

**The Politics of Management and Leadership in
Irish Post-Primary Schools**

A Study of WSE Reports, 2006-2007

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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 (EdD) 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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
 CHAPTER ONE. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	
The Problem	1
The Importance of Leadership for Schools	5
Differentiating School Management from School Leadership	6
The Research Questions and Rationale of this Study	8
Whole School Evaluation (WSE) Reports	10
The Author's Perspective on the Research	10
The Stages of this Research	11
Outline of the Thesis	12
 CHAPTER TWO. A LITERATURE REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL THOUGHT ON LEADERSHIP AND THE IRISH CONTEXT	
Introduction	13
Why are there Different Models of School Leadership?	13
Literature Review - a Dinner Party Analogy	14
Analysing School Leadership Literature	17

The Continua	17
Values/Flexibility	18
Skills/Prescription	23
A School Community/Culture-Organisation/Structure Continuum	24
Where do the models of school leadership fit on the School Community/Culture- Organisation/Structure Continuum	25
Spillane's (2006) Understanding of Distributed Leadership	28
A Deeper Look at Spillane's (2006) Understanding of Distributed Leadership	29
Who Takes Responsibility for Leadership Work	32
How are the Leadership Responsibilities Arranged	32
How do these Arrangements Come to Pass	33
How do Individuals get Constructed as Influential Leaders	33
The practice aspect of distributed leadership	33
Other Interpretations of Distributed Leadership	35
Democratic Models of School Leadership	35
A Study of Management and Leadership in England	38
Governance in Irish Post-Primary Schools	39
The Discourse from which Whole School Evaluation (WSE) Emerged	40
The WSE Process	42
Conclusion	43

CHAPTER THREE. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction	45
Rationale for Theoretical Framework and Research Methods	46
Critical Discourse Analysis, CDA	47
Critical	48

Discourse	50
Analysis	51
Research Methods	53
Justification	53
Analysing the WSE Reports	55
Content Analysis	56
Creating Themes for Content Analysis Categories	61
The Main Stages of the Research	62
Ethical Considerations	62
A CDA of the WSE Process	63
A Content Analysis of a sample of 10 WSE Reports	63
A CDA of the WSE Reports 2006-07	63
Conclusion	64

CHAPTER FOUR. A CDA OF THE WSE PROCESS AND A CONTENT ANALYSIS

Introduction	65
The Research Methods of the Whole School Evaluation Process	67
Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods	69
The Significance of Not Including “Quality of School Planning” in the Quality of school Management Section of the WSE Reports	71
WSE Observation Techniques and Reflexivity	72
A Reminder of the Thinking which Shaped the Content Analysis	74
The Findings	77
Analysis of the Findings	81
Conclusion	84

**CHAPTER FIVE. A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA) OF THE WSE
REPORTS 2006-2007**

Introduction	86
The Themes which Emerged from the CDA	87
Inconsistencies, Ambiguities and Opinions on School Leadership and Democracy	87
The Characteristics of Boards of Management and Their Link with Senior Management	87
Distributed Leadership	88
A Greater Focus on Organisational Matters than on Processes	88
Inconsistencies, Ambiguities and Opinions on School Leadership and Democracy	94
The Characteristics of Boards of Management and their Link with Senior Management	110
Distributed Leadership	124
Middle-Management	124
Ambiguity	127
Central Leadership	128
Strategic Issues	129
Quality of School Planning	131
Conclusion	135

CHAPTER SIX. THE FINAL ANALYSIS

Introduction	139
The Education Problem	139
Answering the Research Questions	141

What do the Reports say about the Inspectorate’s Preferred Model for Management and Leadership?	143
Categorising the Inspectorate’s Preferred Model of Management and Leadership	145
Relevance of this Study	151
Bibliography	155

Abstract

This study examines management and leadership in Irish post-primary schools, as portrayed in Whole School Evaluation (WSE) reports for the period 2006-07. Management and leadership are contested and ambiguous terms, so the examination of the WSE reports was conducted through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA enabled a critical study which interpreted the relevant aspects of the WSE reports in their historical and political contexts. These contexts shaped understandings, practices and official expectations regarding management and leadership. Spillane's (2006) understanding of distributed leadership provided a conceptual model of school leadership which helped guide the critical analysis.

The research problem arose from the lack of an agreed national understanding of school management and leadership. The following research questions emerged. Firstly, how objective was the process that the inspectorate used to report on management and leadership activity in Irish post-primary schools? This is a question about the research and reporting methods used by the inspectors in the first 100 published WSE reports, 2006-07. The second question is, what do these same WSE reports reveal, or not reveal, about management and leadership activity in post-primary schools? Thirdly, what do the reports say about the inspectorate's preferred model for management and leadership?

This study is a critique of the process which generated the WSE reports as well as a critique of what is reported. On the basis of the findings for 2006-07, the author concludes by arguing that the WSE reports do not provide adequate consistency and clarity, and that their frequent ambiguity is in large part due to the absence of a shared national understanding of school management and leadership. While such an understanding may be achievable the WSE process itself was also problematic in terms of securing reliable and accurate data. The findings also indicate that the inspectorate tended to favour a managerialist model of management and leadership. In light of the current erosion of the partnership model in education this managerialism may become more pronounced.

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CHAPTER ONE. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The Problem

The research problem, which this study addresses, by necessity emerges from a significant educational problem (Kilbourn, 2005, p.8). The educational problem is the absence of an agreed definition or a preferred model or approach to understanding school leadership in the Irish context (OECD, 2007, p.63). This educational problem was in evidence for the timeframe of this study (2006-2007) and persists up to the time of writing. The absence of an agreed understanding of school leadership may be explained, to some extent, by the conceptual pluralism which attaches to leadership. This pluralism may give rise to conceptual confusion which, I argue, inhibits the potential to improve leadership in Irish schools. There are, for example, a number of different understandings of the meaning of distributed leadership, which in turn can be conflated with distributive leadership (MacBeath, 2004a, p.34). This educational problem, on school leadership, does "merit systematic, sustained research" (Kilbourn, 2005, p.9) because of the scope and complexity of addressing leadership in Irish post-primary schools. The research problem, which arises from the educational problem, is to understand the reality of Irish school leadership. Such an interpretation needs to encompass the influences which shape the reality of school leadership in the absence of an agreed understanding and against a background of conceptual ambiguity. Given the potential magnitude of such research I decided to make the research problem more manageable by focusing on the management and leadership aspects of the post-primary Whole School Evaluation reports (henceforth WSE reports) for the period 2006-2007, as the main source of primary evidence. Specialised secondary sources are also used. However, as the subsequent chapters explain, the research problem is complicated by the research methodology of WSE and the inspectorate's mode of reporting on school management and leadership. Consequently, as this study evolved, it became as much concerned with the dynamic between the WSE process and school management and leadership, as with any assumed objective reports of management and leadership in the post-primary school system.

The educational problem, which contextualises this study, is summarised by the OECD's *Improving School Leadership Country Background Report- Ireland (2007)* which stated that:

It is clear that the conceptualisation of school leadership needs to be undertaken at system level, so that a clear articulation of a shared understanding of school leadership in education forms the basis for policy making and implementation in the field. (2007, p.63)

The need for a shared understanding of school leadership is highlighted by the same OECD report (2007) as one of two key challenges in Irish education. The OECD (2007) acknowledged how international models of school leadership such as instructional, transformational and distributed, were imported into Ireland but stated that they "need to be interrogated in the context of the needs and realities of schools and the system" (p.62). Further, the report recognises the broader educational leadership roles, including those of patrons, boards of management, inspectors and teacher trade unions; and their impact on leadership at the school level (2007, p.63).

The need to refract imported models of leadership in a way which is sensitive to domestic realities is alluded to by de Vries (2001). Indeed, imported leadership models may be simply unsuitable in a different cultural context. In this regard de Vries (2001) makes the following point about the prospect of trying to adjust the matrix structure of global corporations to different cultures:

It isn't easy for people with a hierarchical mindset to deal with networking organizations in which hierarchy is loosely defined, lateral communications dominate, people "bypass" (that is, forego hierarchical modes of reporting), and many employees have more than one boss. (p.237)

De Vries' (2001) perspective on leadership has a distinctly cultural or national flavour and suggests a need to study leadership in Ireland in the context of Irish history and culture. His view is clarified in the following commentary:

Someone coming from a country such as Sweden, Holland or America - a non hierarchical country - would probably have an easier time of it than someone from a Latin country or (even more dramatically) the Peoples' Republic of China, where there are more than 20 layers in the Communist Party. (p.237)

The second challenge in Irish education, identified by the OECD (2007), is to define the professional qualities of a school leader i.e. attributes, knowledge, skills and competencies. While this is currently a focus for debate in the context of appointments of principals, deputy principals and post-holders, and in the design of professional development programmes, the report argues that "The debate could

also be held in the context of whole school evaluation – exploring the type of leadership that best serves a school in a particular context” (pp. 62-63). Therefore, a shared understanding of school leadership is intended to include professional qualities and school context.

Interestingly, the Leadership Development for Schools (henceforth LDS) articulated concerns about a “one size fits all” approach, arguing for a more fluid or flexible understanding.

The educational problem of ambiguity attaching to school leadership in Ireland is reinforced by Flood (2001), the former National Co-ordinator of LDS, who argued that there is a danger that the current model of leadership in Ireland “ simply reinforces the compliant, managerial role of the 1970s and 1980s” and is a barrier to the realisation of the principal as a leader of learning and the school community (O`Sullivan and Burnham, 2011, p.53). On one level, Flood`s managerial classification of Irish school leadership appears to contradict the OECD`s view (2007, p.63) that there is an absence of an agreed understanding of what school leadership should mean. However, on the other hand, by stating that he finds it difficult to see how there can be “any clear direction to the role of school leaders” until there is national agreement on their purpose, and the skills, qualities, behaviours and practices required (O`Sullivan and Burnham, 2011, p.53), he appears to reinforce the perspective of the OECD (OECD, 2007, p.63).

The term leadership does have currency in the post-primary system in Ireland, as was exemplified by the Department of Education and Skills (henceforth DES) support for the LDS training programme. But, at the time of writing, arising from the Government`s austerity policy this body has now been subsumed into an amalgamation of previously separate entities such as the *Second Level Support Service*. The new body was called the *Professional Development Support Programme for Teachers (PDSPT)*, and is now more simply called *Professional Development Support for Teachers (PDST)*.

While the LDS programme included the word leadership in its title, the OECD`s *Improving School Leadership Country Background Report- Ireland* (2007) refers to the absence of the words “leader” and “leadership” in official documents (OECD, 2007).

It states that education legislation, such as the *Education Act (1998)*, tends to use the term “Principal” while the phrase “school management” was reported as being more in evidence in DES publications such as *Looking at our Schools: An aid to self-evaluation in second-level schools (2003, p.21)*.

The consequences of these observations are critical given the status of the *Education Act (1998)* as a statutory instrument in a highly centralised education system. Clearly there is huge potential for confusion in communication as the academic backdrop is festooned with an array of leadership terminology, some of which equates with the formal role of principal but much of which doesn't. MacBeath's (2004a), *The Leadership File*, is illustrative in this regard but also presents an additional educational and educational research problem. This problem is that although *The Leadership File (2004)*, outlines twenty-five definitions of school leadership, there is no clear reference to school trustees or boards of management who own and manage schools. Rather most of his references are to leadership by principals and other teachers (2004a, p1).

These challenges were and are located in an educational landscape where the idea of school leadership is increasingly seen by researchers, policy makers and educationalists generally, as central to the success of schools (Mac Ruairc, 2010). Of course, we should bear in mind, that the success or improvement of schools, are themselves contentious concepts and how we define them helps to shape our image of effective leadership. School effectiveness depends on judgements about what is educationally desirable (Biesta, 2007). From this perspective powerful sectional or commercial interest groups in society have a major impact on shaping ideas of how schools should operate. So for example, it has been argued, that contrary to the historic mission of American public schools to build literate, civic-minded, and socially responsible adults; by the year 2000 these schools had become an arm of the economy (Cuban, 2003). This correlates with deficiencies in School Effectiveness Research with its focus on school organisation while neglecting “processes” such as attitudes, values, relationships and school climate (Teddlie, 2000, p. 46). In the Irish context there is, like in the U.S.A., a cleavage between theory and practice, a divergence of rhetoric and realities which poses further problems.

For instance, the *Statement of Strategy 2005-2007* of the Irish Department of Education and Science (DES) sets out its mission as:

The mission of the Department of Education and Science is to provide for high-quality education, which will enable individuals to achieve their full potential and participate fully as members of society, and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development. (*Leadership Development for Schools*, 2007, p. 17)

However, the rhetoric of this statement jars with the reality of "performativity" as defined by Sugrue (2006). Teaching to the test as dictated by high stakes examinations such as the Leaving Certificate is a major point of debate in Ireland and elsewhere. The OECD's *Improving School Leadership Country Background Report – Ireland* acknowledges this by stating that:

At post-primary level, the quality of teaching and learning is measured by students' results in the state examinations (Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations) as well as by the recently introduced Whole School Evaluation. (OECD, 2007, pp. 40-41)

There is no reference to broader educational values such as personal development or citizenship as understood by analysts such as Cuban (2003, p.23). On a related point Dalin (1998), while addressing the question of school reform in the 1970s, was worried that reform projects funded by the World Bank had too narrow a focus on educational achievement as shown by simple tests and little concern for what would best help those children to get out of poverty (p.1065). A similar criticism, I believe, can be levelled against contemporary OECD reports on educational leadership because they tend to emphasize links between leadership practice and improvements in student learning as measured by examinations (Pont, Nusche & Moorman (Eds), 2008a, p.19).

The Importance of Leadership for Schools.

School leadership is currently the cornerstone of international studies and OECD policy formulation in education. It is viewed as a means to advance efficiency and equity in schools (Pont et al, 2008a, p.3). Leadership emerges from research as one of the most important factors in making schools effective (Harris, 2004 and Riehl, 2003) and it has also been argued that its importance "is second only to the classroom teacher as an influence on pupil learning" (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins, 2008, p.5). The importance of leadership for schools is further substantiated by the voluminous research and publications on the topic from a range of sources, including the hugely influential OECD.

The executive summary of its *Improving School Leadership Volume 1: Policy and Practice* states that:

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. (Pont et al., 2008a, p.3)

This perspective is supported by Harris and Muijs (2003) who have stated that effective leadership is a key constituent in achieving school improvement. They point out that while the quality of teaching strongly influences levels of pupil motivation and learning, the quality of school leadership matters in terms of teacher motivation and quality of teaching (p.1). Hopkins (1998) has likewise written that effective learning and teaching don't occur by accident but are usually the product of an effective learning situation created by a skilful leader (p.1049). Such comments on school leadership are echoed more broadly by de Vries (2001), who has pointed to the link between responsible leadership and the psychological well-being of the members of an organisation (p.294).

This is a recognition of leadership as an important determinant of workplace health. Furthermore, he argues that effective leadership is required to improve the performance of workers, most of whom he believes are located somewhere between being useless and brilliant (de Vries, 2001, p.1).

While some analysts are concerned that leadership may in time prove to be a passing trend or fad in the history of educational thought, others, such as Spillane (2006) disagree. Spillane (2006), has written that, "One of the greatest challenges that education will face over the next several decades is understanding leadership practice as a basis for thinking about its improvement" (p.89).

Differentiating School Management from School Leadership

Differentiating between school management and leadership is problematic. In the coliseum of conflict, where the meaning and purpose of education are contested, leadership research and analysis can be classified as some of the gladiatorial weapons. That is to say that they are not neutral or objective activities but are often aligned to specific educational outcomes. Writing in 2004, MacBeath identified a significant trend in education over the previous few years. This trend was a move away from notions of management to a new brand called leadership. Management training and teams were given the new title of leadership.

Management was seen as too closely connected with the somewhat discredited "managerialism" and its rational and scientific principles. The literature on school management and leadership is complex with some arguing that management is a subset of leadership while others believe that there are some who lead while others manage (MacBeath, 2004a, p. 58). This complexity led Hodkinson (1993) to characterise the language around leadership as "word magic of the worst kind" (p.21). However some clarity is evident. For instance, the use of the term "leadership", in the school context, came into vogue in the late 20th century as improvement in pupil achievement and school performance became priorities. Increased levels of accountability accompanied ideas about school improvement.

These developments contributed to the growing importance of the term "leadership" as it was associated with ideas of change unlike "management" which is connected with stability and the status quo (Carter, 1997 and Waters, 2006). While some critics such as Grace (MacBeath, 2004a, p.58) have argued that the move from management to leadership was more of an apparent shift than a substantive one, the concepts underlying the envisaged change, real or otherwise, are clear enough.

For example, (Grace, 1995), acknowledges that school management is about achieving organisational effectiveness once the main purposes of the organisation have been set by its own members or an external agency. By way of illustration Drysdale, Gurr and Goode (2011) presented a paper to the European Conference on Educational Research in 2011. It is called, *Dare to Make a Difference: Successful Principals Who Explore the Potential of their Role*, and was based on case studies on successful school leadership in Victoria Australia which were undertaken by the International Successful Schools Principalship Project. The paper examines how principals can "enhance the lives and performance of members of their school communities by exploring beyond the boundaries and potential of their role" (p.1). The paper's title *Dare to Make a Difference*, captures the core of the authors' thesis in that they argue that leadership is different to management in that, "there is a sense that leadership requires people to do things differently; to head in a new direction: expand their zone of influence: challenge the status quo: implement a new innovation; create a new social order" (p.3).

Other writers lend support to the idea of leadership being associated with change. For example, Yukl (2000), attempts to uncover the essence of leadership by describing it as the capacity to influence people to do things they otherwise wouldn't do (Leithwood, p.6). Hopkins (1998), writes that good schools are sailed rather than driven and that their leaders know where they want to go and how to "tack with the wind" (p.243). The link between leadership and change is also supported by those who argue that the effectiveness of leadership in education will ultimately be tested by its ability to prepare teachers for the challenges of change (MacBeath, Moos & Riley, 1996, p.247). A similar view is that resolving a technical problem is management, while tackling adaptive challenges (a problem situation for which solutions lie outside current ways of operating) requires leadership (Pont *et al.* 2008b, p.25).

The Research Questions and Rationale of this Study.

The educational problem, which I defined as the lack of a nationally agreed understanding of a leadership model for Irish post-primary schools, gave rise to the research problem which is to examine the understandings and practice of school leadership in Irish post-primary schools as portrayed in the WSE reports 2006-07. The three main research questions emerge from the research problem. Firstly, how objective is the process that the inspectorate use to report on management and leadership activity in Irish post-primary schools. This is a question about the research and reporting methods used by the inspectors in the first 100 WSE reports, 2006-07. The second question is, what do these same WSE reports reveal, or not reveal, about management and leadership activity in post-primary schools? Thirdly, what do the reports say about the inspectorate's preferred model for management and leadership? These research questions emerge because the inspectors observe, report and evaluate, using evidence including human behaviour, which they find in schools. The WSE reports, which are purposely placed in the public domain, have the power to shape management and leadership practice through their evaluative role. What is contained, or not contained, in these reports with regard to management and leadership, is illustrative both in terms of what is and is not observed in schools during evaluations, what is reported and not reported, what is endorsed and criticised; as well as securing an understanding of the lens through which inspectors make their observations.

My inquiry also provides some insight into what is understood by management and leadership in the schools which participated in the evaluations.

The setting for the inquiry is the post-primary school system in the Republic of Ireland. This system is made up of voluntary secondary, vocational and community schools, community colleges and private schools. These schools, for the period of the study, were subject to periodic WSEs by the inspectorate in order to provide “quality assurance in relation to educational provision”, as set out in Section 13 of the *Education Act (1998)*.

The rationale for this study is the need to address two gaps in knowledge. The first gap is the absence of a Critical Discourse Analysis of the management and leadership aspects of the WSE reports.

The more recently formulated Management Leadership and Learning (MLL) inspections illustrate the importance of discourse, since the terms management and leadership are used, both in the overall title and in the headings for its subsections. Conversely, the term leadership, while frequently used in the WSE reports (2006-2007), is not used in the subsection titles while the term management is. It appears, therefore, that the term leadership has attracted greater attention and currency from the inspectorate, in more recent years. Given the difficulties in distinguishing between the concepts of management and leadership, and the plurality of definitions of leadership, a number of questions arise for the period 2006-2007. These include, how did management and leadership operate in the schools? What types of management and leadership were encouraged or discouraged by the inspectorate? What type of management and leadership roles did individual teachers play and in what contexts? The second gap in knowledge is the absence of a study of management and leadership which avails of a school leadership diagnostic instrument, one which is designed to assist in the improvement of school leadership. Spillane’s (2006) understanding of distributed leadership provides such a diagnostic instrument which is different to political models of school leadership which others may advocate (p.24). I will return to Spillane (2006) in greater detail in the next chapter.

Whole School Evaluation Reports

The WSE reports arise from state policy and are investigated, written and issued by the Inspectorate which is a professional body. The reports are in the public domain and are the only available data, on management and leadership issues, of significant geographical spread and numerical strength. In 1995 the Government White Paper on Education called *Charting Our Education Future* paved the way for new structures of audit, policy and examination for the Inspectorate. In addition, *Charting Our Education Future* (1995) pointed to a move away from the subjective judgements of inspectors "to ensure equitable evaluation, performance indicators and criteria will be developed at national level which will give consistency to the procedures" (p.187). These performance indicators were to be the basis of "fair and objective judgements on the effectiveness of each school" (p.187). Four years subsequently, a Department of Education and Science report called *Whole School Inspection* (1999) stated that "In tandem with the growth of system evaluation, there is a growing awareness of the need to adopt a more professional and scientific approach to the evaluation of learning and teaching outcomes" (p.5). The intention to apply science to the evaluation of teaching and learning indicated a positivist approach. While such a dispensation uses the language of certainty and quantification, there are, I suspect, questions regarding the reliability or objectivity of the inspectorate's research methods. These questions arise because the very notion of objectivity is a contentious term. For example, according to Dunne and Pendlebury (2003), "objectivity in our interpretations is never possible, if it is taken to imply an unprejudiced standpoint outside the flux and turbulence of actions and events" (p.201). This important question about objectivity is examined in more detail in Chapter Four which is a critique of the WSE process.

The Author's Perspective on the Research

As this study is about management and leadership in schools, it relates to my work as a teacher and trade unionist in the Irish second-level school system. This gives me some insight into the practical dimensions of the debate as questions of politics and power are embedded in workplace disputes in schools (Anderson, 1996). In writing this dissertation, I make no rash claims to seek, much less to possess, the elusive quality of objective detachment.

Such a claim would be dishonest and has been dismissed by the philosopher Foucault. According to Kearney (1984) Foucault:

did not believe that knowledge is innocent or neutral. Behind the conventional veneer of the knower as a disinterested, transcendental spectator, Foucault identified ways in which the truth was often monopolised by certain repressive institutions. (p.291)

Similarly, the Italian neo-Marxist Gramsci argued that information and knowledge are manipulated by the elite in order to maintain a consensus around capitalism (Kearney, 1984, p.175). Capitalism, for Gramsci, is a political and economic system which subverts true democracy and exploits people. I adopted a critical position against undemocratic and authoritarian leadership models which fail to prepare students for democratic society.

My work as a history teacher also provides me with some skills and insights which are of relevance to an understanding of educational research. For example, post-revisionist historians such as Ó Tuathaigh and Dunne (1994) have cautioned that all attempts at making sense of the past, or judgements about it, are conditional and require qualification in the interaction between reader and writer (cited in Brady, 1994, p.31).

The Stages of this Research

This study is characterised by a progressive focusing on school management and leadership in Irish post-primary schools 2006-2007. The study moves, in sequence, from an international and theoretical perspective, with a particular reliance on Spillane's theory of distributed leadership (Spillane 2006 and Spillane and Diamond, 2007), through to a narrower but deeper concentration on the Irish political and educational context. This leads to and contextualises a more detailed study of management and leadership as reported in WSE reports for the period 2006-2007. The progressive focusing of this study of the WSE reports is part of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Outline of the Thesis

Thus far, in this opening chapter, I have outlined the educational problem and the research problem, the rationale, the research questions, and my standpoint with regard to the research and its reporting. At this juncture I will sketch a broad outline of the remaining chapters in order to assist the reader's navigation through the remaining pages. The next chapter, Chapter Two, is a review of some of the international literature on leadership both generally and with specific regard to schools. In order to address the diversity of comment and opinion, I have devised an analytical construct with which to clarify the main issues which emerge. Two of the main points of reference are Spillane's (2006) thinking on distributed leadership in schools, and Grace's (1995) Discourse Analysis of the history of the developing role of the principal in English schools. These academics warrant a specific reference here because they had a decisive influence on my choice of theoretical framework. Chapter Two also takes a look at the Irish context.

The theoretical framework and research methodology for this study are dealt with in Chapter Three, which discusses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Content Analysis. Emerging from the CDA in Chapter Three, Chapter Four provides a CDA of the WSE research and reporting process. The CDA in Chapter Four is partly addressed in the examination of discourse in the section on the Irish context of Chapter Two. Chapter Four also presents the findings of the Content Analysis of a sample of 10 schools. This Content Analysis helped map out the terrain for the subsequent CDA of the first 100 WSE reports in Chapter Five. Finally Chapter Six outlines overall reflections and conclusions on the research done.

CHAPTER TWO. A LITERATURE REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL THOUGHT ON LEADERSHIP AND THE IRISH CONTEXT

Introduction

Having provided an explanation to differentiate between the core concepts of school management and leadership in the previous chapter the next step in this progressive analysis is to rationalise the existence of different models of school leadership and explain the ambiguity which often attaches to these models. This rationale is rooted in the fundamentally political nature of school leadership thinking and practice. This chapter also provides a coherent overview of the main strands of thinking in leadership scholarship. While this scholarship is diverse and sometimes contradictory in nature I have consolidated the key issues as they apply to this study. In order to do this I have devised two continua to help focus on the main strands. The first continuum focuses on the individual level which is usually represented as the school principal in the literature. This continuum compares approaches emphasising values and flexibility with other approaches which emphasise skills and prescription. The second continuum takes a more macro view by looking at the wider school community. This continuum incorporates ideas of community and culture on the one hand with organisation and structure on the other. Both of these continua form the basis for the data analysis in chapters 5 and 6. Spillane's (2006) understanding of distributed leadership receives considerably more attention in this chapter than any of the models of school leadership. This is essentially because Spillane's distributed leadership is not, as he explains himself, a model of leadership to be implemented. Rather it is a means to analyse school leadership and management, and a diagnostic tool to study and improve leadership practice (Spillane, 2007).

Why are there Different Models of School Leadership?

While it is one thing to establish a basic understanding of the contrasting purposes of school leadership and management, it is another matter entirely addressing how and why school leadership is practiced or should be practiced.

Grace (1995) is helpful in addressing this particular challenge by arguing that conceptions of educational leadership are determined by history and culture, and are at the centre of ideological and political struggles over the future of education. In this way conceptions of school leadership are not simply matters about technical designs but also reflect cultural and political values. Consequently a body of research and writing known as Critical Leadership Studies (CLS) emerged in countries such as the U.S.A. and the UK as a reaction against what was considered as a hierarchical, "strong leadership" and market dominated school leadership ideology. Greenfield (2004), whose views are an example of CLS, called for contextually sensitive descriptive studies with a focus on social relations among school leaders and others. Issues to do with power, values and morality are central school leadership considerations for Greenfield (2004). Sugrue (2009) also addresses how context factors shape how school leadership is done. He summarised a "confluence of forces", which he considered were shaping discourses and practices of school leadership, as follows:

- "a market ideology that promotes competitive individualism rather than the "common good";
- new technologies;
- regimes of accountability; and
- close coupling of school leadership with school improvement (Sugrue, 2009, p.356)".

Literature Review, A Dinner Party Analogy

A dinner party discussion serves as an analogy for the diversity of the literature. The image of a variety of guests with a range of rhetorical repertoires, political perspectives and other understandings on a controversial topic; sometimes challenging one another's arguments, is at once vivid and dynamic. These fictional guests are images for the variety of voices from my literature review. They all had something valuable to offer but one emerged as presenting a means of identifying the underlying causes of the fragmented and contradictory nature of the discussion.

Most of my guests are educationalists who have laboured in the vineyard of school and school system research in the U.S.A., the UK, mainland Europe and Australia. They are, for the most part, interested in moving the focus of educational effectiveness beyond the narrow gauge of standardised testing.

They recognise the centrality of leadership in moving schools forward both in terms of equity and effectiveness.

Most of them are part of the international academia on educational leadership which has coined a plethora of conceptual models of leadership. Some of the guests, however, who have a lot to say about leadership, do not come from a school leadership perspective.

One of these, Collins (2001), is an American academic who, using rigorous research methods, set out to establish why some American companies became "great" while others remained "good". His research brought him unintentionally but directly to the nerve centre of the leadership debate and provides strong evidential support for the importance of human values and personality in effective leadership. Another is de Vries, whose book called *The Leadership Mystique* (2006), is an extensive narrative and analysis of general leadership issues internationally. Both Collins and de Vries provide valuable insights into ideas on the nature of leadership and what can, and in what circumstances, constitute effective leadership.

Epic historic tales tell us stories of how the power of leadership resides with great men and women. Such tales have had their own cultural impact on thinking about effective school leadership with what came to be described as "the myth of the superprincipal" (Copeland, 2001) or the "superwoman" principal" (Reynolds, 2002). More recently Sugrue (2009) has argued that distributed leadership has relegated the notion of leadership heroism and therefore undermined the importance of principals who are ordinary people who have achieved extraordinary things. Rosa Parks` inspirational impact on the Black civil rights movement in the U.S.A. comes to mind. An evaluation of leadership, like that of beauty, can be in the eye of the beholder. Similarly, leadership is something sought after and admired and is an intrinsic part of the human condition. To extend the analogy further, like Helen of Troy its face can launch a thousand ships. It can cause contradictory outcomes, caustic conflict or comforting collaboration. But these few references by means of illustration are incomplete in terms of seeking an understanding. My journey to comprehend the concept of leadership is long with many twists and turns. A useful starting point is with de Vries (2006) who believes that effective leaders play two roles, a charismatic one and an architectural one.

In the former the leader envisions a better future and empowers and energises their followers to achieve it. In the latter role the leader addresses issues relating to organisational design and to control and award systems (p. 264). In this way de Vries (2006) identifies two important aspects of my continua.

The current landscape of educational research and analysis is covered with different conceptual models of leadership, with some featuring more prominently in the foreground of our view. MacBeath (2004) has identified twenty-five models in total, each with a variety of interpretations.

