



The Role and Impact of Middle Leadership and Management on the
Implementation of School Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools
in the Republic of Ireland.

Dissertation submitted to the Institute of Education,
Dublin City University
as a requirement for the
EdD
by
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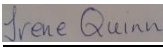
B.Ed., M.Sc. in Computer Applications in Education
and M.A. in Theology

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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 Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed:  (Irene Quinn)

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Date: 4/1/21

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents Ben and Nora. They instilled in me and all our family from a very young age a love of learning and an appreciation of the value of education. My mother went to her eternal reward as I commenced the fourth year of my study. Although she didn't get to see me finish the course I felt at all times she was with me in spirit.

Solas na bhflaitheas ar a hanam dílis.

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Ba mhaith liom buíochas ó chroí a ghabháil libh go léir as bhur gcabhair, bhur gcineáltas agus ucht na tacaíochta a léirigh sibh dom.

Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Acronyms	vii
Abstract	viii
 Part 1 Thesis Framework	
Chapter 1 Introduction and Context Rationale	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Context of emergence of the area of research	3
1.3 Setting the scene: SSE and MLM in a changing educational landscape	3
1.4 Identification of the research topic	5
1.5 Rationale for this study	5
1.6 The scope of this study	6
1.7 Contribution of this study	7
1.8 The researcher in context	8
1.9 Overview of chapters	8
1.10 Conclusion	8
 Chapter 2 Literature Review	
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Leadership	9
2.2.1 Leadership in Education	10
2.2.2 Leadership and Management	10
2.2.3 Middle Leadership and Management (MLM)	10
2.2.4 Literature on MLM	12
2.3 Distributed Leadership	17
2.3.1 A Closer look at Distributed Leadership - Spillane	17
2.3.2 A Closer look at Distributed Leadership - Harris	18
2.3.3 Leading from the Middle - Hargreaves	20
2.3.4 Limitations of Distributed Leadership	20
2.4 Quality Assurance, Inspection and Evaluation	21
2.4.1 Quality Assurance	21
2.4.2 Inspection	23
2.4.3 External Evaluation	24
2.4.4 Internal Evaluation	26
2.4.5 A Combination of External and Internal Evaluation	26
2.5 School Self-Evaluation (SSE)	27
2.5.1 Definition of SSE	27
2.5.2 SSE The Early Days	28
2.5.3 The pioneering work of MacBeath (1999)	28
2.5.4 SSE in Ireland	29
2.5.5 SSE in Europe	30
2.5.6 SSE today	31
2.5.7 A Closer look at SSE	32
2.5.8 Autonomy and Accountability	33

2.5.9 School Improvement and Effectiveness	34
2.5.10 Accountability or Improvement	35
2.5.11 Accountability or Responsibility	37
2.6 Conclusion	38

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction	40
3.1.1 Paradigms	42
3.1.2 Philosophical worldview assumptions	43
3.1.3 Pragmatism	44
3.1.4 Strategies of enquiry	45
3.1.5 Research designs used in this study	46
3.1.6 Conceptual and practical considerations in this study	47
3.1.7 Conceptual framework for this study	50
3.2 Documentary coding, selection and analysis	51
3.2.1 Introduction and background	51
3.2.2 Selection of documents for analysis	51
3.2.5 Documentary coding and analysis	54
3.3 Questionnaire development, distribution and analysis	56
3.3.1 Introduction and background	56
3.3.2 Pilot study	59
3.3.3 Distribution of questionnaire	59
3.3.4 Response rate	59
3.3.5 Questionnaire analysis	59
3.4 Interview coding, participant selection and analysis	61
3.4.1 Introduction and background	61
3.4.2 Selection of participants for interviews	63
3.4.3 Interview coding and analysis	66
3.5 Ethical considerations	66
3.6 Limitations of the study	68
3.7 Conclusion	68

Part 2 The Research

Chapter 4 Documentary Analysis of the Three Key Policy Documents

4.1 Introduction	69
4.2 Shared influences on policy documents	70
4.2.1 Political context as perceived by a number of policy specialists	70
4.2.2 Ball, Bowe and Gold's (1992) Policy Cycle	72
4.3 Looking At Our Schools: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools 2016	73
4.3.1 The Context of Influence	74
4.3.2 The Context of Text Production	75
4.3.3 The Context of Practice	90
4.4 School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016	91
4.4.1 The Context of Influence	91
4.4.2 The Context of Text Production	91
4.4.3 The Context of Practice	94
4.5 Circular Letter 0063/2017 Leadership and Management in Primary Schools	95
4.5.1 The Context of Influence	95
4.5.2 The Context of Text Production	96
4.5.3 The Context of Practice	98

4.6	Conclusion	99
The Fieldwork		
Chapter 5	Part a- The Online Questionnaire Data	
5.1	Introduction	100
5.2	Distribution of Questionnaire	101
5.2.1	Profile of schools in study	102
5.3	Results of the Online Questionnaire	105
5.3.1	Background Information	105
5.3.2	SSE in practice	105
5.3.3	SSE Data	112
5.3.4	SSE Teacher Involvement	114
5.3.5	Reporting SSE	115
5.3.6	Supports for SSE	116
5.3.7	SSE and Accountability	121
5.3.8	The impact of SSE in schools	123
5.3.9	SSE - Possible Improvements	127
5.3.10	The Role of MLM with regard to SSE	129
5.3.11	MLM and <i>LAOS 2016</i>	132
5.3.12	Additional Comments	134
5.4	Conclusion	135
5.4.1	The Role of MLM	135
5.4.2	Positive Outcomes	135
5.4.3	Negative Outcomes	135
Chapter 6	Part b- The Interview Data	
6.1	Introduction	136
6.2	Emerging Concepts and Themes	136
6.3	Selection of Interviewees	137
6.4	The Success of SSE	138
6.5	The Strengths and Weaknesses of SSE	140
6.6	The Main Role of MLM regarding SSE	140
6.7	The extent to which MLM leads SSE in primary schools	141
6.8	The main barriers or challenges facing MLM in their role overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools	143
6.9	School taking ownership of the SSE process	146
6.10	Any other comments regarding the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools	147
6.11	Positive Outcomes	149
6.12	Negative Outcomes	149
6.13	Conclusion	149
Chapter 7	Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion	
7.1	Introduction	151
7.2	Rationale for Methodology Chosen	151
7.3	Key Findings from the Research	151
7.4	Key Findings from the Documentary Analysis of the Policy Documents	151
7.5	Key Positive Outcomes from the Documentary Analysis	151
7.6	Key Negative Outcomes from the Documentary Analysis	152

7.7 Key Findings from the Online Questionnaire	153
7.8 Key Positive Outcomes from the Online Questionnaire	153
7.9 Key Negative Outcomes from the Online Questionnaire	154
7.10 Key Findings from the Interview Schedule	154
7.11 Key Positive Outcomes from the Interview Schedule	154
7.12 Key Negative Outcomes from the Interview Schedule	155
7.13 Summary of the Key Findings from the Policy Documents, Online Questionnaire and Interview Schedule	155
7.14 Overall Outcomes from the Research	155
7.15 Key Positive Outcomes from the Research	155
7.16 Key Negative Outcomes from the Research	156
7.17 Conclusion	158
7.18 Recommendations	161
7.19 Limitations of the Study	163
References	164
Appendices	
Appendix A: Plain Language Statement	176
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form	177
Appendix C: Copy of the Interview Schedule	178
Appendix D: Copy of the Online Questionnaire	180
Appendix E: Copy of REC Ethical Approval	193

List of Tables

Table 1.1a	Selection Criteria for Interview (2016)	2
Table 1.1b	Selection Criteria for Interview (2019)	2
Table 2.2.3	Four Domains as outlined in LAOS 2016	11
Table 2.4.1	Quality assurance methods in the Irish education system	22
Table 3.1.2	Four Worldviews	43
Table 3.1.5a	Alternative Research Designs	46
Table 3.1.5b	Exploratory sequential method used for this research	46
Table 3.1.6	Quantitative, Mixed and Qualitative Methods	48
Table 3.4.2a	The Profile of the Interviewees	65
Table 3.4.2b	The Profile of Schools of the Interviewees	65
Table 5.2.1	Classification of School Size	102
Table 5.2.2	Number of Schools in the Sample	102
Table 5.2.3	Number of MLM posts in a typical school	102
Table 5.2.4	Breakdown from the schools selected	103
Table 5.2.5	Profile of small schools in the study	103
Table 5.2.6	Profile of medium schools in the study	103
Table 5.2.7	Profile of large schools in the study	103
Table 5.2.8	Conglomerate results of schools in the study	103
Table 5.2.9	Percentage of responses from each of the categories	104
Table 5.3.6	Responses regarding use of Outside Agencies	118
Table 5.3.9	Sample responses as to how SSE could be improved?	128
Table 5.3.10a	Sample responses as to how MLM can help implement SSE	131
Table 5.3.10b	Sample responses of leadership styles of MLM	131
Table 5.3.11	Confidence levels with regard to standards	133
Table 5.3.12	Sample responses regarding SSE	134
Table 6.3	Nodes created in NVivo12	137
Table 6.4	Interviewee Profiles	138

List of Diagrams

Diagram 2.4.5a	<i>SSE 2012</i>	27
Diagram 2.4.5b	<i>SSE 2016</i>	27
Diagram 2.5.5	The revised six steps of the SSE process	31
Diagram 4.1	Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) policy analysis framework	70
Diagram 4.3	<i>LAOS 2016</i>	73
Diagram 4.3.21	SSE Questions	76
Diagram 4.3.22	Leadership and Management Domains	76
Diagram 4.3.23	The Structure of the Quality Framework	78
Diagram 4.3.24	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	79
Diagram 4.3.25	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	79
Diagram 4.3.26	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	79
Diagram 4.3.27	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	80
Diagram 4.3.28	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	80
Diagram 4.3.29	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	80
Diagram 4.3.210	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	81
Diagram 4.3.211	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	81
Diagram 4.3.212	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	82
Diagram 4.3.213	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	82
Diagram 4.3.214	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	83
Diagram 4.3.215	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	83
Diagram 4.3.216	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	84
Diagram 4.3.217	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	84
Diagram 4.3.218	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	84
Diagram 4.3.219	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	84
Diagram 4.3.220	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	85
Diagram 4.3.221	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	85
Diagram 4.3.222	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	86
Diagram 4.3.223	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	86
Diagram 4.3.224	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	87
Diagram 4.3.225	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	87
Diagram 4.3.226	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	87
Diagram 4.3.227	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	88
Diagram 4.3.228	Example of Standard from <i>LAOS 2016</i>	88
Diagram 4.4	<i>SSE 2016</i>	90
Diagram 4.4.2a	The SSE process 2012	92
Diagram 4.4.2b	The SSE process 2016	93
Diagram 4.4.2c	The six-step process 2012	93
Diagram 4.4.2d	The six-step process 2012	94
Diagram 4.5	<i>Circular Letter 0063/2017</i>	95
Diagram 5.3.1	Teacher's Role in the School	105
Diagram 5.3.2a	School's Engagement with SSE	106
Diagram 5.3.2b	The main areas looked at in SSE	106
Diagram 5.3.2c	The main aspects looked at in SSE	107
Diagram 5.3.2d	How schools decided on area or aspect for SSE	109
Diagram 5.3.2e	Who was involved in deciding the area or aspect for SSE	110
Diagram 5.3.2f	How the school decided on area or aspect for SSE	112
Diagram 5.3.3a	Usefulness of Data in SSE	113
Diagram 5.3.3b	Data collected for SSE	113

Diagram 5.3.4a	SSE as part of teacher's responsibility	114
Diagram 5.3.4b	Time involved in SSE	114
Diagram 5.3.4c	Time to engage with SSE	115
Diagram 5.3.5	School reporting findings of SSE	115
Diagram 5.3.6a	Usefulness of <i>SSE 2016</i> Guidelines	116
Diagram 5.3.6b	Usefulness of <i>LAOS 2016</i> Guidelines	116
Diagram 5.3.6c	Use of Outside Agencies	117
Diagram 5.3.6d	Benefits of Outside Agencies	117
Diagram 5.3.6e	Main roles played by an Outside Agency	118
Diagram 5.3.6f	Potential role of Outside Agency	119
Diagram 5.3.6g	Engagement with an Outside Agency	119
Diagram 5.3.6h	Recommending the use of an Outside Agency	120
Diagram 5.3.6i	How often to employ the use of an Outside Agency	120
Diagram 5.3.7a	Main reason for engagement with SSE	121
Diagram 5.3.7b	Engagement for Accountability Reasons	122
Diagram 5.3.7c	School's Ownership of SSE	122
Diagram 5.3.8a	SSE and a positive change in school	123
Diagram 5.3.8b	How SSE brought about a positive change	123
Diagram 5.3.8c	SSE identifying strengths in teaching and learning	125
Diagram 5.3.8d	SSE identifying weaknesses in teaching and learning	125
Diagram 5.3.8e	SSE helping with School Inspection	127
Diagram 5.3.8f	How SSE helps with School Inspection	127
Diagram 5.3.9	How SSE process can be improved	129
Diagram 5.3.10a	Who has overall responsibility for SSE	129
Diagram 5.3.10b	Main role of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE	129
Diagram 5.3.10c	Style of leadership of MLM	130
Diagram 5.3.10d	MLM leading SSE in schools	132
Diagram 5.3.11	Four Domains of <i>LAOS 2016</i>	132
Diagram 5.3.12	Additional Comments regarding SSE	134
Diagram 6.3	Word frequency of Interview Transcripts	137
Diagram 6.10	Joining the Dots slide published by the Inspectorate	148

Acronyms

BOM	Board of Management
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Management Association
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EdD	Doctorate in Education
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ISM	In-School Management
ISMT	In-School Management Team
IT	Information Technology
LAOS	Looking at Our Schools
MLM	Middle Leadership and Management
NPLC	New Primary Language Curriculum
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PE	Physical Education
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SEN	Special Education Needs
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
UK	United Kingdom
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

Abstract

The Role and Impact of Middle Leadership and Management on the Implementation of School Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Irene Quinn

This study examines the role and impact of middle leadership and management (MLM) in implementing school self-evaluation (SSE) in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). It is a mixed methods social research combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The methods to be employed to acquire the data for analysis are

1. A documentary analysis of the three policy documents issued by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) regarding MLM in primary schools *Looking At Our Schools: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools 2016 (LAOS 2016)*, *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016 (SSE 2016)* and *Circular Letter 0063/2017 Leadership and Management in Primary School (Circular 0063/2017)*.
2. Online questionnaires completed by primary school principals and teachers.
3. Interviews of primary school principals and teachers and a retired Assistant Chief DES Inspector.

The above documents are the seminal policy statements issued by the DES concerning the subject of this thesis, namely the inspection and evaluation rubric of the inspectorate (*LAOS 2016*), the process of self-evaluation to be conducted by schools (*SSE 2016*) and the role to be played in both by school senior and middle leadership and management (*Circular 0063/2017*).

There has been a lot of research in recent years into school leadership and evaluation and this has influenced the emergence of these documents. The three key policy documents are examined closely with regard to the role of MLM in implementing SSE in schools. Concepts such as distributed, instructional and collaborative leadership are explored in the documents and are further examined in the online questionnaires and interviews. The research aims to evaluate the scope and extent of the role and impact of MLM in primary schools in implementing SSE in practice.

Part 1
Thesis Framework

Chapter 1

Introduction and Context Rationale

1.1 Introduction

For the purpose of this research I will be looking at the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the ROI as perceived by the Inspectorate (DES), principals, deputy principals, assistant principals and other teaching staff.

I will begin my research by conducting a detailed documentary analysis of the three key policy documents which deal with leadership and management and the implementation of SSE in primary schools. These are *Looking At Our School 2016- A Quality Framework* (published by the DES on the 30th August 2016) henceforth *LAOS 2016*, *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines Primary, 2016* (published by the DES on the 30th August 2016) henceforth *SSE 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017 Leadership and Management in Primary Schools* (published by the DES on the 14th September 2017) henceforth *Circular 0063/2017*. I will examine these documents individually and collectively to try to ascertain what type of MLM in primary schools is envisaged and being sought by the DES. In particular I will be concerned with the nature and extent of the role which these documents prescribe as appropriate to MLM in schools.

Having through the above documentary research, analysed the official policy vision concerning the proposed role of MLM in schools I will proceed in phase two of the research to ascertain the perceptions of principals and staff as to the reception of and responses to these documents. In particular this research will focus on the extent or otherwise to which the policies outlined in the key documents are being implemented in the schools.

With regard to leadership and management the DES states

Under the provisions of *Circular 0063/2017*, the post of Assistant Principal was re-designated as Assistant Principal I (AP I) and the post of Special Duties Teacher was re-designated as Assistant Principal II (AP II) (DES, 2017, p.4).

Even though two circulars have since been published by the DES namely *Circular 0016/2018* and *Circular 0044/2019* which have superseded *Circular 0063/2017* I continued to include my documentary analysis of the original circular which was instrumental I think in bringing about the key changes in MLM which are the concern of this research. Seniority has been removed as a specific criterion although the DES (2017, 2018 and 2019) qualify this by saying ‘The value of a teacher’s experience and how that contributes to their capacity to meet the requirements of the post will be reflected in the application of the criteria.’ (p.16).

The selection of the successful candidate is based on the following four competencies as outlined in *LAOS 2016* and illustrated in the tables below.

Table 1.1a

Assistant Principal I & II and Deputy Principal (Internal competition only)		
<i>Demonstrated capacity (with relevant examples of professional, educational and life experience) in relation to:</i>		
i.	Leading Learning and Teaching	25 marks
ii.	Managing the organisation	25 marks
iii.	Leading school development	25 marks
iv.	Developing leadership capacity	25 marks

(DES, 2017, p.16)

Table 1.1b

Assistant Principal I & II and Deputy Principal (Internal competition only)		
<i>Demonstrated capacity (with relevant examples of professional, educational and life experience) in relation to:</i>		
i.	Leading Learning and Teaching	25 marks
ii.	Managing the organisation	25 marks
iii.	Leading school development	25 marks
iv.	Developing leadership capacity	25 marks

(DES, 2019, p.42)

The marking scheme as we can see remains the same.

Circular 0063/2017 in effect is the game-changer regarding MLM in primary schools. The concept of distributed leadership was introduced first in *Circular 0063/2017* and it continues to play a central role in *Circular 0044/2019*. The DES (2018, p.7) states in *Circular 0016/2018* that assistant principals

have shared responsibility, commensurate with the level of the post, for areas such as:

- learning and teaching
- leading school development (including curriculum development)
- pupil support including wellbeing
- school improvement
- leadership/management and development of individuals and staff teams
- special education and inclusion
- supporting teachers during the induction phase of their career
- school self-evaluation

1.2 Context of emergence of the area of research

The DES (2016, p.10) defines SSE as
a collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal school review.

SSE 2016 states that

schools will need to identify who will be responsible for the school self-evaluation process (DES, 2016, p.26).

The reflective part of SSE is very important and is a concept highlighted by MacBeath (2008, p.396) describing SSE as ‘a continuing process of reflection...a paradigm shift from a passive and compliant role to an active role in which teachers are the prime movers’.

MacBeath (2003, p.2) asserts that ‘self-evaluation is now seen as a matter of priority in most economically advanced countries of the world’.

Leadership although acknowledged by the DES in its circular as being all-encompassing relates to formal designated roles with regard to the implementation of *Circular 0063/2017*. The DES (2017, p.4) state that ‘any system of school leadership and management should build on and consolidate existing school leadership and management structures in schools in line with best practice as set out in “LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOLS 2016 - A Quality Framework for Primary Schools”.’ The DES clarifies what it means by school leaders in the context of *Circular 0063/2017* and *LAOS 2016*. It states

the term ‘school leaders’ typically refers to formal leadership roles including teachers with posts of responsibility and others who carry out roles and responsibilities integral to the administration, management and leadership of the school. Therefore, both leadership and management roles are considered at all times as serving the school’s core work: learning and teaching. Every teacher has a leadership role within the school community and in relation to pupil learning (DES, 2017, p.6).

1.3 Setting the scene: SSE and MLM in a changing educational landscape

The educational landscape in Ireland has changed like that in England and indeed much of the world. As in England changes took place in Ireland whereby the headteacher or principal teacher’s role has been extended to include that of both leadership and management. In the late 1980s and early 1990s major changes occurred in England with the reshaping of their education policy. New inspection regimes were put in place which led to more frequent and forensic inspections of schools. The age of accountability and performativity had arrived.

Ball (2003, p.2) discusses the origins, processes and effects of performativity in the public sector. He states “performativity, it is argued, is a new mode of state regulation which

makes it possible to govern in an ‘advanced liberal’ way”. Ball (2003, p.2) explains how ‘the new performative worker is a promiscuous self, an enterprising self, with a passion for excellence’. With the publication of *LAOS 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017* we see the introduction of targets and performance indicators.

Lynch, Grummel and Devine (2012, p.11) state that the teacher trade unions play a huge role in negotiating education policy in Ireland. Unions have a powerful position regarding implementation of education policy and practice due to their strong membership according to Lynch, Grummel and Devine (2012, p.17). Often teachers find it difficult to implement the whole curriculum ‘increasingly against a rising tide of regimes of accountability’ (Sugrue, 2008, p.40).

With the new SSE guidelines the DES (2017) recommends a report to be issued to parents and the wider community regarding school improvement. This report should be according to the DES (p.14) ‘typically.... a single document of no more than three pages in length’ and the DES (p.13) recommends that ‘the resulting school self-evaluation report and improvement plan is shared with the school community’.

Leung (2005) argues that teachers need to have the enthusiasm to devote time and effort to SSE if it is to be successful. McNamara and O’Hara (2008a, 2008b) and Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) found time to be a key factor for many schools in the SSE process. Data collection was an issue too. The lack of parent and pupil voice was another limitation found by McNamara and O’Hara (2012) but this seems to have been addressed with ‘the inclusion of the voice of students and parents in school self-evaluation processes’ in the updated guidelines (DES, 2012, p.9).

Overall the outcomes of the research by McNamara and O’Hara (2008a) with regard to SSE were positive. The Chief Inspector Harold Hislop (2013) acknowledged the poor data collection in schools saying the lack of a data capture system is the result of insufficient government investment. We see how education policy is linked to economic policy as outlined by Ball (1993). Hislop (2012, p.19) tells us that ‘the Irish school system has considerable work to do to improve the information that we have available to us regarding the effectiveness of individual schools and the system more generally’.

When the DES decimated the posts of responsibility as a result of the recession in 2008 and cut the pay of newly qualified teachers by almost 20%, the unions retorted with a directive of non-compliance with SSE. This directive was in effect from March 2016 until March 2018.

As I write we are in the middle of a global pandemic which apart from the serious health consequences will no doubt leave us struggling for quite some time economically. This may have detrimental consequences for leadership and management in primary schools, particularly MLM. The DES is aware of the extra workload placed on teachers with the implementation of SSE to the extent that it has advised schools to limit SSE to looking at one or two aspects only (and also taking into account the significantly reduced timeframe).

1.4 Identification of the research topic

This research is done primarily in three separate ways

Documentary analysis of the three key DES documents namely *LAOS 2016*, *SSE 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017*

An online questionnaire

Semi-structured interviews with a retired Assistant Chief DES Inspector, principals, deputy principals, assistant principals and teachers

1.5 Rationale for this study

There has been a lot of research done in recent years on the themes of leadership and management in education for example Spillane (2012) describes how leadership is not the heroic act of one person. He offers a distributed perspective on leadership as an alternative. Spillane and Harris are two leading experts in the area of distributed leadership. Spillane's perspective on leadership moves beyond the 'superman and wonder woman idea' (p.3). His distributed perspective on leadership has two aspects namely 1. The leadership plus aspect and 2. The practice aspect. The leadership plus aspect concerns leadership when it's not attributed to formal job positions but rather the conjoint work of individuals towards leadership practice. The practice aspect concerns the interplay and the interaction of actors, artefacts and the situation. For Spillane and Harris distributed leadership means more than shared leadership. They view leadership as a relationship of social influence. They point out that distributed leadership isn't just delegated leadership. They explain how distribution depends on leadership functions, subject matter, school type, school size and development stage. Spillane (2006, p.38) states the evidence suggests there are at least three arrangements of leadership responsibilities which are the Division of Labour, Co-performance and Parallel Performance. Several types can coexist in the same school depending on leadership function or routine. Spillane (2006, pp.42-47) clarifies how leadership can be distributed by design, by default and through a crisis. Spillane, Diamond and Jita (2000, 2003) and Spillane *et al.*

(2004) have identified three types of distribution- Collaborated distribution, Collective distribution and Coordinated distribution.

The model of leadership advocated by the DES in *Circular 0063/2017* is one of distributed leadership. It is worth noting however that the DES does not state how this leadership should be distributed in their framework. Harris (2004) opines that effective leaders are aware of the importance of providing leadership opportunities to other people in order to get the best results from SSE activities. ‘Professional collaborative review’ (p.22) and ‘monitoring pupils’ progress and development’ (p.24) are key terms in *LAOS 2016*. ‘Monitor actions’ is part of the SSE process (DES, 2016, p.12) however, monitoring teachers is not part of the assistant principal’s remit in *LAOS 2016*. Professional collaborative review is advocated in the SSE guidelines. Monitoring is part of leadership and management in the UK but it hasn’t really become established in the ROI. Ofsted1 (2003, p.20) has found that ‘there is a strong link between very good monitoring and good or better teaching’. Southworth (2002, p.80) suggests that, ‘Where monitoring is effective, the quality of teaching is noticeably higher than in schools where monitoring is poor and infrequent’.

The justification for the research into MLM in primary schools in the ROI is based on the fact that I believe MLM is currently at a crucial stage in its evolution with the emergence of theories of leadership such as distributive, collaborative, sustainable and instructional. The concept of leadership and developing leadership capacity is very much to the fore in the new DES documents. The OECD (1991) had put school leadership centre-stage and it has become a key aspect of education policy formation in recent years. The framework defines school leadership by its impact on learning.

I am seeking to understand where *Circular 0063/2017* and its implementation fits in terms of leadership theories. I will try to establish what leadership styles in theory and practice are being utilised in the implementation of SSE in primary schools by MLM.

1.6 The scope of this study

This study entails a mixed methods social science research. It involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research paradigm that underlies this study is pragmatism. I will be adopting Ball, Bowe and Gold’s (1992) policy analysis lens in analysing the three key policy documents in Chapter 4. If these documents are to be enacted or implemented as requested by the DES they have to be well-received by the people on the ground i.e. the people who put them into practice. I have sought to establish what the DES, principals, deputy principals, postholders and other teachers think about aspects of these

documents. *LAOS 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017* may indeed be perceived as democratising leadership and management with its emphasis on the concept of distributed leadership.

The key research questions I will seek to answer are

1. What is the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools?
2. What role does the DES envisage for MLM with regard to the implementation of SSE in primary school?
3. What type of MLM structures exist in primary schools?
4. How well-received are the three key policy documents by principals and teachers (both postholders and non-postholders) in primary schools?

The first phase of the research is the documentary analysis of the three key policy documents published by the DES. The study proceeds by means of an online questionnaire which involves principals, deputy principals, MLM teachers and other teachers in primary schools. The third phase of the research comprises of nineteen interviews with key respondents including a retired Assistant Chief Inspector and a number of principals, deputy principals, MLM teachers and other teachers.

The research entailed two years' work. The academic year 2018-2019 as it turned out was the only full year in which SSE took place over the four-year period from 2016 to 2020. The research involved an online questionnaire carried out from April-June 2019. It also involved a series of semi-structured interviews with a retired Assistant Chief Inspector and teachers from January-March 2020.

1.7 Contribution of this study

This study will give a good insight into the role and impact of MLM on the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the ROI. SSE is a relatively new concept in Irish education. It is important for teachers to develop an understanding of what is involved in implementing SSE. I hope that my research will throw light on how the process can be implemented successfully.

I think this research will be of benefit to leadership and management and teaching staff. As I mentioned there has been a lot of research done in recent years on the themes of leadership and management in the primary school sector but not so much has been done with regard to MLM. Schools are changing with more and more demands being made of principals, deputy principals and all staff. There is a need to ensure that an effective and

efficient MLM structure is put in place to ensure the effective running of schools. The justification for the research into MLM in primary schools in the ROI is based on the fact that I believe MLM is currently at a crucial stage in its evolution. The DES have recently published the three new documents mentioned earlier. In this research I will try to ascertain the origin of these new documents but more importantly how, if they are, impacting on the implementation of SSE in schools.

1.8 The Researcher in Context

The researcher is a primary school teacher who holds a post of responsibility (Assistant Principal 11).

1.9 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Context Rationale

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

Chapter 4 - Documentary Analysis – The three key policy documents

Chapter 5 - Analysis of Online Questionnaires

Chapter 6 - Analysis of Interviews

Chapter 7 - Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion

1.10 Conclusion

In this introductory chapter I sought to set the scene for the development of the thesis. My aim was to guide the reader through the stages involved in this study. By setting out the background and rationale the reader will I hope understand my reasoning for this choice of research. Similarly, with the emerging context it will I hope allow the reader to appreciate how this topic came about. Also, I hope in reading the scope of the research one will understand and appreciate more fully the limitations of this study with regard to, for example, time.

The ultimate objective of this research is to improve conditions for all teachers and indirectly their pupils. Perhaps, it may fall on someone reading this thesis to pick up where I left off, to improve upon and add to the research findings gained in an effort to contribute further to the wealth of knowledge in this particular field of education.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the roles and responsibilities of MLM in the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the ROI. As indicated in the introductory chapter the DES has moved strongly away in recent years to redefine MLM from being management only to being leaders also and expecting such staff to become part of a distributed leadership structure. A specific example and the subject of this thesis is the distributed leadership role defined for MLM in the area of SSE.

In consequence this literature review firstly considers briefly the recent developments in leadership theory in the field of education. It looks particularly at MLM. It proceeds to focus in detail on the concept of distributed leadership and how this has become so central to both DES policy and leadership theory and practice in schools. I then consider briefly recent developments in quality assurance in education and in particular the structure and methodology of school inspection which has become such a significant feature of schooling in most European countries including Ireland. Essentially SSE is, in my view a sub element or strand of inspection in that it has largely been driven by the DES and the Inspectorate and is perceived at official level as feeding in to inspection and school action planning. I therefore will complete this chapter with an analysis of the literature on SSE in the wider context but in particular in Ireland.

Chapter 4 examines in detail DES policy documentation in relation to SSE in schools and specifically the role expected of MLM in the implementation of SSE.

2.2 Leadership

According to Gardner (1997) there can be no leaders without followers, and all leadership activities take place in context. Spillane (2005) concurs with this ‘interactionist’ model of leadership. To understand leadership it is necessary to look at the personal make-up of the leader, the make-up of the followers and the specifics of the particular situation. Most effective leaders possess clusters of competencies in three areas- personal competencies, social competencies and cognitive competencies. Gardner (1997) in writing about the ‘leading minds’ of our time distinguishes between ‘competencies’ and ‘competences’. Competencies are described as the qualities that people bring to their task and the competences refer to the prescriptive repertoire of skills that’s required. Both are required by effective leaders. MacBeath and Myers (1999, p.2) drawing on the research of Gardner (1997) state “the conceptual difference underlying this technical distinction between

‘competences’ and ‘competencies’ is a fundamental one in the study of leadership”. They acknowledge context as a third dimension of looking at leadership in practice. MacBeath and Myers (1999, p.5) explain how ‘the three approaches - competences, competencies and context - may be characterised as the who, what and where - ‘Who make good leaders?’ ‘What kind of leaders do we want?’ and ‘Where can leadership be found?’.

2.2.1 Leadership in Education

The OECD (2007) had pointed out a need for a shared understanding of school leadership in Ireland as a basis for policy making. ‘Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school’ (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.5). With the publication of *Circular 0063/2017* the DES provides a definition of school leadership and management.

High quality leadership is crucial in establishing a central purpose and vision for a school and the achievement of high quality educational outcomes for pupils. The primary purpose of school leadership and management is to create and sustain an environment that underpins high quality pupil care, learning and teaching (DES, 2017, p.1).

It is interesting to note that while *LAOS 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017* refer to formal leadership roles including teachers with posts of responsibility as being typical of school leadership it also ambiguously states that ‘every teacher has a leadership role within the school community and in relation to student learning’ (DES, 2017, p.6, 2018, p.4) which is consistent with the distributed model of leadership.

2.2.2 Leadership and Management

Gardner (1997) differentiates between leaders and managers. Leadership is long-term oriented with a vision, focusing on the whys. It seeks to empower. Managers are interested in the present and stability. Management is short-term oriented with a focus on instruction and on the hows. It seeks to control. Leadership and management are both required from postholders in schools.

2.2.3 Middle Leadership and Management (MLM)

Following consultations with the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) and the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) the DES introduced posts of responsibility in primary schools in 1973 and it was agreed that the posts would be

allocated on the basis of seniority. A list of potential duties was compiled in *Circular May 1973* and circulated to the BOMs. Following negotiations which led to the final acceptance of the Programme for Competitiveness at Work (PCW) in the late 1990s the teachers accepted an increase in productivity in return for better pay and conditions. The former Grade A and B posts were renamed as Assistant Principal and Special Duties posts. These posts were to be advertised and allocated by competition. A competency based model was introduced diluting the significance of seniority.

The duties listed are not exhaustive but mainly ‘.....cover curriculum, academic, administrative and pastoral matters’ (DES, 2000, p.2). The staff had to be involved in the selection of duties appropriate to the needs of the school. Changes were made to facilitate a ‘review of the level of performance of duties, review of the time required to perform duties..... review in the context of the changing needs of the school’ (DES, 2000, p.2).

The selection of the postholder was based on the following three criteria, each having equal weighting

- (i) willingness to participate in the school’s middle management structures by undertaking the additional responsibilities specified in the list of duties;
- (ii) experience gained through length of service in the school;
- (iii) and capability to perform the duties attaching to the post (DES, 2000, p.5).

The OECD (1991) had been very critical of the lack of middle management structures in Irish primary schools. The DES (2011) describes posts on its website as follows ‘posts of responsibility are part of a school’s management structure. They are promotion posts and are referred to as Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and Special Duties Teacher’. Special Duties teachers are now called Assistant Principals 11’. The criteria for the posts of responsibility are now based on the four domains as outlined in *LAOS 2016* and shown in the following table.

