes which include both knowledge oriented strands and practice based experience are more likely to procure capable candidates for leadership positions in schools. The Wallace Foundation Report in 2012 entitled: *The Making of the Principal*, concludes that significant progress has been made relating to novice principal preparation in the last decade. The same report, however, also concludes that more selective and probing processes should be employed in assigning school leadership appointments. In addition, the report acknowledges a lack of pre-service training for aspiring principals.

The point is made that policy makers should address issues and challenges not only for those who aspire to leadership positions, but also for those who have been recently appointed and that high-quality support and guidance is an essential prerequisite for effective leadership practice in the first three years of a principalship (Wallace Foundation, 2012). As candidates make the transition from teaching to leadership, the support and development of leadership competencies is a critically important consideration (Radinger, 2014). Brauckmann (2012) stresses that less emphasis needs to be placed on managerial and administrative tasks, since learning is the priority in schools. It is essential that school leaders are adequately supported in committing themselves to pedagogical leadership to improve teaching and learning (Radinger, 2014).

Individual leadership appraisal has a positive effect on school principals' pedagogical expertise, according to Radinger (2014). Formal appraisal procedures can be

implemented to guide principals in the early transition phase of their appointment and should be continued throughout their career as positional leaders in schools. Effective appraisal mechanisms exert positive influences on leadership practice by reflecting upon and guiding effective leadership practices. Upon appointment, new leaders should have access to special support programmes, whether through networking, mentoring or advisory support from serving principals, or alternatively through formal training programmes (Wallace Foundation, 2012). Pont, Nusche and Moorman in their project report on school leadership, conclude that the reality in schools is that principals feel poorly prepared and inadequately supported and feelings of isolation are prevalent among new leaders (Pont *et al.*, 2008).

Leadership is not a state of being, but a process of becoming. Leadership structures should be adaptive to the changing needs of modern society. Succession processes need to be flexible in order to leave growing room for future leaders to adapt to and deal with demands that have not yet come to seed in education. It is not feasible according to Fink "to dress up age-old approaches to leadership and expect that they are appropriate for a new age, and for new generations" (2010, p.50.) The selection and recruitment of capable leaders is vital to the long term health and vitality of educational organisations (Lillis & Flood, 2010). Succession and recruitment are considerations which should be awarded serious attention by policy-makers (Walker & Kwan, 2009). Leadership succession planning is a key ingredient if school improvement is to be sustained (Fink, 2010). Leadership succession is a pressing concern in most OECD countries where "the principal workforce is ageing and large numbers of school leaders will retire over the next five to ten years" (OECD, 2008, p.29). Fink and Brayman (2006) have warned that unless there is a more concerted focus on improving leadership succession structures in education:

school improvement becomes like a set of bobbing corks, with many schools rising under one set of leaders, only to sink under the next. The cumulative result is that a school's efforts to sustain "deep learning" experiences for all its students are severely limited. (p. 62)

Fink (2010) argues that the succession challenge in education has been exacerbated by organisations such as the OECD, which he regards to be partly to blame for adding weight to the pressures placed on school leaders by " turning education into a global rat-race" (p. 44). Fink (2010) argues that greater autonomy and flexibility needs to be apportioned to organisational leaders. He coupled the idea of local autonomy with models of distributed leadership which allow leadership roles to be dispersed in organisations to address student learning as the core purpose of school based practice (Fink, 2010).

Principle 3, Breadth: Distributed Leadership in education

For change and improvement to be an enduring feature of educational organisations, it needs breadth. Breadth is achieved through distributed leadership which provides a wider web of leadership responsibility in schools and produces a "differentiated pool of leadership expertise" (Hopkins, Higham & Antaridou (2009, p. 9). Hartle and Thomas link long term improvement to distributed leadership action stating that:

the clear message is that to sustain improvement requires the leadership capability of the many rather than the few and that improvements in learning are more likely to be achieved when leadership is located closest to the classroom and distributed throughout the school. (2003, p. 15)

Distributed leadership theory has evolved in the last two decades and is now used as an umbrella term encompassing many models of the distribution of leadership responsibilities in educational organisations (Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006). Some of the numerous styles of distributed leadership in the literature include: collective leadership (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008); parallel leadership (Crowther ,

Ferguson & Hann, 2000); organisational commitment (Hulpia, Devos & Van Keer, 2011); shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003); organic management (Miller & Rowan, 2006); teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004); participative leadership (Somech & Wenderow, 2006); communities of practice (Puneul, Riel, Krause & Frank, 2009; Printy, 2008) and organisational citizenship behaviour (Somech & Ron, 2007). Mayrowetz (2008) warns that "one universal usage of distributed leadership may never be achieved, and perhaps it is unadvisable to seek it given the proliferation of definitions that have emerged" (p. 433). All of these theories of leadership action, however, emphasise that the distribution of leadership at practice level does not amount to a delegation of duties on the part of the principal leader, rather it implies that leadership distribution employs a collective approach to the learning within a school. As Fullan points out: "the power of peers is that there are so many of them" (2010, p. 122). This shared learning approach is supported by a culture of collegial respect and mutual trust.

Promoting collaborative practices in schools

The distribution of leadership through collaboration and devolved responsibility is celebrated as good practice in contemporary systems of education (Harris & Day, 2003). Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) advise caution, however, acknowledging that collaborative practice and collective enterprise is not a panacea for all problems in education. Gleeson and Knights (2008) also are critical of those who accept distributed leadership as a cure for all accumulated ills. Distributed leadership is not a quick fix support for school principals. Authentic and successful partnerships take time and considerable effort to consolidate. Though some authors are critical, there is a new drive towards more shared forms of leadership in education and its value is well documented in the literature (Bentley, 2010; Elmore, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). It is argued that by establishing

a less isolated position as leader in a school through collaborative practice, the principal may begin to deconstruct an identity as gatekeeper and develop a culture of "solidarity and allegiance" within their organization (Hall, 1996, p. 2).

The intensification of educational practices and most especially the work of principals, which has evolved since the new millennium has resulted in renewed efforts in research fields to adapt a model of leadership which may go some way towards responding to the relentless pressure of the New Public Management era. Leadership distribution can be accepted as having indirect effects on school improvement, by strengthening leadership support and promoting the talents of teachers who have the most significant influence on student achievement in schools (Cuban, 2003; Harris, 2001; Leithwood *et al.*, 1999). These forms of leadership move focus and reach beyond the traditional heroic styles of leadership by genuinely valuing the input of school members in leadership. Distributing leadership action which is centred on school wide learning, places leadership both inside and outside classrooms. In today's schoolhouses, principals need the help of every leader they can get (Spillane *et al.*, 2004).

Developing leadership talents in schools

Many authors defend the idea that teachers are best placed to review and renew their own practice, activating change and improvement at the level of lived experience (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Fullan, 2002; Sachs, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; MacBeath, 1999). By involving those directly engaged with student learning in decision making, it seems logical that a genuine commitment to changing education for some good becomes more probable. Gleeson and Knights (2008) recognise that procurement of the middle management levels in schools provides a capable and accessible leadership recruiting ground at organisational level. This 'grow your own'

approach to leadership recruitment has been supported by a number of authors in the field who claim that authentic experiences at practitioner level can enhance career ambition and provide the essential skills required for a more fluid transition into formal leadership positions (Gronn, 2003; Moos & Huber, 2007; Simkins & Lumby, 2003).

Fullan (2006) stresses the pressing need to attract high-quality leaders to positions of influence in schools "because it is only high-quality people who can model and otherwise help develop strong leadership in others. It will be this critical mass of distributive leaders who can make the largest differences" (p. 7). The role of the school leader is twofold according to Fullan (2006), integrally associated with school wide success through student achievement and committed to continuous improvement by fostering leadership characteristics in school learning communities. Leaders must plant the seeds for a positive future in their schools. The idea of collective responsibility does not diminish the leadership role of principals (Hallinger & Heck, 2009). School principals still occupy primary leadership positions in schools even when cultures of authentic leadership distribution have been well developed (MacBeath, Moos & Riley, 1998).

All school community members- principals, teachers, parents and students possess leadership capacity and therefore affect the performance of their schools (Pounder, Ogawa & Adams, 1995). This perspective is based on an optimistic vision of a better educational future and the potential to shape meaning in systems by empowering the prime agents who are grounded in practice. In troubling times innovators become motivated through their aspirations for a better world. It is true that "as educators we need a hope which dares to confront our troubled world" (Wrigley, 2003, p.6). Coolahan (2002) and Morgan and Sugrue (2008) suggest that distributing leadership practice is becoming the necessary mechanism for addressing the "crisis' of the growing complexity of school leadership" (Morgan & Sugrue, 2008, p. 9).

Strong adherence to steadfast norms of professional autonomy and isolation have been highlighted as barriers to reform and a deterrent to authentic leadership practices by many authors (Barth, 2001; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; Pounder *et al.*, 1995). Historically schools were never intended to function as communities of learning and action (Fullan, 1993; Harris & Lambert, 2003). The industrial era from which public schooling emerged, fashioned and developed hierarchical leadership structures and leader-follower norms. Schools functioned around meticulously structured programmes of operation and instruction. Teachers were autonomous and leaders were 'masters' and students were empty vessels waiting to be filled. Fullan (1993) commented that schools traditionally are non-intellectual as the structural, normative organization of operations "is not amenable to experimentation, critical reflection, continuous learning, assessment, or re-thinking" (p. 242). Day *et al.* warn that "uncertainty, isolation and individualism are a potent combination. Almost by definition, they sustain educational conservatism, since the opportunity and pressure arising from new ideas are inaccessible" (1998, p. 48).

Management models of leadership endure in schools possessed of these isolationist and individualist cultures. Managerial models do not accommodate the kind of versatile and flexible scope that is desirable in times of rapid change or crisis (Day *et al.* 1998). Research has shown that people who are over -directed and over- controlled and monitored, feel mistrusted and undermined and fail to realise their utmost potential (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000). Leadership, viewed as the potential available for release in schools or the intellectual capital within a school, can often lie dormant according to Hopkins and Jackson (2003). Creative and innovative practitioners become stifled in organisations where traditional cultures prevail. It is the responsibility of the principal to harness all leadership potential and to promote natural leadership as an enacted activity (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003). Emihovich and Battaglia (2000) acknowledge that

transformation from formal organisation to learning community requires a seismic physical and psychological shift.

The contemporary Irish educational context

In the education sector in Ireland, the mandated change agenda has been pervasive in the past two decades (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; OECD, 2008). Reform mandates have included legislation relating to special needs provisions in schools, policies relating to provisions for designated disadvantage and inclusion models focussed on the holistic development of the child. Specific to school leadership, organisational changes have been enacted through legislative provisions including the Education Act, 1998; the Revised Primary Curriculum, 1999; and the introduction of middle management promotions in schools, 2003. All of these reform agendas have had a profound effect on the manner in which principals exercise their functions (IPPN, 2010).

The Education Act (1998) calls for school principals to be both leaders and managers. It is presumed that principals are well positioned and have the capacity and the time to invest in instructional training and commit to classroom engagement in tandem with the already burdensome and irreducible responsibilities of management and administration. Yet reports consistently outline that the remit of leader of learning and manager of organisational and human resourcing is beyond the scope of an individual leader (Davis *et al.*, 2005; McDonald, 2008; OECD, 2008; Levine, 2005). McDonald (2008) summarises the spectrum of expertise bestowed on school leaders in Irish primary education, outlining a job lot that seems impossible for any one individual

> ...not only in the areas of administration but also in the areas of planning, budgeting, human relations, curriculum development, monitoring of performance and provision of feedback, and communication with stakeholders in society generally. From this perspective, the idea of appointing an individual principal becomes redundant. (p. 37)

Despite widespread change and reform in Irish education systems, bureaucratic traditions are a prevailing feature as levels of state involvement in schooling remain very high (Gleeson, 2010; Sugrue, 2006). The dominance of traditional Catholic ownership and management in schools still prevails, with 90% of primary schools still under the ownership of the Roman Catholic Church (Grummell *et al.*, 2009). Old and new flavours fill the leadership cup as organisations are asked to remain true to traditional embedded cultures while at the same time adapting to modern socio-cultural influences. The unique Irish situation bears out in settings that are confusing and detached, being "at once highly centralised and decentralised with no immediate structures between schools" (Lillis & Flood, 2010, p. 130).

Reports have revealed that at practice level the job description of the school principal in Ireland is still not clear (Haygroup, 2003; Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008). Role ambiguity can, perhaps, be linked to a lack of capacity among practitioners in dealing with the enormous spectrum of competencies associated with their position (Sugrue, 2009; Darmody & Smyth, 2011); rather than a lack of guidance relating to duties associated with the role. Included in the definition of the role of the school principal, documented in the Haygroup Report (2003), is the requirement for all principals "to create, communicate and deliver a vision for the school, taking account of the rights and aspirations of all the stakeholders in the school and the community" (p. 11, 2003). Despite an extensive focus on the role, the resulting exhaustive lists of role competencies have done little to alleviate tensions surrounding the exact nature of the role at practice level. The burden of responsibility attached to the role of school principal may be ameliorated if an authentic system of leadership distribution were embedded in schools (Humphreys, 2009). A further challenge linked with the formal distribution of responsibilities in most recent times has been the advent of a moratorium on Special Posts of Responsibility in schools (DES; Circular 0042/2010). The

moratorium places an embargo on recruitment and promotion across all public service sectors including education. The diminution of middle-management posts currently being imposed in Irish schools is an obvious step backwards for leadership in Ireland. Murphy (2007) concedes that the greatest agency in promoting modern educational landscapes is the development of dense leadership cultures within schools. The phasing out of mechanisms which provide opportunities for shared leadership in Ireland can be regarded as a significant threat to the type of leadership proposed by Murphy (2007).

Leadership in Irish primary schools

This research study examines leadership in Irish primary education against the unique political and social landscape in Ireland, which has been documented in literature as influential in shaping practice and procedures in schools (OECD, 2008; IPPN, 2014). A strong argument in this case is that if leadership is developed and sustained in schools, school improvement is more likely to endure (James, Connolly, Dunning & Elliott, 2006; Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The issues borne out in the Irish context are linked closely with the principles of sustainable leadership advocated by Fullan (2002) and by Hargreaves and Fink (2006).

School development planning (SDP) in Irish schools has prompted commentaries which resonate with sustainable improvement philosophies, because of its focus on the future. Tuohy (1997) summarises SDP as "a series of steps that help a school achieve its preferred future", an ideal that reflects the central tenet of sustainability action (Fullan, Cuttress & Kilcher, 2005). It is clear in the Irish context that the role of the school principal in development planning, is to remain active in facilitating, establishing and promoting a whole school vision as the primary moral prerogative within their schools. All of the competencies laid out in the documents, reports and guidelines assume that

principals possess the capacity to secure effective teaching and learning environments in their contexts (DES, 1992, 1995, 1998, 1999; Fullan, 2006; Haygroup, 2003; IPPN; 2004). Other researchers, however, have warned that there are significant challenges in Irish education, in trying to secure capable school leaders to meet the demands of the present educational context (Anderson *et al.*, 2011) and that the issue is most problematic in the case of teaching principalships (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2009). Past research has established a link between principals and the development of school capacity (Cosner, 2009; Fullan, 2003; Gamoran *et al.* 2003; Gronn, 2002). Cosner (2009) claims that principals perform a "make-or-break" role in achieving and sustaining school development and improvement (p. 155).

The primary school principal in Ireland

The role of the principal in the Irish primary school sector has had a slow evolution (Grummell, *et al.,* 2009). Collins, Cradden & Butler (2007) have traced the evolution over the last quarter of twentieth century Ireland from a bureaucratic Weberian model of civil service to one that is heavily influenced by new public management and accountability. Prior to 1970 the principalship is described as bureaucratic and administrative (INTO, 1999; Lillis & Flood, 2010; O'Sullivan, 1989). Principals were required to carry out their work in accordance with standards laid out by the Department of Education (DES, 1965, Rule 123). The majority of principals were committed to full time teaching posts in addition to honouring administrative and managerial responsibilities (IPPN, 2007) and were regarded as the autonomous head of the organisation accepting "control of the other members of the teacher staff" (INTO, 1999, p. 3).

From the 1970's onwards other influences began to shape the development of principals in Ireland. A more complex dual model of the principalship was initiated on foot of a

report commissioned in conjunction with the OECD entitled 'Investment in Education' (1966). This report had a significant impact on the development of educational policy in Ireland (Lawlor & Smyth, 2003). The principalship was being regarded as a managerial role in the DES documentation (1972, 1973). The term 'management' was used as the most common descriptor of aspects of the role during this time (Flood, 2011). Flood (2011) describes a principalship era from mid-1990 to date, shaped by relentless societal and educational change. The Education Act of 1998 charges school principals with the ultimate responsibility for the teaching and learning in their schools:

> The Principal of a recognised school and the teachers in a recognised school, under the direction of the Principal, shall have responsibility, in accordance with this Act, for the instruction provided to students in the school and shall contribute, generally, to the education and personal development of students in that school. (DES, 1998; Section 23(2))

The principal's role is presently considered to be administrative and managerial with a new emphasis on leading learning (Lillis & Flood, 2010). Mandated changes have been imposed centrally through the Education Act, 1998; the Employment Equality Act, 1998; the Equal Status Act, 2000; the Education Welfare Act, 2000; and Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004. A wellspring of new legislation places statutory responsibilities and devolved powers of governance on schools and local boards of management (Grummell *et al.*, 2009). Likewise the role of the principal has expanded exponentially in tandem with the relentless reform catalogue directed at organisational level in schools. The Working Group on the role of the Primary School Principal (DES, 1999) outlined the widely encompassing role of the school principal who must be actively engaged in:

- Leadership of the whole school community

- Effective management and administration

- Instructional leadership and the development of the school curriculum

- Communications within the school and with the wider outside community

- Induction and continuous professional development for school improvement

The report recognises the need to re-evaluate the role of school principal because "societal, legislative and educational changes involve increased responsibilities and wider aspects of the role, leading to new challenges and new tensions in carrying it out" (DES, 1999, p. ii).

School management boards (BOM)[8] exercise specific selection mechanisms, which are stipulated by the Department of Education and Science, for the employment of principals in schools (DES; Circular 02/02, Section 2.2). Within the Irish primary school system, schools function in numerous contexts. Schools differ in terms of location, school sector, size, demographics, student profiles, staff profile, designated status, special educational needs status, ethos and traditions (LDS, 2002). Principals operate within the unique circumstances of their own individual organisation. The diversity of school types in Ireland has changed greatly in recent decades (Sugrue, 2011). School personnel are expected to respond to the challenges that arise in their own inimitable environment (LDS, 2002). Principalships in Ireland are categorised as either administrative or teaching principalships. Both of these roles are viewed as leadership/ management roles (Haygroup, 2003), yet teaching principals assume the additional responsibility of full time pupil instruction. The most recent figures for school leadership posts report that more than three quarters of principals at primary level occupy teaching principal positions (IPPN, 2004; OECD, 2008).

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[8] See BOM in definition of terms Appendix 2

The responsibilities of the principal which are envisaged in the relevant legislation and guidelines appear to be predicated primarily on the role of administrative principal[9] in Ireland (IPPN, 2014). Despite the fact that teaching principals have the same range of functions and accountabilities, the teaching principal role is viewed primarily as a teaching position and full time teaching responsibilities are given priority over leadership duties (IPPN, 2014).

Leadership challenges in Irish schools

The role of the school principal warrants further investigation in Ireland (Fullan, 2006; OECD, 2008) so that leaders may be guided in their practice without submitting to fixed role definitions. It is difficult for school leaders to refine practices when they are at a loss to locate a guideline of the qualities, attributes, knowledge and skills required for such a heavily laden role (Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2008). There is too much wrong with a system that leaves its leaders asking fundamental questions like "what actions should a leader be expected to engage in and which aspects of the school and system organization and development fall within the role" (OECD, 2008, p. 62).

Definition of the role

It can be argued that prescriptive definitions of the role of the principal in Ireland are not lacking. There has in fact, been a concentrated focus on descriptions of the role of the principal contained in legislation, circulars, research articles, practice guideline documents and leadership reports in recent decades: *Education for a Changing World, Green Paper* (Government of Ireland, 1992); *Charting Our Education Future, White Paper on Education* (Government of Ireland, 1995); *The Education Act* (Government of

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[9] The two positional leadership posts; Teaching Principalships (TP) and Administrative Principalships (AP)are summarised in Appendix 2

Ireland, 1998); *The Report of the Working Group on the Role of the Primary School Principal* (DES, 1999); *The Role of the Primary School Principal in Ireland* (Haygroup, 2003); *The Value of Leadership* (IPPN, 2004); *Quality Leadership-Quality Learning* (Fullan, 2006). Some authors have reported that there is too high an expectation and not enough support for consolidating the role of principal in Irish schools (Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2008). This is evident in the detail of the framework for role accountabilities of Irish principals put forward in the Haygroup Management Consultants Report (2003).

The accountability model lists the broad areas of competency as: leadership, education, resource management, human resource management, administration, policy formulation and external relationships (Haygroup, 2003). Among the key accountabilities outlined by the Haygroup (2003), the administrative and managerial role of the school principal has been expanded to include new responsibilities for the instruction and learning that goes on at organisational level. This document places responsibility on positional leaders to create and communicate "a vision of learning and development for the school in a way which creates the environment for pupils and teachers to maximise their development" (p. 2). Principals, however, are increasingly described in literature as too overburdened and ill-equipped to provide positive instructional leadership to teachers within their organisations (Copland, 2001; Goldstein, 2004; Grubb, Flessa, Tredway, & Stern, 2003).

The complexity and subjectivity of the role of school leader is also evident in the publications relating to the role of the principal produced by the Irish Primary Principals Network since its inception in 2004. The IPPN, the professional body for primary school principals, acknowledges the difficulties faced by school leaders in fulfilling their responsibilities as positional leaders in schools at a time of heightened change and accountability (IPPN, 2014). The many publications issued by the IPPN document changes which have profoundly impacted on the role of the school principal in the

context of the recent *socio-political climate in Ireland* (IPPN, 2003; 2005; 2006 (a)).These have included a change in the profile of the family unit, an increased awareness of changes in society, a greater level of organisational autonomy, and a new drive towards partnership models of school improvement. Added to this is an acknowledgement of the economic climate, increasing globalisation and advances in information technology (IPPN, 2006 (b)).

Increased responsibilities associated with the role

Principals are observed in schools carrying the weight of imposed changes, juggling management tasks, attending meetings, securing resources, overseeing policies, dealing with stakeholders, organising budgets and staffing arrangements and the list continues (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2008; IPPN, 2014). So broad are the perceived levels of competency and burden of responsibility, that the IPPN, in a recent publication, have categorised the duties of the school principal into three priority listings: key priorities, categorised as "urgent, must dos"; other priorities, categorised as apt for delegation or shared leadership among staff; and other tasks, which can be "de-prioritised temporarily" (IPPN, 2014, p. 8).

Fink (2010) argues that if we are looking for leadership success stories, then control needs to give way to collaboration. If leaders are perceived as adequately surrounded and supported in their roles then the fear of isolation, complexity and over-burden may become disassociated with the job of leader. Educational practitioners 'become fully alive when their schools and districts provide opportunities for *skilful participation*, inquiry, dialogue, and reflection' (Lambert, 2003, p. 422). By facilitating a school culture where decisions are shared, visions are expressed and leadership for learning is devolved, school principals are helping to preserve positive conditions for learning in

the present and also the conditions in schools for the development of leaders of the future.

Challenges associated with a teaching principalship

As mentioned earlier, almost eighty per cent of all principals in Irish primary schools are teaching principals (DES, 2003). The Haygroup reports highlights the burden of "the competing demands faced particularly by teaching principals to be firstly a principal and secondly a class teacher" (2003, p. 5). Arguably, the challenges are too great and principals cannot be expected to fulfil all their duties and in addition meet their school's instructional needs (Copland, 2001; Goldstein, 2004). These burdens are reported to have created a workload for school principals perceived by many as 'undo-able' (Haygroup, 2003; Lillis & Flood, 2010). The position of teaching principal is viewed as problematic and unsustainable in the Irish context (McDonald, 2008) because of a lack of training and support in ameliorating the dual role of teacher and leader (Morgan & Sugrue, 2008). Adding to the problem, according to MacDonald (2008), is the fact that some teaching principals operate in schools where smaller staff numbers results in a narrower sphere of collective expertise. It is predicted that where principals feel highly stressed, over-worked and under-valued, "it is very likely that significant numbers of schools will not be able to recruit principals" (IPPN, 2006; p. 25) and this issue is particularly evident in contexts where teaching principalships exist (Darmody & Smyth, 2010).

Principal recruitment

Recruitment of school principals is a pressing dilemma in the Irish education system and particularly the recruitment of teaching principals who shoulder the added responsibility of teaching a class full time. The Public Service Benchmarking Board

(PSBB) outlined the role of principals in schools and spotlighted the issue of recruitment in 2002:

> Principals hold prime responsibility for the successful running of the school and management of its resources, including budgets. To this end they must motivate, lead by example and guide staff to ensure that pupils are educated to the best of their abilities. Teaching Principals must balance the teaching requirements of their particular class with the responsibility of managing the whole school. (Govt. of Ireland; p. 260)

A further significant feature in the Irish education system is that there are no formal processes for monitoring the supply of potential school leaders versus the demand (OECD, 2008; Flood, 2011). The total number of vacant positions that are likely to occur in any given year is not available until official notice has been given by incumbents who intend to resign or retire (Grummell *et al.,* 2009). In Ireland there is no gradual process for managing the transition from teacher to principal (Anderson *et al.,* 2011). There is a hire and hope approach to recruitment and a perception that teachers can readily become leaders. It is not a formal requirement in primary schools for leaders to engage in preparation or training programmes (OECD, 2008; IPPN, 2014). Furthermore, the turnover process between successors and predecessors in Irish primary schools is rapid as "leadership posts are advertised on a competitive basis only after the incumbent decides to step down" (Anderson *et al.,* 2011, p. 393). The recruitment of replacement leaders in schools then is an immediate and urgent concern.

Leadership roles in Irish education are not likely to attract increased numbers of recruits for as long as there prevails an exponential increase in responsibilities, an untenable teaching principal position, poor rewards, heavy workloads, lack of support and professional development and ambiguous role definitions in systems of leadership (OECD, 2009; IPPN, 2002; 2006). It is predicted that while principals feel highly stressed, over-worked and under-valued, it is very likely that significant numbers of

schools will not be able to recruit new leaders (IPPN, 2006, p. 25). The principalship, a 'life sentence', is suffering more than ever from an image crisis (OECD, 2008; IPPN, 2014) and the commitment to a teaching principalship is a role that is perceived as "impossible" (Anderson *et al.*, 2011, p. 395). In education, change cannot progress without effective leadership (Osborn, Hunt & Jaunch, 2002). Flood (2011) asserts that "change demands leadership and a focus on the improvement and transformation of practices" (p.57). All discussions of school leadership should be set against the supposition that school leadership directly improves the quality of teaching and through teaching indirectly improves student learning (Fullan, 2014; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach 1999, MacBeath, 1998; Starratt, 2004).

Conclusion

A progressive educational philosophy is visible in the sustainable leadership model favouring deep learning, collaborative action, intrinsic motivation, social justice and community (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Fullan, 2004; Kohn, 2008). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) comment that, "when adults in a school work well together, with reciprocal and relational trust, it increases energy for improvement that then benefits students and their achievements" (p. 214). The sustainable leadership approach is fixed on future outcomes in schools, enacted in ways that are inclusive of all parties in service to learning. It is worth investigating more fully sustainable leadership in the Irish education context, in light of the issues and challenges which have been spotlighted at organisational level in Irish primary schools.

The conclusion drawn from the literature is that leadership pathways in the Irish context are not certain. The focus of this study is fixed on leadership recruitment, leadership succession structures and the promotion of new leaders in Irish primary schools. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) acknowledge that the education sector is failing to attract

quality leaders and in response to this issue they devised the sustainable leadership framework as a tool for developing leadership capacity in schools. It is argued that primary school leadership in Ireland may be aptly explored using the fundamental components of the Hargreaves and Fink (2006) model, in light of some of the leadership issues and challenges that have been reported in the Irish literature. Using the first three principles of the framework (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006), specific issues linked with primary school leadership have been reported in the Irish primary school context including:

- the expansion of the role of principal to include instructional leadership (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2008)

- an increase in principal retirements (IPPN, 2009); a shortfall in applications for the position of school principal (Watson, 2007)

- problems recruiting school leaders (IPPN, 2010; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2009);

- issues relating to the training and preparation of school principals (Travers & McKeown, 2005)

- poor support for school principals, who feel over-burdened and isolated (Haygroup, 2003; IPPN, 2014)

- limited scope for distributing leadership responsibility in support of the school principal (Humphreys, 2009; IPPN, 2014).

The idea that sustainable leadership is a contextually bound and adaptive construct strengthens the argument that role definitions may be too rigid to accommodate such an activist phenomenon. It can be argued that, now more than ever, a proposal for increased teacher involvement and collaborative agency is necessary in Irish schools. A

71

sustainable model of collaborative leadership may alleviate and diffuse the complexity of 'lone' principalships and facilitate greater investment by practitioners in the day to day workings of the school. Schools will operate in the spirit of community rather than enterprise and all members will be active agents of lead learning in support of school improvement (Abrahamson, 2004).

The issues highlighted in the wider literature relating to sustainable leadership were integral to the research design of this study. A lack of Irish research relating to the three components of sustainable leadership: instructional leadership; succession planning and distributed leadership, was also a central consideration which directed the research design plan. A full outline of the research design process is outlined in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter is arranged in five parts. The first section outlines the emergent design

which helped to formalise the research approach in this case. The ontological

perspective and the purpose of this study, outlined previously (See chapter one), are

reiterated and the guiding research questions are restated. The second section describes

the research methods rationale which guided methodological decisions as this study

progressed. The rationale for selecting mixed methods is discussed and followed with

an outline of both the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies adopted in

this study. This section reports the instrument design and administration procedures.

The sampling across both phases is also presented. An outline of validity and reliability

of the quantitative methodology and the trustworthiness of the qualitative approach is

included in this section. Data collection and analysis procedures are also presented in

this section. The third section of this chapter describes the integration process used to

bring together the quantitative and qualitative findings. Some limitations are discussed

in the fourth section. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations

pertaining to the study.

Progressive Design Approach and Research Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore the leadership structures, procedures and

practices in Irish primary schools from the perspective of novice leaders in answer to

the central research question which inquired:

> Do leadership supports, structures and practices in Irish primary education
> viewed from the perspectives of novice leaders reflect a leadership outlook that
> is sustainable in the long term?

The research design was not fixed at the outset, but rather emerged as a complex iterative process. The emergent approach adopted during the research process is outlined in chapter one and developed further in this chapter. A framework depicting the reflective design is presented in the chapter one also (See Figure 1.2, p.17). An emergent approach allows the researcher to remain prominent in the process, by illustrating the reflective procedures through which the design is articulated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It is acknowledged that this process is not free of problems, as it is dependent on a combination of personal assumptions and theory-based knowledge, which may be debated by professionals who hold other preferable positions. The quantitative inquiry was an information seeking component of the study. As themes emerged, a qualitative design approach allowed the study to be "progressively focussed" meaning that a flexible approach was used which allowed for "concepts to change as the study moved along" (Stake, 1995, p. 133). The quantitative phase of the study was used to inform the qualitative instrument design in this case.

The study aims to investigate whether novice leaders are enabled and supported in their work as leaders of learning in schools. The intention is to provide a snapshot of perceptions and experiences from the unique viewpoint of NAPs at the time of investigation. The theoretical framework which guides the research is sustainable leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The core components of sustainable leadership are used as a set of orienting concepts for evaluating sustainable leadership in Irish primary schools from the perspective of newly appointed principals. Sustainable leadership in this case focusses on practices and procedures in schools that: increase leadership stability, build leadership within organisations, and distributes leadership responsibility in organisations (Hargreaves, 2009). The scope then is narrowed along the sustainability spectrum to encompass specifically the first three principles or

"fundamental three-dimensional characteristics" of sustainable leadership in education posited by Hargreaves and Fink (2006). These dimensions are depth, breadth and length. This three-dimensional construct is presented as the foundational basis for leadership sustainability in schools, since these core elements according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006) should be consolidated before any long term concept of leadership can be formalised. It is apt then to seek evidence relating to the prevalence of the fundamental elements of sustainable leadership as a means of providing a greater understanding of sustainable leadership in the Irish primary school sector. By focusing on the succession processes that mark out leadership development in Ireland, a modified three dimensional framework has been developed in this case (See chapter one, Figure 1.2) and fleshed out using the three constructs: depth, length and breadth describes as: leading learning, endurance and succession planning, and leadership distribution respectively (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The contemporary Irish issues derived from the literature (See chapter two) are also framed using the core principles of sustainable leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) in Table 3.1 overleaf. The idea that leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon which is heavily influenced by both context and social interaction is a core assumption in this case. Leadership practice then is flexible and adaptive and can change depending on unique circumstances in a given setting at a given point in time.

Table 3.1: Linking the principles of sustainable leadership with issues in Irish primary education

Core Principles on which Sustainable leadership is built (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006)	Linked with issues and challenges documented in the Irish literature
Principle 1: **Capacity to lead learning in schools**	• responsibility for developing the knowledge, skills and capabilities necessary to effectively lead learning and teaching is generally left to the individual (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; OECD, 2008). • sharp increase in the level of responsibilities and duties (Drea and O'Brien, 2002). • Irish primary principals are not currently required to undertake any career professional development (IPPN, 2014).
Principle 2: **Succession Planning promotes experience and stability**	• leader preparation and succession planning processes are at best ad hoc or absent altogether in any systematic sense (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Morgan & Sugrue, 2005). • recent upsurge in principal retirements causing instability in Irish schools (IPPN, 2009). • issues recruiting new leaders particularly in smaller schools (IPPN, 2010; Watson, 2007; PricewaterHouseCooper, 2009). • current practices in the development and preparation of leaders of learning and teaching are a long way from modelling sustainable practice (Travers & McKeown, 2005).
Principle 3: **Distributed leadership in schools supports principal leaders and promotes future leaders**	• distributed leadership practice has yet to become established as an authentically embedded construct in schools (Humphreys, 2009; IPPN, 2014). • capacity for distributing leadership in schools has been seriously undermined by the moratorium on middle-management appointments in schools , in many cases the entire middle-management team has been removed (IPPN, 2014). • principals lack guidance and support in fulfilling their duties in schools (IPPN, 2014; Mahon, 1993; NAPD, 2014).

Examining school leadership in terms of its long term sustainability produces specific

sets of research questions which expand on the central research question relating to

sustainable leadership structures and practices in schools. These refined questions link

directly to the first three principles of sustainable leadership proposed by Hargreaves

and Fink (2006) and are presented as follows:

- Do principals have adequate opportunity to lead learning in their schools?

- Are there succession plans in place to adequately support leadership changes in
  schools?

- Is leadership distributed among members of the school community in support of
  the school principal?

These key questions direct the development of methodological approaches which have

been deemed as the best fit for the purpose of the study (Crotty, 1998). The schema

outlining the Irish context, ontology and epistemology, theoretical perspectives,

methodologies and methods is presented in Figure 3.1 overleaf. This figure presents an

overview of the factors and theory which progressed the methodological design in this

case. The contemporary Irish socio-political climate of austerity and economic reform

is an important factor in determining a research design plan. It is important to

contextualise the experiences and perceptions of the sample group of NAPs at a specific

point in time. It is considered that a mixed methods design may provide an overview of

the expansion of roles in primary schools. Dealing with restricted resources and

performance demands may be captured using a quantitative methodology by accessing a

broad bank of information relating to wider leadership practices in schools. The reality

of practice at this unique time in Ireland may also be captured using a qualitative

methodology to ground issues in more specific contexts. The schema has been

presented to frame the theory and concepts which preceded the research design (See

Figure 3.1). The rationale for selecting a mixed methods approach linked with the

theoretical and conceptual framework is discussed further in the next section of this

chapter.

Figure 3.1: Factors and perspectives guiding the research design
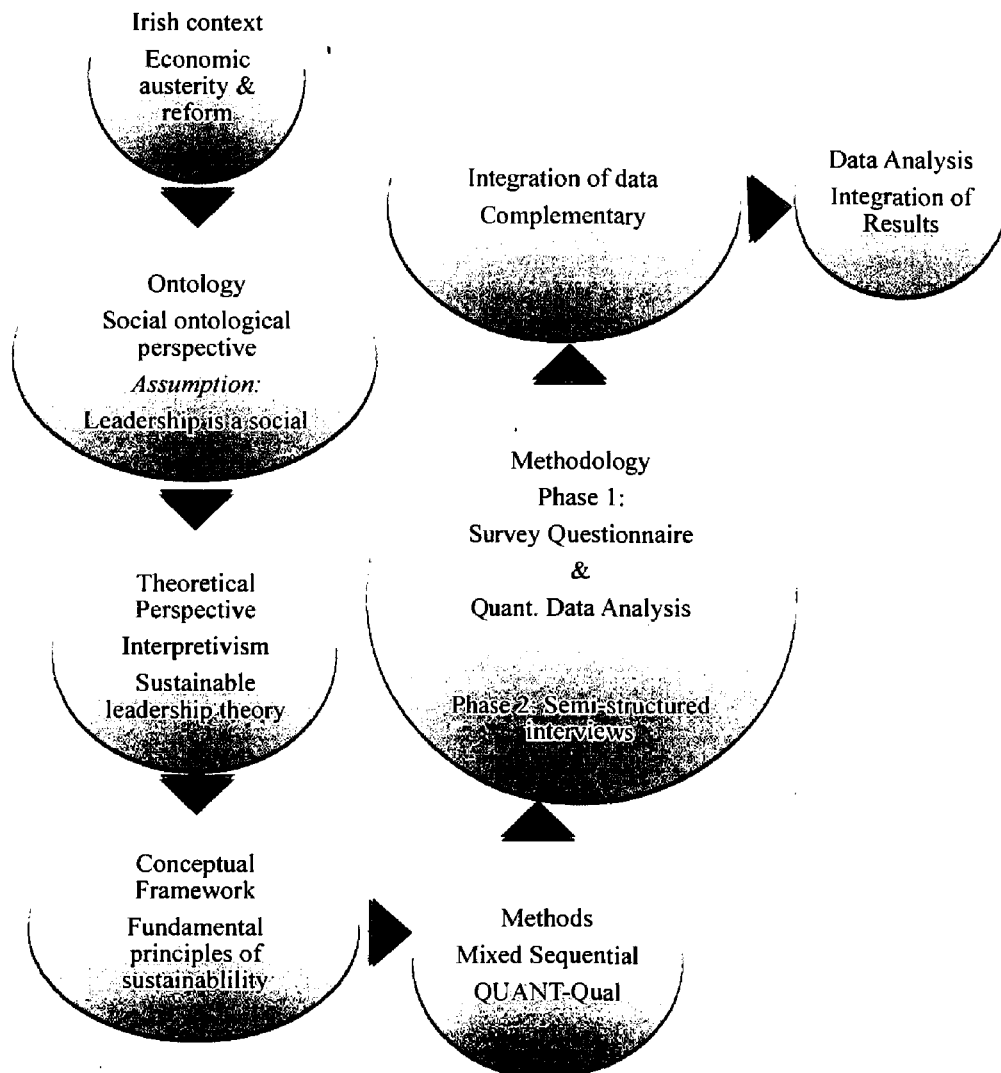
Methods

The research methodology or plan of action is linked with the underpinning

assumptions already formalised by the researcher in approaching any study (Crotty,

1998), since these are the processes that researcher believes will answer the questions

posed by the research. Holden and Lynch (2004, p. 397) recommend that "research

should not be methodologically led, but rather that methodological choices should be consequential to the researcher's philosophical stance and the social science phenomenon to be investigated." This approach provides fluid links between the philosophy, methodology and the research question and creates a greater sense of direction along pathways of inquiry.