He has appropriately and illustratively entitled a paper he produced for Leadership for Learning: the Cambridge Network, as *The Alphabet Soup of Leadership* (2004, p.5). This is reflected in leadership studies more generally which have been described as “Leaderbabble”, with a proliferation of conclusions which can be conflicting and confusing (de Vries, 2006, p.212). The problem of ambiguity is made more apparent, in the context of this study, by the sometimes tentative and Jesuitical distinctions made between distributed and distributive leadership. So for example, while Spillane (2006), clearly uses the term distributed leadership to describe a diagnostic tool, others see it as a model of leadership. Indeed, Sugrue (2008a), took issue with the use of the term "distributive" rather than "distributed" in an OECD report, because the latter "seemed" more democratic and empowering than the former (p.46). However, as a sharp reminder of the problem of different definitions of leadership terms, MacBeath (2004a) has a converse view of distributed leadership, to that of Sugrue (2008a). Comparing distributive and distributed leadership, he writes:

"Distributed" leadership appears to be what is suggested for Moses [Biblical analogy, Exodus 18:21 and 22]. It contains the notion that the leader appoints or delegates others to carry out work on his behalf. In a school context it seems to imply something that is in the gift of a headteacher, allocating leadership roles while holding on to power. (p.34)

MacBeath (2004), continues by stating that:

"Distributive" or "dispersed" on the other hand, suggests leadership being assumed on a more democratic basis, taking influence as a right and responsibility rather than it being bestowed as a gift. Distributive leadership may be seen as a value or an ethic, residing in the organisational culture, exercised in different places within a school. (p.34)

It is apparent from the wide range of leadership models, that the theory and practice of leadership is deeply embedded in its cultural context and shaped by its political perspective.

The shared meaning and understandings of the terminology, such as what exist, are often a product of discourse communities.

Analysing School Leadership Literature

What next? How can this array of leadership models be analysed? How can some sense be made of the literature on this topic which potentially may crush and confuse a reader with its huge weight of detail and conceptual pluralism. It seems that the literature is broadly fragmented into two sets of sometimes overlapping tendencies or approaches. Each set of approaches might be viewed as having two poles on a line of continuum with varying degrees of emphasis in between.

One of the advantages with the use of idea of a continuum is that it doesn't preclude scenarios which involve a mix of the different paradigms.

The Continua

Emerging from these initial observations on the management and leadership literature a coherent overview of the main strands of thinking in leadership scholarship is possible. In order to present such an overview I devised two continua to assist both in terms of presentation and in devising areas of enquiry for my research. The first continuum addresses the values and flexibility focus on school leaders, as understood in CLS, and is presented as a polar opposite to the skills and prescription approach to management and leadership. For some analysts (Sergiovanni, 1992 and Greenfield, 2004) the defining feature of leadership is virtue or value which for Sergiovanni (1992) are associated with the intrinsic characteristics of certain types of people. On the other end of this spectrum are the lists of tasks or competences approach, which views the role in a more structured or prescriptive form, sometimes referred to as technical rational authority (Sergiovanni, 1992, pp. 48 and 49).

The second continuum looks at ideas of school community and culture which relate to the human relationships of CLS and are presented as a polar opposite to the organisation and structure dimension. It should be noted that the continua are not intended to imply that each of the poles do or can operate independently of one another. Rather they are intended to assist in reflecting the emphasis given to certain leadership ideas by different analysts. So, for example, my identification of a culture/community-organisation/structure continuum, facilitates a blending of these contrasting ideas.

In this regard West-Burham (O'Sullivan and West-Burham, 2011) quotes from Leadbeater's reference to innovative communities in his discussion of Linux, the open-source software community, as follows:

[innovative communities] seem to combine many ingredients that are traditionally kept separate, or at least prove difficult to combine. There is healthy competition within the community but also co-operation and sharing; it thrives on masses of individual initiative but is founded on a public good, the community is highly distributed and virtual, yet also hierarchical, with a single authority at its heart. (p.167)

Also, there is an overlap between both continua in that the first focuses on the individual, usually the principal in the literature, while the second focuses on the school and its community.

However, there is an overlap in that concepts such as human values are relevant to both.

Continuum 1.

Values/Flexibility

E.g. honesty, inclusion, equality and professionalism.

Skills/ Prescription.

E.g. Verbal communication and ICT competency. Duties of principal.

Continuum 2.

Culture/Community

E.g. Human relationships, collaboration and group dynamic.

Structure/Organisation

E.g. Senior and middle management. Formal meetings and records.

While West-Burham (2011) uses a continuum to present community as a form of school structure, I use it to position community/culture as a possible polar opposite to organisation/structure. However, as with the Left/Right political continuum, the centre contains a mix of the ideas found at the extremes.

Values/Flexibility

The values/flexibility-tasks/prescription debate is addressed either explicitly or implicitly by all of the writers. Hodginson (cited in Pont et al., 2008), for example, explicitly argues that values "constitute the essential problem of leadership" (p.10). History is heaving with skilful leaders in a bad cause, with Hitler and Mussolini coming to mind. For Sergiovanni (cited in O'Sullivan and West-Burham, 2011), school leadership literature overemphasises bureaucratic, psychological, and technical rational authority at the expense of professional and moral authority.

This, he argues, has been done to such an extent as to make the literature, borderline ineffective and "a leadership practice that is not leadership at all" (p.160).

Others have touched on this theme, by rejecting centrally scripted or cloned versions of school leadership in favour of authenticity, autonomy and professional judgement (Sugrue, 2008, p. 42-43).

While professional judgement may be presented as distinct from morality, I would read them as being at the very least two sides of the same coin. Drysdale, Gurr and Goode (2011), contend that many principals prefer to stay inside the comfort zone of management because it is more "concrete, tangible and measureable" (p.12). The intangible nature of leadership and its more long term focus on the "big picture" are not as attractive (Drysdale, Gurr and Goode, 2011, p.12). Based on the case studies the authors concluded that vision, personal philosophy (based on values), courage, first things first (focusing on what is important and not what is urgent) and environmental scan (long term perspective and opportunity focused), are critical for making a difference (Drysdale, Gurr and Goode, 2011, pp. 13-14).

The idea of a continuum helps to accommodate situations where there is a link between values and prescription. There are those, for instance, who argue that collaborative and distributive leadership will not come about as a consequence of a mandate from policy makers, pointing to the relevance of informal school situations (London, 2008, p.58). But it has been simultaneously conceded that such mandates will be a step in the right direction (London, 2008, p.58).

In Ireland there appears to be resistance to the notion of a centrally agreed model of school leadership on the basis that such a model would negate the idea of leadership as a moral endeavour which requires flexibility in addressing challenges. Closely associated with the moral approach are ideas of strong values, beliefs, attitudes, dispositions and practices (Flood, 2008, p.32). Research in the U.S.A. has led experts to conclude that the "right person" for highly successful companies "has more to do with character traits and innate capabilities than with specific knowledge, background, or skills" (Collins, 2001, p.40). Of course, intrinsic personal values and competencies cannot be mandated. Trait theory in leadership studies is going through a revival.

Rather than looking at autocracy versus democracy, this revival is examining behavioural outcomes of desirable traits in particular contexts (de Vries, 2006, p. 22).

However, personal traits are also seen to be closely tied to competencies, the most crucial to leadership effectiveness being surgency, sociability, receptivity, dependability, analytical, and emotional intelligence (de Vries, 2006, p. 223). According to de Vries (2006), people with emotional intelligence are more likely to be effective leaders as they are better able to motivate themselves and others, and are more able to identify the “rationality behind irrational behaviour” (pp. 5,6 and 21) .

The Irish cultural lens on leadership focuses on national or international figures who by their individual stature command followership. This is part of a Western culture where according to MacBeath (2004) there is from our childhood days a love of heroes who in legends and stories are invariably men. Feminist critics have argued that the notion of leadership has become synonymous with male qualities.

There is, they argue, an alternative “feminine paradigm” which includes the following congruent qualities; awareness of individual differences, caring, intuitive, tolerant, creative, informal, non-competitive and subjective (MacBeath, 2004, p.8).

An extensive literature is devoted to the analysis of the peculiar qualities of famous leaders. One of the best known is Gardner’s *Leading Minds* (1995) which describes common qualities shared by such leaders as Ghandi, Eleanor Roosevelt and Martin Luther King. These qualities (which include, risk taking, resilience and confidence in one’s own instinct and intuition) have often been taken as appropriate to a company or school context and have, directly or indirectly, borne strongly on policy thinking and development (MacBeath, 2004a, p.8). It appears to me, however, that the salient quality of the three international figures mentioned is one of moral integrity. Nevertheless, it is the qualities mentioned previously which have been identified as those which have been used to recruit heroic leaders into industry and politics to rescue a company or country from pending collapse. However, when the crisis has passed, “heroism is no longer needed and may be dysfunctional” (MacBeath, 2004a, p.8).

Churchill's latter day liability to the British Conservative Party following his successful leadership during World War Two is a case in point (MacBeath, 2004a, p.8).

According to MacBeath (2004a), charismatic leadership is a close relative of heroic leadership. It is based on personal qualities which are magnetic and attract others to become followers. Again such figures are part of the leadership lexicon in the West and their example has been promoted in educational policy, particularly in Britain (p.8). Gray's (MacBeath, 2004a) comment that "The importance of the head teacher's leadership is one of the clearest messages from school effectiveness research" has been presented as underpinning "much of policy maker's thinking about how organisations can be "turned around" and has been implicit in the courses for headship and explicit in the creation of "superheads" riding to the rescue of failing schools" (p.8). These leaders are said to have "presence" and educational analysis provides examples of legendary school leaders whose schools were largely reflections of their personalities and commitment. MacBeath (2004a) refers to Arnold of Rugby, among others, in this regard and believes that Britain's Blairite Labour Government promoted this concept of leadership.

He also believes that diverse organisations such as trade unions and media companies can be dwarfed by charismatic leaders "whose emotional appeal can override the rational, creating a suspension of individual and collective judgement" (pp. 10-11). MacBeath (2004a) quotes Bridgehouse and Woods in this regard stating that "Their vision can blind and the strong personality cast a shadow over the need for shared leadership" (p.10). According to MacBeath (2004a), charismatic leadership can be trapped in an infantile narcissistic stage or conversely reflect the purer origin of its title i.e. the gift of grace (pp.10-11). Servant Leadership is the antithesis of charismatic and narcissistic leadership, "although it might be argued that by their very qualities servant leaders convey a powerful charismatic authority" (MacBeath, 2004a, p.54). This caveat provides a classic example of the enduring problem of ambiguity.

Collins (2001) has challenged the assumption that charismatic leadership and effective leadership are synonymous. Strong charismatic leadership is seen by him as a liability as much as an asset, while heroic leaders left their companies without the resilience and capacity to carry on without them.

Collins` (2001) study was conducted in the U.S.A. with the intention of examining leadership but in order to identify companies that enjoyed sustained success over time.

Among the discoveries of the research team was the finding that hugely successful companies, described as "great", were typically led by unassuming people with singular and passionate commitment to their organisations. These leaders (CEOs) facilitated the input of other competent people and thus promoted complete and unhindered intelligent discussion (Collins, 2001, p. 63).

These research findings on the characteristics of very successful leaders are reflected in some of the Irish school effectiveness research (Swan and Devine, 2002). Two contrasting Irish primary schools from low social economic status areas were studied. The research found that one, which was referred to as the "Secret Garden", was a more effective school. Its characteristics included a good physical environment, fair and consistent classroom discipline and praise of students. The latter two attributes were appraised by the staff as vital for providing a safe and secure environment for the children (Swan and Devine, 2002, p.207). The school plan was a "living document", music and drama were encouraged, and there was a positive and empathetic relationship with parents. The researchers` assessment of the principal contains echoes of Collins` study of successful American companies.

She was described as:

quietly spoken, highly organised and totally committed to the children and staff of the school. She sees her main role as facilitator- to provide a happy working environment for both teachers and children and to give people freedom to use their gifts and to work responsibly within a free and easy atmosphere. (Swan and Devine, 2002, p.211)

The principal was also described as having an excellent knowledge of the children and their families. Her relationship with her staff was also described as excellent and she reported that she was guided by their expertise in making decisions for the school. She was reluctant to apply the term of principal to herself. The researchers also reported that, "Her personality is very much in evidence in her management [sic] style- an openness and enthusiasm for her work and an acceptance that she cannot be expert in all things, leaving areas she is not confident in to others" (Swan and Devine, 2002, p.211).

In Collins' study the converse of the self-effacing CEO was typically found in companies which remained "good" and did not become "great". These were led by what Collins characterised as egocentric people who he described as "the genius with a thousand helpers". They were frequently prepared to damage their companies through weak leadership succession in order to strengthen their own legacy (Collins, 2001, p.39).

Skills/Prescription.

While there is a large body of evidence to support the importance of personal character and values as determinants of leadership success or failure, not all agree. Elmore (2008) contradicts these findings by refuting the essentialist theory of both teaching and leading. He wrote for an OECD leadership report that "leadership does not inhere in the personal characteristics of the individual; it inheres in the knowledge, skill, and behaviour of the individual" (p.58). This view fits into the traditional understanding of leadership in the West, as being hierarchical, conferred, subject to training and confined to upper and middle management (MacBeath, 2004a, p.7). It is this position which facilitates an understanding of what I have termed, the skills/prescription model of school leadership.

The OECD, the organisation for which Elmore was writing, argues for the prescription model. Nusche (2008), its policy analyst, argues for four key policy levers to bring about improvement. Firstly, a (re)definition of school leadership responsibilities in order to improve student outcomes.

These responsibilities are in the areas of monitoring teacher quality, school self-evaluation, financial and human resource management, and collaborating with other schools (system leadership). Secondly, Nusche (2008) argues for distributed leadership. Thirdly, the development of leadership skills through training and networks is advocated and fourthly, headship needs to become an attractive role through reduced workload and adequate remuneration (p.20). An additional key finding of the report is the need to re-orientate the principal's work away from administration and towards a focus on teaching and learning. This resonates with the instructional leadership model. Such an approach is reflected in Ireland with a call for the principles of learning-centred leadership to be more embedded in policy and national discourse (Flood, 2008, p.33). Also, the need for knowledge and skills in leadership is accepted in the argument for reformed teacher training (London, 2008, p.50-52).

However, there is much in this report which is a target for criticism, especially in the context of the OECD's *raison d'être* as an economic organisation and not as an educational body. It appears, for example, that its 2008 reports on leadership, are advocating the idea of principalship as a separate career to teaching. This resonates for some with the notion of “educational entrepreneurialism”, a term coined by Sugrue (2008) to explain the official advocacy of a more corporate culture in schools during the 1990s.

Further to this is the concern that the report moves away from autonomy and professional judgement to centrally cloned notions of leadership (Sugrue, 2008, p.44). Reinforcing this criticism of the report is its failure to address the power of cultural and social norms which are deeply embedded in the educational system. These are powerful determining factors underlying what happens in schools. When the ubiquitous problem of conceptual ambiguity is also taken into account, there is the danger of a gap between the academic discussion of the OECD reports and practitioners' implementation of their ideas (London, 2008, pp.50-51).

A School Community/Culture-Organisation/Structure Continuum.

The second overarching observation in my analysis of the leadership literature is the frequent dichotomy between school organisational structures and the culture of a school community which is mostly synonymous with its staff. These concepts can have symbiotic or antagonistic relationships. However, for West-Burham (O'Sullivan and West-Burham, 2011), the idea of community is presented as an alternative form of school structure to that of hierarchical bureaucracy (p.159). I don't agree with the view of community as an example of structure.

Rather, I argue that community, which is akin to culture, is different to structure and unlike West-Burham (2011) I hold the view that, in their pure conceptual forms they are polar opposites. London's (2008) critique of the OECD's school leadership model helps in this regard because he views culture as distinct from structure when he argues that, "Cultural and social norms in education, deeply embedded in both the structures and beliefs of the educational system, are not addressed but remain powerful determinants of what happens in schools" (p.50).

A further problem with West-Burham`s analysis is his equation of organisation with ideas of hierarchy and top-down power (O`Sullivan and West-Burham, 2011, p.167). While there are organisations which fit this description, his definition precludes the possibility of democratic organisations whose structures facilitate bottom-up decision making and positions in-between.

There is also a link between the tasks/prescription concept and the organisational/structure one. Each of these concepts can be categorised as bureaucratic. In my view differences emerge in terms of the political nature of the organisational structures which may be democratic or authoritarian.

A Critical Discourse Analysis encourages a broader historical and political analysis of the ideas here. In this regard it is helpful to note that the political structures of Ireland`s 12th century Norman invaders, whose organisation was centralised and hierarchical, are considered as precursors of modern bureaucracy. The significance of this rests in both the strong cultural impact of the Norman invasion on Ireland and the perception that schools, more generally, thrive on bureaucracy and "are one of the few surviving vestiges of the nineteenth century" (O`Sullivan and West-Burham, 2011, p.164).

**Where do the Models of School Leadership fit on the School Community/Culture -
Organisation/Structure Continuum?**

Given the mix of organisational and cultural components of the numerous school leadership models, they can be located on different points on this continuum. This fluidity is accommodated by the use of the continuum. The differences between the transactional and transformational models of leadership serves as a useful point of illustration. In this regard, Hopkins (2002) writes that during the 1990s the debate on educational leadership was dominated by a contrast between transactional and transformational approaches (p.1). He comes down in favour of the former, attracted as he is by its focus on teaching and learning in the technical or methodological sense.

While not dismissing transformational leadership he views, what he considers, its focus on school culture as being insufficient. Other models, however, demonstrate a greater mix of ideas on this continuum.

With regard to recent trends in educational leadership discourse Mulford (2008) provides a useful analysis. Arguing that the “new managerialism [bureaucracy and accountability] has failed”, he is dismissive of what he calls the “heroic stranglehold” and the “myth of individualism” in school leadership (p.38). Illustrating the huge influence of Collins’ (2006), this analysis refers to his studies of successful corporations and social sector organisations in the U.S.A. whose leaders were described as diligent, modest and self-effacing, and surprised to be singled out as effective leaders (Mulford, 2006, p.38). The “Big Three” leadership models in education over the last three decades are identified as (i) Instructional, (ii) Transformational (which have substantial similarities) and (iii) Distributed, with Sustainable leadership being the new kid on the block. But these need not be mutually exclusive as a combination of all four models and flexibility in their application can and, for Mulford, should, be applied (Mulford, 2006, p.39). While one leadership style or approach may work well for some leaders, in practice most adopt a range of different leadership styles. Successful leaders will adapt and adopt their leadership practice to meet the changing needs and circumstances in which they find themselves (Mulford, 2008, p.48). The analysis is developed further by arguing that school leadership needs to be smart, evidence-based and shared; it should build trust, a collaborative climate, and a shared and monitored vision. Successful school leaders are, he believes, contextually literate and build links with other schools and the community (Mulford, 2008, p.68)

So what are these “Big Three” leadership models and where do they fit on the continuum? To begin with instructional leadership, a term with a distinctively American resonance, was according to MacBeath (2004a) “a radical notion in a climate of managerialism” (p.46). Krug’s (1992) definition of its key components emphasised monitoring of teachers and students, and instruction (MacBeath, 2004a, p.46). There is a strong bureaucratic, hierarchical and formal dimension to this model which connects with its “climate of managerialism”. This places it close to the organisation/structure end of the spectrum. It is, however, characterised by conceptual pluralism.

In some studies it is equated with the use of student performance data to encourage more effective instruction from teachers while in other contexts, it is interpreted as head teachers having a teaching

role and gaining credibility by being seen by staff as effective teachers (MacBeath, 2004a, p.46).

The second of the "Big Three" is transformational leadership which has been described as a counterfoil to transactional leadership. For Leithwood and Janizi (1990) the three main components are:

1. the stimulation and development of a collaborative culture.
2. contribution to the continuous professional development of teachers, and
3. expansion of the problem- solving capacity of the school. (MacBeath, 2004, p.30).

Transformational leadership is considered as different to the concept of "scientific managerialism with its belief in a right way and its faith in procedures and hard data to inform decision making" (Hopkins, 1998, p.243), and therefore it fits more closely on the community/culture end of the spectrum. Mulford (2008) reports that teachers who experienced transformational leadership are more likely to express satisfaction with the principal and to report that they exert extra effort and are committed to the school and improving it (p.42).

The third of the "Big 3" leadership models is distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is a good example of conceptual pluralism in the field. As part of the "Big 3" it is not to be understood as Spillane's (2006) conceptualisation as Spillane (2006) himself argues that he has devised an diagnostic instrument which is agnostic on models of school leadership. There are additional problems of ambiguity with the term distributed leadership. A major focus of the "post-heroic" research has been on "Three D Leadership", the title used to encompass, distributed, dispersed and distributive leadership. Though these terms tend to be used interchangeably there are differences between them. The OECD has included distributed leadership as one of four main policy levers which it claims can improve leadership practice (Pont et al., Vol.1, 2008a, pp. 9-13). However, with regard to evidence to support any markers of success we find tentative terms like the word "suggest"; and claims that the evidence is "suggestive rather than conclusive" (Pont et al. Vol.1, 2008a, p.83).

Placing distributed leadership on the continuum is difficult given its conceptual pluralism.

While it tends to be associated with formal school management structures there are references to informal leadership such as a “body of research literature is emerging to support the idea that distributed leadership when formally or informally organised can improve school outcomes” (Pont et al. Vol.1, 2008a, p.74).

Spillane`s (2006) Understanding of Distributed Leadership.

Spillane`s (2006) conceptualisation of distributed leadership provides both a diagnostic instrument to study leadership and an example of how an understanding of leadership can traverse the culture/community-structure/organisation continuum. It does the latter in that Spillane (2006) highlights informal as well as formal school leaders and in so doing encompasses both school culture and organisation. In addition, by also focusing on relationships between leaders and followers Spillane (2006) again relates to the culture/community aspect of the literature more broadly speaking. Spillane (2006) is neutral on the question of which type of leadership is the correct one to apply. To put this another way, it is agnostic on the issue of social or political values.

While this stance may be read as a flaw in that it explicitly bypasses the arguably fundamentally political nature of leadership, it appears to me that Spillane (2006) is attempting to identify how people behave instinctively. Such distributed leadership instincts may, I think, be enhanced or curbed by political realities. For Spillane (2006) distributed leadership can be democratic or autocratic, collaborative or co-leadership, transformational or transactional. It is not therefore a question of whether or not leadership is distributed but of how it is distributed (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership also challenges analysts to look beyond what formally designated leaders in schools are doing and examine leadership practice as the interaction between formal leaders, informal leaders, followers and their situation i.e. resources and routines. To achieve this in research terms presents major methodological challenges (Spillane, 2006).

For Spillane (2006) distributed leadership provides a fresh perspective on the problems of school leadership. He writes:

We need a new way of thinking about leadership. The distributed perspective offers one. It offers a way of approaching the very practical problems of school leadership. Moreover, it provides a way of thinking systematically about the practice of leadership. (Spillane, 2006, p. 87)

Distributed leadership as an analytical tool "takes us into the living reality as well as the formal structure [of a school]" (Spillane, 2006, p.90).

This distinction between living reality and structure forms another part of the rationale to support the community/culture-organisation/structures continuum which I devised. Moreover, Spillane's focus on leadership practice as the interaction between leaders, followers and their situation provides for the possibility of improving school relationships and structures as a means of enhancing leadership capacity.

Spillane's (2006) argues that there is a reality of leadership distributed across different people in different positions, in different situations and at different times. This is a particularly radical idea given that the historical organisational practice in church and state institutions of hierarchical leadership (MacBeath, 2004b, p.7).

A Deeper Look at Spillane's (2006) Understanding of Distributed Leadership

Research on management and leadership from a distributed perspective has been described by Spillane and Diamond (2007) as being at a preadolescent stage of development.

While the empirical knowledge base for it is relatively small, it has nevertheless grown considerably in recent years. Much of the work done is in primary schools in the U.S.A. which gives rise to the question of how leadership is distributed in second-level schools. For the purpose of my inquiry this poses challenges and opportunities. There is empirical research and theory building, particularly around the "leadership plus" aspect. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research and application of this framework in second-level and European schools, which if the situation were otherwise would provide readymade exemplars for models of research (Spillane and Diamond, 2007).

The pioneers of distributed leadership (Spillane and Diamond, 2007) as a diagnostic and design instrument are justifiably concerned about the ambiguity of the term distributed leadership arising from the different definitions used by academics. This ambiguity or conceptual pluralism inhibits progress as academics, administrators and practitioners talk past one another in their efforts to improve schools (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). Spillane and Diamond (2007) are correct in explicitly addressing this problem by referring to other definitions and providing the rationale for their own. It is disappointing, however, that they do not give similar attention to the same challenge regarding the definitions of the core concepts of leadership and management. Indeed they conjoin the two words in the repeated term of “school leadership and management”.

While acknowledging that these concepts may be analytically distinguishable, (but more difficult to unravel in practice) they proceed on the basis of their own definition without referring to other perspectives. Their definition states that, "Management practice centres on maintaining current ways of doing school business; maintaining the smooth running of a school is paramount. Leadership practice typically focuses on initiating change in the current ways of doing business" (Spillane and Diamond, 2007, p.153). This definition corresponds with that which I outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

While Spillane (2006) is open to the criticism of ignoring political issues, for me his main weakness is that he does not address the significant issues of directional or executive power as distinct from the leadership capacity to influence people to act in a voluntary way. These distinctions are addressed, either explicitly or implicitly, elsewhere in the leadership literature.

Grace (1995) for example, documents the British Conservative Party’s endorsement of rapid executive action as a tool of the head teacher.

Spillane’s (2006) distributed leadership has two major aspects, Leadership Plus and practice. By recognising that leadership is stretched over many people, Leadership Plus calibrates my conceptual lens.

It moves the focus away from more traditional hierarchical ways of looking at leadership to include other examples. The picture which emerges is of a phenomenon which involves in the words of Spillane “the many rather than the few” (Spillane and Diamond, 2007, p.151). However, while Leadership Plus acknowledges multiple leaders it doesn’t ignore or undermine the role of the principal (Spillane and Diamond, 2007, p.151). Spillane (2006), argues that distributed leadership should not be misunderstood as a discounting of heroes, rather it is a recognition of ordinary mortals in the leadership scheme of things. This picture provides the analyst with a deeper means of reading leadership as it permeates a society such as a school. It deepens our view of leadership activity in a school. Indeed the association of a single leader with the apex is of itself misleading given the reliance of those at the helm of organisations and countries on partnerships with trusted others; as seen in the cases of Microsoft’s Bill Gates and Communist China’s Chairman Mao (Spillane, 2006).

Leadership Plus presents a challenge to the research and literature on effective schools which continues to equate school leadership with the principal.

This is not simply in terms of multiple leaders but also in the manner which leadership stretches across formal positions into informal roles. These informal roles include, for example, a teacher who mentors a colleague (Spillane, 2006). The calibration of the lens to include informal leadership opens up a view of a school’s culture as well as its organisation (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). While this is explicitly acknowledged by Spillane and provides further credence to my continua, an inference that can be drawn is the presence of a non-executive aspect to leadership which is apparent in informal roles. By their very nature these roles are separate from legally conferred power. Indeed the idea that distributed leadership includes different types of leadership is illustrated by the fact that formal and informal leaders in schools can be found working collaboratively or in conflict. For Spillane, “The critical issue, then, is not whether leadership is distributed but how leadership is distributed” (Spillane and Diamond, 2007, p. 15). This important observation explains how Spillane’s distributed perspective is a diagnostic instrument.

As a major exponent of the distributed approach, Spillane (2006) accepts that the Leadership Plus aspect is not a novel idea. However, he defends it against accusations of “old wine in new bottles” by arguing that recent research has presented us with new insights and that its treatment of both the

situation of leadership and the role of followers, classifies it as a new departure. The situation aspect he argues is not simply a reference to context but a defining element of practice together with the interaction of leaders and followers. The different positioning of followers also departs from previous scholarship (Spillane, 2006).

Spillane (2006), further identifies four significant questions which arise from the Leadership Plus dimension. These furnish his diagnostic instrument with additional finely tuned antennae. These questions are; Who takes responsibility for leadership work, How are the responsibilities arranged?, How do these arrangements come to pass? and How do individuals become constituted as influential leaders? These questions will now be addressed as answered by Spillane (2006).

Who takes responsibility for leadership work?

Typically multiple individuals do and distribution depends on function, subject matter, school type, strategic vision and human resources. Other issues include developmental stages in leadership both in terms of school growth and the experience of individuals.

How are the leadership responsibilities arranged?

The evidence suggests that there are at least three arrangements; (a) division of labour, (b) co-performance and (c) parallel performance. Spillane`s (2006) studies on *distributed leadership* in schools found some evidence of division of labour with regard to specific routines especially discipline and teacher evaluation. Overall however, it is not standard and when it does exist predictable patterns are difficult to find (p.39). His studies found evidence of co-performance, which means two or more leaders performing a function in a collaborative fashion, for various routines such as teacher and curriculum development. Parallel performance refers to the duplication of work rather than collaboration. It need not be negative in that for example two or more leaders may promote the same school vision, however these may also be conflicting visions.

How do these arrangements come to pass?

These arrangements can come to pass by default or design. At Baxter Elementary School for instance the assistant principal recognised that the principal was not a “people person” and unknown to him and without his request, took on that responsibility but not in an underhanded way (Spillane, 2006).

How do individuals get constructed as influential leaders?

Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (cited in Spillane, 2006) stated that a considerable amount is known in this regard and that teachers construct others as influential leaders based on the interaction between them and conversations with colleagues about these individuals. This construction is based on forms of human, cultural, social and economic capital. Mostly this is on cultural capital at 70.2%, followed by economic capital at 23.8%, human capital at 21.4%, social at 13% (Spillane, 2006).

The practice aspect of distributed leadership.

Spillane's (2006) idea of practice in distributed leadership is the interaction between leaders, followers and their situation (e.g. resources and routines). There is a potentially symbiotic relationship between practice and situation as they shape one another.

This moves the study beyond a focus on structures to a focus on activity which is where assessment must be done in terms of leadership effectiveness. It is this dimension of schools which is understudied and requires deeper inquiry if we are to strengthen our understanding of school leadership. For Spillane (2006), interaction is the key and consequently leadership practice must be analysed from the level of the group. We need to investigate how leadership practice is stretched over two or more leaders. There is however a huge deficit of research in the practice part of distributed leadership, with most of the limited knowledge coming from Spillane and Grann and his colleagues (cited in Spillane, 2006). This practice dimension resonates with the view of de Vries (2001) on the debate between the “personalists” and “situationists” in the leadership studies. While the “personalists” place most emphasis on the attributes of the leader, the “situationists” place the emphasis on environmental constraints. De Vries (2001), argues that like so many other things, the truth lies somewhere in between.

Certain types of leadership simply don't match with certain types of followers and circumstances.

Spillane (2006) has identified three types of distributed leadership.

Collaborated Distribution

In this case, similar to a basketball team two or more leaders work together to set one another up in a particular routine.

Collective Distribution

For collective distribution practice is stretched over two or more leaders who work separately but interdependently. They are heedful of one another, for example in providing each other with reports.

Co-ordinated Distribution

These routines are in sequence like a relay race.

These analogies, however, present difficulties for me given their strong resonance with ideas of collaboration and teamwork. There is a distinction between collaboration and leadership. Once again the spectre of ambiguity seems to appear. Hodgkinson's (1993) related comment about "word magic of the worst kind" comes to mind (p.21).

As a design tool Spillane (2006) identifies three essential principles in relation to leadership:

- "practice is a more proximal cause of instructional improvement than leadership roles, processes and structure;
- intervening to improve leadership necessitates attention to interaction;
- intervening to improve leadership practice requires attention to the design and redesign of aspects of situation e.g. routines and tools, because situation helps define practice" (Spillane, 2006, p.94).

From Spillane's (2006) work on distributed leadership an interesting question relates to teachers.

What leadership roles do they play and in what particular school contexts do these roles appear?

From the point of view of this study this question needs to be tailored to relate to the context of the WSE reports.

Therefore, the question that arises is, what level, if any, of recognition and encouragement is given by the inspectorate to informal leadership roles carried out by teachers?