Domain 1	Leading Learning and Teaching
Domain 2	Managing the Organisation
Domain 3	Leading School Development
Domain 4	Developing Leadership Capacity

Table 2.2.3

2.2.4 Literature on Middle Leadership and Management (MLM)

A study by Lárusdóttir and O'Connor (2017) found a disconnect between distributed leadership theory as outlined in the literature and MLM practice as currently experienced in Ireland and Iceland. Although they found a form of distributed leadership existing in both contexts, it was strictly at the gift of the principal. Bennett *et al.* (2007) note that middle leaders seem to get their authority from their professional expertise rather than their formal authority. Leech and Fulton (2008) maintain there is a requirement to address the issue of distributed leadership as part of school leaders' professional development. They argue for the need of a leadership skills development programme as part of initial teacher education.

Other researchers such as Li, Poon, Lai and Tam (2018) look at middle leadership and interconnecting issues such as teachers' receptivity toward reform and teacher professional development with regard to implementing system-wide English language curriculum reform. Their research shows that middle leadership at the subject department level does indeed exert substantial positive and direct influence on teachers' change in pedagogical practices, their participation in system-wide professional development activities, teachers' receptivity toward the reform and their perceived student learning.

Looking at the factors that assist in the leadership development of teachers at various stages of their career development Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) examined issues connected to leadership talent identification, development, succession and retention in contextually different primary and secondary schools in England. Their study revealed the importance of developing leadership capacity in schools. Leadership learning and development is essential if succession planning is to be effective. Bush, Hammersley-Fletcher and Turner (2007) in their research argue that studies of middle leaders have focused too much on their functions and characteristics. They argue that the social and political contexts on leaders' choices of actions need to be considered in research.

There has been increased interest and research in the middle tier with the idea of 'Leading from the Middle' emerging. Fullan (2015, p.1) argues that with regard to leading from the middle the goal 'is to develop greater overall system coherence by strengthening the focus of the middle in relation to system goals and local needs. Thus, it is not a standalone, but rather a connected strategy'. Hargreaves and Ainscow (2015, p.44) explain how 'leadership from the middle' involves people working collaboratively. They state 'in this leading from the middle approach, MLM don't just mediate and manage other people's

reforms individually; they become the collective drivers of change and improvement together’.

Irvine and Brundrett (2016) found from research in England that the skillsets needed for middle leadership were different to that of the classroom teacher. Indeed, the challenges faced by the middle leader they tell us come from a variety of sources. They found that there were specific and identifiable factors that can be prioritised for development of the newly appointed and inexperienced middle leader and that more focussed approaches to leadership development should be adopted.

Research in two Australian schools by Lipscomb, Tindall-Ford and Grootenboer (2019) tell us that middle leaders find themselves in the unique but complex position where they have an influence on both executive leadership and teachers within the school organisation. Their research showed that if middle leaders were to make a difference in influencing change at local level they needed the support of executive leadership. Resourcing, time, formal role descriptions and trusting relationships were crucial for middle leaders to make a difference in their role. They also found that middle leaders can influence development in education at the school level.

Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain (2011) provide a conceptual paper that explores issues around the agency of primary school middle leaders within a wider context of the political and educational agenda. Examining ‘subject leaders’, they exemplify ways in which primary school middle leaders’ attitudes have developed and changed over the past 15 years. They identify attitudes to leadership, the influence of distributed leadership on primary school role-holders and possible ways forward for middle leaders. The rationale supporting some form of distributed leadership was that different people might assume responsibility at different times for different things.

The dual role that middle leaders play as both teachers and leaders is acknowledged by Bassett and Shaw (2018). Their research looks at the expectations and challenges experienced by first-time middle leaders in New Zealand primary schools. An overwhelming difficulty found was the time to do the administrative work. The study found that further development for new middle leaders was essential. An induction and mentoring programme for middle leaders was recommended. The need for middle leaders to have adequate classroom release time was another recommendation to facilitate them in successfully performing their key role, in particular providing pedagogical support to staff.

Alegbeleye and Kaufman (2020) collected data from 100 middle managers across the United States to examine their four hypotheses that predicted positive relationships between

transformational leadership behaviours and effective followership behaviours. Their study found that certain styles of leadership such as transformational have positive influences on followership and change. Caughron and Mumford (2012) use a low-fidelity simulation to test the effect superiors can have on the leadership style and cognition of their subordinates who also are leaders. Their findings indicate that superiors must use caution when attempting to engender confidence in their followers. Middle managers have the dual role of leaders and followers. Superiors can have a substantial impact on their behaviour by choosing which outcomes to emphasise and by taking a coercive or supportive leadership style. De Church Mesmer-Magnus (2010) examine how poorly MLM is understood. Looking at 'leadership in the middle place' they found that middle managers are often responsible for accomplishing the day-to-day tasks that enable an organisation to function smoothly and pursue the goals handed down from top level leaders.

Murphy (2019) examines school primary and post-primary leadership in the ROI from 2008 to 2018. Murphy (2019) found that even though policy interest in school leadership in Ireland has grown steadily since the early 1990s it is only over the past decade that more significant progress in research in education has been achieved. He tells us that in theory distributed leadership can be seen to underpin the official policy of school leadership in Ireland. Murphy (2019) informs us that this concept of distributed leadership with regard to both school evaluation and leadership preparation is, although interesting, under-examined in Ireland.

Regarding research in English primary schools, Parker (2015) notes that the framework of distributed leadership has been growing in status for a number of years and is now considered to be the dominant model. Parker (2015) questions whether a distributed model of leadership remains useful and appropriate for primary schools in 2014. His findings show that distributed leadership has a place in the current and foreseeable future of education.

Rönnerman, Grootenboer and Groves (2017) argue that it is 'middle leaders' who are the critical professionals for developing quality in education. They examine the leading practices of middle leaders using a practice theory framework in a city district in Sweden. They identified the coordinating middle leaders as the hub in the work of systematic quality work in early childhood education. Their research illustrates the important role of middle leaders in a contemporary organisation steered in a predominantly hierarchical way. They also found that although the middle leaders were initially asked by the principals to become middle leaders, their practices developed from being among the group of middle leaders. In their longitudinal study Hirsh and Bergmo-Prvulovic (2019) sought to create an in-depth

knowledge about the phenomenon of middle-leadership in schools by focusing on identifying (1) the driving forces for seeking and maintaining middle-leading positions and (2) the opportunities and difficulties in relation to maintaining the middle-leading role. Their results revealed five different reasons for seeking a middle leading position in the first place and the driving forces for maintaining the position were categorised as either internal reward or non-observable outcomes or external reward or observable outcomes. Different types of difficulties arise in distinct phases for middle leaders' needs and support for which varies over time. Also, the importance of understanding the complexity of teachers' middle-leaders' career thinking clearly emerges. Having looked at reasons given for (1) seeking and (2) maintaining the middle-leading position they recognise there is a myriad of perspectives and it is difficult to provide absolute definitional boundaries between them.

Torrance (2013) questions in fact whether 'distributed' is the best word to describe the lived reality of school leadership. Torrance argues that if in effect as the study would suggest, the headteacher's role is so crucial to a distributed perspective, that 'distributed leadership' is an oxymoron. He suggests it is time to look for other adverbs that better describe leadership processes and practices. He suggests that the headteacher role needs to be re-examined in relation to the leadership roles of others within the school organisation. Otherwise, Torrance argues it seems likely that distributed leadership will remain 'in the gift of the headteacher'.

In their research Donitsa-Schmidt and Zuzovsky (2018) examined the effect of teachers' formal, nonformal and informal learning experiences on their promotion to middle leadership roles in schools during their first ten years of work. They found the effect of formal learning to be the most influential factor of teachers' promotion to leadership roles throughout the years with informal learning being the second influential factor. They found both formal and informal learning to have an essential role on teachers' professional development, and particularly on their promotion to leadership roles. Their data, which are based on the first ten years of teachers' careers, points at an increasing linear curve in both teachers' learning and promotion over the years. It is too early to determine they tell us whether this linear progression will continue in further stages of the teacher's career. Their findings show that it is highly recommended to offer teachers a variety of learning opportunities, particularly formal ones and that non-formal learning should be revisited so that it becomes a more meaningful factor in teachers' professional development.

De Nobile (2018) maintains while there has been considerable research activity in the area of middle management or middle leadership since the late 1990s, the concept remains

under-theorised and ambiguities persist in relation to who middle managers or middle leaders are and what they do. He acknowledges how the recent shift in terminology in the literature from 'middle management' to 'middle leadership' alludes to evolution in the roles these leaders play in schools. His article proposes a model of middle leadership in schools based on an extensive review of the literature.

Zywine *et al.* (1995, p.55) assert that 'a theory of educational management should be able to help us to analyse what managers in educational establishments do and how they do it.' As a result a large body of literature was drawn upon to produce a model that attempted to explain middle leadership in schools in terms of inputs, roles and outputs. They assume an 'input-roles-output' flow of interactions. Context is an issue and it is acknowledged that it may not be possible to produce a 'one size fits all' model or theory of middle leadership because of this.

Heng and Marsh (2009) ask what is the nature of middle leadership in primary schools and what are middle leaders' understanding and experiences in leading learning and teaching. This study seeks to understand how a distributed perspective of leadership may be operationalised in schools. Middle leaders from twelve primary schools in Singapore who attended a full-time programme for middle-level leaders noted the importance of (1) learning by developing personal capacity in knowledge, skills and values and (2) learning by understanding people, context and change. This new mindset change required for all educators to be effective change agents signals the enormous complexity of the change process in fundamentally conservative education systems.

Having researched the literature pertaining specifically to MLM we can see an increasing emphasis on distributed leadership. Research into MLM structures is becoming more prevalent. There is a void in literature however with regard to the role of MLM in implementing SSE in primary schools in the ROI. This void is primarily due to the fact that MLM structures and the implementation of SSE are really only becoming embedded in schools in recent years. Also, it's perhaps due to the fact that SSE is everyone's responsibility and the leading of it is not at the sole discretion of MLM. This literature review afforded me the opportunity to see how researchers conduct research in the real world. It is clear from the literature that distributed leadership is becoming a pivotal part of leadership and management in schools. But how it is being played out is not clear. I will now turn my attention to the topic of distributed leadership.

2.3 Distributed Leadership

Bolden (2011) tells us there seems to be a steady increase in the popularity of distributed leadership among policy-makers and practices. We see this in the policy documents published by the DES in 2016 and 2017 with regard to leadership and management. Policy-makers in school systems are recently promoting the distributed leadership model of leadership. *Circular 0063/2017* states that

leadership in a school context, creates a vision for development leading to improvements in outcomes for learners, and is based on shared values and robust evaluation of evidence of current practice and outcomes. In this way leadership is distributed throughout the school as a key support for pupil learning (DES, 2017, p.4).

The DES doesn't however state how leadership is to be distributed. Academics like Gunter, Hall and Bragg (2013) and Hartley (2010) argue that school principals may be 'capturing this model as a way to get teachers to do more work'. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) question the motivation of those espousing distributed leadership as it may be perceived as encouraging teachers to do more work. The need to develop leadership capacity in schools is being promoted in *LAOS 2016*. *LAOS 2016* seeks to cultivate a 'leadership climate'. Both collaboration and teamwork are emphasised in *LAOS 2016* as being essential for effective leadership and management.

2.3.1 A Closer look at Distributed Leadership - Spillane

A leading advocate of distributed leadership is Spillane. Spillane (2005, p.144) describes distributed leadership as both a leadership structure and an analytical lens through which to understand leadership practice and 'the interactions between people and their situations'. The importance of 'multiple actors' in leadership has been acknowledged by Spillane (2005). The importance of the shared vision is referred to in *LAOS 2016* (p.12) and must be communicated by all school leaders 'school leaders: communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation'. Spillane (2005) explains how the distributed leadership perspective focuses more on the ways in which leadership manifests itself among relationships rather than emphasising individual leadership roles, responsibilities and personal characteristics and qualities.

Spillane (2006) relates that distributed leadership allows us examine leadership practice as the interaction between formal leaders, informal leaders, followers and their situation. Distributed leadership is as Spillane and Diamond (2007, p.7) describe about 'the many rather than the few'. The key point for Spillane and Diamond (2007) is not whether leadership is distributed but how leadership is distributed. Spillane's (2006) idea of practice

in distributed leadership is the interaction between leaders, followers and their situation. Spillane (2005) refutes some myths about distributed leadership such as that it weakens the responsibility of a principal since, he suggests, everyone is a leader and the more leaders the better. Indeed, advocates of the distributive perspective would argue to the contrary that it in effect empowers the principal. A principal is always the key player in a school, likewise is a leader in the organisation. Spillane (2005) reminds us although distributed leadership encourages and empowers other members of the team, not everyone can and wants to be a leader.

2.3.2 A Closer look at Distributed Leadership - Harris

Another strong advocate of distributed leadership Harris (2004) comments that the literature is not clear on 'the exact form' that distributed leadership takes. Harris (2004) acknowledges that it is no longer possible for heads to lead all aspects of their schools. They need the support of other leaders. Harris (2004) contends that distributing leadership is essential not only to ensure that all leadership activities are handled competently but also so that the collective talents and experience of all senior leadership team members are deployed to best effect. Heads of schools need to find an appropriate balance between solo and distributed leadership.

Harris (2013, p.54) points out that distributed leadership embodies both formal and informal leadership which she says are not separate or opposite. Distributed leadership is according to Harris (2013) concerned primarily with the co-performance of leadership. Harris (2013, p.59) informs us that 'the empirical evidence about the relationship between distributed leadership and student outcome is encouraging'. Harris (2013, p.72) outlines the barriers to distributed leadership such as time, culture, professional reluctance and getting it wrong. Another challenge concerns the issue of building relational trust. Harris explains (2013, p.124) how distributive leadership implies shifts in powers, authority and control.

As we can see leadership is a distributive phenomenon. Advocates of distributed leadership are not saying that it should be distributed but that it is distributed. It exists in schools whether staff are aware of it or not. Leadership is about relationships and interactions. There cannot be leaders without followers. Each one of the group has an influence directly or indirectly on an organisation's culture and what it achieves or fails to achieve regarding its performance. Harris (2013) describes leadership being distributed but hidden. Hidden leadership she tells us actively leads to conflict. A different perspective

according to Harris (2013) is to have leadership contributions encouraged and made transparent. This is healthier and leads to successful outcomes.

According to Harris (2013) distributed leadership is necessary to change leadership practice in order for improvement to occur. Harris (2013) tells us that

- Leadership is the key lever of high organisational performance
- Successful organisations have widely and carefully distributed leadership (not delegation)
- Effective leaders grow other leaders

This development of other leaders according to Harris (2013) is not just the formal responsibility of leaders within the organisation. Harris (2013) reminds us of the importance of putting learners at the centre of everything we do. Learning Harris (2013) says is at the centre of distributed leadership. The skills of collaboration have to be learned and practiced according to Harris (2013). Teachers she tells us must work 'interdependently' not 'independently'.

For distributed leadership to work in schools Harris (2013) says we need to recognise and give people more roles and responsibility. It is necessary to bring the informal leaders on to the team and to use their expertise. This Harris (2013) says is 'easy to say' but 'hard to do'. It poses challenges to both senior and middle leadership. Harris (2013) tells us that collaboration when disciplined and focussed is most effective and can make a significant difference in learning outcomes. The same is true for distributed leadership. Harris (2013) explains that distributed leadership is not giving away power or authority or control but rather it is saying as a leader, how can I create the conditions in my organisation where people will feel able to offer their expertise. Formal leaders must provide opportunities for the informal leaders to come forward.

Harris (2013) questions how far distributed leadership is simply delegation by another name. Distributed leadership is often misinterpreted according to Harris (2013) and perceived as giving things away rather than empowering others to bring things to you. Delegation and distributed leadership are closely related but they are different. Distributed leadership as mentioned involves trust and building rapport and relationships. Delegation is the assignment of authority and responsibility to another person to carry out specific activities. However, the person who delegated the work remains accountable for the outcome of the delegated work. Distributed leadership is a leadership of expertise not roles. Harris describes distributed leadership as 'a collective leadership responsibility' rather than top-down authority which is

constructed through shared action and interaction. Distributed leadership lets us view leadership as a collective and dynamic undertaking. Leadership practice is formed through the interaction of leaders, followers and their situations.

2.3.3 Leading from the Middle - Hargreaves

Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris (2014) suggest, as regarding leading from the middle, that leadership depends on us all being leaders in some way or another. The idea for them of leading from the middle is not about driving things from the top in order to comply from below. They explain how things will emerge from the bottom but we must think deliberately about leading from the middle. This can be with regard to, for example, leading changes in curriculum, assessments, pedagogy, wellbeing and social and emotional learning for the benefit all students. They acknowledge that the middle never gets a lot of positive attention but the middle is also the centre, the core, the heart and the spine of what we do. In their book *The fourth way: The inspiring future for educational change* Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) explain how leadership moves up to another level. It deals with issues about how leaders leave a legacy behind them and how what they've achieved can be sustained over time. Distributed leadership Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris (2014) tell us is a shared responsibility. Leaders need to be developing other leaders. They use the metaphor of uplifting leadership. It is a metaphor of flight like an airplane or a large bird that working together eases the burden.

2.3.4 Limitations of Distributed Leadership

Some academics approve of distributed leadership such as Holloway, Nielsen and Saltmarsh (2018) but it is not without its critics, Lumby being an example (2013). Holloway, Nielsen and Saltmarsh (2018) accept that a basic problem with distributed leadership is its conceptual ambiguity. Harris (2013) tells us about the importance of relationships and trust in distributed leadership. Academics such as Torrance and King (2014) and King and Stephenson (2017) argue that perhaps it is 'licensed leadership' that is needed as opposed to distributed leadership. Examining distributed leadership in two countries Scotland and Ireland they question how distributed leadership has become part of the 'orthodoxy of school leadership'. Harris and Spillane (2008) remind us how the importance of building leadership capacity within education systems is widely acknowledged in schools. Despite its recently popularity Torrance and King (2014, p.5) state that 'distributed leadership is seldom defined and inadequately conceptualised' within the literature. Torrance and King (2014, p.5) saying

that ‘more often than not distributed leadership is promoted as unproblematic’. They acknowledge that the lack of research contributes to a lack of definition. They adopt a working definition of distributed leadership offered by Spillane and Coldren (2011, p.78) who define it as ‘a relationship of social influence’. They also adopt a term given by Spillane and Harris (2008, p.31) of ‘distributed leadership perspective’ whereby multiple leaders irrespective of formal recognition engage in a wide range of leadership and management activities. Harris (2008, p.31) tell us that interactions are key to distributed leadership where ‘both formal and informal leadership and the way they produce different patterns of activity’ are evident. Looking at three case studies in Scotland Torrance and King (2014, p.5) found that a core principle in policy was that ‘leadership should form an integral feature of the role of every qualified teacher’. In Scotland defining leadership proved problematic. Distributed leadership they found to be ‘context specific, socially constructed, negotiated and hierarchical in nature’ and ‘to large extent in the gift of the headteacher’ (p.6).

Having examined the theme of distributed leadership I will now turn my attention to quality assurance, inspection and evaluation.

2.4 Quality Assurance, Inspection and Evaluation

2.4.1 Quality Assurance

The DES states that

Ireland, along with other European countries, is adopting a model of quality assurance that emphasises School Development Planning through internal school review and self-evaluation with the support of external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate (DES, 2003, p.viii).

The Education Act 1998 delineates the responsibility of the Minister for Education with regard to quality assurance within the education system. Both the EU and the OECD have brought standardisation in evaluation in education with regard to policy and practice. The words of Hammersley (2005, p.134) when talking about quality in education are apt, the search for one size fits all solutions to complex questions around teachers and teaching is a futile enterprise—it offers a false hope of dramatic improvement in quality, while at the same time undermining the conditions necessary for professionalism to flourish.

Both evaluations and inspections are concerned with quality and standards. But what do we mean by quality in education and how is quality determined? Biesta (2007, p.35) has tried to make a case for the need to reconnect with the purpose in education, asking the question ‘whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure’. Biesta (2009) argues

that in education, values come first. Biesta (2009) gives the example of the alleged desirability of ‘what works’ and value judgements. He (2009) tells us that the culture of accountability poses a threat to relationships because it redefines relationships in economic terms.

Quality assurance methods in the Irish education system are illustrated in the table below,
Table 2.4.1

Quality Assurance		
External Evaluation		Internal Evaluation
WSE	Incidental Inspection	SSE
Thematic Inspections		SSE-MLL
		Probation of NQTs

DES Website

The integrated roles of internal and external evaluation are required in quality assurance. McNamara, O’Hara and Sullivan (2009, p.506) suggest that at the time of the introduction of *LAOS 2003* the evaluation and quality assurance culture had been firmly embedded within the EU but with major variations across countries. In Ireland McNamara and O’Hara (2008b, p.11) tell us how the culture of compromise has and continues to have a significant impact at national policy level on SSE: ‘Accommodation, compromise and consensus are key words in the political lexicon. A good example of this culture of compromise with regards to evaluation is provided by the emerging school evaluation process in Ireland.’

Croxford, Grek and Shaik (2009) look at policy for quality assurance and evaluation in Scotland. They discuss the Scottish self-evaluation model as a means of promoting the country’s distinctive identity in education within a European frame. The Scottish system of self-evaluation used a ‘top-down system’ rather than a ‘bottom-up’ approach. Their report concluded by acknowledging the substantial influence and direction of a series of key policy actors from Scotland in the work of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates since 1997 and that the levels of interest and the numbers of exchanges of best practice in relation to self-evaluation between Scotland and other European countries have been numerous and are continuing. They conclude that a policy such as self-evaluation, developed in a small nation such as Scotland, can project a vision of the nation as distinctive and sophisticated abroad, that has benefits at home.

2.4.2 Inspection

Nelson and Ehren (2014) conducted a review of research to identify and summarise findings from international empirical research on the impact of inspections. Applying the conceptual model provided by Ehren *et al.* (2013) the review presents evidence from international studies which examine inspection on school improvement, SSE, behavioural change and student achievement. In Ireland, McNamara and O'Hara (2006) found that inspection had little impact on school improvement. The extent to which SSE is externally imposed or internally developed was found to be significant by McNamara *et al.* (2011) in comparing SSE in Ireland and Iceland. The reviews by de Wolf and Janssens (2007) and by Klerks (2013) referring to Chapman (2001) in the UK, found that high quality feedback may be the key to teachers' intentions to change practice. School inspections may also lead to unintended negative consequences for teaching and learning in schools.

Van Hoof and Van Petegen explain regarding school inspection the participants in school self-evaluations are usually more familiar with the specific nature of the local school context and communicate better with the (local) school community. By focusing attention on additional data which reveal the unique character of particular schools, they can broaden the focus of external evaluations (Van Hoof and Van Petegen, 2007, p.106).

Vanhoof, Van Petegem and De Maeyer (2009) examined attitudes towards SSE. The results of two years of survey data of principals and teachers in primary and secondary schools show that inspection primarily drives change indirectly, through encouraging certain developmental processes, rather than through more direct and coercive methods, such as schools reacting to inspection feedback. The results of this study particularly support the mechanisms of 'setting expectations' and 'stakeholders sensitivity' as important drivers for school improvement from school inspections. The results are somewhat different for principals and teachers, and primary and secondary schools. Principals reported higher responses on the improvements in self-evaluations compared to teachers, and respondents from primary schools reported higher responses on accepting feedback and improvements in self-evaluations than respondents from secondary schools. Overall, principals and teachers reported few unintended consequences.

With regard to 'attitudes towards self-evaluation', it appears that only 7% of the total variation in respondents' scores can be attributed to differences between schools. The remaining 93% must therefore be attributed to differences between respondents within schools. There are also differences between team members. Self-evaluation, they found is not a popular activity among many teachers because it is seen as a form of social control. Van

Petegem *et al.* (2005) tell us that team members all too often get involved in a self-evaluation process because it is expected of them. Self-evaluation is carried out in schools in the first place because it is seen as an external necessity by the school management team. This is a different approach from carrying out a self-evaluation because it is perceived as an internal necessity.

McNamara and O'Hara (2012) noted that although inspection documents have contained reference to self-evaluation as a key element of the inspection system for several years research to date has demonstrated that very little of what might be described as self-evaluation was actually taking place in schools. A noticeable change had taken place by 2019. O'Brien *et al.* (2020) demonstrate that in Ireland and indeed across most of Europe self-evaluation is increasingly becoming an integral part of school inspection. SSE won't just happen, it needs to be nurtured over time as MacBeath (2008), McNamara and O'Hara (2008a) and Nevo (1995, 2002) tell us. Schools and teachers need to take ownership of the process of self-evaluation (MacBeath, 2008; McNamara and O'Hara, 2008; Nevo, 1995, 2002).

Brown *et al.* (2016) examine the role of inspectors and the process of SSE in Ireland. They inform us that the relationship between school inspection and SSE in Ireland has shifted from a largely theoretical one to that of a regulatory requirement where schools are mandated to engage with an externally devised process of self-evaluation.

The two main methods of inspection and evaluation in Ireland in primary schools are (a) external inspection (WSE) and (b) internal evaluation (SSE).

2.4.3 External Evaluation

Whole School Evaluations (WSEs) replaced the Tuairiscí Scoile in 2005. Initially they were called Whole School Inspections but the DES replaced the word inspection with evaluation in 2006. The DES advise us on its website that 'during these inspections, we evaluate the quality of the school management and leadership, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the school's own planning and self-review.' The DES always 'provide oral feedback to the school community at the end of these inspections and we provide a printed report which is published on our website.' (DES website).

As part of their external evaluation the DES also carry out incidental (unannounced) inspections. School inspections are still part of the Inspectorate programme today and inspectors still continue to carry out forensic examinations of schools gathering as much

information and evidence as possible during their visit to the schools. Janssens and van Amelsvoort define school inspection as:

The process of periodic, targeted scrutiny carried out to provide independent verification and to report on whether the quality of schools is meeting national and local performance standards, legislative and professional requirements and the needs of students and parents (Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008, p.15).

The purpose of school inspection is to help identify quality standards and ensure compliance with these standards. Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007) explain how external evaluation is not about giving feedback but rather aims to determine results to assess the standard of education provision. School inspections vary widely across countries with regard to consequences and impact. With the introduction of WSEs in Ireland McNamara and O'Hara (2008a) found that schools were generally happy with the system of WSE. WSE is found to have a number of positive impacts on school staff. McNamara and O'Hara (2009, p.70) showed that the process brings staff together as teachers work side by side to update their plans and to engage in collaboration. Even though there has been a huge uptake with internal evaluation in OECD countries most countries have maintained some form of external evaluation (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008b).

The DES also contend that WSE is a viable and effective approach to evaluating the functioning of schools and that it is acknowledged by both schools and the members of the Inspectorate to be an effective model (1999). The OECD attributes the success of the system to the fact that the system is 'positive, affirming and developmental rather than punitive or negative' (2007, p.410). The DES (1999) reported that preparing for WSE increases the feeling of ownership by staff in the school improvement process. There were some limitations to WSEs such as the notion of being observed by an external inspector being stressful and was seen as creating additional workload for teachers (DES, 1999). Although the WSE reports are well received by principals the inspectors were critical of the final report that they themselves wrote (DES, 1999). Their reports tended to be very general, superficial and bland. Research by McNamara and O'Hara (2008a) in Ireland found that schools were generally happy with the system of WSE that had been introduced and were satisfied that the principles underpinning WSE were laudable and that the process adopted was a democratic approach. Perryman (2006, p.16) asserts that "If discipline depends on 'the gaze', through the evaluation, auditing and disciplinary power of Ofsted, then it is difficult to maintain that discipline once the gaze has departed."

2.4.4 Internal Evaluation

External evaluation processes such as the WSE will take increased account of the self-evaluation engaged in by schools' (DES Guidelines 2012, p.13). McNamara and O'Hara (2012, p.13) from their research tell us '...the policy is that school self-evaluation will act as a preparation for inspection but, more importantly, it is also to be the driving force for collaborative internal school improvement efforts'.

2.4.5 A Combination of External and Internal Evaluation

Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007, p.21) suggest that, where internal evaluation feeds into external evaluation, schools may fear negative repercussions and may engage in 'putting on a show, window-dressing and spin'. It is understandable that a combination of external and internal evaluation is necessary to satisfy the accountability and improvement aspects of evaluation. The role of inspection is concerned with the quality of education and standards. The role of evaluation is concerned with school improvement. A critical question to ask is who are the inspections and evaluations for? If we look at inspections for example the reports are published in some countries and not in others. In Ireland the publishing of reports commenced in 2003 when the then Minister of Education Mary Hanafin announced she was proceeding with this course of actions against the wishes of the unions. A lot of negativity arose around inspections and publishing reports due to the nature of this action in the UK. Teachers there were easily identifiable and the consequences of negative feedback were harsh leading to cases of school closures. This made many teachers concerned about inspection and SSE in Ireland and may explain why school evaluation has remained largely unthreatening and 'low stakes'. Sugrue (2015, p.176) tells us how inspections have been characterised as 'the panoptic gaze of the accountability police'.

Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2010) examine whether SSE meets quality indicators and whether differences can be found between the quality judgments of school principals and inspectors. Their results show that principals and the inspectorate declare themselves on average to be satisfied with the quality of the self-evaluations. However, their judgments do not match. This raises questions about the validity and reliability of the evaluation by principals and the inspectorate. Their research involved two central questions 1. How good is the quality of the conduct and results of self-evaluations? and 2. To what extent do internal and external meta-evaluations of self-evaluations processes result in similar assessments?

The findings revealed that almost 90% of the respondents indicated that the self-evaluation had provided them with a good or relatively good picture of the strong points of

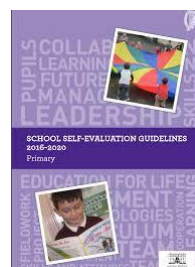
their school functioning. The head teachers gave a positive assessment of the results of the self-evaluation. They concluded that there is no strong correlation between the assessment of a head teacher and that of an external evaluator. The difference between the inspection ratings ‘acceptable’ and ‘very good’ does not translate anywhere into a different evaluation by the head teachers themselves. However, schools which were rated ‘insufficient’ in the external meta-evaluation do indeed appear to score lower than other schools in the internal meta-evaluation.

The Inspectorate of the DES adopts a dual system of both external and internal evaluations. They are ‘complementary’ processes as the internal evaluation informs the external evaluations. I will now take a closer look at the form of internal evaluation namely SSE introduced in Ireland.



Guidelines 2012

Diagram 2.4.5a



Guidelines 2016-2020

Diagram 2.4.5b

2.5 School Self-Evaluation (SSE)

2.5.1 Definition of SSE

The DES defines SSE as

.....a collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal school review. During school self-evaluation the principal, deputy principal and teachers, under the direction of the board of management and the patron and in consultation with parents and pupils, engage in reflective enquiry on the work of the school. It is an evidence-based approach which involves gathering evidence from a range of sources and making judgements with a view to bringing about improvements in pupils’ learning (DES, 2016, p.10).

This definition is similar to the 2012 definition and both documents were devised ‘in collaboration with teachers, principals, parents, members of boards of management, patron and management organisations, teacher unions and other bodies’ (DES, 2012, p.3). The DES (2016) continues that ‘Self-evaluation requires a school to address the following key questions with regard to an aspect or aspects of its work:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How can we find out more?
- What are our strengths?
- What are our areas for improvement?
- How can we improve?’

SSE (2016) involves reflective inquiry leading to action planning for improvement that is informed by evidence of current teaching and learning practice which takes account of each school’s unique context.

I will now trace the evolution of SSE in Irish primary schools from its introduction in 2003 to where it is today.

2.5.2 SSE The Early Days

SSE was first introduced into Irish primary schools in 2003 due primarily to the pioneering work of MacBeath (1999). I will take a closer look at the research of MacBeath (1999).

2.5.3 The pioneering work of Macbeath (1999)

MacBeath (1999) has been championing the cause of SSE for a number of decades. MacBeath’s (1999) research in the area of school improvement with *Schools Must Speak for Themselves*, later updated to *How Good is Our School?* lead to the implementation of SSE in Scotland and subsequently across much of Europe. McNamara and O’Hara’s (2008) publication *Trusting Schools and Teachers: Developing Educational Professionalism through Self-Evaluation* gives great insight into SSE and inspection in Ireland at the turn of the century.

The Scottish Inspectorate breaks SSE down to just three basic questions which go to the heart of what SSE is about namely ‘How are we doing? How do we know? and What are we going to do?’ (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education, 2001, p.7). SSE was introduced in Scotland in 1992 as part of a wider shift in accountability in the public sector as a result of the pioneering work of MacBeath (1999). Improvement is central to SSE which MacBeath defines as

Improvement takes place when learning is centre stage, when there is a learning culture in a school and when heads and senior leadership team are lead learners. It is in the process of building such a

learning culture that self-evaluation takes root and external review, or inspection, plays a valuable supportive and challenging role (MacBeath, 2008, p.398).

MacBeath (1999, p.1) has emphasised the importance of self-reflection concerning SSE stating ‘its primary goal is to help schools to maintain and improve through critical self-reflection’. In 2005 the Ofsted Inspection Framework was developed based on the findings of *Schools Must Speak for Themselves* by which the Inspectorate had established a ‘new relationship with schools’. Milliband (1999) refers to the importance of ‘critical friendship’ as a ‘school improvement partner’. The critical friend such as the role of the PDST in the ROI can support SSE in a variety of ways. MacBeath (1999) explains how ‘external evaluation focuses primarily on the school’s own approach...’

Nayir and McNamara (2014) encapsulate eloquently the immense contribution of MacBeath to SSE when they write

The seminal work of MacBeath (1999, 2008, 2009) was influential in putting the concept on the agenda but even he could hardly have foreseen the current popularity of self-evaluation as a key element of the inspection regime in so many countries.

2.5.4 SSE in Ireland

The Irish model of evaluation is a blend of internal and external evaluation with a very definite move from external monitoring towards internal review and self-evaluation. In Ireland SSE has gotten off to a somewhat slow and bumpy start. This is partly due to what McNamara *et al.* (2004) refer to as a lack of firm or hard data and resources but also because research is not really part of the teachers’ DNA. The DES argues that it is not always looking for hard data which is readily available with literacy and numeracy standardised tests but rather evidence. SSE should be evidence-based according to the DES as opposed to being data-driven. Data would be perceived as hard data such as results of standardised tests whereas evidence can come from a multitude of sources such as interviews of pupils and parents.