Rationale for mixed methods approach

The challenge in selecting a methodological approach is to strike a balance between a design that provides enough structure and direction to develop a broad understanding of leadership experiences in schools, while also providing enough opportunity to get at the deeper aspects of leadership practice through the narratives of lived experiences. It is important in this case that the data collected could be calibrated against a sustainable leadership framework. The study seeks to optimize the capacity to construct meaning from evidence, by drawing upon the unique strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches, as outlined in Table 3.2 below. This table synopsises the strengths of quantitative research outlined by Castro, Kellison, Boyd and Kopak (2010) and strengths of qualitative research outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994).

Table 3.2: Combining strengths in Multi- Method Approaches

Quantitative Strengths- Wide Frame (Castro, Kellison, Boyd & Kopak, 2010)	Qualitative Strengths- Narrow Frame (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)
-accurate operationalization & measurement of constructs -capacity to carry out group comparisons -the capacity to examine relationships between variables -the capacity for testing hypotheses	-the capacity to provide narrative accounts that are examined within the original context of action -the capacity to apply in-depth analysis of complex human and cultural experiences

The value of a mixed methods approach in this study was further reinforced following

engagement with the Irish literature, which highlighted a lack research relating to the

sample grouping and the contemporary leadership issues in the Irish primary school

context (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Cunningham, 2013; Morgan & Sugrue, 2005). Mixed

research methods can be applied as a way of initiating new understanding of the topic at

hand (Caracelli & Greene, 1997). It is posited by the researcher that this study required

an initial quantitative, survey phase to provide some baseline information relating to

leadership experiences among the specific sample grouping. A post-positivist stance

was applied to the quantitative aspect of this study. Adopting such a stance means

acknowledging that "we cannot observe the world we are part of as totally objective and

disinterested outsiders" (Muijs, 2011, p. 5), but that we can approximate the reality of

social phenomena using well considered quantitative methodologies. To reinforce the

full meaning of such approximations, the quantitative data gathered and analysed can be

explored more deeply using a complementary qualitative approach (Sale, Lohfeld &

Brazil, 2002).

A strong rationale for mixing methods is the belief that quantitative and qualitative

methods complement each other and allow for more complete analysis of an issue or

phenomenon (Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006, Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). In this

case, survey questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data and semi-structured

interviews were selected to further explore the significant themes that emerged

following analysis of the survey findings. The study employed an explanatory

sequential design, as the qualitative data was used to explain and build upon the initial

quantitative results to provide deeper contextual meaning and "local groundedness" of

the findings (Punch, 2009, p. 291). Semi-structured interviews were used to thicken the

quantitative findings and the second phase of the study and the design of the survey questionnaire and interview schedules were tightly linked. The study is focussed on understanding the world of school leaders "through first-hand experience, truthful reporting and quotations of actual conversations from insiders' perspectives, than testing the laws of human behaviour" (Tuli, 2010, p. 100). The aim is to access and discover new insights into the leadership experiences and perceptions of a specific sample population of newly appointed leaders in primary schools at a particular point in time.

Phase 1: Quantitative; Survey Questionnaire

Survey research as a methodology allows the collection of data from a large sample of respondents at a given time. The purpose at this stage was to make inferences about the experiences and perceptions of NAPs, relative to the key components of sustainable educational leadership. A quantitative approach was the logical starting point in this study because of a lack of research data relating to the topic of sustainable leadership practice and also to newly appointed leaders, as a sample group. Hutton describing the most common form of survey design defines it as a "method of collecting information by asking a set of pre-formulated questions in a predetermined sequence in a structured questionnaire to a sample of individuals drawn so as to be representative of a defined population" (Hutton, 1990, p. 8). This is an adequate description of the structured survey approach used in this study.

Survey Instrument Design

In the first section of the survey questionnaire, NAP's personal and professional characteristics have been measured across two categories; personal information and school information. The items in this section include; (1) gender, (2) age, (3) education, (4) years of service, (5) professional experience, (6) and (7) training and preparation, (8)

service in present school, (9) nature of principalship, (10) school size and (11) school classification. All items were single-item measures with the exception of items (3) and (5).

The three fundamental components of sustainable leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) have been used to inform the development of rated survey items in Sections 2-4, categorised as: succession, preparation and transition (67 items); leading learning in schools (17 items) and distributed leadership practice (18 items). The survey questions have been carefully devised using the wider literature relating to these specific themes (IPPN, 2006; McGuinness, 2005; Shen *et al.*, 2004; Morgan & Sugrue, 2005; NCSL, 2001; Orr, 2011). Previous research instruments relating to leadership succession, instructional leadership and distributed leadership were also examined to access items pertaining to this study (Fink, 2011; Hallinger, 2011; Obadara, 2013). The survey design has been carefully considered and links have been made between the socio-economic context, the theoretical perspective of sustainable leadership and the conceptual framework based on the fundamental principles of sustainable leadership adopted in this case. A full review of the leadership literature pertaining to the three fundamental principles of sustainability was undertaken and a comprehensive list of components was compiled which are deemed relevant to the purposes of this study. The three principles of depth, length and breath, are linked with the themes of instructional leadership, leadership succession planning and distributed leadership explored in the literature. The conceptual framework based on the principals of depth, length and breadth, has been used to narrow and refine the questioning to ensure that the survey instrument would solicit information pertaining to the central research questions. Each survey item is linked to a specific variable associated with each principle. The survey was designed in four parts. The sections are arranged under the categories:

- demographic information

82

- depth; leadership for learning or instructional leadership

- length; leadership succession planning

- breadth; distributed leadership practices and experiences

An overview of the key components relating to items on the survey questionnaire is

presented in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Overview of the items on the e-survey questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic information

- Age
- Gender
- School information/Middle management posts
- Years of Service/ Qualifications
- Professional experiences/ specific talents/ expertise
- Challenges/ difficulties/concerns

Section 2: Depth- Instructional leadership

- Leading learning

- Collaborative practice in schools

- Professional development in schools

Section 3: Length- Succession procedures

- Leadership motivation

- Preparation and training

- Recruitment and transition experiences

Section 4: Breadth- Distributed leadership

o Distributed leadership practices

o Levels of Support

The survey sought factual and attitudinal information relating to the population and deliberately included an open-ended question to explore challenges reported by the respondents which may not have been included in the survey design. A 5-point Likert scale was used to determine levels of agreement with the prevalence of features of sustainable leadership among the respondents. To measure some constructs, existing items from previous studies were included verbatim (Hallinger, 2008; Obadara, 2013), while in other cases modifications were made to fit the sustainable leadership framework (either changing the wording slightly or including only some items from an established scale because of a concern for overall survey length). New survey items have been developed to measure constructs that are specifically related to the context of this study (e.g. posts of responsibility moratorium). The final instrument is presented in three sections, containing a total of 22 questions, consisting of 92 statements or options. Finally, a matrix of survey items was devised to assess whether the research objectives are fairly addressed. The matrix allows the spread of each sustainable leadership category to be examined. Where items cross categories, they are referenced twice, increasing the total number of items from 92 to 102 in the completed matrix. The matrix of items illustrates a balanced spread across each category for investigating respondents' experiences and attitudes.[10]

Piloting, Sampling and Administration

The survey was piloted among six primary principals to ensure that the items were clearly written and interpreted as intended. Feedback from the piloted sample led to some minor modifications in the e-survey design and the modified survey was retested among a sample of three principals. The sampling in this case was purposeful and was

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[10] See Appendix 3.

carried out on a target population of newly appointed principals (NAPs). As outlined in chapter one, NAPs are defined in this specific case as those appointed to principalship positions in an 18 month period prior to the survey distribution. This survey group includes principals who had been appointed in schools from September 2011 to January 2013. NAPs are a readily identifiable population and were accessed using the online principals' network- the IPPN. The participants are representative of a full national census of newly appointed principals at a given point in time. The sample then is a subset of the wider population of primary principals. It is accepted that a small number of principals may not have been members of the IPPN at the time of the study and as such are outside the target population. The representative population accessed is numbered at 189 for this population category (IPPN, May, 2012). The survey instrument is titled and referenced in this study as *the Newly Appointed Principal's Questionnaire* (NAPQ).[11]

Every effort was made to try to ensure a high quality instrument had been designed so as to maximise the response rates for e-survey questionnaires. Following piloting, testing and re-testing, the modified instrument was administered to the full population group of NAPs, (n189), accompanied by a cover letter summarising the purposes and intent of the study. Informed consent was also sought at this time. Attempts were made to engage the interest of the respondents, by highlighting the relevance of the findings for this specific population grouping. Clear instructions were given and adequate time for reflective responses was provided. A response rate of 60% or higher is considered acceptable in this case (Fogelman & Comber, 2007, Kelley, Clark, Brown & Sitzia, 2003).

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[11] A copy of the Full survey Instrument is included in Appendix 4

Validity and Reliability

The survey instrument has been designed specifically for this study, to gather

information relating directly to the fundamental principles of sustainability (Hargreaves

and Fink, 2006). It is tailored specifically to a participant population of newly appointed

primary school principals. The instrument was constructed using some modified

components abstracted from other instruments: the *Principal Instructional Management*

Rating Scale (Hallinger, 2008) and *the Distributed Leadership Questionnaire* (DLQ),

(Obadara, 2013) as well as items abstracted from the wider literature and items which

were devised relating specifically to the Irish educational context at the time of the

research design. Content validity for the PIMRS was initially established by Hallinger

(2008) and the PIMRS has been proven valid and reliable over the past 25 years and has

been used in well over 125 studies reported since the early 1980s (Hallinger, 2008;

Leithwood, 2005). A reliability coefficient of 0.72 is reported by Obadara (2013) for the

DLQ survey instrument. The modified items selected from both the PIMRS and DLQ

were incorporated into the subscales in the survey design where appropriate and each

sub-scale was then tested for reliability (See Table 3.5, p. 89). Further category

variables highlighted as significant in both the Irish and the international school

leadership literature were devised for inclusion. Each categorised variable is regarded as

"some defined property or characteristic of a person, thing, group or situation that can

be measured in some way, so that they can be compared with one another" (Robson,

2008, p. 100).

A structured approach to the selection of variables was employed by carrying out a

documented synthesis of the components, associated with the fundamental principles of

sustainable leadership. These were abstracted from the leadership literature.[12] The finalised NAPQ items relate to the three central themes of succession experiences, moral purpose or leading learning and leadership distribution. The instrument also includes multiple questions designed to examine the same construct so that some measures of internal consistency could be established during analysis. The construct validity or clarity of questions in the survey instrument was assessed through piloting. During piloting issues of validity are a primary consideration. Feedback from the sample pilot group was requested in order to establish whether items corresponded with research questions and were adequately capturing the reality of experience and practice relating to the sustainable leadership components. Improvements to questions, format and scales were made following feedback reports. Minor modifications were made to the instrument at this stage to clarify questions and to refine the format of the questionnaire. The modified instrument includes an additional open-ended question. To determine construct validity for this qualitative component a further retest of the final survey instrument was carried out prior to distribution. The addition of a qualitative element in the instrument added to the value of data by providing an opportunity for respondents to freely report experiences that could not be fully captured in numerical or rated survey items.

In addition to validity and credibility the strength of a good instrument design may also be evaluated by examining whether it may be appropriately transferred across other relevant settings. This is known as generalizability and "refers to the ability of the researcher (and the user of the research results) to extend the findings of a particular study beyond the specific individuals and setting in which the study occurred" (Mertens,

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[12] Appendix 5 presents the synthesis of components and construction of variables used the question-naire

1998, p. 254). The survey instrument distribution was not selective and so is deemed to be representative of the subset population of newly appointed Irish primary principals at the time of distribution. The instrument is appropriately transferable to similar sample groupings in Irish primary school settings as it explores information pertinent to novice leaders and includes items which are relevant to the Irish educational context. The final dataset comprises a rich body of evidence relating to a full census sample grouping, which supports the transferability of findings to this survey population. From development of design through theoretical and conceptual framing, to instrument design using a synthesis of the literature, a clear chain of evidence can be traced in this case, to support the validity of the quantitative research component.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was made available to the NAP population group (n=189) using the online survey design programme Survey Monkey™. The questionnaire was distributed using active email addresses accessed via the IPPN website. The survey remained accessible for an eight week period (19 January-20 March, 2013). Following initial administration of the questionnaires, two reminder emails were sent to all respondents from the then IPPN Deputy President, to encourage a good response rate. Response checks were carried out using the survey completion bar, inset in the Survey Monkey™ design programme, prior to downloading. The Survey Monkey tool bar allowed responses to be tracked throughout and missing data was easily detected. When the survey completion date had expired, the responses were downloaded from the Survey Monkey website and translated into SPSS data files (SPSS, 20) for analysis. Data cleaning was carried out at this stage, to identify errors, outliers and missing values. Numeric values were assigned to each value and multiple response items were recoded and computed and various categories were combined in order to tighten the data for analysis. A codebook was utilised to document, define and categorise each code. The

total sample number following the elimination of missing cases, outliers and errors was 151 taken from an original sample of 189. The final response rate is calculated as 79.8%.

The data material included numerical data, attitudinal data and qualitative data in the form of open-ended questions. The survey contained the three main categories: instructional leadership, succession planning and distributed leadership practice. Summary statistics were calculated by examining frequencies and means to illuminate themes and patterns. For each survey item the preliminary analysis involved running descriptive statistics of all items contained in the survey. Before proceeding with any statistical analysis of the dataset, tests of reliability of the scaled items on the survey were carried out to ensure that the instrument proved sufficiently reliable (See Table 3.5 overleaf). A total of 72 items which were embedded in the questionnaire design were arranged on 5-point Likert type scales in order to explore specific phenomena. The reliability of each scale and subscale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Alpha levels ≥ 0.7 were considered "good" according to the criteria set by a number of researchers (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; George & Mallery, 2003; Stemler, 2004). The coefficient alphas for the survey subscales ranged from 0.706 to 0.840, which are accepted as reliable.

Table 3.5: Results of reliability analysis for survey subscales

Survey sub- scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Motivation	0.797	11
Recruitment	0.700	6
Transition Issues	0.715	6
Support and Guidance	0.706	12
Instructional Leadership	0.840	14
Distributed Leadership	0.748	13

Frequency distribution tables and graphs were used to show the profile of the frequencies of values across the entire range of variables (Gray & Kinnear, 2012). These statistics were not intended to make inferences or to make predictions, but were useful in reporting the findings of the quantitative phase of the study in a variety of ways (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011). These basic descriptive results which were determined using frequency scores across each survey category, were central to the design of the interview schedule. The aim was to derive inferential meaning in the qualitative inquiry phase. Cohen *et al.*, (2007) report that while simple frequencies and descriptive statistics may speak for themselves and are centrally important in a study, inferential statistics tend to derive more valuable and powerful results. This is especially true in studies that wish to investigate a contextual phenomenon.

Comparisons by demographic characteristics were drawn using Chi-square tests of independence. The Chi-square tests analysed frequencies across groups using various combinations of demographic variables such as; gender, years of experience, school size and classification, administrative and teaching principal classifications, qualifications and leadership preparation. These tests were carried out to examine relationships between demographic (dependent) and attitudinal (independent) variables.

Open ended question

Open ended responses were transcribed into Microsoft Word®. The open-ended question expanded the scope for exploring the perceptions of NAPs and allowed for issues and challenges that had not been included in the survey instrument to be captured. This component of the survey produced rich textual data. Consequently, the approach to analysis in this study was descriptive rather than interpretative. The significant themes yielded from the descriptive response-set were matched with themes

90

already developed from the survey scales. New themes also emerged and were categorised, coded and included with survey results.

Open-ended data differ from questionnaire data and therefore the coded data obtained could not be subjected to statistical tests of reliability. The significant issues that emerged were further explored in the qualitative interviews to enhance the reliability of the information gathered in the open-ended response dataset. A complementary qualitative approach was an essential methodological component in this study. Qualitative interviews were used to enrich and develop the themes that emerged in the survey dataset and to gain insights relating to beginning leadership in Irish primary school specific context. Since qualitative research is effective in extracting and clarifying culturally specific information about sample groupings, it was important to the integrity of this study to include a qualitative design component to complement the qualitative dataset (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Phase 2: Qualitative; Semi- Structured Interviews

Qualitative methods use naturalistic approaches to examine the "various layers of social context" and "profoundly complex interactions among people, knowledge, institutions, policies, time and so forth" (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006, p. 38). Conger (1998) stated that qualitative research is "the methodology of choice for topics as contextually rich as leadership" (p. 107). The complexities and social dynamics of leadership practice could not be fully accessed through numerical data. The qualitative component in this study provided a methodological strategy for incorporating participant experiences on a more comprehensive level, than was achievable by quantitative methods alone. The qualitative component was deemed beneficial to the study as it allows the researcher a degree of interaction with the participant grouping. This is useful

91

for seeking clarification or probing further explanations relating to the research problem (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The aim of the qualitative research strand was to elicit more subjective and interpretative data from the participants.

Focussed semi-structured interview techniques were selected to interrogate more deeply the challenges faced by novice leaders in primary school settings, and the experiences that have shaped perceptions of leadership practice in organisational contexts. The objective was to use guided open-ended questions to understand the respondent's personal perspectives, rather than to make generalisations, since "the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 267). The purpose of this phase was to get at the "how?" and "why?" questions associated with lived practice and experience (Bell, 2005). This rationale was considered in the construction of guiding questions for the interview schedule.

Qualitative Instrument Design and Piloting

The qualitative design template was formulated following the administration, collection and analysis of data obtained using the e-survey questionnaires. The qualitative study phase commenced in June and July of 2013, following the analysis of the quantitative findings. A time-scale of four months punctuated both phases of the study. Once the quantitative analysis had been completed and preliminary findings had been reviewed an interview schedule was designed which was tightly aligned with the e-survey.[13] The interviews were semi-structured using the components of sustainable leadership in line with the significant themes and patterns categorised and coded during the quantitative data analysis phase. Data from the open-ended questions included in the survey

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[13] The Interview Schedule is included in Appendix 6

provided further themes that were included for inquiry in the interview schedule. The schedule was designed and arranged into sections using the broad categories devised for the survey questionnaire. The interview schedule was piloted among three primary school principals and modifications were made to the structure and some repetitive questions were also omitted at this point. The interview schedule was re-tested with a newly appointed principal to assess the modifications made. This pilot and retest process was invaluable to the researcher during the subsequent qualitative phase, as it highlighted issues that may have been problematic, for example, the timing and pacing of questioning.

Qualitative Sample

This design included semi-structured biographical interviews with seven individuals who were selected from the wider sample of respondents. This qualitative sample had completed the survey phase of the study and so had prior knowledge of the research topic. A total of 48 respondents had volunteered to participate in the second phase of the inquiry in survey responses. The respondents consisted of a widely dispersed and diverse sample grouping. Seven semi-structured qualitative interviews comprised the data-set for this phase of the study. The interview sample was accessed using the email contacts submitted by volunteers in the e-survey questionnaires. A demographic profile of the interview participants is presented in the findings in chapter four (See Table 3.2, p. 79). A purposeful sampling approach was employed to achieve a good degree of diversity across demographic variables, such as gender, age, school size and school type and location. The purpose of this approach was to broaden and develop understanding of the specific themes which emerged in the quantitative findings by accessing select participants to "thicken" or broaden the dataset (Willig, 2012, p. 159). According to

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) with purposeful sampling, primary focus is on "intentionally selecting specific cases that will provide the most information for the questions under study" (p. 279).

An important consideration in this study also was the limitations of time and the lack of scope under the constraints of the study to incorporate a larger qualitative sample. By using purposeful sampling to select candidates for the second phase it was considered that the dataset would yield rich contextual evidence which would illuminate the main quantitative findings.

Data Collection & Analysis

The qualitative data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously. The telephone interviews followed an interview schedule which included the components of sustainable leadership used in the quantitative survey. Some questions were also included to further probe significant themes which emerged through quantitative analysis. The telephone interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were taken during and following the telephone interviews. Observations were noted, comparisons and conflicts across datasets were documented and issues that may need further clarification in subsequent interviews were highlighted. The field notes were instrumental for data reduction, categorisation and coding procedures following the collection and transcription of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data display techniques, such as colour coding and review noting using comment boxes, aided the extraction of meaning from the transcripts. The transcripts were organised thematically and the prevalence of specific themes was calculated across the interview dataset. Patterns and themes were linked with the quantitative findings and new emergent

themes were also categorised. This approach was inspired by Patton (2002) who invites

qualitative researchers to deeply consider all possibilities with their findings, by taking

"mental excursions", "side-tracking" and "zigzagging" and remaining open to patterns

and links in the data that may never have been considered, with the intention of

"opening the world to us in some way" (p. 544). Engagement with the qualitative data

was carried out with full knowledge of the quantitative findings. It was important to the

integrity of the study to make connections between the datasets so that issues could be

linked, validated and awarded deeper meaning. It was important to be open to new

possibilities, descriptive themes and conceptual categories derived from the qualitative

data. It was important also to acknowledge and report conflicting findings from both

datasets.

Trustworthiness

A methodological concern with qualitative research is the degree of transparency used

in approaching and conducting research. A comprehensive study should be transparent

and replicable (Sarantakos, 2005). Bryman defines validity as the "integrity of the

conclusions that are generated from a piece of research" (2008, p. 31). By presenting

truthful and accurate accounts of reality, the researcher aims to uphold the integrity of

his/her findings. Validity has different connotations for qualitative research than

quantitative. Qualitative researchers consider the validity of their data in terms of

trustworthiness, defined by Ihantola and Kihn (2011) as contextual validity and

procedural reliability.

Contextual validity refers to the strength of evidence derived from inquiry and the

credibility of data in terms of conclusions drawn (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006).

Asking if the data represents the phenomenon and issues is the key to presenting

convincing text according to Tasshakori and Teddlie (2003). The desire to gain fuller

insights relating to the contextual and perceptive aspects of school leadership was a central consideration for establishing guiding questions for the semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured open-ended questioning technique aimed to encourage credible descriptions with some degree of control or guidance.

Procedural safeguards were employed in this study prior to and during formal data gathering and analysis for the qualitative data-set. To strengthen the reliability of instrumentation, the interview schedule was piloted among four of the quantitative population sample to refine questions and ensure clarity of intent and interpretation. Field notes were used to document general observations, emergent themes, links and patterns and additional questions or issues which emerged. To enhance procedural reliability a rigorous review of the data was performed to locate and address inaccuracies, once the full data-set had been gathered for analysis. The interview transcripts were checked for obvious mistakes and constant comparisons between the data and coding categories were made to ensure that there was little deviation in themes or meanings during coding. Coded data was presented to the participants for member checking, to ensure that there was good agreement on the coding and representation of interview data. This important process helped to reduce the potential for researcher bias and misinterpretation of findings. To further optimise the credibility of the findings, the coded data were triangulated with the quantitative data to achieve complementarity across both data-sets.

Integration of data

Integration refers to the phase in the research process where the mixing or linking of quantitative and qualitative data occurs. The quantitative and qualitative data were connected across different phases of this research project. The quantitative data were

used to identify issues which were further explored through interviews. Both data-sets were merged during and after the collection of interview data. This methodology technique is categorised as "connected mixed methods" by Creswell (2009, p. 208). Complementarity according to Green, Caracelli and Graham (1989) is apt when a fuller explanation of analyses is desirable.

The same theoretical framework was used for both the quantitative and qualitative stages of the study so that analysis and interpretation of the results could be intertwined. The data analysis and interpretation then becomes "transactional" with both datasets enriching the other (Hesse- Biber, 2010, p. 77). The qualitative phase of the study, supported by the data obtained in the quantitative phase, provided a deeper understanding of the transition from teaching to leading, professional experiences, recruitment experiences, leadership readiness, attitudes towards training and preparation, and distributed leadership practices. The qualitative inquiry also allowed for a deeper probe of the challenges and difficulties experienced by principals in the early stages of their leadership careers. The quantitative data provided the numerical and attitudinal data relating to sustainable leadership variables, however, the "how?", "what?", "where?", "when?" and "why?" questions could only be explored through qualitative questioning (Wellington, 2000). The integration of both datasets produced a rich body of evidence relating to leadership as a complex, contextual construct.

Limitations

Methodology helps to interrogate the process of inquiry and the range of methods or approaches used in research. Padgett asserts that the basic goal of any research inquiry should be "to produce a report that is scholarly, trustworthy and readable" (1998, p.104). It is acknowledged, however, that no piece of research is problem free (De Lisle,

2011). With this in mind the limitations pertaining to this study are marked out in this section.

Mixed methods research designs have advantages and disadvantages. It is important when combining methods, to award careful consideration to the rules or assumptions regarding their conduct (Bazeley, 2002). An advantage of mixed methods is the ability to complement one method with another (Cohen, Manion & Morrisson, 2000). The intention in complementary approaches is to produce a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon by drawing from different perspectives "by juxtaposing the analysis of different data types and methods to illuminate the same question" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 76). Mixed methods can provide a more complete picture of a research topic, however, this is dependent on the ability of the researcher to apply a high level of expertise in dealing with both types of research (Bazeley, 2002). Mixing methods can present unique challenges if conflicting results occur across datasets. Presenting an honest account of conflicting opinions is essential, however, drawing inferences relating to the potential reasons for conflict is not appropriate, as quantitative variables do not necessarily have clear cut meanings. Disparities between both datasets are laid out side-by-side during the integration phase of this study.

Mixed methods can also create issues in terms of the time required for a thorough inquiry. The time frame between the two phases of the study is also an important consideration, as results may not be complementary if too much time has elapsed or significant changes in circumstances have occurred in the interim. The issue of time and continuity is noteworthy in this case as the qualitative phase of the study could not be carried out until the quantitative findings had been collected and analysed. It is acknowledged that in the case of this study there may be discrepancies between both datasets as the second phase of the study was conducted in the last term of the school year, at a time when principals have pressing workloads. Since leadership workload is

included as a sub theme in this study, it should be noted that the working conditions of the respondents may have influenced responses. Respondent bias then is a valid consideration for the qualitative sample grouping.

An obvious limitation in this study was the scope for including a large sample of interview participants. In this study the aim of the qualitative phase of the study was not to supplement or add to the quantitative data, but rather to complement data results by contextualising some of the findings gathered from the real life perspectives of practitioners. Owing to time restrictions the qualitative phase drew responses from a relatively small sample size (n=7). The use of semi-structured interviews can enhance the findings and elaborate on the results obtained in the preliminary quantitative investigation. This is especially useful when unexpected results are reported. Purposeful sample selection was implemented in order to access respondents with mixed demographic and contextual backgrounds, however, the restricted sample size limits the scope for nuanced information or divergent perspectives. Information relating to the sample was abstracted from the survey dataset and applied to the target sample for interviews.

The interviews were conducted by telephone. Using telephone interviews allows the researcher to access a geographically diverse sample. Interviewing time and costs are significantly reduced using this method. Another advantage of telephone interviews according to Boland (2006) is that participants perceive greater anonymity than face-to-face interviewing, allowing for information that may be more sensitive to be gathered. There are also disadvantages associated with this type of interviewing. Telephone interviews tend to be strictly time restricted which limits the scope of questioning. Non-verbal responses for example, body languages and expression are not possible and so cannot be noted. Researcher bias is a consideration, the interviewer must be cautious about leading respondents in their answers. Designing an effective schedule with

appropriate questions and probes may help to guide the researcher to remain objective and neutral. The interview schedule was piloted so that questions could be clarified and interviewing techniques could be refined. This process also helps to consolidate a schedule which adhered to the time limit selected. Researchers have less control over extenuating circumstances in telephone interviews and so interruptions may occur owing to the setting in which the interviewee has elected to participate. To minimise the potential for interruptions or distractions participants were contacted in the days preceding the interview in order to confirm times and to outline procedures which may have optimised conditions for the interviewing.

Ethical Considerations

It is accepted in this study that research should be conducted with a good degree of competence and rely on methods that are appropriate for conducting a beneficial body of work. Bassey (1999) states that "it is helpful to discuss research ethics under three headings: respect for democracy, respect for truth and respect for persons" (p.73). Respect for democracy refers to the researcher's freedom to ask questions, to give and receive information and to publish their findings. In claiming these rights, the researcher should pursue them with honesty and openness and with the due care required to safeguard the integrity of the participants.

A number of ethical procedures were carried out to ensure that the ethical guidelines outlined by Bassey (1999) were addressed. Prior to participation and data collection for the e-survey questionnaire, respondents were made aware of the precise nature of the study and the level of involvement required of them. This information was included in a cover letter which was administered along with the e-survey questionnaire.[14] The letter

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[14] A copy of the Cover Letter issued prior to interviews is included in Appendix 7

made clear that participation was voluntary and that respondents were free to withdraw from the study at any stage. The identities of the respondents were not disclosed during the survey process and it was emphasized that the data gathered would remain confidential.

Informed consent was sought from the participants in the interview stage of inquiry, both informally by telephone and formally by letter.[15] A full description of the purpose and nature of the interview was included in a plain language statement and also a consent letter was issued to the seven participants. The consent letter outlined the potential risks as well as the benefits of participation in this phase. Provision of a contact address for follow-up questions or concerns was supplied to participants in the letter. A signature was sought to consent to participation and to indicate full knowledge of the procedures and involvement required of each interviewee. A full copy of the interview schedule was emailed to the interviewees prior to formal interviewing, providing the interviewees with an understanding of the nature of the qualitative study and time for reflection. Participant anonymity was prioritised, however it was stressed that confidentiality could not be fully guaranteed. Pseudonyms were given to individual participants and school names were omitted from the dataset. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and individual copies of the interview transcripts were forwarded to the participants for review prior to analysis. The participants were free to make amendments to their data set at this stage.

In compliance with the research ethics practices promoted by DCU, every effort was made to ensure that this study was approached with honesty, openness and objectivity.[16]

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[15] A copy of the Consent Form is included in Appendix 8
[16] http://main.spd.dcu.ie/main/research/index.shtm

The topic selected for this study was considered to be acceptable, desirable and beneficial to the educational community to which it is directed.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the procedures used in the present research. Using a mixed methods approach has enabled the collection of detailed information relating to the perceptions and experiences of novice principals in Irish primary school settings. The rich level of data collected enabled a comprehensive analysis of school leadership practices and procedures and school leadership challenges in school settings. Utilising a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods benefited the study in many ways. Firstly, the survey data provided an overall picture of beginning school leadership in Ireland. The survey data also provided information relating to primary school leadership which was not available in the literature. Secondly, the interviews added voice and lived experience to the dataset. The qualitative interviews allowed the researcher to engage with the NAP sample group in a way that is not possible in quantitative inquiry. This experience was highly beneficial to the researcher as some of the individual characteristics of the participants were observed during the interview process. A real sense of the enormous commitment that NAPs have for their role was portrayed during all of the interviews. The qualitative data illuminated the lived experiences of novice school leaders which was essential because of the explicit ontological commitment to social constructivism advocated in this study (See chapter one).

The manner in which the data were analysed and an outline of the suitability of the chosen methodology and approach for research were presented in this chapter. The knowledge constructed from the data and the responses to the research questions are presented as findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH STUDY FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained following the analysis of data for the quantitative and qualitative phases of this progressively focussed study. The presentation of the key findings from the specific perspectives of NAPs are associated with the central question:

> Do present structures and practices in Irish primary education support
>
> sustainable leadership in the long term?

The fundamental principles drawn from the sustainable leadership framework contained in Hargreaves and Fink's model (2006) form the main focus of the research in this case. The results are presented in this chapter and are organised around three core principles categorised as:

- Principle 1: Leading learning

- Principle 2: Leadership Succession Planning

- Principle 3: Distributed/shared leadership Practice

The following research questions are linked with these principles for exploratory investigation:

1. Do newly appointed principals have adequate opportunity to engage in instructional leadership in their schools?

2. Are there structures or procedures in evidence which reflect leadership succession planning in Irish Primary schools?

3. Are leadership responsibilities distributed among members in educational organisations in support of the school principal?

The first phase of the study, an online survey of newly appointed principals titled: Newly Appointed Principal's Questionnaire (NAPQ), was carried out in early 2013. Each theme raised in the survey questionnaire is explored using data obtained during interviews which were carried out in May-June 2014 and were guided by preliminary survey results. The integration of numeric data underscored with interview texts creates fluency and cohesiveness in the presentation of findings. In addition, the survey responses for the open-ended item contained in the instrument (See Appendix 4, Question 22 (b)) provide some rich textual data. The question posed was:

What in your opinion is the greatest challenge faced by newly appointed principals in Irish primary schools?

An outline of the presentation of results for each section of this chapter is presented in Figure 4.1 overleaf.

Figure 4.1: Organisation of findings relating to the core principles of sustainable leadership

Survey Respondents (N= 151)

Interview Participants (N=7)

SECTION 1

Sample profiles and demographic results

SECTION 2

Principle 1: Leading Learning

Core dimensions

Determining and sharing of purpose

Management of curriculum and teaching

Promotion of positive environment

Survey data & Interview Transcripts

Survey data & Interview transcripts

SECTION 3

Principle 2: Leadership Succession

Core dimensions

Motivation

Recruitment, Preparation and Training

Transition and Support

SECTION 4

Principle 3: Distributed leadership

Core dimensions

Goal and vison

Organizational structures

Professional development

Instructional management

Survey data & Interview transcripts

Open-ended Responses & Interview Transcripts

SECTION 5

Challenges faced by NAPs in Irish primary school settings

Conclusion

Sample Profiles

The sample accessed in this research study is included as a sub group population classified as NAPs. The high response rate for this sub grouping (n151) is accepted as largely representative of the full sub group population of NAPs at the time of data collection (n189). The final response rate following data cleaning and member checking procedures was calculated at 79.8 per cent. The demographic information relating to the survey sample and a profile of the qualitative sample are presented in this section using simple descriptive statistics in the form of means and frequency percentiles.

Quantitative Sample Profile

Reports relating gender in teaching depict a highly female oriented profession with an 80 per cent female representation according to the OECD (2008), and 84.9 per cent in the report by Darmody and Smyth (2013). The *Growing Up in Ireland Study* (2013) confirms a relatively even gender balance for school principals reporting national figures for male and female principals as 50.3 per cent and 49.7 per cent respectively (Darmody & Smyth, 2013, p. 14). Basic demographic information drawn from the survey instruments shows that of the representative population of NAPs accessed in this study, the larger representation group is female (n=114, 75.5 per cent).

For NAPs in this study, the mean age category is between 31 and 40 years (See Table 4.1). The age profile for NAPs is disproportionate with 78.8 per cent falling into the younger age categories of 21 to 50 (See Table 4.1 overleaf). This shows a further deviation from results reported by the OECD (2008) for the wider principal population. The OECD (2008), report a skew in age in favour of the upper age categories of 50 years and older for the general population of Irish primary principals. In summary, the results for gender and age in this study confirm that in the period between September

2011 and January 2013, approximately three quarters of appointees are female and almost four fifths (78.8 per cent) are aged 50 or younger.[17] These findings reflect a higher rate of female appointments to principalships than previous studies and a decrease in the age profile of principals as compared with previous reports.

Table 4.1: Survey Sample Profiles

Variable Name		Total n=151 %
Gender	Male	21.2
	Female	78.8
Age	21-30 yrs	9.9
	31-40yrs	40.4 (*mean age)
	41-50yrs	28.5
	51-60yrs	19.9
	61+yrs	1.3
Years of Service	0-5yrs	2.6
	6-10yrs	21.9
	11-15yrs	27.2
	16-20yrs	8.6
	20+yrs	39.7
Type of post	Teaching Principal	65.6
	Administrative Principal	34.4

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[17] As noted in chapter 3, principals who were appointed during the 18 month period between September 2011 and January 2013 were classified as NAPs in this study and represent the sample group in this case.

Qualitative Sample Profile

The qualitative sample grouping of telephone interviewees was selected from within the NAP survey sample grouping. Participants identified themselves by indicating a willingness to complete the qualitative phase of the study on the survey questionnaire (*See* Appendix 4, Question 23). After further contact was made via email with the NAP volunteers, a total of 15 respondents reconfirmed consent to participate. A final group of 7 interviewees were selected from the initial sample for the interview phase of the study. A purposeful sampling approach was employed to achieve a good degree of diversity across demographic variables. The selected qualitative participant profiles with assigned pseudonyms are presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Profile of Qualitative Sample Group

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Leadership Post	Experience	School size (Pupil No.)	School type
Nora	Female	31-40	Admin.	11-15yrs	301-400	Urban Co-Ed
Claire	Female	41-50	Teaching	11-15yrs	101-150	Rural Co-Ed
Anna	Female	41-50	Teaching	20+yrs	51-100	Rural Co-Ed
Donal	Male	41-50	Teaching	16-20yrs	51-100	DEIS rural
Joe	Male	51-60	Admin.	20+yrs	101-150	Urban DEIS.
Patrick	Male	31-40	Teaching	6-10yrs	101-150	Rural Co-Ed
Seán	Male	21-30	Teaching	6-10yrs	51-100	Rural Co-Ed

Demographic Findings

In the quantitative survey which represents an NAP population at a given point in time, 65.5 per cent of respondents indicate that they occupy teaching principalship positions. 64.2 per cent of the schools included in this research study have 150 pupils or less (See Figure 4.2). Over half of the school settings included are classified as rural (53 per cent) and roughly a quarter are classified as urban (24.5 per cent). Other school profiles recorded include, Gaelscoil or Scoil sa Ghaeltacht (6.2 per cent) and Special Schools (2.6 per cent). Also 6.6 per cent of the total number of schools are categorised as DEIS Band 1 and 4 per cent as DEIS Band 2.