Other Interpretations of Distributed Leadership.

While Spillane (2006) does not present his concept of distributed leadership as a model for leadership practice, the term "distributed leadership" is also applied to models of school leadership and done so in a conceptually pluralistic fashion. In this regard Sugrue (2009) wrote that:

With terms such as teacher or distributed leadership having recently reached the top of the orthodoxy totem pole with the field of educational reform and leadership literature, it cannot be assumed that meaning is constant; quite the reverse. (p.354)

What appears to unite, most if not all, literature on distributed leadership are references to collaboration between teachers (Gronn, 2003). Sugrue (2009) argues that teacher collaboration became:

the first conduit by which conceptions of school leadership were moved beyond the heroic and the legendary; this too began to shatter the myth of the super hero, but its tenacity is characteristic of cultural archetypes in general. (p.360)

For Sugrue (2009), the jury is out on distributed leadership in whatever form it takes, but he does consider its focus on interactions as "a major strength" (p.367).

Democratic Models of School Leadership.

The strength of the continua to understand leadership models, by highlighting human values, is supported by the sustainable leadership model with its focus on community and human relationships. Hargreaves, Halász and Pont (2008) refer to Fullan (2005) who defines educational sustainability as "the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" (p.75).

A democratic model of school leadership provides a useful ideological counterweight to the concerns about individualism in the "Big Three".

The democratic model shares assumptions of collaborative, shared, inclusive, teacher and student leadership and embraces participatory democracy as opposed to liberal democracy which presupposes serving economic ends.

These contentious issues about democratic or authoritarian models of leadership or some point between the two; cut to the core of the problem. For not only is the type of leadership for a situation contingent on time or place but also on values. Like countries or other social groups, schools can aspire to forms of social order based on political values. Indeed as these values are contested in society at large so too they are they contested inside the walls of the school. Anderson (1996) for instance has argued that schools cannot be understood in functionalist terms whereby they pursue a set of values which are shared by society. Rather he says they are sites of daily political struggle (p.949) He develops his argument by critiquing school leadership studies saying that “Few current proposals for school leadership are compatible with a view of schools as a site of cultural and political struggle” (Anderson, 1996, p.960). His analysis is that whether the model of leadership is authoritarian or democratic, it ultimately converges on what he sees as the broadly similar interests of teachers and administration at the expense of students and community (Anderson, 1996, p.960).

The politics of school life is given sharp focus by MacBeath (2004b) when he questions how well a school can serve the purpose of a democratic society, without itself having a commitment to democratic processes. He sees Scandinavian countries as doing particularly well in providing democratic schools. The Swedes define such schools as having four basic characteristics:

1. focusing on relationships and how we treat each other;
2. equal value of people;
3. respect for difference;
4. right’s and responsibilities (MacBeath, 2004b, p.21).

There is a complete focus, in this definition, on values, attitudes and human relationships. This focus places this model on the community/culture extreme end of the continuum. However, care must be taken when attempting to address concepts such as democratic schools or professional communities.

These too are ambiguous terms. Westheimer's (1999) comparison of two schools in the U.S.A. revealed how one had a much deeper democracy than the other because it emphasised community ideals of participation, inclusiveness and egalitarian democracy (pp. 71-105). While the definition of democracy is debated, the Swedish definition of a democratic school resonates in terms of the core values of respect for the individual and preparation for citizenship.

By extension, a student's capacity to learn, either in a narrow or a broad sense, is enhanced. While Humphries (2002) acknowledges the negative impact of factors such as social inequality on the progress of students in Irish schools he also highlights the importance of self-esteem as a basis for academic achievement (pp. 10-11). It is clear to me that self-esteem, the ability to be oneself while of course not doing harm to others, is at the heart of democratic values.

These definitions of a democratic school foreground morality and values; which of course are part of the culture/community category. This is also true, to some extent of the other models outlined. But the models don't fit neatly or completely into the organisation/structure or community/culture categories.

In this regard democratic schools involve more than values and human relationships. They need appropriate organisation and structures. In the Irish context this is served by the existence of Vocational Educational Committees (VECs), (now ETBs), boards of management, parent councils, staff meetings, and school policies and procedures which are rooted in consultation with the different partners of the school community. These democratic structures and procedures are a significant dimension of the WSE reports, as they relate to management and leadership. The operation of these structures and procedures and their interaction with other models of school management and leadership, such as the role of In-school Management, are a central focus of this study.

A Study of Management and Leadership in England.

It is worth taking a brief look at Grace's (1995) analysis of school management and leadership in England because of his historical perspective and the commonly held view that Irish educational policy, for school improvement, tends to follow the English example even after such example has proven to be unsuccessful (Mac Ruairc, 2010, p.231). Grace (1995), in his book *School Leadership: Beyond Education Management*, weaves a narrative and analysis through a historical lens and explains how the concept of educational leadership has evolved in England. He argues, convincingly, that educational leadership cannot be explained in a historically fixed way. It is shaped by culture and politics and is inseparable from the wider society (Grace, 1995, pp.22 and 27). What is clear from Grace's research is that the form and function of educational leadership in England has undergone radical change since the nineteenth century when school leadership mirrored "the hierarchical, patriarchal and authoritarian nature of society" (Grace, 1995, p.10), through the period of the post-World War Two Labour Party Governments who viewed education as a means for both strengthening democratic society and creating an efficient economy. This latter period resulted in the empowerment of the head teacher who was, in the main, accepted by the governors as the authoritative voice in the school (Grace, 1995, p.12). The ideal form of leadership in the public services during this social democratic period was seen as professionally expert, innovative and consultative. Later, in the 1980s Thatcher's New Right injected the free market ideology into educational organisation and leadership, which presented a major challenge to social democratic ideas of educational leadership (Grace, 1995, p.18). During this era the head teacher became more like a company CEO as schools scrambled to win market share in terms of pupil numbers by securing better grades in standardised tests, the results of which were published in school league tables (Grace, 1995, p.17). Similar changes have been experienced in the U.S.A. during the same period (Grace, 1995, p.27).

The value of discourse analysis as a means of understanding educational management is further supported by the location in time of the use of the term management in schools. Its use as a reference to the overall co-ordination of school activities dates to the relatively recent 1960s (Grace, 1995, p.34). This was the time when comprehensive schools were introduced into England.

These large schools required a “management approach” which gave rise to the use of the terms “senior and middle-management”.

Modern managerial expertise and system thinking began to take precedence over the moral and scholarly authority of the grammar school head (Grace, 1995, p.35).

Governance in Irish Post-Primary Schools

Historically Irish education has been dominated by the Catholic Church and its own hierarchical mode of governance was grafted onto school governance (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p.26).

However, Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) are careful not to overstate the influence of the Catholic Church on Irish school governance. There were other social factors. Hierarchical, male-led, conservatism in schools was also a product of a traditional rural society up to the 1970s and anti-intellectualism (p.27). According to Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) "At the organisational level, schools were characterised by a strong ethos of institutional control, involving respect for authority, the expertise of teachers and a largely unquestioning approach to religious beliefs and values" (p.28).

However, since the 1990s, the social and political power of the Catholic Church has been in steady decline and, by a process of osmosis, the bishops have been replaced by the high priests of neo-liberalism. The advance of the neo-liberal New Managerialism, a project to reform the public service through accountability, transparency, external evaluation and general "reform" on the basis of a business model, was met with little if any resistance in its early years (Lynch, Grummell and Devine 2012). By the time resistance did emerge from some of the teacher trade unions, New Managerialism had become fortified by law. *The Education Act (1998)*, was the most important development in empowering New Managerialism in Irish schools. The Act outlines the functions of the school partners, requires schools to have boards of management, schools must prepare and implement school plans and accountability mechanisms are given legislative effect (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p.31). The accountability and performance measurement dimension of the Act, is enshrined in Section 13. This section gives a statutory basis to the role of the inspectorate. Thus the WSE process, is of itself an instrument of the New Managerialist agenda.

While New Managerialism provides a powerful political lens through which to understand Irish school leadership, other analysts provide other insights. These include Collins and Cadden (2001), who have developed an ethical critique of Irish leadership, more generally, by arguing that a lack of "exemplary, ethical leadership" is an important part of the explanation for the high levels of corruption in Ireland (p.95). Flood (2011), however, writes that the role of the principal teacher in Ireland before 1970 was an administrative one combined with "an expectation to provide moral leadership for the school and the community" (O'Sullivan and Burnham, p.49). The fact that many principals before 1970 were religious may assist in understanding "moral" in this context as analysts, such as the former Taoiseach, the late Garret Fitzgerald, have been critical of what they saw as the catholic church's failure to help build a "civic morality" (*The Irish Times*, April 9th 2011, p.14) in Ireland.

The impact of New Managerialism on governance of Irish post-primary schools, like that of its overall impact, has not been without its obstacles. There was, and is, an ongoing dissent and mediation (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p.23). From a CDA perspective this chimes with the idea of a plurality of discourses.

The Discourse from Which Whole School Evaluation (WSE) Emerged

International organisations such as the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have strongly influenced Irish educational goals. The contemporary policy direction of the Irish inspectorate emerged from the neo-liberal New Managerialist project which has been described as viewing the public sector as "inherently inefficient, self-serving and inhibiting rational economic strategies" (Collins and Cradden, 2001, p.60) . New Managerialism, was promoted by senior civil servants since the 1990s who used the language of choice, competition and service users, and sought to reduce the power of public sector professionals (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, pp. 3 and 4, 2012). In Ireland these ideas were endorsed by senior civil servants, who in converse fashion to what happened elsewhere in Europe, persuaded their respective ministers to adopt New Managerialism.

The Strategic Management Initiative and the Delivering Better Government Report (1996) led to *The Public Service Management Act (1997)*.

All of which paved the way for *Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)* and a general target " to have the public service operate according to `market-like models`" (Collins cited in Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012 p.11). Gunter (2011) has outlined how managerialist performance appraisal has been promoted by New Right and New Labour governments in the UK.

There is a strong dimension within this neo-liberal frame to reduce the power of the teaching profession and casualise the profession to reduce costs (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p.14).

However, other aspects of New Managerialism have been less successful in Ireland. Despite the official rhetoric of "reform", the evidence that is available suggests that teacher's beliefs and values have changed little. Also, individual performance measurement of teachers, a key component of the new managerialism, has made limited progress. Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) state that "The work of individual teachers was not assessed in any detail" (p.15).

Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) fail to mention subject inspections and their reports which, while not naming individual teachers, do attempt to evaluate the aggregate performance of teachers in subject areas. Nevertheless, what is clear from Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) is that Irish teacher trade unions, social factors and the relatively small size of Irish schools have, individually or in combination, either prevented or curbed key aspects of the new managerialism. For example, performance related pay has been prevented, and while school accountability through league tables was prevented, WSE was agreed as an alternative (pp. 16-17).

The Irish state, through the 20th century up to currently, has moved from being shaped by Catholic values to those of the free market. This social metamorphosis reflects the global move towards entrepreneurialism and individualism (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p.21). According to Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012):

The call to be market-led rather than education-led has profound implications not only for the definition of what it is to be an educational leader or manager, but for principals and senior managers' personal lives. Managers are increasingly required to work in a way that is not bound by time or other commitments. The focus is the product not the person, both in terms of what is attained and what is counted and countable. (p.23)

The WSE Process

Whole School Evaluation (WSE) is conducted by the inspectorate and is underpinned by statute. Section 7, (2) (b) of the Education Act (1998) states that it is a function of the Minister for Education and Science to, "monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the state by recognised schools and centres for education" (p.7).

According to the inspectorate, WSE is a:

collaborative process involving the teaching staff, the management of the school, parents and students. At various stages during the WSE process, members of the school community have the opportunity to interact with the evaluation team to discuss their work, their role, and their vision for the school. These interactions provide the evaluation team with an insight into the structure and dynamics of the school. (Inspectorate, 2006, p.2)

The section of the inspectorate responsible for WSE is named the Evaluation Support and Research Unit (ESRU). Section 13 of the *Education Act* (1998) states that a function of the inspectorate is: "to conduct research into education and to provide the support in the formulation of policy by the Minister".

A pilot project on WSE was rolled out in 1999. It involved 17 post-primary school and 18 primary schools. The functions of the inspectorate are given detailed explanation in the legislation and have been summarised as:

a programme of inspection in schools;

promoting compliance with regulation and legislation;

an advisory role for schools and the Department (Coolahan, 2009, p.282).

Consultation with the education partners continued, including the teacher unions whose support Coolahan (2009) considers crucial to the implementation of WSE (p.282). According to Mc Namara, O'Hara, Boyle and Sullivan (2009) the new approach to inspection and school evaluation came from external sources rather than any domestic pressure and "the scheme of evaluation was agreed only after long and difficult negotiations with the stakeholders and the views of teachers were highly influential" (p.109). There was a marked reluctance to engage in the systematic data collection and the analysis necessary to underpin an improvement strategy" (Mc Namara et al, p.109). This included a reluctance to provide a serious role for parents and pupils in the process.

WSE is carried out by teams of inspectors who work in a school for a number of days. The pre-evaluation phase includes discussion with school personnel i.e. teachers, board members and parents; and the study of development and planning activities. School context factors such as the socio-economic background of its pupils are taken into consideration. The in-school evaluation involves five main areas. These areas are, the quality of management, school planning, curriculum provision, learning and teaching, and support for students.

The post-evaluation stage involves the issuing of a report by the inspectors which is discussed with the teachers and the board of management, following which any errors of fact are corrected. If the school wishes it can respond to the inspectors' report and this can accompany the published WSE report.

Inspection reports were first published on the Department's website in June 2006. The Government at the time, and all of its successors to date, have refused to permit the publication of school league tables as experienced in the U.K. The Minister in 2006, Ms Mary Hanafin said that the WSE reports were a "balanced and fair assessment of the work in schools", unlike league tables which are drawn up from examination results only (Coolahan, 2009, p.283). The Minister therefore was a significant voice in the discourse, who used her considerable status to further legitimise WSE. Her use of the positive words, balanced and fair, would reinforce the acceptability of WSE as a means of assessing the work of schools.

Conclusion

The literature review of international thought on school leadership is a prerequisite for the further development of this study, in at least two significant respects. Firstly, my journey through the literature brought me to the Discourse Analysis of Grace (1995). Grace's (1995) Discourse Analysis paved the way to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an appropriate and enabling theoretical framework, or lens, through which to study the WSE reports. The second important contribution provided by my analysis of the literature, is the part it plays in assisting with my analysis of the WSE reports. The review of the literature identified some key themes of management and leadership.

I used these themes, which are represented by the continua, when I devised my research categories for examining the WSE reports.

The examination of the Irish context is important in that it also helped to set the scene for the rest of this thesis. In addition, the context provides an initial look at the broader national and international influences which helped shape the WSE process. Consequently, this aspect of the literature review acted as a precursor for the requirement of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the discourses or contexts which helped design the policies which gave rise to WSE. CDA, which is this study's theoretical framework, is explained in the next chapter, as is the research methodology.

It is clear from the literature review that issues of school management and leadership are complex, given their plurality of interpretation and their political or ideological dimensions. Consequently, a suitable lens through which to study the WSE reports is required. This lens or theoretical framework is addressed next

CHAPTER THREE. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Given the wide range of views on school leadership and leadership generally, the verbal and political complexity of the discourse on management and leadership is a significant challenge. Consequently, a suitable lens, through which to study the sources of information, was required. Grace's (1995) Discourse Analysis of management and leadership in the English school system acted as a signpost which led to Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). CDA facilitates a critical approach which examines the issues and activities under study in their ideological context (Rogers, 2004). The critical theory component of this lens provides an academic basis and rationale for my teacher professional and democratic critique of the WSE reports. This chapter outlines both the rationale for, as well as an explanation of, CDA, and the research methods used in this study.

This chapter opens with an explanation of the rationale for the theoretical framework and research methods. This is followed by a detailed examination of CDA, as it relates to this study. Later in the chapter the research methods are explained and justified. This includes an examination of Content Analysis and how the themes for the Content Analysis were devised. Content Analysis is a quantitative research method in this mixed methods study. The findings from the Content Analysis are used to help set the scene or provide an initial perspective for the subsequent CDA of the WSE reports. The findings from both methods are integrated to build my concluding analysis. The chapter outlines how the main stages of the research were carried out and the rationale for same. Finally, this chapter also justifies my choice of research methodology. I have included this with the explanation of the theoretical framework because my research methods flow logically from my interpretative lens. Indeed, CDA is a research method as well as a theoretical framework (Rogers, 2004). This is arguably apparent in each of the broad components of this framework i.e. Critical Discourse Analysis. Criticism is the invitation to take a politically critical standpoint in relation to the research material.

Thus, a close examination of this material necessitates an ongoing vigilance with regard to political bias, however subtle.

The method here is primarily a close critical reading of the WSE reports and their related context material. This critical dimension governs, at least in part, how the discourse is analysed. The fragmentation of the research material into appropriate categories and trends is guided by the themes which emerge from my analysis of the literature, but also from a critical stance. The analysis component of CDA provides research methods, for example, in terms of how to identify political or power issues in the language of the texts. In addition to these methods which emerge organically from CDA, I use Content Analysis as a quantitative research tool to triangulate the qualitative methods normally associated with CDA.

Rationale for Theoretical Framework and Research Methods.

The numerous models of school management and leadership emphasises the importance of considering their wider social and political contexts. So too does the politics of school management and leadership, which is a contentious dimension of the study. Grace (1995) has argued that theoretical frameworks in the educational leadership field have been too restricted and technically focussed. Consequently, he believes that the historical, political and socio-cultural dimensions have been marginalised. The systematic treatment of these dimensions has led to the evolution of thinking around, what is more recently referred to as, CDA (Rogers, 2004). At an earlier point in the 1990s Grace wrote of discourses as "What can be said and thought but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relationships" (Grace, 1995, p.17). The subjectivity and the power relations referred to by Grace (1995) are significant points in terms of addressing management and leadership in schools. These concepts are central to the discourses which give rise to school evaluation processes and emerge as important themes in this study.

The rationale for the research methods used flows directly from the stance that CDA may deploy different research methods both quantitative and qualitative. Arguably the most important of these methods involves a critical approach to the subject matter.

Critical Discourse Analysis, CDA.

According to Collins (2004), critical perspectives in research require attention to discourse i.e. language use and the social worlds which it is a product of and in turn helps to constitute. While CDA has been credited with putting power and social injustice squarely on the agenda of sociolinguistics it has been criticised for being First World parochial (Rogers, 2004). CDA refers to a range of North American and European research efforts which deal with questions of ideology and power. In its defence Rogers (2004), has written that, "Researchers using CDA can describe, interpret, and explain the relationship among language and important educational issues" (p.1).

CDA is both a theory and a method. Its designers, Fairclough and Wodak (2004) offer eight foundational principles as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. power relations are discursive.
3. discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. discourse does ideological work.
5. discourse is historical.
6. a sociocognitive approach is required to understand how relations between texts and society are mediated.
7. discourse methodology is interpretive.
8. uses a systematic ideology" (p.2).

In order to use CDA the following stages are required.

Critical

It is a critical theory which studies power relations and demonstrates inequities. Gee and Fairclough (Rogers, 2004), were influenced by neo-Marxists and post-structuralists. According to Gee (2004) "To be critical as opposed to discourse analysis, you need a combination of grammatical and textual analysis with socio-political and critical theories of society and institutions" (p.20). Critical can also be understood as an attempt to solve social problems. It is about taking a stance or advocating a position. In this regard, it is my view, that the experience of the UK is illustrative of this critical stance. CDA in the UK goes further than analysing educational management and leadership through an historical and political lens. While critical perspectives are not homogenous they have given rise to Critical Leadership Studies (CLS) in opposition to Education Management Studies (EMS) which can be decoded as democratic schools or educational leadership versus authoritarian line management. Greenfield, who is in the CLS camp, has echoed Grace's criticism of many management and leadership studies as "ahistorical, narrowly technical, mechanistic and unnecessarily boring" (as cited in Grace, 1995, p.51). He has called for a humane science with a values focus (as cited in Grace, 1995 p.52). Others associated with CLS have argued "against contemporary trends towards strong leadership and salvationist and hegemonic views of leadership" (Grace, 1995, p.52) and for a study and understanding of leadership which is informed by critical theory (Grace, 1995). From CLS has emerged an advocacy of educational leadership which is ethical, democratic, community focused and uses education as a means for the empowerment of all (Grace, 1995, pp. 54-55). This perspective, according to Grace (1995) includes, what he calls, White's radical thesis in 1983 which looks beyond the idea of a democratic head teacher to a scenario where such a role no longer exists but is replaced by an elected "administrative chairperson" (p.58). This is part of a CLS challenge to the idea that organisational democracy is not practical and that hierarchical leadership is more efficient, the so-called "iron law of oligarchy" (Grace, 1995, p.58).

Another interpretation of the critical component of CDA is that it is an attempt to describe, interpret and explain the relationship between the form (e.g. grammar, semantics) and function (e.g. how people use language to achieve an outcome) of language. There are specific points of view about this

relationship and specific analytical techniques. Any word or structure in language has a certain "meaning potential". There is a range of possible meanings in different contexts of use. According to Gee (2004) words have: "utterance-type meaning and utterance-token meaning. any word or structure in language has a certain "meaning potential" - a range of possible meanings in different contexts of use" (p.21). Utterance-type meanings are general meanings which are not situation specific e.g. cat as defined as a **feline** creature. On the other hand an utterance-token meaning relates to situational meaning e.g. the "world's big cats" relates to lions and tigers. This refers to different contexts of use. These contexts include the material meaning, the people present and what they know and believe and the language that comes before and after a given utterance, the social relationships of the people involved, and their ethnic, gendered, and sexual identities, as well as cultural, historical and institutional factors (Gee, 2004). For my study the use of the terms "management" and "leadership" in the WSE reports have, or should have, an utterance-token or a meaning which is situated in the context of the WSE process. Most current approaches to discourse analysis take a reflexive view of the relationship between language and context i.e. that an utterance influences what we take the context to be and the context influences what we take the utterance to mean (Gee, 2004). A potential problem that arises for me is what is known as the "frame problem" (Gee, 2004, p.30) i.e. how and where do you stop referring to other possible context factors? The advice from Gee (2004), is that "all you can do is argue your case" (p.30).

The relationship between form and function of language involves the study of the grammatical structuring of sentences to present information as assumed or taken for granted and other information as asserted. These are the grammatical devices of dependent and independent clauses. Normally in the English language, dependent clauses follow independent clauses. All discourse analysis moves beyond form within sentences to study patterns across sentences (Gee, 2004, p.27).

Another aspect of the study of the form and the function of language is the existence of vernacular and non-vernacular social languages. The former is exemplified by a child's language which according to leading linguist Chomsky (Gee, 2004.) is akin to instinct and is not a lesser language because of its non standard dialect. On the other hand a social language is developed for a special purpose e.g. religion or academic specialities. My research of WSE reports will be a study of a social

language, one which has developed around its own speciality. This would also be the case if one were to study the work of other groups, for example, doctors or street gangs. Some formal social languages create solidarity between professionals from the same field but separation from others. This, along with social language issues of status and deference, presents a line of inquiry for my study.

Discourse

Discourse has been defined in a number of different ways. Fairclough (2004), sees it as being more than language but as a type of social practice which involves social relationships where issues of solidarity, status and power are at stake. Discourses are the distinctive ways which people talk, think and relate to one another. For Gee (2004), "Discourses" are inherently ideological involving values and viewpoints about relationships between people. Discourses decide who is "normal" and who isn't, what is acceptable criticism and who are the insiders and who are the outsiders. Some discourses are dominant over others (Gee, 2004).

Discourses within schools form and reform, reward and punish distinctive kinds of people i.e. socially situated identities. (Gee, 2004, pp.39-40). An additional element is the existence of cultural models which are everyday theories about the world learned in a community of practice. So, for example, a college professor might typically apply the widespread academic cultural model that events follow from deeper, underlying and hidden causes. Discourses recruit specific social languages and cultural models.

The discourse is the whole package, the words, distinctive ways of thinking, being, acting, interacting, believing, feeling, valuing, dressing, and using one's body; it incorporates symbols, deeds, objects, tools etc. Discourses are always defended in relation to other discourses e.g. gangs and the police.

They exist and change over time in interaction with one another (Gee cited in Rogers, 2004). For the purpose of my study these discourses about management and leadership exist on a number of levels, including the broader historical and political contexts, the inspectorate and the school.

Analysis

Some analytical methods are less linguistically focused and more focused on context in which the discourse arises. Other methods are interested in the historical emergence of a set of concepts or policies. Finally, some methods pay equal attention to language and social theory. Fairclough (2004) refers to this as textually oriented approach to discourse analysis.

Gee has four analytical tools;

(a) social languages. (b) cultural models. (c) situated meanings. (d) discourses.

According to Rogers (2004) Gee and Fairclough's methodologies are commonly used by researchers. Fairclough's procedures includes; description, interpretation, and explanation of discursive relations at the local (e.g. newspaper), institutional (political affiliation of newspaper) and societal (policies which shape and are shaped by the other two) domains of analysis. Recursive movement between linguistic and social analysis is what makes CDA a systemic method. Fairclough refers to genre, discourse and style as the three properties of language that are operating within and among the local, institutional and societal domains. While there are different approaches, all three components of CDA are embedded within a methodology (Fairclough cited in Rogers, 2004). For the purpose of my educational research CDA presents two important issues

1. Attention to the relationship between the form and function of language. This manifests itself in a number of ways including the use of words such as "objective" which provide credibility to WSE.
2. Attention to the relationship between discourse and contexts. In this respect the discourse of the inspectorate is a dominant discourse which emerges from a context. This context will be examined in the next chapter.

According to Fairclough (1995):

Political discourse provides the clearest illustration of the constitutive power of discourse. It reproduces or changes the social world by reproducing or changing peoples' representations of it and the principles of classification which underline them. (p.182)

The relationship between knowledge and power is a common thread in the writings of Foucault (1976 and 2006) who argues that throughout history power has been used to control and define knowledge. In this way what the powerful claim to be "scientific" knowledge may really be a means of social control. In light of this observation it is noteworthy that the WSE reports are not simply a means of reporting but are intended to shape what is considered good practice in schools by commending and criticising different types of behaviour. It is appropriate therefore to use CDA as both a means of understanding and a guide for studying these documents. This justification for using CDA as part of the theoretical framework is given further support by a study done in the U.S.A. by Woodside-Jiron (2004). Her work examined Californian state policy with regard to the teaching of reading to children. The central point of her research is how the American federal policy of *No Child Left Behind*, which links funding to "scientifically proven methods of reading instruction" (Woodside-Jiron, 2004 p. xviii), broke down resistance and naturalised itself as a conceptual model in California. Her research moved beyond issues of form and function in language to engage with texts, discourse practices, and how they contributed to the bedding down of state policy. Issues of power, cohesion and intertextuality are dealt with. Policy makers, she discovered, put certain people in key positions and sought to establish what was thinkable and unthinkable. By using CDA Woodside-Jiron (2004) created a comprehensive picture of how power engineered social change (p. xviii). The analysis here goes beyond policy goals to inquire into underlying issues of power and ideology. Prunty (cited in Rogers, 1985) argued that issues of how problems arise and appear on agendas, how issues are developed, and how policy is developed and implemented are all important features of CDA. Fairclough's different layers of inquiry are of assistance in this regard (2004). All of these issues of political power and policy in education, which are highlighted by CDA, resonate with my search to understand management and leadership in Irish post-primary schools as mediated by the WSE reports 2006-07.

Research Methods

The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to outline how I approached my research and to justify the methods chosen. I outline in detail “the specific methods that will be used for data collection, interpretation, and presentation in the proposed study” (Kilbourn, 2005, p.18). Also, a central aim of this section is to address “whether the specific methods are adequate for answering the questions that the inquiry has posed” (Kilbourn, 2005, p.18).

I also link my research methods to my research questions which are as follows. Firstly, how objective is the process that the inspectorate use to report on management and leadership activity in Irish post-primary schools.

This is a question about the research and reporting methods used by the inspectors in the first 100 WSE reports, 2006-07. The second question is, what do these same WSE reports reveal, or not reveal, about management and leadership activity in post-primary schools? Thirdly, what do the reports say about the inspectorate’s preferred models for management and leadership?

Justification

My research methods developed logically from my theoretical framework of CDA, and distributed leadership as defined by Spillane (2006). This framework and the research methods that flow from it are best suited to deal with a research problem i.e. to devise an interpretation of the reality of management and leadership in Irish post-primary schools as described in the WSE reports (2006-07); and the influences which shape that reality in the absence of an agreed understanding of school leadership and against a background of conceptual ambiguity. CDA enabled a critical analysis of the WSE process and reports in the context of the discourse which shaped that process.

While CDA does not have a fixed methodological stance it informed and shaped the methods used for this study. At the beginning of this chapter, when I justified CDA as my choice of theoretical framework, I outlined some of the research methods which are associated with it. Many modes of analysis are theoretically possible but all involve close textual analysis. CDA methodology is normally located in the qualitative field of hermeneutics.

This encompasses the idea that we can only understand a particular act or artefact by referring to the world view that created it (Jay and Jay, 1999). But also, I would argue that an act or artefact can help to explain the world view that created it.

An initial consideration for my research methods is the frame problem, i.e. the context where the documents are found (Fairclough's (2004), three-tiered model of description, interpretation and explanation of discourse relations at the local, institutional and societal domains of analysis is most appropriate for my inquiry (p.8). Local for my inquiry is the school, institutional is the inspectorate and its policy framework, and societal is broader Irish society and international influences. This is analogous to the Russian dolls which fit sequentially into a larger companion.

I have attempted to strike a balance between linguistics, context and historical background (Rogers, 2004). Recursive movement between linguistic and social analysis is what makes CDA a systematic model. For Fairclough (2004), genre, discourse and style are the three properties of language that operate within and between the three domains mentioned above. Gee (2004) has outlined four analytical tools for CDA.

- **Social Languages**. These help create a socially situated identity e.g. doctors or street gangs. My research seeks to establish if there is a particular type or form of language used by inspectors. The use, by official sources, of authoritative and credible vocabulary such as "objective" is important in this regard.
- **Cultural Models**. These help people to determine, often unconsciously, what counts as relevant or irrelevant in given situations.
- **Situated Meanings**. What do words mean in particular contexts? This question is of particular relevance given the plurality of meaning of the terms management and leadership in Ireland.

- **Discourse with a capital “D”.** While discourse means language in use, “Discourse” is use of language plus other aspects of human thinking and behaviour. This refers to distinctive ways of thinking, being, valuing, dressing and using one’s body (Rogers, 2004). This is relevant for distinctive groups in my study such as teachers and the inspectorate, with the latter, for example, associated with wearing suits while the former are not. Suits create an impression of professionalism and authority.

Analysing the WSE reports

A comprehensive analysis of a text such as a WSE report should include the following approaches. I have taken this guide from Jager and Meir (2009), and substituted the word "text" for "article". The interpretations of all of these can be subsequently combined to give an overall interpretation.

- **Context.** Why was the text selected? Why is it typical? Who is its author? What are its special areas of coverage?
- **Surface of the text.** What is its layout? What are the headings and subheadings? How is it structured into units of meaning? What topics are included i.e. what discourse strands is the article a fragment of? How do these topics overlap?
- **Rhetorical means.** What kind and form of argument does the text follow? What argumentation strategy is used? What logic underlines the composition of the text? What implications and illusions does the text contain? What collective symbolism is used? What idioms, clichés and sayings are used? What are the vocabulary and style? What actors are mentioned and how are they portrayed (persons and pronouns used)? What references are used? (e.g. references to science, information about the sources of knowledge used)
- **Content and logical statements.** What concept of humankind does the text presuppose and convey? What concept of society does the text convey? What concept of e.g. technology does the text give? What perspective regarding the future does the text give?
- Other peculiarities of the text.