McNamara *et al.* (1999, p.x) tell us from their research ‘that professionals should be empowered to systematically analyse their own practice and thus generate the data and evidence necessary both to empower their own development and also to justify their professional judgements to external audiences’. Indeed McNamara *et al.* (1999, p.x) claim that ‘education is perhaps the best of all exemplars of this emerging focus on what has become known as self-evaluation’. The purpose of self-evaluation in education is described

by McNamara and O'Hara (2008b) in terms of a spectrum with accountability at one end and teacher professional development at the other. 46% of the participants found the process of SSE easy to understand, almost 84% of the principals were of the view that more training was required to carry out SSE and, 90% of the principals were of the view that more resources were required to carry out SSE. McNamara and O'Hara (2008b, p.2) tell us how SSE had led to an increasing demand for teachers to become 'data literate'.

2.5.5 SSE in Europe

In some European countries the research part of the evaluation is outsourced to external agencies. The school still has ownership of the data but they don't get involved in the collection and analysis of the data i.e the number-crunching. As McNamara *et al.* (2004) point out some of the other countries opt to train their teachers in this specialised skill of research. This too involves time and money but it doesn't solve all the problems. As McNamara *et al.* (2004) explain the primary purpose of SSE is to improve teaching and learning so ideally the teacher is best placed to carry out this research.

McNamara and O'Hara (2009, p.11) tell us that 'collaborative school development planning has become recognised by many educators as a key element in improving the quality of school and education in general'. Hargreaves and Hopkins (2004) maintain that 'certain internal conditions' can lead to 'higher levels of outcomes'. These 'internal conditions' such as adequate resources support the effective management of change. Both 'empowerment of staff' and 'shared ownership' are key factors of SSE (2012 and 2016) the goal of which is 'to improve schools from within...'. McNamara and O'Hara (2004) look at the process-centred and teacher-led approach telling us it is necessary to trust the teacher in evaluation. Teachers they find are in better positions to make judgements than external evaluators. Evaluation is fundamental to the professional role of teacher. The practitioner-driven concept of evaluation in education they say is the 'best way forward'. There is a need for a support role for 'professional evaluation'. McNamara and O'Hara (2008b, p.70) from their research with an EU pilot project carried out on SSE found that 'teachers are prepared to be self-critical and to ask themselves questions they might resent from others'.

2.5.6 SSE today

According to the DES, SSE '...gives teachers and schools the opportunity to tell their own story' (2012, p.8). SSE was introduced into Ireland in 2004, though in reality, it is only

since 2011 that it is operating in any significant way in schools. McNamara and O'Hara (2008a, p.102) state that 'this cannot be regarded as surprising since other than rhetoric and exhortation, little or no support or guidance has been given to empower such a development'. SSE was first made compulsory in primary schools in 2012 when 'all schools are required to engage in systematic school self-evaluation from the 2012/13 school year onwards' (DES, 2012, p.1) which remains the case today. The revised six steps the process entails (DES, 2016, p.12) depicted below are outlined more fully in Chapter 4.

Figure 2.1: THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS



Diagram 2.5.5

The DES (2012, p.3) also defined SSE as 'simply a structure to enable teachers, principals and the management of schools to have that focussed conversation about teaching and learning'. The purpose of SSE was described by the Chief Inspector of Ireland who states: 'our ultimate goal is for schools to conduct their own evaluations transparently and accurately and for inspectors to visit these schools to evaluate the school's own self-evaluation.' (Seomra Ranga, 2012).

The then Minister for Education and Skills launched the new SSE guidelines in 2012 to support schools to evaluate their own work and to set targets to improve teaching and learning. At the launch of these guidelines, the Minister said 'We need a balanced and credible approach to quality assurance of schools that involves both external inspection and internal school self-evaluation. That is why I am introducing a new system of school self-evaluation for all schools.' (DES website).

Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012, p.50) define self-evaluation as follows 'a cyclical process, whereby a school itself describes and assesses, on its own initiative and from a

global quality-assurance concept, aspects of its own functioning in a systematic manner with the aim (if necessary) of arriving at specific improvement processes.’

With the introduction of *SSE 2016* schools were required to continue with their engagement with SSE in teaching and learning. It was a four-year process which was disrupted due to industrial unrest. The continuation of SSE in 2020 was also delayed due to the current pandemic and schools are being asked to use the SSE process in the first term of the school year 2020-2021 to help ensure the safe return of all pupils and teachers to school in September as a result of the impact of Covid-19 and to complete any SSE from the previous school year.

2.5.7 A closer look at SSE

As a result of the research by MacBeath (1999) SSE was coming to the fore in education. With SSE the Inspectorate is enabling the schools to take ownership of their own evaluation. SSE is a collaborative process that builds on school development planning (SDP) and assessment practices where principals and teachers engage in reflective enquiry, gather evidence from a range of sources, identify priorities for improvement and take action that leads to improved learning. In 2007 the then Chief Inspector Stack (2007, p.25) stated that the Inspectorate ‘will facilitate the systematic implementation of school self-evaluation in all primary and post-primary schools’.

Harris (2004) asserts that effective leaders are aware of the importance of providing leadership opportunities to other people in order to get the best results from self-evaluation activities. Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) tell us that successful SSE requires the sharing of leadership and a partnership approach. They inform us that self-evaluation has a greater chance of success in schools where collaboration is highly valued. They describe this as a ‘collégial atmosphere’ or as a ‘safe climate’. In their research Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) found that the more leadership was shared and the more effective the communication was, the higher the quality of self-evaluation.

Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) suggest that the quality of the self-evaluation is higher in schools that have an ‘appropriate’ level of participation of teaching staff in decision making during the self-evaluation. Van Petegem et al. (2012) tell us that the reflective capacity of schools is arguably the most crucial factor in achieving a high-quality self-evaluation. Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) found that time allocation is a difficulty for participating staff. The evolution of SSE in Iceland shows that when teachers are given

support, then the process becomes an enriching experience. The Icelandic model actively demonstrates that collaboration, team work, the provision of CPD and the empowerment of teaching staff supports SSE (McNamara et al., 2011). Self-evaluation can only work if team members are positively disposed towards it (MacBeath, 1999, p.21).

2.5.8 Autonomy and Accountability

Government policy has two goals namely school autonomy and accountability. There are varying degrees of autonomy wanted and accepted by schools. With central authority being divested to teachers and schools, schools and teachers are granted more autonomy with regard to budgets, planning, school evaluation and professional development as would be the case for example in Northern Ireland. The neo-liberal agenda sees schools becoming more accountable and transparent. The EU along with the OECD have brought standardisation in evaluative attainments.

McNamara and O'Hara (2008, p.16) argue that 'the obsession with uniformity, conformity and accountability and standards has seriously damaged the autonomy and morale of professionals and organisations'. McNamara and O'Hara (2006) question whether SSE is a workable compromise or a pointless exercise. They tell us the balance is best achieved in a combination of both external and internal evaluation. External monitoring and inspection and internal autonomy and accountability are necessary. SSE offers a new framework for evaluating schools seeking the 'professional judgement of staff regarding the operation of the school'.

Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007, p.102) tell us 'in return for this autonomy, schools are being required to evaluate their own educational quality and to come up with their own plans for improvement'. The Chief Inspector Hislop (2012, p.5) tells us that 'many of the services that we would have traditionally spoken of as 'public services' and which are now being referred to in at least some of the academic literature as 'human services' are being subjected to greater degrees of public examination and accountability.' He continues 'It has been argued that greater school autonomy has to be balanced by greater accountability, and hence, it is asserted, that these systems have a greater focus on outcomes for learners.' Education policy seeks to embed a culture of robust self-review and professional accountability in schools and school communities. Hislop (2012) hopes that over time SSE will create a genuine sense of accountability to the school community.

2.5.9 School Improvement and Effectiveness

MacBeath (1999) suggests that the role of external inspection was to ensure internal systems and self-review improve effectively. It is necessary to strike the balance between external and internal evaluation. Looking at the value and effectiveness of internal or SSE MacBeath (1999) tells us the school's own approach is 'crucial' for school improvement. *LAOS 2016* provides a coherent set of standards and statements of practice to evaluate the effectiveness of a school.

The new paradigm is the bottom-up orientation whereby school improvement should be 'owned' by the individual school and its staff. McNiff (2002, p.4) reminds us that people 'are capable of thinking, learning and acting for themselves' regarding school evaluation. Gray *et al.* (1999) tell us the focus of improvement is more attitudinal whereas effectiveness is to do with the behaviour of persons.

Reynolds *et al.* (2014, p.197) ask the important questions of 'what makes a 'good' school and how do we make more schools 'good'. Biesta (2008, p.36) argues that effectiveness research gives no insight into the values, purpose and goodness of education, stating that 'there is much discussion about educational processes and their improvement but very little about what such processes are supposed to bring about'. Coe (2009) questions whether school improvement is a reality or an illusion. He examines the process in the USA and England asking has school improvement changed. He questions what constitutes success, telling us we need to take evaluation seriously. He questions what schools need to do asking, whether accounts of improvement by schools be trusted and are the improvement claims credible.

Hargreaves *et al.* (2010) explain how the very best leaders ensure that every last drop of expertise is devoted to improving organisational performance and outcome. Harris (2014, p.75) tells us 'they build collective capacity and maximize *social capital* as a way of securing productive change.'

2.5.10 Accountability or Improvement

SSE has the dual perspectives of accountability and development. MacBeath (2006, p.1) has outlined three overarching logics for SSE namely 'accountability, improvement and economic'. I will look at the financial benefits in the next chapter but here I will examine the concepts of accountability and improvement.

An exploratory study looking at the effects of SSE and inspection in European countries by Janssens *et al.* (2008) looks at both improvement and accountability in England, Scotland, the Netherlands and Northern Ireland. SSE concerns school improvement. It can be looked at as a process or product.

The Chief Inspector Hislop tells is

The most crucial question facing us has been whether the primary purpose of inspection and self-evaluation should be accountability or school improvement. For example, while school self-evaluation serves both these purposes we have decided that school improvement is the primary objective in school self-evaluation (DES, 2013, p.15).

In the SSE process it is necessary for the school to compile a School Improvement Plan (SIP). Speaking about the introduction of *SSE 2016* Hislop (2016) tells us that ‘there’s not only evidence from the principals and teachers that it works for them but also there’s a lot of educational research that tells that SSE can be a very effective way of improving schools and children’s learning.’

MacBeath (2006, p.1) endorses an accountability dimension to school improvement but it is worth noting he sees improvement as more important than accountability stating that ‘while school improvement is the most compelling of the three ‘logics’, it will falter without accountability and attention to the attendant time and opportunity costs’. Fullan (2011) argues that accountability has a role as a driver of reform but should not be a lead driver. McNamara and O’Hara (2008, p.173) describe key words and concepts that have come to characterise the accountability agenda such as ‘choice, accountability, transparency, value-for-money and decentralisation of responsibility for performance to individual professionals and institutions such as schools. These goals when achieved are to be policed through such processes as regulation, quality assurance, quality control, audit, benchmarking, evaluation and inspection.’

McNiff (2002) views the teacher as a reflective practitioner and highlights concepts such as self-reflection, self-evaluation and peer review. She asserts (2003, p.2) that teachers and principals should review their own practices and ‘produce an account to show how they felt they were justified in claiming that they have improved the quality of education experience for themselves and for the children in their schools.’

Vanhoof and Van Peregery (2006) from the accountability perspective question

1. Whether quality assurance is concerned with monitoring and accountability or development and improvement and
2. Who determines quality of education? Is it the Government or the school?

The accountability perspective is usually through external evaluation in the form of inspection and the school improvement perspective is through internal evaluation. SSE is about accountability and/or school improvement. Looking at SSE with regard to accountability and school improvement internal evaluation may be subordinate to external evaluation (from an accountability perspective) or external evaluation may be subordinate to internal evaluation (from a school development perspective). The Flemish interpretation sees the advantages of the two. Looking at the accountability perspective with internal evaluation perceived as of service to external evaluation the following three roles are given

A scope-broadening role

An interpretation-fostering role

An implementing role

From the school development perspective with external evaluation of service to internal evaluation these three roles are outlined

A scope-broadening role

A stimulating role

A legitimising role

Fullan (1993) tells us of the importance of trust. It is necessary to support schools in the conduct of SSE and to monitor the quality of SSE. Both external and internal are necessary components of quality assurance systems. Inspectors have core tasks with a two-track policy which they do strictly and transparently

An accountability-oriented policy track

A development-oriented policy track

Internal evaluation is primarily about the identification of means to improve quality and external evaluation is concerned with monitoring the quality of performance. The function of evaluation is both accountability and improvement. The primary function of SSE is to focus on improvement but also has an accountability function. It's about getting 'the right balance' between the two. Accountability and improvement depend on the context of country. In a European study including five national contexts the ideal balance was not found in most of them. In fact, there is an inherent imbalance between external and internal evaluation. Tensions can be high in countries where there are high-stakes involved. Regarding the Education Inspectorate their three main functions are evaluating the quality of education, advising schools and checking compliance. Schools are steering towards improvement with a combination of both methods.

Ehren and Perryman (2018, p.1) tell us how quality education is of major public and private interest and, understandably, considerable effort is paid to the quality of schools and improvement of the level of education in society. They ask (2018, p.1) the pertinent question of ‘who is accountable to whom and for what?’ in a network of schools. They tell us (2018, p.7) that changing structures and modes of collaboration complicate how organisations are held to account and raise difficult questions about accountability. Networks have multiple layers of practice and outcomes which need to be clarified when deciding on who is accountable to whom and for what. Ehren *et al.* (2018) describe contexts where accountability becomes a tool for learning and improvement instead of control. They explain (2018, p.15) how Inspectorates of Education and policy-makers can ensure that the goal of good education, is a shared responsibility and endeavour and that school collaboration is not just an ‘end in itself’ but successfully contributes to improvement of education and student outcomes, even in challenging circumstances.

2.5.11 Accountability or Responsibility

Regarding the implementation of The Education Act 1998 we read in its objectives that every person concerned in the implementation of this Act shall ‘have regardto enhance the accountability of the education system’ and also ‘have regard to the efficient use of resources (and, in particular, the efficient use of grants provided under *section 12*), the public interest in the affairs of the school and accountability to students, their parents, the patron, staff and the community served by the school...’ (DES, 1998, p.20). Ling Lo (2012) explains how the introduction of high stakes accountability sometimes leads to a narrowing of the curriculum with teachers concentrating only on those subjects that are examined, thereby leaving out topics that could be more relevant to some students.

Biesta (2004) analyses the impact of the idea of accountability on education. He examined the kind of relationships that are promoted or produced by the culture of accountability. The accountability regime has resulted in changed relationships among students, parents, teachers and the state. Biesta (2004) reminds us of the two meanings of accountability in the academic literature and the educational world namely as a system of mutual responsibility and as a system of governance. A central aspect of the 1988 Education Act according to Biesta (2004) ‘was turning citizens into consumers’ and ‘giving the idea of school choice for all parents’. Accountability and responsibility are two different concepts. Biesta (2004) examines the connection between the current culture of accountability and responsibility. Biesta (2004) argues that the culture of accountability poses a threat to

responsibility. He asserts that ‘responsibility is an essential component of educational relationships’.

Perryman (2006) traces the change in teachers’ accountability, along with the rise in the audit culture in teaching, and the increase in the power of Ofsted. She describes school inspections as part of the increasing culture of accountability in education. In *LAOS 2016* under the heading (p.12) *Transparency, Accountability and Improvement* the Inspectorate tell us that this framework will offer ‘a transparent guide to support teachers and leaders in being accountable to their communities. School leaders are expected in the domain ‘Managing the organisation’ to ‘develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability.’ (p.13).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) tell us that accountability is the remainder that is left when responsibility has been subtracted. Harris (2013) explains that collective professional responsibility precedes and supersedes accountability.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter afforded me the opportunity to outline the literature available on the key themes of leadership particularly MLM, distributed leadership, quality, inspection, evaluation and SSE. There has been, as we saw, a lot of research in recent years on leadership especially in the field of education. This chapter traced the emergence of a new leadership and management structure in primary schools in the ROI based on the changes in education policy and practice. It examined the differences between leadership and management in education. It then examined the concept of MLM. The chapter continued with a detailed literature review of distributed leadership looking particularly at the research of Spillane and Harris. The contribution by Hargreaves to leading from the middle was examined. It then looked at quality, inspection and evaluation. It concluded with a review of SSE looking particularly at the contribution of MacBeath (1999) and then SSE in schools in Ireland examining the work of McNamara and O’Hara (2008). Having reviewed the literature with regard to these pivotal themes Chapter 4 will allow me the opportunity to present the documentary analysis of the three key national policy documents around school evaluation, inspection, SSE and MLM. These illustrate the link between SSE and MLM in that it becomes clear that the effective implementation of SSE in schools is clearly understood, at a policy level to be heavily dependent, on school management and leadership at senior but also middle level.

In the next chapter I will outline the research methods used in this study and the rationale for the choice of these methods.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

A research approach involves plans and procedures. In deciding on which approach to use Creswell (2013) advises the following three steps - examining the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study, looking at the procedures of and the specific research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Bassey (1999, p.38) defines research as 'systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and wisdom.' Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.128) tell us in planning research it is important to clarify a distinction that needs to be made between methodology and methods, approaches and instruments, styles of research and ways of collecting data.

The research method is according to Creswell (2012) the enquiry strategy utilised during a study and it reflects the underlying epistemological assumptions. Creswell (2013) tells us the three key terms or perspectives in research which help the research move from the broad constructions to the narrow procedures or methods. These are

1. Research approaches
2. Research designs
3. Research methods

Looking first at the approaches to research Creswell (2013) advances three types namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Creswell (2013) explains that they are not dichotomies but are more of a continuum. The mixed method is situated along the middle of the continuum with elements of both qualitative and quantitative. A simple overview of qualitative and quantitative would be that qualitative is concerned with words or open-ended questions and quantitative is concerned with numbers or closed-ended questions.

Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods are defined by Creswell (2013) and others as follows.

Quantitative research

Creswell (2013, p.4) describes quantitative research as an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationships among variables. These variables in turn can be measured typically on instruments so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research Creswell (2013, p.4) says is an approach or exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions or procedure, data

typically collected in the participants' setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.562) tell us that qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.

Campbell (1997, p.122) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process based on building a holistic, complex understanding of a social problem. It is characterized by data collection in a natural setting where the researcher acts as a key instrument. Furthermore, the research contains deep, rich description and is more concerned with process than specifying outcomes or products.

Mixed methods research

Creswell (2013, p.4) tells us that mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005, p.377) argue that not all quantitative approaches are positivist and not all qualitative approaches are hermeneutic. They (2005, p.382) suggest that the terms 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' would be better replaced by 'confirmatory and exploratory research'. They argue that methodological puritanism should give way to methodological pragmatism in addressing research questions. Onwuegbuzie, (2004, p.15) tell us that epistemological and paradigmatic ecumenicalism is within reach in the research paradigm of mixed methods research.' According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) mixed methods research is 'a research paradigm whose time has come'.

Burke-Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.17) define mixed methods as The class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a study and considers that its logic of enquiry includes the use of induction, deduction and abduction.

Denscombe (2008) suggests that mixed methods research can increase the accuracy of data, provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study than would be yielded by a single approach, thereby overcoming the weaknesses and biases of single approaches, enable the researcher to develop the analysis and build on the original data and aid sampling.

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.22) tell us the world is not an 'either/or world but a mixed world' and thus researchers can't rely exclusively on either quantitative or qualitative data but a combination of the two is needed. However, a researcher may find that

the research has ‘a predominant disposition to or requirement for, numbers or qualitative data’. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009, p.265) suggest that conducting mixed methods research involves ‘collecting, analysing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon’. Denscombe (2008) calls for the mixed methods paradigm to be defined in terms of a new ‘community of practice’ in which like-minded researchers adopt the principles of mixed methods research.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p.116) describe ‘methodological pluralism’ as ‘the order of the day’. Rather than having affinity to a single paradigm it enables errors in single approaches to be identified and rectified. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007, p.207) state that ‘a strong mixed methods study starts with a strong mixed methods research question’ and they suggest that such a question could ask ‘what and how’ or ‘what and why’ and they describe the research question as a ‘hybrid’ (p. 208).

Greene (2008) argues that mixed methods research calls for equity and social justice. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.25) tell us mixed methods research addresses both the ‘what’ (numerical and qualitative data) and ‘how or why’ (qualitative) types of research questions.

3.1.1 Paradigms

Onwuegbuzie (1999) tells us how forming research questions is much more difficult in mixed methods studies than in monomethod (i.e. quantitative or qualitative) investigations because it involves the formation of both quantitative and qualitative research questions within the same inquiry. Creswell (2013, p.613) describes mixed methods as a ‘worldview’. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) talk about the ‘cluster of approaches’ used in research methodology. In carrying out research ‘fitness for purpose’ is the ‘guiding principle’. It is as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) say about ‘... the search for truth’. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.54) explain how causation is the ‘holy grail’ of educational research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.113) caution not to be ‘overambitious’. Greene (2007, p.15) tells us that a paradigm ‘refers to an integrated set of assumptions about the nature of the social world, about the character of the knowledge we can have about the social world, and about what is important to know.’

3.1.2 Philosophical worldview assumptions

In planning this research I had to question what philosophical worldview assumptions I bring to the research. Flick (2009) outlines the four main philosophical worldviews which he notes are by no means definitive. They are postpositivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic. A ‘worldview’ the word chosen by Creswell (2013) is ‘a basic set of beliefs that guide action’ (Guba, 1990, p.17). Other researchers use the words paradigms, epistemology, ontologies or broadly conceived research methodologies. Creswell (2013, p.6) sees worldviews as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study. Creswell (2013) has outlined the main characteristics of each worldview as depicted in the following table.

Table 3.1.2 Four Worldviews

Postpositivism	Constructivism
Determination	Understanding
Reductionism	Multiple participant meanings
Empirical observation and measurement	Social and historical construction
Theory verification	Theory generation
Transformative	Pragmatism
Political	Consequences of actions
Power and justice oriented	Problem-centred
Collaborative	Pluralistic
Change-oriented	Real-world practice oriented

(Creswell, 2013, p.6)

My mixed method research with its pluralistic strategies based on real-world practice situates me within the pragmatist quadrant as highlighted above. The mixed methods research suits my research as I need to use both a combination of quantitative and qualitative research allowing me to get the opinions and attitudes of teachers with an online questionnaire and affording me the opportunity to get deeper insights from some of these teachers by interviewing. The philosophical worldview proposed in the study is pragmatism. I will give a brief description of each worldview here as outlined by Creswell (2013).

1. The post-positivist world-view

The post-positivist world-view represents the traditional form of research. It is more quantitative than qualitative. Its worldview is very much the scientific method.

2. The constructivist worldview

In the constructivist worldview the social constructivist is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research. The researchers seek an understanding of the world in which they live and work.

3. The transformative worldview

The transformative worldview evolved around the late 1980s, early 1990s. It involves critical theorists or action researchers. It entails an action agenda.

4. The pragmatic worldview

Creswell (2013, p.10) tells us 'there are many forms of pragmatism but for many pragmatism as a worldview arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent condition'.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) suggest that it is not necessary for the researcher to operate within a single paradigm or to conduct paradigm-driven research. A weakness of positivism according to Cohen *et al.* (1995, p.7) is

Where positivism is less successful, however, is in its application to the study of human behaviour where the immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world.

Morgan (2007) tells us that before starting any research and choosing a methodology and related methods, one must consider one's own worldview or set of beliefs, as these will influence how the research is undertaken and interpreted.

3.1.3 Pragmatism

This research involves both quantitative and qualitative research looking for scientific results and examining specific contexts in which people live or work. With the pragmatist approach rather than focussing on methods researchers emphasise the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem. With its use of pluralistic approaches towards knowledge of the problem this pragmatist approach became an obvious choice for my research.

Creswell (2013, p.11) with his own views and those of Cherryholmes (1992) and Morgan (2007) outlines some key points regarding pragmatism such as pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. They inform us that the pragmatist

researchers look to the what and how to research based on the intended consequences where they want to go with it.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.23) state that while ‘positivist approaches are premised on scientific, objectivist ontologies and epistemologies’ and ‘interpretive approaches are premised on humanistic and existential ontologies and epistemologies’ the ‘mixed methods approaches are premised on pragmatism ontologies and epistemologies’. Cohen and Manion (2000, p.28) also tell us that for positivists, ‘observed phenomena are important’ while for phenomenologists ‘meanings and interpretations are important.’

Denscombe (2008, p.280) informs us that pragmatism is essentially practical rather than idealistic; it is ‘practice-driven’. Feilzer (2010, p.14) explains the benefits of this approach in that rather than debating over qualitative or quantitative affiliations it allows the researcher to find out what he or she wants to know, regardless of whether the data and methodologies are quantitative or qualitative. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) tell us how pragmatism adopts a methodologically eclectic, pluralist approach to research, drawing on positivism and interpretive epistemologies. Likewise Chatterji (2014) argues that mixed methods are unavoidable if one wants to find out ‘what works’.

Denscombe (2008) tells us that pragmatism has its own standards of rigour. The research must answer the research questions and ‘deliver’ useful answers to questions put by the research. With pragmatism the research is driven by the research questions rather than the methodological preferences of the researcher. Greene (2008, p.13) states how it is widely accepted in the mixed methods research community that methodology ‘follows from’ the purposes and questions in the research. Different kinds of research purposes give rise to different kinds of mixed methods research designs. Many researchers such as Denscombe, (2008) believe that the choice of research design should be determined by factors other than a philosophical notion of reality or knowledge. Pragmatism has now come to be viewed as a paradigm in its own right pragmatism.

3.1.4 Strategies of inquiry

The second step according to Creswell (2013) in planning a research study is to decide on the research strategy or the research design. Creswell (2013, p.12) outlines the main features of each of the three methods which I have illustrated in the following table. My research design as highlighted in the following table is an exploratory sequential mixed method.

Alternative research designs

Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methods
Experimental designs Non-experimental designs such as surveys	Narrative research Phenomenology Grounded theory Ethnographies Case Study	Convergent Explanatory Sequential Exploratory Sequential Transformative, embedded or multiphase

Table 3.1.5a

Exploratory sequential method used for this research

	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3
Overall Project Objective The role and impact of MLM on the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the ROI.	MM QUAL DA of 3 key policy documents Stand-alone results + Informs →	MM QUAN Online questionnaire Stand-alone results + Informs →	MM QUAL Semi-structured Interviews Stand-alone results

Table 3.1.5b

3.1.5 Research design used in this study

The third step in the planning process according to Creswell (2013) is deciding on the specific research methods to be used with regard to data collection, analysis and interpretation.

The three methods I decided to use for this research are

1. Documentary analysis of the three key DES policy documents
2. Online questionnaire
3. Semi-structured interviews

Creswell (2013, p.13) describes survey research as that ‘which provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population’. The survey is the quantitative part of my research producing quantitative data. Conducting interviews and documentary analysis are the qualitative part of the research producing qualitative data. The combining or integrating of the quantitative and the

qualitative research and data in this research study makes it a mixed methods design. An advantage of the mixed methods according to Creswell (2013) is that it ‘neutralised the weaknesses’ of the quantitative and the qualitative as each of these methods have their own ‘biases and weaknesses’.

Another advantage of the mixed methods approach according to Creswell (2013, p.15) is that it allows for the triangulation of data sources. Triangulation is the use of more than one source of data so that a finding may be crosschecked and thus increase the validity of the results. Triangulation occurs in this study through the use of primary and secondary sources, and the use of three different research methods namely documentary analysis, an online questionnaire and interviews. Triangulation of methods is needed to ensure the credibility and validity of research. It is a ‘method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search the regularities in the research data’ (Basse, 2000, p.105). This will according to Silverman (2009) increase the confidence in the research findings. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p.114) define triangulation as ‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’.

The purpose of the interviews was for me to give teachers more of a voice. Patton (2015, p.426) puts it well when he argues that because feelings, thoughts and intentions cannot be observed ‘the purpose of interviewing then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective’. By interviewing people we want as Ribbins (2007, p.208) reminds us ‘to explore their views’ and to ‘report our findings in as near as we reasonably can their own words’.

Seidman (2012, p.9) tells us that ‘at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals’ stories because they are of worth.’ Kvale and Brinkman (2009, p.1) define qualitative research interviews as ‘attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences.’ Yin (2009) describes an interview as a purposeful discussion between two or more people. It is an effective method of learning about, and understanding, the experiences, feelings and views of the participants (Cohen and Manion, 2000).

3.1.6 Conceptual and practical considerations in research design

Creswell (2013, p.15) tells us that there are three primary models of pragmatic research in the social sciences

Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods

Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods

1. Convergent parallel mixed methods

In this model the researcher collects the sets of two data at the same time.

2. Explanatory sequential mixed methods

In this model the researcher collects the quantitative data first, analyses the results and then collects the qualitative data.

3. Exploratory sequential mixed methods

In this model the qualitative research is done first and then the quantitative.

Other models mentioned by Creswell (2013) are the transformative, embedded and multiphase mixed methods. As my research began with qualitative research and continued with a quantitative part of the research and concluded with further qualitative research my model falls into the exploratory sequential mixed methods.

In this research study both quantitative and qualitative data are collected, analysed and interpreted. Creswell (2013) has outlined the main types of data associated with each method which I have illustrated in the following table. I have also highlighted the specific methods I have utilised.

Table 3.1.6 Quantitative, Mixed and Qualitative Methods

Quantitative Methods	Mixed Methods	Qualitative Methods
Pre-determined	Both predetermined and emerging methods	Emerging methods
Instrument based questions	Both open and closed-ended questions	Open-ended questions
Performance data Attitude data Observational data Census data	Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities	Interview data, observation data, document data and audio-visual data
Statistical analysis	Statistical and text analysis	Text and image analysis
Statistical interpretation	Across databases interpretation	Themes, patterns and interpretation

Creswell (2013, p.17)

To summarise my research is from the pragmatic worldview, an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach collecting both quantitative and qualitative data,

sequentially in the design. This collecting of diverse types of data leads I think to a more complete understanding of the research problem than either quantitative and qualitative alone.

Other criteria to be considered in selecting a research approach according to Creswell (2013, p.19) are the research problem and question, personal experiences and the audience. The primary research question of this study comes from a void in the literature. The topic of MLM and SSE in primary schools in the ROI is hugely under-researched. The key research question is what is the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the ROI as perceived by the DES, principals, postholders and other teaching staff.

Secondary questions are addressed such as

What type of MLM do we have in our primary schools?

In what ways, if at all does MLM oversee the implementation of SSE in primary schools?

When do the MLM teachers get time to oversee the implementation of SSE in primary schools?

Has the implementation of SSE in primary schools as perceived by the DES, principals, postholders and other teaching staff been successful?

How can the MLM teachers best oversee the implementation of SSE in primary schools?

How can the MLM teachers be supported in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools?

Regarding research methods I have experience as a teacher in conducting online questionnaires pertaining to SSE in my own workplace. I have also conducted interviews as a student as part of the EdD course. To upskill with regard to the research methods chosen for this research I undertook training in both NVivo12 and SPSS. Creswell (2013) tells us we must as researchers consider the audiences we are writing for in choosing our research plan. This research study is being carried out as part of an EdD at the DCU Institute of Education. Its initial audience is there. However, ultimately this research is being carried out for the betterment of all primary school teachers particularly those in MLM positions. As teachers are the main focus I wanted to give as many teachers as I could a voice hence my choice of worldview, research strategies and specific research methods.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework used in this study

1. The goal of the study is to establish teachers', principals' and the Inspectorate's perceptions and attitudes regarding the impact of MLM on SSE in primary schools in the ROI.

2. The research objectives are to establish what type of MLM we have in our primary schools and how it is impacting on the implementation of SSE according to the Inspectorate, principals and teachers.

3. The rationale for the study is the recent changes and developments regarding the structure and input of MLM in primary schools and particularly the new role of MLM in leading SSE as outlined in key new policy documents *LAOS 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017*.

4. To identify the role and impact of MLM on the implementation of SSE as outlined in the key policy documents *LAOS 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017* and the attitudes and views of teachers and principals to the role and impact of MLM in their schools.

5. To establish and identify perceptions and attitudes of the Inspectorate, teachers and principals to the role and impact of MLM in leading SSE in primary schools in the ROI.

6. Mixed methods using both quantitative and qualitative methods of research for improved validity and reliability of results.

7. The mixed method design matrix to be used is exploratory sequential mixed methods.

QUAL + QUAN + QUAL

8. Primary and secondary data to be collected using documentary analysis, online questionnaires and interviews

9. Analyse data using documentary analysis, NVivo12 and SPSS.

10. Validate Data.
Re-evaluate research questions.

11. Interpret Data

This Theoretical Framework follows the 'Steps in the Mixed-Methods Research Paradigm' (Adapted from Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Sutton, 2006, p.71).

Mixed Methods Design Matrix

Time Order

Decision

Equal

Status

Concurrent

Sequential

QUAL + QUAN	QUAL-QUAN-QUAL QUAN-QUAL
QUAL+ quan	QUAL- quan qual-QUAN
QUAN+ qual	QUAN- qual quan- QUAL

Dominant Status

1. The Mixed Method design matrix to be used is **Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method** as illustrated.

3.2 Documentary coding, selection and analysis

3.2.1 Introduction and background

Creswell (2013) reminds us that qualitative research is interpretive by nature so the researcher has a huge role in this type of research. Qualitative research entails a range of strategies, ethical and personal issues. Creswell (2013) tells us the researcher is a key instrument in the research. The researcher gathers the information. The two types of qualitative data in this research study are the three key policy documents and the interviews. The researcher has to try to make sense of this data by establishing categories or themes. It can involve both inductive and deductive data analysis. The purpose of the qualitative research in this study is to find out what the policy documents are saying, what the Inspectorate is saying in the policy documents and what the teachers have to say with regard to MLM and SSE.