Figure 4.2: School sizes included in survey findings
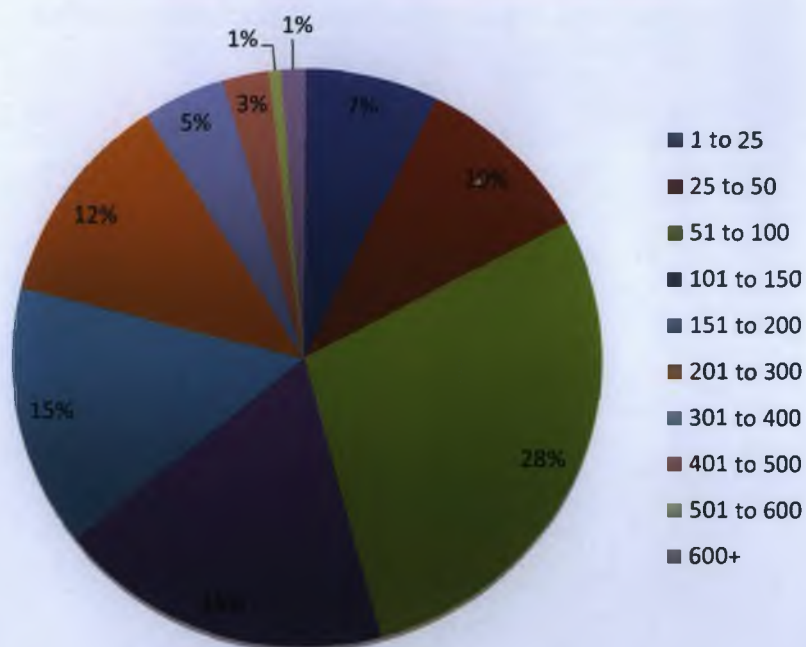
Teaching Experience Prior to Appointment

The mean level of teaching experience for NAPs is 6-10 years. Figure 4.3 below illustrates that at the upper range 27.2 per cent of respondents indicate having more than 20 years teaching experience, and at the lower range 9.9 per cent have five years or less teaching experience. Cross tabulation calculations indicate that there is evidence of a relationship between the age category of NAPs and school size (P= .017).[18] Results show that principals aged 40 and younger are more highly represented in smaller schools. Only 1.6 per cent of those appointed to schools with more than 300 students are under the age of 40.

Figure 4.3: Graph showing respondents' previous teaching experiences
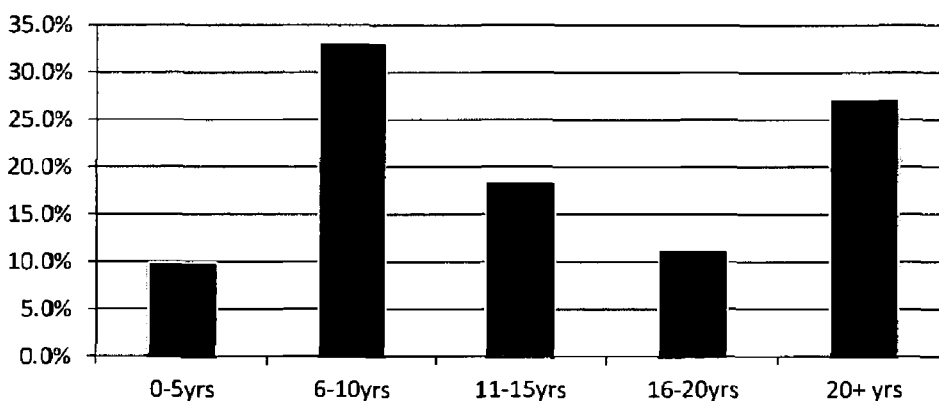
An interesting demographic which is evidenced in this study is the appointment of principals who had less than 5 years teaching experience. This is noteworthy because the DES stipulates that a minimum requirement for the appointment of candidates to principalships in schools with 80 pupils or more is "not less than five years qualified wholetime teaching service" (Circular 02/02, Section 2.2). Circular 02/02 also states that candidates for all school demographics must have successfully completed their

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[18] Cross tabulation results contained in Appendix 9 (a).

probationary period as teachers.[19] In smaller schools (≤ 80 pupils), length of teaching

service is not a necessary requirement, however, candidates must be successfully

probated (DES, 2002). Cross tabulation frequencies were run to determine whether

there are any candidates in the survey sub population who had been appointed to

schools with more than 80 pupils with less than 5 years teaching experience. The

results reveal that although the incidences were small (n=8), this demographic does

indeed exist.

The qualitative data confirms that in some cases the minimum requirements for

appointment as principal are not always adhered to. For example, Nora outlines her

personal experience as a newly qualified teacher having been appointed as a teaching

principal (TP) on her first day of teaching service. She explains:

> What happened to me was that I was actually asked to apply for a principalship,
> in the country in a Gaelscoil [...] I actually went to that interview knowing that I
> was going to get the job. I got the interview and I took the job and so I was a
> principal on my first day as a primary school teacher. (Nora, AP: 48-61) [20]

Nora subsequently vacated the teaching principal position and accepted a mainstream

teaching position in another school for a number of years before accepting her present

position as administrative principal. In Nora's case, appointment was made on the

grounds that the school had less than 80 pupils and only two teaching posts. She was

appointed, however, without having completed the mandatory probation period for

teaching. In this case the interviewee felt that she had accepted a position that nobody

else desired and when she applied for the post she felt that the Board of Management

(BOM) were simply seeking "a warm body" for the role (Nora, AP: 90). In further

commentary, she remarks that "I suppose, it goes without saying that no teacher coming

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[19] The probation process involves a minimum teaching service requirement (100 days) and incidental
visits from a Department of Education & Skills Inspector, who will prepare a report on the suitability of
the teacher. To register fully, all primary teachers must complete a probationary process
[20] AP denotes Administrative Principals in the participant sample and TP denotes Teaching Principals

straight out of college should be trusted to be put in that situation" (Nora, AP: 88-89).

Seán agrees that long term teaching experience is an essential prerequisite for the role of

primary school principal. Seán was appointed after 7 years of teaching and indicates

that he felt he was still relatively inexperienced. He explains that:

> someone has only 5 years of experience and they can become a principal. What
> do you know in 5 years? And in a school smaller than a four teacher school any
> one with even 1 year experience once you're probated can apply you be a
> principal [...] now what do they know about it? I think something should be
> done about that. (Seán, TP: 175-178)

Donal outlines how he had, as a newly qualified teacher, applied for a teaching position

in a rural school and was surprised to discover that the outgoing principal was

encouraging him to apply for the teaching principal position which was also advertised:

> He asked me what job did I apply for and I said the mainstream job and he said
> you didn't, you applied for the principalship, and I said that I didn't and he said
> well come along anyway [...] I declined it you know the application for the
> principalship because I said that I wasn't ready and that I didn't have the skills
> in that direction and that I needed to learn more. (Donal, TP: 27-32)

All of the interview candidates specified that long term teaching experience is an

important prerequisite for leadership candidates, reflecting the wider survey results

which show that 86 per cent of respondents view teaching experience of more than 5

years as essential for preparing candidates for the principalship.

Leadership Experiences Prior to Appointment

A further demographic captured in the survey results was a sub-set of candidates who,

like Nora, had held previous principalship positions. This suggests that there is a degree

of mobility across leadership posts between schools. In total 9.3 per cent of these were

teaching principals and the minority, 1.3 per cent had held administrative positions

previously. It would seem that teaching principals are more likely to move position

than administrative principals. The qualitative data provides further details relating to

112

principalship mobility across Irish primary schools. 5 of the 7 interviewees state that they feel there is a general belief in primary education that a teaching principalship post is viewed as a "stepping stone" to an administrative principalship (Anna, TP: 493). Anna remarked:

> Well a lot of people on the principal's *Misneach*[21] course who were teaching principals are very young [...] and they actually see themselves as administrative principals in 5 to 7 years [...] and quite a lot of teaching principals are very discontented because they actually view it as a stepping stone and are kind of uneasy because they haven't reached their goal yet. (Anna, TP: 489-493)

Evidence of a perception that teaching principalships are regarded as internships for administrative posts is captured in the survey data, with over half of teaching principals surveyed (53.6 per cent) indicating that they intend to pursue an administrative position at some stage in their future careers. 57.3 per cent of respondents report that they have held previous leadership positions other than principalships in schools. These positions are categorised as Special Duties Posts (SDPs)[22] or middle management positions (20.5 per cent), Assistant Principalships (Asst. Ps) (6.6 per cent) and Deputy Principalships (DPs) (29.1 per cent).[23] These leadership positions are classified as senior management and are graded as A or B posts in schools. Figure 4.4 overleaf shows results for previous leadership experiences among the survey respondents (total n=151). Some respondents report having held more than one type of formal leadership position which is accounted for in the percentages reported. A considerably large proportion of the survey sample had no previous formal leadership experience (43.7 per cent).

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[21] MISNEACH is a formal leadership induction programme offered to Newly Appointed Principals by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

[22] SDPs are defined in Appendix 2

[23] The duties, which may be delegated to post holders, are outlined in Sections C, D and E of Department of Education Circular 16/73

Figure 4.4: Leadership experiences prior to appointment as principal
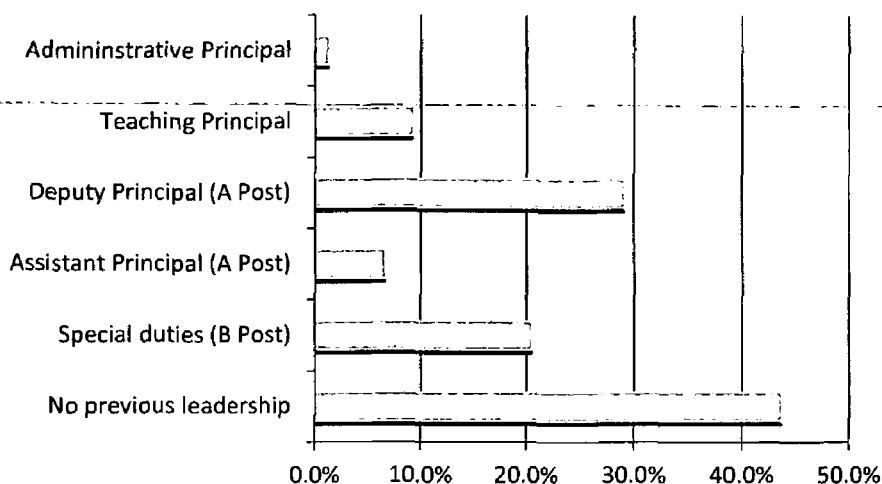
Leadership service history among the qualitative sample group highlights a range of experiences as shown above. Perceptions relating to the importance of SDP experience in preparation for the principalship were gathered using the survey instrument. The findings indicate that just over half (52.7 per cent) of NAPs agree that middle management experience is important in preparing school leaders for the role of principal. An interesting perspective is highlighted by Patrick who concludes that in some cases acquiring special duties posts may deter aspiring leaders from pursuing the position of principal because of the marginal difference in salary between a teaching principalship and a teacher with a SDP allowance. He claims that this would certainly have been the case if he had been awarded such a post in his school:

> I'm actually one of the few teachers in the country who was fortunate that they got rid of the in-school management posts because I would have been in line to get one and if I had a B post with an allowance of what three thousand euros, it wouldn't have been worth my while to go for a principal's allowance. I would probably have taken my B post and settled. (Patrick, TP: 69-76)

It would seem that although SDPs may be regarded as important for allowing teachers to gain leadership experiences in schools, for some like Patrick, SDPs may act as a

barrier for aspiring principals who perceive that there is little financial incentive in pursuing the role.

Preparation and Induction for Aspiring and Novice Principals

The final demographic finding for this section relates to formal leadership preparation experiences through the aspiring leadership programme entitled Tóraíocht [24] and the leadership induction programme entitled Misneach. Induction is aimed at supporting NAPs through a programme of professional development and support. The survey findings show that the uptake for formal leadership preparation is much lower than for induction training. Figure 4.5 overleaf illustrates that only 12.6 per cent of respondents confirm that they completed the Tóraíocht preparation programme, compared to 87.4 per cent who have completed the Misneach principal induction programme. Neither programme is a compulsory requirement for principalships.

The low uptake on the Tóraíocht preparation programme is explained to some degree in the qualitative interviews. Only two of the participants, Nora and Claire, report having completed the Tóraíocht programme. Both state that they purposefully sought out this self-funded programme in order to progress their end goal of becoming school principals. Nora indicates that not many people know of this course and therefore do not pursue it. Both interviewees view the programme as highly beneficial in preparing them for the role of principal. Nora describes it as "an excellent programme and I think of all the things that I have done Tóraíocht was probably the best thing, though unfortunately because they don't know about it, not everyone is doing it" (Nora, AP: 572-574). That the Tóraíocht preparation programme is not well advertised or is not highly sought after is verified by the other interviewees. Some indicate that they were not aware that it was

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[24] TÓRAÍOCHT is a postgraduate leadership preparation programme for teachers which is run by PDST in partnership with the National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

available (Patrick, TP: 146-149; Anna, TP: 34-42) and others state that there is "no incentive" to pursue a preparation course as it was not a requirement for the position of principal (Seán, TP: 158).

Figure 4.5: Formal Leadership Preparation and Induction Training among NAPs
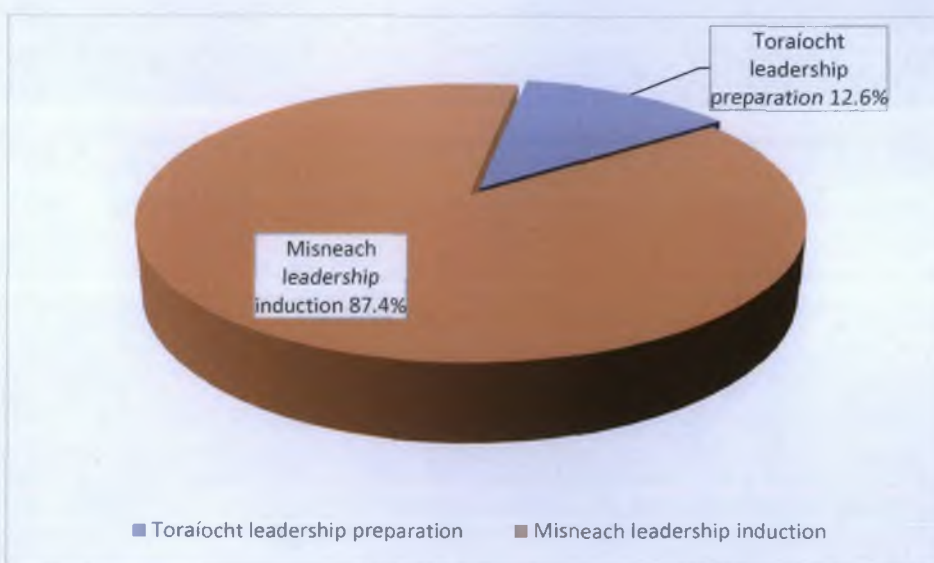
A number of alternative training and preparation programmes are available to aspiring school leaders and are outlined and explored in the third section of this chapter as part of the leadership succession component of sustainable leadership. The demographic profiles of the NAP sample provides some useful insights relating to the contexts in which sustainable leadership is framed in this research study. An exploration of the fundamental principles of sustainability from the perspective of NAPs is presented in the remaining sections of this chapter.

Findings relating to Principle 1: Leading Learning in Schools

The first principle of sustainable leadership namely, leading learning, is explored using results from the NAPQ survey instrument and complementary quotes from the qualitative dataset. This is the starting point in the study of leadership sustainability.

The perspective advocated by the sustainable leadership model is that the promotion of teaching and learning is the top priority in schools and that educational leadership should be predicated on this premise.

Instructional leadership practices and procedures

An instructional leadership approach to leading learning in Irish primary schools has been emphasised (OECD, 2008; MacDonald, 2008). Instructional leadership components described as behaviours likely to represent instructional leadership practice (Hallinger & Heck, 2006) are reviewed in chapter two. The findings for instructional leadership perceptions and experiences are arranged in this section in line with the significant categories for instructional leadership highlighted in the literature (Bezzina, 2010; Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007; Hallinger, 1984, 2008; Hulpia *et al.*, 2009). A total of thirteen survey items examine three dimensions of instructional leadership associated with leading learning in schools. The dimensions include:

1. the promotion of positive learning environment

2. determining and sharing purposes

3. management of curriculum and teaching.

Table 4.3 (overleaf) depicts the categories relating to each instructional leadership dimension and their constituent variables. This illustration represents an overview of this section of the chapter, which outlines both quantitative and qualitative findings for significant aspects of each dimension. Confirmation of reliability for each survey scale is contained in chapter three (See Table 3.5, p. 89).

Table 4.3: Instructional leadership variables

Instructional leadership Dimension	Items on the survey scale
Promoting a Positive School Culture	• Putting structures in place to maintain a positive learning environment • Encouraging and liaising with teachers with regard to Continued Professional Development (CPD).
Determining and Sharing Purpose	• Determining a shared vision • Sharing and encouraging new practices • Recording leadership practices • Reflecting on practices of principal leader
Management of Curriculum and Teaching	• Developing and evaluating the school curriculum • Liaising and using assessment data to monitor learning progress and improvement • Using research and outside agencies to inform school based decision making • Reviewing instructional materials to address learning needs • Evaluating and discussing the practices of all teaching staff • Principal observing teachers engaged in classroom instruction • Principal engaged in time-tabled instruction at various levels in the school

The levels of agreement among NAPs with statements associated with the three

dimensions of instructional leadership are illustrated in Figure 4.6 overleaf. Significant

findings for each dimension are discussed further in this section to develop some

understanding of instructional leadership perceptions and experiences across school

contexts in this research study.

Figure 4.6: Perceived opportunities for leading learning in schools

Encouraging and liaising with teachers with...	48.3%
Putting structures in place to maintain a...	65.5%
Recording own practices as school leader	21.4%
Creating and reviewing a shared long term...	26.2%
Sharing and encouraging new practices...	32.4%
Reflecting on my own leadership practices	43.4%
Observing teachers engaged in classroom...	8.3%
Evaluating and discussing the practices of...	11.0%
Engaging in time-tabled classroom...	24.1%
Using research and outside agencies to...	26.2%
Reviewing Instructional materials to...	29.7%
Liaising and using assessment data to...	32.4%
Developing and evaluating the school...	33.8%

Dimension 1: Promoting a Positive School Culture

The most prevalent instructional leadership practices reported in this study are the two items associated with the dimension "promotion of a positive learning environment" (See Figure 4.6 above). The qualitative data complements survey findings showing that in general there are good working relationships reported in schools and that both principals and teachers work together to promote positive learning experiences in their schools. It should be noted, however, that these findings relate to the perceptions of NAPs and it cannot be assumed that teachers or indeed other members of the school community would corroborate these views. The preservation or cultivation of a good atmosphere or "positive feel" (Donal, TP: 235) is reported consistently in this study. There is also strong evidence to support that student learning is valued as a central consideration by all of the interview participants.

119

Professional development and culture of learning

Professional development is an important feature in positive learning communities

(DuFour, Eaker & DuFour, 2007). The level of agreement for the item relating to

professional development in schools is relatively low. Less than half of respondents

(48.3 per cent) claim that they regularly liaise with members of their teaching staff with

regard to CPD. Finding the time and the financial support to engage in professional

development is reported as a significant issue for principals by the interview

participants. Donal questions:

> Have I opportunities? Well I suppose there are opportunities, I mean there are
> loads of courses available, but you have tough choices to make and as a new
> principal I certainly didn't have time to even consider doing anything like that.
> (Donal, TP: 480-481)

Similarly, Sean reports that "there are leadership courses but you will have to find the

time and you will have to fund it yourself and most people can't do either" (Seán, TP:

113-115). NAPs in the study point out that professional development is not mandatory

(OER: 113; 128; 131; 144; 159)[25] and therefore might not be prioritised in schools. It is

stated that many people who have succeeded to the position of principal may not feel

compelled to pursue further development because "there is little incentive to do it"

(Claire, TP: 270-276). With regard to teacher development, it is clear that the scope for

CPD depends very much on the geographical locations of schools. In rural settings

professional development courses are not easily accessible. For the most part interview

participants report that teacher development courses are provided by regional education

centres which may be some distance away from schools. One principal explains that

"my staff are not really interested in CPD mainly because it is an hour travelling in the

evening to the learning centres in Cork or even Limerick and an hour home (Anna, TP:

247-248).

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[25] OER is the code applied to Open Ended Responses included in the NAPQ

In the interviews, NAPs highlight that professional development courses are often paid for by the school but for university based career development there is no funding provision. This greatly restricts teachers' capacities to pursue post graduate development according to NAPs as many are not in a position to privately fund this type of extended education. Another issue highlighted is the fact that professional development is not adequately incentivised or rewarded in teaching:

> There's no incentive here, they took the incentive away. One of the girls who works with me did her Masters and they took away the allowance you get in your wages, so she hasn't pursued it any further and why should she? (Seán, TP: 158-161)

In certain school contexts it would seem that there may be greater opportunities available for teachers to pursue professional development training. For example, there are specialised training programmes provided for teachers who work in schools with DEIS status:

> For us, being a DEIS school we have been up-skilled in "Incredible Years" and "Restorative Justice" and areas that we have worked towards like school positivity and pupil positivity. I think in those areas, money has been spent. (Joe, TP: 467-470)

Frequencies relating to DEIS status schools and the item for prioritising staff development reveal that for DEIS Band 1 and 2, between 91.8 per cent and 94.8 per cent of survey respondents view staff development as an important priority. In stark contrast, however, only 8.2 per cent of respondents in rural schools with DEIS status state that staff development is a high priority in their schools. This corroborates earlier findings which support the view that staff professional development is more readily accessible to teachers in locations that are more closely located to regional education centres.

Dimension 2: Determining shared vision and purpose

The results across the four items on the dimension for determining and sharing purpose in general show that the majority of NAPs in the sample group do not feel that there is adequate scope for engaging in these collaborative practice aspects of instructional leadership (See Figure 4.6, p. 119). Only 26.2 per cent of respondents report that they often review a shared long term vision for their school. It would seem that leaders find limited opportunity to share and evaluate leadership practices. Only 33 of the 151 respondents for this question indicate that they would often discuss their own practices with others. While shared vision, decision making and broad ownership of the learning that goes on in schools is clearly highlighted as important to school achievement and improvement in the wider literature (Bryk, Bender- Sebring, Allensworth, Lupescu & Easton, 2010), it seems to be problematic in reality according to the findings in this study. A full account of the findings across this dimension is presented in Figure 4.6.

Culture of shared practice

The interviewees' responses underscore the survey results and provide deeper insights into the contextual reality for school leaders and the problems encountered in trying to promote a culture of shared practice. A number of inhibitors to shared practice are reported. It is clear that there is no time within the school day to allow teachers and members of the school community to come together to discuss practice. For the most part it would seem that collaboration relating to instruction and learning occurs informally outside normal school hours. Claire warns that collaboration may take from formal instructional time (Claire, TP: 204-210). Nora explains that the teachers in her school are fully occupied with their own programmes for teaching and have little time for responsibilities outside their own classrooms:

> Teachers have always done their planning and everything and done it with good heart and willingly [...] At the end of the day, teachers need to be trusted to do their work and they do and teachers do their job and outside of that there is no time for anything else really. (Nora, AP: 940-944)

The reality of the school day is perceived by NAPs to impede upon teachers' capacities to engage in formal dialogue relating to instruction. Participants themselves outline that they have little or no time to discuss leadership practice with members of their school community. There are mixed views, however, among participants relating to the perceived opportunities in their schools for engaging in shared and open dialogue relating to school wide instruction. Some participants indicate that the scope for collaboration has been enhanced by the recent public service agreements. For example, the *Croke Park* and *Haddington Road Agreements*, (2010-2014), [26] are referenced by participants as a new forum for dialogue, planning and shared decision making within their organisations. The activities set out in Circular 008/2011 include school planning, staff meetings and in-service training. Joe reports that this additional time is frequently used to discuss matters relating to instruction or for adopting a shared approach to school improvement. Discussing the additional hours recently introduced in his school he states that "at the end of the day they are things that are helping. It gives us that opportunity that probably wasn't always there well it most definitely wasn't there in my time as a teacher" (Joe, AP: 346-350). There are conflicting arguments reported in relation to the perceived opportunities to engage in collaborative practices in schools. On the one hand the survey findings and participant accounts seem to indicate that there is limited opportunity to engage in formal collaborative practice because of the instructional demands of the school day. The interviewees, however, report that collaboration among teachers and school leaders is provided for under the provisions put in place as a result of additional development and planning hours recommended in

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[26] See definition of terms Appendix 2 for a summary of *The Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreement* documents

the Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreement documents. It is interesting that the some NAPs regard this programme for formal planning to be additional to their work schedule and therefore view the new service agreements as "added workload" (OER: 23; 24; 28; 49; 70; 77; 89; 110; 119; 149) which has led to "disgruntled staff members" (OER; 81, 2) who "generally resent the manner in which they [increased hours] were implemented and as a result, the outcomes from the time spent are not producing any real and positive results" (OER, 34: 4-5). It seems that NAPs perceive that an allowance of time for formal collaborative practice within the school day is the preferred ideal.

Evaluation of leadership practices

Reflecting upon and evaluating their own practices is an important aspect of the sharing purpose dimension of instructional leadership. The survey findings show that for only 43.4 per cent of respondents self-reflection is a regular feature of their own practice. It is remarked that "time for reflection has to be built in. It is almost non-existent at the present time" (OER, 34: 2). The qualitative data expands on this further, highlighting again that time is a major impediment when it comes to this aspect of instructional leadership:

> By the time I have looked at plans and policies and read up on initiatives and tried to find things out for my staff and for the school, do I have time to sit down and write out what I do as a principal? No. (Seán, TP: 501-503)

As well as lack of time, the sense of isolation or loneliness associated with the principalship is clear and one participant reports that "I don't really have proper time to record what I do, I mean I don't get any feedback really from others and you just learn to accept that" (Anna, TP: 335-336). Discussing reflective leadership practice and the recording of his own work Seán also remarks that "I wouldn't know where to start and no one would ever understand it anyway" (Seán, TP: 504).

The strong sense of isolation felt by NAPs and the expectation relating to NAPs from other school community members that they do not require support as they "are the expert" (OER, 45: 5) is strongly reported in the open-ended responses taken from the survey data (OER: 7, 8, 25. 45, 57, 94). One respondent articulates that there is:

> A real sense of isolation when it comes to decision making and an assumption that the principal will know, when in fact they may not. Difficulties with staff who have high expectations of a principal that may not be able to delivered. (OER, 8: 1-3)

Sean's comments reflect his sense of isolation as a principal. He does not perceive that the staff in his school would have an interest in his work as principal and that requesting feedback may serve to undermine his position as leader:

> It's different for teachers they can ask each other for a dig out or opinions or whatever, but principals are expected to know what they are doing. You definitely wouldn't go to a staff member and evaluate your work. No it might be seen as a sign of weakness. (Seán, TP: 925-927)

Patrick reinforces this viewpoint. He outlines that there is an expectation that principals should create opportunities to reflect with teachers relating to classroom instruction and to make space to offer affirmation and feedback. He feels, however, that feedback, reflection and recording of the leadership practices of school principals is not the norm in schools:

> And the principal as well as rarely getting praise, the teachers can go into the classroom and give out about "Johnny's" behaviour but a principal cannot go into a staffroom and give out because you have to maintain confidentiality and you certainly wouldn't record your leadership activities, no. It's just not done. (Patrick, TP: 306-310)

It is clear from both quantitative and qualitative findings that key aspects of this dimension of instructional leadership are not strongly evidenced in practice in Irish schools. The significant issues reported are:

a) lack of time during the school day to engage in whole school collaborative practices

b) a lack of confidence and insecurity among principals in leading instructional practices

c) a sense of isolation when it comes to leadership practices and feeling pressure to maintain and portray a level of expertise as leader in a school

d) a lack of clarity relating to the responsibilities associated with the role of school principal.

Some of these issues are strongly linked with the third dimension of instructional leadership, the management of the curriculum and teaching.

Dimension 3: Management of Curriculum and Teaching

The guidance and direction of teaching is included as an important aspect of the role of the school principal in Ireland as outlined by the Education Act (1998, Section 22: 2, *a*). The seven items for the third dimension of the instructional leadership categorised as: management of curriculum and teaching, are illustrated in Table 4.3 (p. 117). The results across this dimension in general show that the features of this category on the subscale are not strongly evidenced across the schools in this study (See Figure 4.6, p. 119). For all items in this dimension, only one third of respondents or less report having adequate opportunity for engaging in practices associated with curriculum management and teaching and learning. These findings are also reflected in the qualitative study.

Evaluation of the school curriculum

Only 33.8 per cent of NAPs report that they would often develop and evaluate the school curriculum as part of their role as school principal. All interview participants confirm that frequently engaging in curriculum evaluation is not commonly practiced by them as leaders in their schools. Interviewees state also that the use of research to inform practice is rarely or never the norm. Seán outlines that all research or knowledge

126

has to be sought privately and that there is little or no guidance provided for those who wish to develop their knowledge relating to new initiatives or mandate. He explains that:

> Now with all this anti-bullying circulars and strategies and we are told restorative practice is where we all have to go. Now I have no idea what restorative practice is and so I had to go (...) during the week to buy a load of books and now I'm having to sit down to try to find out how to become an expert through reading all of these books so that I can sit down with the staff at the end of June and say this is what we are doing come next September and this is how it works. (Seán, TP: 480-485)

There exists a sense of "paralysis" (Donal, TP: 404) caused by agendas for change because there is not enough time to seek adequate knowledge associated with an initiative or change agenda, before the next initiative associated with teaching and learning is pushed forward. Donal remarks that:

> I haven't internalised most of that [policy] information because I am not comfortable around it. Well as I was doing it I would have been fluent in it and fluent in the language of that information, but as for now, well everything changes, now we have to move on to the next thing. (Donal, TP: 399-402)

Wenger's theory relating to social learning communities views the consolidation of ideas and practice as emergent and based on " complex relationships, self-organization, dynamoc boundaries, ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of identity and cultural meaning" (2010, p. 1). The renegotiation of meaning through complex social interplay develops competency in time. If inadequate time is given to new initiatives and ideas, communities feel a sense of change overload and a failure to attach authentic meaning to reform programmes. This sense of change "overload" (OER, 2: 1) was a significant theme in the open ended questions in the quantitative dataset also (OER: 2; 22; 26; 27; 32; 33; 37; 41;43; 49; 62; 67; 81; 83; 93; 100; 114; 117; 120; 122; 123; 135; 138; 140; 149; 152). One respondent in the quantitative survey outlines her frustrations at the "continuous bombardment by the DES of new initiatives" (OER, 140: 1-3). Some comments illustrate the frustration felt by teaching principals who perceive that their commitment to teaching is being compromised because of the excessive demands of

administrative and managerial duties and policy implementation (OER, 3: 20; 46; 78; 107). In one response it was reported that "teaching or administrative duties are constantly being juggled resulting in a sense of failure" (OER, 110: 5).

Monitoring progress and improvement

In the present findings only 33.8 per cent of respondents agree that they have sufficient opportunity to evaluate progress and improvement in their school contexts. Similarly, only 31.1 per cent of survey respondents report having adequate opportunity to frequently monitor progress and improvement using school learning and assessment data. The consensus then among respondents is that there is inadequate opportunity to engage in these aspects of instructional leadership. In addition interview participants highlight that school leaders perceive that they have more challenging or pressing contextual issues to deal with but that there is pressure to prioritise policy agendas. School leaders believe that they do not have the freedom to focus on context specific issues such as funding and resourcing, because of the demands placed on them through policy mandates and the requirement to document action in these areas. Joe remarks that:

> I don't feel that self-evaluation of literacy and numeracy is my biggest challenge at the moment but it is the only one on which I am going to be marked at the end of the year. And we are told that doing a school self- evaluation and literacy thing it will help us academically within the school. I don't think it will actually. I think it is too much of a one size fits all. (Joe, AP: 554-560)

Seán believes that support in schools is limited to prescribed agendas determined by the DES, yet there are many other urgent priorities that require attention in schools. He explains that the level of administration associated with DES policies is enormously time consuming and restricts the amount of time or opportunities for addressing other aspects of school practice. For example, all schools are required to evaluate and document numeracy and literacy standards and plan and record proposed changes for improvement regardless of the levels of achievement in these areas in their schools. A

school with perceived good standards for numeracy and literacy must address these areas and show evidence of further improvement even if there are concerns relating to student learning in other areas. Seán reports that:

> There are much bigger issues in schools but from where I am sitting, unless you pick a literacy or numeracy element you are not going to get any professional development help. (Seán, TP: 490-491)

The perception that dealing with curriculum design and curricular improvement agendas are not the most pressing issue at school level is reported by NAPs in the quantitative dataset:

> There are bigger concerns. From losing class teachers to large numbers in classes. Changes made recently have negatively affected our school (loss of class teacher, rural school, difficulty maintaining learning support base) and all planning/ keeping up with circulars is done with this huge negative elephant in the room. (OER, 41: 3-6)

The lack of resources available to schools for implementing improvements is also a recurring theme in the open responses contained in the survey dataset (OER: 16; 47; 52; 53; 54; 60; 63; 83; 99; 103; 108; 116; 120; 122; 133; 144). Interviewees report that they feel inadequately prepared and lack the training required to facilitate the change agendas that are being thrust upon schools presently. Patrick emphasizes the fact that, while the whole school is responsible for bringing about change and improvement, it is ultimately the principal who is given the task of researching proposals and communicating them to stakeholders at practice level. This according to Patrick increases the demands placed on the principal. He comments that "there is initiative after initiative and it's all lovely in theory but in reality it is the principals who are having more and more to do" (Patrick, TP: 371-375). Survey respondents also indicate that there is no training provided to schools for implementing policy reform (OER: 14; 26; 45; 54; 81; 103; 119). This would suggest that the development of communities of practice which are open and responsive to change is severely compromised because of lack of preparation and time for negotiation and renegotiation of planned changes (Wenger, 2010).

Affirming good practice

The management of teaching and the curriculum also involves observing teaching and appraising and affirming practices in schools which enhance opportunities for learning (IPPN, 2014). In guiding curricular improvement principals are expected to possess a degree of expertise relating to school instruction (OECD, 2008) and there is a strong onus on principals to "guide" and "direct" teaching (DES, 1998). The research findings indicate that the opportunity to evaluate teaching is problematic across practice contexts. Only 11 per cent of the NAPs surveyed report that they evaluate teaching practices in their schools on a regular basis. A few NAPs (8.3 per cent), state that they regularly observe the teaching that goes on in their schools. This result is explored further in the qualitative study producing strong evidence that the evaluation and observation of instructional practice is difficult to accommodate possibly due to practical constraints at organisational level. For both administrative and teaching principals, the scope to observe teaching is not a common reality according to the research findings because of time constraints in schools. Patrick states that:

> The only time for that I would get is on my release days. But I would only
> briefly go in and out of a classroom and I would always warn in advance and
> just ask to see a poem or something. It is not observation really or evaluation of
> teaching, no. (Patrick, TP: 467-470)

Other interviewees report that they are reluctant to observe the teaching practice in their schools for various reasons. Anna and Nora feel that it would undermine the relationship of trust they have built up with their teachers and both also feel that members of their teaching staff have more expertise than they would have in certain curricular areas. Claire relates that she feels that she lacks training and expertise in new instructional practices and feels that observing and advising teachers may be viewed as undermining their professional capacity. Joe feels that it should be accepted that administrative principals "inevitably lose contact with the classroom and teaching" (Joe, AP: 662), and describes himself as being "on the outside looking in" which illustrates

130

that he feels perhaps teachers should be trusted to fulfil their roles without too much interference from the principal (Joe, AP: 663).

The role of the principal in the management of instruction

Administrative principals according to the findings seem better positioned to engage in activities associated with the management of curriculum and learning. It was found that evidence of a statistical relationship exists between the type of post and the opportunity to observe classroom teaching at a significance level of P=.020.[27] 80.2 per cent of teaching principals state that they rarely observe the teaching that goes on in their schools. By comparison, 65.3 per cent of administrative principals in their capacity as school leaders indicate that they rarely observe teaching in their schools. Both figures indicate that observing or guiding teaching is not common practice in schools even though this activity is stipulated as an essential element of the role of principal in Irish schools (Haygroup, 2003). There is evidence also of a statistical relationship between the items "principal develops and evaluates the curriculum" (P= .036) and "use of research to inform improvement" (P= .046)[28] and the demographic variable for type of leadership post. Administrative principals report developing and evaluating the curriculum more frequently (44.9 per cent of cases) compared with teaching principals (28 per cent of cases). Survey results for the use of research to inform practice also show a disparity across principalship posts, with 35.4 per cent of teaching principals indicating that they never engage with research compared to 16.3 per cent of administrative principals for the same item.

The leading of learning or the capacity to promote a collective focus on student learning school wide is "a primary function for all school principals" according to the IPPN

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[27] Cross tabulation Table for this variable included in Appendix 9 (b)
[28] Cross tabulation table for these items included in Appendices 9(c) and 9(d)

(2014, p. 5). Almost half of the NAPs in this research study report that they rarely

engage in multi-level classroom instruction in their school (See Figure 4.7). In the

qualitative study, neither teaching principals nor administrative principals report

engaging in classroom instruction at various levels frequently in their schools. For

teaching principals in the qualitative sample guiding instruction outside their own

classroom is simply not feasible because of full commitment to teaching in their own

classrooms.

Figure 4.7: Engagement in Multi-Level Instruction
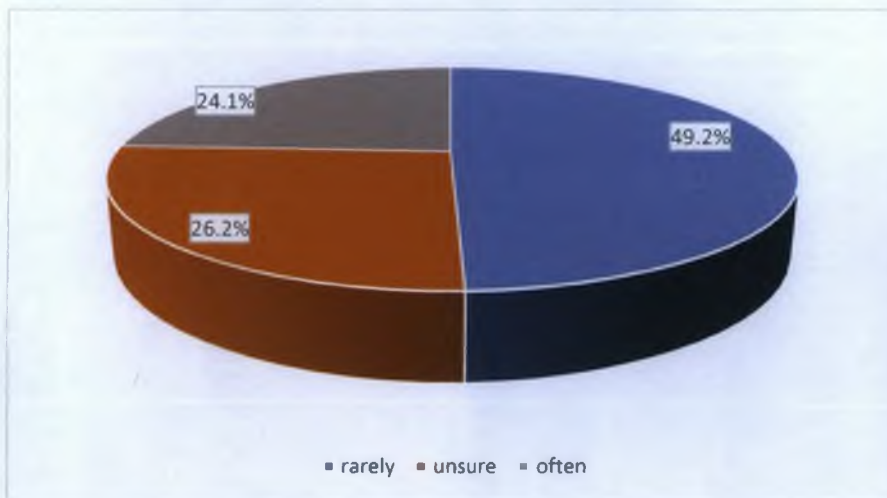
Opportunities for leaders to engage in incidental teaching as part of their role as

instructional leaders is perceived as problematic according to the qualitative and

quantitative findings. For teaching principals it is not possible to engage in teaching

frequently in classrooms other than their own. A strong theme that emerges across all

dimensions of the instructional leadership sub scale is that the roles of teaching

principal and administrative principal are perceived differently by NAPs (OER: 79; 121;

124; 151). One respondent argues that:

> The role of teaching principal is very unique and very different from the
> experience of an administrative principal. The job of any principal is enormous
> if done well, but I suspect comparing [administrative] and teaching principals is
> like comparing apples and oranges. (OER: 129, 7-10)

132

According to the IPPN (2014) there is no delineation between these two positions in Irish legislative and guideline documents. As mentioned earlier, teaching principals are allocated release days from their classrooms during the course of the academic year in order to carry out the additional leadership responsibilities that are associated with their role. The number of days is directly related to the size of the school and ranges from 20 days for a 4-5 teacher school to 12 days for a 1-2 teacher school (DES, Circular 14/01). All of the teaching principals in the qualitative sample state that this release time is insufficient and that leadership duties are for the most part completed outside of school hours. Between them, it was stated that they would spend from two to four hours a night dealing directly with school matters after school hours. There was general consensus among the qualitative sample, even among administrative principals, that teaching principals have much longer working hours than administrative principals. Joe comments that "I think that a lot of the administration from the small schools has got to be taken into a central area for teaching principals, so that people can get on with the teaching aspect of the job" (Joe, AP: 670-680). The perception that "release times" for teaching principals are insufficient is also captured in the open-ended reports contained in the survey data (OER: 20; 35; 59; 61; 67). One respondent notes that the "insufficient number of principal release days for teaching principals results in inadequate time for teaching principals to engage with evaluation of teaching and learning during the school day" (OER, 59:1-3).