- Discourse position and overall message of the article (cited in Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

These questions were an important set of guidelines for my research but it wasn't necessary to use them all or to be restricted in any way by them. Jager and Maier (2009) who devised the questions caution that they are not meant to be prescriptive. It is to be emphasised that CDA is not a rigid formula that must be followed mechanically. Flexibility is encouraged and is conditional on the particular research question and the type of materials used. Foucault is referenced to provide intellectual support for this position (cited in Wodak and Meyers, 2001, p.56).

Content Analysis

An additional instrument in my research methods tool box is Content Analysis. As noted earlier CDA is not prescriptive about the research techniques deployed so I availed of aspects of Content Analysis in order to map out the terrain in a quantitative manner. As a quantitative method combined with the essentially qualitative nature of CDA, Content Analysis makes my research a mixed methods approach.

Content Analysis has been described as "systematic research method for analysing textual information in a standardised way that allows evaluators to make inferences about the information" (United States General Accounting Office, 1986, cited in Weber, 1990, p.70). Weber (1990) has described it as creating "quantitative indicators that assess the degree of attention or concern devoted to cultural units such as themes, categories or issues" (p.70). The key strength of this method is that the numerous words in the documents can be classified into much fewer content categories. The analysis may include classification of themes, issues, topics etc. It can include word counts, frequency of statements, subtle differences in their intensity and a study of issues over time and place. And not only can Content Analysis summarise and describe trends in the content of documents "it can also describe attitudes or perceptions of the author of that material" (United States General Accounting Office, 1986, cited in Weber, 1990, pp.9-12).

An advantage of Content Analysis is the ability to reduce the danger of bias. An example of this is the use of word counts. However, it should be pointed out that judgement must be used when coding the data. Nevertheless, the strength of this systematic approach is that it enables researchers to extract relevant information more consistently than if they were reading the documents only casually (United States General Accounting Office, cited in Weber, 1990).

It is important to state that there is no universally right way of conducting Content Analysis. Indeed it has been noted that the best form of this research combines quantitative and qualitative methods (Weber, 1990). A simple summary of the strength of Content Analysis is its capability to reduce the many words of the text to fewer words in categories. Summary measures such as word frequency lists are considered to represent the intensity of concern with each category (Weber, 1990). So, for instance, in a study done of US Presidential candidates' speeches from 1976 it was found that economic and health are ranked 6th and 18th in the Carter platform, whereas in the Ford platform economic ranks only 23rd and health didn't figure among the most frequent words (Weber, 1990, p.51). Lists of key words in context (KWIC) and the classification of words into content categories are further rich research tools.

I decided, for my research, to use the latter. I classified words into categories which emerged from my analysis of the literature.

•**Define recording units.** The common options are word, word sense i.e. words with multiple meanings or those with similar meanings, sentence e.g. where co-location is under study and theme e.g. where a sentence needs to be broken into segments.

•**Define the categories.** This relates to questions of whether a recording unit can be placed in more than one category, in which case issues of reliability arise. Another concern is whether the categories should be broad or narrow. For example, leadership is broad while distributive leadership is narrower.

•**Reliability or accuracy.** Care needs to be taken if human coding is used due to the danger of fatigue. On the other hand however, computer coding may present with unanticipated words which may be misclassified (Weber, 2001).

For this study human coding was necessary because of the wide variety of words and statements for each category.

There are six commonly used recording units; words, word sense, sentences, paragraphs, theme, and whole text. I chose theme, as a recording unit, because the reports contain many different words which link to the same category of ideas or theme e.g. the motivational aspect of leadership i.e. school leaders motivating other staff. Words such as praise, promote and encourage, are linked to this theme. I used a sample of 10 WSE reports for my Content Analysis. A small number was sufficient given the labour intensive nature of Content Analysis and that the purpose of the exercise was to inform the CDA. I did this to help establish the themes for the CDA. Looking at 2006-07 to provide a benchmark for further study as there are no other studies done. These are a stratified sample of the WSE reports, which are representative of VEC, Community and Comprehensive and voluntary secondary schools.

The Content Analysis of management and leadership, as observed and reported by inspectors, was done using a representative sample of 10 reports. These were chosen on the basis that the range of types of post-primary schools needed to be represented in the sample. The reports used for my analysis are taken from WSEs which took place between September and December 2006, in the first year of the publication of the reports.

The reports were chosen because they are from different categories of schools. They include, voluntary secondary schools, both co-ed and same sex; a community school and a community college, a vocational school and an Irish medium school. Therefore, the following school types were identified and chosen for the sample;

1. Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) College in County Limerick, designated as disadvantaged but not Delivering Equality In Schools (DEIS);
2. Patrician Academy voluntary secondary school for boys in a large town, County Cork;
3. VEC co-educational in a large town. County Cork;
4. Loreto College, voluntary secondary school for girls, Dublin city;

5. A large VEC co-educational post-primary school in a big town in County Kildare;
6. A relatively small vocational school in a large town, County Kildare;
7. Irish medium vocational school in the Gaeltacht, County Galway;
8. Catholic Diocesan Secondary School for boys in a large town in County Louth;
9. Salesian Catholic secondary school with DEIS status in County Limerick;
10. Christian Brothers School (CBS) for boys in Dublin city.

This sample also takes into account geographical distribution. The reports were sourced from schools in cities and towns, over a wide geographical area. Also, one of the sample is a post-primary school based in an Irish speaking part of County Galway. Studying these samples, as they relate to management and leadership issues, I noted the vocabulary and terminology that are present. Words, terms or other units which have similar meanings were placed in the same coding category. Ensuring agreement here is referred to as "semantic" validity (Holsti, 1969). An example of this might be the placing of the words, management and board of management in the same category. Categorisation and quantification of themes is based on single words, or different combinations of words in the WSE reports.

The themes I researched relate to the continuums which emerged from my analysis of school leadership literature. These continuums, values/flexibility-tasks/prescription and community/culture-organisation/structure, are reflected in the WSE reports through a variety of words and statements. Consequently the themes I identified in the management section of the reports were, structures/formal, relationships/interaction, leadership/motivation, and ethos/values.

There are an increasing number of computer programmes to analyse text files which facilitate the interpretation of large amounts of material but this was not possible for my study. I had to rely on a manual identification of words and statements for my themes and their frequency. This occurred because of the significant variety of words and word combinations which match my themes.

So for example, in the ethos/values category, the following are a sample of the words and statements which apply. "safe and nurturing environment" and "the work of staff is characterised by a fundamental care and concern for each student" (Hazelwood College, Dromcollogher, September 2006). The identification of discreet units in the text, each of which qualify as a single reference for quantification purposes, was problematic. For example, the statement that "Policies strive to be fair and yet efficient, codes are equitably created" (Loreto college, Dublin, September 2006) is counted as two references for the ethos/values category. Given the labour intensive nature of this work and the high demands on precision and concentration, there is a clear danger of human error. Therefore, I acknowledge that there is an inevitable margin of error in my quantification. However, given the significant gaps in scores which emerged from this research, the work has validity in terms of drawing deductions. The frequency of references to the themes by the inspectors enabled me to extrapolate evidence to help answer my core research questions.

There are four key aspects of the Content Analysis process. These are;

Measurement. The use of numbers to represent some aspect of the text;

Indication. This is when the investigator draws an inference of some unmeasured quality from the numbers;

Representation. Techniques for describing syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic aspects of the texts; and.

Interpretation. The translation of the meaning of the text into some other analytical or theoretical language (Weber, 1990, p.70).

The sections made use of for the CDA were (a) Quality of School Management; which is subdivided into (i) the Characteristic spirit of the school, (ii) School ownership and management, (iii) In-school management; and (b) the Quality of school planning. I included the school planning section, even though it lies outside the prefigured management section, because it refers to the development of school policies and procedures. These are important for management and leadership issues, because they are a significant dimension of school governance. School planning involves all teachers and the other partners in the school community, in its development.

Creating Themes for Content Analysis Categories

The literature review in Chapter Two resulted in the construction of two conceptual continuums. The first continuum is the values/flexibility-skills/prescription continuum. Secondly, the school community/culture-organisation/structure continuum. I used both of these continuums as a guide to create the thematic categories for the Content Analysis. The theoretical framework also played a role in guiding the construction of categories. I identified words and terms which relate to political relationships and decision making in the context of school governance. As distributed leadership is part of my theoretical framework, it was one such example. However, even when including the other reports which I read, the use of the term "distributed leadership" occurred very rarely, and other references to the word leadership were accompanied with a variety of adjectives. I noted words and terminology in the WSE reports which relate to aspects of management and leadership, and the many adjectives which prefix them.

I selected and colour coded my categories of Content Analysis as follows:

(a) **Formal positions, structures and decisions**

This category includes words such as manager, leader, formal, running (as in managing), monitor, development, implement, decisions, strategy, aims, goals, accountability and planning. This category links strongly to skills and organisation, and all related words, groups of words and concepts were underlined in black.

(b) **Activities and ideas which relate to human relationships and interactions**

This category includes words such as communications, meetings, relationship, consultation, engage, conduit, rapport, document and trust. This category resonates with the community/culture pole of my second continuum. However, it should be noted that some of these words could also fit into the organisation category e.g. meeting. The words/terms or small groups of words in this category, and those with similar meanings were underlined in blue.

(c) **The motivational and inspirational aspects of management and leadership**

This category includes words such as praise, promote, commend, affirm, enhance, foster, friendly, encourage, support. This category relates to both the values/flexibility and the community/culture continuum poles. It is, given its non-technocratic focus on positive human relations, contrary to managerialism. Concepts in this category were underlined in green.

(d) **This category tries to identify words connected with human values**

These words relate to aspects of human behaviour or relationships which are not conducive to measurement, for example, ethos, reflection, care, community, vision, inclusion, partners, holistic, share, spirit, potential, equity, learning community and collegiality. These concepts mostly resonate with the values/flexibility and community/culture poles of each continuum. This category was underlined in red.

The Main Stages of the Research

The research involved a multi-leveilling model which facilitated triangulation and progressive focusing. Triangulation which "attempts to confirm inferences made from the findings of several research methods and approaches" (Smith, 2006) occurs in this study through the use of primary and secondary sources, and the use of different research methods on the WSE reports i.e. Content Analysis and CDA. The research was also progressive in that different stages of the research were dependent on previous stages. In this regard, for example, the Content Analysis was dependent on the continuums which were presented previously in the Literature Review. It should be recalled that the CDA takes place in two phases. Firstly, there is a CDA of the WSE process and subsequently there is a CDA of the WSE reports, 2006-07.

Ethical considerations.

WSE reports are, as a matter of official DES policy, purposely placed in the public domain. In that sense they are similar in status to newspaper reports or information in a specialised secondary source. Consequently, education research considerations concerning confidentiality cannot apply as the evidence used in this study is already widely available and easily accessible by the general public.

However, I have attempted at all times to adhere to the principle of beneficence which is understood to be the research obligation to do no harm, to maximise possible benefits and minimize possible harms (Strike, 2006).

A CDA of the WSE process

This involved an analysis of the policy context which produced and shaped the WSE process. This was required because CDA looks at contexts and discourses, and how they shape policy and practice (Rogers, 2004, p.182). This initial stage of my research critically examines the research and reporting methods of the inspectors. By closely scrutinising their methods I am addressing my primary research question which is to establish the level of objectivity in the WSE reports.

A Content Analysis of a sample of 10 WSE reports

I chose 10 WSE reports because they constitute 10% of the overall number of reports studied and this is a representative sample. In choosing my schools for the Content Analysis I aimed for a representative mix in terms of employer i.e. VEC, Community School and Voluntary Secondary; gender i.e. co-educational, and single sex; and geographical i.e. town and city. This Content Analysis assists in addressing all three of my research questions i.e. the objectivity of the WSE process, what do the WSE reports say, or not say, with regard to management and leadership in the schools, and what is the inspectorate's preferred model on management and leadership.

A CDA of the WSE reports, 2006-2007

This necessitated a close study and critical analysis of a 100 WSE reports from 2006-2007, inclusive. I chose these reports because they start with, and continue in chronological order from, the first WSE report.

I needed a large sample but also one which I could reasonably manage within my time constraints.

This is a critical analysis, which is guided by the continuums which I devised in Chapter Two, Spillane's (2006) understanding of distributed leadership and the Content Analysis.

Conclusion

Ideas which protect its interests, resonates with the theoretical framework. Interestingly, Gramsci In this third chapter I have given an outline of CDA and my rationale for using CDA as my theoretical framework. The outline of the chapter does not, however, reflect a purely linear development of my thinking. The theoretical framework provides an academically robust lens to examine the WSE reports as they relate to management and leadership. This lens ensures that this study goes beyond a basic report of what is said in the reports. My research was guided by an aim to analyse the reports in a politically critical way and in their historical, cultural and political context. The theoretical framework contextualises the WSE reports as the product of a wider and older discourse where those with power have shaped the agenda. Gramsci's (Kearney, 1984) theory of "ideological hegemony", whereby a dominant class retains political power by manipulating popular opinion and therefore creating a "popular consensus" around argued that his idea of "ideological hegemony" is frequently maintained through religious and educational institutions (Kearney, 1984).

In this chapter I have also explained the rationale for my research methods which demanded a close critique of the WSE process and its context as well as the WSE reports. The CDA is a research method as it seeks to understand the management and leadership assumptions of the inspectors. Other methods include Content Analysis. The next chapter, will outline both a CDA of the WSE process and the findings of the Content Analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR. A CDA OF THE WSE PROCESS AND A CONTENT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to directly address the three main research questions by using CDA to critique the WSE process and then report on the Content Analysis of the WSE reports. The findings of the Content Analysis helped to guide the CDA of the reports, which is outlined in Chapter Five.

This chapter begins by critiquing the WSE process and then examines the findings of the Content Analysis. The findings are outlined in tabular format with each table containing a statistical breakdown of the categories of words formulated for the analysis. Following this statistical presentation there is an interpretation of the Content Analysis results which reveals a tentative understanding of the answers to the research questions.

A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the WSE process was initiated in the Irish context section of Chapter Two. In Chapter Three I noted that political discourse changes the social world by harnessing social forces to bring these changes about (Rogers, 2004, p.182). The WSE process fits into this paradigm for thinking about social change because its reports do more than tell a story, they are intended to shape what is considered to be good practice. But, just as practice is intended to be shaped by WSE, in similar fashion the WSE process is a product of a wider discourse. The discourse, which shaped the WSE process, was dominated by the neo-liberal ideology (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012).

Coolahan's (2009) subjective narrative of the evolution of the Irish school inspectorate from its origins to its more recent form, is part of the discourse which legitimises WSE as an instrument of "reform". Through this narrative he weaves the word "reform" as his assessment of the emerging WSE process, thus endorsing the official perspective.

Indeed, Coolahan (2011) refers to the consultation process which accompanied the development of WSE as "nurturing support for official policy" (p. 75). CDA goes to the heart of this bedding down of official policy. Prunty (1985), represented policy as "an agenda or set of objectives that legitimises the values, beliefs and attitudes of its authors" (cited in Rogers, 2004, p.176). Locating the origin of these values, beliefs and attitudes is the context or frame challenge of CDA. The CDA of the WSE process in this chapter builds on this analysis.

The critique of the WSE process, outlined at the beginning of this chapter, was conducted through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and availed of a number of tools from the research toolbox. These include a close study of the language and argumentation used by the inspectorate in order to help to understand the WSE process. Of particular concern are the research methods and research claims made by the inspectorate which, arguably, are not apolitical. I construct a case, for this argument, by referring to academic understandings of research methods. By closely examining the research issues which emerge from the WSE process, an interesting point of confluence between the trajectory of state policy development and the research methods of the inspectorate comes into focus. This merging of political ideas and research methods clusters around the neo-liberal policy of New Managerialism.

Finally, this chapter examines the Content Analysis of 10 WSE reports. A small sample was sufficient because the main purpose was to help map the terrain for the subsequent CDA of the first 100 WSE reports. The literature review and Spillane's (2006) theory of "distributed leadership" helped to shape the categories of words used in the Content Analysis and the interpretation of its statistical results. These findings are of assistance in mapping out the information landscape of the reports both in terms of what is reported and not reported, but also in terms of what is emphasised and what is placed in the background by the inspectors. In a sense this is a landscape which has a topography where, as with physical geography, some features appear more prominently than others.

The Research Methods of the WSE Process

Some of the tools of researchers are used by inspectors during a WSE. For example, the inspectorate's guide to the process refers to notes taken, during meetings with the Board of Management, as forming part of "the record of evidence" (Inspectorate, 2006, p.9). Elsewhere in the guide "meetings and interviews" are mentioned as means of providing "information and evidence to inform the WSE" (Inspectorate, 2006, p.10). These meetings it states are "typically held" with in-school management teams, subject teachers as a group for the subjects being evaluated, and the school planning education support and pastoral care teams, and student council representatives. Other means of securing information mentioned are; the observation of teaching and learning, interaction with students, reviewing students work and "other evaluating activity" and "Members of the evaluation team may also visit other school and subject-related facilities as appropriate" (Inspectorate, 2006, p.11). Finally the evaluation team drafts its report in accordance with the "evidence collected" (Inspectorate, 2006, p.11).

Fairclough (2004), suggested that CDA text analysis be organised under four main headings; vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. Texts, through repetition and constantly being pointed to as authoritative, become "established as fact or normal" (Fairclough cited in Rogers, 2004, p.180). Professional language and scientific phrases are used by the inspectorate to describe its work in gathering information about a school. Words and terms such as "objectively", "reliably", "consistent application" and "first-hand evidence based on observation" (Inspectorate, 2006, p.3 and 14), are used. It is advised that the WSE not take longer than five working days, and subsequently the school community is presented with a draft report. An opportunity is provided for the school community to address what they consider to be factual inaccuracies. If accepted as such, by the inspectorate, then the draft can be amended accordingly. This is called "Factual verification". Finally, the school has the right to formally respond to the WSE report (Inspectorate, 2006, p.13).

The WSE report, which is circulated publicly via the internet, is described by the inspectorate as: a balance between description, in the form of evidence based on the particular area of enquiry, and evaluative statements identifying both the strengths and areas that are recommended for development (Inspectorate, 2006, p.14).

The inspectorate's methods of gathering information and its use of language to describe this process are of interest and importance for CDA. As a powerful player in the education system, the inspectorate uses authoritative language, such as "objective" and "evidence based" to reinforce its position. This claim to authoritative status can help counter any challenges to the process of WSE. The inspectorate is an instrument of the state and the rationale for their use of scientific terminology can be traced to Government policy. In 1995 the Government White Paper on Education called *Charting Our Education Future* paved the way for new structures of audit, policy and examination for the inspectorate. This paper pointed to a move away from the subjective judgements of inspectors "to ensure equitable evaluation, performance indicators and criteria will be developed at national level which will give consistency to the procedures" (p.187). These performance indicators would be the basis of "fair and objective judgements on the effectiveness of each school." (ibid, p.187.) A subsequent DES report in 1999 on Whole School Inspection, as it was then known, stated that "In tandem with the growth of system evaluation, there is a growing awareness of the need to adopt a more professional and scientific approach to the evaluation of learning and teaching outcomes." (DES, 1995, p.5.). These were ambitious aims using authoritative language and advocating scientific methods and procedures. Subsequent publications from the inspectorate reflect the Government's policy of framing the inspectorate's work in a scientific paradigm (Inspectorate, 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007). While the inspectorate are not researchers in the academic sense, they are nevertheless using research methods and terminology which are used by some researchers in the field.

However, claims of objectivity, reliability and science, by educational policy makers, have been described as an important part of discourse practice to achieve credibility (Gee, 2004, p.195).

Therefore, the inspectorate's claims need to be critiqued from a CDA standpoint.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

When inspectors visit a school to observe, to meet with representatives of the school community and to interview people there; they are entering a complex local society. Schools have their own history, culture and political relationships. An attempt to know or to understand school dynamics is a significant research challenge. The inspectorate is engaged in a systematic enquiry, using sources, in an attempt to succeed in this research challenge.

The significant problems of social research are explained by Robson (2002). He describes "real world" or "in the field" research as "open" in a way which is contrary to the "closed" nature of laboratory research (p.4). He believes that the challenge of real world research is "to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally "messy" situation"(Robson, 2012, p.4). Labaree (2004), believes that qualitative research is suited to the "socially complex, variable-rich, and context-specific character of education" (p.68). While outlining that quantitative research methods have a "harder feel", with results that come across as clearer and more concrete; ultimately he argues that this is clarity at the expense of accuracy and that in contrast qualitative researchers "embrace education in all its complexity and specificity" (Labaree, 2004, p.68). What Labaree (2004), describes as a "harder feel" (p.68), resonates with the authoritative and definitive language of research as expressed by the inspectorate. Central to this vocabulary is the use of the word objective. Advocates of quantitative research methods claim that they can obtain objective knowledge or facts. This is one of the assumptions of Positivism or the "standard view" of science.

The work of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) clearly illustrates this perspective in action. The mission of the AERA is to transform educational research knowledge from being “soft” to “hard” i.e. to bring it into line with subjects like physics where conclusions are universal, difficult to refute and generally accepted and respected. This mission resonates with the language of certainty associated with the WSE process.

While many academics argue that reality cannot be defined objectively (Robson, 2002) and Byrne (1998) claims that Positivism is consigned to the past (p.37); Nash (2005) states that the bones of Positivism "remain fossilised in the lexicon of applied statistics" (p.202). Hodkinson (2004), argues that a new orthodoxy in the U.S.A. and the U.K. assumed that educational research could achieve objectivity and promote best practice. Hodkinson (2004) believes that this new orthodoxy represented a return to Positivism, which he rejects as a faulty premise to build educational research because “there is no possibility of theory-free knowledge or theory-free observation” (p.10). Hodkinson (2004), believes that this new orthodoxy was not a linear progression from the earlier debates between the different methods or as he puts it, the opponents and proponents of postmodernism but arose from the audit culture of the western world, a culture which has permeated both the public and private sectors. And, it is at this point that the construction of a model for understanding research paradigms overlaps with the dominance of "performativity" (Sugrue, 2006) in education policy. Western society experienced an audit research culture, simultaneously to an audit approach to school life. What emerged was an international climate of measurement or quantification of school activity. This political perspective on educational research is reinforced by Stonach (2004) who sees the new orthodoxy as, "a resurgence of positivism as a handmaiden to the managerialist control of errant professions" (cited in Hodkinson, p.17). This is a significant observation in the context of this study, as it identifies a link between new managerialism, public sector reform, educational reform, the inspectorate and the research methods used by the inspectorate in WSE.

The Significance of not including "Quality of School Planning" in the Quality of School

Management Section of the WSE Reports

Research can be placed on a continuum between open-ended and pre-figured with various positions in between. Rossman and Rallis (2003), write that "Some are tightly structured, relying on checklists to record types of action or interactions and their frequencies. Others are holistic, recording the flow of events in the setting and capture a detailed description" (p.302). It is important, at this point, to place the actions of the inspectorate on this continuum.

The WSE research process and report have a tightly structured framework. The different areas for observation and the design of the report are clearly delineated and defined. From the perspective of the study of school management and leadership the section of the report called "The quality of school management" is significant. But the limitations of pre-figured studies are apparent in the WSE process because of the important management and leadership issues which emerge from school planning. The planning aspect of school life is found in a separate section of the report. It is not, therefore, officially considered to be a dimension of school management. However, the development of the school plan is a significant opportunity to observe and promote distributed leadership as school planning involves all of the teachers. This is so irrespective of a teacher's position on the staff. A teacher's entitlement to contribute to policy formulation is made on the basis of being a teacher and not on the basis of seniority or whether the teacher holds a promotional post. Indeed, all of the school partners are expected to participate in school planning as a collaborative endeavour. One WSE report stated that: "In order to promote a collaborative and proactive approach among all the school partners to school development planning it is recommended that the process underpinning the development of school policies be reviewed" (Ard Scoil Rís, Dublin, January 2007).

This WSE report is also illustrative of the problem of language usage in the reports more generally as it refers to the need "to distribute the leadership of school planning" (Ard Scoil Rís, Dublin, January 2007). So the prescribed section for school management in the reports, it could be argued, suggests a division between management and leadership.

WSE Observation Techniques and Reflexivity

WSE employs some of the methods of ethnographic research with its use of observation and note taking. It is not, however, ethnography which embraces its subject in a manner that allows the story to unfold. The success or otherwise of observation as a research method is contingent on its application as a fluid, flexible and formidable feeder of information. Bogdan and Biklen (2003), have written that ethnography is undermined when research uses some of its techniques "but do not conform to the rules of ethnography" (p.107).

Researchers in some of the anthropological traditions of qualitative research keep their descriptive and interpretive notes completely separate. Indeed Bolgan and Bilken (2003), write that, "The reflective part of the field notes insists that research, like all human behaviour, is a subjective process" (p.114).

In addition to the criticism structured observation as a means of researching information about schools, is the problem of reflexivity. This relates to the credibility of the data collected. How reliable is the evidence obtained? The reliability of the data can be queried from two important perspectives. Firstly, is it possible that the data may have been shaped by the presence of bias, conscious or unconscious, of the researcher? The discretionary use of sources by the inspectors, as reflected in the guide to WSE which states that "Members of the evaluation team may also visit other school and subject-related facilities, as appropriate" (Inspectorate 2006, p.11) gives rise to the possibility of selectivity if not actual bias.

This raises doubts that there may be inconsistencies across the WSE reports.

Another matter for concern about the information gathered arises from the evaluative function of the WSE and the placing of the report in the public domain. There is a lot at stake for teachers and the other partners in a school community. Many schools are vulnerable to competition from other schools for the attraction and retention of pupils. Thus the WSE process may promote competitive practice, which is consistent with New Managerialism. Arguably such competition may erode the reliability of what is observed in schools. This is so because there is an obvious temptation for the school community to try to anticipate and present, during a WSE, what the inspectorate approve of. This issue of authenticity has recently been publicly acknowledged by the inspectorate with the introduction of Incidental Inspections which do not provide the advance notice of a school visit as experienced by schools in this study. The credibility problem in social research with regard to the behaviour of those under observation has been acknowledged by Boulton and Hammersly (2006), who have raised concerns that those being observed may be putting on a show or maintaining a front for the observer (p.256). This is a profoundly serious question given the dual role of the inspector as an observer and an evaluator of schools. Again, using the extensive experience of ethnographers as a barometer for making comparisons it is certain that there is an incompatibility between the inspectors' dual roles. From the perspective of academic education research, Delamont (1999), identifies the establishment of trust between researchers and their subjects as an essential component of good field work. With specific reference to teachers in this regard, she wrote that; "There is a structurally tense relationship between teachers and educational researchers, just as there is between teachers and what Wolcott (1977) called "technocrats" (outsiders who want to introduce technical changes into schools).

Such hostility must not be taken personally, because it is of long standing, and is endemic to the occupational culture of teaching. Hostility to researchers, experts and so on is felt in most staffrooms" (p.128).

As I have indicated before, I am not suggesting that the inspectorate are academic researchers, indeed my position is that despite their claims to objectivity they are less than objective.

However, given that words such as "objective", "fair" and "consistent" are used by official documents to describe the observations of the inspectors, it is reasonable to compare their methods of gathering information with the methods of academics which have evolved over a long period of time. Research into the views of school principals on the quality and the conclusions reached by inspectors in the WSE process has shown that many of them believed that "impressionistic conclusions were favoured over analytical evaluation by the inspectors" (Mc Namara and O'Hara, 2009, p.106). In addition, these research findings indicate, that at least for the initial period of the WSEs, that the inspectorate was disinclined to look at significant sources of school data such as student absentee lists and in-class assessments (Mc Namara and O'Hara, 2009, p.106). Other research into the WSE process (Mulkearns, 2008) confirms while that the publication of the reports was generally welcomed by principals, it was considered that such publication led the reports to "being more opaque than might at first appear necessary" (Mc Namara, 2012, p.92). Another significant flaw identified by principals, relevant for both the period and focus of this study, was that "the inspectorate as currently constituted has a real deficit in terms of its understanding of the current management culture in schools caused by an almost total lack of former school leaders in its ranks" (Mc Namara and O'Hara, 2012, p.93).

A Reminder of the thinking which shaped the Content Analysis

The content analysis, it is worth recalling, was focussed on the "Quality of School Management" section of the WSE reports, with the following subsections:

- (i). "Characteristic spirit of the school";
- (ii). "School ownership and management";
- (iii). "In-school management".

I will also deal with the "Quality of school planning section".

The Quality of School Management section of a WSE report opens with a subsection called the "Characteristic spirit of the school". Section 15. (2) (b) of the *Education Act 1998* (b) states that it is the responsibility of the school board of management to uphold the characteristic spirit which is determined by the school's "cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions", and to be compliant with any relevant Act of the Oireachtas. According to the inspectorate (2006):

The WSE team examines the characteristic spirit of the school and the awareness of that characteristic spirit within the school community. The team explores its expression and the policies that reflect that spirit. They also observe how the characteristic spirit is reflected in activities, communication and relationships within the school. (p.18)

The inspectorate (2003), sheds further light on this. It outlines that there should be a statement of the characteristic spirit of the school as well as a statement of its religious or educational philosophy.

According to this guide the mission statement and characteristic spirit should be linked, and there should be awareness of this spirit in the school community. It also states that senior management should make a link between the characteristic spirit and school policies. Also included in this area for evaluation are relationships and communications. Evaluation, by a team of inspectors, is intended to examine the extent to which relationships and communications are characterised by mutual respect, openness and caring. Finally, according to the inspectorate (2003), the evaluation report must appraise the effectiveness of communication within the school and how it reflects the spirit and principles of the mission statement.

The next subsection of the WSE is called "School ownership and management". Here the WSE team examines the composition, role and functioning of the board of management, the operation of the board and its policies and procedures. This subsection is followed by an examination of "In-school management", which includes the role of the principal, deputy principal(s) and the middle-management team. The evaluation team looks at the management of students and the management of relationships with parents and the community.

There is no mention in the guide to WSE of the management of relationships with staff.

Other references however, include, allocation of staff, compliance with official requirements in relation to resources and staff, and accommodation issues (inspectorate, 2006).

For the purposes of this study I have not looked at the management of [non-human] resources section as it doesn't provide significant information on the relationships between people or the governance of schools. However, I studied the "Quality of school planning" subsection as it deals with the design of the school plan which, in my view, is a central issue in the management and leadership of schools. My argument, that the plan is part of school management and leadership, rests on the fact that the school plan deals with, among other aspects of school life, its "mission, vision and fundamental aims" (DES, 1999, p.17). The inspectorate's guide outlines that this subsection deals with both the school plan and the planning process. It also examines action plans and staff members "roles and responsibilities with the process". The evaluation team also evaluates the "implementation, dissemination and the impact of the school" plan (Inspectorate, 2006, p.19).

The themes or word categories used in the Content Analysis are:

- (i) organisation.
- (ii) relationships/interactions.
- (iii) motivation/support.
- (iv) ethos/values.