Creswell (2013) tells us there are four basic types of collection procedures in qualitative research which are

1. Qualitative observation
2. Qualitative interviews
3. Qualitative documents
4. Qualitative audio and visual materials

Both qualitative documents and interviews apply to this research.

3.2.2 Selection of documents for analysis

The specific designs chosen by the researcher in this study are (a) documentary analysis and (b) interviews.

1. Documentary analysis of the three key policy documents
2. Semi-structured individual interviews

Bowen (2009) explains how the researcher determines what is meaningful and relevant in the documents forming emerging themes into categories. This is achieved by focused examination, re-reading and integration with other methods. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) remind us of the distinction between documents produced independently of the researcher and those produced by researchers themselves as data for their research. Creswell (2007, p.152) tells us ‘if researchers use a prefigured coding scheme then they should be open to additional codes emerging during the analysis.’ The researcher made allowances for unusual categories (Creswell, 2009).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.249) state a document may be defined briefly as a record of an event or process. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.249) tell us that ‘documentary research typically makes use of documents produced previously and by others rather than in the process of the research or by the researcher.’ Silverman (2001, p.19) informs us that transcripts of interviews or completed questionnaires are examples of documents prepared by researchers for the purposes of their research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.249) tell us that ‘primary documents are produced as a direct record of an event or process by a witness or subject involved in it’. Secondary documents they tell us are ‘formed through an analysis of primary documents to provide an account of the event or process in question, often in relation to others’. It is often not easy to decide which section the documents fit into. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.253) remind us that documents ‘once located and examined do not speak for themselves but require careful analysis and interpretation’. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.253) state that the reliability of documentary evidence raises particular problems with regard to education. Jupp and Norris (1993) suggest that there are three general traditions in documentary analysis – positivist, interpretive and critical. Within these three traditions particular types of theoretical approach may be framed. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.254) state that the combination of historical and documentary research allows for methodological pluralism which is relevant to research in education.

Creswell (2013) tells us the researcher plays a more significant role in qualitative research than in quantitative research. The researcher Creswell (2013) tells us brings a certain bias to reading and interpreting documents and trying to find meaning in them but also these biases are evident in the interviewing procedure too and in analysing transcripts. Creswell (2013) talks about 'reflexivity' and how the researcher's role influences the research as they bring their biases, values and interpretations to it.

I will outline the procedures involved in each of the two designs (a) documentary analysis and (b) interviews separately.

Documentary analysis is an invaluable method of research providing key insights into philosophies and theories of education. Bell and Waters (2014, p.127) tell us there are two standard approaches to analysing documents namely a source-oriented approach and a problem-oriented approach. The documents chosen for analysis for this research project are the official documents available on the DES website. Access and availability are not issues as they are openly available to the public on the DES website.

Documents can be divided into primary and secondary sources. It is not clear-cut as some documents are considered primary from one perspective and secondary from another. Primary sources can according to Bell and Waters (2014, p.129) be divided into deliberate sources and inadvertent sources. Bell and Waters (2014, p.131) tell us that witting evidence is the information that the original author of the document wanted to impart. Unwitting evidence is everything else that can be learned from the document. All documents provide 'unwitting' evidence but it is the task of the researcher to try to assess its precise significance. External criticism of the document ensures the document is genuine and authentic. These documents have been published by the DES. They follow the same structure or format and are typical of DES publications. External and internal criticism may overlap. Internal criticism involves subjecting the contents to rigorous analysis. I will do this by seeking to ascertain what kind of documents they are.

Bell and Waters (2014) and Silverman (2016) advise the researcher to question the terminology, purpose and tone of the documents. Who is the intended audience? Are these documents typical or exceptional? Documents can't be accepted at face value but must be examined carefully. The question of reliability needs to be addressed for example in determining reliable for what.

Bell and Waters (2014, p.136) tell us how the issue of act or bias needs to be addressed. Denscombe (2014) tells us that documentary research is a kind of social enquiry that uses documents as its source of data. The source of primary data are the documents such as written

texts, digital communication and visual sources. These documents contain information that can be used as evidence of something not just at face value but deeper reading involves interpreting the documents hidden meaning and are a permanent record. Sources of documentary data are government publications and official statistics. These documents are authoritative, objective and factual by nature. Access to documentary sources is good and as Denscombe (2014, p.228) describes ‘probably the greatest attraction of using documentary sources is their accessibility’. They are usually available online for example in this case on the DES website. Cost and ethical issues are not a concern with accessing the documentation. It is important to establish validity, authenticity and representativeness i.e. is the document typical? Validity is a measure of what a piece of research aims to achieve or how well it reflects the reality it claims to represent (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston, 2013, Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013).

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006, p.51) tell us that validity has been replaced with the term ‘trustworthiness’ in qualitative research. For Denscombe (2014, p.230) credibility involves questioning the purpose of the documents. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.253) tell us how ‘policy reports are also important for revealing the kind of assumptions that underlie policy reform.’ Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.236) remind us that documents and records ‘have the attraction of being always available, often at low cost and being factual’. However, they may be unrepresentative, selective, lack objectivity, be of unknown validity and may be possibly be deliberately deceptive. Denscombe (2014, p.139) outlines the advantages of documentary research such as access to data is easy and inexpensive, it is cost-effective and the permanence of data. The disadvantages are the credibility of the source, secondary data and the social constructions. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.253) tell us to ‘look for authenticity and reliability’ saying ‘it is necessary to comprehend both the text and its wider context’ and that ‘the context of documents being examined also requires close examination’.

3.2.3 Documentary coding and analysis

The research was started with a documentary analysis of the three recent key policy documents *Circular 0063/2017*, *LAOS 2016* and *SSE 2016*. In this research documentary analysis was used to get an oversight of the educational landscape of MLM with all its recent changes and SSE but also to inform the questions of the online questionnaire which in turn informed the line of questions of the subsequent interview schedule.

A documentary analysis was carried manually out of the key three policy documents using Ball, Bowe and Gold's (1992) policy analysis framework. The primary data sources are the three aforementioned documents published by the DES and the interview transcripts. These documents are hard sources of evidence. A hard copy of each of the three policy documents was sent to every school. These documents are also available on the DES website. The researcher accessed them electronically, downloaded and printed a copy of each for analysis. As mentioned all these documents are in the public domain so there is no issue with regard to accessibility or availability.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.580) tell us

the great tension in data analysis is between maintaining a sense of the holism of the data - the text - and the tendency for analysis to atomise and fragment the data - to separate them into constituent elements, thereby losing the synergy of the whole, and often the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Krippendorff (2012) offers a description of content analysis as a research tool used to analyse the frequency and use of words, terms or concepts in a document. It involves ascertaining the meaning or significance of the terminology. The themes formed in the analysis of the policy documents helped to inform the line of questions in the online questionnaire and later the semi-structured interviews. The analysis began with an examination of *LAOS 2016* followed by an analysis of *SSE 2016* and then *Circular 0063/2017*. According to Ball (1993) implementation never happens, interpretation does. The stages of Ball, Bowe and Gold's (1992) policy cycle are The Context of Influence, The Context of Text Production and The Context of Practice. Ball (1994) later added The Context of Outcomes and The Context of Political Strategies.

Stake (1995, p.71) defines analysis as '... a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations. Analysis essentially means taking something apart'. Creswell (2013, p.196) urges researchers to look at qualitative data analysis as following steps from the specific to the general and as involving multiple levels of analysis. It is an interactive approach involving interrelated stages.

Creswell (2013) mentions three types of topics evident in documentary analysis which are (a) expected, (b) surprising and (c) unusual. The researcher had no expected topics in the initial phase of the research, the documentary analysis of the three key policy documents. Similarly, in establishing codes Creswell (2013) refers to three types of code (a) emerging, (b) predetermined and (c) emerging and predetermined. Again, the research allowed the

codes emerge during the documentary analysis in the initial phase of the research and the interview transcripts.

The interview transcripts were analysed using a combination of manual analysis and NVivo12. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2104, p.561) describe codes as ‘simply a name or label that the researcher gives to a piece of text that contains an idea or a piece of information.’ They continue ‘the same piece of text may have more than one code ascribed to it, depending on the richness and contents of that piece of text.’ Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.561) distinguish between open, analytical and axial coding in which an open code ‘is usually the earliest, initial form of coding undertaken by the researcher’. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.561) tell us an analytic code ‘might derive from the theme or topic of the research’ and an axial code is ‘a category label ascribed to a group of open codes whose referents (the phenomena being described) are similar in meaning (e.g. concern the same concept).’ The data were coded using NVivo12. Coding has been defined by Kerlinger (1970) as the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis.

Creswell (2013) recommends choosing about 5-7 themes or categories from this analysis. The researcher chose key themes from the analysis which were used to inform the line of questioning in the online questionnaires. The following are some of the themes which emerged with regard to MLM – duties, recording of duties, roles and responsibilities, supporting and assisting the principal, leadership roles, instructional or curricular leadership, collaborative leadership, distributive leadership, monitoring, communication, relationships, vision, CPD and external tutors.

A narrative passage was used to convey the findings of the analysis in Chapter 4. A discussion of themes and sub-themes forms part of this analysis. The themes obtained from the documentary analysis were interpreted and used to inform the questions of the online questionnaires.

After completing the first part of the qualitative analysis namely the documentary analysis of the three key policy documents the researcher then started to look at designing the online questionnaire based on the themes and categories obtained from the analysis. I will now look at the steps involved in the quantitative part of the research before looking at the third and final part the interviews.

3.3 Questionnaire development, distribution and analysis

3.3.1 Introduction and background

The quantitative method used in the research was a survey. Creswell (2013, p.155) informs us that ‘a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population.’ From these sample results the researcher can generalise or draw inferences to the population. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.148) tell us that determining the size of the sample has to take account of non-response, attrition and respondent mortality i.e. some participants will fail to return questionnaires, leave the research, return incomplete or spoiled questionnaires. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.148) state that unless one has guarantees of access, response and, perhaps, the researcher’s own presence at the time of conducting the research then it might be advisable to estimate up to double the size of the required sample in order to allow for such loss of clean and complete copies of questionnaires or responses.

Smyth (2004) advises of the importance of the visual aspect of questionnaires in internet surveys. According to Smyth (2004) it affects the layout of questions, instructions and response lists, the grouping of items, the colours used, the spacing of response categories, the formatting of responses. Smyth (2004) reports that respondents use ‘preattentive processing’ when approaching internet surveys, i.e. respondents try to take in and understand the whole scene (or screen) before attending to specific items. In this way visual features are important such as emboldened words, large fonts, colours, brightness, section headings, spacing and placing boxes around items. Smyth (2004, p.21) also suggests that the use of headings and separation of sections take on added significance in internet-based surveys. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.373) tell us that surveys and questionnaires are relatively simple data collection devices but can be time-consuming to design and require careful forethought and planning in terms of exactly what analysis is to be done with each piece of information gathered. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.382) inform us that there are several kinds of question and response modes in questionnaires, including for example: dichotomous questions, multiple choice questions, rating scales, constant sum questions, ratio data and open-ended questions.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.384) explain a central problem with questionnaires is that different respondents interpret the same words differently. ‘Anchor statements’ they tell are useful to allow a degree of variance in response (e.g. ‘strongly

agree', 'agree', etc.) but there is no guarantee that respondents will always interpret them as intended.

Babbie (2010, p.255) defines a questionnaire as 'an instrument specifically designed to elicit information that will be useful for analysis'. Oppenheim (1992, p.81-2) suggests that interviews have higher response rates than questionnaires because respondents become more involved and motivated; they enable more to be said about the research than is usually mentioned in a covering letter to a questionnaire, and they are better than questionnaires for handling more difficult and open-ended questions. The design of a survey method section follows a standard format. It has detailed typical components. Creswell (2013) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) provide a checklist of questions and advice for designing a survey which I followed regarding purposes, objectives, research questions, the population and sample, the topic, constructs, concepts, the kinds of measures or responses needed, the questionnaire items, research questions, piloting, refining and administering the questionnaire. Prior to completing the online questionnaire it was necessary to inform the prospective participants of what's involved in the study. The opening section of the questionnaire welcomes potential participants to the questionnaire. It informs them of the description and outline of the study, telling them the purpose of the study, how to participate in the study, the benefits and risks of the study and the requirements for participation. The Researcher Contact Information is given along with information regarding freedom of withdrawal. If teachers wish to respond to the questionnaire they must provide informed consent. They are afforded the opportunity to consent to participate in the questionnaire and confirm their understanding of what's involved in the study. They are requested to read and tick their understanding of a number of statements. Participants were asked to consent before continuing with the questionnaire.

The respondents may not know anything about the researcher or if it is a bona fide piece of research. The solution proposed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) is to include the researcher's affiliation (e.g. university) with a logo if possible. Regarding informed consent Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) suggest ensuring that it is easy for the respondents to withdraw at any time e.g. by including a 'Withdraw' button at the foot of each screen.

An online questionnaire was the preferred type of quantitative data collection procedure for the study due to its ability to reach a large number of people. It is also a cost-effective means of collecting data. The economy of design, its convenience and the rapid turnaround of data in collection are acknowledged as strengths by Fowler and Cosenza

(2009). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) tell us how the use of the internet for the conduct of surveys is becoming commonplace in many branches of social science. Some advantages of internet-based over paper-based surveys according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) are cost and time reduction, capturing a wider audience, respondents can respond from home in a time suitable to themselves, affords anonymity, software can prompt respondents to complete missed items, reduction in human error in transferring results and greater generalisability may be obtained as internet users come from a wide and diverse population. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) outline potential problems with internet surveys such as with sampling, ethics, technical issues, respondents, layout and presentation, reliability and dropout. One example of a problem they give regarding ethics is respondents may wish to keep their identity from the researcher and an email address would identify them. The possible solution they suggest is to direct respondents to a website rather than using email correspondence. In this research the questionnaire was sent as an attachment to a general email sent to the school.

3.3.2 Pilot study

Chromy (2000) tells us ‘it is good practice to pilot test all survey procedures with a small advance study before implementing a large full-scale survey’. Berend (2000) informs us ‘when the survey instrument is put together, it is helpful to submit it to a review by experts and to administer it to a group similar to those who will comprise the main survey sample’. He advises piloting a study first. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.384) emphasise the importance of the wording of questionnaires and that pre-testing is crucial to their success. Pilot testing has several potential advantages telling us how long the survey takes, which questions were unclear and if the pilot sample is large enough to measure a construct. This online survey was piloted among eight teachers first in order to establish clarity and understanding of questions and the average time for completion. Oppenheim (1992, p.48) tells us that everything about the questionnaire should be piloted; nothing should be excluded, not even the type face or the quality of the paper.

3.3.3 Distribution of questionnaire

The term sampling refers to the process of selecting the individuals who will participate in a research study. A sample is any subsection of the population of individuals on whom information is obtained. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.138) remind us not to

assume that research will always go according to plan and a poor response rate to questionnaires might be encountered, rendering subsequent analysis, reporting and generalisation problematical. A stratified convenience sample was selected for this research.

3.3.4 Response rate

My initial plan of sending the questionnaire to 1000 teachers was not successful. This poor response rate was probably due primarily to access. With the changes in GDPR in May 2018 it was not permissible to access the email addresses of individual teachers for example from the INTO or DES database. Access was only permissible to the schools. A database of school email addresses is available on the DES website. The emails were sent to the schools and the secretaries forwarded them to the principals. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) list possible reasons for low response rates some of which are probably relevant to this research. The poor response rate was due to a combination of factors such as the questionnaire not reaching the required audience, teacher apathy with the topic of MLM and SSE, teacher work overload and the timing. The questionnaire was sent in the last term when schools are particularly busy. Survey fatigue is an issue as the DES sent its own online questionnaire regarding SSE to principals in 2015 which they had to complete. A modified approach was adopted which did yield the desired response.

3.3.5 Questionnaire analysis

The actual survey instrument used in this part of the research was the online questionnaire. This involved designing a user-friendly questionnaire in Google Forms following the guidelines and recommendations given by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2014) and Creswell (2013). The online questionnaire was designed by the researcher for the purpose of this research only.



With products such as Google Forms researchers can create their own surveys quickly using custom templates and post them on websites or email them for participants to complete. This software program can generate results and report them back to the researcher as descriptive statistics or as graphed information. Participants could not proceed with the online questionnaire until they had consented to its terms. The email included an explanation of the purpose of the research and a request for their participation. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed in that the identities of the participants will not be made known. The quantitative part entailed asking teachers closed questions.

The questionnaire consists of seven sections- Description of the Study, Informed Consent, Background Information, SSE, Role of Middle Leadership and Management with regard to SSE, Middle Leadership and Management and 'Looking At Our School 2016' and Outside Agencies. These sections were formed based on the themes taken from the documentary analysis of the three key policy documents. A combination of open and closed questions was used.

Following ethical guidelines the respondent was fully informed about the nature and purpose of the questionnaire. All documentation relating to the questionnaire is included in the appendices such as the plain language statement (Appendix A), the consent form (Appendix B) and a copy of the questionnaire itself (Appendix D). Participants would have accessed the plain language statement and the consent form electronically when completing the questionnaire. Both continuous scales and categorical scales were used in the questionnaire. The question types and their associated variables are available to view in a copy of the questionnaire (Appendix D).

A descriptive analysis on these results was conducted and presented in Chapter 5. The number of participants is too small to conduct more advanced inferential analysis. As mentioned Google Forms automatically generates descriptive results using graphs and bar charts. The researcher is trained in SPSS and used this statistical computer program to conduct more advanced descriptive analysis than that generated by Google Forms. The findings helped inform the questions for the interview schedule.

The final part of the research sees the researcher returning to qualitative analysis where indepth interviews were conducted with the selected participants.

3.4 Interview coding, participant selection and analysis

3.4.1 Introduction and background

The third and final part of the research was the conducting of interviews. According to Kvale (2008) the interview in research provides an opportunity for knowledge that is generated between humans for example through conversations. Follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis either face-to-face or by telephone giving an opportunity to explore in more detail some of the significant findings from the online questionnaires. Silverman (1993) suggests that it is important for each interviewee to understand the question in the same way. He suggests that the reliability of interviews can be enhanced by careful piloting of interview schedules, training of interviewers, inter-rater reliability in the coding of responses and the extended use of closed questions. These suggestions were adhered too. A pilot was conducted by interviewing two teachers. With regard to training the researcher however had no formal training in interviewing but did have opportunities to practice over the course of the EdD programme. Silverman (1993) argues for the importance of open-ended interviews, as this enables respondents to demonstrate their unique way of looking at the world - their definition of the situation. Open-ended questions enable important but unanticipated issues to be raised.

Oppenheim (1992, pp.96–7) suggests several causes of bias in interviewing with regard to sampling, rapport, wording, prompting, probing, questioning, coding and recording of data. Kvale (1996, p.158) argues that leading questions may be necessary in order to obtain information that the interviewer suspects the interviewee might be withholding. There were no leading questions in this researcher's interview schedule.

Oppenheim (1992, p.148) argues that interviewers seeking attitudinal responses have to ensure that people with known characteristics are included in the sample which was the case in this research. Kvale (1996, p.126) also suggests that there are definite asymmetries of

power as the interviewer tends to define the situation, the topics and the course of the interview.

Miller and Cannell (1997) identify some particular problems in conducting telephone interviews which was the case in this research where the reduction of the interview situation to just auditory sensory cues can be particularly problematical. Robinson (1982) suggests conducting telephone interviews leads to the absence of non-verbal cues. However, Nias (1991) and Miller and Cannell (1997) alternatively suggest that the very fact that interviews are not face-to-face may strengthen their reliability, as the interviewee might disclose information that may not be so readily forthcoming in a face-to-face, more intimate situation.

Bell and Waters (2014, p.182) state that ‘one major advantage of the interview is its adaptability’. It enables the researcher to probe, follow up and investigate motives and feelings which cannot be done with questionnaires. It takes account of the way in which a response is made noting for example tone of voice, facial expression and hesitation. Interviewing is a time-consuming process and is a highly subjective technique with an inherent danger of bias. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.409) tell us ‘the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life, it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable’. They tell us that interviews are not subjective or objective but intersubjective. Creswell (2002) outlines the advantages and disadvantages of interviews. Regarding advantages he tells us they are useful when participants cannot be directly involved, participants can provide historical information and they allow the researcher control over the line of questioning. The disadvantages he informs us are that they provide indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees, they provide information in a designated place rather than the natural field setting, the researcher’s presence may bias responses and not all people are equally articulate and perceptive.

Basic procedures such as contacting the interviewee in advance, reaching agreement, conducting at a mutually convenient time are recommended. It is important to build trust and rapport. It is essential to prepare recording equipment and arrange seating positions to best advantage. Denscombe (2014) advises to initially ask an easy question to help the interviewee to settle down or relax. Creswell (2013) calls this ‘an ice-breaker’. At the end the interviewee should be invited to raise points and thanked for their participation. Denscombe (2014) recommends recording the interview. He reminds us how psychologists tell us human memory is prone to partial recall, bias and error. Field notes can be taken to complement an audio recording. It is good practice Denscombe (2014) says to check the transcript with the informant.

Bernard (2012) and Denscombe (2014) describes the different structures of interviews. Interviews can be classified as structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Structured interviews involve the use of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews have questions with more flexibility and unstructured interviews are non-directive. Interviews can be carried out face-to-face or over the telephone or Internet (Bernard, 2012).

3.4.2 Selection of participants for interviews

The subjects for the research were a retired Assistant Chief DES Inspector and 18 primary school leaders and teachers. In order to ascertain the key issues regarding MLM teachers in primary schools with regard to SSE I interviewed eighteen teachers (6 Senior Management, 6 MLM and 6 non-postholders) and a retired inspector. The purpose of these semi-structured interviews was to find out key issues regarding the role of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in schools. By interviewing nineteen professionals in the field of education it offered me a clearer picture of what the key issues are regarding MLM with regard to SSE.

Based on the information retrieved from the questionnaires an interview schedule was designed for the semi-structured interviews with the target group of eighteen teachers and one retired inspector. Interviews were used as a research design in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the issues involved in MLM and SSE. All researchers Creswell (2013) tells us have biases, values or personal background that they bring to qualitative research and which shapes our interpretations.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) assert that researchers can ‘handpick’ cases for the sample on the basis of their judgement, typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. Creswell (2013, p.189) informs us that idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (documents) that best help in the research. There are he tells us four parts to selecting these participants and sites (a) settings (Where?), (b) actors (Who?), c) events (What?) and (d) process.

A purposive sampling strategy was used whereby the researcher identified suitable people for interview. The interviewees were selected based on the profiles required and having completed the questionnaires. It was decided to interview a sample of teachers from large, medium-sized and small schools. This would reflect the profile of the MLM teams in the schools. The data were analysed manually and using NVivo12.

Purposive sampling operates on the principle that we can get the best information through focussing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected on the basis of their known attributes (i.e not through random selection) (Denscombe, 2014, p.14).

Purposive sampling suited this research with regard to the selection of interviewees.

Purposive sampling works where the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data (Denscombe, 2014, p.41).

There was no imbalance of power evident in this research. Interviewing is a convenient and easy way to collect data. However, it is laborious and time-consuming particularly with regard to the transcriptions as a one-hour interview typically take about 4-5 hours to transcribe. The researcher is aware that there are software packages available to enable digital transcriptions which offers a faster way of transcribing. The researcher decided to transcribe the recordings manually in order to ensure clarity and to enhance familiarisation with the content and tone of responses received. The interviews were transcribed immediately after taking place in order to maximise clarity and aid the researcher with the recall of responses.

The researcher thinks that nineteen was a good number of interviewees to select due to the time constraints present in the research and to what Creswell (2013) and Gentles *et al.* (2015) refer to as ‘saturation’. After a number of interviews the same information is repeated with nothing new being given and any new knowledge is exhausted. The researcher conducted face-to-face and telephone interviews with participants. Creswell (2103) says about the need to ‘winnow’ the data which means focusing on some areas to elicit the data that required. As mentioned Creswell (2013, p.195) suggests using about choosing about 5-7 themes. The interviewees as mentioned earlier consisted of six in senior management, six in MLM positions and six who had no formal leadership and management duties in the school.

All the interviews were conducted 1:1 and all were recorded using a smartphone. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes. There are many advantages to interviewing as a research method and the face-to-face is probably the better of the two formats mentioned in the sense that it allows for body language and facial expression to be acknowledged. It helps the interviewer create a deeper understanding of what the interviewee is saying. The phone offers a satisfactory alternative way to access interviewees across the country. The same guidelines and procedures were followed regarding the interviews as with the online questionnaires. The interview schedule consisted of ten questions regarding the main themes

and categories established from the documentary analysis and based on the findings of the online questionnaire. A copy of interview schedule is included as Appendix C.

As mentioned in obtaining the interviewees it was decided to get teachers from across the spread of schools i.e small, medium and large schools. The role of the principal and the MLM teachers in these various types of school differ because of the varying conditions in their schools. In a small or medium-sized school the principal is a teaching principal with very little time afforded for administrative duties. In the larger schools the principal is an administrative principal. Larger schools would have more MLM teachers than smaller or medium-sized schools. It is more likely to see MLM teams in larger schools with each MLM teacher being responsible for a particular curricular area and thus more actively involved in leading SSE. Over two thirds of schools are small, rural schools with a teaching principal and fewer than six teachers.

The profile of the interviewees

Inspector	Senior Leadership and Management	MLM teachers	Other teachers
1	6	6	6

Table 3.4.2a

The profile of schools of the interviewees

Small	Medium	Large
6	6	6

Table 3.4.2b

The responses from the interviewees were transcribed and analysed using a combination of both manual analysis and NVivo12 for deeper clarity and effect. The specific form of data collection used was a semi-structured, individual interview conducted either face-to-face or by telephone.

3.4.3 Interview coding and analysis

The interviews were transcribed for analysis. Analysis involved both handcoding and computer coding. Initially the transcripts were read to get a sense of what the interviewee was saying and then re-read and handcoded for themes and categories. The transcripts were uploaded in NVivo12 and analysed using NVivo12. Creswell (2013) tells us that qualitative computer data analysis program NVivo12 provides an efficient means for storing and locating qualitative data. The researcher acknowledges that although the software is a faster

and more efficient way of categorising data the researcher felt it necessary to go through it manually.

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. The transcripts were printed out and also inputted to NVivo12. The transcripts were read and re-read so the researcher became familiar with them. The topics were expected based on the questions. Surprising and unusual topics were included. The codes were both emerging and predetermined. We will see from this analysis that the following key themes emerge administration, barriers, change, committee, communication, contact, critique, expertise, improvement, leading SSE, ownership, paperwork, remuneration, role, style, support, teamwork, time and training.

The themes for the interview transcripts were very much predetermined based on the ten questions in the interview schedule. The themes are described as a narrative in the analysis Chapter 6. As a combination of both manual and computer coding was used the findings will be presented in two ways. A descriptive analysis of the data was completed by the researcher. The use of NVivo12 allowed the researcher to present findings also using tables, graphs and figures.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Creswell (2000) tells us about ‘the importance of ethics in scholarly inquiry’. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p.76) suggests ‘that ethics in educational research is fraught with dilemmas’. In order to carry out research the researcher abided by the DCU Ethics policy. Ethical approval was received for the research from the DCU Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix E). Respondents to questionnaires and interviews were requested to sign a consent form (as requested by DCU) guaranteeing them confidentiality, anonymity and the assurance the results will be used for the sole purpose of academic research. Ethical issues involve consent, access, withdrawal, trust, confidentiality, terms of involvement, relative status relationships, data ownership, thesis accessibility etc.

Ethics have to be considered while conducting any type of research. With the online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews where the researcher was requesting the input of information from other participants these respondents were given information to ensure they understood the purpose of research and know their rights. The questionnaire and interviews didn’t have any leading, presumptive or offensive questions. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008, p.3) tell us in carrying out research ‘we are morally bound to conduct our research in a manner that minimises potential harm to those involved in the study’.

As a postholder in a primary school the researcher made her perspective clear from the outset. The researcher is aware of her own biases in this area. Informed consent forms, assuring anonymity and confidentiality were issued to respondents to the online questionnaires and the interviews. Anonymity is a research condition in which no one including the researcher knows the identities of research participants. This applies to the online questionnaires. Confidentiality will ensure that no one except the researcher will know the identities of participants in the study. This applies to the interviews. Confidentiality refers to the treatment of information that a participant has disclosed to the researcher in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be revealed to others in ways that violate the original consent agreement, unless permission is granted by the participant. The data were password protected and stored on a pc.

The questionnaire will always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent regarding a number of perspectives e.g. time to complete, sensitive questions and invasion of privacy. Questionnaire respondents and interviewees are not passive data providers but rather subjects not objects of the research. Respondents must be encouraged to participate and have the right to withdraw at any time.

Informed consent was obtained for face-to-face interviews using plain language consent forms and giving the right of withdrawal. Informed consent is a key ethical principle. A prospective participant should be provided as much information as required to make a decision about participating. There are no vulnerable adults or children involved in the research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) tell us ‘Given that qualitative data analysis frequently concerns individual cases and unique instances, and may involve personal and sensitive matters, it raises the question of identifiability, confidentiality and privacy of individuals.’ Codd (1988, p.254) reminds us of the ethical and legal issues regarding documentary analysis where we must be mindful of concepts such as laws of copyright, freedom of speech and data protection.

3.6 Limitations of the study

This small-scale research was prone to limitations such as time. Due to time constraints it was not possible to conduct more interviews. Time became a factor too in the distribution of the online questionnaire.

3.7 Conclusion

The exploratory sequential mixed methods worked well in this study. The interviews were productive in that they allowed teachers an opportunity to develop themes touched on in

the questionnaire. I will give a detailed description of all the analysis in the following chapters

Chapter 4 Documentary Analysis of the Three Key Policy Documents

Chapter 5 Analysis of Online Questionnaires

Chapter 6 Analysis of Interviews

Part 2

The Research

Chapter 4

A Documentary Analysis of the Three Key Policy Documents

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the inception to implementation of three key national policy documents *LAOS 2016*, *SSE 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017* is examined through the lens of Bowe, Ball and Gold's (1992) policy cycle. These documents are the seminal policy statements issued by the DES concerning the subject of this thesis, namely the inspection and evaluation rubric of the inspectorate (*LAOS 2016*), the process of self-evaluation to be conducted by schools (*SSE 2016*) and the role to be played in both by school senior and middle leadership and management (*Circular 0063/2017*). The relationship between *LAOS 2016* and *SSE 2016* is important to note. The former is a complete statement of school evaluation policy and practice including inspection and SSE while the latter is a detailed template for the conduct of self-evaluation by schools. In that sense the latter might be perceived as a subset of the former.

In the introductory chapter I outlined the purpose of this work which is to evaluate the scope and extent of the role and impact of MLM in primary schools in implementing SSE in practice. I indicated that a key part of this research would involve a close and detailed analysis of the three seminal documents concerning SSE promulgated by the DES in recent years. In the preceding chapter I outlined in detail the methodology of documentary analysis which I propose to use and the steps which would be taken to identify the key ideas, categories and themes emerging from these documents. I have chosen to take each document in turn to begin this process of analysis, comparison and contrast. I complete this chapter by drawing the themes together and suggest that they present a clear description of the emerging and developing policy of the DES around the envisaged roles and tasks of MLM in the process of SSE.

This, as it were, is the rhetoric of policy and will provide the basis on which my fieldwork both quantitative and qualitative will seek to evaluate the extent to which the rhetoric is in fact received and acted upon in schools.

For the purpose of this analysis I have chosen to use the policy analysis framework designed by Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992). The reason for my choice of this particular policy framework is the fact that Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) present a policy cycle as opposed to a traditional linear model in their understanding of policy from beginning to enactment and this cyclical approach is particularly relevant to the education policy that forms the basis of this research. Bowe, Ball and Gold's (1992) policy analysis framework has three cyclical stages as outlined in the following image

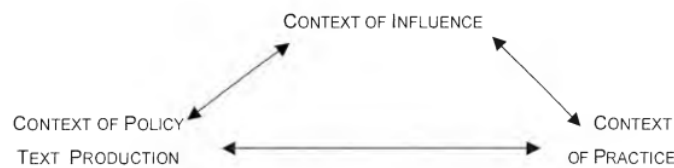


Fig.1 The Policy Cycle (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992, p.20)

Diagram 4.1

Ball (1994) later added in two more stages The Context of Outcomes and The Context of Political Strategies.

4.2 Shared Influences on policy documents

4.2.1 Political context as perceived by a number of policy specialists

Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) remind us that policy has a history. There is a context of influence with regard to policy formation (Bowe, Ball, Gold, 1992). Sugrue (2006) has traced the evolution of performativity and accountability policy and practice over the last twenty years in Ireland. He outlines the effects of economic growth and with it the development of materialism and consumerism in Irish society and how this has impacted on our education policy. Sugrue (2006, p.3) tells us how ‘the language of efficiency shapes our public as well as our private lives’.

Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012, p.2) suggest that the 1990s saw the introduction of new managerialism in education in Ireland. Ireland had entered the age of modernisation and neo-liberalism was the reigning policy discourse. A ‘spirit of capitalism’ was entering Irish society according to Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012, p.3). This led to the introduction of a new mode of governance. Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012, p.14) contend that market-led models of control and regulation became part of the public sector. The language of choice was part of the discourse and competition was encouraged. Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012, p.10) tell us how ‘accountability was one of the key principles informing policy development in the Education White paper in 1995’.

New managerialism has led to performance indicators, systems of accountability and strategic plans in Irish education. However, Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) argue that the strategic location of teachers and unions limits the impact of new managerialism in primary and second-level education. Yet, the new managerial language of efficiency, flexibility and accountability has become part of the education policy vernacular despite

opposition from unions and management bodies. Ireland has moved from being a state governed by theocratic principles to one governed by market principles according to Lynch, Grummel and Devine (2012, p.21). This is very much the policy context and influence in which the key policy documents under discussion here emerged, and, as we shall see, the language and concepts of the new managerialism permeates the documents.

According to Lynch (2014, p.1) 'New managerialism represents the organisational arm of neoliberalism'. She explains how it gives primacy to product and output over process and input. Lynch (2014, p.3) says that 'Within new managerialism, there is an elision of the differences between public and private interests'. Lynch (2014, p.5) suggests that the 'new managerialism's prioritisation of efficiency and effectiveness' is often at the 'expense of more broadly-based moral and social values related to care, autonomy, tolerance, respect, trust and equality'. She contends (2014, p.6) that education is commodified. The caring skills she tells us cannot be quantified or measured. Lynch (2014) argues that too much accountability can damage values. Professionals lose their autonomy. For academic theorists such as Lynch and Sugrue this can ultimately be damaging for education.