Findings for Principle 2: Succession Planning

The results in this study for the succession planning component of the sustainable

leadership framework have been arranged as shown in Figure 4.1 (p. 105), under the

categories:

1. motivation

2. recruitment

3. preparation and training

4. transition and support

These categories are explored using key findings from the survey questionnaire and are

complemented by data obtained during the qualitative phase of the study.

Leadership Motivation

A leadership motivation scale was devised to gather information intended to create

greater understanding relating to the factors that are most likely to have encouraged new

leaders to pursue the position of principal (See Table 4.4 overleaf). A total of 11 items

on the scale measures three sources of motivation adapted from the Motivation Sources

Inventory (MSI), (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998). The reliability coefficients for the modified

motivation subscale are reported in chapter three (See Table 3.5, p. 89).

Table 4.4: Subscale items included in Motivation Scale

Motivation Categories	*Survey variables*
Transformational	• I sought the principalship because I wished to progress my career • Financial reward was a factor in my decision to become principal
Instrumental	• I sought the principalship because I felt I could initiate change • I sought the principalship because I enjoy the challenge of responsibility • I sought the principalship because I wished to instigate school improvement • I sought the principalship because I wished to share my knowledge and philosophies relating to education • I felt that by becoming a school principal I could make a real difference to society
Self-concept	• I was encouraged by others to pursue the role of principal • I had a strong personal belief that I would be a good leader in schools • I sought the principalship because I had a strong desire to lead others • My leadership potential was recognised and nurtured early in my teaching career

The three sources of motivation are described as transformational behaviours, instrumental motivation and self-concept. The items contained in the motivation subscale are arranged in line with the sources of motivation categorised by Barbuto and Scholl (1998) and are presented in full in Table 4.4 above. In general NAPs report being highly motivated in pursuing the role of principal across most items on this subscale (See Figure 4.8 overleaf).

Figure 4.8: Survey findings relating to motivational factors for NAPs
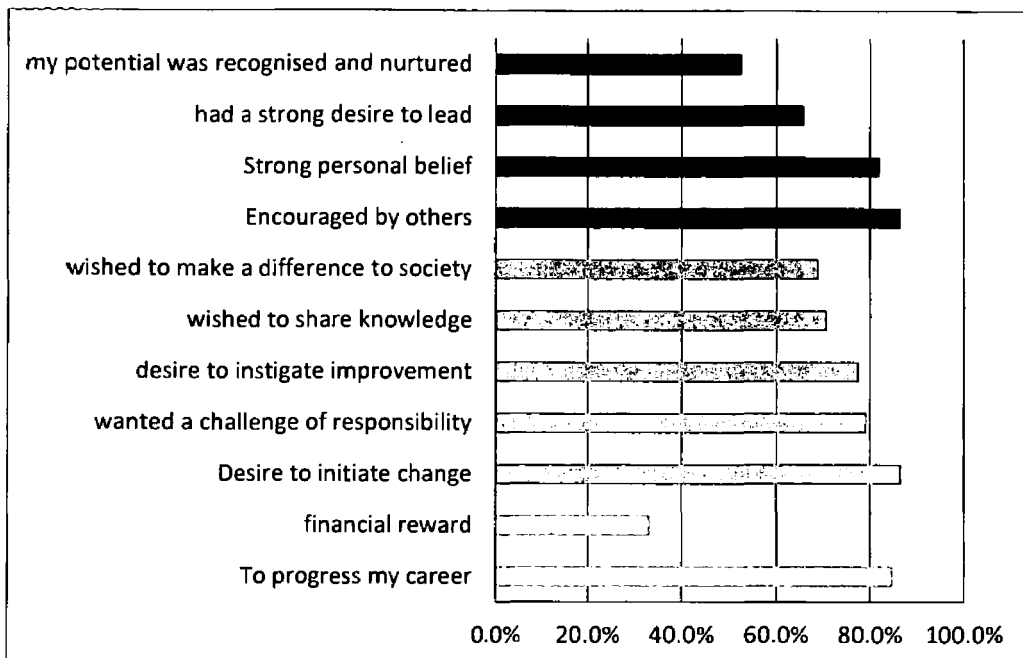
Financial Rewards

The financial rewards associated with the position of school principal stands out as a non-motivating factor as compared with other items on the scale. Only one of the seven participants claimed that financial gain may have influenced his decision to apply for the principalship initially, however, he discovered upon appointment that the financial gain did not compensate for the level of time and commitment he dedicated to the job:

> Like principal's allowance is like minimum wage. It was only after I had done the maths that I worked out how much extra I was getting and I was a bit bitter for a while, but like nobody becomes a principal for the money. (Patrick, TP: 617-620)

It is apparent from data gathered in the interviews, that senior and middle-management positions contribute to principalship reluctance in schools because the difference in salary is perceived as marginal. Patrick outlines that it would have deterred him from applying for a principalship had he secured a middle-management position in his school. Certainly, there is some evidence to support the premise that deputy principals are unwilling to seek principalships because "for the extra bit of money [she] would get

136

for being principal as opposed to deputy principal it wouldn't be worth [her] while doing the extra work" (Patrick, TP: 614-616). In line with this finding, there is some evidence to show that a recent feature in the school settings studied is the increase in interest in principal positions because of the present embargo on SDP or middle management in schools. Joe relates that there is a perception that more teachers are pursuing a principalship for financial reasons because of a lack of opportunity for promotions in schools since the imposed middle management moratorium:

> What I am hearing is that there are more people going for principalships now because with the moratorium, middle management in bigger schools is basically gone like the old way. I mean people are going out there and are basically looking for principalships, now partly for the wrong reason they are looking at this financially. (Joe, AP: 638-643)

Perceived inadequate remuneration is evidenced in the survey dataset as an issue which may promote principal reluctance (OER: 9; 114; 119; 133). A specific issue highlighted was the fact that the level of duties are increasing yet the salary has decreased in some cases because of pay cuts (OER: 9; 119).

Support and encouragement

A high proportion of NAPs (86.7 per cent), report that encouragement from others motivated them to pursue the position of principal in a primary school. There is recognition among interview participants that included in the role of school principal is a responsibility to promote future candidates for the position of principal. Nora claims that:

> Part of the job was creating leaders. She [school principal] knew that she had to leave leaders behind. You know, you can't just do your job and then go away, that there have to be people ready who are willing to take the ball and we very much had that with our principal (Nora, AP: 548-550).

That principals themselves play an important role in recruiting prospective leaders is witnessed by participants in their professional contexts when, as teachers, they benefited from the encouragement, support and advice of principals within their own schools and

also outside their immediate professional contexts. For instance, Donal recalls that "principals would have encouraged me along the way. They were always mindful of the courses that teachers should be going on" (Donal, TP: 82-84). Seán relates how he was encouraged by two principals to pursue a principalship. They recognised in him some leadership attributes and encouraged him in his decision to pursue a principalship:

> I sat down one night and spoke to three friends who were all older and wiser and were all principals and they said well we think you have it, we think you are cut out for it, so what are you waiting for? (Seán, TP: 39-41)

Patrick also states that he was encouraged by others to seek leadership training:

> Then two other principals I knew and they are both actually retired now as well... one of them actually showed me a few ads and that, and told me about courses for Masters for Leadership...with the specific aim for me to become principal. (Patrick, TP: 27-30)

There seems to exist in schools a purposeful drive by principals to encourage and support teachers they identify as future leaders based on interview data and also confirmed in the surveys. Just over half of the NAP survey sample group indicate that their leadership potential had been recognised and nurtured (See Figure 4.8, p. 158). This reinforces the idea that candidates may be identified as possessing leadership attributes during the course of their careers. Some interviewees mention that they were motivated to pursue the position of school principal because of strong encouragement from friends and colleagues in the teaching community. In other cases, participants acknowledge that they had not identified themselves as potential principals and that encouragement from others had "planted the seed" (Seán: 30-31) which led them to consider a principalship as a possible career pathway.

Personal motivation

A high proportion of NAPs report a strong personal motivation to pursue the position of

principal leader (82 per cent). In most cases, the interview participants were highly self-

motivated to become school principals and had identified with this career goal early on

in their practice as teachers. Seán for example, had always identified himself as a

potential school leader stating that "I had perceived that before I even left college. I had

a very clear direction of what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go in my career"

(Seán, TP: 68-69). Similarly, Claire had viewed the principalship as a career choice

from a young age. She reports that "since I was small that was my goal I suppose for

many years I kind of latched on to that ambition of wanting to be a Principal, of wanting

to be a leader" (Claire, TP: 61-64). This may suggest that leadership in some cases is

sought for the prestige associated with the role rather than because of a deep

understanding of the nature of the role.

Desire for career progress is also shown to be an important motivating factor in the

survey sample (84.7 per cent). In Anna's case, however, a contrasting story emerges.

Anna outlines that her pathway to school principalship seemed to come about because

of a unique set of circumstances in her organisational context, rather than through

strong self-motivation or encouragement from others:

> So then in the school I am in basically the principal retired and I decided that I
> wouldn't go for the principalship even though I was the deputy principal (...)
> and the girl who got the principalship got sick within three or four months and
> thus began my journey into principalship. (Anna, TP: 38-46)

Anna made it clear throughout her interview that she felt she was given little choice

when it came to applying for the role of principal in her school. She felt duty bound

because of her position as deputy principal in the school. She reports that:

> I felt that I had little choice because you lost your deputy principalship
> allowance if you didn't act up. That is one thing you agree to when you become
> a deputy that if anything happens to the principal you agree to act up. (Anna, TP:
> 46-49)

Three of the participants remark that their deputy principals did not seek the principal

leader position when it became available in their schools. Joe outlines how his deputy

principal restricted her own leadership development in order to avoid succession. He

claims that "she didn't even develop herself as a deputy principal for fear of being

coerced into going for the principalship at some stage" (Joe, AP: 301-304).

Leadership reluctance

Interviewees perceive that there is a belief that seniority should be honoured in schools

resulting in newer members of staff "feeling pressured not to go for the job" (Claire,

TP: 204). It is reported that in the case of younger members of staff there is a

reluctance "to put yourself forward because people might think that you are getting

notions about yourself if you are doing something like that" (Patrick, TP: 157-158). Joe

reports that potential candidates have little interest in the role of teaching principal

specifically because there is a perception that the role is too onerous. The weight of

responsibility which is carried by teaching principals is emphasized by the interview

sample. Perceived reluctance to pursue this position is reported by some participants

among their school community members, who witness the commitments to heavy

workloads by the teaching principals. Donal explains that:

> They see that not only are people changing the rules as you go along and adding
> more and more to the job and they seem to be tying your shoe laces together and
> then asking you to run in a fair race. People see that you know and they know it
> might not be worth it. (Donal, TP: 501-506)

Heavy workloads are a visible aspect of the job in school settings. Seán describes a

typical example of this in his school setting:

> We were off school today, but I was at school this morning at nine o'clock and I
> didn't come home here until 5 o'clock. And they see me doing that and they
> kind of go, well if that's the life that you're getting, I don't want it. (Seán, TP:
> 295-298)

Leadership reluctance is witnessed among teachers in schools according to reports in this study, yet clearly many candidates are not deterred from pursuing the role. There are a number of factors which may influence the pursuit of and appointment to principalships, from personal motivations to organisational and political influences and also recruitment experiences. To determine how pathways have been followed by NAPs in this study, some items were included on the survey instrument to capture attitudes and experiences relating to recruitment, training and support structures for aspiring candidates in the Irish primary sector.

Recruitment of School leaders

Forming part of the succession component of the survey instrument, a recruitment subscale was devised using items taken from the wider literature relating to recruitment experiences (Fink, 2010; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; IPPN, 2006; Stutsman, 2007). Reliability coefficients for the devised scale for this succession component are provided in chapter three (See Table 3.5, p. 88).

In general the mean scores for this scale indicate that respondents are satisfied with procedures relating to their recruitment and appointment (See Table 4.5 below). The findings support that there are positive attitudes among NAPs towards the recruitment process itself. Most respondents felt the appointment process was open and fair (86.7 per cent) and that recruitment procedures were systematic and rigorous (76 per cent).

Table 4.5: Recruitment experiences of NAPs prior to appointment

Perceptions associated with recruitment experiences	No. of respondents to agree and strongly agree (Total N=151)	% of respondents to agree and strongly agree
I felt the appointment process was open and fair	139	86.7%
I felt the recruitment and appointment process was rigorous and systematic	114	76%
I received valuable support from an experienced principal in preparing me for the role	103	68.7%
I had a clear understanding of the responsibilities and duties prior to my appointment	86	57.3%
I gained access to coaches and mentors who supported my development prior to my appointment	73	48.7%
I felt prepared for the role	58	38.7%

The survey results show that while 68.7 per cent of respondents report receiving valuable support from an experienced principal in preparing them for the role, the majority (38.7 per cent) still did not feel adequately prepared for the role. This would suggest that more supports need to be put in place to support candidates prior to appointment as principals in schools. Some issues relating to recruitment and appointment are illuminated in the interviews which are not generally reflective of the results drawn from the survey questionnaire relating to appointment processes. For example, in one case, the participant questions the procedures used for conducting interviews for school principals and the lack of focus on the specific needs and context of the school:

> I did an interview last year in a school that I worked in, it was a DEIS 1 challenging school and not once was I asked in the interview about how I would deal with discipline in the school. I feel that the interview structure needs to be more defined and it doesn't have to be the same interview as would happen in a non- DEIS environment or for a country area or for a teaching position as

opposed to administrative, I mean the questions are quite similar for them all. (Joe, AP: 188-194)

In contrast with the quantitative findings (See Table 4.5, p. 142) interviewees report that the recruitment process is not always open and fair. Participants report that having good contacts is a factor in appointments. Nora describes how she used her contacts to access knowledge relating to the position prior to her appointment:

> I kind of put out feelers and it was funny because one guy I put out feelers to, I would have always thought that he knew everybody and he did, because I went to that interview basically knowing that I was going to get it. (Nora, AP: 56-59)

Seán reports that it has been his experience that internal appointments are favoured by interview panels. He explains that "if there's a person within the staff who wants the job, then a person from outside the staff would want to be unbelievably exceptional to be even considered for the job" (Seán, TP: 317-319). This practice may preserve what Grummell et al. describe as "homosociability" in schools by appointing candidates who are "drawn from a relatively small pool of highly involved insiders" (2009, p. 4). Such candidates are perceived as "safe" because of their local knowledge of the organisation (Grummell et al. 2009, p.2). These recruitment practices, however, restrict the appointment of more objective external candidates who may possess the necessary qualifications, experiences or talents required to fulfil the role in certain contexts.

Interviewees in the present study also report that the recruitment process is not considered open or fair because of a lack of applicants in situations where the interviewing panel "were glad that somebody did apply" (Claire: 224). In one instance it was made clear to the NAP by the chairperson of the interview panel, that they felt he/she "had no choice but to appoint you" (Anna, TP: 81) because of a lack of applicants for the job at the time. In one case only, the participant related that he felt the interview and appointment process was rigorous, open and fair (Donal, TP: 224-228).

143

Clearly many contextual factors play a part in the recruitment of principals, however, the formal selection process is conducted through interview. It is the job of a nominated recruitment panel at local level to appoint the appropriate candidate to the position of school principal. Specific school needs are not always a consideration in the selection process across contexts according to the qualitative findings. In some instances, a shortage of applicants leaves interview panels with limited selection options. In other cases the selection panel possess limited knowledge themselves of the exact needs of the school.

Preparation for the role

A further theme highlighted in this study is that the newly appointed candidates feel that they do not possess sufficient knowledge relating to the role of school principal and specifically the managerial or administrative aspects of the job. The survey findings show that 61.3 per cent of NAPs do not feel they were adequately prepared for the role upon appointment. Interview participants report that the initial months of leadership are "quite a sharp learning curve" (Patrick, TP: 190). The statistical data indicates that there is a significant correlation between gender and NAPs perceptions relating to levels of understanding of the role upon appointment (P= .009). Statistical frequencies confirm that female NAPs, (63.7 per cent), perceive that they have a better understanding of the role than the male appointees (16.3 per cent). The quantitative analysis confirms also that female candidates were more likely to have prepared for the role by following a staged career path to the principalship. For instance, approximately one quarter (25.4 per cent) of the female sub sample had previously occupied deputy principalship positions compared with just 4 per cent for male NAPs. A higher number of females (17.2 per cent) also report having held special duties positions in schools as compared with male NAPs in the survey (3.3 per cent). The survey data would seem to indicate that male candidates are less likely to have acquired leadership experiences

prior to their appointments into principalships. Correlational findings reveal also that there is evidence of a significant statistical relationship between gender and perceived value of CPD (P= .018). The majority of female NAPs (78.7 per cent) view CPD as essential in preparing them for the role, whereas only 17.3 per cent of males value CPD as an essential prerequisite for adapting to their new roles. The statistical findings suggest that male candidates are less likely to pursue leadership development prior to and following their appointments as school principals. The reasons for disparities across gender, relating to leadership experiences, cannot be ascertained from the survey data. Likewise, during interviews candidates were unable to determine whether gender differences are in evidence when it comes to leadership experiences. In fact there was a high level of agreement among both male and female participants relating to role preparation.

All of the interviewees outline challenges in their new principalships and report feeling overwhelmed and under-prepared for their roles. All participants agree that they did not feel prepared for the role whether they had succeeded to principalships within their teaching contexts (n=3) or moved to other school contexts (n=4). The consensus that NAPs are poorly prepared for the role upon appointment is also confirmed in the open-ended responses included in the survey data (OER: 7; 8; 26; 113; 121; 128; 131; 144; 159). Respondents document that principals have no training prior to appointment and so struggle greatly in the initial months of appointment. Participating in communities of practice is an important way of learning (Wenger, 2010). According to Williams, Matthews and Baugh (2007) learning is closely linked to interaction and participation in meaningful contexts. For newcomers who may not yet have established stable relationships with members of their community of practice, learning and knowledge can be accessed only in the context of action. Newcomers operate initially on the periphery

of the community and so internship and mentoring programmes offer useful practice based experience for aspiring principals. In the Irish context from the perspective of NAPs in this study, legitimate peripheral participation is not a feature of leadership preparation as most candidates rarely if ever, gain practice experience of the role prior to appointment. As a result some respondents note that "learning on your feet" (OER: 26) and through "trial and error" (OER: 113) are common features of practice for NAPs.

Evidence of a significant statistical relationship (P= .021), exists between the type of leadership position and the levels of prior knowledge and understanding of the role.[29] Teaching principals (34.7 per cent) are more than twice as likely to disagree with the statement "I had a clear understanding of the responsibilities and duties" than administrative principals (13.5 per cent). Overall, the results show that 42.7 per cent of respondents indicate that they lacked understanding relating to the demands of the role prior to appointment. Many interviewees sought advice from experienced principals in the initial stages of leadership, a strategy also confirmed by 68.7 per cent of the survey sample. NAPs state that advice was sought informally from principals or retired principals who were known to the participants within their professional circle. The formal mentoring service offered by the IPPN was accessed by 57 per cent of respondents.

The research findings highlight issues which spotlight that NAPs feel unprepared and inadequately supported in trying to adjust to the new role of school principal. One respondent summarises a transition which involved "taking on issues already present in the school before I came [with] no knowledge of them [and it] took me by surprise. New role to learn and having to deal with very difficult, long running issues" (OER:

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[29] See Appendix 9 (e)

126). There is limited scope or opportunity to facilitate an adjustment in role definitions from teacher to principal. Claire outlines the difficulties she experienced coming to terms with the complex role of principal having little to draw upon besides previous experiences as a teacher:

> You are a teacher one day, for me it was February the 28th and then March the 1st you're the principal ...there are no plans, you are not prepared for it and the other staff aren't prepared for this either. (Claire, TP: 163-166)

There are no formal procedures in place in Irish schools to facilitate a change in leadership or indeed to allocate novice principals time and support in coming to terms with their new roles in new professional contexts. The selection and appointment of school principal is carried out by school boards with little or no consultation with members of the school community. The findings show that only 18.9 per cent of NAPs report that there are formal leadership succession plans in place in their schools (See Figure 4.10, p.163). This means that upon appointment NAPs are required to fill the position and carry out the full responsibilities of the role without any internship or settling in period and in many cases confirmed by respondents in this study, with little prior knowledge of the context of the school. The transition from teaching to leading is extremely daunting (Northfield, 2014) and rapid changeovers in the Irish context further complicate the issue, an argument that is supported by the evidence presented in the next section of this chapter.

Transition experiences

There is strong agreement among the survey sample that to possess knowledge relating to the specific school context prior to appointment as principal is essential (76.7 per cent). Approximately half of the NAPs in this survey (51per cent) have been appointed to principal positions outside their own schools and as a result have experienced transitions across organisational contexts and settings. The interview participants

represent both external and internal appointees and it is acknowledged among them that "an internal appointment is completely different from somebody coming in from outside" (Claire, TP: 166). The obvious difference between both situations is that internal candidates possess some prior knowledge of the school and have established relationships with the staff. This is perceived as an advantage by some who spoke of preserving cultures in the school and honouring the legacy of the incumbent leader (Joe, AP; 50-54). Nora describes a change of leadership she witnessed as a teacher which she described as "seamless" because it was an internal appointment and the "groundwork had been laid" (Nora, AP: 549). Some participants describe feeling overwhelmed and isolated in new settings where established relationships and embedded school cultures exist. Some also report that they felt they needed to maintain a veneer of expert knowledge and assume control because of their position as principal. Participants in new contexts also report their reluctance to seek counsel or advice from members of the established school community. As noted earlier, this is seen as a sign of weakness by some NAPs (See Seán, TP: 925-927, p.125).

Training and preparation for the role

The survey gathered relevant data relating to preparation experiences among NAPs which supported their transition from teaching to leading in schools. The survey results show that the types of training and preparation being accessed by the NAP sub population vary (See Table 4.6 overleaf).

Table 4.6: Leadership training and preparation experiences

Training and preparation experiences	No. of respondents	Frequency of respondents
Engaged in networking with other schools	143	96%
Engaged with IPPN services	128	85.9%
Engaged in induction programme	104	69.8%
Engaged in mentoring programme	85	57%
Engaged in university based leadership programme	24	16.1%
Engaged in leadership shadowing	7	4.7%

A high proportion of NAPs (96 per cent) indicate that they had engaged in networking with other schools and school principals prior to their appointment as principals. Underscoring the survey results, interview participants report experiencing leadership mentoring accessed through the IPPN, within the first few months of practice as NAPs. The perceived value of these programmes is mixed. Nora remarks that she did not have a good relationship with her mentor and found that she did not receive much support regarding a "particularly horrendous situation" shortly after her appointment (Nora, AP: 255). Patrick enjoys the relationship he has developed with his mentor, but remarks that he views the relationship as a friendship rather than a professional arrangement remarking that "I wouldn't do anything he [the assigned mentor] recommends" (Patrick, TP: 531). Patrick describes how he was given poor advice relating to legal matters in his school from his assigned mentor and as a result he had little confidence in the professional advice being offered. In other cases the participants find that their mentors have been a useful source of support and advice (Seán, TP: 127; Anna, TP: 192). Donal suggests that the procedures for mentoring need "to be a bit more formal" (Donal, TP:

552). Despite mixed experiences with the IPPN mentoring service, all interview candidates spoke very highly of the support services and guideline documents provided by the IPPN. The general consensus is that the IPPN is a readily accessible source of support. Patrick states "I am a big fan of the IPPN and I would say that the most important letter in that is the 'N'...the Network" (Patrick, TP: 524-525). Few respondents report having engaged in university based leadership programmes (16.1 per cent) and fewer still have engaged with any kind of leadership shadowing (4.7 per cent). A university based Masters in Leadership is the most commonly cited route to leadership development among interviewees (5 of the 7 participants). Although four interviewees indicate that they had been interested in pursuing a Master's programme, only one participant (Patrick) has completed one. Participants claim they are deterred by the financial demands of a university based programme. None of the participants in the qualitative study have engaged in any form of leadership shadowing. Nora, however, describes how she has observed and been inspired by a "superb principal" (Nora, AP: 232) during the course of her teaching career. This was not a formal shadowing arrangement, however, Nora describes this period of her teaching career as "an informal internship" (Nora, AP: 531-532). Nora states that she is still inspired by this leader and has followed many of the leadership practices she has learned during this time:

> I watched her and thought watch and learn and I would say in thirteen years she only did about three things that I wouldn't have entirely agreed with but I watched her and what I saw I liked and I store it all and I'm using it. (Nora, AP: 457-459)

This type of leadership preparation occurs informally in school settings and it is therefore difficult to ascertain if this type of practice is prevalent in schools, however, it can be assumed that everyone with teaching experience is exposed to opportunities to learn by witnessing a school principal. The value of this learning very much depends on the relationships which are developed in schools and on the specific talents of school

principals. It is worth pointing out that although there is evidence to support the view that aspiring leaders may gain useful knowledge from principals whom they admire, others, like Joe, for example, may be inspired to pursue the role of principal because they felt that "mistakes were being made and the timing was right to go in and stabilise the school" (Joe: AP, 52-56). In general, the interview respondents have a positive interest in the idea of leadership shadowing. Patrick agrees that it is a good idea and that shadowing could be very beneficial but he points out that there just simply isn't time to accommodate such practices.

An important consideration in examining the results relating to engagement with preparation and training programmes is the perceived value of preparation and training by NAPs. Long term teaching experience is considered an essential prerequisite for preparing principals by 86 per cent of respondents. University based leadership programmes are not rated highly by respondents with only 28.7 per cent viewing them as essential. This corresponds with the results for engagement with university based programmes and the contribution of university led programmes reported earlier (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.7: Perceptions of the value of specific preparation procedures

Preparation experiences viewed as essential	No. of respondents	% agreement among respondents
Long term teaching experience (≥ 5yrs)	129	86%
Knowledge of recent instruction methods	127	84.7%
Continuous Professional Development	122	81.3%
Prior knowledge of school context	115	76.7%
Administrative and management training	98	65.3%
Formal leadership training	96	64%
Middle management experience	79	52.7%
Knowledge of recent research	78	52%
University based leadership programmes	43	28.7%

Patrick, the only interviewee who has completed a university based programme claims that he did not find the programme highly applicable to his present position as school principal:

> It was probably beneficial to have on my CV, but when you go into the real world [...] it's like reading a book to learn how to ride a bicycle and knowing the theory of it and then all of a sudden you're put on a bike at the top of a hill [...] like college will get you so far but it's on the job really that you will get the most benefit. (Patrick, TP: 95-104)

Other leadership preparation experiences perceived as essential among the full survey sample include: acquiring professional knowledge relating to new instructional methods (84.7 per cent), CPD (81.3 per cent) also linked with new instructional practices and gaining personal knowledge of the context of the school (76.7 per cent). The qualitative data suggests that the opportunity for gaining insights and first- hand knowledge

relating to the school and specifically in relation to school leadership is problematic. As mentioned earlier many of the professional development opportunities and supports in schools are focussed on policy reforms. Opportunities to develop skills and knowledge relating to other aspects of instructional leadership, such as new approaches to learning, specific learning needs and school specific learning priorities are not readily accessible according to the findings.

In all cases the interviewees state that they were dissatisfied with the leadership handover process in their specific contexts. In many cases the changeover was rapid or sudden and therefore the predecessor was not available to offer adequate guidance and support. Sudden departures are reported by those who have been appointed from within their own schools and also by those who have been appointed to new organisational contexts. Nora's experience echoes the reports of other interviewees:

> My predecessor met me over the Christmas holidays and handed over the keys. I took my last course day that year to go over on a school day to meet the children and to meet the teachers. I wanted to get a feel for the place and to have a chat with her. It was nowhere near enough and after that she was gone. (Nora, AP: 682-687)

Nora's experiences highlight that it is difficult to gain appraisal or to seek out information relating to leading in a new context. There is little consultation with the previous principal and little opportunity to gain insider knowledge prior to appointment to the position.

Improving knowledge of instruction
Many of the interview participants acknowledge that they perceive it as important for a school leader to be appraised of new instructional practices and to acquire and share knowledge about new teaching methodologies. Joe acknowledges that there may be more scope for administrative principals to seek out initiatives that may benefit instruction in the school as they are not committed to a classroom full time. He

153

highlights, however, that it is sometimes difficult to transfer these new ideas to others in the school because "I think that sometimes it is impossible if I go to a meeting, it is me bringing this back to the staff in a third party way, which is very, very difficult" (Joe, AP: 575-576). Anna agrees that it is important for principals to be appraised about new instructional practices but in the case of teaching principals:

> Everything is done outside mainstream classroom time. I suppose I was very good at that for years and funny enough since I became a principal I find it more difficult because I get tied back up in the school. (Anna, TP: 247-248)

In contrast, Donal indicates that the opportunities for developing skills and knowledge related to school wide instructional methods are available if you actively seek them. He outlines, however, that managing best practice is a more complex issue than simply imparting new knowledge. He claims that "there are small little things that hinder you like lack of resources. You've all the will in the world to progress with these ideas but you are hitting pitfalls…there is always something pulling against us all the time" (Donal, TP: 449-451).

In-career leadership development

One avenue available in schools for gaining leadership experience "on the job" (Patrick, TP: 104), is through the acquisition of a senior or middle-management position. Middle management experience is considered an essential prerequisite for leadership practice by 52.7 per cent of those surveyed. The effects of an embargo placed on middle-management promotions which became mainstream in education in 2009 (Circular 0022/2009), has yet to be researched in Ireland. To gather information relating to moratorium effects in schools, survey respondents were asked if they had been adversely affected by the embargo imposed on middle management appointments. 86 per cent agree that the embargo has had a negative impact in their schools. Six of the seven interviewees report that they have recently lost middle leadership positions in

their schools largely due to a recent upsurge in early retirements. In all cases where middle management positions had been lost the interviewees report that voluntary acceptance of responsibilities is witnessed in their schools. Claire reports that there is a strong culture of volunteerism in her school, stating that "we share a lot of responsibility really on the ground" (Claire, TP: 479-480).

Cross tabulation calculations show also that there is evidence of a statistical relationship between the type of leadership post and negative impact of the moratorium (P=.033)[30] In the case of administrative principals, a higher proportion (96.2 per cent) report that they feel that the moratorium is having a negative impact in their schools compared with 80.6 per cent of teaching principals. This may be the case because administrative principals are positioned in larger schools where middle management posts are more likely to have been lost. Joe confirms that "in larger schools especially the moratorium has had a big impact" (Joe, AP: 638-639). Donal suggests that the excess duties resulting from a loss of in-school management personnel are placing too much undue pressure on teaching teams. He explains that "they have also taken away posts of responsibility from people and people end up saying you know why don't you delegate more but the reality is that people are delegated out the door" (Donal, TP 511-513).

The erosion of middle management capacity is captured as a strong theme in the open-ended survey responses also. Respondents view the middle management moratorium as a negative effect in schools linked directly to increased workloads (OER: 25; 48; 49; 51; 63; 77;79; 85; 119; 145). Some respondents report that the moratorium has contributed to low morale among the staff in their schools (OER: 9; 11; 25; 33; 63; 77). One respondent reports that "at present there is a feeling of despair amongst staff. Teachers feel overworked and underpaid and there are no opportunities for promotion"

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[30] See Appendix 9 (f)

(OER: 87, 1-2). Following the introduction of the middle-mangement moratorium opportunities to engage in in-career leadership development have become largely informal and depend on a spirit of volunteerism in schools. Since in-school leadership structures in the form of middle management posts are no longer reinstated in schools much of the leadership responsibility which is being accepted by teachers is not formally acknowledged or affirmed. In-career leadership development at practice level in schools then is significantly compromised at present.

Organisational structures linked with leadership capacity

The transition scale results suggest that there is strong consensus among NAPs that some common issues are impinging upon early leadership capacity in schools in the primary context (See Table 4.8, p 158). For example, 89.3 per cent of respondents indicate that they do not have sufficient time to deal with the level of duties they are expected to carry out and 80 per cent agree that the role is more challenging than they had anticipated. Also, 86 per cent of those surveyed feel that there are inadequate resources, such as training and development, for carrying out leadership responsibilities in schools. In addition to lack of supports and resources, all participants report that they felt that lack of time is a pressing issue for principals in primary education. Some highlight that the level of expectation and burden of responsibilities for principals seems to be increasing in schools.

Increased workload is the most prevalent challenge cited in the open-responses included in the survey data (See Figure 4.11, p. 169). One respondent cites that the "work overload in schools today is a sure recipe for total burnout" (OER, 122: 3). A lack of time for carrying out duties seems especially problematic in the case of teaching principals. Cross tabulations show that there is evidence of a strong statistical relationship between the type of leadership post and the perception that there is not

enough time to carry out responsibilities (P=.00).[31] Although there is high general

agreement among the full survey sample that lack of time is a pressing issue, teaching

principals are in almost total agreement with this statement (98 per cent) compared with

administrative principals (73.1 per cent). In some cases it is reported that the burden of

administrative duties and common issues relating to the general running of the school

are negatively impacting on instructional capacity for teaching principals. Donal reports

that "a teaching principal shook me by the hand and said "welcome to the worst

teaching you will ever do" and he was right, I am definitely not as effective as a teacher

because of all the administration" (Donal, TP: 483-486). Seán also expresses his

frustration at having to deal with leadership issues during classroom instruction time:

> On average I have lost three and a half hours per week sorting out problems in
> other classes, people coming in looking for me or something unexpected that I
> have to deal with immediately and I have to just drop everything and go. (Seán,
> TP: 411-415)

Almost one fifth (19.8 per cent) of responses included in the open-ended dataset

reference that trying to manage full time teaching tasks and leadership duties is a huge

challenge for teaching principals. One respondent reports that "the children in my class

suffer because I am a teaching principal" (OER, 140: 4-5), while another simply states

that "there is no reality to the term teaching principal" (OER, 91: 1).

Figure 5.8 shows that there is general perception that the role of principal is difficult to

define (83.3 per cent) and that expectations relating to the job and the spectrum of

responsibility are difficult to ascertain. Evidence from interviews reveals that NAPs

perceive that there "are no real guidelines" (Claire, TP: 530). It is also perceived that the

definition of the role is problematic since the nature of the principalship "very much

depends on the context of the school" (Claire, TP: 531). This reflects the view that

leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon.

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[31] See Appendix 9 (h)

Table 4.8: Transition challenges associated with the role of school principal

Perceptions associated with transition challenges	No. of respondents in agreement	% of respondents in agreement
I feel that the position of principal is not adequately remunerated	140	93.3%
I feel there is inadequate time for leadership duties	134	89.3%
I feel there are insufficient resources for carrying out leadership duties	129	86%
I feel that the role is not well defined	125	83.3%
I feel that the role is more challenging than I had expected	120	80%
I feel I lack guidance in carrying out my duties as school principal	60	40%

Remuneration

Remuneration which has been briefly outlined in relation to leadership motivation is also captured as an issue on the transition scale. There is a strong consensus among respondents that the role is not adequately remunerated (93.3 per cent). This result seems to suggest that the position of school principal is not an attractive career prospect from a financial point of view and that this perception is understood among the education community. Earlier results show that only one third of the survey population considered that they were motivated to pursue the role of principal because they stood to gain financially. This is a significant issue when it is considered that there is reluctance among potential leaders to seek the position because "there is no comparison between the salary and the duties and people realise that" (Anna, TP: 326-327).

Leadership supports

Linked closely with the common issues associated with the transition phase of school leadership is the level of guidance and support newly appointed leaders receive in dealing with the demands of the role. The survey reveals that 40 per cent of NAPs agree that they lack guidance in carrying out their new roles as principals. A subscale measuring support and guidance which is constructed around the available support services and practices that prevail in Irish primary education was used as part of the succession component of the sustainable leadership model (See Figure 4.9 below).

Figure 4.9: Support received from partners in education
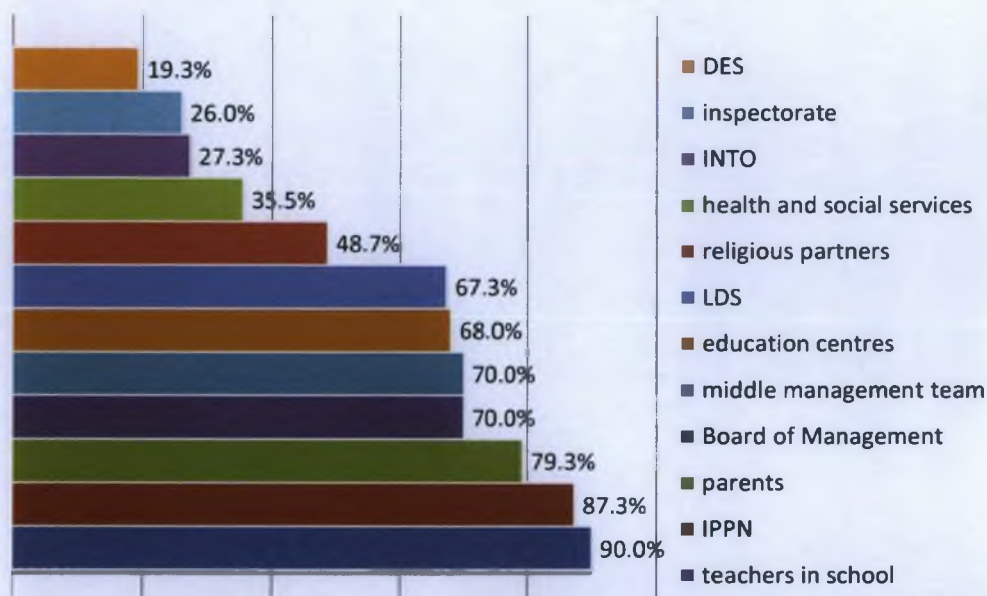
The findings show that NAPs view teachers in their schools as their most valuable source of support at 90 per cent. Most interviewees acknowledge the commitment to work and the level of support they receive as new principals from their teaching staff. As mentioned earlier, interview participants observe an increase in "good will" and "volunteerism" (Patrick, TP: 246-248) in schools where middle management posts had been lost. The IPPN are regarded as an essential support service with 87.3 per cent agreeing that they receive valuable support from the organisation. Parents, boards of

management (BOM) and middle management teams are viewed as supportive by the survey respondents (70-79.3 per cent agreement) and also by interview participants. Less than half of NAPs (48.7 per cent) view religious partners as patrons in denominational schools as a strong source of support. Other school partners such as the Health and Social Services and the INTO teachers union body are regarded as supportive by 35.5 per cent and 27.3 per cent of NAPs respectively.