While there is an affinity between word categories (ii), (iii) and (iv), i.e. relationships/interactions, motivation/support and ethos/values, they merit separate consideration given that motivation/support and ethos/values are judged by some analysts as being significant and specific dimensions of management and leadership. The counting of the words/terms and those with similar meanings was carried out for each report and for each of the subsections under study. This count produced the following data.

Each separate reference to an identified concept was counted as one unit. These have been tabulated.

Each column in a table gives the total of the units counted in each of my categories for the sections of the WSE reports under study.

The Findings

As explained in the introduction to this chapter the statistical findings of the content analysis are outlined first and subsequently there is an interpretation provided.

Table 1. VEC College in County Limerick, designated as disadvantaged but not DEIS

Report 1	Organisation	Relationships/interactions	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	3	6	8	33
Ownership/management	60	14	9	4
In-school management	80	30	30	37
Quality of planning	71	8	3	9

Table 2. Patrician Academy. Voluntary secondary school for boys in a large town in County Cork.

Report 2	Organisation	Relationships/interactions	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	0	2	5	15
Ownership/management	61	6	0	4
In-school management	78	13	10	13
Quality of planning	54	3	1	17

Table 3. VEC co-educational school in a large town in County Cork.

Report 3	Organisation	Relationships/interaction	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	1	0	0	17
Ownership/management	53	7	0	4
In-school management	48	15	0	10
Quality of planning	70	7	1	15

Table 4. Loreto College. Voluntary secondary school for girls in Dublin.

Report 4	Organisation	Relationships/interaction	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	20	3	2	41
Ownership/management	71	16	0	2
In-school management	119	53	5	19
Quality of planning	73	13	2	2

Table 5. Large VEC co-educational post-primary school, in a big town, County Kildare.

Report 5	Organisation	Relationships/interaction	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	8	1	3	22
Ownership/management	55	4	2	6
In-school management	144	44	11	26
Quality of planning	47	3	1	17

Table 6. Vocational school in a large town in County Kildare.

Report 6	Organisation	Relations/interactions	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	23	4	6	19
Ownership/management	86	8	4	14
In-school management	99	21	13	24
Quality of planning	69	10	3	15

Table 7. Irish medium Vocational School in the Gaelteacht, County Galway.

Report 7	Organisation	Relations/interactions	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	1	2	0	25
Ownership/management	80	8	3	16
In-school management	84	15	4	22
Quality of planning	87	8	3	13

Table 8. Catholic diocesan secondary school for boys in a large town in County Louth.

Report 8	Organisation	Relations/interactions	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	3	2	3	36
Ownership/management	58	12	4	3
In-school management	56	17	6	25
Quality of planning	64	0	5	9

Table 9. Salesian Catholic secondary school in Limerick with DEIS status.

Report 9	Organisation	Relationships/interaction	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	10	2	4	20
Ownership/management	71	27	13	14
In-school management	138	42	8	16
Quality of planning	84	18	5	10

Table 10. CBS for boys in Dublin City.

Report 10.	Organisation	Relationships/interactions	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	5	3	3	28
Ownership/management	49	10	4	4
In-school management	86	8	2	6
Quality of planning	81	10	2	1

Composite Report. Raw scores

Composite of reports. Raw scores	Organisation	Relationships/interactions	Motivation/ support	Ethos/values
Characteristic spirit	74	25	34	256
Ownership/management	644	112	39	88
In-school management	932	258	89	198
Quality of planning.	700	80	26	102

Composite Report. Percentage figures.

Composite of reports.	Organisation	Relationships/interactions	Motivation/support	Ethos/values
Percentage figures.				
Characteristic spirit	19%	6.4%	8.7%	65.8%
Ownership/management	72%	12.7%	4.4%	10%
In-school management	63%	17.5%	6%	13.4%
Quality of planning	77%	8.8%	2.9%	11.2%

Analysis of Findings

There is a need to be mindful of a level of human error in content analysis given the intensive task of identifying and counting the words and small combinations of words for each category. However, despite possible errors, the quantification of the results reveals, in some significant respects, very definite and clear patterns. What the content analysis provides is a quantitative measurement of the categories of words and groups of words chosen.

The most striking overall observation of the results is the very significant emphasis on the "Organisation" category in all of the subsections except for the "Characteristic spirit" subsection. This latter subsection has an almost reverse pattern in terms of the contrast between Organisation and Ethos/Values. This is perhaps unsurprising given the nature of the "Characteristic spirit" subsection with its fixed or pre-figured focus on ethos and values. It is also interesting to note that this subsection scored the highest percentage word count in the motivation/support category which is closely aligned to ethos/values in that there is an emphasis on people and interpersonal skills.

The "Ownership and management" subsection, where the inspectorate examines in particular the composition and work of the board of management, shows a significant majority of the "organisation" category of words. This reflects the inspectors' concentration on matters to do with compliance with circular letters, knowledge of legislation, school policies, decision making and other structural issues related to the governance of the school. The "ethos/values" words category has its lowest percentage at 10%, across all of the subsections, in the "Ownership/Management" subsection. Is this percentage an accurate reflection of the boards' interest in ethos and values or is it a case of the inspectorate's relative disinterest in same? Whatever the cause, there appears to be a deficit in terms of these important considerations. Similarly, comparatively little attention is given in the Ownership and Management subsection to "motivation/support". This word category is at a low quantitative percentage of 4.4%. This is the word category which deals with "fostering", "encouraging", "support" and similar words. It may be that this is not an area of management and leadership activity that is conducive to the work of the board given its overarching management role which is separate from the day-to-day running of the school.

The "In-school Management" subsection brings us more directly to the roles of principals, deputy principals and post holders in Irish post-primary schools. This is where the focus of many school management and leadership studies is located (MacBeath, 2004a). From a distributed leadership perspective the design of this subsection indicates a bias against the view that leadership is spread across all of the staff. "In-school Management" (ISM), in so far as this is one area of school life where the inspectors identify leadership practice, is mostly linked with those who have formal positions of "management" or "leadership" in the school. The breakdown of the Content Analysis here again demonstrates an emphasis on the "Organisation" category, which is at 63%. By contrast the "Motivation/Support" dimension to management and leadership is 6% which is very low. Again, depending on the veracity of a WSE, this may not necessarily reflect an actual low level of motivation and encouragement of staff and pupils by the In-school management teams. But it does indicate, given the absence of WSE recommendations for the ISM to improve on "motivation/support", that the evaluation team are giving disproportionate attention to the formal or technical aspects of school management and leadership at the expense of motivation, encouragement and affirmation.

The "Relationships/Interaction" word category shows a higher rating at 17.5%. This, in combination with the 13.4% for "Ethos/values", gives some balance between the personal relationships and human values area of management and leadership with the "organisation" category. But the clear focus of attention, according to the Content Analysis, is with the more technical "organisation" category.

The Quality of school planning subsection also shows a high level occurrence of words or terms associated with the "Organisation" category. At 77% of the total, this is the highest rating for this word category across all of the subsections. Given that this subsection deals with the design and development of the school plan it is potentially an opportunity for a recognition of distributed leadership. The "Ethos/Values" category which includes words like "inclusion", "partners", "community", "collegiality", "learning community" and "equity"; is closely associated with the ideas which underpin distributed leadership. Yet this content category has a low count of 11.2%, the second lowest for this category overall.

Spillane (2006), draws attention to both the "leadership plus" and "practice" dimensions of distributed leadership (p.3). According to Spillane (2006), leadership practice involves ordinary mortals as well as heroes, the many and not the few, where leadership is stretched beyond structures. The words categories of "ethos/values", "motivation/support" and "relations/interactions" relate to this issue of practice. However, in total they represent only 23% of the word count in the Quality of planning subsection. This is not to suggest that distributed leadership does not link with the "organisation" category, but that the important interpersonal relationships aspect of this type of leadership, appears to be marginalised.

These figures suggest that distributed leadership, as understood by Spillane (2006), was not a priority for the inspectorate. Again, however, the figures do not prove an absence or relatively low occurrence of Spillane's (2006) theory of distributed leadership. Such an absence would not in any case be theoretically possible given Spillane's (2006) argument that distributed leadership exists in schools, regardless of formal structures. The figures give a quantitative indication of those areas the inspectorate focused on. In this regard it must be borne in mind that content analysis is only one of the research tools for this mixed methods study.

The next chapter reports the findings of the qualitative CDA.

Conclusion

The CDA revealed a strong linkage between the research methods of the WSE process and the ideology of New Managerialism. The authoritative language used both by policy makers to underpin the WSE process and by the inspectorate in implementing the process is deliberate, positivist and may have been intended to resist any possible opposition to the official discourse. International analysis of similar official educational policies strongly suggests that this latter point is true. However, the official narrative of objectivity and consistency in describing the WSE process is not consistent with the serious research challenges in addressing the complexities of school life and the subjective value judgements which are likely to arise. Therefore, the CDA has proven important in helping to answer the first research question on the objectivity of the WSE process. The Content Analysis was also important in that regard.

The most significant finding from the Content Analysis is the quantitative imbalance in the reports between ideas and actions linked to school organisation on the one hand; and, ideas and actions linked to attitudes, values, relationships and school climate, on the other hand. At 64.2% of the units (words or combinations of words) counted, or a ratio of nearly 2:1 over other units counted, school organisation emerged as the numerically dominant dimension of management and leadership in the sections of the reports studied. The measurements for "Organisation" in some of the subsections, other than that for the Characteristic spirit, are even greater. For example, the Content Analysis for "Organisation" in the Ownership and management, and Quality of planning subsections are 72% and 77% respectively, or nearly 4:1 in the latter case. Indeed, while the "Characteristic spirit" subsection is predisposed to issues of ethos and values; it measured the least quantity of units of all the subsections studied. The 389 units identified in the "Characteristic spirit" subsection are just 10.6 % of the units recorded overall.

Teddlie (2000), argued that School Effectiveness Research focuses on school organisation at the expense of "processes" such as attitudes, values, relationships and school climate (p.46).

The WSE reports do not neglect such "processes", but do appear to give more attention to organisational matters.

This suggests that there may have been a bias on the part of the Inspectorate in favour of organisational issues and against "processes" as understood by Teddlie (2000, p.46). The apparent lack of emphasis on issues relating to inter-personal relationships and motivation suggested a shortage of evidence to study management and leadership from Spillane's (2006) practice perspective (p.85). Also, this initial quantitative analysis, with its emphasis on organisational matters, suggested that the WSE process mirrors the focus of international School Effectiveness Research (Teddlie, 2000, p.46).

The findings of the Content Analysis, in that they appear to reflect Teddlie's (2000, p.46) observation of imbalance in School Effectiveness Research, suggests that the WSE reports are not objective as sources of evidence from which to create an accurate picture of management and leadership. This apparent lack of balance, which directly addresses my first research question, is also linked to my third research question about the inspectorate's preferences for models of management and leadership. Therefore, there appears to be a preference for matters of school organisation at the expense of attitudes, values, relationships and school climate. In the literature review I hypothesised the use of two overarching continuums in an attempt to summarise, in a conceptual manner, the array of management and leadership ideas. Assessed against these continuums the content analysis suggests that the inspectorate's preference is for the skills/prescription and organisational/structure poles of the continuums as opposed to the values/flexibility and community/culture poles. In my next chapter I elucidate more findings from the WSE reports by critically analysing them using CDA.

CHAPTER FIVE. A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA) OF THE WSE REPORTS

Introduction

The Content Analysis of the previous chapter set the scene for the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the first 100 published WSE reports. This CDA is reported on in this chapter. The data which emerged from the content analysis indicated a possible bias, on behalf of the inspectorate, for organisational aspects of school management and leadership. The Content Analysis also suggested that there may be a dearth of information to examine the reports from the perspective of Spillane's (2006) *Distributed leadership* theory. However, the Content Analysis was a preliminary quantitative indicator in a mixed methods study. The CDA provided a qualitative research method which builds considerably on its quantitative precursor. CDA is a critical theory which facilitated a critical analysis, based on considerations of power and democracy. The critical analysis, which draws primarily from Spillane (2006) but not exclusively so, is outlined in this chapter.

This chapter unfolds the major themes identified from the (CDA). These themes begin with a development of the main conclusion from the Content Analysis, which was the tentative and possibly nascent argument, that the inspectors placed a greater emphasis on organisational matters rather than processes. The subsequent themes are *Inconsistencies, ambiguities, and opinions about school leadership and democracy, the characteristics of Boards of Management and their link with Senior Management* and finally *Distributed Leadership*. Collectively, these themes crystallize the observations which emerged from the theoretical framework, the Content Analysis, the Critical Discourse Analysis, and as informed by the literature review. The themes emerged like the threads of a tapestry weaving their way through the reports. The story which the tapestry unfolds includes a pattern of research consistencies, by the inspectors, which are speckled with issues of inconsistency. Similarly, clarity in the reports is frequently interrupted by ambiguity. While the themes, which the CDA identified, are coherent and clear, it must be borne in mind that the nature of the WSE reports does not facilitate a discrete compartmentalisation of the themes.

For example, data used to support arguments with regard to human relationships (such as observations on poor relationships between senior management and teachers) is also linked to other pertinent issues such as inconsistencies in the reports (such as references to teachers' assessment of their senior management). This recursive nature of the themes in the reports is persistent and unavoidable.

The Themes which emerged from the CDA

The imbalance in the reports in terms of the quantitative attention given to organisational matters, is identified and developed further by the CDA. This constitutes the opening theme of the CDA and is referred to as, *A Greater focus on Organisational matters rather than on Processes*. In addition to there are three other major themes, as follows.

Inconsistencies, Ambiguities, and Opinions about School Leadership and Democracy

The inspectors' ambiguity reflects some academic concerns about the nebulousness in literature on management and leadership (Hodgkinson, 1993). That said, there is also a clarity and consistency of approach to some leadership ideas in the reports. However, the ambiguity which does exist is compounded by inconsistencies and points for debate with regard to leadership related ideas.

Disputatious matters, which relate to ideological views, include the status of teacher professional expertise in the development of a school plan in the context of the overall management role of a board of management. Collectively, these problems, notwithstanding points of consistency, raise doubts that the school evaluation process, for the period under study, was "equitable" and "consistent", as predicted by *Charting Our Education Future* (DES, 1995, p.187).

The Characteristics of Boards of Management and their link with Senior Management

The reports indicate a distinction between the overall strategic management and leadership of schools by a board of management, including the principal, and the day-to-day management of schools by senior management and middle-management. The training, knowledge and wisdom of a board of management are of critical importance in terms of its capacity to deliver effective management and leadership. In this regard, the inspectors report an overall positive picture but with some significant problems in relation to the capacity of some boards to be competent managers and leaders.

The reports reflect a day-to-day management which is the responsibility of the principal and deputy principal and middle-management.

Distributed Leadership

There is an overall sense, from the WSE observations, of consultative management and leadership practised in schools, with the inspectorate promoting a consciousness, among post-holders, of being a part of a management team. The inspectorate encourages, what I interpret and is sometimes described by inspectors, as distributed leadership among In-school management. In this regard, formal meetings for In-school management teams are advised, but the reports generally marginalise wider staff meetings and rarely make explicit reference to informal leaders. In this regard, it should be recalled, that Spillane (2006) makes a strong case for the importance of informal leaders by stating that staff members construct others as leaders, either formal or informal, "depending on the particular circumstances, so the distinction between leaders and followers appears to be real enough in schools" (p.71). The poverty of explicit, or otherwise clear, reference to informal leadership might be considered, in light of Spillane's (2006) view, a weakness in the reports. This weakness is obviated, to a limited extent, by a more inclusive recognition of distributed leadership across all of the staff for school planning.

I will now outline a more detailed CDA of each of the identified themes.

A Greater focus on Organisational matters rather than on Processes

Overall the content analysis shows a stronger focus on aspects of school organisation and structures than human relations and values or what Teddlie (2000) called "processes" (p.46). However the prominent positioning, at the beginning of the Quality of school management section, of the "Characteristic spirit" section, could be used to counter a claim of bias by the inspectorate against school "processes" (Teddlie, 2000, p.46). However, the percentage of all of the units in the content analysis which are located in the Characteristic spirit subsection is only 10.6%. This very low density, in terms of the overall content analysed, taken in combination with this subsection's foregrounding in the reports, suggests a type of embroidered trimming rather than a serious concern.

Further, the problem of an overall shortage of material in the reports to satisfactorily examine the mechanics of human relationships in schools, remains.

The CDA of the Characteristic spirit subsection revealed recurring themes, including consistent references to school mission statements and the values which they espouse. The inspectors regularly judged if a school's atmosphere and/or policies complied with its mission statement. Comments include, for example, "policies are in line with the Catholic ethos" and "The Catholic ethos is lived out in the day-to-day interaction among staff and students" (Coláiste Cholmáin, Claremorris, December 2006). The inspectors normally reported that the school atmosphere/culture and/or policies were compatible with the school's mission statement. In a majority of reports the school atmosphere is described in a positive way although occasionally there is either no reference to it, or a criticism of it. Examples of positive comments include, "During the inspection the atmosphere was welcoming and calm." (St Mary's Diocesan School Drogheda, October 2006) and "The atmosphere is in good accord with that described in the mission statement" (Hazelwood College, Dromcollogher, Co Limerick, September 2006). Occasionally the reports indicate use of an evidential warrant, other than the inspectors' own observations. For example, "Students referred to the school as a happy, open and friendly place with good support and a good spirit" (Urslin College, Sligo, January 2007). However, the obligation in *Looking At Our Schools: A Guide to Self-Evaluation* (DES, 2003) that a school is required to have a statement of the "Characteristic spirit" is not borne out in the reports. Rather, any reference to the spirit of the school tends to take the form of a reference to the observed school atmosphere or spirit, and links these with the "Characteristic spirit" or mission statement. For example, one report states that "The school succeeds in its procedures, processes and actions to create an inclusive, compassionate environment in keeping with its mission" (Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreabháin, October 2006). Given the difficulty in assessing dimensions of school culture, such as inclusiveness, it would seem that the use of evidential warrants from teachers and students would be an additional help. However, such sources were only used occasionally. Notwithstanding the limited information provided on inter-personal relationships in the reports generally, such relationships are a strong feature of the Characteristic Spirit of the School subsections.

While relationships are a dimension of atmosphere, they are frequently reported on in their own right. Mostly these references are positively framed but in a small number of cases the inspectors were critical. Positive examples include, "The values and ideals expressed in the mission statement and ethos are lived out through the daily interaction between staff and students." (Ard Scoil Rís, Griffith Avenue Dublin, January 2007) and "the friendly relationship between staff and students is evident" (Killarney Community College, January 2007). A variable in the reports regarding relationships is whether the focus is on the staff only or the whole school community. One report refers to a "strong spirit of collegiality [that] is evident among all staff members" (Scoil Pól, Kilfinane, County Limerick, March 2007), while another identified all the education partners, stating that "A noteworthy sense of community and partnership is prevalent in many aspects of the school among parents, students, staff and Board of Management and trustees" (Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Salerno, Galway, February 2007). However, this later breadth of coverage is the exception rather than the rule. Another exception is a reference to one school's development of a policy on Dignity in the Workplace and "strategies for dealing with staff members and students in times of difficulty, have been agreed by the board of management" (St Mary's Diocesan School, Drogheda, October 2006). Such a policy was not mentioned, either as existing or not existing, in any of the other reports. From a CDA perspective issues relating to dignity in the workplace are of concern because the well-being of all staff is important and is a product of the nature of power relations, among other cultural and personal factors.

Occasionally, there are criticisms of relationships. For example, one report from a Marist school (Catholic University School, 89 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2) stated that:

Some tensions and difficulties were evident in the school at the time of the evaluation. These have arisen due to poor relationships between senior management and a small number of staff, and among some staff members and have a negative impact on many areas of school life. Management indicated their belief that these tensions were due in part to their having prioritised certain values in accordance with the Marist tradition. (April, 2007)

In this case, the inspectors recommended that the school develop a more inclusive mission statement which would prioritise student welfare and embrace all the stakeholders in the school. This recommendation is consistent with the almost ubiquitous linkage made in the reports between a school's atmosphere and its mission statement.

One example from a nondenominational school is, "Classroom atmosphere, as experienced by the inspectors, mirrors the whole school values inherent in the mission statement" (Millstreet Community School, October 2006).

Where schools with a religious patronage are concerned, their ethos is normally mentioned. For example, "The Catholic ethos is lived out in the day-to-day interaction among staff and between staff and students" (Coláiste Colmáin, Claremorris, December 2006).

This latter observation is quite typical of the generalised (without detailed observations) comments made by inspectors with regard to the observed link between religious ethos and atmosphere or staff relations. One could ask if the reflection of Catholic ethos in staff interaction might mean that the staff are encouraging one another to observe Catholic religious duties and practice Catholic social teachings? This latter question is also a reminder of the recursive nature of the overall themes in the reports identified by the CDA in that the question also relates to the problem of ambiguity which is addressed later in this chapter.

In addition to the Characteristic spirit subsection, there are references in other subsections to relationships. These are sometimes evaluative in nature, in that they appear to pass judgement on the value of what was observed. The quality of inter-personal relationships is sometimes identified as having an impact on positive professional performance by the staff. These references also tend to be associated with senior management. For example, one report states that senior management created an environment "which brings out the best in the staff, where positive relationships are fostered and everyone including the principal is a team player" (Carrick Vocational School, Co Donegal, March 2006). The principal is frequently mentioned in observations about school interactions and is presented as being central to the quality of relationships. In this regard, one report on a Christian Brothers' School stated that "The openness and willingness of the principal to listen to and engage with others transcends all interactions throughout the school" (Abbey CBS, Tipperary Town, February 2006). Interestingly, the exact same sentence appears in another report (Méanscoil na mBraithre CBS, Ennistymon, Co Clare).

One WSE team commented that, "The strongest characteristic of the principal's style of management is his ability to use face-to-face interaction with members of the school community to best effect" (Loreto College, Mullingar, October 2006).

A principal's ability to build positive interpersonal relationships, is linked by one report, to his ability to motivate staff.

But the reporting of such a link is infrequent and therefore, in addition to representing a further inconsistency, identifies a gap in the value of the reports in terms of Spillane's (2006) theory that leadership practice needs to be studied (p.90). Sometimes the inspectors report on what the principal considers to be the key qualities of management or leadership.

This often involves a comment on interpersonal relationships and leading by example. One report stated that, "The Principal emphasises excellent interpersonal relationships as the single most important leadership quality and leads the school by example" (St Mary's Diocesan School, Drogheda, October 2006).

As with the "Characteristic spirit" subsection, relationships in so far as they are mentioned, tend to be reported in a positive light with a few negative exceptions. The exceptions occurred within senior management or between the principal and some members of staff. Problematic relationships at senior management level, seemingly, do not necessarily adversely affect staff relations. One report, for example, advised that senior management avail of training in "collaborative leadership" as a consequence of their "relationship problems" (Patrician Academy, Mallow, September 2006).

However, the same report proceeded to say that "The staffroom is a friendly place where the staff tend to interact openly with one another" and that there were weekly staff meetings and staff had a good input (Patrician Academy Mallow, September, 2006). Another report states that relationship difficulties at senior management level "are more evident to senior staff and less so to other groups" (St Colman's Community College, Middleton, October 2007), and elsewhere in the same report a school strength is identified by stating that "The quality of teaching is high" (St Coleman's Community College, Middleton, October 2007).

Apparently, therefore, the teaching competence of staff is not necessarily negatively affected by poor professional relations at senior management level.

Other reports, however, indicate that staff were observed as being adversely affected by poor relations between themselves and their principal. In this regard a small number of reports state that there were serious problems between principals and some members of staff.

For example, one report states that the relationship between the principal and some teachers was a cause for "serious concern" and that morale was low among some teachers (Kemare Community School, September, 2007). As with all such cases the inspectors recommended that the area of "relationships, communication and the morale of staff be addressed as a matter of priority" (Kemare Community School, September, 2007).

References to relationships are not consistent across the reports. Such as they are, they tend to be general in nature and devoid of any depth with regard to the nature of the interactions.

This is significant for the theoretical framework because Spillane (2006), argued that distributed leadership, as both a diagnostic and design tool, requires a study of practice in a way that takes us into the living reality as well as the formal structure of schools (p.90). Further, Spillane (2006) states that "Intervening to improve leadership necessitates attention to interaction" (p.94). It appears, from the reports, that the inspectors were either not encouraged or provided with sufficient resources and time, to conduct the type of investigation which would engage with interaction at a level which could lead to a deeper understanding and improvement of school management and leadership. Indeed, the issue of management and leadership improvement features only in a minority of reported problematic cases for which the inspectors referred senior management to the LDS, (Leadership Development for Schools). Of course, it is likely that the inspectorate might simply state that it is not their role to conduct deeper research into management and leadership, but it is its responsibility to improve schools.

Ironically, however, there are examples of significant and insightful observations, or conclusions, from inspectors on the value of positive human understanding and interpersonal skills by managers and leaders. One positive example, of such a reference, is as follows: "The principal takes responsibility for the motivation of staff and achieves this for the most part, by building good personal relationships with colleagues" (Loreto College, Mullingar, October 2006). These examples demonstrate that quality evaluation and research is achievable, with the methods and resources at the inspectors' disposal, in this important area of management and leadership. The question which arises, therefore, is why are such references not made more consistently across the reports, either in an affirmative way or alternatively to encourage good relationships?

In conclusion to this theme, the CDA supports the indication from the content analysis that there was a bias for organisational matters and against processes. There is insufficient data to arrive at firm conclusions about the rich texture of human interactions and leadership practice, in the schools observed by the inspectors. The references to leadership practice, such as they are, are inconsistent and often ambiguous or superficial. They appear to lack depth, or at least a depth of observation, which might assist analysts in an endeavour to learn about the reality of management and leadership with a view to improving both.

Inconsistencies, Ambiguities and Opinions on School Leadership and Democracy

Challenges which emerge while studying the WSE reports include, as mentioned in the previous theme about processes, the problems of inconsistency and ambiguity. As already explained these problems are recursive through all of the main themes which are identified. Inconsistency occurs with regard to a number of important matters including the use of evidential warrants, other than the observations by the inspectors, and the occasional reference to the motivation of staff by a principal. Ambiguity is an additional problem and arises in a number of ways, including with regard to the use of words such as "management", "leadership" and "democracy"; words which are at the heart of this study.

This ambiguity resonates with de Vries (2006) view of international leadership studies as "Leaderbabble" (p.212) and one of the conclusions in an OECD publication on Irish school leadership which said that there was a need for a shared understanding of school leadership in Ireland as a basis for policy making (OECD, 2007, p.63). This conclusion was supported by various submissions made to those preparing the report (OECD, 2007, p.26). The need for a clear definition of the term school leadership is reinforced by the often ambiguous use of leadership related terminology, by the inspectorate in the reports. Finally, the opinions of the inspectors which I identify and address, relate to contentious issues concerning school management and leadership. CDA invites and empowers a challenge to the opinions of powerful agents, especially when such opinions are presented as objective facts.

In addition to the inconsistencies already mentioned, a significant and illustrative example is the occasional references, across the reports studied, to the patrons/trustees/owners of schools.

The reports focus almost exclusively on the boards of management. However, it is the patrons/trustees/owners who constitute the highest level in the hierarchy of governance in a school. The elevated status and legal power of the patrons/trustees/owners was not lost on the inspectors who did refer to them. One such reference is insightful because the inspectors commended the trustees of a Christian Brothers school for providing a detailed response to a board's minutes, thus "giving direction and guidance on behalf of the trustees to the board in fulfilling its remit" (St Brendan's College, Bray, January 2007).

In this case the trustees are reported as endorsing a collaborative approach to policy making "prior to forwarding to the Trustee office for final clearance and ratification" (St Brendan's College, Bray, January 2007). Another report describes how the congregation of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary "delegates management and leadership responsibility to the board of management, which has been properly constituted under the Articles of Management for Catholic Secondary Schools" (Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Salerno, February 2007). Far from relegating or marginalising the power of the upper hierarchical tier, these reports appear to emphasise its statutory pre-eminence.

Given the status of school owners, under the *Education Act 1998*, the question therefore arises as to why this layer of school management and leadership is given infrequent mention by the inspectorate. Was there a presumption that the *de facto* centre of decision making is a board of management and that patrons normally ratify a board's decisions as a matter of form? In addition, it can be argued that the inconsistent reference in the reports to patrons/owners/trustees, who are a key part of school management and leadership, weakens the inspectorate's claims to objectivity and scientific research methods. Such inconsistency appears to reflect a selectivity, with regard to issues, by inspectors. Selectivity, without any logical, fair and transparent guide; is by definition a product of subjectivity not objectivity and this further undermines the claims in official documentation that the WSE process is fair and equitable (DES, 1995).

The nebulosity of the term "leadership" was identified by the OECD as an educational problem in Ireland in 2007, in so far as its report called for a shared understanding of school leadership for Irish policy development (OECD, 2007).

This ambiguity was also a research problem for this study because of the difficulty, even impossibility, of deciphering what the inspectors appear to mean by leadership. Both of the terms, *management* and *leadership*, are used frequently and sometimes interchangeably in the WSE reports. The word "leadership" is most often applied with regard to a school's senior management i.e. the principal and deputy principal. Some reports do use the term with regard to other members of the In-school management team or the staff more generally. The term is also used at times in relation to a board of management.

Evaluations of senior management are normally made at the beginning of the "In-school management" section of the reports.

Examples of references to leadership include, the principal "leads the school by example" (St Mary's Diocesan School, Drogheda, October 2006), the principal and deputy principal "work well together to provide effective daily leadership" (Gort Community School, January 2007), and the principal and deputy principal had "an effective partnership approach to school leadership" (Coláiste Cholmáin, Claremorris, December 2006).

However, while the term *leadership* is frequently used and linked to senior management in the reports some inspectors didn't use it the "In-school management" section. For example, one report simply refers to the senior management team as "the senior managers" (Coláiste an Chroí Naofa, Carraig an bhFear, March 2007), and another commented on the principal and deputy principal that, "They work well together in ensuring that the school is administered efficiently (Patrician College, Finglas, March 2007)". Other terms used with a management rather than leadership flavour include "Their [senior management] approach to the day-to-day running of the school is collaborative" (St Aidan's CBS, Whitehall, December 2006). Frequently, with regard to senior management, both the terms "management" and "leadership" are used without any clarity provided for their distinctive meanings, if indeed such a distinction is understood or intended by the inspectors. Further, in at least one case, the two concepts were linked in a theoretically confusing way when the inspectors commented that the principal and deputy principal "lead the day-to-day management of the school" (Gairmscoil Mhuire, Athenry, January, 2007).

This is significant in the context of the theoretical framework because Spillane and Diamond (2007) make an important distinction between school management and leadership, by connecting management with the maintenance of the current way of doing school business and leadership with changing the ways things are done (p.153). It is therefore problematic, both in terms of trying to understand and improve management and leadership practice in schools, if there is no clearly defined distinction made by the inspectors between these two concepts.

Additional problems potentially arise because the term "leadership", in the reports, is accompanied by a variety of adjectives including, collaborative, effective, excellent, organisational and strong. Other word formulations include; open and collaborative leadership style, leadership of learning, and leadership of people. The problem that arises is not simply due to the underlying absence of clarity around the terms management and leadership, but because some of the adjectives used are ambiguous. This is especially so due to the absence of any clarification of these adjectives.

The adjective "strong" is arguably the most ambiguous and problematic of all given its potential application to both authoritarian and democratic forms of leadership.