Solbrekke and Englund (2011, p.2) examine the different meanings given to professional responsibility and look closely at the two concepts of professional 'responsibility' and 'accountability'. In examining the key distinctions between 'responsibility' and 'accountability' Solbrekke and Englund (2011, p.9) tell us how key synonyms for 'responsibility' are trustworthiness, capacity, dependability, reliability, trust, capability, judgement and choice and in contrast, key definitions of 'accountability' include answerability, blame, liability and obligation. They contend that 'accountability' emphasises the *duty to account* for one's actions, and concerns what is rendered to another, while 'responsibility' is a *moral obligation* assumed by oneself, or bestowed upon a person to be used for another (Solbrekke and Englund, 2011, p.9). They examine the implications for professional work telling us that 'We must constantly remind ourselves that professional responsibility implies more than mere accountability' (2011, p.14).

Other educationalists in Ireland such as MacRuairc (2011) also refer to this 'economisation of education'. Education has become commodified due to the influence of neo-liberalism and post-modernity. These ideologies with their emphasis on marketisation, performativity and test scores have been a significant influence in shaping these policies.

Academic research plays a huge role in shaping the education policy and practice which I will be looking at with regard to each document separately. For example MacBeath's

(1999) research *Schools Must Speak for Themselves* and McNamara and O'Hara's (2008) *Trusting Schools and Teachers: Developing Educational Professionalism through Self-Evaluation* have had a significant influence on education policy as has Spillane's (2005) work on distributed leadership. Another significant influence is the OECD.

MacRuairc (2010) tells us '....an analysis of a number of previous policy recommendations focusing on the education sector in the Republic of Ireland indicates that the OECD has been very influential in the framing of national policy'. This applies very strongly to school evaluation. MacRuairc (2010) reports on research from the OECD (2008) which states that 'student achievement *seems* to be higher when teachers are held accountable through the involvement of principals and external inspectors in monitoring lessons'.

Having tried to expound the political context as perceived by a number of policy specialists and looked at the social, economic and financial background from which these policies emerged I will now take a brief look at Bowe, Ball and Gold's (1992) policy cycle. In the context of the above debate Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) take a very critical view of new managerialism a view with which I tend to concur and thus seems to be a very good tool for policy analysis in this case.

4.2.2 Bowe, Ball and Gold's (1992) Policy Cycle

Ball (2005) prefers the use of the word 'enactment' to implementation when referring to education policy as it entails the full range of activities and engagements in implementation. Ball (2005, p.7) tells us 'We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us' and that we do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do'. Ball (2005) refers to 'policy subjects' and 'policy actors'. Ball (2005) explains how teachers do not 'do policy' but rather 'policy does them'. With the 'intensification' of teacher's work Ball (2005) explains how this leads to 'more paperwork, more bureaucracy'. It is a case of 'more work, less time' (Ball, 2005).

Performance is a part of 'state regulation' (Ball, 1993). The 'new performative worker' is a promiscuous self, enterprising self-passion for excellence' according to Ball (1993). There are three interrelated policy technologies according to Ball (1993) the market, managerialism and performativity. Ball (1993) explains how neo-liberalism has led to 'privatisation' and 'commodification' of core public services. Regarding performance processes it is not de-regulation but re-regulation. In the performative culture, performativity has no room for caring. We are not expected to 'care 'about each other just about

performances (Ball, 1993). Organisations have become ‘auditable commodities’ (Ball, 1993). Policy is not just a product but a process. Regarding policy enactment in education the teachers are ‘key agents’ as the ‘final policy brokers’ according to Ball (1993). He talks about the ‘paradox of enactment’ and that teachers are ‘not passive’ as they enact the policy initiative (Ball, 1993).

Ball, Maguire, Braun (2012, p.3) tell us ‘policy is done by and to teachers’. As Ball (1993, p.4) says ‘when the glossy brochure arrives through the letterbox into the school it does not arrive in a vacuum’. Having passed the policy as text production stage the policy now has to be ‘translated’ and ‘intepreted’. There are many different interpretations, what Ball (1993) describes as ‘interpretations of interpretations’. The ‘policy gap’ that Ball (2005) refers to will be evident in the enactment of the policy being different to what was initially intended due to different interpretations. How the policy is put into practice depends on the ‘policy actors’, the people who translate it and give it meaning. This will lead to different outcomes in different places.

I will now look at each of these three documents separately using Bowe, Ball and Gold’s (1992) policy cycle of analysis starting with *LAOS 2016*. As we go through the documents the cyclical nature of the process of policy development and enactment will become more apparent.

4.3 Looking At Our Schools: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools 2016 (*LAOS 2016*)

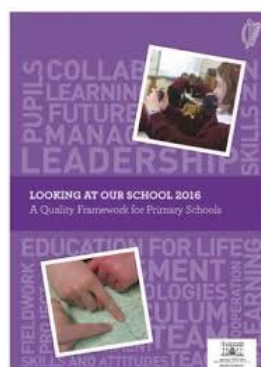


Diagram 4.3

4.3.1 The Context of Influence

Having outlined the political factors which I think have helped shape the formation of *LAOS 2016* I will now take a look at some of the other influential factors. *LAOS 2016* was published by the DES in September 2016. *LAOS 2016* replaced *LAOS 2003* which was the first official policy document designed to re-shape and re-energise the process of school inspection which had a long history in Ireland but had become largely moribund. The Education Act 1998 mandated whole SDP with development plans to be formally devised by schools and made available to inspectors. The Act had clearly defined, for the first time, the role and responsibility of the Inspectorate and this taken together with SDP charted the way to a model of evaluation involving both external inspection linked to internal research and development. A number of years passed with little progress but the *LAOS 2003* document finally set out a clear framework within which school inspections and the related new notion of SSE would be conducted. The *LAOS 2003* document was very much influenced by the work of MacBeath (1999) and also by concerns that given the controversial nature of school inspection in Ireland and the suspicions of the teacher unions a low stakes unthreatening approach was appropriate. In the years that followed both inspection and SSE became well established and mostly uncontroversial. However, in the years between 2003 and 2016 academic critiques and, it may be inferred, a desire by the Inspectorate to, as it were, tighten up the accountability element of inspection led to revised policy documents and some considerable changes to practice in the *LAOS 2016* document.

In *LAOS 2003* schools were introduced to the concept of SSE, which, due primarily to the work of MacBeath, had gained considerable currency in an increasing number of education systems. In the foreword, the then Chief Inspector, tells us how *LAOS 2003* (p.6) was designed to ‘to strive for excellence in our schools’. It was devised in consultation with the education partners and was to establish a model of school evaluation in which external inspection and SSE would be entwined. Regarding quality in schools, efficiency and effectiveness were to be formally evaluated both through Whole School Evaluation (WSE) and SSE conducted internally in schools but following closely a template provided by the Inspectorate. The Education Act 1998 (p.11) had outlined the schools’ role in planning and how quality assurance is necessary to ‘monitor and assess the quality’ of schools and *LAOS 2003* sets out a very detailed description outlining how school improvement involves both external review and internal self-evaluation and exactly how these processes were to be conducted. This represents a noticeable shift in emphasis by the Inspectorate in that, previously, inspection had been perceived and conducted as an entirely external activity. As indicated above, *LAOS 2003*

provides a model based very much on the theories of MacBeath (1999) who sees ‘the role of external evaluation as being to ensure that internal improvement is conducted effectively’.

LAOS 2016 set out to address some of the weaknesses of *LAOS 2003* as identified, for example by McNamara and O’Hara (2008a). The biggest of these was that the quality of data available in schools to conduct any type of extensive SSE was poor and the capacity of schools and teachers to engage in this activity was weak. McNamara and O’Hara (2008a, p.71) remark that ‘no attempt is made to suggest who should collect and analyse the information or how data can be collected.’ A second major criticism made by McNamara and O’Hara (2008a) was that, while there was a very unwieldy set of 143 themes for self-evaluation outlined and a suggestion that schools rate themselves against these on a four-point scale, no criteria as to what might count as good performance on these themes were defined. Other criticisms were that, in the early days, WSE reports were not available to the public and even when this was rectified in 2005 the reports were vague and anodyne. Finally, it was noted that no role in inspection or SSE for parents or pupils was provided for nor indeed was the exact relationship between SSE and external inspection made clear, since SSE was not made a mandatory activity for schools.

LAOS 2016 was designed to address these critiques and taken together with *SSE 2016* can be described as a more coherent, robust and complete statement of school evaluation policy and how it was to be implemented. *LAOS 2016* for the first time defines a detailed quality framework whereby schools can measure their effectiveness by using the domains of the framework. The framework maps out a common set of standards and a common language that schools can use to make their own judgements regarding their effectiveness. In the following section I will take a closer look at some of this language as it pertains to MLM. In doing so we will begin, through the lens of Bowe, Ball and Gold’s (1992) policy analysis framework to see the language of targets, data use, and such, redolent of ‘new public management’ theory begin to emerge.

4.3.2 The Context of Text Production

LAOS 2016 is a 30-page document. It can be accessed at www.education.ie (along with other such publications). Looking specifically at the text, the language of *LAOS 2016* is completely different to that of *LAOS 2003*. *LAOS 2003* consisted of terminology such as areas, aspects and components with a total of 143 themes and sub-themes. There were, for example a total of 30 themes for In-School Management. In contrast the modified and

simplified *LAOS 2016* has two dimensions – teaching and learning and leadership and management, the latter being the focus of this research. Each dimension has four domains with each domain having four standards.

What is working well?	What aspects of our practice are already effective / highly effective?
What is not working as well as we'd like?	What aspects of our practice are not yet effective / highly effective?
How can we improve things?	What do we need to do to improve our practice to ensure it is effective / highly effective?

Diagram 4.3.21

For the purpose of this research I will look specifically at the standards and statements of practice relevant to MLM and SSE only. Ball (1993) describes ‘policy as text’ and ‘policy as discourse’. Policy involves both the written and the spoken word. *LAOS 2016* is addressed to the managerial bodies. Its language is plain, concise and clear. The four domains are outlined as follows.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	Leading learning and teaching	School leaders: promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning
	Managing the organisation	School leaders: establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability
	Leading school development	School leaders: communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education
	Developing leadership capacity	School leaders: critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation, and pupil leadership build professional networks with other school leaders

Diagram 4.3.22

Looking at *LAOS 2016* (p.23) with regard to leadership and management we see the introduction of new terminology such as a ‘culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in the first domain’ and ‘foster teacher professional development, effective communication, professional responsibility and accountability in the second domain. ‘Monitoring’ (p.24), ‘leading SSE’ (p.27) and ‘guiding vision’ (p.27) are new terminology in the third domain and in the fourth domain we have statements such as ‘critique their practice as leaders and develop efficient sustainable leadership’ and ‘empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles’ (p.13).

LAOS 2016 presents a ‘unified and coherent set of standards’ (p.7) in two dimensions teaching and learning and leadership and management. The set of standards are used to inform the work of inspectors and are to be publicly available. The standards are written using a common language to assist in the dialogue. The principles of the framework are based on a ‘holistic view’ (p.7) with wellbeing being an integral part of the framework.

The language of *LAOS 2016* is plain setting out very clearly its expectations and requirements. The tone is pleasant and friendly. A welcoming, invitational and cordial style is adopted. The document is presented clearly with a foreword, an introduction and five chapters. The chapters are as follows 1. *The Purpose and Rationale*, 2. *The Principles of the Quality Framework*, 3. *The Structure and Approach*, 4. *A Comprehensive Framework to be used selectively* and 5. *The Quality Framework - a range of applications*. A table is included in page 17 with an overview of the quality framework.

LAOS 2016 (p.8) defines ‘school leaders’ at the beginning as this is a term it uses frequently throughout the document. In *LAOS 2016* school leaders refer to those who have designated formal roles of leadership and management in the school i.e principals, deputy and assistant principals. However, the Inspectorate acknowledges that ‘all teachers play a leadership role within the school’ and they wish to ‘develop’ this role (2016, p.8).

In looking at the statements for the effective and the highly effective practice we can see how they differ in their wording and terminology. For ease of reading and emphasis the differences have been emboldened by the Inspectorate in the statements of practice for the highly effective practice. We can see how the terminology and language used for the statements of practice for the highly effective schools is more descriptive and powerful. The statements of practice for the highly effective schools are based more on practice rather than aspiration. They are concerned about evidence of practice rather than theory. The statements of practice for the

effective practice acknowledges how the school leaders are, for example ‘aware’ (p.25), ‘recognise’ and ‘ensure’ (p.26) whereas in highly effective practice they are acknowledged with terminology such as ‘inspire’ (p.27) ‘identify’ and ‘empower’ (p.29). I will now take a closer look at some of the standards regarding MLM and SSE.

3. The structure and application of the Quality Framework

I. OVERVIEW

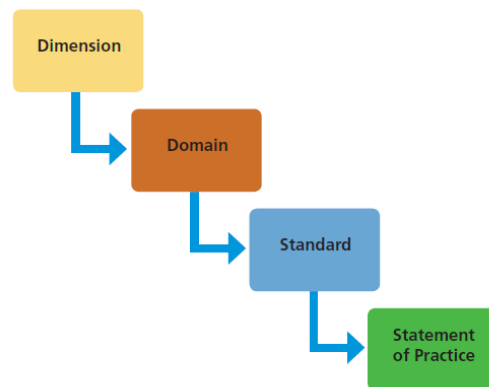


Diagram 4.3.23

(DES, 2016, p.7)

The Statements of Practice- Leadership and Management

Domain 1: Leading Learning and Teaching

Postholders always had responsibilities in a curricular area but leading the learning and teaching aspect of the curriculum is given greater currency in the new role. Collaboration is acknowledged.

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching, and assessment	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school work to promote a learning culture. They have generally high expectations for pupils and lead staff in striving for improved outcomes. They support reflective practice and promote a culture of improvement.</p> <p>The principal, with those leading the process, uses SSE to encourage teaching that is engaging and challenging, and to increase pupils' interest in learning.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school encourage teachers to develop their teaching, learning and assessment practices, and to share their practice.</p> <p>They encourage innovation and creativity. They recognise the value of individual and collective contributions and achievements.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school foster a culture in which learning flourishes. They lead the school community to continuously strive for excellence by setting high expectations for pupils. They promote a culture of continuous improvement by supporting colleagues to become reflective practitioners.</p> <p>The principal, with those leading the process, uses SSE very effectively to encourage teaching that is engaging and challenging, and to enable all pupils to become active and motivated learners.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school expect and encourage teachers to develop and extend their teaching, learning and assessment practices, and to share practices that have proven successful at improving learning.</p> <p>They actively promote innovation and creativity. They welcome and celebrate individual and collective contributions and achievements.</p>

Diagram 4.3.24

Foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil	<p>The board of management and principal ensure the provision of a broad curriculum and a variety of learning opportunities.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles promote an inclusive school community.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles are committed to ensuring that all relevant school policies are inclusive, and are implemented accordingly.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles adhere to principles of inclusion and social justice to promote equality of opportunity for pupils. They strive to ensure that all members of staff support this ethos.</p>	<p>The board of management and principal foster pupils' holistic development by providing a very broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles promote an inclusive school community which demonstrably values diversity and challenges discrimination.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles ensure that all relevant school policies are inclusive and are implemented accordingly.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles establish clear principles of inclusion and social justice to deliver equality of opportunity throughout all aspects of school life. They do so in collaboration with all members of staff.</p>
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Diagram 4.3.25

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
	<p>Those with leadership and management roles develop and implement effective policies and practices to support pupils' educational, social and personal well-being.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school have effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress and development. They recognise the importance of systematic monitoring to help pupils reach their full potential.</p>	<p>Those with leadership and management roles develop and implement highly effective policies and practices to support pupils' educational, social and personal well-being.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school have highly effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress and development. They ensure that these systems are used to help pupils reach their full potential</p>

Diagram 4.3.26

Manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum	The board of management and the principal provide a broad and balanced curriculum.	The board of management and the principal provide a broad and balanced curriculum, making deliberate and informed efforts to meet the needs of the pupils.
	The principal and other leaders in the school efficiently manage curriculum-related planning.	The principal and other leaders in the school strategically and efficiently manage curriculum-related planning.
	The principal and other leaders in the school are committed to ensuring that the school curriculum is implemented in a way that provides valuable learning experiences, and is working to that end.	The principal and other leaders in the school work purposefully to ensure that all aspects of the school curriculum are implemented in a way that provides all pupils with valuable learning experiences.

Diagram 4.3.27

Foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning	Those in leadership and management roles support teachers' continuing professional development in a range of areas.	Those in leadership and management roles support and promote teachers' continuing professional development in a range of areas, to support high-quality teaching.
	The principal and other leaders in the school seek to identify relevant and purposeful professional development opportunities for teachers. They encourage participation as a means of improving teaching and learning.	The principal and other leaders in the school ensure that professional development is firmly based on action research and is adapted to the identified needs of the school. They maximise opportunities to develop teachers' capacity and competence to improve teaching and learning.
	The principal and other leaders in the school support teachers' participation in professional networks.	The principal and other leaders in the school support and encourage the active participation of teachers in professional networks to improve pupil learning.

Diagram 4.3.28

Domain 2: Managing the Organisation

Postholders always had a managerial aspect to their posts with responsibilities for the management of resources in a particular curricular area.

AND MANAGEMENT	Managing the organisation	School leaders: establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability

Diagram 4.3.29

Establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication	The board of management and the principal are aware of their statutory obligations, and work to ensure that all legislative and policy requirements are met.	The board of management and the principal are fully aware of their statutory obligations, and ensure timely compliance with all legislative and policy requirements.
	The board of management and the principal fulfil their responsibility to create and maintain a climate of security and well-being in the school. They are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all pupils and staff.	The board of management and the principal fulfil their responsibility to create and maintain a climate of security and well-being in the school. They develop and implement clear policies to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils and staff.
	The board of management and the principal understand the school's responsibilities for child protection and health and safety matters and communicate these effectively. They liaise appropriately with the relevant statutory bodies.	The board of management and the principal fully understand the school's responsibilities for child protection and health and safety matters and communicate these very effectively to the whole school community. They work constructively with the relevant statutory bodies.
	The principal and other leaders in the school manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. To this end, they develop and implement effective systems of communication.	The principal and other leaders in the school manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. To this end, they develop and implement effective systems of communication that enable all members of the school community to play their part.

Diagram 4.3.210

Establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication	The board of management and the principal are aware of their statutory obligations, and work to ensure that all legislative and policy requirements are met.	The board of management and the principal are fully aware of their statutory obligations, and ensure timely compliance with all legislative and policy requirements.
	The board of management and the principal fulfil their responsibility to create and maintain a climate of security and well-being in the school. They are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all pupils and staff.	The board of management and the principal fulfil their responsibility to create and maintain a climate of security and well-being in the school. They develop and implement clear policies to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils and staff.
	The board of management and the principal understand the school's responsibilities for child protection and health and safety matters and communicate these effectively. They liaise appropriately with the relevant statutory bodies.	The board of management and the principal fully understand the school's responsibilities for child protection and health and safety matters and communicate these very effectively to the whole school community. They work constructively with the relevant statutory bodies.
	The principal and other leaders in the school manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. To this end, they develop and implement effective systems of communication.	The principal and other leaders in the school manage and oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the school. To this end, they develop and implement effective systems of communication that enable all members of the school community to play their part.

Diagram 4.3.211

Manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation	The principal works well with the board of management to create and maintain a learning organisation that delivers good learning experiences for all pupils and staff.	The principal works very effectively with the board of management to create and maintain a learning organisation that delivers high quality learning experiences for all pupils and staff.
	The principal and other leaders in the school lead and manage the organisational structures in the school effectively.	The principal and other leaders in the school very effectively lead and manage the organisational structures in the school.
	The principal and the board of management constantly monitor the use of budgets, personnel, and other resources and direct them towards identified learning priorities.	The principal and the board of management constantly monitor the use of budgets, personnel, and other resources to ensure that they are closely aligned with identified learning priorities and the school's strategic plan.
	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school manage human resources well, seeking to maximise pupils' learning opportunities. They deploy teachers with a view to making good use of their specific strengths and skills.</p> <p>The board of management maintains the building and grounds to a good standard. It ensures the provision and maintenance of teaching aids and equipment to a good standard.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school manage human resources very effectively to ensure the maximum impact on pupil learning. They deploy teachers strategically to make the best use of their specific strengths and skills.</p> <p>The board of management maintains the building and grounds to a very high standard. It ensures the provision and maintenance of teaching aids and equipment to a very high standard to enable their optimal use.</p>

Diagram 4.3.212

Manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation	The principal works well with the board of management to create and maintain a learning organisation that delivers good learning experiences for all pupils and staff.	The principal works very effectively with the board of management to create and maintain a learning organisation that delivers high quality learning experiences for all pupils and staff.
	The principal and other leaders in the school lead and manage the organisational structures in the school effectively.	The principal and other leaders in the school very effectively lead and manage the organisational structures in the school.
	The principal and the board of management constantly monitor the use of budgets, personnel, and other resources and direct them towards identified learning priorities.	The principal and the board of management constantly monitor the use of budgets, personnel, and other resources to ensure that they are closely aligned with identified learning priorities and the school's strategic plan.
	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school manage human resources well, seeking to maximise pupils' learning opportunities. They deploy teachers with a view to making good use of their specific strengths and skills.</p> <p>The board of management maintains the building and grounds to a good standard. It ensures the provision and maintenance of teaching aids and equipment to a good standard.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school manage human resources very effectively to ensure the maximum impact on pupil learning. They deploy teachers strategically to make the best use of their specific strengths and skills.</p> <p>The board of management maintains the building and grounds to a very high standard. It ensures the provision and maintenance of teaching aids and equipment to a very high standard to enable their optimal use.</p>

Diagram 4.3.213

Manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice	The board of management and the principal ensure that school policies are based on principles of justice and fairness.	The board of management and the principal ensure that the values of the school enshrine equality, fairness and justice for all pupils and staff, and are clearly enunciated in policies.
	The principal and other leaders in the school foster a positive school climate and encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school community.	The principal and other leaders in the school model and develop a strong culture of mutual trust, respect and shared accountability. They foster a very positive school climate and encourages respectful interactions at all levels within the school community.
	When required, the board of management and the principal are prepared to challenge actions, behaviours and practices that do not accord with the school's ethical standards.	The board of management and the principal challenge actions, behaviours and practices that do not accord with the school's ethical standards.
	The board of management and the principal recognise challenging situations when they arise, and sometimes anticipate them. They look for solutions and generally resolve matters satisfactorily.	The board of management and the principal are alert to potentially challenging situations. They work pre-emptively and effectively to manage them, and adopt a solution-focused approach.
	They establish procedures for dealing with conflict and, for the most part, are able to follow them through successfully.	They establish and communicate very clearly the procedures for dealing with conflict and follow them as necessary. They successfully implement and monitor agreed solutions.

Diagram 4.3.214

Develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability	The principal and other leaders in the school encourage staff to evaluate their own practice.	The principal and other leaders in the school expect and facilitate teachers to critically analyse and evaluate their own practice.
	They encourage teachers to engage in collaborative review of their practice and its outcomes, in the interests of professional accountability.	They promote a culture of collaborative review of teaching and learning practices and outcomes, as part of an effective professional accountability process. They do so in an affirming and developmental manner.
	The principal meets teachers annually to discuss their work.	Within this culture of collaborative review, the principal meets teachers annually to discuss their work and their professional development.
	The principal identifies teachers in difficulty, and offers appropriate support. The principal understands his or her responsibility and endeavours to ensure that appropriate action is taken.	The principal, with the board of management, ensures that teachers who are experiencing difficulties are supported effectively, recommends appropriate action where necessary, and ensures that action is taken.

Diagram 4.3.215

Build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community	The principal and other leaders in the school value and support partnership with parents as a means of supporting pupils' learning and wellbeing. They build and maintain good relationships with parents.	The principal and other leaders in the school value and support partnership with parents as a means of supporting pupils' learning and wellbeing. They build and maintain very constructive relationships with parents.
	The board of management and the principal facilitate and support the parents' association to fulfil its partnership and advisory role.	The board of management and the principal facilitate and support the parents' association to fulfil its partnership and advisory role, and to operate as an inclusive forum, supporting the involvement of all parents.
	The principal and other leaders in the school have good links with other schools and education providers to extend learning opportunities for pupils.	The principal and other leaders in the school build and maintain very productive relationships with other schools and education providers to extend learning opportunities for pupils.
	The principal and other leaders in the school build good relationships with the wider community.	The principal and other leaders in the school build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the school and the wider community.
	The principal communicates with parents and other partners through various means. Two-way communication occurs, and there are structures that enable dialogue with partners.	The principal and other leaders in the school build and maintain constructive relationships through effective and regular communication with all school partners using a range of media. They seek and listen to the opinions of others and formally engage in very effective dialogue with partners.

Diagram 4.3.216

Manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education	The principal and other leaders in the school adapt to changes in context or policy environment and manage the implementation of the changes well.	The principal and other leaders in the school demonstrate a clear understanding of change processes and approach the management of change in a collaborative, flexible and sensitive manner.
	Those in leadership and management roles are aware of the school's changing needs, and seek to respond to them.	Those in leadership and management roles are alert and responsive to the changing needs of the school.
	Those in leadership and management roles are aware of educational developments and see their relevance to the school. They seek to use this information constructively.	Those in leadership and management roles keep abreast of thinking, developments and changes in the broader educational environment and use this information positively for the benefit of the school.
	The principal and those leading SSE use the SSE process with increasing effectiveness as a means of managing change.	The principal and those leading SSE use the SSE process very effectively to manage the school's response to changing needs.

Diagram 4.3.217

Domain 3: Leading School Development

Assistant principals have responsibility for leading school development such as leading the school's engagement in the process of SSE.

LEADERSHIP	Leading school development	School leaders: communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education

Diagram 4.3.218

Communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation	The patron, board of management and principal are proactive in establishing and maintaining a guiding vision for the school.	The patron, board of management and principal are proactive in establishing and maintaining a guiding vision for the school.
	The school's guiding vision sets out goals and expectations for the school as a learning community. The principal and other leaders in the school take responsibility for communicating this guiding vision, supported by the trustees and board of management.	The school's guiding vision sets out goals and expectations for the school as a learning community. The principal and other leaders in the school take responsibility for communicating this guiding vision, and does so very effectively, working with the trustees and board of management.
	The principal and other leaders in the school communicate the guiding vision to teachers in a way that encourages them to see their responsibilities as fulfilling it.	The principal and other leaders in the school clearly communicates the guiding vision to teachers, parents and pupils in a way that empowers the whole school community to translate the vision into action.
	The principal and other leaders in the school take positive steps to support and motivate staff, and to set high expectations for learners.	The principal and other leaders in the school inspire and motivate pupils, staff and the whole school community. They set high expectations for every learner.

Diagram 4.3.219

Lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation	Those leading school self-evaluation engage with it as a structured process with a focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment.	Those leading school self-evaluation engage with it as a structured process with a focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment.
	The principal and other leaders in the school recognise that a crucial part of their role is to lead and manage action planning for improvement. They are working to ensure that improvement plans are put into action on a whole-school basis and are monitored systematically.	The principal and other leaders within the school very competently exercise their role in leading and managing action planning for improvement. They ensure that improvement plans are put into action on a whole-school basis and are monitored systematically.
	They endeavour to establish high expectations through the school improvement plan.	They ensure that the school's improvement planning is underpinned by a culture of high aspirations for staff and pupils.
	They are focused on the effective implementation of agreed actions and are committed to measuring their impact.	They work purposefully and very effectively to ensure that actions implemented lead to measurable and identifiable improvements in learner outcomes.

Diagram 4.3.220

Lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation	Those leading school self-evaluation engage with it as a structured process with a focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment.	Those leading school self-evaluation engage with it as a structured process with a focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment.
	The principal and other leaders in the school recognise that a crucial part of their role is to lead and manage action planning for improvement. They are working to ensure that improvement plans are put into action on a whole-school basis and are monitored systematically.	The principal and other leaders within the school very competently exercise their role in leading and managing action planning for improvement. They ensure that improvement plans are put into action on a whole-school basis and are monitored systematically.
	They endeavour to establish high expectations through the school improvement plan.	They ensure that the school's improvement planning is underpinned by a culture of high aspirations for staff and pupils.
	They are focused on the effective implementation of agreed actions and are committed to measuring their impact.	They work purposefully and very effectively to ensure that actions implemented lead to measurable and identifiable improvements in learner outcomes.

Diagram 4.3.221

In both effective and highly effective practice (p.27) ‘Those leading school self-evaluation engage with it as a structured process with a focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment’. It is never stated explicitly who these people are meant to be as the DES is aware that this will vary depending on the context of the school. It is worth noting in this standard it emphasises the principal together with ‘those leading the process’ (p.23) of SSE which may or may not be the MLM depending on the size of the school. In larger schools with a number of MLM teachers the onus would be on the MLM to lead the SSE. It may be the principal, deputy principal, MLM or other teachers. The expectation of the domain is if MLM exist in schools that they will be involved in leading SSE.

Important terminology such as relationships and communication is central to *LAOS 2016* and the principal and other school leaders are expected to build good relationships.

Domain 4: Developing Leadership Capacity

Assistant principals have a role to play in developing leadership capacity in their schools.

Developing leadership capacity	School leaders: critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation, and pupil leadership build professional networks with other school leaders
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Diagram 4.3.222

Critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership	School leaders engage consistently in personal self-evaluation against relevant professional standards.	The board of management, principal and other school leaders regularly review their own and each other's professional practice and development through the school's rigorous self-evaluation processes.
	They question their practice through processes of personal reflection. They are willing to work on areas of their practice that require improvement.	They develop self-awareness by regularly questioning their own practice through personal and collaborative reflection. They identify and work on areas of their practice that require improvement.
	The principal, deputy principal and other school leaders are mindful of their own wellbeing. They respond well to pressing responsibilities and demands.	The principal, deputy principal and other leaders in the school attend successfully to their own wellbeing, as well as that of others. They respond proportionately and constructively to pressing responsibilities and demands.
	The principal prioritises and delegates responsibilities well for the most part.	The principal prioritises and delegates responsibilities appropriately and strategically.
	He/she is establishing systems and structures to meet the priority needs of the school.	He/she ensures that systems and structures are in place to meet the priority needs of the school.

Diagram 4.3.223

Empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles	The principal understands the importance of the quality of leadership and management for the school as a learning organisation.	The principal recognises and affirms the defining role of the quality of leadership and management for the school as a learning organisation.
	He/she encourages teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, and is willing to distribute significant leadership responsibilities.	He/she empowers teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, through the effective use of distributed leadership models.
	The principal encourages the formation of teams to address school priorities. He/she understands the potential for building leadership capacity, and seeks to develop this.	The principal encourages teamwork in all aspects of school life. He/she creates and motivates staff teams and working groups to lead developments in key areas, thus building leadership capacity.
	The principal provides a mentoring programme to support teachers in new roles.	The principal provides and manages an effective mentoring programme both to support teachers in new roles and to develop the leadership capacity of mentors.

Diagram 4.3.224

Promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice and pupil leadership	Those in leadership and management roles value pupils' views, and support pupils' involvement in the operation of the school.	Those in leadership and management roles recognise pupils as stakeholders, value their views, and ensure their involvement in the operation of the school.
	They ensure that the pupil council is democratically elected, and that it is included in decision-making.	They ensure that the pupil council is democratically elected and representative, and is a catalyst for change, with an active role in decision-making and policy development.
	They offer pupils opportunities to take leadership roles.	They support pupils in taking leadership roles by facilitating relevant training and providing opportunities to lead school initiatives.
	Those leading the SSE process recognise the need to listen to pupils and are increasingly consulting pupils on their own learning.	Those leading the SSE process actively consult and engage with pupils in reviewing and improving teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Diagram 4.3.225

Build professional networks with other school leaders	The principal engages in professional dialogue with their peers at various levels on an ongoing basis. He / she seeks to apply what they learn to their practice.	The principal actively involves themselves in professional associations for school leaders and managers at all levels, up to and including international level. He / she demonstrate learning from these associations in their practice.
	The principal contributes to the professional learning community of his / her peers.	The principal supports the professional development of his / her peers, and contribute purposefully to the professional learning community.
	Those with leadership and management roles avail of the support of national bodies that support the development of effective management and leadership practices.	Those with leadership and management roles engage purposefully with the national bodies that support the development of effective management and leadership practices

Diagram 4.3.226

Foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning	Those in leadership and management roles support teachers' continuing professional development in a range of areas.	Those in leadership and management roles support and promote teachers' continuing professional development in a range of areas, to support high-quality teaching.
	The principal and other leaders in the school seek to identify relevant and purposeful professional development opportunities for teachers. They encourage participation as a means of improving teaching and learning.	The principal and other leaders in the school ensure that professional development is firmly based on action research and is adapted to the identified needs of the school. They maximise opportunities to develop teachers' capacity and competence to improve teaching and learning.
	The principal and other leaders in the school support teachers' participation in professional networks.	The principal and other leaders in the school support and encourage the active participation of teachers in professional networks to improve pupil learning.

Diagram 4.3.227

Those in leadership and management have a role to play with regard to fostering teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning.

Manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education	The principal and other leaders in the school adapt to changes in context or policy environment and manage the implementation of the changes well.	The principal and other leaders in the school demonstrate a clear understanding of change processes and approach the management of change in a collaborative, flexible and sensitive manner.
	Those in leadership and management roles are aware of the school's changing needs, and seek to respond to them.	Those in leadership and management roles are alert and responsive to the changing needs of the school.
	Those in leadership and management roles are aware of educational developments and see their relevance to the school. They seek to use this information constructively.	Those in leadership and management roles keep abreast of thinking, developments and changes in the broader educational environment and use this information positively for the benefit of the school.
	The principal and those leading SSE use the SSE process with increasing effectiveness as a means of managing change.	The principal and those leading SSE use the SSE process very effectively to manage the school's response to changing needs.