The findings show that only 19.3 per cent of respondents view the DES as an important source of support for NAPs. All of the interviewees stated that they did not regularly seek guidance from the DES and some remarked that they avoided contact with government departments altogether. Some comments illustrate high levels of frustration felt towards the DES who are perceived as inaccessible or "disconnected" (Claire, TP: 557) from schools and school principals. Joe is critical of the support offered by the DES and describes his reluctance to seek advice or access information via DES services. Anna describes being significantly affected by her experiences of DES service providers when trying to seek guidance in her first months as school principal. She describes that as a NAP she tried to access information from the DES in relation to an administrative issue in her school. She was frustrated by the lack of support and advice she received and felt offended as the implied message from the DES advisor was that she should already know how to deal with these issues. Following on from this incident Anna explains that she tries to avoid contact with the DES because "I felt like I was getting abused you know...I felt like I was being treated like a little school girl" (Anna, TP: 100-121). All interviewees express that they would be reluctant to seek guidance from the DES and prefer instead to access other sources of support when dealing with leadership issues. Dealing with the DES is reported as a significant challenge in the open-ended dataset also (OER: 18; 34; 48; 62; 73; 114; 130; 135; 148). Some

respondents report frustration at "the continuous bombardment by the DES of new initiatives" (OER: 140, 1) coupled with "difficulty knowing how to access information" (OER: 14, 3).

The inspectorate who "promote best practice and school improvement by advising teachers, principals and boards of management in schools" (DES, 2014) are viewed as supportive by just 26 per cent of respondents. One respondent reports that "the inspectorate come in and judge and try to find fault" (OER: 130, 5). Some interviewees report positive experiences with their local inspectorate (n=3) and others outline that they do not feel that the inspectorate facilitated them in carrying out their duties as principal leaders in schools (n=4). It is clear from the findings that NAPs perceive that they are better supported in their roles by colleagues and personnel at organisational level than by outside partners and agents.

The most readily accessible source of support for novice school principals is to be found within the organisation which they lead. This view is acknowledged by advocates of distributed leadership as a mechanism for supporting school leaders by dispersing responsibilities in schools (Barth, 1990; Donaldson; 2001 Hallinger, 2007; Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership practice comprises the third component of the sustainable leadership model. Findings relating to leadership distribution structures and practices are presented in the next section of this chapter.

Findings for Principle Three: Distributed Leadership Procedures and Practices

The final subscale in the NAPQ includes items associated with distributed leadership in schools. Leadership from this perspective takes into account the human potential available in schools for accepting and carrying out leadership duties and responsibilities in support of the school principal (Gronn, 2000). A review of distributed leadership in education is presented in chapter two. A total of 13 items are included on this scale which relate directly to distributed leadership action in line with other studies (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007; Grant, 2011; Hulpia, 2009; Leithwood *et al.* 2006; Spillane, Camburn & Pajera, 2007). Reliability coefficients for this subscale are reported in chapter three (See Table 3.5, p. 88). The scale items are arranged and presented in line with four components of distributed leadership categorised by Leithwood *et al.* (2006). These dimensions are; goal and vision, organizational structures, professional development and instruction management (See Table 4.9 overleaf).

Table 4.9: Distributed Leadership Dimensions

Distributed leadership Dimension	Items on the survey scale
Goal and Vision	• Post holders have autonomy to make whole school decisions • Planned changes for improvement are put in place • The principal and ISM team work on a shared school vision
Organisational Structures	• There is a formal succession plan in place to accommodate a change in Principal leader • Adequate time is allocated for post holder duties • There is a high functioning leadership team in the school • Teachers perform duties in support of the school principal outside their own classrooms
Professional Development	• New teachers are encouraged and given adequate opportunities to lead • Teachers without posts are given leadership responsibilities • Shared decisions are made relating to Continued Professional Development for teachers • Staff development is prioritised in the school
Instruction Management	• Discrete time is provided for formal collaboration relating to instruction • Parent and the wider community are involved in instructional matters

Survey findings for all items under the distributed leadership dimensions are presented in Figure 4.10 overleaf. The frequency results for this subscale show that NAPs consider that some practices are in place which promote and develop shared leadership responsibility in the settings included in this study.

Figure 4.10: Findings on the scale for the dimensions of distributed leadership
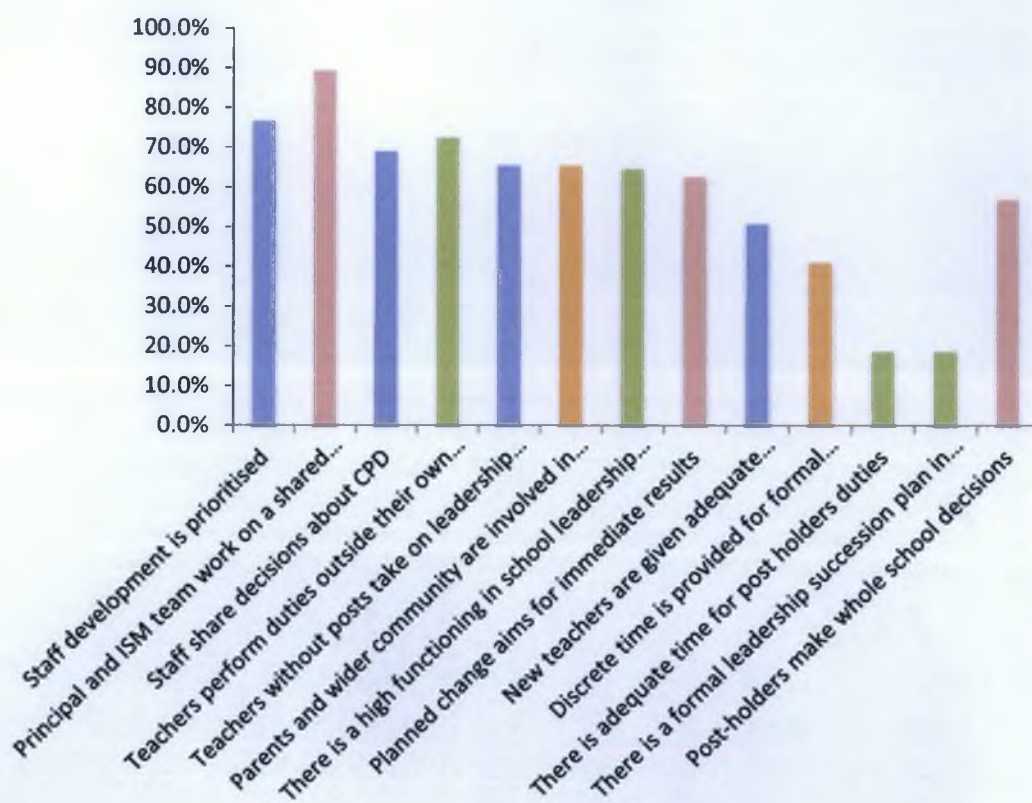
Distributing leadership through middle management

There is a dual advantage to distributed leadership structures in schools. Firstly, school principals are guided and supported in their roles by members of the school community who have the knowledge and skills to identify and address the specific needs of the school in relation to student learning. Secondly, distributed leadership helps to acknowledge, affirm and develop leadership talent more widely in schools, thus promoting future leaders. In the Irish context in-school management structures are identified as a useful means for developing future leaders and also supporting the school principal in their role (OECD, 2008). For the most part survey respondents agree that the principal and in-school management teams work collectively towards a shared vision for their school (89.5 per cent). Planning for change is reported as a priority feature among 62.9 per cent of respondents in the survey. Across contexts, middle

164

leadership teams are given opportunities to lead. 57.3 per cent of respondents report

that post holders possess the autonomy to make whole school decisions. Most of the

interview participants also confirm that that they receive valuable support from their

middle management teams. In one context, however, there is no longer any formal

middle management structure in the school due to the moratorium on middle

management appointments.

Collaborative Practices in schools

Despite the fact that opportunities to gain leadership experience through new middle

management promotions have ceased, there is evidence that collaborative cultures are a

strong feature in schools. For example, it is reported among 72.7 per cent of respondents

that teachers regularly perform leadership responsibilities outside their own classroom.

The findings show that providing opportunities to lead for new teachers, however, is

reported in only 51 per cent of cases. Informal teacher leadership is reported as a

prevalent feature in 65.7 per cent of the schools included in this study. Teachers are

commended for their willingness to accept additional duties in an informal capacity in

schools. Donal remarks that in his school since the cessation of middle leadership

appointments "teachers who are coming in are quite willing to do the work" (Donal, TP:

520-522). There is good evidence to support, that in the contexts explored in this study

informal collaborative practices are witnessed. The exact nature of these duties and

how they are disseminated in schools is less clear. Some interviewees perceive that

teachers are far more willing to engage in collaborative practice that is related to

instruction and learning rather than wider leadership responsibilities. Donal states that

he has "tried to give out leadership roles but it doesn't work out and so we end up going

back to curriculum roles" (Donal, TP: 571-573). Seán comments that leadership

responsibilities tend to be the primary priority for principals but not for teachers:

> Teachers will look after their class first and every other responsibility will be done if they get time. My thinking is different. I know I need to look after the school first and my class comes second. (Seán, TP: 664-666)

It would seem that there is a perception among some NAPs and their teaching communities that leadership is not part of the role of the teacher and that as Seán reports, teaching comes first and other duties are additional. This perception is a recurring theme in the study and is reported in the findings for collaborative practices (See p. 212-214).

Shared approaches to change and improvement

There is a perception that the implementation of school improvement initiatives is the ultimate responsibility of the school principal despite reported cultures of shared responsibility in schools. There is a feeling among NAPs that while teachers are happy to "go along" with policies and change agendas (Anna, TP: 185), the dissemination and orchestration of DES initiatives and programmes for school improvements are primarily the responsibility of the principal as leader. Patrick agrees that duties and decision making may appear to be shared more widely in schools but that in reality the principal is left to research and deliver agendas. This increases rather than alleviates workloads for principals:

> Now we would go through policies as a staff and see what we see about them before we go any further, but you know I would be the one to go and get the policies and to read them and mark areas for concern and to put into questions things that I think might be useful and then we go through them. Like by and large I get them a few days before a staff meeting and have a read through them, but at this stage they just look at the bits that I have highlighted. (Patrick, TP: 400-405)

CPD which promotes teacher expertise is valued in schools according to survey results with a high proportion of respondents indicating that staff development is prioritised (76.9 per cent) in their schools. Shared decision making relating to in-service professional development is also the norm in 69.2 per cent of cases. NAPs are complimentary of the commitment to learning of their teaching communities and the

general willingness to improve themselves professionally. The most significant challenge relating to distributive leadership practices in schools according to the findings is lack of time for carrying out leadership duties. Only 18.9 per cent of NAPs agree that there is sufficient allocation of time for meaningful shared leadership practice in their schools. This notion has been strongly supported by the qualitative sample and cited by all participants as an issue which affects the leadership agency in their schools.

Distributing leadership and the wider school community

Distributing responsibilities in schools is not restricted to the members of the teaching community. Authentic distribution spreads also to the wider community in support of the work of the school. 65.7 per cent of respondents indicate that they feel that parents and the wider community are encouraged to play an active involvement in instructional issues. Again, however, it is quite difficult to determine the exact nature of the school partners' involvement from the survey results alone. It is not clear whether partnerships with parents and the wider community are directly related to leadership in schools. The nature of the roles of the wider community is explored more fully in interviews. Participants report that support from the wider community tends to relate more to management and administrative aspects of leadership rather than instructional management.

Interviewees report that they access local specialised knowledge when it comes to some of the management and administrative aspects of their role such as school finances and buildings and maintenance works. Many of these relationships are cultivated informally, through liaison with parents or local volunteers. Seán reports that he receives good support and accesses expertise from voluntary associates outside of the school community. He explains " I have a good friend and he does the accounts once a

month and he spends three or four hours on a Saturday and it's voluntary and he doesn't mind doing it" (Seán, TP: 736-739). In other situations leadership support is formally constructed by purposefully placing creative and knowledgeable personnel on her school management board, however, this is not always possible according to Anna because "they don't really have the expert knowledge, you know they are all just volunteers and we are lucky to have them at all really" (Anna, TP: 128-129).

By distributing leadership across different people and organisational structures schools are in a stronger position to deal with contemporary challenges and effect continuous improvement, according to an OECD Report (2008). Leadership can be formally distributed through organised team structures, such as middle management teams in Irish contexts or more organically and informally by developing and drawing upon the expertise available in schools to address specific needs. The findings in this study would imply that the latter very much depends on a strong level of volunteerism in schools and a willingness to accept responsibilities that go beyond the fulfilment of teaching duties.

Significant challenges reported by NAPs

Many of the challenges captured in the research findings are reiterated in the open responses contained in the survey dataset. The response rate for this single survey item was 94.7 per cent of the total survey respondents and many of the single responses submitted contained multiple themes. Coding and categorising response entries revealed that the most significant recurring themes cited are:

1. the burden of responsibility

2. lack of time for carrying out duties

3. lack of support and poor resourcing

4. too much mandated change

5. poor preparation and training

6. feelings of isolation

Some new themes have emerged from this dataset which have not been included in the instrument survey scales. These include low morale, dealing with conflict, poor public opinion of schools, dealing with multiple stakeholders and principal mental health and well-being (See Figure 4.11 below).

Figure 4.11: Coded themes arising from open ended survey question
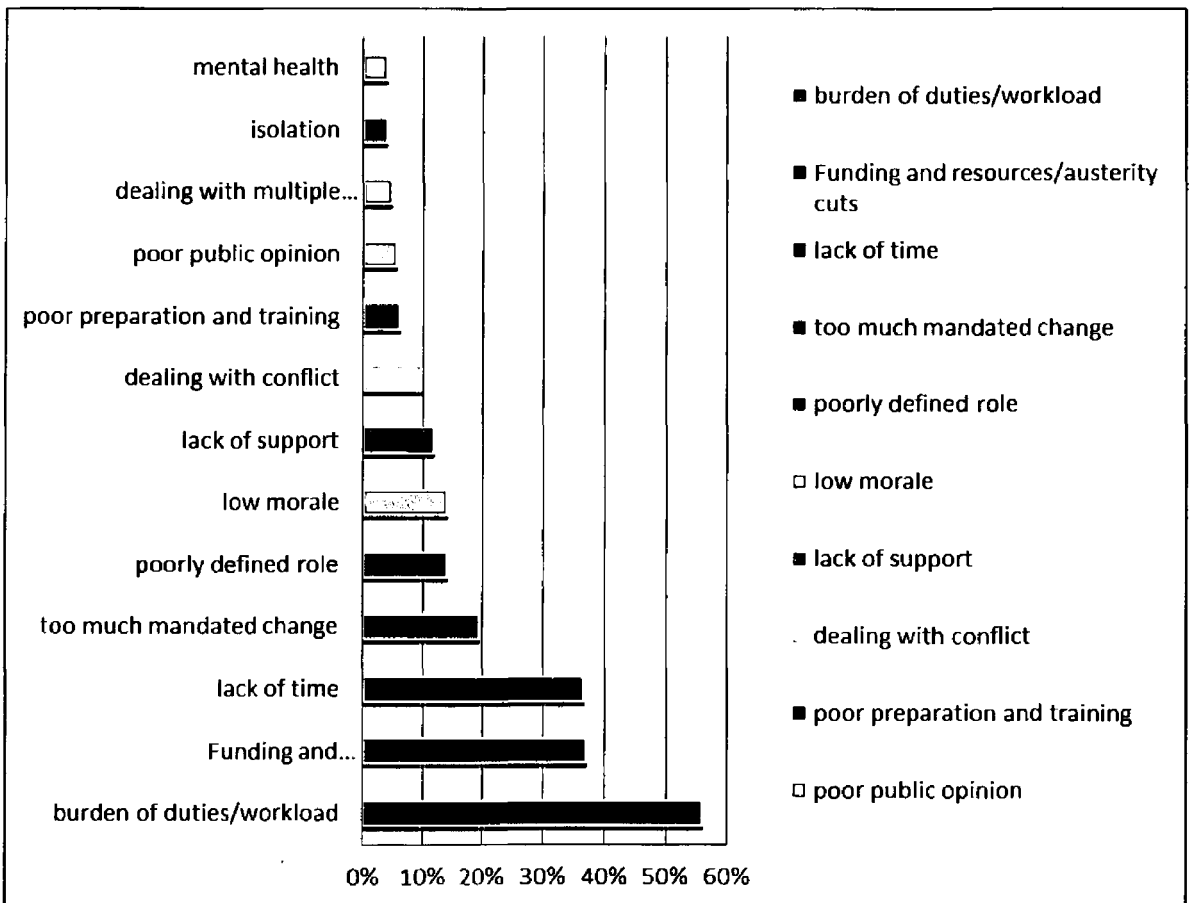
(New themes are presented in grey)

Frequency results show that the level of responsibility is the most frequently cited challenge in the open- response transcripts (56 per cent of cases). This is especially true for teaching principals:

169

> A teaching principal has an impossible task of trying to do two jobs at the one time and it becomes incredibly stressful with the busy day-to-day workload and frequent unexpected as well as ongoing challenges both inside and outside the classroom. There is not sufficient awareness of the stress involved in the role of teaching principal. (OER: 12, 1-5)

Principal well-being and mental health is a significant concern which emerged in these findings. One respondent reports that "there are far too many things to take care of and I fear that both my physical and mental health will suffer in the long term" (OER: 107). The pressure to fulfil all aspects of the role is associated with personal well-being and mental health in some reports:

> NAPs face the difficult challenges of minding their own mental health as pressures grow on the schools they lead. (OER: 27, 5)

There are many entries reflecting converging opinions relating to feelings of isolation, concerns for mental health and dealing with conflict and low morale in schools. Low morale among staff is recorded as a theme in 13.9 per cent of entries relating to challenges faced by newly appointed leaders. Nora recognises that low morale is a significant issue in her school. She claims that she feels as school principal that it is her responsibility to try to address this stating that "the morale is terrible and it is very hard to keep up the morale, I mean you are looking for any old reasons to celebrate and try to kind of keep people on the up" (Nora, AP; 963-965).

Some of the emergent themes contained in the open-ended dataset were explored in the qualitative sample phase of the study producing some insightful accounts of the challenges for principals in the context of practice. When asked about the initial period of practice as a NAP, Anna describes how the overwhelming levels of responsibility impacted upon her personally. She reports that "I would have lost about three months sleep and my friends were telling me …we can't live with you anymore and people were saying to me that I had more interest in the school than anything else" (Anna, TP:

170

145-150). Seán remarks that he finds little time for anything outside of his leadership duties and that the burden of responsibility has impacted heavily on his own personal life also. He explains that:

> I'm not planning on staying in it for too much longer and the reason is that I have never been as unhealthy in my life as I am now. I mean I am a fit person and I played a lot of sport but I practically gave up training and everything and I basically cut out my social life when I took this job because it is all consuming. (Seán: TP, 795-798)

Seán's statement vividly illustrates that the long term mental health of school leaders is an issue for concern. It is interesting to note that the emergent themes which are gleaned from the open ended response sets are directly related to the interpersonal or human aspects of the role rather than structural or procedural issues (See Figure 5.12). Low morale is linked with an "undervalued role of the teacher by the general public" (OER, 33) and high expectations from outside partners (OER, 27). Some NAPs report that resolving conflicts and fostering relationships between members of the school community places a severe burden on novice principals (OER, 72; OER, 127; OER, 163). Leadership in schools goes well beyond management of teaching and learning and administrative skills, it also requires emotional intelligence. Dealing with inter-relationships can be enormously time consuming and adopting the role of "social worker" can require a great deal more energy than the instructional and administrative aspects of the role, according to some responses (OER, 132).

Poor mental health and emotional well-being may be exacerbated by significant issues highlighted in this research relating to all three principles of the sustainable leadership framework. A positive future outlook for principals in Irish school settings does not appear to be feasible for as long as there prevails a climate of increased responsibility, decreased resources, inadequate supports, training and preparation for present and future leaders in schools. The findings in this study suggest that, at organisational level, some

171

fundamental impediments to leadership sustainability in schools are prevalent. Instructional leadership is impeded by constraints of time and logistical issues and a lack of training in new instructional methods at organisational level. There are no formal succession procedures in place to facilitate a change of leader in schools and recruitment and transition issues are compromised by limited training and preparation for newly appointed leaders. Finally, while reports confirm that collaborative practices are witnessed in schools, approaches are largely informal and dependent on volunteerism in the wake of the restrictions imposed upon the recruitment of middle management personnel in schools.

Conclusion

Throughout this study the associations between school leadership and school improvement and student learning have been explored. The sustainable leadership model is proposed as a leadership aspiration that fits with the contemporary scene of innovation and change that dominates all domains of practice presently. There are two key benefits to this approach. Firstly, career progression and professional development are integral to the promotion of individuals who are possessed of the necessary skills to lead into the future. Secondly, sustainable leadership redirects focus on learning as the central moral purpose in schools. There is no single activity that will improve organisational leadership or promote a sustainable future. This research highlights that is clear that sustainable leadership in Irish primary education is an issue that merits review.

The research journey during the course of this exploration illuminated many themes and challenges which directly impact upon the long term sustainability of school leadership in Irish primary schools. Evidence relating to the three fundamental aspects of sustainable leadership: leading learning, succession planning, and distributed leadership

172

practice will be further explored in the chapter that follows. Many additional significant challenges emerged from the data which were beyond the scope of this research study. These included:

- principal well-being and mental health

- the contrast between administrative and teaching principalships

- dealing with conflict

- dealing with multiple stakeholders.

These issues may be explored in further research relating to Irish primary school leadership.

The study represents the impact of organisational and system level constraints from the perspective of novice school leaders and the voice of the school principal in context is a core element of the research story. The views of NAPs are used as the main narrative for the discussion of findings in the chapter that follows and are underscored by the wider literature where appropriate. Data from the survey, the open-ended response set and the interview sessions are interwoven to provide a deeper understanding of some of the significant issues identified in the research findings. The specific intention is to represent the perspectives of NAPs, the experts in the field, in recognition of the fact that primary principals in Ireland are under-represented in the leadership literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

As noted in chapter two, school principals play a central role in school improvement and development (Ali, 2007; Bottoms *et al.* 2003; Fullan, 2002; McCarthy *et al.* 2011)

and so this exploration of school leadership as it pertains to newly appointed school principals aims to make a contribution to educational leadership theory in the Irish context. This research focusses on the perspectives of novice school principals and the findings are not intended to be representative of other partners in primary education. The research presented and discussed here draws upon the sustainable leadership theory proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006), which is adopted and accepted as a good fit for exploring school leadership in the contemporary Irish education field. In the absence of a wide base of literature specific to Irish primary school leadership, many of the reports and studies carried out by the IPPN are referenced throughout the research study. The IPPN, as the representative body for primary school principals may be viewed as, advocate of a subjective view of school leadership. However, the substantive work of the IPPN in highlighting issues affecting school principals aligns with many arguments advanced in this research study.

The findings may be of interest to a number of organisations involved in school leadership including: the DES, IPPN, LDS, CPSMA, INTO and university based leadership programmes. This research is relevant also to both aspiring and serving school principals and to principal recruitment boards at organisational level across the primary school sector.

The fact that a highly significant number of NAPs (79.8 per cent) responded at the time that this study was carried out is noteworthy. The evidence collated and discussed confirms that this population sub-group feel overworked and overburdened by the extremely challenging demands of their new roles, and yet many have given generously of their time to this exploration of school leadership. The integrated datasets illuminate a consensus story of leadership constraints and professional isolation spotlighting an urgent need for recognition, support and guidance for school leaders in Ireland. It can

be concluded from the findings that leadership in primary education cannot be sustained in the long term if the challenges that are highlighted by the NAPs participants continue to endure within the education system. Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the significant findings discussed in this chapter.

Figure 5.1: Sustainable leadership from the perspectives of NAPs in primary schools

Do present structures and practices in Irish primary education support sustainable leadership?

Sustainable leadership themes	Key Sub-themes
Sustainable leadership in context	• Culture of change and reform ◦ Rushed agendas for reform ◦ Connecting policy with practice ◦ Knowledge, training and development ◦ Economic Austerity ◦ Diminished resourcing in schools
Instructional leadership	◦ The principal as leader of learning ◦ Whole school approach to leading learning ◦ Leadership planning
Succession Planning	◦ Leadership Motivation ◦ Perceptions of the role ◦ Well-being and professional isolation ◦ Pathways to leadership ◦ Remuneration and leadership ◦ Recruitment ◦ Leadership preparation and training ◦ Leadership qualification requirements ◦ Developing leadership experience ◦ Transition from teacher to principal ◦ Leadership turnover procedures ◦ Leadership transition programmes ◦ Leadership handovers at organisational level
Distributed leadership	◦ Development of leadership capacity through CPD ◦ Promoting collaborative practices ◦ Organisational constraints ◦ Support from outside agencies

Sustainable leadership in context

The responsibilities accepted by school principals are considerable and in most recent decades expectations have increased as the role has intensified (IPPN, 2014; Morgan

and Sugrue, 2008). Principals may be policy brokers, negotiators, administrators, managers, confidantes, financiers, care-takers, instructional experts, support workers, researchers, lead learners, team builders and recruitment agents. Principals offer advice and support at practice level to many partners in education. However, the evidence captured in this research study confirms that principals themselves have limited avenues available to them when it comes to seeking advice and support in their own work. Developing an understanding of the leadership portfolio in Irish primary education grounded in an era of innovation, change and reform has become an urgent challenge for two reasons. First, education viewed as the pathway to a better future is a widely accepted platitude. The Strategic Policy Requirements for Entreprise and Development posit that "the Irish education system will be under intense pressure to further improve educational outcomes to support increased living standards into the future" (2009, p. 6). Second, according to the Department of Expenditure and Reform (2011) managing public finances and safeguarding a sustainable economic future depends on the capabilities and skills of leaders in all public sector fields, including education.

Climate of educational reform

Change is an ever present feature in schools and is integrally linked with sustainable leadership because "change is based on the belief that schools will contribute directly to the next generation of learners as they face and master the challenges of the future" (NCCA; 2010, p. 7). The evidence drawn from the research findings illuminates some significant issues which are in contrast with the visions of gradual and measured reform associated with sustained improvement. In Irish primary education at present there is a pervasive change culture (Anderson *et al.* 2011) and a vivid sense of "change overload" is reported in this research (OER: 2; 15; 21; 22; 26; 27; 32; 33; 37; 41; 43; 49; 62; 67; 81; 82; 93; 100; 114; 117; 120;122; 123; 135; 138; 140; 152; 154). Educators, who are at the helm in terms of leading learning at organisational level, feel increasingly

177

constrained by the mandated prescriptions of policymakers and the DES who "seem to be tying your shoelaces together and then asking you to run a fair race" (Donal, TP: 505-506). The prolific change era is continuing to impact upon teaching and learning at practice level in schools is outlined by NAP respondents who attest that "the management of the change agenda is absorbing too much time and energy" (OER, 27: 2) and "there are so many new circulars and so much change in the last two years alone, that it is difficult to find time to keep up" (OER, 41: 1-3). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) warn that too much change means that "learning hasn't gotten much better, it's just gotten faster" (2006, p. 47) because grand goals are translated into short-term targets.

Change overload in schools

It is argued, based on the findings from this research study that too much change has led to only superficial changes in schools, as mandates have been given little or no time to incubate before the next reform has been mainstreamed. This notion is supported by respondents who feel that "school communities are coping poorly with change" (OER: 117) and "there is no capacity remaining in the system to accommodate effective changes" (OER, 27: 3-4). The findings support the contention that principals are severely limited in their scope to broker change and improvement in their organisations. One participant outlines his frustration at the pace of change in primary education noting that "some of the expectations are still a foreign language and there is simply nowhere to go to access easy information ... it is left to the individual themselves" (Donal, TP: 404-405). As a result of weighty reform mandates which have been issued concurrently in schools in the past five years, NAPs feel that organisations are simply "going through the motions" of change (Patrick, TP: 375) because "it is impossible to keep current with all the changes that have come on-stream" (OER, 2: 1). The level of documentation and administration involved in policy implementation is also a source of

frustration for NAPs (OER: 2, 11, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 32, 33, 37, 44, 56, 65, 77, 82, 110, 114, 120, 122, 123, 129, 135, 136, 140, 147, 149, 150, 154, 159) and perceived as "a recipe for total burn-out when added to existing workloads" (OER: 122).

Sustainability is about change and growth. In the present Irish context, however, the levels of change and reform are significant barriers to changes that are likely to sustain in the long term. The results confirm that 59.6 per cent of NAPs agree that changes are designed to bring about immediate results as opposed to embedding improvements over time. One respondent states the case by simply noting that "there are too many initiatives and not enough time" (OER, 22: 1). As noted in the review of the literature, pervasive change cultures have caused grand scale disorientation in schools and have seen school reform "plummet to the depths of unsustainability" across western school systems (Hargreaves and Fink, 2001, p.19). Yet educational organisations in the contexts explored in this research study continue to be saturated with policy reforms and change agendas which ultimately can lead to reform "paralysis" (Donal: TP, 404).

The research findings suggest that for improvement initiatives to be sustained in the long term supports need to be provided for implementing and embedding authentic change and improvement. Fewer initiatives may lead to more embedded and sustained improvements. It is observed by the OECD (2002) that it takes at least ten years for a policy cycle to reach completion as an authentically embedded practice. Perhaps the rate of reform proposed by government departments should be challenged at a political level, as policies are prescribed by successive governments and the cycle of government is often shorter than the policy cycle identified by the OECD.

Connecting policies with practices

Policy reform is still viewed as a "one size fits all" model of change (Joe, AP: 560). School leaders and school community members are frustrated by the failure to regard the specific needs of the school as a priority in terms of change and improvement. The deliberate focus on fixed agendas by policymakers is highlighted by participants who claim that the drive to implement and document policy reforms detracts from "more urgent things that need addressing other than Department policies" (Seán, TP: 497-498). Improvement is linked with reform. However, relentless policy reform will not necessarily lead to greater improvement. In fact the converse may be true. Certainly in schools the relentless press of policy reform is a source of frustration and it is observed that "changes are often ill-conceived knee jerk responses to the individual needs of the current minister" (OER, 27: 4). Such comments reaffirm the notion that there is a disconnection between policy and practice, an issue which further adds to the complexity of leadership in schools. Policy is perceived to be more about wider political and ministerial agendas than the needs of individual schools. There is a need for more cohesion between policy and practice. Communication and implementation of policy reform can be improved only if professionals in schools believe that prescriptions for change are realistic and attainable. Leaders in school communities should be trusted enablers of change and reform which is contextually focussed and based on specific learning needs.

School planning for change should encompass a vision that is projected over time and with sufficient professional development to create school wide knowledge for informed action. The rate of reform needs to accommodate incubation, reflection, review and renewal of practice in schools. 'Slow knowing' according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006) is what cultivates a sustainable future in our schools. The reform lesson is being learned and relearned in educational jurisdictions the world over, with numerous

authors reporting the detrimental effects of change overload which cause debilitating constraints in over stretched education systems (Hamilton, 2003; Thomas, 2004; DiPaola, 2003; Leithwood, 2007). Continuous reform coupled with increased workload and administration are promoting conditions in schools where sustained improvements and achievements are difficult to consolidate.

Renewing knowledge through development training

Policy is informed by research. However, the findings here suggest that there is limited knowledge of research in education among practitioners who are the policy implementers. The findings demonstrate that the use of research to inform practice is not a prevalent feature across school contexts. NAPs confirm that research is frequently used to inform school based decision making in only 26.2 per cent of the contexts surveyed. It is clear that the educators at organisational level require greater access to knowledge bases relating to policy reforms. Research expertise in schools, according to the findings, depends on the capacity and motivation of school members "to sit down to try to find out how to become an expert" (Seán, TP: 486-487). CPD is an essential element of the process of reform, yet lack of training and guidance are highlighted by NAPs as significant barriers to authentic reform (OER: 26; 113; 140; 144). It is reported that constant change agendas with limited training and development leads to "disgruntled staff members" (OER, 81) who see little scope for improvements under the constraints of "time, work overload and meagre resources" (OER, 116: 1).

Improved access to research information and increased capacity through training should be key features of professional development directed at school improvement and reform. Professional development requires a significant investment of funding, which is a scarce commodity in the Irish education system at present. Instructional and leadership development, however, can be promoted in schools in ways that are cost

effective and stimulating for practitioners who are directly engaged in context based learning and reform. Grounding research in practice using teachers, who are regarded as natural researchers (Alexander, 2005; Day, 1997), is a practical approach for the promotion of authentic improvements in schools. An action research approach involving information gathering, analysis and reflection, planning, implementation and evaluation of learning is an embedded component of education practice in other jurisdictions such as Japan, the UK and US (McAteer, 2013; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). Educators who are immersed in the specific teaching contexts have privileged access to real-life data. The promotion of site-based research may be a good access point for addressing the "massive disconnect" between policy and practice reported in this research (Seán, TP: 568-569). It may also promote more involvement in change and reform at organisational level by cultivating practice experts as enablers of learning and improvement.

Economic Austerity in Ireland

The hunger for educational change has been heightened by financial constraints in Ireland which have focussed attention on regaining economic sovereignty in the wake of a dramatic economic recession in the past decade. According to the Education Minister Ruairí Quinn in 2012, the foundations of recovery should be reconstructed upon a "vibrant, dynamic and creative education system" since in times of uncertainty "a sound education is the bedrock on which to secure our children's future" (2012, p. 2-3). In his article, the Minister outlines a clear association between education and economic recovery and highlights that new initiatives for improvement need to be implemented in a standardised way. The Minister's vision of a hopeful future driven by education echoes sustainability advocates who argue that our future society is to be found incubating in our schools (Dahlberg & Petrie, 2002; Kohn, 2008). This vision, however,

is unrealistically hopeful as the same article proposes that "we must renew our education system at a time of constraints on resources" (2012, p. 3). Securing a hopeful future according to sustainability theory is not possible in conditions where resources seem to be diminished or exhausted (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003).

Resourcing in schools

Sustainable development generally becomes a key priority in times of crisis, according to Parker (2014). Environmental sustainability became a key priority in the 1980s in response to a global economic crisis and the rapid depletion of natural resources. Ideally, sustainable development should aim to pre-empt and prevent crises rather than emerge in response to them. The perceptions of NAPs in this research would indicate that schools are already in crisis because the key resources in schools such as time, money and people, are becoming steadily exhausted. Without sufficient resources schools become reduced to "doing the emotional management work of a system in crisis" (Blackmore, 1999, p. 2). The paradox of increased growth with decreased investment is not lost on school leaders as evidenced in the words of one respondent who states that "it is very difficult to achieve the ideals of a world class school if there is neither funding nor respect for those who are supposed to achieve it" (OER, 52: 4-5). Lack of funding and investment is a prevalent theme in the research findings with 86 per cent of NAPs reporting that their organisations are under-resourced. Under enduring conditions of austerity which have had a tangible impact at organisational level, a sustainable educational future is an extremely unlikely prospect. It is simply unrealistic to expect that the education system is the bedrock of the future if "there are no resources to carry out an ever increasing workload" (OER, 45: 1).

In conditions of heightened constraints education cannot be an enabler of change. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2003) some of the negative effects of poor resourcing in schools include professional burn-out, low morale, early retirements and high leadership turnovers. That principals struggle to deal with the weight of their diverse roles in schools is reflected in the findings, as NAPs report feeling isolated (OER: 7, 8, 25, 45, 57) and overburdened (OER: 10, 12, 13, 17, 23, 24, 28, 45, 49, 55, 63, 77, 78, 88, 89, 110, 112, 114, 119, 149) and also that they lack guidance when it comes to directing change and improvement (OER: 14, 41, 45, 65, 66, 94, 103, 110, 113, 118, 130, 144, 156, 160, 163, 165). The pressures placed on the most readily accessible resource, people, may be too great to secure sustainable development. This is especially felt by NAPs in this study who report that pay cuts and increased workloads are weighing heavily on morale in schools (OER: 9, 114, 119, 133) and "the motivation of the staff can be a challenge in the current climate" (OER, 81: 1).

The key to improvement is the ability to put resources to good use. In challenging times strong leadership is essential. According to City (2010), the basic resources available to leaders in schools are people, time and money. In the Irish primary school setting at present, where funding is being diminished it would seem that human capital is the most accessible resource. However, NAPs perceive that increased administration and planning are deflecting focus away from the day to day learning that goes on in schools. This is noted by one respondent who remarks:

> How lovely to have a day when I could fulfil my role as principal: leading the teaching and learning in the school without being pulled in different directions by outside agencies whose action plans only read 'the school will'. (OER, 27: 6-8)

The findings show that NAPs perceive that the increased demands of administration and management results in limited time and opportunity to engage in instructional

leadership (OER: 38). This is a source of frustration for principals who are struggling to keep pace with "an overwhelming workload....much of which has nothing to do with teaching and learning" (OER, 10: 1-2). Leading learning is recognised by participants as an important but challenging aspect of the role of school principal for multiple reasons, which are discussed in more detail in the section that follows.

Principle 1: Instructional leadership practices

Although principals may take the lead, instructional leadership is very much a shared responsibility in schools, according to Knapp, Copland & Talbert (2003). The OECD highlight instructional leadership in Irish schools as an issue for review stating that "an emerging concern in recent years is the extent to which opportunities are available to principals to play a significant role in leading learning" (2008, p. 40). The issues and challenges reported in this study capture the human aspects of the job. Schools are complex social organisations and dealing with multiple conflicting and converging factors on a daily basis constructs a role for school leaders which is enormously complex and changeable. Principals need to be flexible in dealing with the many aspects of the role and adequately supported as instructional leaders. At present, the vast menu of responsibility and time poverty, cited as significant themes among NAPs in the research findings, results in principals "not being able to actually lead learning" (OER: 136). The findings suggest that novice principals who are dealing with such a broad range of duties and wide diversity of people, feel overwhelmed by the unique challenges of leadership.

The principal as leader of learning

Formal instructional leadership practices include activities such as using assessment to inform change, accessing research relating to learning and teaching, evaluating the curriculum and reviewing instructional materials. The results confirm that the position

of principals as 'leaders of learning' in schools is compromised by organisational structures which inhibit their capacity to directly engage with learning and instruction. Irreducible administrative tasks are enormously time-consuming and "result in inadequate time for principals to engage with evaluation of teaching and learning during the school day" (OER, 59:2-3). As reported earlier, this view is strongly supported in the research findings with only 8.3 per cent of NAPs stating that they regularly observe the teaching that goes on in their schools. Also in only 11 per cent of cases regular evaluation of teaching practice by the school principal is a prominent practice.

Though NAPs perceive that lack of time and resources are significant factors when it comes to engaging in aspects of instructional leadership, another likely factor which may influence instructional leadership is the willingness of NAPs to engage in such practices on a regular basis. For some NAPs the idea of leading learning is a key priority for some NAPs according to the findings (OER: 5; 10; 27; 38; 65; 125; 136; 153; 157), however, leading learning does not take precedence when it comes to exercising the day to day duties of the role as noted by one respondent who states that "I find that my day to day management gets in the way of leading the learning" (OER, 38:1). Others agree that the day to day management of the school takes precedence over leading learning in practice (OER: 65; 125; 136; 145).