Potentially more readily understood leadership terminology, in the context of academic studies, is sometimes used. For example, the term "transformational leadership" appears in reports on schools under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). This is probably because "transformational leadership" is referenced in the vision for ERST schools. Interestingly however, none of the reports studied define, develop, or evaluate the application of this leadership concept.

The problem of ambiguity with regard to the vision aspect of leadership can be seen in a recommendation from a report concerning a VEC school. The report acknowledges that this school's board was a sub-committee of the VEC, thus making its decisions subject to approval by the VEC. While the CEO was reported as praising "the vision and management style of the principal", the board members were recommended to "pay particular attention to the role of the board in developing a vision for the school" (Balbriggan Community School, Pineridge, October 2006). The report recommended that this should be done after the members received further training because they appeared to the inspectors to be "somewhat unclear of their role".

The multiple layers of decision making in the VEC system, as demonstrated in this report, taken in combination with the SDPI's promotion of the principal and teachers as the experts in policy formulation, are in aggregate a source of potential confusion. Such potential for confusion is not addressed by the inspectors, indeed the problem is frequently compounded by the apparent linking of the formulation of school vision with different layers of management and leadership. This later point should not be conflated with the promotion of an agreed vision by all of the partners in a school community.

While the term "leadership" is frequently linked in the reports to senior management, the term management is closely associated with the middle-management of schools. However, some inspectors reported that middle-management teams viewed themselves as "leadership". For example, "All post-holders described a sense of personal responsibility for providing leadership" (Hazelwood College, Dromcollogher, September 2006).

Middle-management, (which sometimes appears in the reports to refer to the assistant principals only, but often includes all post-holders), are often, but not always, either acknowledged by the inspectors for their sense of being a management team or the school is advised that a middle-management identity be created.

Most references relate to situations where a sense of being a management team was reported. The steps advised to achieve this sometimes include formal meetings between senior management and other post-holders to facilitate the sharing of experience and expertise, and to promote a "management group identity" (Virginia College, March, 2007). Middle-management teams appear to be viewed by the inspectors as essential elements of school organisational progress and in keeping with Department of Education and Skills Circular Letters. The inclusion of all post-holders i.e. assistant principals and special duties teachers or just assistant principals, as the middle-management team is not always clear. In one report, where the "post-holders" were described as not having a sense of being a middle-management team, the inspectors appeared to privilege assistant principals by recommending as follows:

that training be provided for assistant principals to support their role as a middle management team and achieve their opportunities for development in instructional leadership, curriculum, management and development of staff, in keeping with Circular Letter 23/98. (Coláiste Cholmcille, Ballyshannon, September 2006).

Another report refers to the school's Year Heads as middle-management and doesn't refer to special duties teachers at all. It states that the Year Heads "see themselves, and are seen by fellow staff members, as middle management" (Loreto College, Mullingar, October 2006). Other reports are more explicit in their inclusion of all post-holders as part of middle-management. For example, one report states that in line with Circular Letter 05/98, assistant principals and special duties teachers "form part of the middle-management structure within the school" (Maynooth Post Primary School, September 2006).

While many reports refer to the need for post-holders to have a sense of being part of a management team, other reports use the term "leadership" with regard to what appears to be the same work. An important example of this is that some reports use the term "distributed leadership" to describe the responsibilities of middle-management.

Whatever the explanation, the net point is that again, the reports make no explicit conceptual distinction between the terms management and leadership. Further, the reports, other than referring to the adjectives mentioned, do not explicitly outline the different forms of school leadership as are used in academic papers and reports (MacBeath, 2004a).

In addition to the challenge presented by the ambiguity of the terms management and leadership, is the fluidity of meaning which attaches to the concept of democracy. Variations of democratic ideas are important elements of academic and political thinking and practice, associated with school management and leadership. For example, with regard to democratic leadership in schools, MacBeath (2004b) makes a distinction between "liberal" and "participatory" democracy (p.56). The former he links to schools owned by governments who are serving economic ends, while the latter he associates with schools where "teachers, parents, and students have ownership in shaping the school's development" (MacBeath, 2004b, p.56). This distinction is illustrative of the alternative understandings which may arise from the use of the term democratic in the school context. However, MacBeath's (2004b, p.56) distinction between "liberal" and "participatory" school democracy is not necessarily so clear cut in practice. Grace (1995), for example, has argued that the Conservative Party's educational reforms in Britain during the 1980s and 1990s, deployed a rhetoric of school democracy when in fact the fundamental objective was the empowering of the consumer and the market in education (p.19). Grace's (1995) analysis, provides further insight by stating that the Conservatives argued that "teacher professional autonomy was counter community democracy" (p.19). These issues are pertinent to a CDA of the inspectors' use of words to do with "democracy" in the reports.

Issues concerning the meaning and practice of school democracy and the compatibility of teacher professional autonomy with "community" governance of schools, resonate with the Irish inspectors' promotion of the overriding management and leadership power of boards of management. While the patrons of schools have ownership and overall control of schools, the reports overwhelmingly focus on the boards of management.

The composition, competence and activity of boards is given a significant amount of attention by the inspectors. In terms of school governance, which is a statutory power of school boards, the inspectors frequently recommend that the boards be proactive. This encouragement is often made in the context of telling a board that it should initiate, as well as sanction, the school plan and policies. The school plan, inclusive of a school's vision which is often understood to be an important aspect of leadership (Drysedale, Gurr and Goode, 2011, p.13), is under the control of boards which are composed of representatives of parents, staff and patrons. Such a composition could be described as "community democracy" as referred to by Grace (1995, p.19).

In every report, the school's board of management is referenced by the inspectors, and with a significant amount of comment. Statutory provision for the establishment of a board of management is contained in Part IV of the *Education Act*, 1998. Section 15 (1) of this Act outlines that; "It shall be the duty of the board to manage the school on behalf of its patron". Among the functions mentioned in Section 15 (2) (e) of the Act is the directive that a board shall, "Have regard to the principles and requirements of a democratic society and have respect and promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society."

The power of a board is expressed also in Part V of the Act which deals with the principal and teachers. Part V, Section 23 (2) (a) makes clear that while the day-to-day management of the school is the responsibility of the Principal who shall "be accountable to the board for that management." Part (d) of this section states that the Principal shall, "Under the direction of the board and, in consultation with the teachers, the parents and, to the extent appropriate to their age and experience, the students, set objectives for the school and monitor the achievement of those objectives."

While the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) prioritised the planning role of the principal and teaching staff (DES, 1999, p. 12), planning nevertheless is, according to the 1998 *Education Act*, ultimately the responsibility of a board of management. Indeed, given the complex nature of school politics and Spillane's (2006) observations on distributed leadership, many of the leadership issues are not easily compartmentalised. Thus, the threads of management and leadership weave across the different sections of the WSE reports.

Within this tapestry a tension or ambiguity about the leadership of school development planning emerges. While the SDPI championed the teaching staff as the cornerstone of planning; the inspectorate frequently encourages the boards of management to take the initiative in school planning. For example, one report commends the board for “initiating policies” and a board taking a pro-active role in the management of a school is seen as a strength (Presentation Secondary School, Loughboy, December 2006). Another report appears to undermine the notion of teacher expertise by recommending that the board evaluate and review, "in-school management, planning, teaching and learning, curriculum and student support" (Gairmscoil Mhuire, Athenry, January 2007).

But while such advice contradicts or dilutes the view that the teachers have the expertise, it is in compliance with the *Education Act, 1998*, which states that it is a board's function to manage a school and make arrangements for regular review of the school plan (Section 21 (1)). The principal is accountable to the board with regard to his/her guidance and direction of the teachers (Section 23 (2) (a)). Further evidence of the Inspectorate encouraging boards to take a lead is found in the following appraisal:

There is evidence that, at times, the board tends not to be pro-active in carrying out its functions, but to approve and support as far as possible whatever initiatives come from the teaching staff and parents. The board has not been very involved in the development of policies. There has been a tendency to allow the principal, staff or others, to come up with and develop ideas. The resulting plans and policies are then discussed, reviewed and amended at late draft stage by the board, before a final, agreed policy is approved. (Méan Scoil an Chlochair, Kilbeggan, October 2006)

The inspectors advised that the "board as a whole needs to take a more pro-active approach to its leadership role" (Méan Scoil an Chlochair, Kilbeggan, October 2006). But the approach taken to policy development by this board was aligned with the thinking of the SDPI (DES, 1999, p.12).

The SDPI recognised the expertise of the principal and teaching staff. However, in doing so it did not reduce the board to the level of a rubber stamp. Rather, the reference to making amendments to policies demonstrates that the board conducted its own appraisal of the drafts and then made its own contribution to policy by making changes. Finally, the board gave policy legal effect. This approach too is compliant with the 1998 *Education Act* in that it stipulates that the school plan be the product of consultation (Section 21. (3)).

The tension that emerges may be a product of ambiguity in the *Education Act*, possibly around the idea of consultation, which was interpreted differently by conflicting perspectives on school management and leadership. The Inspectorate appears to have favoured the interpretation which gives a board of management the responsibility to initiate and direct school planning. The inspectorate's advocacy of this interpretation is illustrated by the following extract, "As it is clear that there is a strong need for strategic planning in the school the board needs to adopt a stronger managerial role. This role should be both visionary and directional" (Ramsgrange Community School, New Ross, October 2006).

However, as indicated, this tone and approach is not uniform across the reports. Some adopted an approach which might be described as promoting partnership or power-sharing between a board of management and staff.

Some reports suggest that their authors had no difficulty with a board initiating some policies and supporting the development of other policies. It is also clear from a number of reports that inspectors advocated the overriding importance of a school vision for informing school planning. Some reports link the term "leadership" with the school board of management. However, many of the reports, while not mentioning the term leadership, show that the inspectors believe that the board should be proactive in their leadership of the school. This is demonstrated by the frequent affirmation of boards which were proactive on school planning. One report clearly expressed the leadership role of the board. This was in the context of an evaluation of a school which, unusually, was seen as having self-review as integral to its practice. The inspectors judged that, "Given that foundation, [self-review] the board is well-equipped to lead the school in working through the recommendations of this report over the coming years" (Ballinrobe CS, Ballinrobe, April 2007).

Evidence from the reports strongly suggests that the policy of the Inspectorate, for the period under study, was to activate the management and leadership potential of the board. In this regard the school leadership of the principal or other formulations of teacher leadership might be seen to be curtailed.

One report crystallised this position by stating:

While the board demonstrates very significant strengths in terms of its management functions, there is some evidence that it may not currently be realising its full potential for leadership and therefore, it is now timely for the board to take a stronger leadership role, thus avoiding the risk of over-dependence on the principal. (Urseline College, Sligo, January 2007)

Another report underlined the importance that the inspectors attached to a board being proactive. It stated that:

There was strong evidence that this board takes a very proactive role in the management of the school. The board is committed to supporting excellence among students and teachers and has a clear vision of its role and purpose in the school. Members are committed to maintaining the ethos of the school as established by Nano Nagle. (Presentation Secondary School, Loughboy, December 2006)

In this matter of overall school management and leadership the inspectorate, by promoting the power of school boards, was following the provisions of the 1998 *Education Act*. There may be room for some debate about how much power-sharing, between a board and the school staff, should or can be facilitated, but ultimately a board makes the final decisions. The ideology of giving school management and leadership power to a board of management is given statutory authority by the 1998 *Education Act* and stewarded by the inspectors through the WSE process.

That said, however, questions remain concerning what areas of school decision making does a board of management have jurisdiction over, and if and to what extent such powers encroach on a teacher's work? A shared school vision need not necessarily alleviate possible points of tension as staff representatives may be out voted on a board of management. Further, even on the basis of a genuinely shared vision, school policies which deal with implementation matters and the steps necessary to secure a vision, may of themselves prove disputatious. In addressing these questions it is instructive to note that the reports are not always consistent in their understanding of other aspects of board of management responsibilities. For example, some reports make a distinction between "developmental planning" and the "permanent section" of the school plan. The distinction was explained by the SDPI. It defined the "relatively permanent" section as including the school's mission, vision and aims; context factors, and organisational policies.

On the other hand the "developmental" section includes current development targets and action plans for their attainment (DES, 1999, p.34). The distinction is clarified in one WSE report which describes that the board's developmental priorities for the immediate to short-term future of the school:

The board of management has clear development priorities for the school. The provision of improved sports facilities and the provision of a new school on a green field site have been regarded as absolute priorities in the short term. The board is also concerned with the provision of adequate toilet facilities for boys and staff among other structural and infrastructural items. (St Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla, March 2007)

These "development priorities" are of a different type to policies which would be found in the relatively permanent section of a school plan, such as the school code of behaviour and pupil assessment. However, the distinction between a permanent and relatively permanent section of a school plan is not made clear in all of the reports. The reports do not always refer to "developmental priorities" and when they do it's not always clear that, as the SDPI explained, organisational policies should be part of the permanent section of the school plan. For instance one report on a Catholic voluntary secondary school in Co Mayo stated that:

The key developmental priorities identified by the board are the advancement of the building project, *ongoing review of policies*, [author's italics] keeping abreast of legal and statutory obligations, preparation for Le Chéile Trust and maintaining the ethos of the school. (Gortner Abbey, Crossmolina, April 2007)

An important question, from a CDA point of view, is to what extent were boards of management encouraged to take control of matters which might be considered as best decided by teachers, that is to say, matters of a teacher's professional remit.

Were the inspectors, through the reports under study, weakening the power of the teaching profession in a way which might mirror the analysis of the Neo-Liberal impact on Irish education as articulated by Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012, p.14)? In this regard it might be argued that while school policies, such as a campaign to lobby for new classrooms, are not within the domain of teacher professionalism, other policies such as the code of behaviour or homework policy, are best left under teacher control. To this extent, if one accepts that some of the school policies are best controlled by teachers, then the WSE reports might help to diminish the power of the teaching profession, but only in so far as such an approach was ordained by the *Education Act* (1998).

The issue of the standing and level of teacher professionalism, within the web of school management and leadership, is complex. The reports reveal a layered or hierarchical texture to management and leadership in schools. While there is a fairly consistent promotion of the overall authority of boards of management, there is also a recognition of management and leadership at levels below the board of management. In this regard, some reports acknowledge the professional expertise of teachers and of the principal in particular. One report, by means of illustration, drew attention to the devolved nature of leadership in the VEC system which provided that the "chief task of the principal is to provide leadership to the school community" (Gaírm Scoil Mhuire, Athenry, January 2007). The inspectors in this case proceeded to comment that the chief focus of the principal's leadership should be on teaching and learning (Gaírm Scoil Mhuire, Athenry, January 2007). Such comments, provide a basis for arguing that the core school issues of teaching and learning are at least recognised as properly within the domain of teacher professionalism.

The issue of teacher professionalism is contentious. Care needs to be taken against the danger of a rhetoric of democracy throwing a blanket over school life and consequently masking the reality of school management and leadership. These reports under analysis do not clearly articulate a nuanced analysis of the complex nature of what is required to make schools operate successfully. It is the purpose of the inspectorate, after all, to assist with the improvement of schools. While recognising the restrictions imposed by the *Education Act 1998* it is still possible to make a clear acknowledgement of the distinct responsibility for teaching and learning which rests, or should rest, with teachers.

Additional points of debate around the meaning and application of democracy in school management and leadership, arise with regard to how decisions were reported as being made at board level.

Sometimes the reports acknowledge and commend the practice of consensus decision making at board level. For example, "It is a tribute to the board that a consensus of opinion is *always* [author's italics] reached at its meetings" (Maynooth Post-Primary, Maynooth, September 2006). However, while consensus decision making is considered to be a democratic and desirable practice, there can be concerns and democratically based counter-arguments to it. Such concerns arise because consensus decision making requires more support than a simple majority.

Consequently consensus can be interpreted, in certain situations, as providing a veto on decision making for a determined minority. Questions arise about when and how consensus should be implemented e.g. while it is clear that the basis of a consensus decision is stronger than a simple majority, does it require a two thirds majority, or perhaps another fraction of the vote or unanimity? Questions also arise regarding the appropriateness of consensus decision making in light of the inspector's own acknowledgement that some boards have a deficit of expertise or understanding by board members of their role, even where training was provided. These are issues for debate and by their very nature are, contrary to the claims of the inspectorate, outside of scientific or objective evaluation. I would also argue that these are issues for debate within the context of the school and its board. In that regard, at least one report does attempt to make a distinction between proposals that require a vote and those which were made by consensus, and also appears to define consensus as unanimous support. This report reflects a different approach to the one mentioned previously and is therefore another example of inconsistency. It states that:

If necessary, votes were taken on issues before the board, but this is reported as not to be a regular occurrence as consensus is the usual means for concluding matters. It was clear, from the meeting with the board, that all parties voice their opinions and that the board is very active in discussing matters regarding all aspects of the school and its future. This is to be commended. (Loreto College, St Stephen's Green, Dublin, September 2006)

This report's reference to all members voicing their opinions may be a clue to why a mixed approach to decision making worked. The inspectors' commendation of inclusive and open dialogue is typical of the reports generally. Indeed, many reports encourage diversity of membership backgrounds and the collective wisdom that may ensue from such diversity. In this regard there is continuity of support from the inspectors for democratic practice at board level.

Inclusive and open dialogue are regularly complimented by the inspectors.

An additional aspect of democratic practice promoted by the inspectors is for clear and effective communication channels between the board of management and the school community. For example, "The new board of management should be actively involved in the school community and should have formalised reporting procedures" (Rockwell College, Cashel, October 2006). Agreed reports from the school board are generally advocated by the inspectors.

However, it may be argued, especially in the context of the overall promotion of consensus decision making, that agreed reports are potentially a curb on democratic scrutiny and accountability. For instance, a determined and politically astute board member, referring to inspectors' advocacy of consensus, could block the circulation of important information. There are circumstances, of course, where agreed reports are defensible. For example, unsubstantiated complaints against a school could be reasonably argued to be confidential material. However, the inspectors were silent on such distinctions. One example of a recommendation for an agreed report was worded as follows:

Communication between the board of management and its various nominating bodies is facilitated through a number of means. A copy of the minutes of each board meeting is made available in the staffroom for all teachers. Parent nominees provide oral feedback to the parents' association. It is recommended that a short, agreed written report be provided for the teacher and parent nominees, which should be delivered by them to their respective nominating bodies. (Mayfield Community School, Mayfield, September 2007)

Notwithstanding the fact that the inspectors frequently reported that there was less than satisfactory activity by, and attendance at, meetings of parents' councils; the matter of reporting back to representatives of different constituencies is of leadership, as well as democratic, importance. It can be reasonably argued that the inspectors should have observed the practice aspect of board of management communication more fully. This could have been done by both exploring the quality of the communication and giving guidance on deciding what was appropriate for an agreed report. As Spillane (2006) stated, "While the interactions among leaders shape leadership practice, they do so in interaction with followers. In how they interact with leaders followers help define leadership practice" (p.74). With a view to improving leadership in schools these interactions should have been more fully explored. Not to do so represents a missed opportunity to build a better understanding and improvement of school leadership.

While the contestability of the meaning and application of democracy to schools is present at board of management level, this contestability also stretches deeper into the day-to-day affairs of a school. In the world of academic discourse school management and leadership is mostly focussed on the principal and teachers. In what then might be considered as the parallel universe of real world Irish education, the reports acknowledge and advocate the overall management and leadership role of the board of management.

However, the inspectors also recognise, what I interpret as, the layered nature of school leadership by strongly associating leadership with the principal.

At this level of leadership the particular and contestable, understandings of democracy evident in the reports are problematic. This arises at points in the reports which might relate to Spillane's (2006) concept of leadership practice i.e. the interaction between leaders, followers and situation (p.85).

Many of these points of leadership practice, as argued in the previous commentary on school processes, are rarely developed in the reports. Further problems emerge from instances where some inspectors refer to their understanding of the "democratic" style of senior management. One such reference arises from an inspector's observation that the style of senior management was "democratic, for example, staff can add ideas to the agenda of staff meetings and ideas can come from the staff which the principal may adopt" (Ramsgrange Community College, New Ross, October 2006). This was described in the same report as a "down-up" approach. However, the inspectors' use of the term "democratic" here is debatable, if not actually incorrect, because it implies that the principal had discretion over the use of the staff's ideas. The inspectors reported that the staff's ideas "may be adopted". In this regard, in-school decision making rests with the principal. It would be more accurate therefore to have described the principal's management and leadership style as consultative, because such a process, while seeking to establish agreement, leaves the final say with the principal. This is further evidence of a need, by the inspectorate, to use language more accurately.

Consultative leadership by senior management, the reports seem to imply or sometimes state, is an overall feature of the schools which were evaluated. This is in the context of a statutory requirement to do so, where possible, by the *Education Act (1998)*. The concept of consultation, however, also contains potential ambiguities in terms of its understanding and application. For example, Grace (1995), uses the term "consultation" interchangeably with the terms "power-sharing" and "social democratic", and described it as the dominant theme in the discourse on school leadership in England during the period from World War Two to the emergence of Thatcherism in the 1970s (p.17).

However, he qualified this by explaining that there is a lack of evidence to prove that the rhetoric of consultation was matched by the reality (Grace, 1995, p.17). Grace (1995), argued that in English schools in the 1970s there were four forms or styles of educational leadership.

Firstly, schools which remained loyal to the old headmaster tradition. Secondly, those that "recontextualised this [the old headmaster tradition] within new consultative procedures". Thirdly, those that had a genuine commitment to consultation and finally those that wanted "a radical break" (p.17).

This type or depth of analysis of management and leadership is not provided by the WSE reports and constitutes a gap which it may not be possible to fill. In the context of possible weaknesses in the reliability of what is contained in the reports and the potential ambiguity of the term consultation, it is not possible to conclude that a genuine commitment to consultation or "power-sharing" is a strong feature running through most schools. Addressing this observation and reporting challenge would necessitate a more focussed engagement with staff on the meaning and implementation, or otherwise, of consultation.

The Characteristics of Boards of Management and their link with Senior Management

Given the scope of the management and leadership responsibilities of a board of management, and the arguments about New Managerialism, it is pertinent to examine the characteristics and competence of board members as reported by the inspectors. Also, a logical development in the CDA and Spillanes' (2006) theory on distributed leadership necessitates an examination of the link, and interaction, between boards of management and In-school management.

The scope of the activities, or work, of a board can be broad and diverse. One report commented that:

While the board does not get involved in the day-to-day running of the school, it is involved in staff appointments, promotions, policy matters, finance and from time to time discipline issues. (Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Salerno, February 2007)

These matters were (and continue to be) within the remit of boards in all sectors except the VEC (now constituted as Education and Training Boards), where the operation of recruitment, promotion and contractual issues are executive functions of the CEO. While there was a body of opinion that such executive powers were subject to policies approved by the VEC (Vocational Education Amendment Act, 2001), in practice CEOs had a huge degree of independence in this regard. This situation, with regard to VECs, is now superseded by the Education and Training Boards Act.

A general distinction between the overall strategic management, leadership and planning of schools, and their day-to-day management and leadership, is discernible from the reports. It is clear that the inspectors commend, encourage and endorse a pro-active approach by boards of management to the overall management and leadership of schools. However, questions of competence and expertise arise. These questions fall into two broad categories.

The first, is the overarching issue, which I have already addressed. This is the question of the primacy of board of management authority, as opposed to teacher professional expertise, with regard to matters which are arguably in the domain of the latter. A second question arises also, which is, what do the inspectorate evaluate as the level of role awareness and management knowledge among the voluntary members of boards of management?

As stated previously, trying to make a distinction between management and leadership in the reports is problematic as there is no theoretical understanding provided by the inspectorate and the terms are sometimes used ambiguously or interchangeably. However, some more concrete conclusions about the inspectors' understanding of school management and leadership can be inferred from the broad thrust of the reports. A distinction between the overall strategic direction and planning of a school on the one hand; and its day-to-day running, on the other is one such understanding. Spillane (2006), underlines the importance of day-to-day operations by saying that "Leadership improvement will ultimately depend on the day-to-day practice of leadership in schools" (p.89). In this respect the WSE distinction between overall strategic direction and planning, on the one hand, and operational matters, or day-to-day practice, on the other, is helpful for learning how to improve school leadership. However, the reports are sometimes unclear, or subjective in their view, about who, or what level of school management and leadership, is professionally responsible for deciding on these matters.

Overall strategic direction includes school planning, or school development planning. This planning gives rise to a school's vision, mission statement, development priorities, policies and procedures; and is usually observed and commended by inspectors as being done in a collaborative manner by the school community. Consultation by the board with the schools parents, patrons, staff and students; for planning purposes, is mandated by the *Education Act 1998* (Section, 21 (3)).

This can be described as a form of distributed leadership, in so far as it involves the many rather than the few in decision making.

This idea of stretching leadership is referred to by Spillane (2006) as Leadership Plus (Spillane, 2006, p.13). However, while this mode of decision making involves all of the school community, the reports frequently acknowledge that it is guided by some type of central leadership. This central leadership is usually reported as coming from the principal or a designated member of staff.

This type of dispersed ownership of the planning process is frequently commended by the inspectors. Given the linkage between vision, policies and the power-sharing and distribution in the planning process, a form of distributed leadership appears to be prevalent across the schools studied. Therefore, while distributed leadership is not mentioned in the 1998 Education Act, it can be argued that it is present in this legislation by implication through the consultation provision for school planning (Section 21(3)).

The statutory role of the board to manage the school is reflected in the understanding of many board members, but not all, as reported by the inspectorate. Positive comments include:

It is clear from discussions with the board that members are very aware of their statutory role. This was evidenced by many references made to the relevant legislation in terms of the development of policies and references to the articles of management. (St Declan's College, Cabra, February 2007)

There are frequent references, in the reports, to board members being of the view that their role is to support the principal in managing the school. These references appear to indicate a cultural view that the principal is the overall school leader, a conclusion which is supported by the usual accompanying recommendation that a board should initiate planning. For example one report stated that "The board defines its role as collective responsibility supporting the principal and staff in the regulation and management of the school" (Ballinteer CS, Dublin, October 2006). This is soon followed by, "However, there is evidence to suggest that there is a need for more proactive involvement in initiating policy development and review and monitoring progress" (Ballinteer CS, Dublin, October 2006). Another report states that the board perceives its role as "supporting the principal and the staff in the effective management of the school".

Again, it is noted that the board ratifies policies and it is recommended that members become more proactive in forward planning, prioritising and drawing up action plans. Other board members saw their role as advising the principal. In one school in Co Clare they saw themselves as having “an advisory capacity”. The minutes of one VEC board are reported as illustrating that they provided “guidance and advice to the principal and deputy regarding the day-to-day management of the school”.

The potential power of a board of management in an Irish school is considerable. This may, or may not, be frequently exercised but the legal basis for such power is clearly outlined in the Education Act, 1998.

While *distributed leadership* is facilitated through collaboration for school planning and the requirement for the principal to consult, where practical, with staff, the Act empowers the board as the management of the school. The Inspectorate, albeit in an inconsistent manner, promotes the exercise of this power by boards and is consequently making a definite contribution to the practice of management and leadership in post-primary schools. It is therefore of importance to make an appraisal of the competence of boards. From a CDA perspective the effectiveness of boards in terms of delivering on the potential for democracy in schools is one line of inquiry. Another dimension is to identify how governance is being exercised and by whom. Also, given the privileged position advocated by the SDPI, for the principal and the teachers in school planning, it is necessary to assess the level of expertise of boards. Given that boards are frequently encouraged by the inspectorate to be proactive the question arises whether they have the capacity to do this effectively?

A board of management is constituted under the Education Act, 1998. The prevalent view of the inspectorate on the role of these boards might be encapsulated in its advice given to one board that it needed “to provide more visionary leadership for the active steering of change and developing strategies to support senior management” (St Wolstan’s C.S., Celbridge, December 2006). The understanding of leadership here is aligned with Spillane’s (2007) explanation that leadership is about changing the way things are done in schools (p.153).

The WSE reports make very frequent reference to how the board is constituted, the mode of decision making, the keeping of minutes, training for members, level of communication with the different school constituencies, and the level of awareness among members of their roles. One report for a school in Dublin stated that the board is:

properly constituted. There are four trustee nominees, two parents' representatives, two representatives from the teaching staff. The board meets regularly, about once every six weeks. Attendance at board meetings is very good and is indicative of the commitment of its members to the school. Minutes of all meetings are kept and are forwarded to board members in advance of meetings. This is good practice. (St Declan's College, Cabra, February 2007)

This is a fairly typical example of the strong focus on organisational or formal issues, as indicated in the content analysis.

Board expertise was linked by the inspectors to the provision of training. The report continued:

Members of the board have received training. In addition specialist courses that are deemed of interest to the board members are availed of. For example, a board member recently attended a seminar on legal perspectives in education. Ensuring that board members receive such training is praiseworthy. (St Declan's College, Cabra, February 2007)

Training for board members is identified as an important issue in a lot of reports, either in the form of an acknowledgement of its use by a board or as a recommendation that it should happen. Trustee or patron bodies such as the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) and the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) are often noted as being active in this regard.

Generally the reports which I studied reflected a satisfactory situation, from the inspectors' perspective, on the issue of board competence. Additional positive comments included a reference to the diversity of representation covering different sectional interests on the board, which according to one report can result in "a collective wisdom" (Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Salerno, February 2007). One school was described as being strengthened by a "diverse range of skills and views".

According to the board in a Dominican school, while members represent sectional interests "they see themselves as a cohesive team working with management and staff" (Dominican College, Wicklow, February 2007). One report stated that the work of the board was strengthened as a result of its "diverse range of skills and views" (Loreto College, Mullingar, October 2006).

Following this logic another report suggested that consideration might be given “to the inclusion of persons from outside the educational sphere to provide a broader perspective on the management of the school” (Pobal Scoil Neasáin, Baldoyle, December 2006). Other reports stated that different perspectives added strengthened board team work.

However, not all boards are reported as working well by the inspectors. In the context of an overall picture of consensus decision making, one board was reported as having some members with more influence than others. It stated that there was a “core-group with a greater awareness of in-school issues and more involvement in decision making” (Meán Scoil an Chlochair, Kilbeggan, October 2006). But to what extent is this insight a reflection of the reality of boards that attracted no such adverse comment from the inspectors? Was the research methodology of the inspectorate capable of eliciting accurate data in this regard?

The inspection team also said that in this case there was “a degree of vagueness among some individual members regarding their role” (Meán Scoil an Chlochair, Kilbeggan, October 2006). Could such criticism not have equally been applicable to the numerous board members who described their function as one of support for the school principal?

The reports do not significantly move beyond the organisational, procedural and general comments about competency, in any significant way. While there are some comments about boards leading by example, there is no deeper analysis of the characteristics of board members through a theoretical lens based on board effectiveness. For example, there is a dearth of explicit comment on recognised attributes, such as effective communication skills, integrity, courage to speak up and being outspoken (O’Sullivan and West-Burham, 2011, p.34). This confirms the indication from the content analysis that there was a bias, on the part of the inspectorate, for organisational matters at the expense of processes.

Many of the reports in the "School ownership and management" subsection make reference to the relationship between the board and the principal/senior management/in-school management. One board for example, was reported as, describing their relationship with the senior management as a partnership, while another described it as a partnership with the in-school management.