Diagram 4.3.228

SSE is all about change and improvement and both the principal and all school leaders play a role in this regard. In this standard the assistant principal has a role also in leading change.

In Domain 4: Developing Leadership Capacity (p.12) we are introduced to new terminology such as 'critique', 'empower' and 'build professional networks'. The idea of collaboration is included. Wellbeing is included with a subtle difference between effective and highly effective practice being the concern for the wellbeing of others. It is the principal who has the sole responsibility for delegating responsibilities. How well he or she does this is the difference between an effective and highly effective practice. Again it is only the

principal who has the formal designated role as outlined in the Statements of Practice of empowering staff to take on and carry out leadership roles.

He/she encourages teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, and is willing to distribute significant leadership responsibilities (p.28).

He/she **empowers** teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, **through the effective use of distributed leadership models** (p.28).

We see the change in terminology (p.28) from effective to highly effective practice where '**empowers**' replaces '*encourages*' and '**through the effective use of distributed leadership models**' replaces 'is willing to distribute significant leadership responsibilities'. According to the statements of practice it is the principal who is expected to distribute leadership. It is not noted in the statements of practice that the postholder must distribute leadership. It is a standard in the domain but the statements of practice give more detail with regard to specific roles. They differentiate the role of the principal from that of the postholder. In the statement of practice it is clear that the distribution of leadership is the principal's duty but in practice it is often left to the postholders. This is something that can be teased out further in the online questionnaire and the interviews. In reality it may not be the principal but the postholder who is distributing leadership.

LAOS 2016 emphasises teamwork, staff teams and working groups. The difference between effective and highly effective according to the DES (2016, p.28) is '**through the effective...use of the distributed leadership model**'. The DES is explicitly promoting the distributed leadership model. The formation of teams is encouraged. This statement tells us to that it is the principal who has a role in mentoring. Although mentoring plays a key part of the role of MLM in other countries such as in the UK it is not explicitly a role required by MLM in the ROI. Fletcher (1998, p.112) claims that 'mentoring should be regarded as part of a professional vision of teaching'. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000, p.54) explain that 'mentoring in the sense becomes not just a way of supporting individual teachers but also a device to help build strong professional cultures in our schools, dedicated to improving teaching, learning and caring'.

In each of these domains we can see what is being expected of MLM with regard to their new role now as assistant principals. The statements of practice offer greater clarity between what is expected of MLM and senior leadership particularly the principal. The Inspectorate as I mentioned on one hand refer to those in 'formal leadership roles' (p.8) and on the other hand is encouraging a distributed framework across the school. Utilising Bowe,

Ball and Gold's (1992) analysis of the context of text production I was able to ascertain the main themes of the documents which helped inform the questions of the online questionnaire and the subsequent interview schedule. Key themes of collaboration, mentoring, professional development, accountability, empowerment, critique, teamwork, building leadership capacity and distributed leadership have emerged.

4.3.3 The Context of Practice

Producing the *LAOS 2016* document is one thing but having it read and 'enacted' by its prospective 'actors' is another. *LAOS 2016* will be put into practice largely depending on the culture of the school. I will ask in the online questionnaire how useful teachers found the *LAOS 2016* document.

With the introduction of *LAOS 2016* based on the four domains teachers taking on these new roles are expected to play a significant role in building leadership capacity and empowering others in schools. Yet, when we look closer at the statements of practice in greater detail it is the principal only who is expected to distribute, delegate and empower. These contradictory expectations lead to ambiguity and confusion and add to the challenges of interpretation which is such a central part of policy. I will now examine the second document *SSE 2016* using Bowe, Ball and Gold's (1992) policy cycle.

4.4 School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016 (SSE 2016)

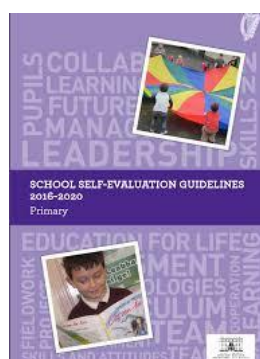


Diagram 4.4

4.4.1 The Context of Influence

SSE 2016 has evolved from *SSE 2012* which in turn was developed as a result of changes to the WSE model. WSE was introduced in Irish schools in 2005, based on the policy outlined in *LAOS 2003* and after the process had been piloted in a small number of schools during the school year 2003-2004. WSE replaced what were known as Tuairiscí Scoile (school reports following inspection), which evolved into *SSE 2012* and subsequently *SSE 2016*. SSE was made mandatory in 2012 for the first time although it had been in widespread use in schools, if to greatly varying degrees, since *LAOS 2003* had first encouraged schools to self-evaluate.

Under *SSE 2012*, over the four-year period 2012-2016 schools were expected to review three curriculum areas (literacy and numeracy being two) and draw up and implement a SIP. As part of this review each school was expected to gather evidence from a number of sources such as standardised test results, other assessments and the views of teachers, parents and pupils. Based on this research each school was required to develop a plan of action that recognised the school's strengths and areas where improvement was needed. The mandatory nature of *SSE 2012*, the specific areas to be evaluated and the collection and use of data, particularly standardised tests and surveys of parental and student opinions were major developments of the much less prescriptive approach taken when SSE first appeared in *LAOS 2003*.

After a review of this iteration *SSE 2016* which is the current guiding document was issued in 2016. The DES published *SSE 2016* outlining timeframes and stages for SSE for the period 2016-2020.

4.4.2 The Context of Text Production

The format of the SSE documents is similar with *The Purpose of the Guidelines*, *Who the Guidelines are for*, *Using the Guidelines* and *The Content and Structure of the Guidelines* in the opening chapters of each. Both documents are written for all stakeholders i.e. principals, teachers, trustees and BOMs, parents and pupils. The role of pupils and parents is somewhat upgraded in *SSE 2016* with requirements both for their consultation through research and their access to school plans and other documents being strengthened. Priorities for action are stated in both documents. SSE we are told (p.6) 'empowers a school community to identify and affirm good practice, and to identify and take action on areas that merit improvement. School self-evaluation is primarily about schools taking ownership of their own development and improvement'.

In *SSE 2016* the introduction of *SSE 2012* is acknowledged where schools were asked to (p.6) ‘engage’ with SSE and now in *SSE 2016* they are being asked to continue to implement this process (p.6). *Circular 0039/2012* required all schools to engage in the SSE process, and set out its purpose and rationale. *Circular 0039/2016* sets out how schools should continue to implement SSE. Terminology such as (p.6) ‘reflective enquiry’, ‘action planning’, ‘informed by evidence’ and ‘unique context’ are used. *SSE 2016* reiterates the offer of practical support in continuing SSE. It has reflected on the feedback received from schools and education partners on the original guidelines and on experiences of SSE to date. The revised guidelines are also based on the findings of this research by the DES in 2015. *SSE 2016* includes an extract from *LAOS 2012* outlining the two dimensions- teaching and learning and leadership and management. Once again the main focus is on teaching and learning which it says is the ‘core work of every school’ (DES, p.6).

With *SSE 2016* the DES reiterated its emphasis on the importance of not having the work of SSE overly paper-driven. It recommends a 2 or 3 pages report. The importance of all stakeholders being involved is emphasised with reports being shared with the whole school community. The six-step process of *SSE 2012* has been changed slightly to the six steps in *SSE 2016*. Collaboration is a key feature of *SSE 2016* as we saw in *LAOS 2016*.

We can see the change to the wording in the SSE processes of 2012 and 2016 in the following diagrams.

SSE process 2012

2.4 The school self-evaluation process

School self-evaluation builds on the school development planning process. The framework below (Figure 2.1) highlights a six-step school self-evaluation process. The process is iterative in that it facilitates repeated cycles of analysis or a return to a previous stage of the cycle as required.

Figure 2.1: THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

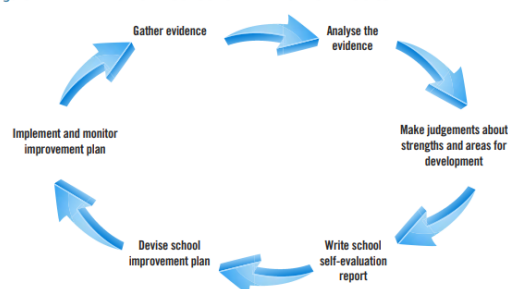


Diagram 4.4.2a

SSE Process 2016

Figure 2.1: THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS



Diagram 4.4.2b

We can see the inclusion of identifying focus before gathering evidence in the process. The six steps to be followed in 2012 and 2016 are outlined in the tables below.

The six-step SSE process 2012

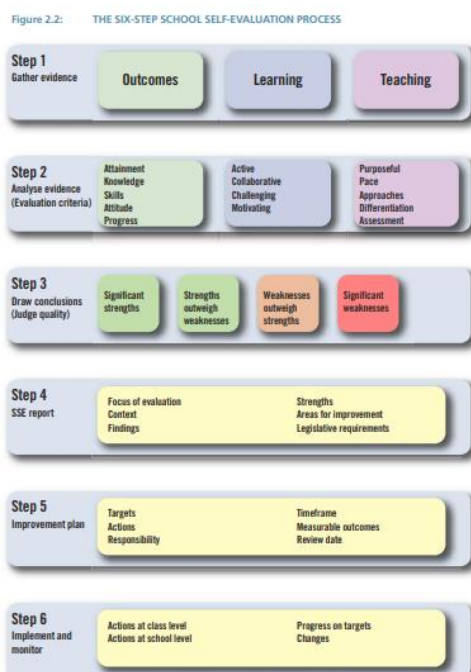


Diagram 4.4.2c

The six-step SSE process 2016

Table 2.1 APPLYING THE SIX-STEP SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

	TEACHING AND LEARNING			
Step 1: Identify Focus Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 3	<div>← Consider the Quality Framework overview Identify the domain most relevant to your school →</div>			
Step 2: Gather Evidence Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapters 4 and 5	Learner outcomes	Learner experiences	Teachers' individual practice	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice
	Investigate your area of focus			
Step 3: Analyse and make judgements Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 4	<div>← Not effective Highly effective →</div> Evaluate the effectiveness of your current practice using statements of practice			
Step 4: Write and share report and improvement plan Relevant section of Guidelines: Chapter 6	Record your findings and develop your school improvement plan			
	Share a summary of this record with the parents and school community			
Step 5: Put improvement plan into action	Actions at the level of the individual class			
	Actions at the level of a group of classes (e.g. all second classes)			
	Actions at the level of the whole school			
Step 6 Monitor actions and evaluate impact	Changes in practice		ADJUST AS NECESSARY	
	Teacher experiences			
	Pupils' experiences			
	Impact on learning			

Diagram 4.4.2d

4.4.3 The Context of Practice

Industrial unrest had affected the practice of SSE in schools up until the directive was lifted in March 2018. This disruption has been acknowledged by the Inspectorate in its notifications to schools in 2018 regarding re-engagement with SSE. In reality although *SSE 2016* as a policy document refers to the four-year period of 2016-2020 SSE was only really implemented in schools between March 2018 and March 2020, as the schools closed on 13th March 2020 due to the coronavirus. This would have made the continuation of SSE very difficult. Measuring the achievement of targets would have been more challenging. For example standardised tests for the academic year 2019-2020 were cancelled by the DES on 27th April 2020. Primary schools are required to administer standardised testing during the period May or June for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes in accordance with circulars 0056/2011 and 0018/2012. On this basis *SSE 2016* was only fully implementable, uninterrupted for one academic year i.e 2018-2019 in that four-year period.

With the introduction of *SSE 2016* schools were encouraged by the DES to undertake modest projects, choosing 2 or 3 aspects over a four-year period. Following the removal of the INTO directive of non-cooperation with SSE in February 2018, the DES published *Circular 0016/2018* to clarify how schools should re-engage with SSE. This circular which amends *Circular 0039/2016* requires schools to select one or two curricular areas or aspects of teaching and learning to be the focus for SSE between March 2018 and June 2020. On the 17th June 2020 the DES published *Circular 0040/2020* in relation to SSE for 2020/21. The circular provides that there will be no new or additional SSE requirements on schools in the

2020/21 school year. Instead schools are encouraged to use SSE to plan for and address the challenges involved in the return to schools in the 2020/21 school year and/or complete SSE work that would normally have been completed from March to June 2020.

The online questionnaire and the interviews will allow me to evaluate the context of practice further with regard to SSE. Having looked at the document *SSE 2016* I will now analyse *Circular 0063/2017*.

4.5 Circular Letter 0063/2017 Leadership and Management in Primary Schools (Circular 0063/2017)



Diagram 4.5

4.5.1 The Context of Influence

According to the OECD (2007, p.9) school leadership has become a ‘priority’ in education policy internationally. It maintains that ‘effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling’. The OECD (2007) contends that school leadership improves student learning, bridging education policy and practice. School leadership responds to changing policy environments. With new public management, it tells us there is a move towards decentralisation, autonomy and accountability. There has been a renewed focus on teaching and learning. It continues that school led teams play a vital role in school development. There is a clearer distribution of their role and distribution which can contribute to increased effectiveness and better provision for future leadership.

The circular published in September 2017 provides a leadership framework based on models of distributed leadership such as that advocated by Spillane (2005). In my opinion the

re-shaping and re-naming of Special Duties postholders to assistant principals is a result of the influence of both academic research and economic policy. The schedule of posts which had been greatly reduced in 2009 has never been fully restored post-moratorium and with the recent introduction of *Circular 0044/2019* it doesn't look like it will be restored in the near future. Of the 5,000 posts of responsibility lost since the cutbacks in 2009 only 1365 have been restored to date.

There were serious cutbacks in education as a result of the recession in 2008 and it saw the MLM structures built up in schools over the previous thirty years being almost eradicated overnight. Posts in primary schools were reduced from almost 50% of total staff to about 25% during the economic crisis. *Circular 0063/2017* doesn't clarify how leadership should or could be distributed. However, it does direct the reader to the document *LAOS 2016* which clearly outlines examples of leadership and management in both effective and highly effective schools.

As we can see education policy is set against the backdrop of economic policy. I am confining my analysis of *Circular 0063/2017* to material regarding MLM. The DES (2017, p.4) tells us that '...leadership is distributed throughout the school as a key support for pupil learning'. But how much will change in reality will depend on the interpretation and implementation of the policy in individual schools.

4.5.2 The Context of Text Production

Looking at the text of *Circular 0063/2017* we can see the introduction of new terminology such as Assistant Principals 11 replacing Special Duties teachers. All postholders hold the title now of assistant principal. Prior to that A-postholders only were referred to as assistant principals. With the new title comes extra responsibilities. There has been a shift from duties holder with responsibility for managerial duties to assistant principal with a role in leadership. The assistant principal is still responsible for carrying out duties but must now play a bigger role in the leadership aspect of schoolwork. Extra responsibility and accountability are attached to the newly designated assistant principals. Duties will continue to be decided in consultation with the staff and will be chosen to suit the needs of the school. The duties will be reviewed on a regular basis with postholders now being required to change duties in accordance with the changing needs of the school. And in line with post-modern

society the themes of reviews, reports, accountability and productivity are very much stamped on the policy.

The domains outlined in *LAOS 2016* for leadership and management are a central part of *Circular 0063/2017*. Indeed the four domains form the basis of the marking criteria for appointment procedures to these positions. Special duties teachers always had a role to play in management being referred to as the In-School Management team (ISMT). But now leadership has been introduced as a key part of their role. Assistant principals have a dual role and responsibility in both leadership and management. They are viewed by the DES as being complementary processes. Therefore, both leadership and management roles are considered at all times as serving the school's core work: learning and teaching. Every teacher has a leadership role within the school community and in relation to pupil learning.

All schools are obliged to implement the circular in accordance with the DES's guidelines. The circular helps to regulate the DES's policy view regarding posts stating how they should be carried out and how everything should be implemented. The purpose of the circular is to provide clarity to schools regarding what is expected of them by the DES. Circulars are produced in Irish education policy to provide a centralised, coordinated system of practice. Stakeholders such as the unions are consulted in the development of circulars. Circulars have national application.

Circular 0063/2017 is a 32-page letter addressed to all managerial authorities and all teaching staff in recognised primary schools. The language of the circular is the language of government. It is a clinical, legal style of language. In its usual fashion the DES states how this circular (p.1) 'supersedes' all previous circulars concerning posts and how its implementation comes into 'immediate effect'. It is the language of the civil service, both legal and technical.

It is clear from *Circular 0063/2017* that postholders are going to be held to account. If we look at *LAOS 2016* we can see the four domains- leading learning and teaching, managing the organisation, leading school development and developing leadership capacity. There are very specific guidelines for postholders which are prescriptive. They are the four criteria to be used in the marking scheme in the appointment of posts in schools. This policy document is part of the accountability agenda. The responsibility and trust once afforded to postholders has been replaced now with accountability. Specific guidelines such as these may take away the postholder's autonomy. Assistant principals will have to report annually to their BOMs outlining CPD completed etc. With *Circular 0063/2017* we see the introduction of the word leadership into the MLM structures of the school. *Circular 0063/2017* sets out a leadership

and management framework for primary schools. Although *Circular 0063/2017* highlights the importance of distributed leadership and the fact that all teachers play a role in school leadership it quickly turns its attention to the formal role of leadership, that is to those who have designated duties. It emphasises that *Circular 0063/2017* ‘encompasses the roles and responsibilities of those leaders who hold designated posts of principal, deputy principal, assistant principal I and assistant principal II, under the new leadership and management structure of the school’ (DES, 2017, p.6).

Circular 0063/2017 seeks (p.4) ‘flexibility’ in identifying the roles and responsibilities and in assigning and reassigning these roles. *Circular 0063/2017* (p.4) refers to *LAOS 2016* which provides standards of good practice outlining what ‘good’ and ‘very good practice is’. The framework provides (p.5) ‘a common understanding and language’ regarding both leadership and management in schools. *Circular 0063/2017* includes the key leadership and management areas i.e. the domains and the content standards for each domain from *LAOS 2016*. It doesn’t include the statements of practice.

The principles of *LAOS 2016* which we saw earlier are based on a ‘holistic view of learning and learner’ (p.7) are reiterated in *Circular 0063/2017*. Wellbeing, active citizenship and lifelong learning are central to *LAOS 2016* and are reiterated in *Circular 0063/2017*. As the crux of the *Circular 0063/2017* is distributed leadership I will be exploring this concept further in the online questionnaires and the interview schedule.

4.5.3 The Context of Practice

With the introduction of *Circular 0063/2017* we can see that assistant principals have a role to play in leading SSE. *Circular 0063/2017* introduces a distributed view of leadership into what would have been previously a hierarchical view. It provides opportunities for distributed leadership. In accepting a post of responsibility part of the role is in leading school development and building leadership capacity in schools. It involves empowering others. In this research I will be looking at how assistant principals are carrying out these roles. I will explore the issues of distributed and instructional leadership in the online questionnaire.

Circular 0063/2017 will have different responses from the many interpreters and actors who give meaning to it. The policy will mean different things in different policy sites which vary from school to school with different cultures evident. In one way it may be too soon to look at the context of implementation or enactment as posts are just being appointed at this stage in the new process. Maybe the whole MLM structure outlined in the circular is being selected in the wrong way as schools are more like ‘communities’ than ‘organisations’

as de Vries (1994) tells us. They are not profit-making organisations. According to de Vries (1994) they rely on team-building, collaboration, trust, values and a shared sense of purpose. Introducing competition and performance measuring procedures can be divisive in schools.

Cutbacks to posts of responsibility have impacted on the work in schools. The context of practice with regard to *Circular 0063/2017* is hugely affected by these measures. Not alone does it compromise the implementation of initiatives such as SSE but it deprives young teachers of possibilities of promotion in their schools and acquiring essential leadership skills for the future. The online questionnaire and the interviews will allow me to evaluate the context of practice further with regard to *Circular 0063/2017*.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the three key policy documents *LAOS 2016*, *SSE 2016* and *Circular 0063/2017* through the lens of Bowe, Ball and Gold's policy-cycle (1992). It is clear how these documents came into being, influenced by the ideologies of new management and neo-liberalism. The economic climate as we saw was an influential factor too. Academic research has played a role as is evident in the introduction of distributed leadership as a recommended framework. These three documents as we saw are strongly affiliated to each other. They are in turn clearly connected to school inspection with an emphasis on both accountability and performativity.

I have sought to set out the macro and meso landscape from which these documents emerged. I argued, having examined academic research findings that all these documents as a complete package played out in the very heavy accountability and performativity context which is a result of new managerialism. The whole layout of the documents is for accountability and performativity purposes with for example the tick box style of effective and highly effective schools in *LAOS 2016* and the reporting and reviewing in *Circular 0063/2017* with postholders' performances being closely monitored. The question going forward regarding these documents is how will they be interpreted and implemented or enacted in schools. I hope to get some further answers to this question in the online questionnaires and the documentary analysis of the interviews.

Having analysed the policy documents I will now look at the results of the online questionnaires and the interviews in the next two chapters.

The Fieldwork

Chapter 5

Part A - the Online Questionnaire Data

5.1 Introduction

In this study a link to an online questionnaire was sent to 60 schools. Principals were asked to complete the questionnaire and to distribute it to the rest of the staff with a request to respond. A total of 100 responses to the questionnaire was received from 53 of these schools. 30% of respondents to the questionnaire are principals with 16% of the total being administrative principals and 14% teaching principals, 19% are deputy principals, 29% almost one third are assistant principals with 14% being assistant principal 1 and 15% assistant principal 11 and 22% of respondents, just over one fifth have no formal leadership position in the school. This spread will help to give a clearer picture of the different perspectives with regard to MLM and SSE in schools. It is worth noting that this representation is not indicative of the profile representation nationwide as two-thirds of principals are teaching principals and only 25% of teachers currently hold a post of responsibility in primary schools.

My initial objective was to conduct a much larger-scale study by sending the online questionnaire to one thousand schools, about one third of the total. In the academic year 2018-2019 I wanted to ensure that schools had an opportunity to complete the SSE process as fully as possible before requesting them to complete the questionnaire. This meant sending the questionnaire in the last term which is a particularly busy time for schools. With the introduction of the new GDPR guidelines in May 2018 it was no longer possible to obtain the individual email addresses of teachers. Teachers could only be contacted through their principals or secretaries. This meant the questionnaire had to be sent to schools and a request made for principals or secretaries to forward the questionnaire to teachers. Initially, adhering to the GDPR guidelines I sent the questionnaire to school principals and requested them to forward it to all teachers. It quickly became apparent, having sent a number of emails with such a request, that principals were very busy and for whatever reasons the email was not being forwarded to the teachers. Some principals replied apologising that they had completed a number of questionnaires that year and their school would not be participating in any further research. The response rate to this initial effort was tiny and forced a change of approach. I decided instead to go for a much smaller stratified sample of 60 schools which might enable me by assiduous follow-up to obtain a better response rate.

5.2 Distribution of questionnaire

The term sampling refers to the process of selecting the individuals who will participate in a research study. A sample is any subsection of the population of individuals on whom information is obtained. Snowballing is a non-probability sample in which the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contact with others. For the purpose of this study a stratified snowballing convenience sample was obtained.

Stratified sampling continues to adhere to the underlying principle of random selection. However, it introduces some element of researcher influence into the selection process and, to this extent moves away slightly from pure random sampling (Denscombe, 2014, p.38).

Snowballing was used to ensure sufficient responses.

With snowballing sampling the sample emerges through a process of reference from one person to the next. At the start, the research is likely to involve just one or a few people. Each can be asked to nominate some other people who would be relevant for the purposes of the research (Denscombe, 2014, p.42).

Denscombe defines convenience sampling as

Convenience sampling is built upon selections which suit the convenience of the researcher and which are 'first to hand'. An element of convenience is likely to enter into sampling procedures of most research (Denscombe, 2014, p.42).

In order to ensure an adequate sample of 60 schools the researcher availed of contacts from fellow teachers obtained at in-service courses and sent the questionnaires to these contacts and requested them to forward it to relevant contacts too to ensure the correct number of school-type was obtained. The primary school list from the DES 2018-2019 contains 3,109 mainstream primary schools and 137 special schools giving a total of 3,246 schools which would include approximately 40,000 teachers. This gives an average of about 12 teachers per school. As mentioned due to the limitations and challenges regarding access to teachers for the purpose of this study I decided to send the questionnaire to 60 mainstream and special schools which is approximately 1.8% of such schools. Approximately 66% of schools have six teachers or fewer so in selecting schools I ensured this percentage was included in the sample.

Having identified and established contacts at in-service courses for primary school teachers and in the teaching community in general it was possible to identify 60 schools suitable for the research providing the various profiles required. Using the allocation of Assistant Principal posts as set out in *Circular Letter 0070/2018* I was able to establish the number of posts in each type of school selected. There may also be some posts held by

assistant principals in a personal capacity as outlined in the circular. *Circular Letter 0070/2018* (p.25) states

A permanent teacher, who holds a post of responsibility allowance, retains the allowance on a personal basis even if the post is subsequently not warranted by reference to the schedule of posts. However, the post holder must continue to undertake an Assistant Principal II role while he/she continues to teach in the school in accordance with the provisions of this circular.

For the purpose of this research schools were classified as large, medium and small as follows.

5.2.1 Profile of Schools in Study

Table 5.2.1 Classification of school size

School Size	Large	Medium	Small
Number of teachers	18+	9-17	2-8

Table 5.2.2 Number of schools in sample

School Size	Large	Medium	Small
Number of schools	10	10	40
% of schools requested to participate	16.6%	16.6%	66.6%
% of schools responded in sample	34%	31%	35%

As we can see from Table 5.2.2 a sample of 60 schools was chosen consisting of 10 large schools, 10 medium schools and 40 small schools.

Table 5.2.3 Number of MLM posts of responsibility in a typical school

	Administrative Principal	Teaching Principal	Deputy Principal	Assistant Principal 1	Assistant Principal 11	Non-Postholders
Large school	1	-	1	2	3	11+
Medium school	1	-	1	1	2	4-12
Small school	-	1	1	-	1	0-6

As we can see from the above table in almost two thirds of schools (66.66%) there exists just one MLM, that is a postholding teacher alongside a teaching principal and a deputy principal.

Table 5.2.4 The breakdown from the 60 schools selected

School size	n = number of schools in study	% of schools in study	Number of teachers per school
Small	40	66.6%	1-8
Medium	10	16.6%	9-17
Large	10	16.6%	18+

Table 5.2.5 Profile of small schools in study

School Size	Small
Number of schools	40
Teaching principals	40
Deputy principals	37
Assistant principals 1	0
Assistant principals 11	37

Table 5.2.6 profile of medium schools in study

School Size	Medium
Number of schools	10
Administrative principals	10
Deputy principals	10
Assistant principals 1	0
Assistant principals 11	20

Table 5.2.7 Profile of large schools in study

School size	Large
Number of schools	10
Administrative principals	10
Deputy principals	10
Assistant principals 1	40
Assistant principals 11	20

Table 5.2.8 Conglomerate results of schools in study

	Teaching Principals	Administrative Principals	Deputy Principals	Assistant Principals 1	Assistant Principals 11	Non-postholders	Teachers
n	40	20	57	40	77	486	720
r	16	14	19	14	15	22	100
%	40	70	33	35	19	4.5	14

Using the schedule of posts from the DES 2018 we can see the make-up of posts of responsibility in these schools.

Table 5.2.9 The percentage of responses from each of the categories

Status	% of own group	% of total of responses
Administrative Principal	65%	14%
Teaching Principal	40%	16%
Deputy Principal	32%	19%
Assistant Principal 1	45%	14%
Assistant Principal 11	16%	15%
Non-Postholder	5%	22%

It can be seen from the above tables that the sample chosen endeavoured to reflect the make-up of the Irish primary schools, in terms of size and therefore in the number of teachers holding different levels of responsibility. However, the final table indicates a good level of response from the different ranks of teachers it does not fully reflect the national percentages in each category.

The questionnaire contained both closed quantitative questions, which, however, in most cases also invited qualitative response. The latter, in fact, form a surprisingly large part of the returns and are reported with the statistical tables which follow. The quantitative and qualitative data analysis methodology is described in detail in Chapter 3, the Research Methodology.

A pilot of the online questionnaire was conducted with a sample of ten primary school teachers. This enabled the researcher to seek clarity of understanding regarding the questions and identified any ambiguities present. Denscombe emphasises the importance of conducting pilots in all aspects of research.

Finally, another matter of good practice that applies to any data collection method. The method should always be tested out in advance to check how well it works in practice. No matter how much time and effort a researcher puts into devising a good data collection tool, there is no real substitute for trying it out ‘in the field’ with real participants (Denscombe, 2014, p.165).

I will now present the results of the online questionnaire. As mentioned earlier a copy of the final questionnaire is included as Appendix D.

5.3 Results of the Online Questionnaire

5.3.1 Background Information

Of the 100 replies to the opening question regarding the teacher's role in the school the following breakdown was received as illustrated in the following bar chart (Diagram 5.3.1).

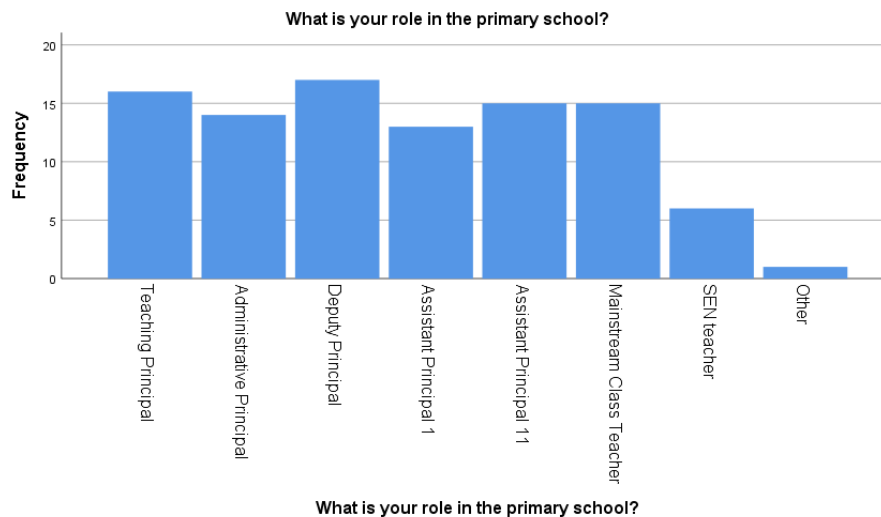


Diagram 5.3.1

As can be seen from Diagram 5.3.1 there is a good, even spread of respondents from the various backgrounds. This spread will help to give a clearer picture of the different perspectives with regard to MLM and SSE in schools. As mentioned earlier this representation is not indicative of the profile representation nationwide as two-thirds of principals are teaching principals and only 25% of teachers hold a post of responsibility.

5.3.2 SSE in practice

As we can see from the following pie chart, Diagram 5.3.2a, 93% of the 100 respondents reported their schools were engaging with SSE.

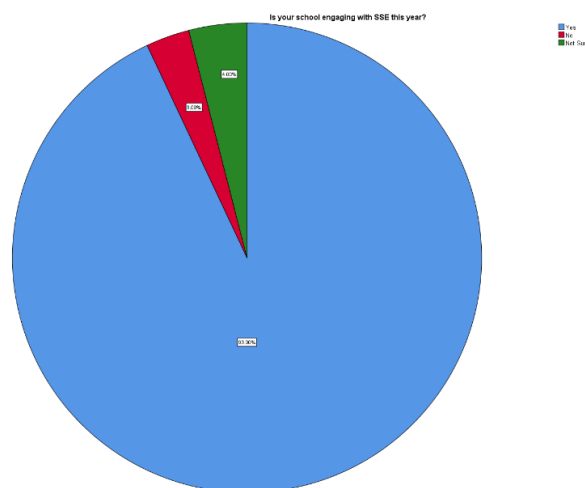


Diagram 5.3.2a

When asked to indicate the area being evaluated in that academic year for SSE purposes there was a surprisingly wide spread.

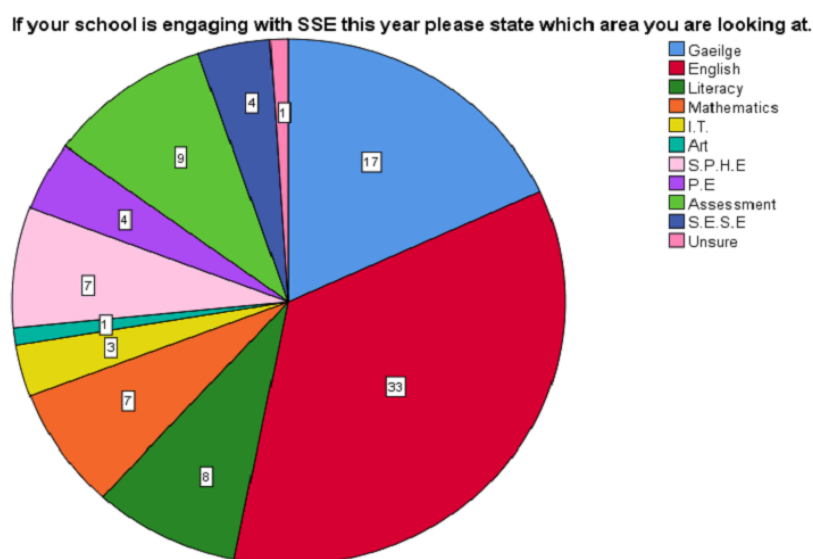


Diagram 5.3.2b

The main areas looked at are indicated in the pie chart with a third of respondents, 33% saying their schools chose English and almost one fifth, 17% chose Gaelige as the area for evaluation and a further 8% chose the NPLC. This shows that over half of the respondents, 58% chose Irish and English (Literacy) as their subject area. A further 7% of the respondents chose maths as their subject area which means a total of 65%, almost two-thirds

chose literacy or numeracy as their aspect of evaluation as recommended by the DES in the circular. This is not surprising as the DES had recommended literacy and numeracy and it coincided also with the introduction of the NPLC to schools in 2016. A further 9% chose assessment which obviously links into literacy and numeracy which would bring the total for literacy and numeracy to 74%, almost $\frac{3}{4}$. A further 7% of respondents chose SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) which is not surprising given the emphasis on wellbeing in the *LAOS 2016* publication. There is an even spread in the percentages of areas chosen from the remaining 19% of respondents such as IT 3%, Art 1%, PE 4%, SESE 4% and Unsure 1%.