Reflecting upon and reviewing assessment data, evaluating research and indeed sharing instructional practices in a formal structured forum are practices which must be facilitated outside of instructional teaching times. The findings show that regular evaluation of the school curriculum is a prevalent practice in only 33.8 per cent of the contexts researched. The practice of reviewing and revising of instructional materials is regularly carried out in only 29.7 per cent of cases and only 26.2 per cent of NAPs

surveyed report that they would use research to inform teaching and learning in their schools (26.2 per cent).

This study reports a significant statistical relationship between the type of principal post and the feeling that constraints of time impede leadership capacity (p = .000)[32]. Teaching principals by necessity are engaged in full time instruction in their own classrooms. For teaching principals who are committed to instruction in their own classrooms, and often in multi-grade settings, there is strong agreement that there is inadequate time to carry out collaborative instructional leadership (77.6 per cent). The perception that time impedes instructional leadership for teaching principals is significantly higher than for administrative principals (21. 5 per cent). The lack of release time for collaboration relating to school wide instruction is problematic (OER: 20; 35; 61; 85). According to teaching principals in reference to instructional leadership "release days just are not enough and they are spent mostly on policies like numeracy and literacy" (Anna: TP, 269-271). There seems to be a perception among NAPs, as suggested in Anna's comments above and in open-ended responses (OER: 10; 27; 38), that time spent on policy initiatives is not viewed as instructional leadership. Yet the most recent policy mandates relating to numeracy and literacy development are very much linked to instruction and learning. It is interesting to note that policy implementation and new initiatives are linked with administrative duties, "record keeping" (OER, 67:2) and "paperwork" (OER, 56:1) rather than with leading learning by some respondents. In fact, the challenge to change and reform is noted as an impediment to leading learning by some NAPs (OER: 20; 67; 135; 148).

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[32] The significance of p=.000 is presented in Appendix 9

It is reported by less than a third (32.4 per cent) of NAPs, that assessment data is used to monitor school wide progress. This figure is quite low despite recent DES initiatives promoting literacy and numeracy which are supported by a schools capacity to self-evaluate. The mandated drive for school self-evaluation is proffered as a "collaborative, reflective process of internal school review" providing teachers with "a means of systematically looking at how they teach and how pupils learn and helps schools and teachers to improve outcomes for learners" (DES, 2012, Circular 0039/12, Section 2). In the wake of an intensive policy drive aimed at improving numeracy and literacy in schools it is disappointing to note that many of the aspects of instructional leadership associated with this initiative are not prevalent in schools. This reinforces the earlier argument that too much change leads to implementation failure at organizational level.

Engels *et al.* (2008) acknowledge that the increasing complexity of principals' roles in recent decades reduces the capacity to lead learning in schools. Severe workloads have resulted in principals feeling that they lack the capacity to motivate teachers to learn and optimise their practice. The most significant challenges reported by NAPs according to the research findings are work overload and lack of time (See Figure 5.12). The burdens of responsibility for principals and the demands of instruction for teachers mean that "it is very hard to get the time to lead learning" (OER, 121: 1). Every moment of the school day is dedicated to full time instruction which means that for teachers and teaching principals all other duties are addressed outside of school hours. The list of additional duties which are essential to the day-to day running of a school is extensive and includes school planning, policy implementation, collaboration, evaluation, special educational needs applications, grant applications, time-tabling, assessment, CPD, administration, financial management, maintenance and school works, management meetings, parent meetings, extra-curricular activities and projects.

The introduction of the *Croke Park* and *Haddington Road Agreement* (Circulars 0025/2011, 0055/2014) introducing extended working hours and loss of allowances in schools have resulted in some resentment in schools, according to Nora, Seán and Joe. They report that teachers feel that mandating an additional 36 hours per annum for voluntary planning shows a lack of acknowledgment for the work that is already carried out in schools. The frustration felt at school level is captured in the following response:

> Teachers are already doing an enormous amount of work outside school with school planning, correction of work, orienteering, GAA, quizzes, music competitions, attendance of ceremonies for sacraments and all this is in addition to the Croke Park Agreement. This work they undertake in their own time and it is not acknowledged. (OER, 119: 4-7)

The promotion of leadership talents in teachers from the earliest career stages may nourish green zones of growth from which future leaders are cultivated. This growth is nurtured in schools where more collaborative leadership approaches are embedded, and learning is valued at all levels and by all members of the school community

Whole school approach to leading learning

Effective collaboration as argued in chapter two, begins with a mutually accepted shared vision for best practice which focusses centrally on learning as the moral obligation of all involved in education. Principals report that collaborative practice is greatly inhibited in schools because of the frenetic nature of the school day and the burden of responsibility associated with classroom instruction. Participants confirm that collaboration and sharing of practice can only occur outside instruction time. The creation and review of a shared long term vision in schools, a central component of instructional leadership practice (Fullan, 2002; Metabru, 1998), is reported as prevalent practice 26.2 per cent of respondents in the findings. The result is that while positive learning cultures are observed in schools (65.6 per cent of cases) collaborative practices

are not systematically embedded and fail to impact upon teaching and learning because "it is all on a very informal level" (Seán, TP: 462).

Principals feel that it is their responsibility to create opportunities in schools for collaborative practice and that the staff are happy to "go along" with what principals suggest (Anna, TP: 185). Principals, however, feel reluctant to place added pressure on teachers, post holders and senior management to accept duties which add to their already burdensome teaching responsibilities. Nora explains that "teachers do their job and outside of that there is no time for anything else really" (Nora, AP: 944). The interview participants' perceptions relating to collaborative practices tended to focus mainly on the practices of the teaching members of their school community. It may also be the case that principals themselves may not value collaborative practices above individual teaching and instruction in schools. For collaborative practice to work, it must be an in-built mechanism for improvement in schools and formal structures should be put in place to accommodate authentic sharing of knowledge and practice directed at learning (Barth, 1990; Brownwell *et al.*, 2006).The difficulties experienced in schools committed to developing collaborative practice are not easy to negotiate. Collaboration is viewed in schools as a surplus activity rather than an essential element of the role of teacher as noted by Donal who states that:

> I feel that I cannot ask teachers to be spending more time collaborating and documenting if I genuinely feel as I do, that it will take away from their teaching or add too much to their work plate and cause resentment which would be of no benefit. (Donal TP: 529-533)

As discussed in the literature, teachers are best placed to review and renew their own practices. However, those who are fully committed to teaching and instruction are also the most time impoverished members of the school community. The added responsibilities associated with widely distributed instructional leadership are difficult

to negotiate in the present climate where increased expectation is coupled with poor acknowledgement and affirmation of good practice. Low morale among teaching staffs in schools is a recurring theme in the findings and is linked to pay cuts (OER: 16; 18; 24; 28; 41; 43; 44; 45; 47; 48; 51; 52; 68; 86; 106; 114; 119; 123; 133; 134), increased workloads (OER:10; 17; 23; 24; 28; 45; 49; 63; 70; 77; 89; 107; 110; 119; 122; 149) and lack of opportunity for promotions (OER: 43; 48; 51; 79; 85; 87; 119; 145). There is no doubt that if authentic shared practice is to gain a foothold in our schools, instructional leadership will need to be acknowledged and prioritised on some formal level and given adequate time and space to embed as accepted practice. Instructional leadership practice if it occurs at all at present, according to the findings, is more incidental than concerted.

The idea of instructional leadership coupled with a sustainable leadership perspective accepts that principals are positioned as wardens of change and innovation and as leaders of learning. These leaders, however, cannot be sustained unless they have been adequately primed for the "reality shock" of new leadership practice faced by novice leaders (Spillane and Lee, 2014, p. 434). Long-term leadership planning is a critical element of sustainable leadership in conditions where principals are buoyed by leadership teams. More formal systems of shared leadership and collaborative approaches to learning which includes development and training may elevate leadership as a prioritised feature of practice at multiple levels within a school.

According to Engels *et al.* (2008), the development and cultivation of leadership talents as an explicit feature of instructional practice is likely to motivate teachers to learn and optimise their own practice, as well as supporting the school principal as leader of learning. An exploration of the structures that promote future leaders in schools is essential to sustainable leadership. Leadership succession planning, according to

Fullan, involves the development of "professional capital" by employing "the sum of practice and expertise" within a group as part of a framework for leading learning in schools (2014, p. 67). Succession planning cultivates leadership talent and embeds cultures in schools where principals and teachers work together as a group learning from and with each other. In Irish schools, however, there are no formal structures in place to accommodate leadership succession planning. This issue is explored more fully in the following section of this chapter.

Principle 2: Succession planning procedures and practices

The research findings concur with Fink's summation that "there is no more neglected topic in research, policy or practice" than succession planning in schools (2002, p. 7). It is emphatically confirmed by NAPs that succession planning does not feature in their practice contexts as a mechanism for developing leadership potential or facilitating leadership turnover in primary schools. The findings show that 81.1 per cent of respondents indicate that they are unaware of any formal succession plan in their organisations. Interviewees confirm this finding with a full consensus among participants that "there is no such thing" as leadership succession protocol in their schools (Seán: TP, 190).

Fink and Brayman (2006) argue that the appointment and retention of new and capable principals is emerging from the evidence as one of the most important strategies for turning around failing schools in the United States. The construct of failing schools does not exist in the Irish context, however, this does not negate the importance of succession planning as an issue that clearly impacts upon school effectiveness in the long term. Addressing leadership agency in education involves inquiry into pre and post leadership involvement, including: leadership motivation and recruitment; preparation and training; teacher to leader transitions and practice based leadership guidance and

support (Fink, 2010). These key aspects of leadership development are discussed using data linked with the succession planning tenet of sustainable leadership.

Leadership motivation

The development of leadership succession procedures in schools begins with the identification of potential leadership candidates who are motivated to lead. Emergent leaders should be nurtured and developed so that a steady flow of capable leadership candidates may be channelled to lead schools long into the future (Fink, 2010; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Mendels, 2012). Investigating leadership motivation among the research sample in this study provides some insights relating to factors which may contribute to leadership reluctance which is documented in Irish primary education (Anderson *et al.* 2011; IPPN, 2006).

Fullan (2005) presents the obvious argument that highly motivated leadership candidates tend to be happier and more productive in their roles. Reflecting on their own motivations for assuming leadership roles, a high proportion of respondents (81.5 per cent) reported that they possessed a strong personal belief in their own potential as leaders. Intrinsically motivated goals are self-determined behaviours or goals that are sought for personal reward (Lepper, Iyengar & Henderlong Corpus, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation according to Ryan and Deci (2000) results in high quality learning and achievement and self-satisfaction because it is linked with free choice. Self-motivation is a significant factor in pursuing the role of principal, according to the findings here and intrinsic values such as the desire to initiate change; the desire to make a difference to society; the desire to share knowledge and the desire to instigate improvement, were all cited as key factors which motivated NAPs to pursue a principalship (See Figure 4.8, p136).

Intrinsic rewards, however, are not sufficient to ensure a steady pipeline of capable leaders, as incentives such as financial rewards are linked to how individuals believe they are valued by an organisation according to Kroth (2007). The literature links leadership reluctance in education both nationally and internationally to three key factors. These are perceptions associated with the role, increased workloads, and low salary or poor remuneration (Cheung & Walker, 2006; Fuller & Young, 2009; Stevenson, 2006; Sugrue, 2003). Professional isolation, personal well-being and loneliness are captured as themes relating to novice school leadership in the wider literature also (Hobson *et al.* 2003). A strong theme which is captured in the findings is the lack of mobility associated with the role of principal in Irish primary school settings. The issues of role perceptions, principal well-being and professional isolation, career mobility, and remuneration are highlighted as potential barriers for aspirant leaders or leadership reluctance factors in the context of this research study.

Perceptions of the role of school principal

The pace of reform in Irish education has undoubtedly had profound effects on how professional practices have evolved in schools in recent decades. The role of school principal has intensified yet principals are still perceived as the lead authority in schools, as noted by one participant who explains that:

> the book really does stop with you for everything because you are the steward of this whole magical thing called a school and you're the one ultimately who has to make things happen and if it doesn't you're the only one to blame. (Nora, AP: 969-970)

Fullan remarks that "ad hoc or fragmented strategies turn a principal's job into one of keeping too many batons or chainsaws in the air, endlessly juggling ill-shaped, ill-timed, and uncoordinated policies" (2014, p. 37). Leadership responsibility directed at school learning and improvement is the responsibility of all school partners. Initiatives can feasibly be brokered by a team of leaders rather than perpetuated as the ultimate

responsibility of a single figurehead leader in schools. The development of leadership potential in schools is a logical access point for engaging school wide leaders as agents of change. Principals who are more ably supported in schools through a community approach to leading may feel less isolated in their roles.

Well-being and professional isolation

Although contemporary conceptualizations of school leadership move away from the principalship as an heroic or gallant position (Moller & Pankake, 2013), the findings confirm that principals are still "dealing with the isolation and loneliness of the position" (OER, 94, 1). The consensus is that while principals can direct others to support them in their roles they nevertheless occupy isolated spaces in organisations by virtue of their status as positional leader. The pressure to live up to the position and the sense of isolation felt by principals is framed in the following response:

> I feel a real sense of isolation when it comes to decision making. There's an assumption that the principals will know everything, when in fact they may not. And there are difficulties with staff who have high expectations of a principal that may not be delivered. (OER, 8, 20-4)

The position is compounded by the pressures associated with assuming the mantle of the expert at all times. The enduring analogy of the principal as hero "tends to package superior judgement and knowledge with superior authority and power" (Donaldson, 2007, p. 26) and reinforces the idea that leadership is reserved as the ultimate responsibility of the figurehead leader. Teachers are happy to oblige but "they are never going to take the lead and do something by themselves" (Anna, TP: 190-191).

The research findings suggest that the structures that are prevailing in Irish schools continue to consolidate the role of school principal as a solitary position and principal well-being is captured as a significant theme in the survey data (See Figure 5.12). Effective leaders can no longer be expected to operate independently of others in a professional community of practice (Wenger, 2010). It is not enough to expect that the

principalship may be redefined as a broader construct which places leading learning as the central moral prerogative, if the role of the teacher is not likewise redefined to include leadership responsibilities in support of the principal. Principals who are not supported in their leadership roles may not be able to find the space, time and energy to engage with the teaching and learning that goes on in their schools.

Pathways to leadership

The findings here support the view that lack of mobility with regard to the principalship is a major weakness in the Irish system. Principalship is regarded as a career cul-de-sac because in Ireland, unlike other jurisdictions, principalship is an indefinite contract and mobility across contexts is unlikely (IPPN, 2014). There is limited scope in the Irish school system to facilitate a school leader who wishes to step down as principal (OECD, 2008; IPPN, 2014). Principals who return to teaching must accept the most junior teaching position in a school regardless of their leadership experience or service history. The term "principal for life" is a practice reality in Ireland according to the IPPN (2014, p. 8) and an issue that is reported in the research findings. Nora explains that the decision to become a school principal is accepted as a life-long tenure. She states that "if you were a principal and you discover this is not for me then you have nowhere to go" (Nora, AP: 981-983). Joe remarks that principals do not step down because the decision to return to teaching is perceived as an admission of failure and as a result principals are "indelibly marked" by such decisions (Joe, AP: 702).

The OECD highlight that the difficulties filling positions for the role of school principal in Ireland are particularly notable in small rural schools "perceived to be in difficult situations or with little or no status attached" (2008, p. 46). There is as yet no research in Ireland outlining leadership motivation across types of principal post. However, evidence drawn from this study would support the idea that the teaching principalship is

viewed as a different prospect by aspiring leaders to that of administrative principal. Anna acknowledges that she understood that the role of teaching principal "was not a good prospect" (Anna: TP, 261) but she felt that as deputy principal she was given no choice but the "act up" (Anna: TP, 58) because of a lack of applicants for the job in her school. Interviewees report that many regard a teaching principalship as a temporary post, or a "stepping stone" (Seán, TP: 357) which leads to the ultimate goal of successfully securing a position as administrative principal described as the "Holy Land" (Patrick, TP: 646). The survey results confirm that over half (53.6 per cent) of the teaching principals included in the study intend to pursue administrative positions at some stage in the future. "Stepping stone" career pathways are confirmed in the literature relating to principal mobility across contexts, in spite of a perceived lack of mobility reported in the findings of this study (Beteille *et al.* 2012, p. 905).

It is interesting to note that the deputy principalship which should be regarded as a port along "the leadership journey" (IPPN, 2007, p. ix) is viewed as a position which holds more permanency than a teaching principalship. A recurring theme highlighted by NAP participants in the research is that DPs who occupy senior leadership positions are reluctant to pursue the role of school principal. It would seem that senior leaders are not being developed in schools as future leaders and in some cases actively avoid the position. This point is emphasized by Joe who notes that DPs are reluctant to develop themselves as leaders "for fear of being coerced into going for the principalship at some stage" (Joe, AP: 301-304). A report by the IPPN (2007) suggests that a lack of meaningful professional development for deputy principals, a loosely defined leadership role and lack of acknowledgement and affirmation of the work of senior leaders in schools, has contributed to an increased reduction of the number of DPs pursuing the role of principal. DPs need to be promoted and developed as visible leaders in schools

and should be awarded opportunities to develop their talents in ways that will encourage them to pursue the role of principal in the future.

Financial rewards and remuneration

The issue of remuneration of senior leadership roles in primary education has been highlighted in recent years as a possible contributory factor influencing leadership reluctance (OECD, 2008; IPPN, 2014). Evidence from the survey findings strongly supports the contention that the principalship is not viewed by NAPs as financially attractive with 93.3 per cent agreement that the role is not adequately remunerated. A "flawed" salary structure for Irish principals is a serious issue according to the IPPN (2006, p. iv). There is no separate salary scale for deputy principals or principals in the Irish education system. Principals', deputy principals' and post-holders' allowances are added to existing teaching salaries. The allowance for school principals is arranged in accordance to school size, which means that teaching principals receive smaller allowances than administrative principals in larger schools.

Financial reward is evidenced as the least likely motivational factor by respondents in the survey dataset. Interviewees report that the salary scale does not reflect the level of responsibility or long working hours associated with the role. Teaching principals in particular are dissatisfied with the financial incentives associated with their roles. Teaching principals report that their salary scale is not much greater than that of a long serving teacher and that the difference in allowance between deputy principal and teaching principal is marginal. Some participants remark that deputy principals do not desire the position of principal "because there is absolutely no comparison between the duties and the salary for both jobs" (Claire, TP: 326) and deputy principals perceive that "for the extra bit of money [she] would get for being principal as opposed to deputy principal it wouldn't be worth [her] while doing the extra work" (Patrick, TP: 613-614).

Poor remuneration for senior positions in schools makes the role less competitive by comparison to similar grades in other public sector organisations, according to the OECD (2008). The IPPN (2014) recommends restructuring remuneration for principals and deputies along separate salary scales. It seems unlikely that the position of principal will be sought by high quality candidates for as long as it is perceived to be inadequately remunerated. Leadership remuneration is an issue which should no longer be ignored in education since educational improvement is linked with highly motivated and incentivised leaders (Fullan, 2014).

Leadership recruitment

Lashway (2007) argues that in order to promote success in schools leaders must exert influence on others to employ their leadership talents and to pursue shared goals within the specific context of their organisations. The participants in this research recognise that they have an active role to play in the promotion of future leaders in their schools and most indicate that they encourage their staff members to develop their leadership talents. Results also confirm that NAPs were actively encouraged and in some cases recruited by principals during the course of their teaching careers.

The research findings demonstrate that the potential for succession management exists in our schools. Findings confirm that future leaders identify themselves with the role early on in their teaching careers and that leadership potential is being developed informally primarily by serving principals who recognise and harness this potential in teachers. For the most part, however, there are no formal succession plans in place in the contexts researched in this study. The promotion and identification of future principal candidates in schools seems to be occurring on a largely informal level in the absence of early career leadership development (Roza Celio, Harvey & Wishon, 2003; Turnbull, Riley & MacFarlane, 2015). The research confirms that as teachers 52.3 per

cent of NAPs were actively encouraged and supported by serving principals to pursue the role of principal. Schools are viewed as "breeding grounds for our future principals" (Donal, TP: 196) and that "grooming your replacement" (Seán, TP: 281) is identified as an essential part of the role of principal. This may be regarded as a positive mechanism in schools as it may offer opportunities for aspiring principals to gather practice based knowledge and construct meaning relating to leadership which is based on practical experience. This reflects arguments put forward by Wenger relating to "inbound trajectories" in practice where participants interact in a professional community with a view to becoming fully participant in roles associated with that community at some point in the future (1998, p. 154). This type of experience according to Wenger (1998) is a critical stage in the development and negotiation of identity in communities of practice.

Presently, leadership recruitment in primary schools is highly decentralised and local school boards are awarded full responsibility for principalship appointments via an open application and interview process. The selection boards in schools consist of nominated members with mixed profiles in terms of their knowledge of the school context. The training and development of recruitment panels in Irish schools is a critical component of succession planning. According to the IPPN (2014), those who are involved in the recruitment of principals in Irish primary schools need appropriate and continuous training in recruitment and selection, which is based on best practice internationally. It is difficult to argue that the right people will be placed in the leadership driving seat in schools if the right people are not available to place them there. Principal recruitment should be based on best practice internationally and not on the preservation of embedded cultures or grooming your successor at organisational level, which is found to be the case in the Irish system. It is essential that those involved in recruiting school principals who are central to a school's long term success, be adequately trained to

procure the best candidates for the role. At present there are no transparent criteria or recruitment guidelines for the selection of members to principal recruitment panels.

Joe confirms that many recruitment panellists are retired principals who may or may not have knowledge of the school and that religious patrons are likely to be nominated to selection boards in denominational schools. Some participants explain that 'insider' influences can impact upon appointments at organisational level. It is suggested that teachers from within the school are more likely to be appointed as leadership successors than external candidates which suggests that appointments may not always open and fair (Joe, AP; Seán, TP). One participant explains that he considered that applying for a principalship where an internal candidate was also pursuing the role was "a waste of my time" and he explains that this perception is broadly accepted and "almost an unspoken rule" in schools (Seán, TP: 341-346). Grummell *et al.* (2009) claim that the principals appointed in their study were "being drawn from a relatively small pool of highly involved insiders" leading to "homosociability" or the preservation of existing cultures in Irish schools (2009, p. 3). It would seem that some participants in the study perceive that context based experience or local knowledge is more highly valued than professional qualifications when it comes to appointments in schools. More open and transparent criteria for the selection of school principals should be put in place in schools. Appointments should be made on the basis of suitability and qualifications for the role rather than on connections or previous associations with a school.

Leadership preparation and training

The research results suggest a lack of provision for leadership preparation and inadequate training and development relating to leadership is a significant theme in the research (OER: 1; 26; 79; 113; 118; 140; 144; 163). The socialisation process from teacher to principal begins with training and preparation which focuses on the specialised knowledge required for the job (Coetzer & Field, 2011; Fuller & Young, 2009). That NAPs feel poorly prepared for the role of principal is strongly evidenced in the research findings (62.3 per cent), and correlates with the findings confirming that the majority of the sample group have not completed formal training or preparation for the role with, 83.9 per cent having no post-graduate leadership qualification. For most NAPs (80 per cent) the role is more challenging than they had expected. The findings show that the management and administrative aspects of the role are regarded as the most challenging aspects of the role from the perspectives of NAPs (OER: 14; 20; 38; 59; 61; 63; 67; 77; 79; 83; 91; 101; 110; 112; 124; 129; 131; 136; 143; 145; 147; 148; 150; 151; 159; 165). The difficulties associated with these aspects of the role are associated with "a lack of real training beforehand and knowledge of what to expect" (OER, 159:1). The findings would suggest that NAPs find the management and administrative responsibilities associated with the role constraining because of the level of "paperwork" (OER, 37; 56; 66; 77; 120) and "administration" (OER, 20; 59; 148) associated with these tasks. Management tasks are often perceived as "urgent" (OER, 79) because duties such as the acquisition of school works, the arrangement of accounts and budgets, maintaining school buildings, updating health and safety and insurance policies and so on, are often constrained by deadlines. Many of the tasks also involve continuous communication with multiple personnel, for example contractors, DES officials, accountants, financiers and assessors which demands specific sets of skills for which some NAPs feel inadequately prepared (OER, 105; 137; 128; 153)

Leadership qualification requirements

In Ireland formal leadership qualifications are not a mandatory requirement for candidates seeking a principalship position in schools. School leadership preparation programmes are provided at post-graduate level by higher level institutions and also by the Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST). These programmes, however, do not guarantee a school leadership position and are not funded. Donal points out that financial support for leadership development is a major inhibitor for teachers who may wish to pursue a leadership qualification:

> Honestly, teachers are not really encouraged to earn extra qualifications. Firstly there is no funding and secondly there is no real reward. You may pay for a Masters and work hard to achieve a qualification and then discover that you could have gotten a principalship without all that hardship. It's more a personal journey I suppose, it is not a requirement as such. (Donal, TP: 108-112)

The difficulties associated with leadership preparation and training for teachers is likely to have an adverse effect on the identification and formal recruitment of potential or aspiring leaders within the system. Principals in Ireland according to the OECD (2008) are typically experienced teachers and many school leaders have worked in the same organisations for a number of years. The research findings deviate from this conclusion showing that the mean prior teaching experience for NAPs in the sample is between six and ten years. Despite these results a majority (86 per cent) of NAPs regard long term teaching experience as essential preparation for the role of principal. Previous teaching experience is presently the only prerequisite requirement for appointment as school principal. The findings show that among the NAP research sample 43.2 per cent were appointed as principals having had no previous leadership experience. The transition from classroom teaching to the principal's office described by Spillane and Lee as the critical period of "entry and encounter" (2014, p. 434), involves a major shift in both

personal identity and professional relationships (Draper & McMichael, 2000; Lankford & Wyckoff, 2002).

The findings confirm that despite a mandatory requirement of more than five years teaching experience for appointment to principalship, almost ten per cent (9.9 per cent) of NAPs confirm having taught for less than five years. The problems associated with limited practice experience are revealed in the comments of one participant who was appointed as school principal in a small rural Gaelscoil as a newly qualified teacher:

> I was principal on my first day as a primary school teacher (…) it was a real case of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. I would never have done it if I had known anything about the job and needless to say I ended up leaving to become a teacher first and then later a principal. (Nora, AP: 60-65)

In Ireland school principals are continuing to accept "the unending level of responsibility which seems to be increasing year on year" (OER, 105, 1) with no formal qualification requirements, limited preparation opportunities and insufficient leadership supports. Under present conditions school principals may be viewed as a cohort of professionals who are grossly undervalued by a system that continues to place high expectations upon them. With limited leadership experiences NAPs are likely to encounter difficulties as novice principals in adjusting to their roles.

Developing leadership experience in practice

An important lever promoting future leadership talent in Irish schools according to Humphreys (2009) is through middle-management appointments. The OECD (2008) also confirms that the introduction of new middle-management structures in Irish schools could be regarded as a move towards more formal mechanisms for developing leadership experience at practice level. Both of these reports preceded the current moratorium on middle-management in education as part of the government's programme of austerity in education (Circular 0022/2009). Presently, the opportunities

204

for cultivating leadership talent and promoting future leaders is seriously compromised by the retrenchment of middle-management in schools. The moratorium implies that leadership is not a priority in education in the present climate of austerity, a point that is acknowledged in the remarks of one respondent who claims that "the moratorium on posts of responsibility leaves principals having to take responsibility for too many duties. It also shows a lack of respect from the DES for team leadership in our schools" (OER, 47: 1-3).

For leadership to be developed and leadership talents accessed, some system of middle leadership needs to be reinstated in schools. It is clear from the findings that the embargo on promotions for teachers has caused frustration at organisational level and has further complicated the role of the school principal by diminishing the scope for the development of leadership talent in schools. It is highly unlikely that the significant issues of leadership shortages and leadership reluctance reported in the literature (Anderson *et al.,* 2011*)* will be resolved in conditions where opportunities for leadership experience are constricting rather than broadening in schools.

The transition period from teaching to leading is an important facet of succession planning in schools. Fink warns that "a leadership transition is one of the most traumatic events in a school's history" (2010, p. 117) and argues that appropriate training and preparation of potential leaders is an essential prerequisite for long term sustainable leadership in schools. New leaders according to Fink (2010) should come to the role with a good degree of inbound knowledge developed through training.

Transition from teacher to principal

The transition from teaching to principalship is a critical juncture on the career path of the school leader. Previous reports confirm that in Ireland there has been a haphazard approach to the preparation of teachers for management positions (Coolahan, 1994; O'Hanlon, 2008). This issue is reinforced in the findings which confirm that training and preparation for aspiring leaders is grossly neglected in Irish schools. Only 12.6 per cent of NAPs completed the Toraíocht preparation programme for aspiring school leaders and only 16.1 per cent have completed a university leadership programme. Successful applicants to the role of principal encounter numerous diverse priorities outside of classroom instruction. Leadership succession should involve careful planning, adequate preparation and "decent humane management of the succession process" if the new successors are to stand much hope of stepping out of the shadows of the leaders who have gone before them (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 3). Chapman (2005) acknowledges that traditionally education systems relied heavily on processes of self-selection for the identification and appointment of future leaders. These procedures did not facilitate the acquisition of 'inbound knowledge' relating to the role or the context of leadership for newly appointed candidates (Wenger, 1998) . In addressing the issues encountered by novice principals transitioning to the role of school leader, some education systems have focussed on the training and development of aspiring school leaders by offering practice based experience in the form of leadership mentoring, internships and leadership shadowing programmes (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2007). These practice based models of leadership preparation offer hands-on leadership experiences which are viewed as "pivotal to candidates professional learning and identity formation" (Darling-Hammond *et al.* 2007, p. 6). Presently in the Irish primary education system there are no formal procedures in place which provide for practice based leadership training for aspiring principals.

Leadership turnover procedures

Planning for leadership turnover in Ireland may be viewed as a difficult task in the present system where there is no way of knowing how many principals are likely to retire (OECD, 2008). Anderson *et al.* (2011) confirm that the identification and pre-preparation of new principals is inhibited in Irish schools because leadership posts are advertised only after incumbents decide to step down. Notwithstanding the inevitability of sudden departures of leaders in schools, due to illness and so on, planning for a change of leader in schools is unlikely to succeed if schools are not given adequate warning about planned departures. The present research confirms what is largely reported in the literature, that most schools do not have strategic succession plans in place to deal with principal turnover (Fink, 2010; Lortie, 2009; Myung, Loeb & Horng, 2011; Simkins, Close & Smith, 2009).

For novice leaders who feel under prepared for the reality of the role it is critical that a transition process be facilitated between new appointees and departing principals in schools. Gaining knowledge relating to the context of the school, the endemic procedures and practices and the school climate and culture, is crucial if novice leaders are to gain a steady foothold on which to direct their leadership practice. As large numbers of talented and experienced principals exit schools, efforts need to be made to ensure that knowledge and skills relating to practice are imparted to NAPs who are accepting the challenge of leadership across a wide diversity of contexts. A good succession plan creates a smooth transition between old and new management which minimises leadership gaps by encouraging a leadership merger rather than a sudden leadership shift. Succession planning in many fields of practice involves carefully formulated procedures for initial handover of responsibility between outgoing and incoming leaders in an organisation (Lamoureux, Campbell & Smith, 2009; Northfield, 2014). Even with limited scope within systems for predicting departures of school

principals some structures can be put in place to facilitate a change of leader. In Singapore planning models are used to continuously assess teachers for various leadership positions and training is provided so that a qualified pool of candidates are available to fill newly vacated principalship positions in schools (OECD, 2011). In other countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, leadership training is a requirement for appointment to the role of principal. Those who advocate mandatory training according to the Schleicher (2011) regard pre-service training as a way of professionalising leadership in schools.

Leadership transition programmes

Leadership shadowing is cited by participants in the research as an intervention in schools which may greatly benefit NAPs in negotiating the transition phase of the school principalship. Donal suggests that when the NAP accepts the leadership position they:

> Should first inherit an exit file, with all the policies and an account of where they actually stand in all of the critical areas and they should also have a certain amount of time to ghost the former principal or to have some access. (Donal, TP: 552-555)

Leadership shadowing is not a prevalent practice in Irish primary schools and the findings confirm that only 4.7 per cent of NAPs were awarded the opportunity to shadow a serving principal in preparation for the role. Shadowing or site based leadership experience has been recognised in the literature as an important mechanism for socialising new leaders into the role of school principal (Normore, 2004). Job shadowing has been included as a significant element of leadership training programmes in countries such as the UK and Australia (Victoria). One of the key objectives of work shadowing according to Simkins *et al.* "is to extend the participants' awareness of the range of pressures, challenges, micropolitics, strategies and other

leadership dimensions of the headteacher's role" (2009, p. 240). The idea of leadership

shadowing is certainly welcomed by participants in the research. Anna remarks that:

> I think there should maybe be an apprenticeship or if people feel that they want
> to take up a principalship they should be given the opportunity for six months
> while the leader is there and they can see them at it. (Anna, TP: 453-455)

The advantage of formal leadership preparation programmes which include internships

or job-shadowing is that it involves on the job training. The issue with such

interventions is that these forms of training and coaching would require a commitment

of release time for both mentors and aspirants to apply themselves to their roles. In the

Irish context, time is an absent commodity when it comes to developing leadership

potential.

Leadership handovers at organisational level

All participants report that the handover process between them and the outgoing

principal did not adequately prepare them for their new roles. For NAPs who were

moving schools there was limited contact with the outgoing principal and no contact

with other staff members prior to succession. This is significant since findings show

that 75.6 per cent of those surveyed strongly agree that previous knowledge of the

context of the school is essential for preparing NAPs for their new positions. The

general consensus is that little or no efforts are made to impart knowledge about

practices, procedures and structures in context and one respondent notes that they

"found the transition to principalship regarding staff relationships difficult to negotiate"

(OER, 118: 2). It is reported that the initial months of practice are especially difficult

for NAPs who find that juggling the role is "a steep learning curve" (OER, 121: 1) and

cultivating relationships is a tentative process (OER: 1; 8; 12; 30; 43; 55; 96) especially

"without knowing the history and traditions that are engrained in the school" (OER, 1:

4-5).

Established cultures already exist when new leaders are appointed. The legacy of the outgoing principal can cast large shadows long after his/her departure according to Weindling and Dimmock (2006). It may be difficult for NAPs to adapt to their new roles and some report that they struggle to maintain a veneer of expertise so that they are not perceived as weak or uncertain in their new role, particularly in new settings (OER, 57; 130; 132; 145; 160). The experiences of NAPs in this research study highlight rapid changeover patterns which seem to be a prevailing feature in Irish primary schools. Joe remarks that in his situation "the handover took place in twenty five minutes" (Joe, AP: 246).

It is not surprising that principals report feelings of isolation and loneliness in the initial months of new leadership practice (Earley *et al.* 2011; Spillane & Lee, 2014), a finding that is replicated in the present research (See Figure 4.11, p. 169). The findings suggest that there is potential in schools for developing future leaders who readily identify themselves as prospective principals by co-ordinating leadership development using the expert knowledge of serving principals in the field of practice. It is recognised by participants in the research that leadership recruitment is an accepted aspect of the role of the principal. Almost all of the interviewees (6 out of 7) indicate that they were actively encouraged by experienced principals, who were known to them, to seek the position. 52.7 per cent of survey respondents confirm that their potential was recognised and nurtured during their teaching careers. NAPs also acknowledge that they received valuable support as aspiring school leaders through informal consultation with serving school principals (68.7 per cent).

It is clear that in Ireland there is limited scope and opportunity to facilitate informed transitions between outgoing principals and newly appointed leaders. As noted by Anna in her interview it is possible in the Irish education system to "be a teacher on Friday and become school principal by the following Monday" (Anna, TP: 57-58).

Organisations need to be encouraged through considered succession planning to provide adequate opportunities for teachers to develop their skills as leaders. These opportunities are not restricted to formal training but can be arranged at organisational level through leadership shadowing programmes or structured mentoring programmes. These creative and innovative approaches to leadership development, however, can only succeed if the space and resources to share and develop leadership skills is provided for in practice contexts.

Principle 3: Distributed leadership Practices

The findings presented in this research study support the notion that distributed leadership practices are witnessed as a prevalent feature in schools (See Table 5.9) and principals recognise the importance of distributing leadership. The findings show, however, that dispersing responsibility does not always alleviate the work of the school principal. The reflections of interview participants imply that promoting distributed leadership in their specific settings adds further to the workload of the principal, who "often ends up having to correct mistakes" when duties are dispersed (Claire, TP: 436). The sharing of duties is often carried out on an informal, voluntary basis according to one participant and teachers "rely very much on the principal" who "has to do the homework" (Donal: TP, 360-362). Humphreys (2010) reports similar findings in Irish secondary schools where teachers play informal leadership roles and warns that the lack of formality surrounding distributed leadership in schools reduces the capacity to impact upon teaching and learning. More formal, structured and explicit distribution of leadership in educational organisations may help to address some of the challenges faced by school principals in directing distribution authentically and to the benefit of school wide teaching and learning.

Sharing leadership is not only about supporting school leaders to meet organisational goals (Hallinger, 2011) but is also a powerful mechanism for promoting leadership skills in others, thus nurturing future leaders (Fullan, 2002; Osburn & Hunt, 2007). Humphrey's research concludes that it is critical in schools for principals to recognise and develop leadership potential in others (2010). The present findings indicate that with diminished middle-management in schools, principals are more dependent than before on the voluntary support of staff members. The scope for broadening leadership potential in schools is seriously limited under the current conditions of the embargo on promotions. Middle management positions can no longer be seen as an avenue for enhancing the professional life of the teacher or contributing to a reduction in the workload of the principal. With diminishing middle management teams becoming a feature in Irish schools as evidenced in the research findings, it is critical that principals create alternative opportunities for accessing support and guidance in ameliorating the complex task of leading in schools.

Developing leadership capacity through CPD

The most accessible resource available in schools are the people involved in education. Authentic reform requires significant investment in practitioners and leaders in schools who are trained and prepared to become capable enablers. Professional development is associated with positive and progressive learning cultures in conditions that optimize teachers' learning and development (Barth, 2001; Wong, 2004). Encouraging professional development is viewed as supporting teachers in tangible ways. Mees reports that "intellectual stimulation through professional development leads to collaboration and the promotion of collective action to reach school goals" (2008, p. 33).

The majority of CPD accessed by teachers and principals in Irish schools is provided for by regional educational centres in the form of specialised courses relating to specific aspects of practice. According to the findings in this research study the opportunity to pursue these courses in Ireland very much depends on the demographics of the school. Interviewees indicate that schools in rural settings experience logistical barriers to CPD because schools are distanced from regional education centres. Results show that in rural DEIS schools for example, CPD is prioritised in only 8.2 per cent of cases included in this research compared with 85.9 per cent agreement across the same item for urban schools. Participants report that principals may encourage CPD among their staff only if there is adequate opportunity and scope to do so in reality. The findings reveal a perception among NAPs that accessing CPD which suits the specific needs of the school is not always an option. The desire to address the specific needs of the school is hindered by the emphasis placed by the DES and the inspectorate on specific policy agendas according to some participants.