Supportive and collaborative relationship, and “relaxed without being too comfortable” are other descriptions used by board members to describe their relationship with senior management. As secretary to the board the principal is usually a constant presence at its meetings and a point of contact for the board. But the reports examine the communication between the board and the principal between meetings, on an on-going basis. This is also articulated as the means or conduit for the board’s contact with the school. For example, “The board maintains ongoing communication with the school through the principal and chairperson”. This type of activity is endorsed by the inspectorate. For instance, “Informal communication between the board and senior management is commendably regular by means of close communication between the principal and chairperson”. One board described the principal as its “main point of contact with the day to day running of the school” and another highlighted the working relationship between the chairperson and principal as excellent. The level of contact between the chairperson and the principal is a recurring reference in the reports.

This demonstrates a concern on behalf of the inspectorate that school boards are aware of the daily life of the school. In one case the chairperson is commended for visiting the school on a regular basis. A board can also be kept in touch at meetings by a principal’s report. In this regard the principal is a gatekeeper or lynchpin in the school leadership system.

The In-school management subsection of the reports reflect the inspectors’ examination of the role of the principal, the deputy principal (or deputy principals) and the middle-management team (DES, 2000). The *Education Act 1998* states in Section 22. (1) that:

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.

The Act further states, in Section 23 (a), that the principal is responsible for the "day-to-day" management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and be accountable to the board for that management,". In Section 23 (b) it states that the principal shall "provide leadership to the teachers and other staff and the students of the school". There is no specific mention of the deputy principal or post holders in the Act, but their functions are covered by circular letters.

The legislative framework through the Act, is closely reflected in the structure of the WSE reports. As with the Act the inspectors' reports follow the top-down protocol to the governance of schools i.e. the School ownership and management subsection (including the Board) is followed by the "In-school management section". The In-school management subsection in turn feeds into a report on senior management (i.e. principal and deputy principal) followed by a report on middle-management (i.e. all post-holders or those who hold assistant principal posts). The WSE reports, quite often, also use the language of the *Education Act 1998* e.g. the "day-to-day" management of the school. CDA recognises the significance of the use of language in discourse, and in this regard the deployment of language from the Education Act contributes to a sense of authority in the reports. However, unlike the Act, the reports invariably make reference to the principal in conjunction with the deputy principal. Nevertheless, the net point is that, the Education Act is closely mirrored in the structure of the WSE reports, which promotes a hierarchical concept of management and leadership.

My study of the detail in the reports provides evidence which appears to reinforce this top-down model as dominant in the discourse.

The "day-to-day management" of a school is, according to the *Education Act 1998*, the responsibility of the principal Section 23-(2). The WSE reports frequently observe and commend a partnership approach between the principal and deputy principal with regard to these operational matters. Often this involves a division of management and leadership responsibilities, or working together on certain matters, between the principal and deputy. Such observations on the practice of leadership by senior management link with Spillane's (2006) view that "Division of Labor" (different functions which overlap) and "Co-performance" (performing a function collaboratively), are part of distributed leadership (pp.39-40). Indeed where teamwork between senior management was not in evidence the inspectors advised that this be corrected, usually with training. So, for example, one report stated: It would be timely if both principal and deputy seek out further opportunities for training in collaborative leadership in order to enhance their effectiveness as a management team. (Patrician College, Mallow, September 2006)

While there is no statutory obligation on the principal to consult with teachers about operational matters, widespread consultation with post-holders in particular is both apparent from, and commended by, the reports.

The distinction, in practice, between the day-to-day management and leadership of schools and their strategic management, appears from the inspectors' observations to be prevalent in schools. However, the "In-school management" subsection of the reports, where references to senior management's day-to-day management of schools are located, occasionally, refers to strategic management and leadership. For example:

The senior in-school management team demonstrates a capacity for leadership, which is characterised by dynamic open discussion and strategic thinking informed by clarity of direction. (St Patrick's CC, Naas, September 2006)

While the reference to "strategic thinking" by senior management could be interpreted to relate to matters outside the competence of the board of management, such distinctions are not explicitly made in the reports.

On the contrary, one report highlights the central strategic function expected of senior management by stating that they were conscious of their role "in leading the school out of a difficult period of falling enrolments" (Killarney Community College, January 2007).

Indeed, the inspectors, perhaps unsurprisingly, uncritically reported that members of a board of management had full confidence "in her [principal] direction of the school" (St Mary's Diocesan School, Drogheda, October 2006). This view from the board gives rise to a question about how they perceive their own role in school governance after all it is the board which is legally charged with the overall management of the school. And, having consulted with the partners in the school community, it is the board which decides on the vision of the school. One could assume that the direction of the school and its vision are synonymous. Yet, other reports also closely associate a vision for the school with the ideas of the principal. This is done without clarifying, whether or not, this vision is the one endorsed by the board in its school plan. For example, the inspectors told one board to "adopt a stronger managerial role. This role should be both visionary and directional".

However, the same report stated "In defining this vision the principal needs to take a decisive leadership role" (Ramsgrange Community School, New Ross, October 2006). It is arguable, therefore, that the Inspectorate was contradicting itself by acknowledging how senior management, and sometimes solely the principal, were leading the school community (as distinct from the day-to-day management of a school) and, on the other hand, recommending that boards of management take responsibility for strategic leadership.

It appears that the "In-school management" subsection of the reports always begin by referring to the "senior management" of the principal and the deputy. Their centrality to In-school management is further supported by comments in the reports which describe them as "the key personnel". One report stated that senior management "have a strong presence in the school" (Ghairmscoil Mhuire, Athenry, January 2007). While there is a level of vagueness about the latter comment, it does nevertheless give some indication of the sense of communal importance afforded to recognised central leaders.

The positive effects of a senior management team could, more often, be explained more, for example, "It is obvious that the senior management team is a key influence in cultivating the calm and friendly atmosphere that is very evident in the school" (Ard Scoil Rís, Dublin, January 2007).

However, some reports juxtapose management and leadership skills with beneficial effects of the actions of senior management. For example, one report mentioned senior management's "expertise in dealing with people" (Gorey Community School, March 2007) and subsequently said that senior management "assist the collegiality of the school". Further reported benefits of efficient senior management include a "positive approach through the rest of the school management team" (CBS, Charleville, January 2007) and "high morale" among staff" (Dominican College, Wicklow, February 2007).

A frequent observation reported by the inspectors is that the principal and the deputy work as a team or in partnership. One report states that the senior management team together "displays very effective leadership in the school". Many reports make reference to the senior management working "collaboratively" or having a "cohesive and focused management approach" (Hazelwood College,

Drumcollogher, September 2006). The significance of this teamwork for the Inspectorate is summarised by one report which states that the "real strength of senior management is that it is a team" (Coláiste an Chraoibhín, Fermoy, September 2006). Another report probes the issue a little further by saying that, "This empowerment of the deputy is reciprocated by the deputy's support of the principal" (Salesian Secondary School, Fernbank, October 2006). There is also a reference to the principal and deputy advising each other. One report refers to senior management having "a mutual professional respect" (St Aidan's CBS, Whitehall, December 2006).

Reference to teamwork is often accompanied by a comment on the "visibility" or "presence" of senior management on the school premises. For example, one report stated that senior management "lead the day-to-day management of the school" and that they had "a strong presence in the school and are readily available to the school community" (Gairmscoil Mhuire, Athenry, January 2007). Again, while not doubting the sincerity of the inspectors, the adjective "strong" is ambiguous in this context.

It would have been helpful from the point of view of building an understanding of management and leadership to have this type of observation developed and explained. From a research perspective such ambiguity is also evident with regard to other important aspects of management and leadership. For example, in a rare reference to teaching and learning with respect to senior-management, one report states that "Teaching and learning are monitored" (St Paul's CBS, Dublin, April 2007). Unfortunately there is no explanation of the modalities or the impact of this monitoring, which is an important aspect of instructional leadership.

This is an all too frequent example of a superficial reporting of inspectors' observations which provides limited opportunities to address "the day-to-day practice dimension of leadership in schools" (Spillane, 2006, p.89). Therefore, the data available in the reports which might be used to develop strategies for leadership improvement, which depends on the day-to-day practice (Spillane, 2006), are also limited. The duties of the senior management personnel, and the equitable and efficient distribution of these, are an important concern in the reports.

One report states that "Duties are clearly designated, equitably distributed and regularly monitored" (St Patrick's Community College, Naas, September 2006). The senior management team in one school opined that they "had different but complementary strengths". Many reports refer to what Spillane (2006) described as a "division of labor" (p.39) inside senior management. For example, the principal addresses "staffing issues" and the deputy addresses "resource and equipment issues". This frequent observation of division of labour by the inspectors appears to contradict Spillane's (2006) U.S. findings that "A neat division of labor with respect to leadership work is not the standard operating procedure in schools. When it does exist, predictable patterns are difficult to find" (p.39).

Problems of senior management work overload are sometimes referred to in the reports. For example:

In many respects however, the local management and administration work, taken on by the principal and deputy principal, as senior management team, is too heavy, and the management of the school would benefit from delegation of more of the duties to other members of staff. (Presentation De La Salle College, Bagenalstown, November 2006)

Such references to senior management work overload are usually followed by suggestions of work being redistributed among post-holders. Also, there are occasional commendations of teachers, without posts of responsibility, performing duties which should attach to same.

However, the *ad hoc* nature of assigning such duties can undermine teacher collegiality and distributed leadership. Also, there is no clear recognition of the frequently argued point that senior management more generally, during the period under study and subsequently, suffer from work overload. International studies, contemporaneous to this study, indicated that work overload deterred potential candidates from taking up principal positions (Nusche, 2008, p.20). It is therefore, enigmatic that such concerns are not reflected in the reports, especially given the link made by the inspectors between senior management and leadership. Leadership, whatever one's interpretation, is different to the administrative duties which carry a time consuming commitment.

One is left to speculate if, given the Inspectorate's role on behalf of the state, such concerns were suppressed or if principals withheld complaints about overwork in the context of trying to present a positive image of their schools.

While the principal and the deputy are usually mentioned in conjunction with one another as a senior management team, there are also a significant number of references to the principal as the key person. One report, for example, stated that "the chief task of the principal is to provide leadership to the school community" (Gairm Scoil Mhuire, Athenry, January 2007). Highlighting a more important leadership role for a principal is not necessarily exclusive of senior management teamwork. One report refers to an excellent senior management team and also comments that "The principal clearly has a pivotal role within the school and is very highly regarded by the board, staff and parents as an able administrator and educational leader" (Marion College, Ballsbridge, October 2007).

The reference here to an evidential warrant in the form of the positive appraisal of the principal by the board, staff and parents, is unusual and a further example of inconsistency. One might ponder with regard to the numerous examples of silence in this regard, whether the silence is an indication of an absence of respect for the principal or simply a case of not reporting one way or the other.

The delineation of duties occasionally reveals the superior authority of the principal. The hierarchy of school authority is summarised as follows in one report. "The principal has specific duties including disciplinary issues that have been referred up the disciplinary ladder and leading school development planning". Another report states that the principal has "the final word" (St Paul's CBS, Dublin, April 2007) on discipline. As mentioned already, some reports, refer to the principal having responsibility for "strategic planning" which in one report is illustrated with the examples of development planning and the design of the school timetable.

Where the pre-eminence of the principal emerges in the reports, strengths of the principal, as well as aspects of formal authority, are mentioned. For example, one report states that the principal; "is in the most positive of respects, synonymous with Presentation Secondary, Tralee (Presentation College, Tralee, November 2006)". She is described as having a "pivotal role" in "the management and operation of the school".

In a unique reference from the reports I studied, this report states that she "knows all 666 pupils by name". While this report does acknowledge the partnership approach of senior management, it does also reinforce the notion of the pre-eminence of the principal by stating that she is "ably assisted in the day-to-day running of the school by the deputy principal (Presentation College, Tralee, November 2006)". A principal's dominance in the management and leadership of a school is encapsulated in the following observation: "The principal's leadership style is dynamic and the principal's vision of the school informs and drives all aspects of school life" (Tullamore College, February 2007).

While another report acknowledged "The leadership provided by the school principal has led to a strong sense of empowerment among all staff", it went on to observe that "staff felt they could approach the principal with ideas and suggestions they might have for the future development of the school" (Coláiste Cholmáin, Claremorris, December 2006). This latter reference reinforces the sense of the pre-eminence of the principal in that there is an implication that staff input into school planning is somehow dependent on the principal. This notion of the power of a principal can be contrasted with a report which highlighted collegiality and commented that the staff board of management representatives' regular reports contributed positively to the staff's "sense of ownership of the decision making process" (Killarney Community College, January 2007).

The apparent inconsistency in the reports regarding the usual promotion of senior management teamwork while sometimes acknowledging or encouraging the principal as the school leader, is made sense of by Spillane (2006).

As part of his assessment of the Leadership-Plus aspect of distributed leadership Spillane (2006) explains, for example, that while Bill Gates gets the credit for the success of Microsoft, there was co-leadership with Steve Ballmer (p.12). Spillane (2006), develops the point further by stating that "Throughout history, from corporate board rooms to Chairman Mao's China, those at the helm relied on partnerships with a trusted other to execute leadership; co-leadership was the modus operandi" (p.12). What appears therefore as an inconsistency in the reports might be better presented in a more fully explained manner by the inspectors.

Distributed Leadership

Spillane's (2006) theory of distributed leadership provided a lens to study the WSE reports. There is evidence in the reports of both widespread distributed leadership in schools and support for this from the inspectors. This was particularly so in the school planning process but there is negligible attention given to the substance of the interaction between leaders, followers and their situation (Spillane, 2006, p.17). The inspectors, also, regularly examined, encouraged and endorsed a form of distributed leadership in the middle-management of the schools and thus ring-fenced it around a specific level of school structures. Staff meetings, while also being a formal aspect of school organisation are an important setting for the study of informal leadership, where teachers without official management and leadership positions, may exercise leadership. However, staff meetings, notwithstanding some examples of the inspectors encouraging democratic practice, are generally marginalised in the Quality of school management section of the reports. While there are more references to staff meetings in the Quality of school planning section, there is insufficient detail on such meetings to build an interpretation of leadership practice. Overall there is very little research on staff meetings reported or other situations with potential for insight into distributed leadership, leaving a dearth of data for the study of informal leadership. From a CDA perspective this also demonstrates a power imbalance as other forums and power brokers, such as the board of management and the principal, are given considerably more attention in the Quality of school management section.

Middle-Management

Middle-management is categorised by the inspectorate, in the reports, as a constituent part of In-school Management (ISM). ISM is also comprised of the principal and deputy principal, who are also referred to as senior management. However, while middle-management was broadly considered by the inspectorate as being the post-holders (i.e. assistant principals and special duties teachers), there are inconsistencies in the reports with regard to which category of post-holders. Many reports imply an equation between assistant principals and middle-management or otherwise give priority to these particular post-holders.

For example, one report states that "The Assistant Principals have taken a lead role in the [planning] process" and another recommended that senior management and assistant principals meet formally to "to share management of school planning."

Such privileging of assistant principals, where it occurred, reflects an importance attached by a significant number of inspectors to seniority and the hierarchical structure of schools. Such recognition, however, is also a reflection of the reality of school life or DES policy as evidenced in some reports. One report, for example, states that "the assistant principals run the school should the principal and deputy principal be absent" (Salesian Secondary School, Fernbank, October 2006).

On the other hand, other reports give a clearer recognition to special duties teachers as part of middle-management by recommending that they be accorded greater recognition as part of the management structure of the school. Therefore, the privileging or foregrounding of assistant principals, often in the form of Year Heads, is not ubiquitous as some reports give parity, at least in terms of reference, to special duties teachers. For example, one report stated with regard to the tri-weekly meetings between assistant principals and senior management that this was an "important discussion forum for school initiatives. This collaborative decision-making should continue with the inclusion of special duties teachers more into the process" (Millstreet Community School, October 2006). Another team of inspectors recommended that "the senior management team meet in plenary session with the team of assistant principals and team of special duties teachers at agreed intervals and that a definite agenda is provided" (Ard Scoil Rís, Griffith Avenue, Dublin, January 2007). While the term "distributed leadership" is not used in this context, this is nevertheless an example of some inspectors seeking to enhance the distribution of leadership across a greater number of teachers.

However, it is also noteworthy that examples of inspectors encouraging such distribution of leadership tended to be done in formal organisational ways e.g. plenary sessions and other types of formal meetings. Assistant principals, in common with special duties teachers, continue to hold contracts for their posts which outline a specific set of duties e.g. Year Head, and are according to DES Circular 05/98 part of the middle-management structure within the school. Circular Letter 20/98, which refers to the revised In-school management structures in vocational schools and community

colleges, refers to the duties of post-holders matching the "central tasks" of schools such as "instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff and their development and the academic and pastoral work of the school". Most of the WSE reports focus on and encourage a sense of "management group identity" (Virginia College, March, 2007). For Spillane's (2006) theory of leadership this is the idea of "heedful groups" (p.59).

This is the notion that co-performing leaders are aware of themselves as a team of leaders. These "heedful groups" act according to their social norms and develop systems of joint action towards which they act accordingly. The result is a practice which resides not only in individuals but also in their interaction (Spillane, 2006). Some reports indicate that the assistant principals, or post-holders more generally, did see themselves as part of middle-management, other reports did not comment and others said there was no sense of being part of a management team or having a sense of being management. For example, one report stated that, "most post-holders do not see themselves as part of school management, rather as assistants to the managers, and this element of middle management needs to be revisited" (Presentation De La Salle College, Bagenalstown, November 2006). Another states that post-holders did not see themselves as part of management but "They see themselves as assisting management which is a different matter" (Loreto College, St Stephen's Green, September 2006). Such a distinction may not always be clear to readers of the reports because there can be a subtlety in the language. For example, one report states that, "Assistant Principals confirm that they *assist* [author's italics] Senior Management as required and are available to take over the running of the school if required. There is a strong awareness of themselves as middle management" (Beech Hill College, Monaghan, February 2007). Other reports found to the contrary.

For example, "Outside of their assigned duties, the middle- management team do not see themselves as having a collective managerial role relating to the development of the school" (Presentation Convent, Tralee, November 2006). The inspectorate's overall approach to In-school management and leadership, appeared to disapprove of this type of situation and a more distributed leadership model among the principal, deputy principal and assistant principals is encouraged. In this case,

the inspectors recommended that the "disjointed post structure" be addressed by a staff meeting which should "discuss if the post schedule is meeting the needs of the school" (Presentation Convent, Tralee, November 2007).

Ambiguity

In some cases the inspectors used the term "distributed leadership" to describe how the middle-management team carried out its work. In doing so, such examples, address the recursive issue of ambiguity and the specific problem of an absence of a stated explicit distinction, from the inspectors, between the terms management and leadership.

Instead of a clear distinction being made there is a conflation of the concepts of management and leadership. This conflation is an educational problem because it inhibits an accurate reporting of school management and leadership. In one case a middle-management decision to interview students about their study habits, as a means of bringing about improvement thereof, was described by the inspectors as an example of "distributed leadership" (Schull Community College, April 2007).

However, in most cases the inspectors use the term management rather than leadership to describe the work and identity of middle-management. Occasionally there is a reference to Year Heads seeing themselves and been viewed "by fellow staff members as middle management" (Loreto College, Mullingar, October 2007). However, another report cautioned that Year Heads and middle-management are not synonymous (Presentation Secondary, Loughboy, November and December 2006). The following extract also serves to illustrate the conflation of management and leadership, which is often apparent. "It was clear that management was in general effectively and fairly distributed among post-holders and staff and that the levels of co-operation and collaboration were high" (CBS, Charleville, January 2007).

Some reports reinforce a sense of confusion about the term management. In one case, for example, contrary to the general thrust of most reports, the inspectors pointedly referred to the assistant principals who were organised in the school as a "management advisory committee" which provided a "consultative forum for management [senior management] and help it to keep in close touch with

issues that directly affect teaching and learning in the school" (Killarney Community College, January 2007). The same report potentially confuses matters further by describing this activity as "collaborative management" (Killarney Community College, January 2007). The reports reveal a tendency for the inspectorate to recommend a broader co-operation by middle- management to engage with the overall performance of the school and to do so at formal meetings. One report described this as "strategic long-term or system issues." Another referred to a developing management culture in a school and its weekly middle-management meetings which assisted the school "in deriving maximum benefit now and in the future from the sharing of the valuable experience and expertise of long serving post holders, and is commended" (St Mary's Diocesan School Drogheda, October 2006). This encouragement of tapping into the overall professional expertise of post-holders, as distinct from a simple list of contractual tasks and duties, is a common feature of the reports.

Central Leadership

There is a recognition in some reports that the concept of "central leadership" as practised by the senior management team, can co-exist with or empower a more distributed leadership. In this respect, it is evident that some of the inspectors look at management and leadership in schools through a more democratic lens than do others. For example, one report states that, "Throughout the College commonly distributed leadership and empowerment of groups and individuals is clearly in evidence. However it is the central leadership role of the senior management team that guides the progress and development of the college" (Schull Community College, April 2007). In this case senior management were reported as having participated in the *Leadership Development for Schools (LDS)* programme. The report states that, "Both the principal and Deputy principal have attended LDS which has enhanced the very effective leadership style of senior management" (Schull Community College, April 2007). It would appear that LDS had a beneficial affect in terms of promoting distributed leadership. In some reports, senior management are referred to LDS for training, by the inspectors. Sometimes the reports foreground the principal as the key leadership figure. In one school year assemblies were given monthly by the principal and "sometimes the Year Head isn't present due to timing" (Presentation Convent, Tralee, November 2007).

However, while the principal appears to have been a dominant personality in a large school, the report also states that there is a "collaborative atmosphere" among the staff. Therefore, this has some of the main characteristics of transformational model of leadership. The inspectors' recommendations at the end of this report help to clarify their understanding of how senior management leadership is reconcilable with distributed forms of leadership. One recommendation states that:

The greater involvement of members of the middle-management team in decision making relating to the management and development of the school is recommended. This would greatly assist the senior-management team in its task of leading the school into the future. (Presentation Convent, Tralee, November 2007).

In turn, senior management is reported by some inspectors as having a positive impact on middle-management. For example, the positive influence of high levels of professionalism practised by senior management teams, in encouraging others in the In-school management to do likewise, is evident in a small number of the reports.

One such report states that, "The high standard of leadership and careful planning evident in the work of senior management encourages a similar positive approach through the rest of the school management team (CBS, Charleville, January 2007).

In this way the central leadership of senior management guides middle-management but the inspectors also, at times, clearly recognise the beneficial effects of followers on their leaders. This demonstrates an implicit acknowledgement of Spillane's (2006) view that "Leaders not only influence followers but are also influenced by them" (p.16).

Strategic Issues

The reports suggest that the inspectors sought to increase school efficiency by building the capacity of post-holders beyond the strict limits of their contractual duties. As already outlined this included post-holders (usually assistant principals) working as a management team which could pool its collective experience. In this regard middle-management were required to address day-to-day school matters, but there was an additional expectation from the inspectors in the reports.

This further expectation is articulated in some reports which refer to the need for middle-management to contribute to "global issues" or "the big picture". The inspectors sometimes referred to the tendency of post-holders to carry out their duties in a compartmentalised manner and with insufficient consideration of the "big picture".

As with other aspects of report writing the language can be fluid around the theme of the "big picture". For example, one report referred to assistant principals being provided with a weekly meeting time "to address immediate issues as well as strategic long-term or system issues" (St Patrick's Community College, Naas, September 2006). Other inspectors stated, that meetings between senior management and post-holders would be "a means of distributing responsibility and ownership for leading and managing whole-school issues, and for developing a teamwork dimension to the work of post-holders" (Ard Scoil Rís, Griffith Avenue, Dublin, January 2007). These extracts from the reports suggest, in an implied manner, a distinction between management and leadership as leadership is generally associated with the overall direction and, according to Spillane and Diamond (2007), initiating change in how things are done (p.153).

It would be of assistance to the reader of the reports if such distinctions were made explicitly. There are difficulties also concerning the meaning of terms such as "whole-school issues" and "the big picture". Challenges in terms of clarity arise, for example, in the context of school development planning which empowers staff and the other partners in the school community to be included in the design of policies and procedures. Policies and procedures, which include mission and vision, are whole-school issues or "the big picture". Yet, many inspectors recommend that either the board of management and/or staff steering committees should lead or guide school development planning. However, whole-school issues for middle-management could also refer to the implementation of school policy and procedures. Clarity of meaning would be helpful with regard to all of these questions.

Some reports tease out what the inspectors may mean by strategic issues. For example one report states that the assistant principals met to discuss and make recommendations on various issues, such as the timing of in-house examinations.

However, there is also a rare reference, in this report, that such recommendations "go to the whole staff for final decision" (St Aidan's CBS, Whitehall, November and December 2006). This is an unusual reported example of teacher democratisation of the strategic decision making process from the Quality of school management section.

Other reports however don't refer to "global issues", either explicitly or implicitly. Meetings in these reports are for "operational issues" or for post-holders who are dealing with similar issues. The diversity of post duties is seen by other inspectors as a barrier to holding effective post-holder meetings. Nevertheless, this is balanced by a recognition of the expertise of Year Heads and the commendation of this group holding meetings to deal with operational issues, especially "the ongoing monitoring of students." Some reports commend meetings of Year Heads with the Deputy Principal because they gave ownership of day-to-day management to a broader spectrum of staff.

Quality of school planning

The inconsistent and problematic use of terms such as "the big picture" or "strategic" in the Quality of school management section, where they often appear to relate to operational matters, are underlined by the centrality of strategic matters to whole school planning. The inspectors' observations on and view of the effectiveness of whole school planning are addressed in the Quality of school planning section of the WSE reports. *School Development Planning An Introduction for Second Level Schools* (1999) states that "The basic framework is a planning cycle that revolves around a central core." (p.16) and that "The core consists of the school's mission, vision and fundamental aims" (p.16). This clear linkage between the Quality of school planning section of the WSE reports and key strategic concerns such as school mission, vision and aims, presents challenges for clarity of reporting. There are frequent references to, and commendation of, the consultative, collaborative and the implicit distributed leadership of school development planning. Of course distributed leadership, as understood by Spillane (2006), recognises its compatibility with forms of central or overarching co-leadership (p.12) and to that extent there is scope for co-existence between school distributed leadership and overall guidance from a board of management, principal, senior management and middle-management.

WSE report writing could be more cohesive by providing clarity, where appropriate, to the distinct matters of strategic planning on the one hand and its implementation on the other. Implementation of policies and procedures are of concern to all of the staff and formal management structures on an on-going basis. Clarity could also be provided with regard to strategic or whole school matters which fall inside or outside of the policies and procedures extant in a school plan at any given point in time. This is so because issues not addressed by the official planning process would presumably require attention from formal school management and leadership. Finally, clarity could always be provided (as it sometimes is) where it is the understanding of the inspectors, that middle-management are part of the overall management and leadership of school development planning.

The Quality of school planning section of the WSE reports provide considerable evidence of support from the inspectors for a form of distributed leadership which closely resembles Spillane's (2006) view. There is also, in this discreet section, more acknowledgement of the important role of staff meetings in the management and leadership of a school. Acknowledgement and commendation of the empowerment of the whole school-community in the planning process are frequently made by inspectors.

For example, one report stated that, "Whole-school involvement, that is, of board members, teachers, parents and, when appropriate students should continue to be a significant feature of the policy development and review process of all policies, and where necessary the involvement of all policies should be enhanced" (Presentation Convent, Tralee, November 2007).

A significant number of the WSE reports in the Quality of school planning section make implied reference to distributed leadership by acknowledging and commending the use of staff steering committees and/or committees specialising in areas of planning. Some of the reports make explicit reference to the expertise, in different areas of planning, which can be deployed for the benefit of the school. The extract below makes this clear, "Policy development in the school has usually involved the school planning group identifying a person with a particular interest or talent in a specific area and that person heading up a group that forms an initial draft policy" (Killarney Community College, Killarney, January, 2007).

There is a strong sense here of an implied recognition of Spillane's (2006) ideas on *Leadership Plus* and informal leadership.

Occasionally, the inspectors do make explicit reference to distributing leadership, if not exactly distributed leadership. One such example, provided below, also helps to highlight how there is potential for confusion around the role of middle-management in managing or leading on matters of school strategy or the "big picture". The inspectors advised that, "A more discreet and identifiable team should be appointed to distribute the leadership of school planning and encourage collective ownership of school development planning" (Ard Scoil Rís, Dublin, January 2007).

There are clear and repeated references, across a large number of WSE reports, to whole-school collaboration in the planning process. However, the inspectors, in an overall sense, appear to have had different views about who, or what structure, should centrally manage and lead school planning. For example, one report acknowledges the "guidance of the board and senior management, and the commendable leadership of the principal since his appointment in 1999" for "the superb quality of school development planning" (CBS, Charleville, January 2007). However, other reports, with a view to lightening what the inspectors considered to be the heavy workload of senior management, encouraged that "Some consideration should be given to how coordinator [planning] responsibilities can be managed and shared in a manner that further supports staff ownership of the school development planning process" (Gort Community School, Gort, January 2007). Another ambiguous point, which has been addressed previously in the CDA theme *The characteristics of Boards of Management* and their link with Senior Management, is the question of who provides the strategic vision for a school? One report stated that:

In guiding the development of the school plan senior management has shown strategic vision in identifying long-term planning goals. Evidence was provided to show that the staff contributes significantly to the planning process and helps to shape its direction and this is to be commended. (Gort Community School, Gort, January 2007)

This makes clear that senior management provided the over-arching vision for the school and only subsequently did the staff contribute by shaping its direction. It appears that the board of management is obsolete in this case except, presumably, to ratify the planning goals which emerged.

This example also shows more inconsistency by the inspectors because many other reports advocate that boards of management be proactive in leading their school. In addition, the reference to staff subsequently shaping the direction of the planning process demonstrates the consultative nature of the planning process with senior management being in the more powerful position. However, while some reports clearly acknowledge and commend the primary or powerful role of senior management in the strategic work of school planning others recommend that such powerful responsibilities be distributed to other staff members. As mentioned previously such recommendations arise when the inspectors consider the workload of senior management to be too heavy. So, for example, one report stated that:

To alleviate the problem [heavy workload] it is recommended that a planning coordinator be appointed who, in collaboration with the support of school staff and relevant parties, would *strategise* [author's italics], prioritise and coordinate the planning process. (Balbriggan Community College, Dublin, October 2006)

Again, in this extract, the word "strategise" is used and it carries a significant responsibility in terms of school management and leadership. In light of the many WSE reports which advocate that the board of management show leadership and be proactive in terms of school planning, and other reports which promote and endorse the overall leadership of the principal, one is left to reflect on the level of leadership responsibility bestowed on another member of staff, arising from having to strategise for school planning.

School development planning is a crucial area of activity for school management and leadership.

Yet, the WSE reports, while being clear in recognising and commending a form of distributed leadership which most closely resembles that of Spillane (2006), present with a significant level of inconsistency and ambiguity with regard to who or what should provide the overall leadership. In some cases, the principal is recommended by the inspectors to be the leader but in other cases it is the board of management and sometimes other members of staff. It would appear, in so far as one can tell, that the reality on the ground was that the principal provided the overall leadership for the planning process either directly or by devolving power to other members of staff. This is an important area of leadership study which warrants deeper investigation by those who observe schools and are interested in school effectiveness.

The benefits of effective school development planning are numerous and include, as a result of consultation and collaboration, " a sense of empowerment and ownership for all" (Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Crossmolina, April 2007).