Examples of non-curricular aspects examined are collaboration, engagement with parents, teacher behaviour, teacher planning and preparation, creative school, Learn Together Programme, attendance and ensuring all strands are getting maximum time. These are some of the aspects to the fore in the *LAOS 2016* document. Some responses were very particular and specific e.g. *Language development through ICT, Gaeilge and ICT and the Digital Learning framework*. 1% of respondents reported being unsure of the area chosen for evaluation.

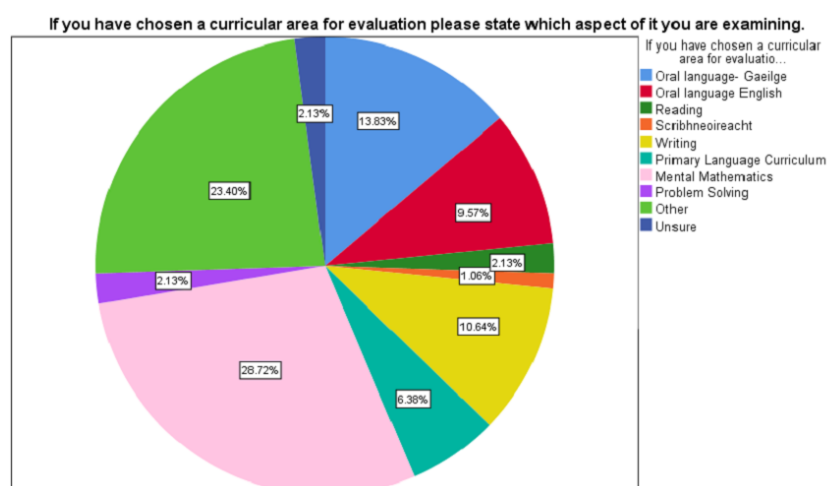


Diagram 5.3.2c

As we can see from Diagram 5.3.2c above almost three quarters chose literacy and numeracy for their area of evaluation. If we look closer at this we can see what aspects of the subjects they chose according to 77 respondents in Diagram 5.3.5

From this pie chart, Diagram 5.3.2d we can see that 28.72% chose mental maths as the aspect of their evaluation. This is interesting because the standardised tests used in schools to measure maths progress of the pupils does not give a score for mental maths. The

teachers obviously in these cases would have designed their own measuring instruments to evaluate mental maths or used samples of tests from maths schemes. Almost a quarter of respondents chose oral language with 13.83% choosing oral language in Gaeilge and 9.57% choosing oral language in English. Teachers may have devised their own system of assessing pupils in the area of oral language in English or used measures such as the Drumcondra Profiles for English (A framework for assessing oral language, reading and writing in primary schools). Oral language was the first phase introduced in the NPLC and great emphasis was placed on it by the DES. Over half of the 77 respondents, 52.12% said their schools had chosen mental maths or oral language in Gaeilge or English. A further 6.83% chose the NPLC but didn't specify which aspect of it, reading was chosen by 2.13%, scríbhneoireacht by 1.06%, writing by 10.64%, problem-solving by 2.13%, leaving a remainder of 23.4% of respondents giving other aspects as their choice. Some of these final respondents offered reasons for their choices such as opting for handwriting as opposed to creative writing for the following reason 'Originally we had opted for creative writing as we felt it was neglected during last SSE process. But it was too hard to measure so we changed to handwriting as it can be measured'. This concurs with Biesta's (2000) assertion of measuring what we value and valuing what we measure. Creative writing is as important as handwriting or perhaps even more important but with the pressure of having to have SMART targets (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timeframe) and evidence teachers opt for aspects that they think are more easily measured. Some areas and aspects lend themselves more easily to hard data such as standardised test scores in maths and reading. However, looking for evidence as opposed to data means teachers can use both qualitative and quantitative methods of finding results. Teacher observation and opinion although subjective contributes immensely to the production of this evidence.

Another respondent said 'in numeracy we are examining problem-solving skills and understanding mathematical language. We have chosen to participate in the Creative Schools under the Arts Council, we are focusing on improving the use of creativity in all subject areas of the school with the emphasis on sustainability'. A number of schools chose to evaluate two or three aspects of the curriculum during the year e.g. Talk time in English and Oral Language in Irish. Once again 2.13% of respondents were unsure of the aspect chosen for evaluation.

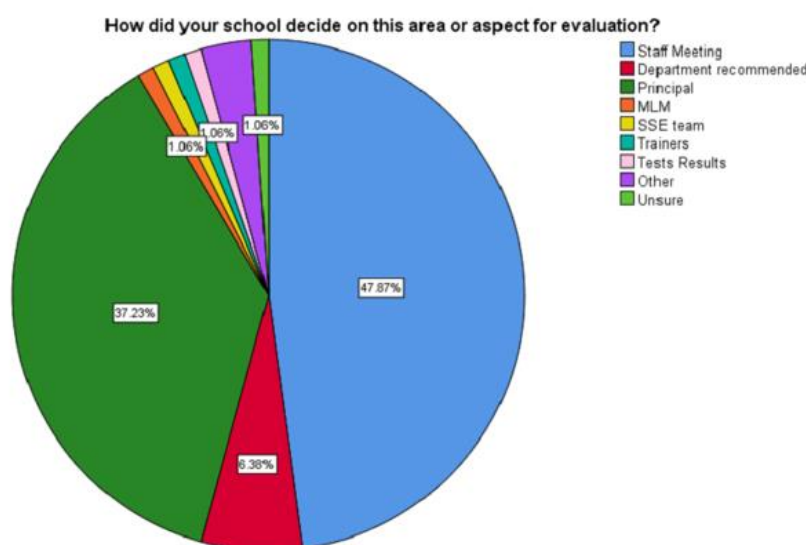


Diagram 5.3.2d

When asked how their schools decided on the area or aspect for evaluation 93 responses were recorded giving a variety of reasons with ‘at a staff meeting’ being the most popular at 47.87%. We can see an example of the involvement of MLM in the SSE process from this response.

Subject postholders and SSE team met to list many suggestions, all teachers were invited to make suggestions to the postholders prior to this initial meeting. The list of suggestions was presented to the postholders at a staff meeting, was discussed and debated and two from each area were selected by vote (Online Questionnaire Respondent).

In some cases the MLM decided. For example, one response was ‘in school management discussion’. Some schools based their selection on tests results, as is indicated in these responses, ‘results from standardised tests, focus groups and pupils’, ‘Sigma-T results’ and ‘test results’. Others were advised by external support groups, as shown in these responses, ‘advised by trainers’ and ‘intro of Primary Language Curriculum/ a need among our pupils to develop these skills/advice and support from a PDST Advisory visit’.

Others opted for the NPLC saying ‘In line with launch of new curriculum’ and ‘teachers identified it at a staff meeting/identified by Leadership and Management team/ new curriculum’ and ‘Recommended by MLM and introduction of New Language Curriculum’. For others it was determined by previous inspections with respondents saying ‘Based on WSE’ and ‘Whole School Evaluation/Inspection’. Other schools chose an area that was particularly relevant to them. For example, ‘we needed to update IT plan so kill 2 birds with one stone’, ‘ICT grant - we needed to access how best to put it to good use’ and ‘we have been very interested in this area for many years. It was a natural progression for us’. For

others it was perceived as an ‘area of need’ or ‘area that needed improvement’ saying ‘we deemed it necessary’ or ‘It was an area of weakness’. Others mention how ‘All staff had an input through staff meetings and consultation’ and for others they were ‘Not sure as I am new to the school’.

Some used both tests and teacher observation, for example, ‘we chose problem-solving area for numeracy based on low scores across the school in Sigma-T results’ and another saying ‘We chose creativity as we found this is one of the main areas all children will need as a skillset for their future careers’.

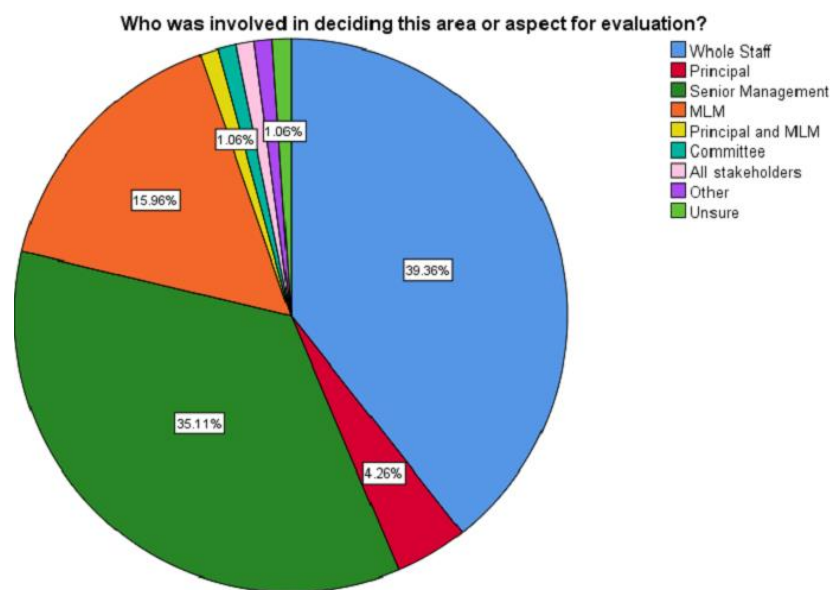


Diagram 5.3.2e

In Diagram 5.3.2e we can see who was involved in deciding the area or aspect for evaluation. Of the 94 responses to this question it was mostly decided by the staff at 39.36% or the principal at 35.11%. As we saw earlier staff meetings were the most popular method of staff being afforded an opportunity to reach a decision. One respondent noted how the staff was asked for opinions but then the principal decided. Others responded saying for example ‘all staff’ with ‘principal having final say’ or ‘very little! We were probably told at the beginning of the year’ and ‘The principal suggested it and everyone agreed’. In a number of cases the area or aspect was decided following the input of a number of people such as ‘the principal, ISM members, staff and the IT coordinator’. Committees were formed such as the ‘maths committee headed by postholder especially for maths’.

It is interesting to note the number of committees involved, either lead by a postholder in a certain curricular area or another teacher or the establishment of a specific SSE team. We can see the inclusion of teams and committees for example in the SSE processes in the responses to the questionnaire such as ‘staff and active schools committee’, ‘literacy coordinator, maths coordinator, middle management and relevant teams, principal, ISM members, staff, IT coordinator’, ‘All teaching staff led by postholders’, ‘All staff, then groups, then postholders’, ‘maths committee headed by postholder responsible for maths’, ‘language committee’, ‘middle management team’, ‘All stakeholders’, ‘Principal/ deputy/leadership and management team/all staff’ and ‘maths committee (one teacher from each stream) plus whole staff agreement’.

The data collected to support SSE was according to 92 respondents both of a qualitative and quantitative nature. A variety of data was collected using numerous instruments such as questionnaires and teacher observation. Others acknowledged the time involved in collecting data such as ‘Lots and lots of surveys that took up class teaching time and also personal time from teachers who had to correct them and file them’. Another respondent said ‘We did baseline testing of class ability and then continuous data collection for the period of the SSE process- Christmas to Easter- and then a final test to compare with baseline.’ Other data such as ‘sample of writing and tests results’, ‘Samples of work, pupil views, teacher views, parent views, policy reviews’ and ‘Breathnóireacht an mhúinteora, suirbhé’. Interviews and focus groups were carried out in some schools. Reports were used with respondents saying ‘Report of WSE 2015, Drumcondra Irish results, feedback from pupils’, ‘Data as collected from assessment results from Sigma-Ts across different classes throughout the school. Informal feedback from staff at Croke Park hour meetings.’ and ‘MLL report and SWOT analysis by staff’.

The most common methods used to collect the data according to 91 respondents are depicted in the following pie chart, Diagram 5.3.2f

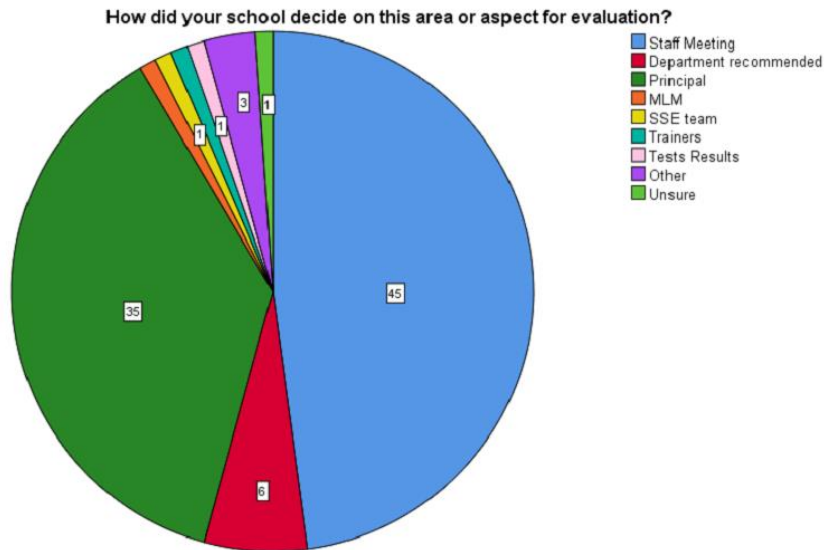


Diagram 5.3.2f

Some respondents said they were unsure or couldn't recall saying for example 'it was some time ago so not sure' or else they said they had forgotten. Others said 'Our assessment of school needs. Possibly asked parents and pupils can't recall' or 'Don't know. Wouldn't have picked this area myself.' For some respondents the data collection is 'ongoing'. Some respondents acknowledged that data collection was a 'team approach with different staff members doing different aspects', for others postholders collated the results. In some cases the data were 'collated by postholder', 'active school teacher collected and informed staff at staff meetings' and others depending on aspect of focus such as 'SET teachers conducting sessions every week or every fortnight.' Again we see the collaborative nature of the approach with the involvement of teamwork often led by a postholder in this part of the process.

An example of MLM involved in data collection is 'teacher survey- distributed and collected at staff meeting. Children's survey- distributed and collected in class. Standardised results- collated by postholder'.

5.3.3 SSE Data

Of the 89 respondents regarding the usefulness of the data collected to the SSE process we can see the following breakdown in Diagram 5.3.3a. We can see from the bar chart a total of 61.8% of teachers considered the data collected useful or very useful to the

SSE process. Less than 7% (6.74%) didn't find the data useful. This surely is a strong endorsement from the schools of the value of the SSE process.

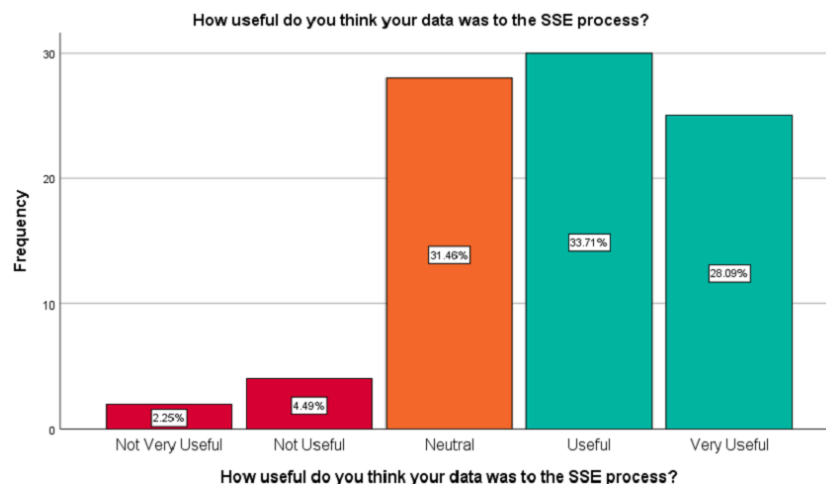


Diagram 5.3.3a

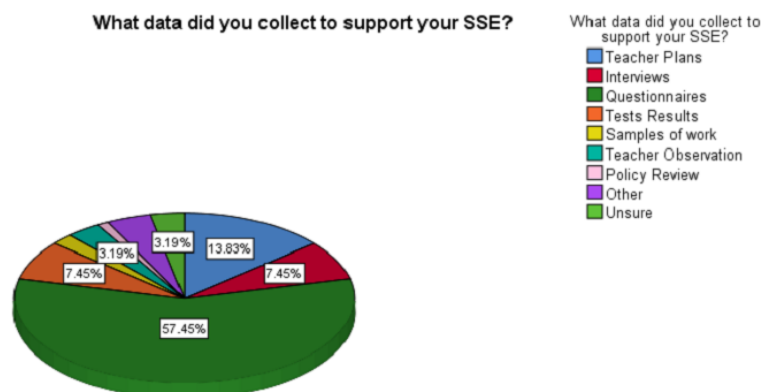


Diagram 5.3.3b

A variety of data was collected by teachers in the SSE process as illustrated in Diagram 5.3.3b with questionnaires being the most popular with well over half of respondents 57.45% using questionnaires to collect data. The next popular was teacher plans at 13.83% and interviews and tests results having 7.45% each. Other methods employed were samples of work 7.45%, teacher observation 3.19% and policy review 3.19%.

5.3.4 SSE Teacher Involvement

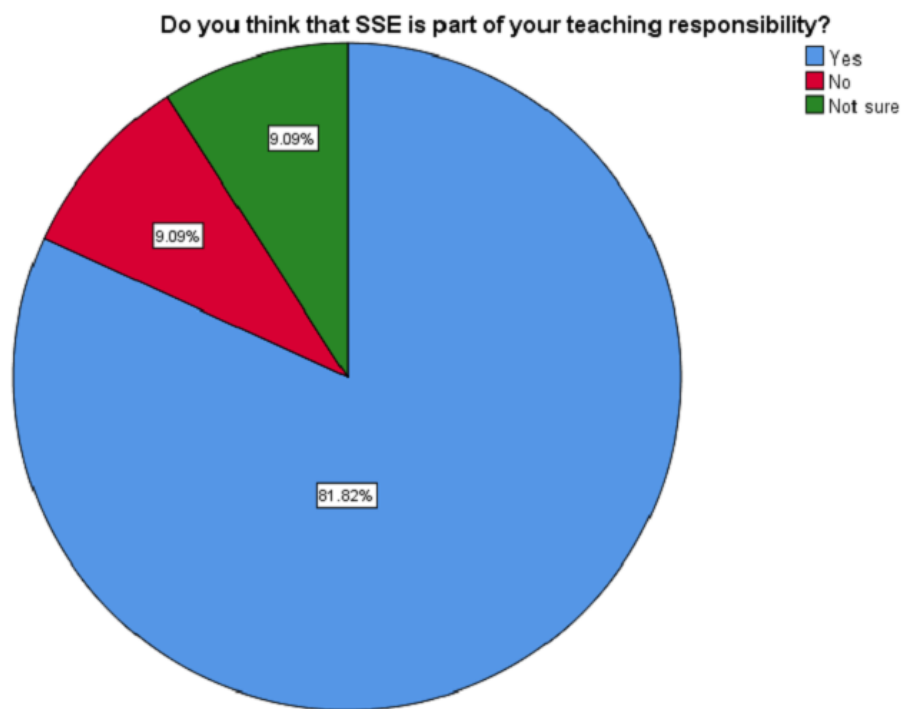


Diagram 5.3.4a

As we can see from the pie chart above, Diagram 5.3.4a an overwhelming majority 81.82% reported they thought SSE was part of a teacher's responsibility with 9.09% saying no and another 9.09% being unsure. However there was also strong agreement that it was a very time consuming process.

As we can see from Diagram 5.3.4b over two thirds of the 97 respondents 69.07% consider SSE to be time-consuming or very time-consuming with 10.31% saying it wasn't time-consuming or very time-consuming.

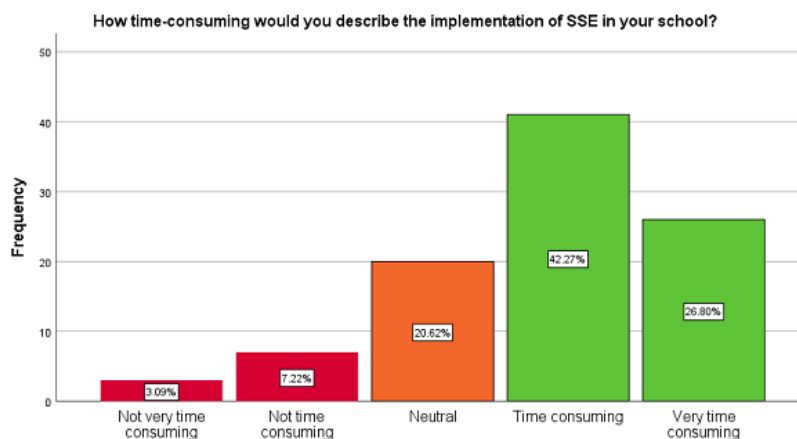


Diagram 5.3.4b

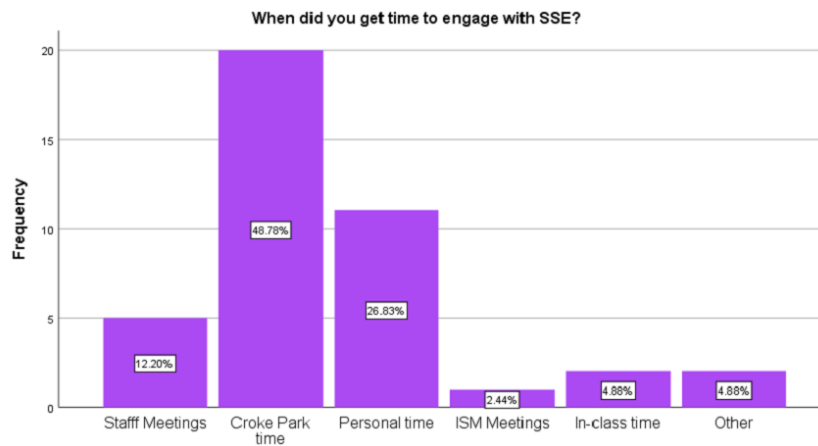


Diagram 5.3.4c

As is depicted in Diagram 5.2.4c almost half of the 93 respondents (48.78%) said they got time to engage with SSE during Croke Park time with over a quarter 26.83% saying personal time. Staff meetings accounted for 12.2% of the time, 4.88% reported in-class time and 2.44% was ISM meetings and 4.88% was other.

5.3.5 Reporting SSE

As we can see from the pie chart below, Diagram 5.3.5 a third of the 98 respondents, 33.67% said they had reported the SSE findings to parents and the wider school community with slightly over another third, 34.69% saying they hadn't done yet but will do. The online questionnaire was conducted in the last three months of the school year.

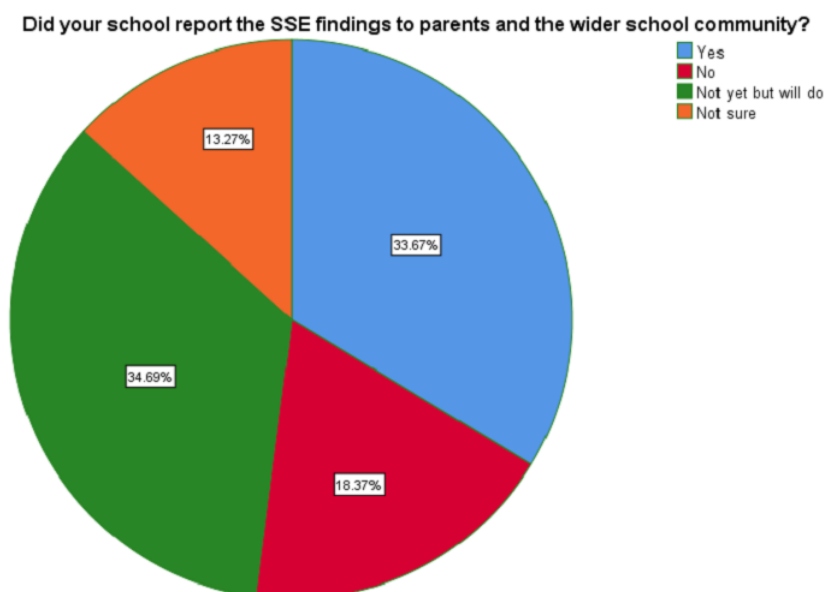


Diagram 5.3.5

5.3.6 Supports for SSE

As we can see from the bar graph below, Diagram 5.3.6a almost half, 45.36% of the 97 respondents thought the document ‘School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020’ was useful or very useful to implementing SSE with less than one fifth, 17.52% thinking it was not useful or very useful.

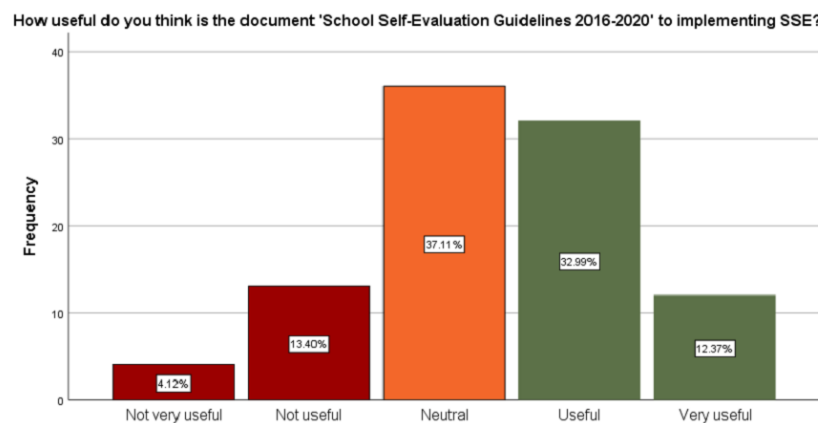


Diagram 5.3.6a

Similarly as we can see from the bar graph below, Diagram 5.3.6b almost half, 43% of 97 respondents thought the document ‘Looking At Our Schools 2016-2020’ was useful or very useful to implementing SSE and again less than one fifth, 17% think it is not useful or very useful.

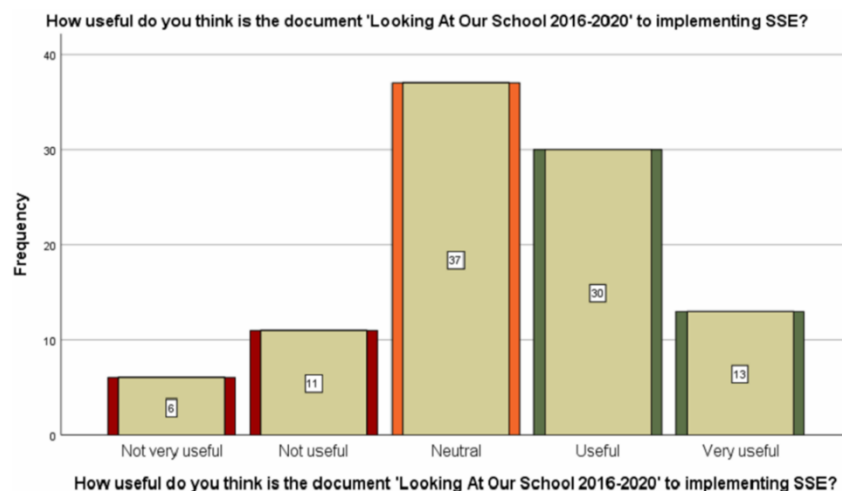


Diagram 5.3.6b

We can see from the pie chart below, Diagram 5.3.6c the number of respondents who reported their school employing the services of an outside agency to assist the SSE process.

More than half 51.04% of the 97 respondents didn't employ the services of an outside agency.

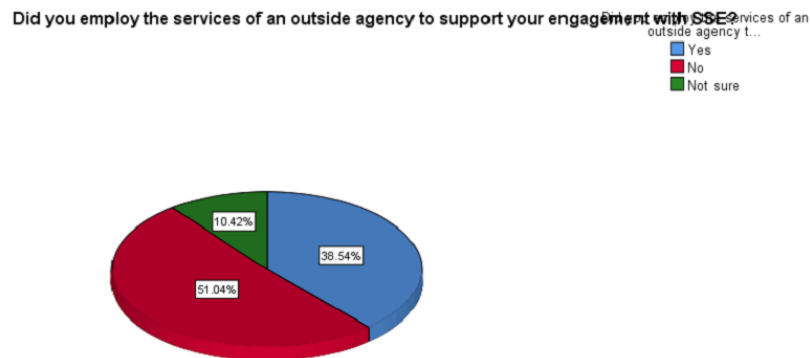


Diagram 5.3.6c

As we can see from Diagram 5.3.6d that 48.86% of the 88 respondents said the use of an outside agency in supporting their engagement with SSE was beneficial or very beneficial. 20.45% reported them as not beneficial or very beneficial. The 88 responses are depicted as follows.

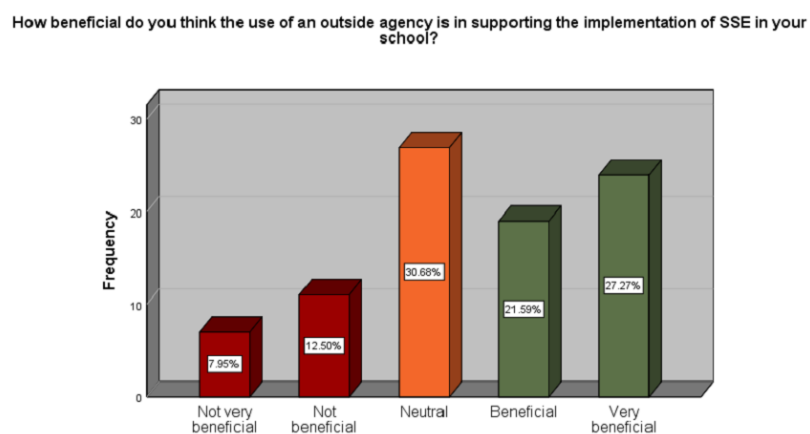


Diagram 5.3.6d

From the bar chart above, Diagram 5.3.6d we can see that almost half 48.86% of the 62 respondents found the use of the services of an outside agency in supporting the implementation of SSE to be beneficial or very beneficial.

Examples of some of the 62 responses are indicated in the following table.

Advisory	‘Advisory- shared ideas regarding good practice and resources.’, ‘PDST helped us to interpret the task in hand more clearly and how to best proceed.’, ‘Bring ideas’ and ‘They answer questions and help with planning and structure’.
Guidance	‘Support sought from the inspectorate and the PDST, which gave valuable and manageable guidance.’, ‘Enable us to focus and proceed with confidence’ and ‘Probably give guidance on how to approach the implementation’.
Support	‘PDST gave us good support’ and ‘We had support in the area of the new English Curriculum and felt more confused at the end than beforehand.’
Expertise	‘Demonstrating gymnastics lesson to teachers’, ‘Informed us of ways to improve this subject area.’, ‘Sharing expertise but limited help due to our choice of area for development’ and ‘I imagine an outside agency would be a super help in this area. They have the knowledge and skills we certainly don't have in this area.’
Paperwork	‘They will provide templates but don’t assist in school’s own paperwork’.
Other	‘Involved all staff in a collaborative way managed workload very efficiently while recognising the burden of work required.’, ‘They helped shape our actions.’ and ‘None. They inspected us only.’

Table 5.3.6

What role do you think did an outside agency play in supporting SSE in your school?

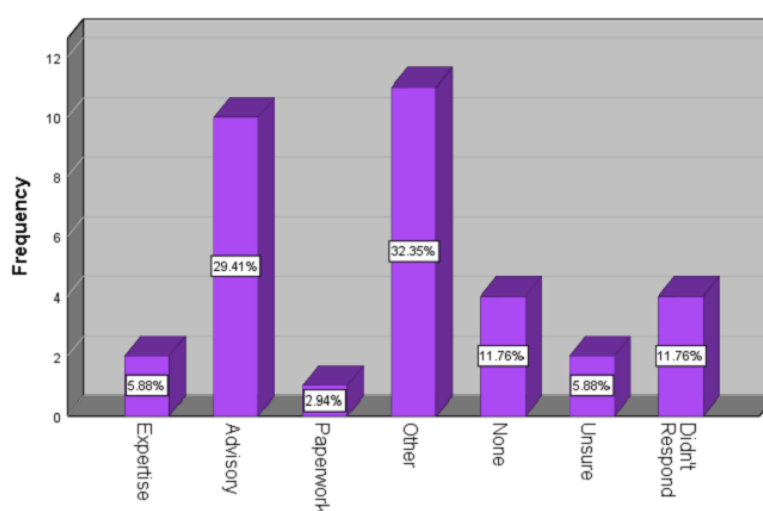


Diagram 5.3.6e

We can see from the above bar-graph, Diagram 5.3.6e that the main role played by an outside agency in supporting the implementation of SSE was according to 29.41% of the respondents advisory.

What role do you think an outside agency could play in supporting SSE in schools?

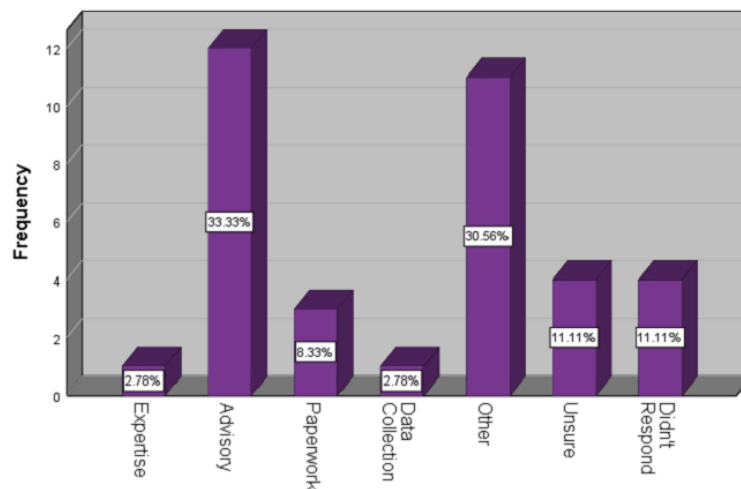


Diagram 5.3.6f

Similarly, the main way envisaged by teachers as to the role an outside agency could play in supporting SSE in schools is mostly advisory and the sharing of expertise according to 71 responses as illustrated in Diagram 5.3.6f. This advisory role the outside agencies could play in supporting schools with the implementation of SSE was reported by about a third of respondents 33.33%.