There is a need to establish a commitment to renewed investment in CPD that serves the needs of the school and the development of teachers and leaders in order "to ensure effective teaching and learning into the future" (OECD, 2008, p. 68). Funding for CPD facilitated within the school is restricted, as noted by Seán who claims that "there are online colleges and CPD colleges, but for those you have to pay a tutor to come down to the school and schools just are not in a position to pay" (Seán, TP: 498-500). The administrative burden of policy led changes is a concern among respondents who are required to "review, draft, redraft and keep records and this takes up a huge amount of valuable time" (OER, 148: 6-7). Opportunities to pursue professional development can be severely compromised in schools where loaded reform agendas are the primary focus of professional learning and development. The data in this research suggests that

professional development that focusses on individual learning is not commonly sought by teachers and school principals. NAPs report that factors such as reduced funding and the accessibility of training deter teachers from pursuing professional development.

Action research in schools may be an important lever for promoting professional development in schools (Check & Schutt, 2012). Teachers are natural researchers, they are inquisitive about the learning that goes on in their classrooms and also about improved practices directed at learning. If teachers and principals are promoted as active lifelong learners then learning may become broadly valued across an organisation. Supporting teacher researchers at practice level may be a potent tool for growth and sustainable improvement. By adopting what Cochran-Smyth and Lytle term as an "inquiry stance" (2009, p. 44) teacher researchers address questions that are pertinent to their own teaching practice and to the contexts of their schools. Site based research is a direct mechanism for interrogating teaching and learning and promoting reform.

The weak links between research and practice are maintained within a system that does not appear to prioritise CPD. The irony in education is that those who are vested with leading learning in schools are faced with many obstacles if they desire to pursue continued learning themselves. Post graduate programmes in education are not funded and are no longer incentivised since the abolishment of allowances for additional qualifications in 2012 (Circular 0088/2013). Release time for full-time post-graduate education is not provided for in schools as study leave in education is regarded as a break in teaching service. Further education is not a mandatory requirement for teachers or school principals.

Promoting collaborative leadership practices

As noted earlier in this chapter the evidence supports the fact that informal collaborative practices are a prevalent feature in schools and teachers across settings are commended for their strong commitments to additional responsibilities by participant informants. These practices are termed as informal in the discussion that follows because there are no systematic procedures in place to accommodate them in schools. The findings show that the majority of respondents view the teachers and staff of their schools as the most significant source of support upon appointment as school principal (90 per cent). This finding corroborates evidence which shows that for the most part NAPs feel that there is a positive working atmosphere in their schools and collaborative practice is a prevalent feature. These results are encouraging as the literature reports that often staff can be resistant to new leaders rather than supportive of them (Bolam *et al.*, 2000; Earley *et al.*, 2011). On the face of it the evidence paints a positive picture of school communities working hand in hand to create a positive learning environment for their students. There is good evidence to support that there is a spirit of "goodwill" (Patrick, TP: 246) in schools in terms of accepting additional responsibilities. The findings indicate that there is a common perception in schools that leadership is ultimately the principal's responsibility. While leadership duties are accepted by teachers these responsibilities are viewed as surplus to their roles as classroom teachers. This is evident in Seán's account of the middle management structure in her school:

> Their responsibility always comes through a need to look after their class and this other post of responsibility is done when they have time (Seán, TP: 674-679).

It is reported that additional duties accepted informally across contexts do not always support the principal in terms of alleviating leadership tasks. Principals report greater demands and pressures associated with distributed practices in their schools, as they feel that they must direct the work that is being carried out. The organisation of distributed practice then, adds to their workload rather than alleviating it. While collaborative

school cultures are an essential feature of the sustainable leadership approach, the

findings in this case portray an image of shared leadership which is largely informal or

organic in nature. Informal teacher leaders receive no leadership training or

development and they do not, for the most part, document or review their work.

Shared practices have emerged, it would seem, from a need to fill gaps which have been

created by a shortfall in formal middle management positions in schools at present. It is

reported that "teachers are willing to take on the extras" but that teachers view

themselves as teachers first and everything else follows. It is telling that these duties

are viewed as "extras" rather than as an essential part of their role. NAP participants are

keenly aware of the heavy workload accepted by their teaching staffs and are reluctant

to place added responsibility on them. Anna expresses concern that adding too much to

the workload of teachers may compromise their teaching. There is conflicting evidence

with regard to the erosion of goodwill among teaching staffs in schools. Despite

constraints of time and instructional demands teachers are reported in the findings as

generally willing to take on extra duties in support of the principal, especially in

contexts were middle management capacity has been eroded. Teacher dissatisfaction

and frustration is linked by participants to the level of expectation placed upon schools

from the higher authorities rather than a resentment towards principals. Teachers feel

that they are "constantly being bombarded with new initiatives even though we already

have an overloaded curriculum" (OER; 26, 2-3).

While collaborative practice has become established as a mainstream concept in

education and schools "do have collaboration you know almost naturally" (Claire, TP:

262-263), collaboration specific to leadership is not evidenced as a prevailing feature

across the same contexts. The scope for broadening conceptualisations of leadership

does exist. This is confirmed in the findings which show that informal teacher

leadership is reported as a prevalent feature in 65.7 per cent of schools included in this research. The central issue, however, is that this form of shared leadership has strong associations with volunteerism and is therefore viewed as an additional responsibility rather than a requirement. Distributed leadership does not naturally emerge as an embedded and authentic culture without intelligent and intuitive guidance, planning and professional development.

Organisational challenges relating to distributed leadership practices

Collaboration takes time and energy which according to O'Hanlon (2008) are the scarcest resources in schools. It is clearly no longer adequate to expect that the projected ideal of shared leadership will be met in schools when there is no scope within the school day to accommodate it. The findings show that there is low·morale in schools (OER: 33; 63; 71; 77; 81; 86; 87; 103; 107; 108; 119; 123; 139; 140) due to resource constraints, salary cuts, promotions embargos, increased media and public expectations and the continuous "bombardment of new initiatives from the DES" (OER, 140: 1). School practitioners are struggling to keep pace with the sheer breadth of responsibility that they are duty bound to fulfil, while remaining faithful and committed to student learning as a central priority. The research confirms that principals are faced with "multiple urgent priorities" (OER, 79: 6) and feel that they are not able to commit themselves fully to all aspects of the role because they are "dealing with stresses from so many directions" (OER, 124: 2). The danger of this condition is that if everything is urgent then nothing is urgent.

The findings align with some reports in the literature (Gronn, 2008; Leithwood *et al.* 2006), which suggest that shared practices in schools can often add to the burden of leadership responsibility by placing onus upon school leaders to steer distributive action. Old assumptions about leadership need to be realigned so that new forms of

217

complementary leadership can emerge in schools that are a natural breeding ground for future leaders. Teachers may be encouraged to move beyond the classroom if formal opportunities to develop their leadership talents are provided for in schools. Teacher leadership recognised as a critical component of educational change is being developed across some educational jurisdictions in the USA and the UK through graduate teacher leadership programmes (Leonard, Petta & Porter; 2011; OECD, 2011). These post graduate programmes are reported to enhance not only the leadership potential in schools, but also to benefit teacher quality and teacher effectiveness.

Leadership may be viewed as a formal responsibility for all in schools. Leadership responsibilities can be reviewed and discussed in the same way that school planning and improvement are discussed as a formality of practice. The research findings, however, indicate that leadership is rarely discussed or reviewed or perhaps may not even be fully understood. 45 per cent of NAPs in this research report that they rarely discuss their own practice and in 45.7 per cent of cases, the practices of school leaders are never recorded. This reinforces the isolated position of school leaders. Leadership is not affirmed or discussed according to the findings as evidenced by one participant who points out that "I don't get recognition from the others at all. And you just learn to accept that" (Anna, TP: 335-336). Another explains that "as principal you rarely get praised" and you cannot share certain issues "because you have to maintain confidentiality" (Patrick, TP: 306, 309). It is clear that there is perceived to be limited scope at organisational level for discussing and reflecting upon leadership practices, and that school principals encounter difficulties in accessing support. Leadership support is critical, however, if school leaders are to be sustained in the long term. Professional teacher and leadership capacity is the strongest accessible resource in our schools and York-Barr and Duke (2004) advise that by expanding leadership roles to allow teachers to become more formally involved in the work of their schools new hopes for

educational improvement and student learning may be realised. This outlook complements sustainable development in our schools by accepting that school communities possess the agency to bring about change by redeploying in-house assets and recombining them to promote future development and improvement. Schools, however, are mirrors of the communities that surround them. Schools can increase their agency by accessing the skills and expertise of outside partners as well as the talents of those within the organisation itself. Innovative co-operative practice can also extend itself beyond the school. Sergiovanni argues that schools can "seek meaning from building purposeful communities" (1994, p. xiii). Schools are unique settings, according to Sergiovanni and each organisation must invent its own practice of community by building on improvements informed by the specific environments in which learning is being constructed. Dietz (2008) states that "a learning organization is not a building that breathes but rather a collection of community members who give life, presence, flexibility, adaptability, responsiveness, new thinking, and energy to their organization and the work it does" (p. 3). An effective learning community according to Deitz (2008) invites conversations and feedback from individuals with diverse philosophies, talents and experiences from multiple partners within the organisation, in the local community and in the wider educational field.

Support from outside agencies

The research findings provide a broad view of the perceptions of NAPs relating to the level of support and guidance they receive in fulfilling their leadership roles from partners in education located outside the context of the school (See Figure 5.1, p. 176). NAPs report a negative perception of the DES related to perceived heightened expectations placed on schools by policy reform and increased requirements for the documentation of planning for improvements. There is only 19.3 per cent agreement among NAPs that the DES offers adequate support and guidance to principals and

219

schools. More detailed accounts of experiences with the DES are reported by interview participants. Some participants state that they avoid contacting DES services and prefer to access information from other principals and support services such as the IPPN and the CPSMA. All participants report having difficulties accessing information through the DES which is described as "a warren that nobody seems to be able to figure out" in terms of getting information (Joe: TP, 453-453). The lack of support and increased pressures associated with the DES is also a strong recurring theme in the open ended response set (OER:14; 41; 45; 65; 66; 94; 103; 110; 113; 118; 128; 130; 144; 151; 156; 160; 163; 165). The research findings suggest that the DES are prescribing too many mandated changes and are not providing adequate support for schools to properly implement these changes and NAPs report feeling isolated as the leaders of change. A more objective view of educational change in the Irish system presents an argument that supports the idea that DES policy reformers are working parallel to practitioners in schools by pursuing a common purpose; the improvement of learning. Yet, the perception highlighted by NAPs in this research is that policy reform is impeding the leading of learning in schools. It seems that there is a disconnection between both partners in terms of school improvements. NAPs report that they are not supported in this study, yet it can be argued that presently, school leaders have access to more supports in recent years when it comes to enabling their work in education. New public management agreements for example have promoted social partnership models in education offering a wide range of supports from multiple sectors associated with education, including, parents, local communities, special education support agencies and businesses, according to Gleeson and O' Donnabháin (2009). Leadership support agencies have played a significant role in guiding school principals since the establishment of LDS, NAPD and IPPN in the last two decades. Even with welcome advances in support of schools NAPs report feeling isolated in their roles. Perhaps the

contemporary issue for principals in Irish schools arises from tensions associated with dealing with so many stakeholders and partners in education. Sugrue offers a different perspective arguing that despite increased supports the voices of school principals in Ireland are rarely heard and are muted by "more powerful and influential authorities who are ready to prescribe for the ills of societies that become the responsibilities of principals to administer as part of the 'official' curriculum (2005, p. 12). .

The DES inspectorate who are by role definition advisors in schools are not generally regarded as supportive by NAPs according to the findings. A minority of NAPs (26 per cent) report that they feel that the inspectorate support and guide them in their work. Some NAPs feel that the inspectorate "are there to judge and find fault" (OER, 130: 3) rather than to offer guidance. One participant reports having a very positive and supportive relationship with her inspector but most participants report that they do not like to contact the inspectorate for advice and do not wish to "see them coming through the front door" (Joe: TP, 482). Teaching principals report that they feel added frustration because the inspectorate show "little compassion for newly appointed principals" (OER; 130, 4). Teaching principals are in the vulnerable position of having both their teaching and administrative roles assessed by the inspectorate.

A large majority of NAPs report that they frequently seek support through networking with other principals (96 per cent) and by accessing the services of the IPPN (86.5 per cent). It would seem that principals are more likely to seek guidance from among their peers or contemporaries than from the DES or the inspectorate as indicated in the following quote:

> Realistically I would prefer to chat with other principals than to bother with the bureaucracy of the department. Principals understand the scene and many of us are having the same problems. (Patrick, TP: 524-526)

The DES and third level organisations have a long way to go to create tighter connections with school based practice. University based leadership programmes are regarded as "too theoretical" and misaligned with the reality of practice according to some respondents (Patrick, TP: 94). Accepting the positive influence that a competent school leader can have on a school the IPPN (2014) challenges why the role of school principal in Ireland is so under supported. It is obvious that there is a disconnection or lack of communication in evidence between the DES and school leaders at organisational level.

Positive aspects of the role

Reflecting on the analysis and integration of data in this study it is apparent that there is a high level of consensus, with regard to specific issues and challenges, which inhibit sustainable leadership practices in the settings explored. The findings presented produce a sustainable leadership profile that in general terms seems uncertain and problematic. In representing these findings NAPs appear to possess quite negative views in relation to leadership capacity, development, and supports in schools. The quantitative findings confirmed strongly that specifically in relation to aspects of instructional leadership capacity, leadership preparation, succession, and transition there are many challenges when it comes to securing the foundations of sustainable leadership in schools. The open ended item in the quantitative survey reinforced this consensus by asking specifically about the challenges faced by NAPs in new practice contexts. The quantitative dataset does capture some positive findings. For example, it is clear that, though not formally structured in schools through formal procedures and explicit mechanisms, distributed leadership practices are in evidence in many of the settings explored. The survey findings also confirm that although it is reported that the role of school principal is poorly defined, many of the NAPs are cognisant of the instructional leading aspects of their role (OER: 10; 27; 38; 54; 57; 59; 65; 78; 125) and

the value of more distributed forms of leadership as a means of developing shared visions relating to the learning that goes on in schools (OER: 12; 39; 48; 79). The inclusion of an open-ended item on the survey questionnaire was a positive addition to the instrument as it yielded a rich body of data which added to the findings. While analysing this data, however, it became apparent that although the question relating to leadership challenges was highly relevant, it limited the scope for gaining insight into some of the more positive aspects of the role. In hindsight, it may have been useful to include an additional open ended question asking specifically about the rewards of the role. This may have provided a more balanced insight into the nature of the role and perceptions of the role from the viewpoint of novice principals.

NAPs voice that they felt under prepared for their role (61.3 per cent) and lacked full knowledge relating to the level of responsibility attached to the role (42.7 per cent), however, it should be noted that the decision to become school principal is a conscious one. All who pursue a position of leadership in any field have some knowledge of the elevated responsibilities associated with the role. Leadership is a position which sets leaders apart from other working members of any organisation, even in contexts where shared leadership is an embedded practice. Leadership is a challenge and perhaps part of the reward of leadership is embracing this challenge. This viewpoint is reflected in some of the comments contained in the open-ended responses in the survey questionnaire. For example, one respondents noted that "the role of principal is not clearly defined but, while this can be a challenge, it is also part of what makes the job so exciting" (OER: 83, 7-8). Another remarks that "it is a very unknown job and if you are prepared to learn as you go in a calm and positive manner you will find the job very rewarding" (OER: 92, 1-3).

The findings illuminated some of the frustrations felt by NAPs in disseminating the role of principal as novice leaders. These frustrations were also strongly reinforced during

the qualitative interviews. It is important at this point to clarify that although NAPs express frustration at some of the constraints experienced in practice, the tone of the interviews for the most part was extremely positive. There is a subtle difference between frustration and complaint which is very difficult to illustrate in the presentation of findings for this study. Interacting with the interview participants was perhaps the most illuminating aspect of the research process. This was not only because the interviews provided depth and understanding to the preceding quantitative dataset, but also because it brought to life some of the engaging characters who have been recently appointed as principals in our schools. It is most difficult to represent the enthusiasm and positivity of participants in print, as much of the tone of the interview dialogue is lost in text. The most conclusive indication in the findings which supports the idea that NAPs are enthusiastic about meeting the challenges of their positions is that all participants indicated that they find their work rewarding and are positive in their outlooks for the future. This is illustrated in the following remarks:

> I wouldn't change things for the world I mean I have to say I love it. (Claire, TP: 654)
>
> The one thing I'd like to say for the end is that in spite of everything I still really love the job. (Donal, TP: 587-588)
>
> But there is a great sense of satisfaction in the job...I mean I am contributing a lot more than I would have been just as a class teacher in a large school. I'm a lot more involved. (Patrick, TP: 627-629)

These views echo recent research by Darmody and Smyth (2010) who confirm that levels of job satisfaction are very high among principals in Irish schools. Each interview participant talked about the future and recognised that as NAPs they are still coming to terms with their role and in that respect they are open to new ideas and are willing to learn. NAPs do not believe that they are the only professionals who are challenged by

the enormous commitments of their chosen role; they acknowledge that the teachers in their organisations also face challenges as education providers in schools. Participants speak positively about the support they receive from other members of their school community and in particular the support received from parents. Anna reports that in her school "there is a pleasant calm atmosphere with the parents" (Anna, TP: 302) and that they respect the dual constraints associated with teaching principalships. She states that parents acknowledge "that you work hard and at the end of the day they appreciate the fact that you are there. They always thank you for giving up your evening to talk to them" (Anna, TP: 328-331). Patrick outlines similar experiences with the parents in his school. He remarks that one of the positive benefits of being a teaching principal is that "I get to teach uninterrupted most of the day" (Patrick, TP: 435), whereas administrative principals may interrupted on a daily basis "at the drop of a hat" (Patrick, TP: 436).

Remaining directly connected with classroom instruction was viewed as a rewarding aspect of the role for teaching principals as they derive " a sense of achievement" from their students and through feedback from parents (Patrick, TP: 641). Joe describes feeling disconnected from students because as an administrative principal he does not have much opportunity to engage directly with classroom instruction and he feels that as a result, the role of administrative principal can "become extremely insular" (Joe, AP: 337). Donal also implies that the teaching element of his role is affirming and makes links between teaching and job satisfaction. He reports that "I think it's the contact maybe with the children that makes it very rewarding and I find that it is a very valuable job and it's an important job" (Donal, TP: 594-595). Both Donal and Anna comment that the lack of contact with students have deterred them from pursuing opportunities to acquire administrative principalship positions. Anna elaborates on this stating that:

> I do like the contact with the kids and I feel you are a better person for it and every principal should be made to go back teaching for two to three months every second or third year, because you do lose perspective and I think it does isolate you as a principal (Anna, TP: 373-376).

Like any position in any field there are rewards and challenges associated with the role of school principal. As discussed earlier, the quantitative findings show that there are disparities in perceptions relating to the capacity to fulfil certain aspects of the role across leadership posts. Teaching principals are more likely to report that constraints of time, and the conflicting priorities of their dual roles as teachers and as administrators, can mean that the capacity to carry out many of the responsibilities associated with instructional leadership can be compromised. The qualitative interviews, however, brought to life a cohort of teaching principals who recognise that while the role is challenging and enormously time consuming, they feel enthusiastic and motivated to carry out their work. All participants in some way recognise the importance of their role and articulate that a highly motivational factor for them is the knowledge that they possess the potential to make a real difference to the lives of the students and other school community members in their organisations. Both Seán and Anna view being principal as a vocation and they claim that dedication and commitment are accepted features of the role. Seán remarks that a principal seeks the role by choice and that "there are those who are meant to do it and those who are not and most principals love their job despite all the bad days and I think they wouldn't change it for the world" (Seán, TP: 937-939).

Concluding comments

The job of leading is getting more difficult as the challenges of the 21st century mean working in an environment of constant change, economic uncertainty and increased global competition. Investment in and development of innovative leadership is now more important than ever before. Investment in leadership in education is an investment in the future ensuring that Irish education remains competitive from a global perspective. A strong argument advocated throughout this study is the idea that leadership is the business of all involved in the improvement of learning in our educational organisations. Lambert claims that "everyone is born to lead in the same way as everyone is born to learn" (2003, p. 422). It seems appropriate to suggest that the drive towards a vision of 'learning for all' in schools should be broadened to accommodate 'leading and learning for all'.

This broader vision of leadership will depend on the mutual commitments of multiple partners in education and strengthened relationships between system, wider community and organisational partners in education. Through strengthened relationships, wider pockets of leadership may be promoted which are directed by a shared vision for the future of schools and student learning. By elevating leadership for learning as a fixed goal in education more value may be placed on the development of school leaders at multiple levels of the system.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

It is logical to begin a review of the research findings with a restatement of the central research question, which asks:

> Do leadership supports, structures and practices in Irish primary education viewed from the perspectives of novice leaders reflect a leadership outlook that is sustainable in the long term?

The evidence collected, analysed and presented in the preceding chapters produces a strong case for arguing that there are a number of fundamental weaknesses in the Irish primary context, which place road blocks along the pathway towards sustainable leadership in the long term. Like environmental sustainability, sustainability in education is a moral imperative and the quality of our educators' lives and the future of our students' learning depend on it. Making leadership sustainable is an enormously difficult proposal and is built upon "the necessity of taking the long view" and "the wisdom of being prudent" or shrewd in the management of educational affairs (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 4). Sustainable leadership is an aspirational outlook. It respects the past, but also regards the future, by seeking action that is urgent while allowing time for results to ferment. It is constructed upon the premise of growth and development. It depends on the cultivation of shared visions for action which promote structures and practices that more aptly support enduring improvement. Sustainable leadership requires shared commitment and time.

This mixed methods study explored whether the perceptions and experiences of NAPs represent a solid platform on which sustainable leadership may be constructed. The central objective in this study has been to present a snapshot of the reality of practice for novice school leaders. The fundamental components of sustainable leadership were the

guiding framework for this investigation. It has been argued that when learning is central, leadership succession is planned for, and distributed leadership is established as a practice norm in schools, sustained improvement is more likely to be achieved (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The major findings explored as priority issues in this chapter have implications for the formation and development of future policy and for the sharing of good practice. The findings are directly associated with sustainable leadership which is recognised as a relatively new concept in education (Grooms & Reid-Martinez, 2011).

The aim in this chapter is to present the broader implications of the findings, and to draw conclusions from the study as a whole by prioritising the emergent issues which inhibit sustainable leadership in practice contexts. The significant findings are revisited and presented as new knowledge emerging from the research. It is useful at this point to reconnect with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the emergent research design in presenting an overview of the significant findings in this study. Figure 6.1 (overleaf) builds on the outline of the study presented in chapter one (See Figure 1., p. 11) by expanding the framework to include the links between theory, design and significant findings in this case. This provides a useful map of the full research journey and flags the pathway which led to new understanding relating to the concept of sustainable leadership in the Irish primary school sector. Figure 6.1 depicts how the guiding belief that leadership is central to school improvement, coupled with influential factors grounded in the specific context of school leadership in Ireland, and the researcher's ontological perspective, shaped the research approach in this case. The conceptual framework of sustainable leadership and the core tenets of depth, length and breadth in turn guided the research design and provided the framework through which the research findings were subsequently categorised and discussed.

Figure 6.1: Outline of study approach leading to research findings

Core belief: Leadership is central to school improvement

Contextual Background

Economic austerity   Educational reform

Ontology

Social ontological perspective | Assumption: | Leadership is socially constructed

Theoretical Perspective

| Interpretivism | Sustainable leadership | Leading learning | Succession planning | Distributed leadership |

Conceptual framework

| Fundamental principles of sustainability | Depth | Length | Breadth |

Methods

| Sequential Mixed Methods | QUANT ↓ qual | Complementary | Integrated data aligned with | • Context
• Theory
• Conceptual Framework |

Overview of findings

- Leading learning is impeded at practice level due to organisational constraints
- There are no formal procedures for succession planning in Irish primary schools
- Distributed leadership is witnessed only as an informal construct in primary schools
- Socio-political factors have impacted upon leadership development in schools

In the first section of this chapter, a summary of important findings linked with the substantive literature in the field has been arranged under the following headings:

- Prioritising leading learning as the central moral purpose of schooling

- Promoting CPD that focuses on the specific leadership needs of the school

- Developing distributed leadership

- Enhancing structures and procedures in order to promote leadership succession planning in education

The chapter proceeds with specific recommendations in response to the perceptions of principals regarding leadership challenges, and priority issues associated with sustainable leadership. A number of specific proposals are presented which may help to sustain and strengthen leadership practices linked with progressive school improvement. Recommendations are aligned with the key priorities discussed in this chapter, and address five priority areas including increased scope for leading learning in schools, promoting training and preparation for leadership in schools, enhancing structures for distributing leadership at organisational level, developing formal succession planning procedures and elevating school leadership using professional standards. Following on from the recommendations, the limitations of the study are highlighted, and suggestions for future research are put forward. The chapter concludes with a reflective review of the research journey and a summary of the implications of the study.

Prioritising leading learning as the moral purpose of schooling

Learning is accepted by many authors as the central moral purpose in education and leading learning as the desirable ideal for the school principal (Fullan, 1993; Davies, 2001; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, Sergiovanni, 2007). Leading learning or instructional leadership involves direct principal engagement with the curriculum, school wide

instruction and assessment of learning (Hallinger, 2005; Jenkins, 2009, Prytula *et al*. 2013). Sustainable leadership has leading learning as a fundamental principle since learning is the core business of schooling (Fullan, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). That school leadership is a complex and changeable social construct has been outlined as a central assumption by the researcher in this study. It is feasible to argue that given the complexity of the role and the many diverse responsibilities and challenges involved in the role, principals may not always view leading learning as a central priority.

Some NAPs in this study report that the weight and urgency of school administrative and managerial tasks means that core aspects of instructional leadership are aspirations rather than practice realities. It seems that in the reality of practice, school management and administration take precedence over instructional leadership for principals in schools. Administration and management may be viewed as more urgent because many of these tasks require negotiation, documentation and recording and these tasks are often limited to specified time schedules. NAPs perceive that the pace of change and reform and the level of documentation associated with mandated policy reform is causing frustration at organisational level in education. NAPs regard DES policy reformers as culpable for the sense of change overload being experienced in schools presently. Many of the change mandates, however, are closely associated with components of instructional leadership. For example, revised curricula, new instructional approaches and assessment and evaluation of learning are outlined in the Numeracy and Literacy reform policies.

The evidence in this study supports the fact that instructional leadership is not perceived as a reality of practice for NAPs in schools. This may arise from a genuine reluctance or uncertainty about specific aspects of instructional leadership. Principals may lack the competence or expertise to fully engage in some aspects of instructional leadership. Principals may feel that observation of practice undermines the teachers in their schools

who may be regarded by principals as having greater levels of expertise in new instructional methodologies and specific classroom level curricula.

Time-poverty has been consistently reported in previous Irish studies and is therefore, not a new issue (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; IPPN, 2007; 2014; Morgan & Sugrue, 2008). This issue, however, is highly relevant to the long term sustainability of school leadership because workload pressures are linked strongly with principal burnout in the literature (Carr, 1994; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Lim, 1995; Thornton, 1996). It can be argued that lack of time is a common constraint in many working environments, however, schools environments are far more nuanced than other work sectors. Schools are not private enterprises since education is everyone's business. Schools are "loosely coupled systems" involving missions, shared visions, specific cultures, continuous interactions and evolving behaviours that all shape instruction and learning. Educational leadership is complicated by the frenetic nature of a school and Sugrue's comments about the "growing realization that 'business as usual' is no longer adequate for the challenges of primary principalship in the first decade of the 21st century"(2003, p. 9), seem as relevant now as they were over a decade ago.

The issue of time-poverty is complex. The responsibilities associated with leadership in schools need to be carried out during the course of the academic year and many tasks, particularly administrative tasks have fixed deadlines. NAPs report that school principals have longer working hours than other members of the school community because of commitments to the managerial and administrative aspects of the role. In the case of teaching principalships, the challenge of exercising the dual role of teacher and leader is perceived as unrealistic among NAPs who also report that leadership reluctance for teaching principal positions is a prevalent dilemma. Teaching principals it would seem feel huge pressures to fulfil the same commitments to administration and school management as administrative principals. This work is attended to outside of

school hours because of full-time teaching commitments and release day allowances for management and administration are perceived as insufficient.

Decreased centralised regulation of schools can be linked with extended responsibility for school leaders, according to Engels *et al.* (2008), because of the level of policy management and administration that increased local autonomy requires. Decision making involves collaboration with multiple stakeholders, however, the principal is viewed as responsible for their implementation (Elmore, 2000). The most recent agendas of change and reform in primary education have run concurrent to conditions of diminished public sector resourcing and funding. NAPs emphatically report that school community members feel the burden of pressure from multiple partners in education and feel overwhelmed and under prepared to meet the expectation of dynamic and innovative leadership in challenging times. The expansion of the role due to increased administrative demands is reported as the greatest barrier to instructional leadership in the contexts explored in this study. It is clear that leadership roles may need to be re-envisaged so that leading learning is re-established as the central priority for both principals and for school partners in support of school principals.

Promoting CPD that focusses on the specific leadership needs of the school
The promotion of professional capital in schools through leadership development at all levels of the organisation may enhance collective agency and produce greater learning in students. Expertise is more likely to grow in a building where professionals learn from each other, however, improvement depends on attracting and cultivating talented personnel in the first place, according to Fullan (2014).The principal has a central role to play in developing organisational capacity by focussing on leadership development for teachers as well as for themselves. To fulfil this role, principals need to articulate the specific requirements for effective improvement in their school contexts. As instructional leaders they need to evaluate teachers on their effectiveness, establish

professional growth opportunities, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, and develop the academic culture of the school (Hallinger, 2005; Jenkins, 2014). Leadership capacity which is learning centred will depend on the accessibility of high quality professional development. It is essential that training is provided which focusses on a broader vision of leadership in schools and that training and development is relevant to all partners involved in school learning.

The findings in this study reflect previous studies claiming that primary school CPD provision is fragmented (Sugrue, 2002; Coolahan, 2003; Granville, 2005; Johnson, Murchan, Loxley, Fitzgerald & Quinn, 2007). It is perceived that access to CPD is dependent on the location of the school and amenity to regional education centres. A common perception which emerged in this study is that CPD provisions are linked closely with policy led agendas rather than with the specific needs and challenges experienced in school contexts. CPD linked with organisational leadership is not commonly accessed by school professionals and it is reported that post-graduate school leadership qualifications are rarely sought by teachers or aspiring school principals. University leadership programmes are viewed as overly theoretical because they are not practice based. There is also little financial incentive to seek professional development relating to school leadership.

Given the new demands of the role of principal in the 21st century, policy makers in other jurisdictions are increasingly focussing on training and preparation as a means of sculpting candidates for the diverse demands of the principalship (Barber *et al.* Hale & Moorman, 2003; Fink, 2010; Northfield, 2014). By comparison professional development in school leadership in the Irish primary sector seems to be undervalued. There are few incentives within the system which may help to attract potential

candidates to pursue leadership training. Leadership development for teachers is not funded and presently is no longer formally recognised at practice level because of the embargo on middle leadership positions in schools. The desire to pursue leadership development would seem to be restricted to those who intend to pursue a principalship and leadership practice is not commonly regarded as an accepted feature of teaching practice. Even for aspiring principals it would seem that leadership training is not a keen priority. Few NAPs in this study report having engaged with leadership development programmes prior to their recent appointments as principals.

The research findings indicate that there are weak links between leadership training and preparation, and site based practice. By preparing aspiring leaders and promoting teacher leadership practices which are focussed on the key components of leadership for learning and shared leadership practices, more solid foundations for sustainable leadership be consolidated in schools. Leadership training for all members of the school community may reinforce distributed leadership practices which are more likely to support school principals in carrying out their diverse roles. Teacher leadership may also enhance the teaching and learning that goes on in schools by identifying and utilising the talent and expertise that is readily available in schools. Presently, collective leadership capacity is an untapped resource in our schools.

Developing distributed leadership

An already overloaded prescript for the principalship in Ireland is expanding in schools where middle leadership networks are being eroded. In the school contexts in this study, the lack of formality relating to authentic distribution of duties is perceived as problematic. Many NAPs who are now more dependent on a spirit of volunteerism in their schools are by necessity accepting the leadership shortfall. In a previous study

exploring distributed leadership in the secondary school sector in Ireland, Humphreys (2009) reports that school leaders need to be more adequately trained and supported to direct distributed leadership practices in their organisations. Distributed leadership is a term connected with groups, and is therefore constructed in schools in ways that involve teachers and wider community members in addition to principals. Principals who are reluctant to devolve control or teachers who view leadership as an additional responsibility rather than part of their role, may greatly impede shared approaches to school leadership. Authentic distribution occurs when all school partners are complicit in shared leadership approaches which enhance school wide learning (Hatcher, 2005). Shared responsibility for leadership supports school principals by alleviating in some part the burden of responsibility on the principal (Harris, 2003). Collective leadership also empowers teachers by developing their leadership capacity and enhancing shared ownership of school wide improvements. Team approaches to leadership therefore are associated with student learning (Murphy, 2005).

Strong organisations have leaders at all levels. The traditional outlook which views the principal as the sole leader in schools is no longer relevant where increased partnership in education is desired. The role of the teacher Irish schools may be reconceptualised to include leadership as an accepted tenet of teaching. This will only be achieved if principals also devolve control and provide opportunities within their schools for meaningful collaboration and shared responsibility. That NAPs report feeling isolated in their roles is a significant finding, yet, it can be argued that the level of supports offered to schools has never been so great. Parents, students, school management boards and the wider local communities are accepted as significant partners in education. This has opened forums for discussion and communication with the aim of providing more holistic approaches to learning and development in schools by using a broad network of expertise and knowledge to inform educational practice. Increased decentralisation

237

offers schools the opportunity to develop partnerships and networks in order to become self-improving (Hargreaves, 2010). It may be the case, however, that rather than alleviating tensions and work related pressures in schools, new partnership models have had the converse effect. Principals may feel that increased involvement with multiple partners has further expanded the role of school leader who is responsible for brokering relationships with invested parties.

Hargreaves (2010) argues that to achieve sustainable and self-improving schools, structures and procedures need to be planned for and implemented in order to organise distributed leadership practice throughout the organisation itself and through relevant networks outside the organisation. This may be achieved through school clustering, local involvement and co-construction and a through interaction and dialogue with a wide network of system leaders.

Structures and procedures for promoting leadership succession planning

The development and cultivation of a steady pipeline of capable leaders projects an image of strong leadership which promotes learning in the long term. Succession planning is key to a hopeful leadership future in schools (Fink, 2010). The research confirms that in Irish schools there are no plans for leadership succession. For the most part, leadership development occurs post-appointment for principals in Irish schools. The opportunities provided for teachers to develop their leadership talents are severely restricted as there are no allowances for professional development in leadership, and leadership posts of responsibility in schools have ceased. The pathway to leadership in Irish primary schools presents as a stunted process of socialization for emergent leaders. There is no multi-staged career trajectory to the principalship. In addition, formal leadership training is not a requirement for successful candidacy to the role of principal which means that the identification and recruitment of capable leaders is a difficult

challenge. It is only through "vigorous and targeted recruitment and selection" that expert teachers with leadership potential can be cultivated, according to Schleicher (2011, p. 22). In the absence of a structured professional pathway to principalship it is difficult to identify and develop leadership talent or to deepen leadership recruitment pools.

Within a system that intends to attract an adequate cohort of capable and knowledgeable professionals to positions of influence in schools much needs to be done to enhance the image of the school principalship. The research confirms that strong messages relating to the value of school leadership are imparted at practice level. The enduring perception of the school principal as over-worked and under-supported has done much to devalue the role and feed the issue of principal reluctance and prevailing leadership shortages (Anderson *et al.* 2011). Deciding to become a school principal involves the decision to become more than a class teacher and should therefore involve the acquisition of skills which are above and beyond the remit of teaching, yet no policy programmes for the development of school leaders have emerged in the last two decades. There is more training and support provided for the induction of newly qualified teachers than principals in primary education.

For many NAPs presently, previous teaching service is the only preparatory experience for the position of principal. Upon selection also, NAPs are not ensured an adequate induction process and transitions to the role of new principal in schools are often problematic. The most obvious and widely acknowledged issues associated with the role of school principal which are at the heart of leadership reluctance including workload, remuneration, isolation and role description, have yet to be addressed in any way by policymakers or government agencies in Ireland. These issues are likely to continue to complicate the pursuit of sustainable leadership in schools where the role of principal is accepted as a life-long career commitment.

Recommendations

In order that the foundations of sustainable leadership be consolidated in Irish primary schools, the following recommendations are put forward:

- *Provide adequate time and scope for leading learning in schools*

  The findings confirm that the scarcest resource and the greatest challenge reported by NAPs in practice contexts is the lack of time provided for assuming all duties associated with their roles. Engaging in instructional leadership, observing and evaluating practices and sharing knowledge are practices that are severely compromised by heavy curricular workloads in the reality of practice. The issue of time is especially constraining for teaching principals who are committed to full time classroom instruction for the duration of the school day. It is clear from the research that for teaching principals the allocated release days provided for carrying out administrative duties are inadequate. The policy documents call for principals to engage in instructional leadership. There are, however, no guidelines contained in the documentation which advise practitioners as to how instructional leadership practices may be accommodated in schools. The provision of time and space within the school day for leading learning and sharing best practice should be prioritised as an integral feature of curricular instruction in schools. The key message in the sustainable leadership framework is that learning in schools is not the reserve of students alone and that teachers who are learning from and with each other, promote greater student learning outcomes in the long-term.

- *Provide adequate training and preparation for school leadership candidates*

  In line with international trends which have directed attention on school leadership as an essential ingredient for school improvement and student

achievement, mandatory leadership training programmes should be introduced for those who wish to apply for the position of school principal in the Republic of Ireland. An adequate budget for appropriate training and development of leaders needs to be provided for, as investing in school leadership may prove to be the most economical investment in the future in terms of improving learning outcomes in our schools. Practice based leadership experience is an important forum for developing leadership potential in schools also. NAPs report that the current moratorium on middle-management positions in schools is having an adverse effect on leadership capacity within their organisational contexts. There needs to be a reinvestment in and a revision of middle leadership structures in schools in order to support school leaders and to nurture teacher leadership. The moratorium reinforces the contention that leadership is not prioritised in schools.

- *Introduce formal structures and procedures to guide distributed leadership in schools*

It is apparent that school leadership carries responsibilities and burdens that are too great for individual leaders operating on lone platforms in schools. Leadership should be accepted as a responsibility which is incumbent upon all members of the school community so that co-operative and supportive leadership becomes an explicit feature in learning organisations. Distributed leadership may be promoted by providing adequate professional development for teacher leaders in schools from the outset of a teacher's career. Education colleges could include leadership modules as part of their teacher training programmes. Distributed leadership should be planned for and reviewed in schools so that the specific talents and the interests of team members are promoted and utilised. In this way future leaders can be identified and nurtured

in practice contexts and principals can be ably supported and as a result may assume a less isolated position in schools.