Conclusion

The inspectorate evaluated, reported and advocated for management and leadership practice in line with the Education Act (1998) and subsequent DES circular letters, for example, CL 20/98. However, the reports also contain interpretations and expectations, by inspectors, which don't always appear to conform with circular letters. For example, inspectors were inconsistent in including special duties teachers as part of middle-management.

The legislative and DES policy framework empowers boards of management with overall management and leadership responsibility; an empowerment which the WSE reports vindicate and where necessary endeavoured to actualise. The inspectorate did not hesitate to encourage the boards of management to realise their considerable school management and leadership potential. Such board of management power potentially covers the full range of school activities and raises questions about the extent to which the potential for teacher professionalism has been restricted. It is arguable that, notwithstanding the exercise of consultation, the capacity for teachers to exercise discretion on a range of professional matters, has been weakened. Boards of management generally received satisfactory comments from the inspectors who favoured training and the idea of collective wisdom. However, while boards were advised to take a school leadership role many of their members, during the evaluation, viewed their role as one of support for the principal as the school leader.

The school principal, it emerges from many reports, was widely considered by boards of management and teachers as the *de facto* leader of the school community. Sometimes inspectors reinforced the perception of the principal as school leader by favourably, or uncritically, commenting that a principal, with the deputy principal, had a clear or shared vision for the school. Reading the reports, one might assume that this vision originated with, and belonged to, the principal or senior management as no attempt was made to clarify if the vision was designed by the board of management or a product of whole school consultation.

While the policy framework for schools, during the time period under study and subsequently, can be designed by, and must always be approved by, a board of management, it is senior management and other teachers who implement policy and act on matters not covered by policy.

In this sense teacher professionalism was, and is, facilitated. The reports indicate that management and leadership in the schools operated in a layered fashion. Under the overarching layer of the board of management, the principal and deputy principal were acknowledged and endorsed, by the inspectors, as key leadership figures on the ground. While the reports do not reveal the rich story of human relationships, such relationships were referred to and senior management were occasionally acknowledged as having a positive or negative affect on staff morale.

The dearth of information reported on human relationships, attributes and values in the exercise of both management and leadership in all sections of the WSE reports studied, means that there is limited potential to study school leadership practice "which takes us to the living reality as well as the formal structure" (Spillane, 2006). This problem is exacerbated by ambiguities and inconsistencies both with regard to the terms management and leadership, and to the adjectives used to describe management and leadership. It appears, therefore, that Spillane's (2006) observation that "Relatively little is known about how leadership practice is stretched over formal and informal leaders" (p.21) is reinforced by the WSE reports 2006-2007. Indeed, the evidence from these reports suggests that there is also a level of confirmation of Spillane's (2006) view that effective schools literature and research "helps to continue the tradition of equating school leadership with the principal" (p.41). This is so in so far as the term leadership in the reports appears to be applied more often to the principal than any other category of the teaching staff.

However, this observation is somewhat qualified in that the inspectorate also tended to bracket the principal and deputy principal as a senior management team. There is also the additional complicating factor of the reports advocating that boards of management be proactive in leading their schools.

Some inspectors used versions of the term distributed leadership with regard to middle-management or in-school management e.g. "Leadership roles are distributed among senior and middle-management" (Coláiste Dún Iascaigh, Cahir, February 2007).

Many other inspectors seemed to imply an advocacy for a type of distributed leadership at middle-management level. In the Quality of school planning section there is both an observation and endorsement of a form of distributed leadership which more closely resembles the Leadership Plus aspect of distributed leadership as understood by Spillane (2006, p.12).

Insufficient and extremely limited attention is given in the reports to informal leaders. For example, the Quality of school management section of the reports gives scant attention to staff meetings where informal leaders might be presumed to be affective. While there is occasional analysis through a democratic lens of staff meetings by some inspectors, these meetings are generally marginalised and not reported on in a manner which might facilitate examination of informal leadership. Staff meetings are given more attention in the Quality of school planning section and it may be said that there is therefore implied recognition of informal leadership as understood by Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership (p.13). This is arguable also in terms of the common enough references to steering committees and other teaching staff committees observed and endorsed by the inspectors in the Quality of school planning section. However, there is no explicit recognition of informal leadership which forms an integral part of Spillane's (2006) model of distributed leadership. Further, whether at staff meetings or in other situations, there is an absence of evidence in the reports to analyse the interaction between leaders and followers which would help researchers "to understand how followers contribute to the construction of leadership practice" (Spillane, 2006, p.92).

Finally, the irregular use of types of evidential warrants used by the inspectors, for example, the only occasional reference to the views of staff on the quality of their senior management, contradicts the claim that the WSE process is equitable and consistent. Irregularity also occurs with respect to reporting the affect on staff of activities such as school development planning.

This erosion of the level of equity and consistency possible is compounded by the nebulousness of terms such as "management", "leadership" and "strategic", as used in the reports. It should be recalled that the Government White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future* (1995), which underpinned the WSE process, envisaged a move away from subjective judgments by inspectors

"to more equitable evaluation, performance indicators and criteria [which] will be developed at national level which will give consistency to the procedures" (DES, 1995, p.187).

In my next and final chapter I provide an overall and final analysis which includes answers to the research questions. These research questions were set out at the beginning of the thesis and at subsequent points to remind the reader.

CHAPTER SIX. THE FINAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this final chapter I will address the research questions, refer to other ways that this research has contributed to knowledge about school management and leadership and discuss some important issues which emerged. It should be recalled however that the answers to the research questions pertain to the timeframe of the WSE reports studied i.e. 2006-07 and that possible implications for subsequent periods of time are speculative. Given that the first published 100 WSE reports are now analysed, this research may be understood as an introduction to a CDA of potentially all of the WSE reports, as they relate to management and leadership. CDA of subsequent WSE reports, for set periods of time, could be linked and compared with the findings of this study. It is for other researchers and analysts to assess the extent to which subsequent WSE processes and reports represent continuity or change from the findings of this work.

I devised two continua, outlined in chapter two, as conceptual constructs to assist in understanding the diverse models and views on school management and leadership. Firstly, there is the values/flexibility-skills/prescription continuum, and secondly there is the school community/culture-organisation/structure continuum. Both of these conceptualisations, to some extent, overlap and formed the basis for the themes in the Content Analysis. Similarly, the findings of Content Analysis assisted in guiding the CDA of the WSE reports. The two continua may prove helpful for other researchers and analysts in the quest to strengthen understandings of school management and leadership.

The Education Problem

Given the widespread acknowledgement of the significance of school leadership for a school's educational effectiveness (Mac Ruairc, 2010), it appears remarkable that the stakeholders in Irish education have no common understanding of school leadership during the timeframe of this study (OECD, 2007) or that Ireland continues not to provide pre-service training for school principals.

One aspect of the problem, arising from the lack of a common understanding of leadership, is the provision of different school leadership development programmes from different organisations e.g. the LDS (now absorbed into Professional Development Service for Teachers), management bodies and unions (OECD, 2007). While it should be borne in mind that it is argued that there is no clear understanding of leadership from the vast field of literature on the subject (Harris, 2003), there is an arguable case that an agreed understanding of school leadership for the Irish school context is achievable. This contention is supported by the *Irish Country Background Report 2007* which called for an agreed understanding of school leadership (OECD, 2007). The absence of a common understanding or an attempt to construct such an understanding was, and continues to be, an obstacle to any possible systematic effort to improve school leadership. Spillane (2006) argues that "One of the greatest challenges that education will face over the next several decades is understanding leadership practice as a basis for thinking about its improvement" (p.90).

Adopting Spillane's (2006) interpretation of distributed leadership and its practice could be a useful starting point for a common understanding among Irish stakeholders in education, but is such a common understanding realisable? It has been argued that there is a lack of critical engagement in Ireland with educational policy and that this is part of a wider malaise (Mac Ruairc, 2010).

Ideological approaches to policy have been described as "minimising or eliding larger contextual questions and keeping political critique firmly at a distance" (Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin, 2002, p.8).

A similar criticism of the lack of public engagement is evident also in Northern Ireland where a need to "politicise education" has been advocated, not necessarily in the party political sense but by getting the public to understand that education is one of the prime policy areas of the state (Haire, 2008). The need for public engagement with education policy gives rise to the question of whether the inspectorate and the WSE process acts to prevent or curb opposition to official education policy and by extension to an agreed understanding of school leadership? Indeed, the question emerges logically from the research questions of this study, particularly the third one which inquires about what might be the inspectorate's preferred model of school management and leadership.

There is a similarity between official endorsement of reading strategy in California (Rogers, 2004) and the history and implementation of the WSE process, strengthened as it is with contextual claims of objectivity, fairness and consistency (Inspectorate, 1995). Indeed, Irish official sources mirrored the Californian experience (Rogers, 2004) by using the term "scientific" to address the evaluation of teaching and learning (Inspectorate, 1995). The examination of the WSE process and the reports for the period 2006-2007 shows that objectivity is not possible and that a uniform level of fairness and consistency has not been achieved. Claims of objectivity, by the inspectorate, appear to have had more to do with concerns to appear professionally authoritative than a determination to be universally fair and equitable. CDA provides a plausible explanation for the disjuncture between the reality revealed by this research and the claims of the DES and the inspectorate. In this respect, Gee (2004) argues that presenting yourself as unbiased is an "important discourse practice in establishing credibility" (p. 195).

Answering the Research Questions

At this point I want to return to the research questions. These questions arose from the lack of an agreed national understanding of school management and leadership. The following research questions emerged. Firstly, how objective is the process that the inspectorate used to report on management and leadership activity in Irish post-primary schools. This is a question about the research and reporting methods used by the inspectors in the first 100 WSE reports, 2006-07. The second question is, what do these same WSE reports reveal, or not reveal, about management and leadership activity in post-primary schools? Thirdly, what do the reports say about the inspectorate's preferred model for management and leadership?

As this study evolved and is written I addressed each of the research questions. It is evident, from the research, that the answers to each question are connected by the overarching issue of the impact of neo-liberalism on Irish education policy. Specifically, this relates to the long-standing attraction of the DES to the "ideology of new-managerialism" (Mac Ruairc, 2010, p.230). Indeed, the WSE process itself has been described as a product of neo-liberalism.

The first research question asked about the objectivity of the WSE process and was addressed in chapter four. This chapter concluded that there are strong grounds for arguing that the language of objectivity which accompanies the WSE process is more to do with presenting the inspectorate as being authoritative than with a commitment to being universally objective. Subsequently, in chapter five, the CDA of the WSE reports showed that there are significant inconsistencies and occurrences of subjective opinions about management and leadership. Indeed, the WSE process failed to provide a conceptual understanding of the difference, if that was understood, between management and leadership.

The second research question asked what the WSE reports reveal or not reveal about management and leadership in post-primary schools? Both chapters four and five show that the tendency, among the education partners at school level, is to associate the ideas of management and leadership with the school principal. However, there was also a significant level of awareness of being part of a management team among post-holders, particularly assistant principals. "Co-leadership" (Spillane, 2006), at senior management level, is widespread but not described as such, rather it is described as team work or sometimes with terms such as "collaborative leadership". Boards of management were given considerable attention by the inspectors and were widely observed as working on a "consensus" basis. While the WSE reports showed a fairly ubiquitous extent of staff collaboration in school planning, there appears to have been no, or very little, awareness among teachers that such collaboration may be seen as a form of distributed leadership. On the deficit side of the second research question, the findings show a significant lack of attention to informal leadership. In this regard, Spillane's (2006) understanding of the Leadership Plus aspect of distributed leadership is of assistance. Leadership Plus is part of Spillane's (2006) understanding of the reality of leadership practice in schools. This therefore is not a question of management and leadership ideology but of what actually happens on the ground. As such, the failure to deal with informal forms of leadership is a significant gap in the WSE process.

While Leadership Plus is, as understood by Spillane (2006), a non-ideological reality of leadership practice, its omission even by implication may reflect ideological considerations in the WSE process.

This is the case because to marginalise informal leadership among teachers who do not have an official management role, appears to conform with new-managerialism. Consequently, discussion of this matter leads to the third research question which asks about possible preferred model of management and leadership by the inspectorate. This research question requires some significant teasing out which I outline under the following subheading.

What do the reports say about the inspectorate's preferred model for management and leadership?

In the absence of an agreed understanding of school leadership in Ireland, international educational, political and economic forces, Irish history, culture and politics, statutory direction in the form of the *Education Act (1998)*, circular letters, policy initiatives by different government Ministers responsible for education, and the views of the inspectorate; collectively shaped a *default* hybrid model of school leadership, (2006-2007). This *default* model of school leadership, is simultaneously reflected in, and shaped by, the WSE reports. However, the model appears to be fractured by omissions, inconsistencies, ambiguities and the inspectors' opinions, on management and leadership, which are prevalent in the WSE reports (2006-2007).

The flaws in the WSE reports are magnified given the status of the *Education Act (1998)* and the statutory authority of the inspectorate to improve the effectiveness of Irish schools. Arguably the most fundamental of the omissions in the WSE reports is the failure to address the differences between management and leadership or to provide some level of clarification which would assist a reader of the reports. The other inconsistencies, ambiguities and opinions are additional challenges to clear understanding. That said, clear patterns and consistencies also emerge in the WSE reports which are potentially powerful influences on the Irish understanding of school management and leadership. These consistencies include an advocacy and endorsement of a proactive leadership role by boards of management, overall day-to-day school leadership by senior management and a broadly consultative approach to school management and leadership by boards of management and principals.

With regard to distributed leadership, the consistencies in the reports include support for a restricted form of such leadership at middle-management level and another form of distributed leadership in school development planning which more closely resembles Leadership Plus as understood by Spillane (2006).

The marginalisation of staff meetings in the reports, particularly in the Quality of school management section, is a significant indication of the lack of attention to what Spillane (2006) understands as the importance of both formal and informal leaders in Leadership Plus. That staff meetings are given even lower levels of consideration in the Quality of school management section than the Quality of school planning section infers that consultation with non-management teachers on the implementation of school policy, or in the making of other decisions, is not a high priority with most inspectors. There are higher levels of both attention to and support of, staff meetings, committees comprised of a broader spectrum of teaching staff and consultation generally, in the Quality of school planning section. This is probably as a consequence of the *Education Act (1998)*, the publication *School Development Planning An Introduction for Second Level Schools* (DES, 1999) and the consequential in-service provided by SDPI. Indeed, the school planning service has elsewhere been identified as "building collaborative capacity in schools similar to the practice identified in international scholarship" (Mac Ruairc, 2010, p.241). But the WSE reports do not provide adequate information to help address the international deficit of knowledge as to how leadership practice is stretched across formal and informal leaders (Spillane, 2006).

Perhaps the most salient aspect of leadership, as understood by international experts, is its association with the creation of a vision for organisations such as schools (Drysdale, Gurr and Goode, 2011). However, if one attempts to use vision as a weather vane to point in the direction of the location of school leaders in the WSE reports, then further frustration ensues. Who has responsibility for the formulation of a school vision? This is not always clear from the reports which, despite a regular advocacy of team work among senior management, occasionally appear to reinforce a heroic model of leadership by linking vision with the school principal.

Such a link between vision and the principal is contrary to the many reports which tie the design of school vision to the board of management. A school vision is part of a school plan and a school plan, as directed by the *Education Act (1998)*, must be devised by a board of management following consultation with parents, patrons (trustees), staff and students of a school (DES, 1999). Drilling down into the reality of implementing consultation, as read in the reports, shows that consultation can be problematic. For example, at a very fundamental level concerning the practicalities of consultation with teaching staff there is no guidance provided on how a planning co-ordinator or principal might measure an adequate level of support for a proposal. This is pertinent given that the WSE reports consistently approve of consensus as a method of decision making by boards of management. The consultation process is left open in terms of the nuts and bolts of its application. This is not inconsequential because it can be an ambiguous term and the democratic quality of consultation requires evaluation and guidance. Consultation by definition reserves the power for final decision with the statutory authority, which in the case of schools is the board of management and the principal acting on the board's behalf. The steps in the consultation process, before a final decision is made, may be important in explaining why teachers in some cases were reported as having been empowered by school development planning.

Finally, while many WSE reports advise boards of management to be proactive with school planning, the *Consultative Group and Working Party* on school development planning stated, in an arguably contradictory way, that "The key agents in the process are the principal and teachers, whose partnership in planning is the cornerstone of effective school planning" (DES, 1999, p.12).

Categorising the inspectorate's preferred model of management and leadership

This third research question asked "What do the reports say about the inspectorates' preferred model for management and leadership?" This question is not as easily answered as it might appear. A *default* hybrid model has already been referred to, so the challenge is to outline its main features and to classify these in conceptual terms. There are clear consistencies in the reports which are helpful, such as, the activation of boards of management as the overall leadership of schools, the promotion of management and leadership identities at senior and middle-management levels and the endorsement

of consultation in both the day-to-day running of schools and in school development planning. But where does this, and other considerations, fit in terms of management and leadership models? In many respects the question may be redundant given that the scope for preferences by the inspectorate is circumscribed by the *Education Act 1998* and circular letters. On the other hand the ESRU, which is the section of the inspectorate responsible for WSE, has an important function in developing DES policy. Much of what is understood to be desirable or required in management and leadership is outlined by statute and statutory instrument. But, the inspectors interpret wider requirements in their own way. So for example, while circular letters such as 20/98 indicate that all post-holders are part of In-school management, the WSE reports frequently equate middle-management with assistant principals only. There is also the important consideration of emphasis and dealing with matters which are not covered by statute or statutory instrument. This is so with regard to concepts such as "consultation" and "decision making" processes e.g. where boards of management were commended for using consensus but no attention is given to how decisions at staff meetings should be made.

It may have been more instructive to have phrased the third research question along the lines of what the official preferred model of management and leadership is as interpreted and augmented by the WSE reports? CDA is helpful in this regard because it facilitates placing the inspectorate and the WSE process into a wider national and international discourse. For example, words such as, "objective", "scientific" and "consistent", as found in related official documents, are inextricably linked to positivism which has been described as the handmaiden of managerialism (Hodkinson, 2004, p.17). Such indications of a managerialist approach also include what Sergiovanni (1992) has described as the overemphasis on bureaucratic, psychological and technical rational authority at the expense of professional and moral authority, in attempting to understand leadership.

The Content Analysis of the WSE reports (2006-2007) indicates a leaning towards bureaucratic and technical authority. Again, the Content Analysis appears to confirm that the inspectorate were (2006-07) adopting the approach of School Effectiveness Research and managerialism.

Locke and Spender (2011), in examining managerialism, have contrasted it with the positive contribution of workplace association to good management in German and Japanese manufacturing organisational cultures. Their (Locke and Spender, 2011), conclusion is that successful leadership in both the business and military worlds is linked to good human relations built on trust and that the relatively poorer performance of American business from the 1970s was due to "U.S. managerialism and business school education [which] interrupted the natural processes of association and collaboration under pressure" (p.xvii). While the WSE reports studied foreground the Characteristic Spirit section with its focus on values and human relationships, as promoted in school mission statements and evident in the atmosphere of the school, the Characteristic Spirit section represents only about 10% of all the units in the Content Analysis. Across all sections analysed "organisation" related words outnumbered the words related to "processes" (Teddlie, 2000) by about 2:1. It might be prudent not to adopt the language of certainty, associated with positivism, when arriving at conclusions from this study. In this regard the continua devised in the literature review may be helpful in that they accommodate a mix of approaches and the idea of tendencies. So while the WSE reports contain a significant amount of references to "processes" (Teddlie, 2000), there is arguably, according to Sergiovanni (1992) an overemphasis on bureaucratic and technical issues, and therefore a tendency towards managerialism.

Ironically, while there is a tendency towards managerialism in the approach of the inspectors to WSE, the business world appears to offer some basis for a more human and less technical approach to leadership. The inspectorate, for example, adopted a highly technical and bureaucratic approach to its reporting and evaluation of boards of management in the reports studied. Yet, key attributes of boards of management, as identified by the corporate world, include "important personality traits" such as integrity and the courage to speak up (O'Sullivan and West-Burham, 2011, p.34). Collins' (2001) findings, after an extensive study of the C.E.O.s of different companies, included the conclusion that character traits and innate abilities are more important than "specific knowledge, background, or skills" (p.40.). This, more human focussed approach to explaining success in the corporate world appears to identify a flaw in the thinking of those who refer to business models as equating with technical and bureaucratic practices.

Businesses obviously use charts, figures, plans and goals; but this does not mean that businesses do not have a focus on more intrinsically human considerations. Collins (2001) shows that successful businesses have a greater focus on important human values and personal characteristics, but this is not the focus of the inspectorate in its WSE reports.

However, none of these observations on the business world more generally, detract from the more ideologically focussed meaning of managerialism and its relevance to classifying the perspective of the inspectorate. In endeavouring to classify the WSE reports, for the period 2006-2007, it may be argued that the continua devised in the Literature Review provide a sound basis for judgement. This is because these continua i.e. values/flexibility- prescription/skills, and community/culture- organisation/structure, contain the possibility of a fluidity or blending of ideas and practices from either of the polar opposites. How such blending may occur, or to what extent ideas from either pole may dominate depends on a variety of social, political and educational factors. So while the new-managerialist trajectory of the DES is evident, it requires a nuanced appraisal of its exact nature at any given point in time. The Content Analysis in chapter six provides a quantitative analysis of the words associated with the poles of the continuums. The conclusion from this is that there is a focus on organisation as opposed to processes. What would be of interest is to see what another Content Analysis, based on the same or similar data for analysis, would reveal for a subsequent period of time.

There are other aspects of managerialism which emerged from the qualitative aspect of this mixed methods approach. The inspectorate, despite some inconsistencies, encouraged boards of management to be proactive in their management and leadership roles. This largely reflects the statutory position of boards of management as found in the *Education Act 1998*. The question that arises is to what extent, if at all, this may be seen as undermining the professionalism of the teaching profession or perhaps to what extent it helps to define the parameters of the teaching profession in the context of community participation (including staff representation) in the democratic management and leadership of schools? If considered to be undermining of teacher professionalism then it would strengthen the argument of new managerialist progress in Ireland. But classification here is problematic.

While there may be no argument with regard to the management of matters such as the development of school infrastructure, the issues are less straight forward when it comes to policies and procedures such as a Code for Student Behaviour. Maybe more importantly managerialism, if understood as resisting the democratic power of the teaching staff as a collective, is most evident in the WSE reports in the inspectors' advocacy of a limited version of what some inspectors described as distributing leadership.

When considered in light of the marginalisation of staff meetings by the reports, particularly in the Quality of management section, a definite encouragement of a leadership elite in schools staffs is identifiable. The assumption, and sometimes the explicit message, from the reports is that a relatively small group of teachers possess the knowledge and wisdom required to provide guidance for both the day to day and in-school strategic management and leadership. This in-school management team, including the senior management, is viewed as a type of cabinet which can bring about school improvement. The engineering and strengthening of a central management group and identity, called middle-management, resonates strongly with Locke's (2011), understanding of managerialism which he describes as the practice of positioning power with a management group on the basis that such a group possesses the "knowledge and know-how necessary to the efficient running of the organization" (p.xi).

The case for classifying the management and leadership model advocated in the WSE reports as being managerialist may be diluted by the overall approval of consultation both by the senior management in terms of in-school issues and for school development planning. The Quality of school planning section acknowledges and promotes collaboration between teaching staff and between the education partners in the development of a school plan. A case can be made, however, that the reports don't give sufficient attention to the implementation of consultation in order to assess the extent to which it was democratised. This is a significant point in terms of an overall assessment of what the combined power of statute, statutory instrument and WSE reporting appears to have on shaping a model of school management and leadership. As indicated by some of the reports studied consultation can result in a sense of empowerment for teachers.

But, while none of the reports suggested that there was a problem with consultation in any school, it remains uncertain how well consultation works in different schools. For example, some inspectors seem to have had a heroic and hierarchical view of principal leadership as they referred to the principal's vision for the school or how the principal might give consideration to staff ideas for school planning. Other inspectors took a more democratic view of management and leadership by commending practices such as middle-management proposals being referred to staff meetings for approval.

Were there differences in other schools with regard to the practice of consultation? Quite possibly there were. Grace (1995), argued that the official policy of consultation in the U.K. during the 1970s had four main manifestations in schools, ranging from retention of a headmaster autocracy to genuine forms of power-sharing. It would, I believe, be surprising if there was a homogenous practice of consultation in Ireland 2006-2007. Grace (1995) referred to official U.K. reports in the later 1970s which emphasised the need for consultation and participation in school decision making. One report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate in 1977 stated that effective school leaders appreciated the need for specific education aims and "have the capacity to communicate these to staff, pupils and parents, to win their consent and to put their own policies into practice" (Grace, 1995, p.17). This is a top-down model of consultation which is at variance with ideas of teacher empowerment and democratic impulses.

When all of the findings are considered collectively, it is clear that to a considerable extent the inspectorate advocated, through the reports (2006-2007), a managerialist approach to school management and leadership, but in a way which was balanced with some consideration for human values and social democratic ideas of consultation. This mix of contrasting management and leadership models is a product of different education policies which emerged over time and is not unique to Ireland. Grace (1995), has argued that, in the U.K., while "managerialism" could incorporate the shared decision making of the 1970s as manifested by the collaborative management styles of successful businesses, it was however shaped more by the rapid executive action favoured by the Conservatives and frequently referred to as "strong leadership".

To some extent this resonates with the WSE reports (2006-07) in that senior and middle-management teams were endorsed and encouraged as managers and leaders in terms of the day-to-day running of schools. While school planning was similarly associated with collaboration; boards of management, principals or planning co-ordinators emerged as key management and leadership players.

Relevance of This Study

I have been critical of the inconsistencies and ambiguities which characterise the WSE reports, and I have classified the inspectorate as having a bias, despite its claims of objectivity, which tends towards managerialism. What relevance does this critique have? Hostetler (2005) is of assistance in dealing with this question when he writes that:

Researchers are expected to be knowledgeable and articulate with regard to the process of research. I am not sure that there are similar expectations regarding the ethical ends of research-expectations that researchers be knowledgeable and articulate regarding human well-being (p.17).

Human well-being should be at the heart of education and consequently principles of equity and fairness should be sacred, as reflected in democratic models of school leadership. Yet, fairness is not always present in the WSE reports in that inconsistencies make it difficult for those reading the reports to understand how they are expected to improve their performance in management and leadership. This point is reinforced given the placement of WSE reports, which may admonish schools, into the public domain. There may be a fine line between the concepts of accountability and "name and shame".

But, the overarching problem with the bias for managerialism in the WSE reports studied is its undermining of the contribution of all teachers to the leadership of a school and the resulting marginalisation of the contribution of teachers other than those with designated management positions. Flood (2011), writing after the timeframe for this study commented that "the model of leadership in most Irish schools remains highly hierarchical and atomised with a focus on a distribution of tasks rather than responsibility" (p.53). It is clear from the WSE reports studied that the inspectorate enhanced the hierarchical model of management and leadership, modified by consultation, by promoting, in the main, a middle-management team of assistant principals.

While some inspectors referred to this as distributing leadership, in reality it is a misleading application of the term distributed with regard to leadership, especially in terms of Spillane's (2006) theory. In adopting this hierarchical or managerial approach the reality of Spillane's (2006) Leadership Plus aspect of distributed leadership, particularly for the purpose of operational matters, was ignored and the potential to build such leadership was lost.

Where Spillane's (2006) leadership theory appears to be most closely identifiable i.e. in the Quality of school planning section; this seems to be as a consequence of the *Education Act 1998* which requires that school planning involve consultation with all of the education partners. However, in the absence of a clear advocacy by the inspectors of bottom-up empowerment of all staff and the education partners, the reports studied fail, with a small number of exceptions, to explicitly endorse or to argue for deep and meaningful democratic practice. Nor did the inspectors recognise the reality of leadership being stretched across all teaching staff in both formal and informal ways (Spillane, 2006), or the "web of leaders, followers, and their situations which gives form to leadership practice" (Spillane, 2006, p.3).

School improvement is contingent on improving school leadership but this study, WSE reports 2006-2007, shows that there were a number of significant flaws in the WSE process. Based on the understanding that this process has remained fundamentally the same in the intervening years, there are a number of challenges for policy makers. Central to these challenges is the need for a clear understanding and articulation of school management and leadership. Preferably such an understanding and articulation should arise from agreement between the national education partners but in the interim the inspectorate should provide its own clarity and consistency of message. Clarity is a prerequisite for rational discussion and development of thought regarding improvement. But clarity is also necessary for fairness because the WSE reports are evaluations of the performance of professionals and others involved in the management and leadership of schools. All of these people deserve to be judged equitably, especially as the judgements are placed in the public domain. Also, those who read the reports with a view to securing guidance on improving school management and leadership deserve clarity.

In addition the inspectorate, as the leaders in the field of evaluation and research, may need to use Spillane's (2006) model of distributed leadership to provide a suitable lens for studying and evaluating school management and leadership. Otherwise there is no academic basis for building an intelligent understanding of how leadership is being implemented and how it can be improved.

The overarching lesson from this study, in so far as its conclusions may continue to be applicable, is the need to resist new managerialist modes of management and leadership, and to embrace more democratic ideas based on values such as respect for people and fairness. A small number of the reports in this study reveal the potential of good human relationships and staff ownership of decision making for improving the morale of teachers. While such reporting is an example of inconsistency it also indicates that the WSE process can address issues of human relationships and that the reporting of such matters was not necessarily restricted by logistical considerations. Overall the tendency in the reports is towards organisation rather than human relationships, prescription and skills rather than character and values, management classes rather than teacher professionalism, and the chimera of objectivity rather than a real recognition of the complexity of school life. None of this is to argue that organisation, skills, management or the pursuit of objectivity are anything other than important aspects of democratic schools. Achieving a balance between all the ingredients necessary to enrich the human potential of schools is necessary. Having said that, it is important to note that the neo-liberal *raison d'être* of the WSE system, albeit that the process was also shaped by domestic factors such as trade unions, can be viewed as incompatible with the aim of achieving truly democratic schools built on firm foundations of deeply human values. For example, Stein (2001), has argued that "In our avowedly secular age, the paramount sin is now inefficiency. Dishonesty, unfairness, and injustice - the sins of the past- pale in comparison with the cardinal sin of inefficiency" (p.2). But such a recognition of current social realities does not preclude, indeed it invites, a radical critical analysis. Such a critical standpoint must also be mindful that, in the pursuit of accountability of teachers, the publication of WSE reports may constitute a serious barrier to inspectors gaining access to the true nature of human relations, characteristics and values in a school community. A radical departure might envision an examination of the more intrinsically human dimensions of school life in a manner more confidential to individual teachers or to a staff. Such an approach may assist in enhancing or unlocking the true human potential of all teachers, address problems or shortfalls in management and leadership, and lead to school improvement even as measured by standardised tests.

McNamara et al (2009) argued that there was an uncertain future for the evaluation culture which has emerged in Ireland. Conflicting perspectives on school evaluation exist including, on the one hand, negative experiences of accountability approaches internationally and, on the other, both international and domestic calls for stronger evaluation systems.

A concern is that in the intervening period of time the economic crisis in Ireland has caused the:

rejection of the partnership culture that characterised much of the policy approach to the public service. Now the emphasis is on accountability and transparency, and these two themes seem to be critical to the Irish education system. (McNamara and O'Hara, 2012, p.95).

With accountability and transparency as the twin pillars of official policy, it is necessary to enhance our understanding of the WSE process. I hope this study contributes to the discussion on how a deep understanding can be achieved.

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