- *Introduce leadership succession planning in schools*

  A change of school leader can have a profound long-term effect on the life-cycle of a school. There are no structures or procedures in evidence in the school contexts in this study to facilitate a change of leadership according to the findings. In most cases, NAPs who are appointed as school leaders are given no time or space to familiarise themselves with the position or to new school contexts. The development of induction and transition procedures to facilitate smoother handovers between incumbent leaders and successors would greatly improve the leadership changeover process in schools. Leadership job shadowing and leadership internships have been introduced in other jurisdictions where succession planning has been prioritised as an issue for review. These interventions were developed to alleviate the sense of isolation and to improve the socialisation process as teachers become leaders in new practice contexts. The prevailing situation in the Irish context which leaves novice principals struggling to come to terms with their new roles, with limited knowledge of the workings of the school and with no avenue for support, is wholly inadequate.

- *Elevate school leadership using professional standards in education.*

  School leadership has been awarded little attention at policy level in Irish education. The lack of funding awarded to leadership is evidenced in the findings which show that leadership is poorly remunerated, incentivised and supported at practice level in schools. Principal isolation is a prevalent feature of practice and principals report that they lack affirmation and support in dealing with their immense work agendas on a day-to-day basis in practice. Principal

salaries need to be more reflective of the level of duty and responsibility associated with the role. Concerns about remuneration and especially the differential between principals/deputies and other posts of responsibility are an enduring issue.

The principal salary should be brought in line with managerial and administrative salaries in other public sector departments. Increased remuneration may be linked with increased professionalization of leadership in education. For example, a more focussed emphasis on succession planning which accepts specific leadership qualifications or professional standards as mandatory for appointment as principal, may go some way towards re-envisaging the principalship as an elevated professional career path. Remuneration for the role may be associated with increased qualifications and training, thus providing crucial incentives for attracting skilled leadership candidates to the role. Continued investment in leaders for the course of their leadership careers is essential also, if principals are to remain informed about best practices as leaders of learning in their schools.

Suggestions for further research

This research has highlighted some significant issues pertaining to leadership in Irish primary schools and has generated knowledge relating to NAPs as a specific population sub-group. The scope of this research has been necessarily narrowed to include the specific tenets of the sustainable leadership framework. A number of other significant themes were illuminated in the findings and these are presented below as topics that would be apt for further review:

- The research demographics show that the gender balance in Irish primary schools seems to be shifting, as a greater number of females have been

appointed as principals at the time of this study than documented in previous reports. A study of gender and work-life balance may prove to be an interesting topic of investigation, in light of the findings that confirm that the expansion of the role of school principal is reported as the greatest challenge in practice for NAPs in this study.

- Principal well-being and mental health was captured in the survey findings and also in interviews as a growing concern among practitioners in the field of practice. A longitudinal study which explores principals' health and well-being across different organisational contexts, and different career phases may provide evidence relating to the types of supports and procedures that are likely to moderate some of the negative factors associated with the role.

- The additional pressures associated with teaching principalships was highlighted as a strong theme throughout the study. A comparative study of administrative principals and teaching principals may provide some interesting insights into the diverging challenges associated with each of these positions.

- By widening the sample to include all principals a more generalized study of the challenges of leadership in primary education may be accommodated. Such a study could investigate also the in-service development of leaders, which was beyond the scope of this study.

Reflection

As researcher in this case, I have been granted a unique insight into the professional lives of primary school principals and felt challenged to convey their experiences. My enormous respect for this cohort of professionals has been consolidated by this research journey. I am cognisant of the fact that as positional leaders, principals are required to exude leadership qualities which place greater demands on them than on other school community members. My interest in school leadership grew from witnessing first-hand a talented leader in practice and realising that he was performing a role which I felt certain I would never desire. I have frequently questioned my 'principalship reluctance' and that of my colleagues and concluded that the decision to pursue the position of school principal is a courageous one.

The most challenging aspect of this research journey has been the organisation and management of the extensive body of data generated by the sample population. The presentation of findings depicts a broad range of themes which are representative of commonly held views and experiences. Many remarkable and interesting stories have had to be placed aside. It has been difficult to personify the NAP participants and to disclose the real life characters who are possessed of so many admirable attributes. Engaging with NAPs allowed me to briefly connect with some exceptional personalities and leaders who possess humility, passion, determination, enthusiasm and deep attachments to their schools and school community members. Despite the enormous tableaux of duties and responsibilities and the common pressures of leading in times of increased demands and financial constraints, these principals have a strong sense of duty and care towards the students and partners in their organisational community. They are rewarded for their commitment by the community itself. They derive great

pride in and pleasure from their work. This is reported by participants in this study in

the following comments:

> Despite it all, I love my job. I am extremely fortunate to work with a most
> dedicated, professional, positive team of people who are there for the pupils. I
> couldn't remain if it were otherwise. (OER, 79:18-20)

> I'm sitting here and talking to you and I'm thinking of the school and the things
> that have happened during the year and I have a big smile on my face because of
> it. (Seán, TP: 926-928)

Many challenges which have been documented and discussed in this research study are

restricting school leadership practice. The findings have shown that numerous issues

exist at both system and organisational level in schools which diminish leadership

capacity. Effective change is based on a steadfast purpose, which should be matched at

system and organisational level. Fullan (2014) recognises that there has never been a

time "when circumstances for the role of school principals have been more volatile"

(2014, p. 145). Certainly leadership in Irish primary schools does not seem to be

developed or prioritised by a system that charges leaders with securing an educational

future. School leaders feel isolated, under-valued and demoralised. Leadership in the

Irish primary school system continues to be neglected at policy level and presently as

this research suggests, the long term sustainability of educational leadership is a genuine

concern.

Fullan's defines sustainability as "the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities

of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" (p. ix).

Sustainability theorists claim that the central lever for sustainable improvements is

effective leadership (Kellermann & Webster, 2001; Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur &

Schley, 2008). Fullan notes that Archimedes, the first to explain the principle of the

lever, pointed to a very important element of sustainability when he said, "Give me a lever long enough and I can change the world." (2005, p. 18). Fullan argues that "for sustainability, that lever is leadership" (2005, p. 27). The legitimacy of sustainability, as a sought after ideal, has been validated by the volume of research and debate on the issue in multiple fields of inquiry.

A core argument advocated throughout this research study is that schools are sustained on the shoulders of great leaders, a conviction that led to the question: How are great leaders sustained? The response to this question, according to the evidence offered by principals themselves in this research study, is that primary school leadership is not sustainable. The core foundations of sustainable leadership: leading learning, succession planning and distributed leadership according to the findings discussed, are compromised by a number of complicated factors. School leadership urgently needs to be developed and supported in Ireland by a system that recognises that investment in school leaders may be the greatest long term investment for future improvements in schools. The only way to predict the future is to create it.

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**Seven Principles of
sustainable leadership
in Education**

Depth	**Principle 1** Leading learning as the central purpose in schools
Length	**Principle 2** Promoting future leaders in our schools
Breadth	**Principle 3** Utilizing leadership talent to distribute leadership responsibility

**FUNDAMENTAL
PRINCIPLES**

Justice	**Principle 4** Socially just education serving the public good and remaining inclusive of all.
Diversity	**Principle 5** Creative and flexible education promoting learning for all in strong networked communities.
Resourcefulness	**Principle 6** Renewal of human resourcefulness promoting progress and change.
Conservation	**Principle 7** Learning from the past to develop future improvements

Modified from Hargreaves and Fink (2006).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Acting principal: In schools with three or more teachers a deputy principal or vice principal is required to fill an acting principal's post in the absence of the principal owing to illness or other cause. Should the deputy principal refuse to take the acting principal's post his/her deputy principal's allowance will cease to be paid for the duration of the acting post.

Administration: The requirement to comply with the various reporting, recording and data-management obligations to which the school is subject. (Hay Group, 2003).

Administrative principal: The broad categories of the role of the administrative principal include; leadership, staff management and development, pupil development and progress, policy development, curriculum development and administration (Hay Group, 2003).

Assistant principal: An assistant principal is a senior management position in Irish schools. Along with the deputy principal, an assistant principal supports and works under the direction of the school principal in managing and leading a school.

Aspiring leaders: Aspiring principals are defined by the Hay Group as "capable teachers who have demonstrated leadership ability and have identified potential to grow into principalship or other senior school leadership role" (2010, p. 7). In some jurisdictions aspiring principals are formally identified as candidates who are engaged in leadership internships or enrolled in leadership preparation programmes (Ontario, Canada; UK; USA; Victoria, Australia).

Board of Management (BOM): The board must uphold the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school. The composition of the board of management for schools with more than one teacher is made up of:

- Two direct nominees of the patron
- Two parents of children enrolled in the school (one mother and one father) elected by the parents
- The principal
- One other teacher elected by the teaching staff.
- Two extra members agreed by the representatives of the patron, teachers and parents

The board's main function is to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and to provide an appropriate education for each student at the school. The board is accountable to the patron and the Minister for Education and Skills. The school principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and is accountable to the board.

Croke Park Agreement/ Haddington Road Agreement: Public Service Agreements outlining requirement to undertake an additional 36 hours in order to provide additional time to deal with some or all of the following items:

> school planning, continuous professional development, induction, pre and post school supervision, policy development, staff meetings, nationally planned in-service, school arranged in-service. (Circulars 0025/2011, 0043/2014).

Deputy Principal: The Deputy Principal occupies a position of vital importance in the administration and development of the school. The Deputy Principal shall undertake responsibility under the direction of the principal for the internal organisation, administration and discipline of the school. (Circular 04/98, DES).

Distributed leadership /Shared leadership: Leadership practices which "rely on multiple sources of leadership across the organization to guide and complete numerous tasks that vary in size, complexity, and scope" (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 439).

Instructional leadership: Educational leadership which focuses on the technical core responsibilities of schools, namely teaching and learning, by defining the school's

mission, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

Management: The principal has overall authority under the authority of the Board of Management/Manager for the day to day management of the school. The principal controls the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school, including the assignment of duties to members of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The principal submits to the Board all such statements and reports affecting the conduct of the school as the Board requires.

Mentoring: A relationship in which an experienced person provides guidance and support to a less experienced person (Haney, 1997).

Novice leaders: Novice leaders also termed as beginning principals, new leaders, novice administrators or transitioning leaders; are classified by a number of authors as school principals who are in their first two years of a principalship (Barnett, Shoho and Oleszewski, 2012; Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton & Schuyler Ikemoto, 2012; Tredway, Brill and Hernandez, 2003).

Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST): PDST is a school development planning support service. It was established in 1999 by the Department of Education and Science to stimulate and strengthen a culture of collaborative development planning in schools, with a view to promoting school improvement and effectiveness.

School community/stakeholders/partners: The term school community typically refers to the various individuals, groups, businesses, and institutions that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a school and its community, for example, the teaching and ancillary staff, parents and the wider community served by the school. The term school

community is often used interchangeably with the term "stakeholders" or "school partners".

School Development Planning (SDP): School Development Planning is a process undertaken by the school community to give direction to the work of the school in order to ensure that all pupils receive a quality education in terms of both holistic development and academic achievement. The fundamental purpose of School Development Planning is to enable the school to achieve and maintain the highest possible level of effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of its pupils in a culture that is characterised by change. It involves a systematic approach to the planning work that is already being done in schools: it co-ordinates and integrates piecemeal planning activities into the coherent structure of an overall plan (DES, 1999).

Special duties /middle management posts of responsibility: The principal, deputy principal, assistant principal and holders of posts of responsibility together form the in-school management team for the school. In-school management provides 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 development of the school (DES, Circular 05/98).

Teaching principal: The broad categories of the role of the teaching principals include; teaching, staff management and development, curriculum development, pupil progress and development, policy development and leadership (Hay Group, 2003).

APPENDIX 3

Matrix identifying survey item specifications

Sustainable leadership Categories	Objective/examining experiences	Objective/Examining attitudes	Total
Preparation and training	Q3, Q4,Q5,Q6,Q7,Q8,Q14a,b,c	Q13a,b,c,d,e. Q15a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i Q20a,b,c,d,e.	28=27.4%
Support	Q22b,i. Q16h.	Q18a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l.	15= 14.7%
Transition	Q19a,b,c,d,e,f	Q16a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h. Q12a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j	24=23.5%
Instructional leadership	Q21a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m,n	Q15b,f,g.	17=16.6%
Distributed leadership	Q22a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,I,j,k,l,m	Q15a,d,Q14a,b,c.	18=17.6%
Total:	45=44.1%	57=55.9%	102=100%

(Adapted from Cohen et al, 2007, p. 419)

APPENDIX 4

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Synthesis of components and construction of variables used the questionnaire

Demographics

PERSONAL INFORMATION	
Gender Q1.	
Age Q2 (1-5)	
Qualifications/Education Q3 (1-8)	**Professional Experience/Service History** Q4 (1-5), Q5 (1-10)
Leadership Preparation Q6.	**Leadership Induction** Q7.
Knowledge of School Q8 (1-6)	**Type of Post** Q9 (1-3)

SCHOOL INFORMATION	
School Size	Q10 (1-10)
School Profile	Q11 (1-13)

Attitudinal Variables

ATTITUDES RELATING TO ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP Framework Theme :Challenges; Code= F1	Survey Items
Valued preparation Feeling adequately prepared	Q15(1-10) Q16 (3) Q20 (1-6)
Level of challenge	Q16 (4)
Level of support	Q16 (5)
Clarity of role	Q16 (6)
Level of financial reward	Q16 (7)
Allocation of time & resources	Q16 (8,9)
Restrictions on formal leadership positions	Q16 (10)
Complexity of the role of teaching principal	Q17 (1-3)

Items from literature- Anderson et al., 2012; IPPN, 2006; ETUCE, 2010 & OECD, 2008

Experiential Variables

LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING: MOTIVATION & EXPERIENCES Framework Theme: Motivation; Code= F2	Survey Items
Strong desire to lead	Q12(1)
Desire to instigate improvement	Q12 (2)
Financial gain	Q12 (3)
Progress/ambition	Q12(4)
Desire to bring about change	Q12(5)
Encouraged by others	Q12(6)
Self-belief/identify self as leader	Q12(7)
Wanted challenge/responsibility	Q12(8)
Make a difference to society	Q12(9)
Desire to share knowledge	Q12 (10)
Satisfaction with pre-service preparation	Q16(3)
Leadership potential developed early in teaching career	Q13 (1)
Access to leadership counselling/coaching	Q13(2)
Guidance from serving principal	Q13(3)
Understanding of the role	Q13(4)
Personal goal	Q13(5)

Attitudinal Variables

LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING: Leadership Preparation Framework Theme: Training & Preparation & Recruitment: Code =F3	Survey Items
There is a succession plan in the school	Q22(13)
Importance of leadership training	Q15(1)
Importance of teaching experience	Q15(2)
Importance of leadership experience	Q15(3)
Importance of managerial/admin. Knowledge	Q15(4)
Previous knowledge of the school	Q15(5)
Knowledge of new instructional practices	Q15(6)
Importance of Continued Professional Development	Q15(7)
Value of knowledge of research	Q15(9)
Value of mentoring	Q20(1)
Value of leadership induction courses	Q20(2)
Value of University leadership programmes	Q15(8), Q22(3)
Value of networking	Q20(4)
Value of peer coaching	Q20(5)

Experiential variables

Mentoring service	**Q19(1)**
Induction programme	Q19(2)
IPPN support	Q19(3)
University programme	Q19(4)
Networking	Q19(5)
Training for leadership development in schools	Q14(1)
Training in recruitment of future leaders	Q14(2)
Training in development of aspiring principals	Q14(3)

Items in literature (Basham et al, 2009; OECD, 2008;Cowie & Crawford (2007; Elmore & Burney,2000; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Rhodes & Brundett, 2007).

Attitudinal variables

LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING: TRANSITION EXPERIENCES	*Survey Items*
Framework Theme: Transition and Early Practice: Code =F4	
Rigorous recruitment process	Q16(1)
Fair and open appointment process	*Q16(2)*
Felt adequately prepared	*Q16(3)*
Find role challenging	*Q16(4)*
Lack of guidance	*Q16(5)*
Role is clear	*Q16(6)*
Time constraints	*Q16(7)*
Resource constraints	*Q16(8)*
Impact of moratorium	*Q16(9)*
Support of BOM	*Q18(1)*
Support of middle management team	*Q18(2)*
Support of teachers	*Q18(3)*
Support of parents	*Q18(4)*
Support of DES	*Q18(5)*
Support of Inspectorate	*Q18(6)*
Support of INTO	*Q18(7)*
Support of IPPN	*Q18(8)*
Support of LDS Programmes	*Q18(9)*
Support of Religious partners	*Q18(10)*
Support of Regional education centres	*Q18(11)*
Support of Health and Social Service agencies	*Q18(12)*

Items developed from synthesis of available development programmes in Irish Primary contexts

Perceptual Variables

PERCEPTIONS OF NAP's RELATING TO <u>INSTRUCTIONAL</u> LEADERSHIP CAPACITY	
Framework Theme: Leading learning; Code = F5	Survey Items
Evaluation of teaching	Q21 (1)
Aligning practice with school improvement	Q21 (2)
Using evidence to instigate change	Q21 (3)
Maintaining a long term vision for the school	Q21(4)
Promoting a positive school climate	Q21(5)
Using research & outside agents to inform practice	Q21(6)
Promoting professional development	Q21(7)
Directly engaging in classroom instruction	Q21(8)
Developing and evaluating school wide curricula	Q21(9)
Reviewing instructional materials	Q21(10)
Reflecting on leadership practice	Q21 (11, 13)
Recording formal leadership practice	Q21(12)

Items in literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Hulpia et al., 2009; Bezzina, 2010; Goff et al., 2012; Gulcan, 2012; Mattar, 2012; RAND Study, 2012; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Variables relating to Organizational practice

OBSERVATIONS OF PRINCIPALS RELATING TO <u>DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP</u> PRACTICE IN THEIR SCHOOL Framework Theme: Distributed Leadership; Code= F6	Survey Items
There is allocated time for formal leadership	Q22 (1)
There is an explicit shared vision	Q22(2)
New teachers perform leadership roles	Q22(3)
Formal collaborative structures are in place	Q22(2,4)
Evidence of informal teacher leadership	Q22(5)
Planned professional development	Q22(6)
Strength of leadership team	Q22(7)
Formal leaders make whole school decisions	Q22(8)
Parental and community collaboration	Q22(9)
Shared decision making	Q22(10)
Focus on short term change	Q22(11)
Focus on long term change	Q22(11)
Staff development is valued	Q22(12)

Items in literature (Bush & Glover, 2012; DeLima, 2008; Hulpia et al, 2009; MacBeath, 2009; Spillane & Camburn, 2007; NCSL, 2003)

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

THEME: Length-Succession Planning

Preparing for the role

1. **Can you tell me a little about your own personal journey to school principalship?**

   Any early career experiences-ambition, encouragement?

   Training or preparation?

   Chief motivation?

2. **Did you have any leadership experience before you sought the role of principal?**

   Principal in another school?

   Deputy Principal?

   Assistant Principal?

   In-school management position?

   Other?

   Do you feel this helped you in any way or encouraged you to pursue the role?

3. **Were there adequate opportunities for you to prepare yourself for the role?**

   Formal training?

   Coaching?

   Shadowing a principal?

   Experiences throughout your career?

4. **Do you feel that principals could be better prepared?**

   How?

   Is there scope for this?

   Change in Principal and impact on school

5. **To your knowledge, did your school have any structures in place to deal with the change- over of principals?**
   What was involved and who was responsible?

6. **Was there an easy transition between you and the outgoing principal?**
   Did you have a good feel for the school, staff and work criteria before you began?

   Did you experience; mentoring? Shadowing of an experienced principal? Transition

   procedures/handover period etc. or introduction to the school?

7. **Do you think the school was well equipped to deal with a change in leader?**

   Was there or is there any succession plan in place for principal turnover?

   Were any structures put in place in period leading up to impending change in leader? Was turnover

   sudden or carefully planned- e.g. transition period?

   Do you feel that the present structures for dealing with a change in principal are adequate?

Do you think that principals should be permitted to gain some experience before taking up a new position in schools?

8. **How do you think potential principals are recruited in schools?**

   Encouraged by present principal or others? Do you think principals have a central role? Have you has any involvement in recruiting potential school leaders?

   Follow their own path- seek responsibility and experience -further education?

   Are there formal processes in place?

   Can you outline your own experiences?

9. **Do you have any knowledge of interview procedures for the appointment of new principals?**

   Can you outline your own experiences- requirements, interview panel members etc.

THEME: Depth-leading learning

10. **Do you think there is good scope for sharing and reflecting upon best practices in your school?**

    Do teachers and leaders work together to interrogate and improve methods of instruction?

    Does the school as a team spotlight areas of need and improvement relating to teaching and learning?

    How does this work in your school?

    Are reflections about best practice documented and reviewed?

11. **Is there adequate provision of Continuous Professional Development specific to the teaching and learning needs of your school?**

    How accessible is CPD to the members of the school community?

    How are decisions made regarding CPD?

    Do you, as principal, have adequate opportunity to access CPD that is related specifically to teaching and learning in your school?

12. **Do you feel that you are well supported as a school in dealing with improvement and change?**

    Do you feel that it is the responsibility of the principal to effect change and improvement?

    Do you feel that schools are awarded adequate time to put long-term improvement plans in place? Mandates? Legislation? School improvement plans? Policies procedures etc.

    Do you feel that your school can be autonomous in planning for change?

    Principal leading learning

13. **Do you feel that you have adequate scope to develop your expertise on new teaching and learning practices?**

    Would you regularly share expertise with teachers relating to classroom instruction and student learning?

    Have you had any recent training in relation to classroom instruction?

14. **Would you regularly review and share reflections about the teaching that goes on in your school?**

Do you feel that you have good opportunity to observe the teaching at all levels of your school?

Are you involved in regular classroom instruction (AP)- outside your own classroom (TP)?

15. **Do teachers share information relating to their own classroom practices with you as the school principal?**

    Can you think of any examples?

16. **Do you have adequate opportunity to reflect upon and document your own practices as school principal?**

    Do you have opportunities to reflect upon and share ideas about your own practice with others?

    How do principals share knowledge about best practices?

THEME: Breadth- Sharing leadership responsibilities

17. **What kinds of support do you receive in carrying out leadership duties in your school?**

    In your personal context are leadership duties formally distributed throughout the school?

    What types of leadership responsibilities are shared in your school?

18. **Do you feel that leadership tasks could be distributed more effectively throughout your school?**

    In your present context do you feel that leadership duties are viewed as a shared responsibility?

19. **What leadership duties, if any, do you feel could be best dispersed among staff members throughout the school?**

    Are there any leadership tasks that cannot be distributed effectively?

20. **Do in-school management teams (ISM) have adequate opportunity and scope to support you with leadership duties in your school?**

    Has the moratorium on posts of responsibility had any adverse impact upon the leadership scope in your school? (If yes-How has this affected you as principal?)

    Do teachers without special duties assume leadership roles in your school?

    ## Themes arising from the survey data

21. **Can you outline your thoughts and ideas relating to the definition of the role of school principal?**

    Do you feel that the role needs to be reviewed?

22. **Would you agree with survey findings that suggest that principals find it difficult to cope with the volume of responsibilities and duties associated with the role?**

    Do you find that lack of time adversely affects your ability to fulfil your role as school principal?

    Is it difficult to combine management and administrative duties with leading learning in your school?

    How could in your opinion could the job lot of school principals be alleviated?

23. **Do you feel that the role of Teaching Principals presents specific challenges and pressures?**

    How could these issues be alleviated?

24. **Do you think that the role of school principal as it stands is tenable in the long term?**

    Where do you go for support?

25. **Would you agree with the findings that leadership reluctance exists in the context of Irish Primary schools?**

    Why do you think potential school leaders may be reluctant to apply for the role?

26. **Would you agree with the findings that school principals do not receive adequate support from the Department of Education or the Inspectorate?**

    What are the best sources of support for school principals in your experience?

27. **Do you think that the level of morale in schools is an issue in schools at present?**

    Among principals? Among teachers? Others?

    What do you feel may be contributing to low levels of morale in schools?

28. **In general, how would you describe your level of satisfaction with your work as school principal?**

DO YOU WISH TO ADD ANYTHING FURTHER OR TO ASK ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY ASPECT OF THIS INTERVIEW?

Express appreciation and acknowledge the valuable contributions made to this study.

COVER LETTER

A Chara,

Thank you very much for agreeing to complete a questionnaire which investigates the experiences of Newly Appointed Principals (NAPs) in Irish primary education. The study seeks to document the reality of new leadership practice across two key phases of succession; the aspirational phase (prior to appointment as principal), and the transition phase (new leadership experiences). The aim of the study is to explore the structures that may be or may not be in place, which encourage and support new principals in pursuing leadership positions and carrying out their roles in the context of school leadership practice.

This survey is part of my research for a doctoral thesis currently being undertaken in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This study offers a unique opportunity for newly appointed principals to report their professional experiences and aims to generate a rich body of data specifically related to this sample grouping. The information gathered from the questionnaires will be analysed and some key emerging themes will be explored at a later stage through focus group discussions. These will involve a small number of voluntary participants from this survey group. The second phase of the study will not take place until the survey data have been gathered and fully analysed.

The survey should be completed in one sitting and should take no more than 15 minutes. You are asked to submit your survey response by Friday, March 22nd, 2013.

The questionnaires will be coded and the identity of the respondent and school will not be revealed in the thesis. The raw data will be stored electronically and held for 5 years after the completion of the degree and then destroyed.

The research findings may be used in presentations and publications as part of the dissemination of the research. If you require any further information or explanation, please contact me at eadaoinmcg@eircom.net

Once again, my sincere thanks for participating in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Éadaoin McGovern.

Below is the link which will take you straight to the online survey instrument;

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NAPQuestionnaire2013

Interview Consent Form

Research Study: A study of the preparation, succession and transition of Newly Appointed Principals from teaching to leading in Irish Primary school settings.

Project context: *Doctoral Study of Newly Appointed Leaders in Irish Primary Schools*

I agree to participate in this project, whose conditions are as follows:

- The project aims to seek knowledge about the experiences and perceptions of NAPs in their journey and transition into school principalships. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key informants **[from the survey questionnaire sample group).**

- Interviews will last for about one hour and questions will deal with aspects of leadership which are linked to long term leadership sustainability.

- The interview itself and the information it contains will be used solely for the purposes defined by the project.

- To facilitate the interviewer's job, the interview will be recorded. However, the recording will be destroyed as soon as it has been transcribed.

- All interview data will be handled so as to protect confidentiality. Therefore, no names will be mentioned and the information will be coded.

- All data will be destroyed at the end of the project.

- For any information about the project, I can contact **Éadaoin McGovern** at eadamac@gmail.com

- At any time, I can refuse to answer certain questions, discuss certain topics or even put an end to the interview without prejudice to myself.

Respondent's signature & date: _____

Interviewer's signature: _____

APPENDIX 9

STATISTICAL CROSS TABULATIONS

(a) Age categories and school sizes

Leadership Post / Age Crosstabulation

			age					Total
			21 to 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 to 60	61	
Leadership Post	Teaching Principal	Count	14	43	25	16	1	99
		% within Leadership Post	14.1%	43.4%	25.3%	16.2%	1.0%	100.0%
		% within age	93.3%	70.5%	58.1%	53.3%	50.0%	65.6%
		% of Total	9.3%	28.5%	16.6%	10.6%	0.7%	65.6%
	Administrative Principal	Count	1	18	18	14	1	52
		% within Leadership Post	1.9%	34.6%	34.6%	26.9%	1.9%	100.0%
		% within age	6.7%	29.5%	41.9%	46.7%	50.0%	34.4%
		% of Total	0.7%	11.9%	11.9%	9.3%	0.7%	34.4%
Total		Count	15	61	43	30	2	151
		% within Leadership Post	9.9%	40.4%	28.5%	19.9%	1.3%	100.0%
		% within age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	9.9%	40.4%	28.5%	19.9%	1.3%	100.0%

304

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	56.354[a]	36	.017
Likelihood Ratio	45.634	36	.130
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.498	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	151		

Correlation is significant at ≤ 0.05 level. This table indicates a positive relationship between the school size and the age category of the survey respondents. Chi-square= 56.354, df=36, P=0.17. 93.3 per cent of younger candidates were appointed to teaching principal positions (school sizes ≤150 pupils).

(b) Type of leadership post and opportunities to observe teaching

Crosstab

			Principal observes teaching			Total
			rarely	not sure	often	
Leadership Post	Teaching Principal	Count	77	10	9	96
		% within Leadership Post	80.2%	10.4%	9.4%	100.0%
		% within Principal observes teaching	70.6%	41.7%	75.0%	66.2%
		% of Total	53.1%	6.9%	6.2%	66.2%
	Administrative Principal	Count	32	14	3	49
		% within Leadership Post	65.3%	28.6%	6.1%	100.0%
		% within Principal observes teaching	29.4%	58.3%	25.0%	33.8%
		% of Total	22.1%	9.7%	2.1%	33.8%
Total		Count	109	24	12	145
		% within Leadership Post	75.2%	16.6%	8.3%	100.0%
		% within Principal observes teaching	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	75.2%	16.6%	8.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.833[a]	2	.020
Likelihood Ratio	7.442	2	.024
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.130	1	.288
N of Valid Cases	145		

Correlation is significant at ≤ 0.05 level. There is a positive relationship between the type of leadership post and the opportunities reported for observing teaching. Chi-Square= 7.833, df =2, P=.020. Teaching principals engage in observation less often due to teaching commitments. 80.2% rarely observe teaching, compared with 65.3% of administrative principals.

(c) Leadership post and the development and evaluation of the curriculum

Crosstab

			Principal develops and evaluates curriculum			Total
			rarely	not sure	often	
Leadership Post	Teaching Principal	Count	22	47	27	96
		% within Leadership Post	22.9%	49.0%	28.1%	100.0%
		% within Principal develops and evaluates curriculum	84.6%	67.1%	55.1%	66.2%
		% of Total	15.2%	32.4%	18.6%	66.2%
	Administrative Principal	Count	4	23	22	49
		% within Leadership Post	8.2%	46.9%	44.9%	100.0%
		% within Principal develops and evaluates curriculum	15.4%	32.9%	44.9%	33.8%
		% of Total	2.8%	15.9%	15.2%	33.8%
Total		Count	26	70	49	145
		% within Leadership Post	17.9%	48.3%	33.8%	100.0%
		% within Principal develops and evaluates curriculum	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	17.9%	48.3%	33.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.666[a]	2	.036
Likelihood Ratio	7.115	2	.029
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.507	1	.011
N of Valid Cases	145		

Correlation is significant at ≤ 0.05 level. There is evidence of a statistical relationship between type of post and the opportunity to evaluate teaching is shown. Chi-square=6.666, df= 2 and P=.036. Teaching principals are less likely to often engage in the development and evaluation of the curriculum. 28.8 per cent of teaching principals report that they often evaluate the curriculum compared with 44.9 per cent of administrative principals.

(d) Leadership post and use of research to inform practice

			Principal promotes use of research			Total
			rarely	not sure	often	
Leadership Post	Teaching Principal	Count	34	37	25	96
		% within Leadership Post	35.4%	38.5%	26.0%	100.0%
		% within Principal promotes use of research	81.0%	57.8%	64.1%	66.2%
		% of Total	23.4%	25.5%	17.2%	66.2%
	Administrative Principal	Count	8	27	14	49
		% within Leadership Post	16.3%	55.1%	28.6%	100.0%
		% within Principal promotes use of research	19.0%	42.2%	35.9%	33.8%
		% of Total	5.5%	18.6%	9.7%	33.8%
Total		Count	42	64	39	145
		% within Leadership Post	29.0%	44.1%	26.9%	100.0%
		% within Principal promotes use of research	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	29.0%	44.1%	26.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.175[a]	2	.046
Likelihood Ratio	6.525	2	.038
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.698	1	.100
N of Valid Cases	145	.	.

Correlation is significant at ≤ 0.05 level. There is evidence of a statistical relationship and between the type of principal post and the use of research to inform instructional practices in schools. Chi Square= 6.175, df= 2, P=.046. Teaching principals are less likely to engage with research than administrative principals. 35.5 per cent of the teaching principals surveyed rarely use research to inform practice compared with 16.3 per cent of administrative principals who rarely use research.

(e) Relationship between type of post and reported understanding of the role prior to appointment

Crosstab

			I had a clear understanding of the role			Total
			disagree	unsure	agree	
Leadership Post	Teaching Principal	Count	34	14	50	98
		% within Leadership Post	34.7%	14.3%	51.0%	100.0%
		% within I had a clear understanding of the role	82.9%	60.9%	58.1%	65.3%
		% of Total	22.7%	9.3%	33.3%	65.3%
	Administrative Principal	Count	7	9	36	52
		% within Leadership Post	13.5%	17.3%	69.2%	100.0%
		% within I had a clear understanding of the role	17.1%	39.1%	41.9%	34.7%
		% of Total	4.7%	6.0%	24.0%	34.7%
Total		Count	41	23	86	150
		% within Leadership Post	27.3%	15.3%	57.3%	100.0%
		% within I had a clear understanding of the role	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	27.3%	15.3%	57.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.771[a]	2	.021
Likelihood Ratio	8.409	2	.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.938	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	150		

Correlation is significant at ≤ 0.05 level. There is statistical evidence of a relationship between the type of leadership position and the level of prior understanding of the role of principal. Chi-Square value=7.771, df= 2, P=.021. Teaching principals are more likely to disagree with the statement that they felt prepared for the role at 36.7% as compared with Administrative Principals at 13.5%. This cannot be explained by age as there is no statistically significant relationship between type of position and age categories.

(f) Relationship between leadership post and perceived negative impact of the special duties moratorium

Crosstab

			the moratorium has had a negative impact in my school			Total
			disagree	unsure	agree	
Leadership Post	Teaching Principal	Count	9	10	79	98
		% within Leadership Post	9.2%	10.2%	80.6%	100.0%
		% within the moratorium has had a negative impact in my school	90.0%	90.9%	61.2%	65.3%
		% of Total	6.0%	6.7%	52.7%	65.3%
	Administrative Principal	Count	1	1	50	52
		% within Leadership Post	1.9%	1.9%	96.2%	100.0%
		% within the moratorium has had a negative impact in my school	10.0%	9.1%	38.8%	34.7%
		% of Total	0.7%	0.7%	33.3%	34.7%
Total		Count	10	11	129	150
		% within Leadership Post	6.7%	7.3%	86.0%	100.0%
		% within the moratorium has had a negative impact in my school	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	6.7%	7.3%	86.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.817[a]	2	.033
Likelihood Ratio	8.147	2	.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.902	1	.015
N of Valid Cases	150		

Correlation is significant at ≤ 0.05 level. Cross tabulation calculations show also that there is evidence of a statistical relationship between the type of leadership post and negative impact of the moratorium. Chi-square= 6.817, df= 2, P=.033. In the case of administrative principals a higher proportion (96.2 per cent) report that they feel that the moratorium is having a negative impact in their schools, compared with 80.6 per cent of teaching principals.

(g) Relationship between leadership post and perceptions relating to adequate time for collaborative instructional leadership

Insufficient time * Leadership Post Crosstabulation

			Leadership Post			Total
			Teaching Principal	Administrative Principal	Acting Principal	
Insufficient time	disagree	Count	0	5	0	5
		% within Insufficient time	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	not sure	Count	2	9	0	11
		% within Insufficient time	18.2%	81.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	agree	Count	12	14	1	27
		% within Insufficient time	44.4%	51.9%	3.7%	100.0%
	strongly agree	Count	83	23	1	107
		% within Insufficient time	77.6%	21.5%	0.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	97	51	2	150
		% within Insufficient time	64.7%	34.0%	1.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.105[a]	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	34.778	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	28.204	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	150		

Correlation is significant at ≤ 0.05 level. Cross tabulation calculations show also that there is strong evidence of a statistical relationship between the type of leadership post and negative impact of the moratorium. Chi-square= 34.105, df= 6, P=.000. The results show that the type of leadership post influences perceptions relating to the level of time available to carry out collaborative instructional leadership. 77.6 per cent of teaching principals strongly agree that they have insufficient time to engage in collaborative instructional leadership compared with only 21.5 per cent of administrative principals for the same statement.

(h) Relationship between gender and understanding of the role

*Understanding of the role and gender crosstabulations

			I had a clear understanding of the role			Total
			disagree	unsure	agree	
gender	Female	Count	24	17	72	113
		% within gender	21.2%	15.0%	63.7%	100.0%
		% within I had a clear understanding of the role	58.5%	73.9%	83.7%	75.3%
		% of Total	16.0%	11.3%	48.0%	75.3%
	Male	Count	17	6	14	37
		% within gender	45.9%	16.2%	37.8%	100.0%
		% within I had a clear understanding of the role	41.5%	26.1%	16.3%	24.7%
		% of Total	11.3%	4.0%	9.3%	24.7%
Total		Count	41	23	86	150
		% within gender	27.3%	15.3%	57.3%	100.0%
		% within I had a clear understanding of the role	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	27.3%	15.3%	57.3%	100.0%

318

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.506[a]	2	.009
Likelihood Ratio	9.139	2	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.364	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	150		

Males less likely to state that they felt they had a good understanding of the role as compared with females. Strong statistical association between gender and understanding of the role.

(i)   Relationship between gender and perceived value of CPD

Crosstab

			importance of continued professional development			Total
			not essential	unsure	essential	
gender	Female	Count	5	12	96	113
		% within gender	4.4%	10.6%	85.0%	100.0%
		% within importance of continued professional development	41.7%	75.0%	78.7%	75.3%
		% of Total	3.3%	8.0%	64.0%	75.3%
	Male	Count	7	4	26	37
		% within gender	18.9%	10.8%	70.3%	100.0%
		% within importance of continued professional development	58.3%	25.0%	21.3%	24.7%
		% of Total	4.7%	2.7%	17.3%	24.7%
Total		Count	12	16	122	150
		% within gender	8.0%	10.7%	81.3%	100.0%
		% within importance of continued professional development	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	8.0%	10.7%	81.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.060[a]	2	.018
Likelihood Ratio	6.892	2	.032
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.630	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	150		

Statistical evidence suggests that male NAPs are less likely to value CPD than female NAPs

APPENDIX 11

Component parts of Sustainable Leadership models in education

Davies (2009)	Fullan (2005)	Hargreaves and Fink (2006)	Hill (2006)
Builds capacity of staff	Public service with moral prupose	Depth	Belief in the power and purpose of learning
Strategic leadership distribution	Commitment to changing context at all levels	Length	Wanting the best for all young people
Consolidates	Capacity building through networks	Breadth	Commanding authority and using it wisely
Builds long-term objective from short-term goals	Intelligent accountability and capacity building and vertical relationships	Justice	Share and foster leadership
Diversity	Deep learning	Diversity	Build and sustain a learning community
Conserves	Dual commitment to short and long term results	Resourcefulness	Practice accountability
	Cyclical energising	Conservation	Balance long and short term goals
	Long lever of leadership		Renewal
			Work closely with governors
			Communicate clearly and consistently