Do you think your school should engage the use of an outside agency again in supporting the implementation of SSE in your school?

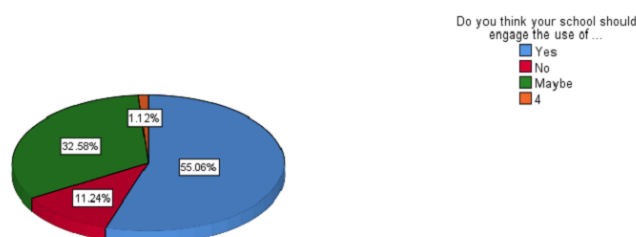


Diagram 5.3.6g

As we can see from the above pie chart, Diagram 5.3.6g over half of the 89 respondents 55.06% think their schools should engage the use of an outside agency with 11.24% saying they shouldn't.

Would you recommend the use of an outside agency in supporting SSE to another school?

Yes
No
Maybe
4

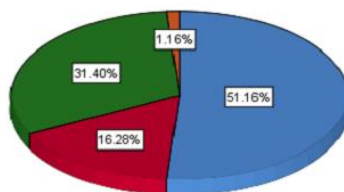


Diagram 5.3.6h

As we can see from the above pie chart, Diagram 5.3.6h over half 51.16% of the 86 respondents would recommend the use of an outside agency to another school and 16.28% wouldn't recommend the service to another school.

How often do you envisage your school in availing of the use of an outside agency in supporting the use of SSE in your school?

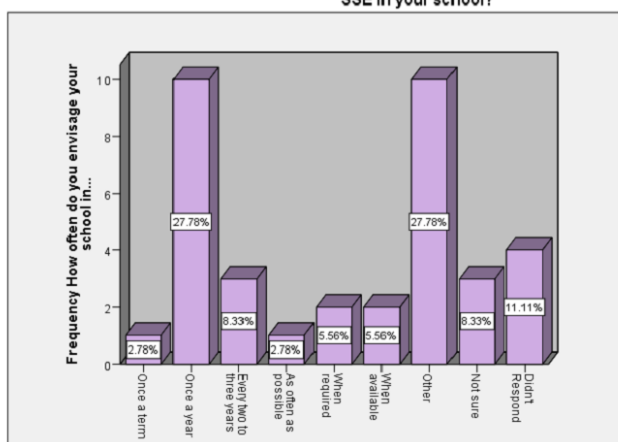


Diagram 5.3.6i

From the above bar chart, Diagram 5.3.6i we can see that 27.78% of the 75 respondents would like to avail of the services of an outside agency once a year with 2.78% saying once a term.

5.3.7 SSE and Accountability

Interestingly and importantly the main reason offered by respondents for engagement with SSE was compliance with over two thirds 67.50% of the 92 respondents giving reasons to do with SSE being compulsory. Over a fifth 22.5% of respondents reported it was to do with reasons associated with collective responsibility as shown in Diagram 5.3.7a below.

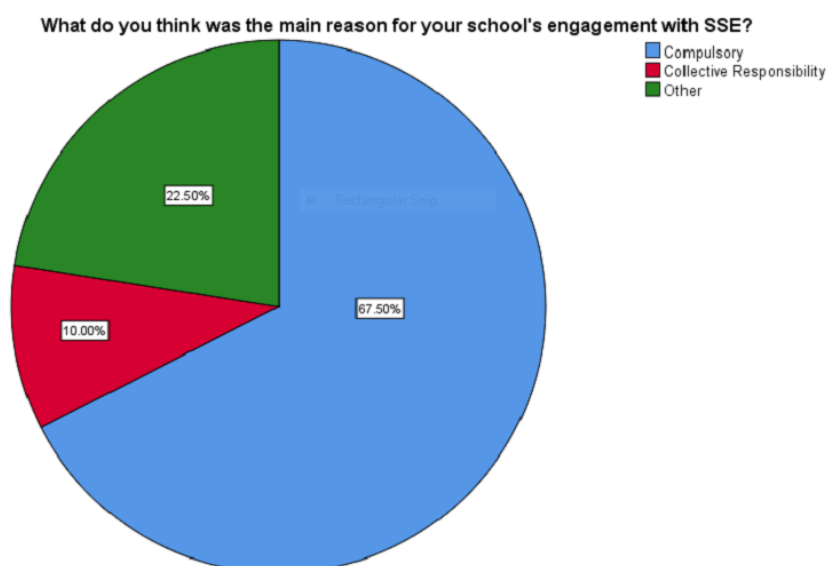


Diagram 5.3.7a

A variety of reasons are put forward regarding the school's engagement with SSE by the 92 respondents some of which are for *accountability* reasons only, some see it as part of their *collective responsibility* and others see it as *mixture* of the two. Some are not sure as they felt 'Unsure as was not involved in decision making'. Examples of reasons of compliance are with responses such as 'obligatory, DES requirement, external recommendation, it's part of our job, told to!, had to do it, compulsory, because we have to, to be compliant, DES pushing it and legal requirement'. Responses such as 'accountability to the DES' could fit in to both categories i.e compliance and collective responsibility. 'SSE reengagement was pushed as an immediate goal for the school this year...' Examples of reasons of collective responsibility are 'to see what we do well and what we need to do better, desire to improve accuracy in Oral Irish, a way of progressing', 'We are always looking to improve practice but now when we do it we complete lots of paperwork to prove we are doing it.', 'Circular from department and staff desire to improve teaching and learning in school' and

Schools are doing SSE anyway. It is in the literacy and numeracy plans and part of our life. The SSE report is repetition. I worked in self-evaluation systems in the private sector

and this is an attempt to put a private sector system into the ed. sector without any of the supports that are in the private sector (Online Questionnaire respondent).

Exactly half of the 98 respondents reported that they think their school engages with SSE for accountability reasons only as shown in Diagram 5.3.7b below. Almost a third, 30.61% of respondents didn't think their school engages with SSE for accountability reasons only and almost a fifth 19.39% were unsure.

Do you think your school engages with SSE for accountability reasons only?

Yes
No
Not sure

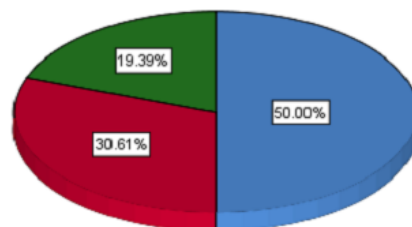


Diagram 5.3.7b

Accountability in this question referred to compliance as the sister question was related to the school taking ownership of SSE. Over half 55.21% of the 98 respondents reported their schools took ownership of SSE to a large or very large extent as shown in Diagram 5.3.7c below. Less than one fifth, 17.71% felt that their school had taken ownership to a small or very small extent.

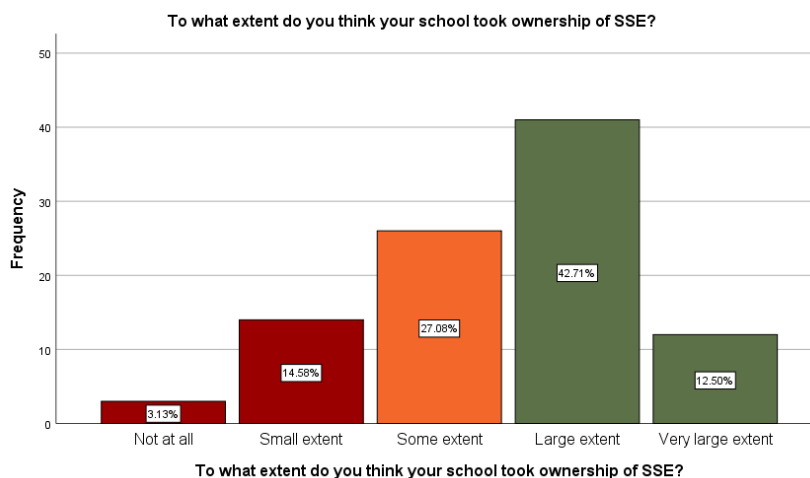


Diagram 5.3.7c

5.3.8 The Impact of SSE in Schools

We can see from the pie chart below, Diagram 5.3.8a almost half, 49% of 98 respondents thought SSE was beneficial in bringing about a positive change in their schools. 16% didn't think it was beneficial and 33% were unsure.

Do you think SSE was beneficial in bringing about a positive change in your school?

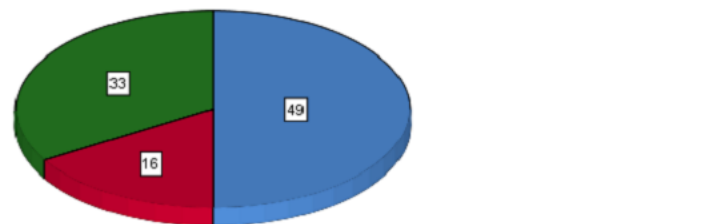


Diagram 5.3.8a

The ways mentioned by the 58 respondents as to how this positive change came about was mostly the idea of a better focus with over a third 34.62% mentioning focus as a positive aspect as shown in Diagram 5.3.8b below.

If yes, how do you think SSE was beneficial in bringing about a positive change in your school?

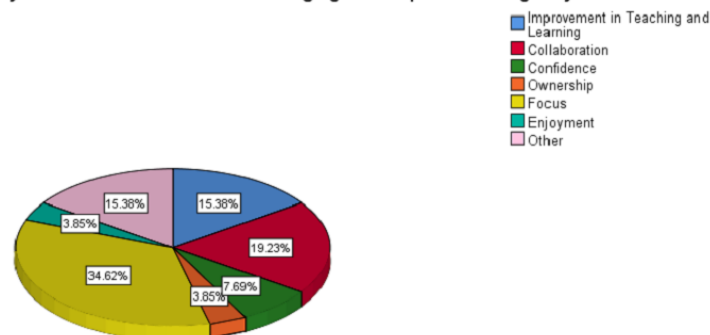


Diagram 5.3.8b

34.62 % of the respondents felt that the focus brought about a positive change in SSE saying for example 'Focus on key areas that need improvement', 'Clear focus for everyone. Whole school approach.', 'Just made us focus more when we are so busy trying to keep on top of so many other things', 'It has focused teachers on implementing changes in the

curricular area. It's made us aware of what's going well in a curricular area.', 'It forced us to focus on areas that we feel need improvement.', 'Teachers are focused on one topic.' and 'We certainly do focus on improving the subject area. However, the paperwork required would deter us from adding any optional extras.'

19.23% reported collaboration as bringing about a positive change saying it 'Promoted staff reflection and discussion, helped us to identify strengths and weaknesses', 'Got us to self-reflect and plan collaboratively for a better school', 'As we are a small rural 2 teacher school we are constantly discussing and reflecting on what's happening in our school but SSE makes us record our findings.', 'Developed collaborative working practice among teachers. Sharing of assessment resources. CPD and information-sharing with colleagues. More finely tuned IEP targets which are meaningful and achievable.', 'Sharing good practice/resources/planning/collaboration - all ongoing and 'Got us to self-reflect and plan collaboratively for a better school.'

15.38% saying there was an improvement in teaching and learning such as 'The time spent on SSE is beneficial to the teaching and learning in our school', 'Better outcomes and learning', 'Our results are improving' and 'Shared understanding of process, improved teaching and learning, CPD'.

A variety of responses as indicated in the pie chart above show different opinions such as 'Reflection is always beneficial, as it leads to improvement.', 'Children had a positive experience learning Irish' and

Having completed the process from start to finish on a relatively straightforward and easily measurable topic, we feel confident enough to repeat it next year with something more challenging. The actual topic covered (maths tables) also benefited the school in that the children's confidence with tables improved (Online Questionnaire respondent).

There was a relatively small number of sceptical responses. For example, respondents reported 'I am hopeful that it will bring about positive change but the process has yet to be completed fully and recommendations implemented and that will be the key to whether it is successful or not', 'Professional dialogue/whole school approach is positive', 'It gave us ownership of our own performance', 'No, it's cosmetic' and

I think there is a small number of staff who work on the SSE paperwork and it is discussed with the whole school at brief meetings, however I think SSE is only beneficial when a whole school is fully committed to engaging in making changes across the board (Online Questionnaire respondent).

We can see from the pie chart below, Diagram 5.3.8c that over three quarters, 77.55% of the 98 respondents reported that their engagement with SSE enabled their school to identify its strengths in learning and teaching.

Did your engagement with SSE enable your school identify its strengths in learning and teaching ?

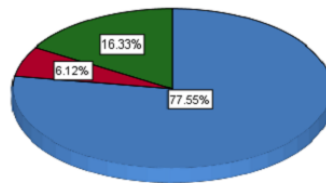


Diagram 5.3.8c

Similarly, we can see from the pie chart below, Diagram 5.3.8d that a similar number 77.32% of the 97 respondents reported that their engagement with SSE enabled their school to identify its weaknesses in learning and teaching.

Did your engagement with SSE enable your school identify its weaknesses in learning and teaching?

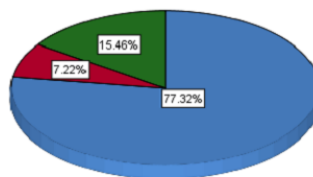


Diagram 5.3.8d

Well over half of the 98 respondents, 57.14%, as can be seen in Diagram 5.3.8e, reported that the process of SSE helps their school with regard to external school inspection. 14.29% replied in the negative and 28.57% said they were unsure.

Do you think the process of SSE helps your school with regard to external school inspection?

Yes
No
Not sure

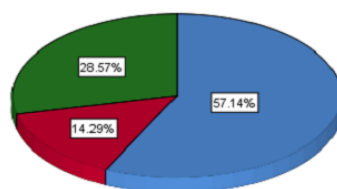


Diagram 5.3.8e

As we can see in Diagram 5.3.8f the main ways given by the 58 respondents as to how SSE helps with regard to external school inspection are evidence and improvement. Almost a quarter, 23.33% gave evidence and one fifth 20% reported improvement as the reason. Other reasons given are ownership, collaboration, focus, paperwork and transparency.

Examples of responses regarding evidence are ‘Data and evidence collection benefits inspector by providing more than the one-day snap-shot of school life’ and

Yes I think the main reasons schools participate in the SSE process and all of its paperwork is primarily for the school inspector as it would be something they would request to see in the overall school plans (Online Questionnaire respondent).

Examples of responses regarding improvement are ‘It gives more visibility to the positive operations of the school.’, ‘Assists with planning and documentation and evaluation.’, ‘You improve areas which could bring you down in a WSE.’, ‘The school is working together as a whole to improve an identified area of need within the school.’ and ‘not sure it does, it gives the Inspectorate another thing to check and criticise’.

A combination of evidence and improvement was mentioned too

We have completed a cycle of SSE now and can support our decisions in that area of the curriculum with data and have the confidence going forward to repeat the process across the rest of the curriculum (Online Questionnaire respondent).

and ‘We feel that this will inform our whole school planning and our school improvement plan which we expect the inspectorate to look for when they visit.’

An example of a response regarding ownership is as follows: ‘SSE made staff more aware of what our aims are in teaching and learning; it also instilled a sense of ownership and confidence amongst staff for the work that we do.’ An example of a response regarding compliance are ‘Inspectors are keen on SSE so are happy that we are doing it!’.

If yes, how do you think the process of SSE helps your school with regard to external school inspection?

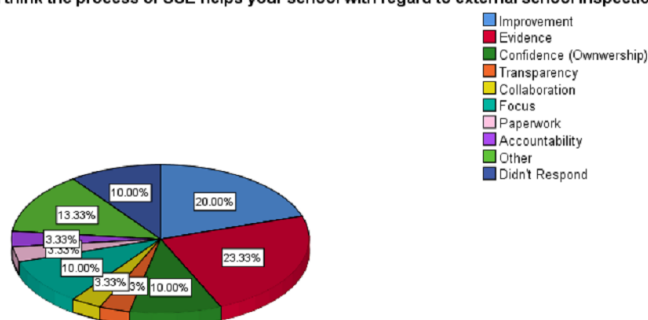


Diagram 5.3.8f

5.3.9 SSE – Possible Improvements

As we can see from the bar chart below, Diagram 5.3.9 more time and less paperwork were the two main responses from the 90 respondents. More professional support was recommended also. Over half of the 95 respondents, 54.55% consider the purpose of SSE to be improving teaching and learning.

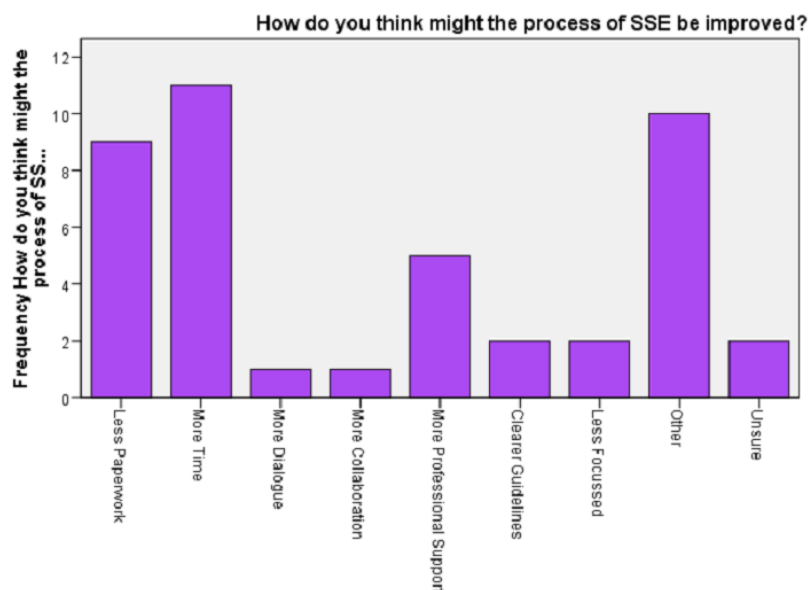


Diagram 5.3.9

The main reasons offered by the respondents as to how the process of SSE might be improved are more time (11%) and less paperwork (9%). The DES as mentioned in the literature review does not wish the SSE process to be paper driven. A two or three pages report is ample according to the DES. But from the point of view of the teachers there is a lot

of paperwork involved with regard to collecting evidence before the end document, the SIP is written up. Time is a factor too. As we saw earlier Croke Park hours are the main time used for teachers for conducting SSE, followed by teachers' own personal time but Croke Park can't be used exclusively for SSE. With regard to time some teachers expressed a need for 'more release time from class to plan'. Some of the reasons offered as to how SSE could be improved are according to 100 responses -Time, Data, Paperwork and Dialogue. These concerns are all interrelated. The paperwork and data collection for example become more of an issue due to the lack of time.

Examples of some responses are indicated in the following table.

More time	'Allocated time for staff to take an SSE planning day mid-year - focused conversations based on school's individual needs.' and 'Slow down pace'.
Less Paperwork	'Less reliance on paperwork' and 'Less paperwork and note keeping'.
More Resources	'We need to have all the relevant resources'.
Data	'SSE is too data-driven'.
Dialogue	'Opportunities are needed to be able to talk with fellow teachers'.
Sharing Information/Teamwork	'It's hard to get time to discuss SSE matters with colleagues'.
More professional support (DES and outside agencies)	'Support from Inspectorate or other' and 'PDST teams to visit schools to help with process'.
More training	'More in-service training. One day with PDST is not enough'.
Clearer direction	'More department guidance' and 'Clearer direction and support in writing reports and in planning, define more what aspect is to be reviewed'.
More autonomy	'More autonomy for schools in implementation' and 'More autonomy over layout of report'.
More money	'Paying teachers to engage !!!!! I'm joking, but it would work' and 'Decrease teacher workload so teachers can engage with SSE. Reduce class sizes. Use Croke park hours for all SSE. Or pay teachers for their overtime when engaging with SSE.'

Table 5.3.9

Other examples of responses are 'Let teachers teach. The concept of SSE is flawed. Teachers are professional. Trust us. Our instincts to teach our students to the best of our ability is true. The strict SSE process is a box ticking exercise and restricts us.'

5.3.10 The Role of MLM with regard to SSE

As is depicted in Diagram 5.3.10a over three quarters 76% consider the principal to have the overall responsibility for the implementation of SSE in their schools.

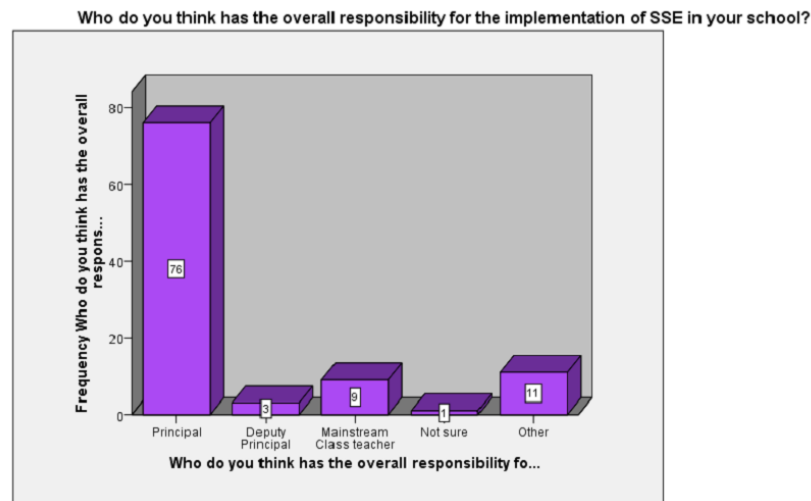


Diagram 5.3.10a

As we can see from the bar chart below, Diagram 5.3.10b less than half, 44.44% of the 100 respondents consider the main role of MLM in the implementation of SSE to be assisting. 8.89% of respondents said leading SSE with 4.44% said informing. 44.2% of respondents offered a variety of other reasons such as facilitating and coordinating.

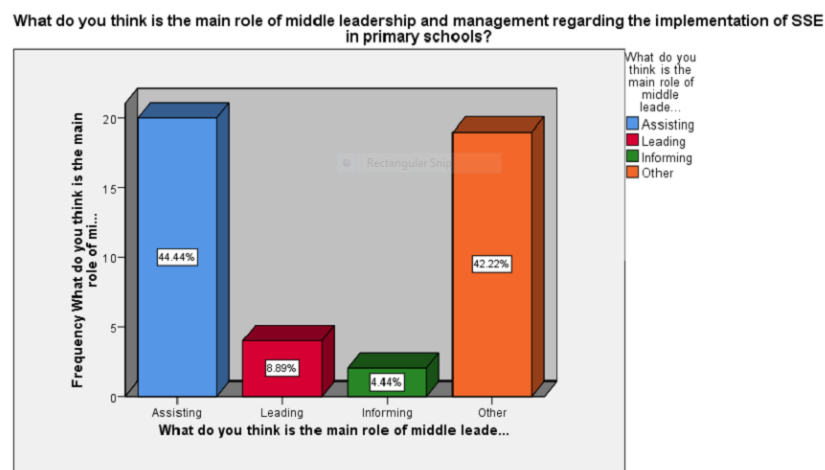


Diagram 5.3.10b

Examples of some responses are indicated in the following table.

Assisting	'Assisting the principal in implementing change' and 'Assist the principal in SSE planning and implementation'.
Leading	We should be involved in leading SSE, perhaps meeting with different levels to facilitate discussion.', 'Leading focus group/suggesting ways to gather evidence etc/devising same', 'Having direction from the principal, I think the middle management should run the SSE', I think they should be leaders in this area.', 'Organise, lead, oversee implementation and report on engagement with SSE', 'Leading the focus and purpose', 'steering only' and 'lead research and then lead implementation of strategies or changes'.
Informing	'Ensure staff know what is expected of them', 'Ensuring it is explained, understood and implemented to a level that is of benefit in a school.' and 'Dissemination of information'.
Other	Support and promote the implementation', 'to encourage all staff to engage', 'Co-ordinate, and implement, engage other teachers', 'Facilitation, guidance and direction', 'Liaison with staff and see needs of the school in order to progress and adapt', 'Identify needs, distribution of leadership' and 'Overseeing implementation, enabling discussions regarding benefits of SSE and problems that arise, paperwork'.

Table 5.3.10a

As we can see from the pie chart below, Diagram 5.3.10c almost a quarter 22.22% of the 100 respondents describe the style of their MLM team as collaborative. 13.33% describe the MLM style as supportive with a further 4.44% describing it as distributive. 60% described the style in a multitude of other ways.

How would you describe the style of leadership and management shown by the middle leadership and management team in your school?

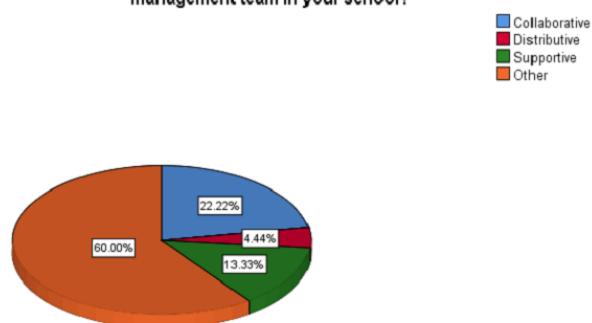


Diagram 5.3.10c

Examples of some responses are indicated in the following table.

Collaborative (22.22%)	‘Collaborative - total of 3 teachers, one of whom is shared SET based here’, ‘Collaborative/ teamwork’.
Supportive (13.33%)	‘Positive and supportive’, ‘Open and willing to listen, supportive approach. We could do better at ensuring implementation however.’
Distributive (4.44%)	‘Distributed’ and ‘distributive and transformational’.
Other (60%)	‘It varies’, ‘Very strong and professional’, ‘Facilitators.’, ‘Inclusive’, Very collegiate and democratic’, ‘As a principal - some better than others’, ‘Poor’, ‘Very stressed staff in general with an over-loaded curriculum, killing ourselves working. Leading by example yet we feel distributive leadership is not working as people that don't have posts feel they shouldn't have to do all this extra work’.

Table 5.3.10b

We can see from the bar chart below, Diagram 5.3.10d almost half the 99 respondents, 49% think the MLM lead SSE and school improvement to a large or a very large extent with 26% saying to a small extent or not at all.

To what extent do you think does middle leadership and management lead SSE and School Improvement in your school?

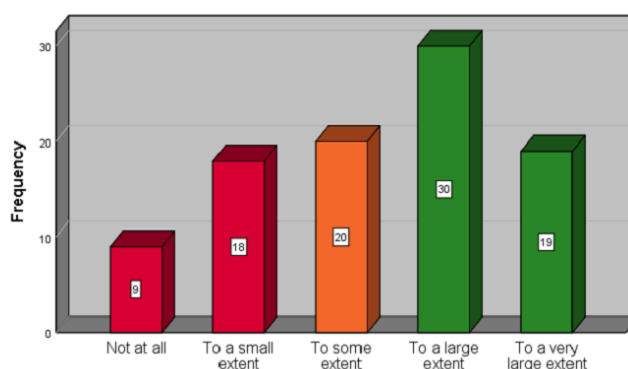


Diagram 5.3.10d

5.3.11 MLM and LAOS 2016

In the key policy document on the role of MLM in SSE, *LAOS 2016*, clear expectations are outlined by the Inspectorate. The following series of questions was designed to test MLM respondents' views on the extent to which they perceive themselves to be equipped to implement these roles. It was necessary to clean the data as some other teachers also responded. The data were cleaned to extract the responses of the MLM teachers only. The results are given in Table 5.3.11.

Expectations of MLM, *LAOS 2016*

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	Leading learning and teaching	School leaders: promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning
	Managing the organisation	School leaders: establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability
	Leading school development	School leaders: communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education
	Developing leadership capacity	School leaders: critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation, and pupil leadership build professional networks with other school leaders

Diagram 5.3.11

The confidence levels reported by the MLM respondents in each of the above domains is as follows.

Confidence levels with regard to standards (the ‘no opinion’ (neutral) column is not included).

Standard	Percentage reporting Confident or Very Confident	Percentage reporting little or no Confidence
Promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment.	66.6	3.7
Foster a culture of inclusion, equality of each pupil and the holistic development of each pupil.	74	3.7
Manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum.	59.2	7.4
Foster teacher professional development that improves teachers’ and pupils’ learning.	59.2	3.7
Establish an orderly and secure learning environment and maintain it through healthy communication.	70.3	3.7
Manage the school’s human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning environment.	44.4	7.4
Manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice.	62.9	7.4
Develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability.	44.4	14.8
Communicate the guiding vision of the school and leads its realisation.	59.2	14.8
Lead the school in a continuous process of SSE	59.2	11.1
Build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools and with the wider community.	66.6	11.1
Manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education.	57.69	6.41
Critique their practice as leaders and develop an understanding of effective and sustainable leadership.	37	25.9
Empower staff to take on leadership roles.	44.4	22.2
Promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation and pupil leadership.	60.4	14.8
Build professional networks with other school leaders.	51.8	22.2

Table 5.3.11

5.3.12 Additional Comments

Please add any other comments regarding the implementation of SSE in your school.

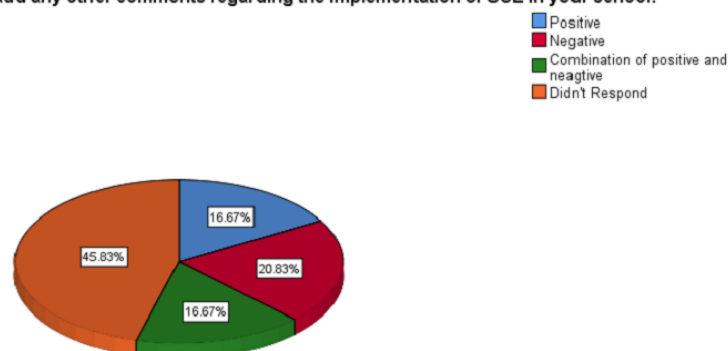


Diagram 5.3.12

A variety of comments were offered by 30 of the respondents some examples of which are indicated in the following table, Table 5.3.5. The percentage of positive and negative comments received are indicated in the pie chart above, Diagram 5.3.12.

Positive	'I think SSE gives the whole school community a focus for planning, for CPD and resourcing materials.'
Negative	'The idea behind the process is excellent. However, the amount of investigation, assessment and reporting which needs to be written and provided to inspectorate is onerous.' and 'I find it's hard to get the buy-in from staff at times and they see it as a box-ticking exercise.'
Mixed	'Very worthwhile but very time consuming, sometimes I feel we have to do too much paperwork which is just for show/ to prove we have engaged in SSE and this may not be the most beneficial use of our time - the process should be simple and not cumbersome.' and 'We can see the benefit of SSE but it is a bit daunting.'

Table 5.3.12

The above table taken together with those immediately before it indicates that SSE policy envisages a significant role for MLM staff in the process and that the majority of respondents both have confidence that they have the skills to undertake this work and are in fact doing so in practice. In schools that have MLM, and in particular the largest schools, the role of MLM in the context of SSE is highly regarded.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings can be categorised into three main sections –the role of MLM in SSE, positive outcomes and negative outcomes.

5.4.1 The Role of MLM in SSE

The role of MLM is acknowledged by the respondents as significant. MLM play a role in deciding the area, collecting and collating the data, writing targets and reporting to staff. The majority of respondents found the data collected to be useful to the SSE process. The role and impact of MLM in overseeing SSE varies depending on their school profiles.

5.4.2 Positive Outcomes

It is very clear from the results of the online questionnaire that primary school teachers consider the SSE process to be a very worthwhile exercise. The results show that schools are engaging with the SSE process and that it is having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

5.4.3 Negative Outcomes

It is equally clear from the results of the online questionnaire that primary school teachers are still experiencing many challenges with regard to the implementation of SSE in their schools. The main challenges revolve around time and paperwork. Related to this is the need for dialogue, discussion and collaboration which of course is linked to the time constraints. MLM teachers in particular need more release time from classes in order to facilitate worthwhile and fruitful discussion and collaboration with their colleagues. Training is an important part of a teacher's professional development. MLM teachers would like to have more access to training to support them in their role in leading the implementation of SSE.

The above chapter reports on an online questionnaire, the outcome of which the researcher used to inform the question schedule for a major series of follow-up, in-depth interviews designed to enrich the data. It is to these we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 6
Part B - the Interview Data

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews. A series of 19 interviews was completed with primary school teachers and principals and a retired Assistant Chief Inspector. This retired DES inspector had responsibility for developing and introducing SSE as a mandatory requirement in schools.

The interviews were conducted one-to-one, either face-to-face or on the phone during the period from January to March 2020. It was decided to conduct some of the interviews by phone due to the imposed lockdown in March 2020 as a result of Covid-19. The interviews were designed to build on the most interesting and fruitful areas which emerged from the questionnaire and to explore them in greater detail. Each interview lasted an average of 45 minutes. They were recorded to aid analysis. The recordings were transcribed manually and the transcripts were analysed both manually and using NVivo12. A copy of the transcripts was given to the interviewees to ensure accuracy of interpretation. The methodology of analysis is fully described in Chapter 3, the Research Methodology.

The interviewees were furnished with the interview schedule in advance of the interview to facilitate preparation of answers. The questions used in the interviews were modified slightly to be more relevant to the retired inspector. A copy of the interview schedule is included as Appendix C. The questions used in the interviews form the basis of this analysis.

6.2 Emerging Concepts and Themes

We can see from Table 6.3 below some of the main nodes created in NVivo12 from the analysis of the online questionnaire responses. Key themes emerged such as administration, barriers, change, committee, communication, contact, critique, expertise, improvement, leading SSE, ownership, paperwork, remuneration, role, style, support, teamwork, time and training. Some of these themes were explored further in the interview schedule. Key questions had emerged from the questionnaire which were used in the subsequent interviews to get a deeper understanding. The questions for the interviews were designed based on the results of the online questionnaire.

	Small school	Medium school	Large school
Non-postholder	NPHC1 NPHC2	NPHB1 NPHB2	NPHA1 NPHA2
Postholder	PHC3 PHC4	PHB3 PHB4	PHA3 PHA4
Principal	PC5 PC6	PB5 DPB6	PA5 PA6

Table 6.4

A total of 18 teachers was interviewed from 18 different schools.

Principal = P

Deputy Principal = DP

Postholder = PH

Non-Postholder = NPH

Six Senior Management – PA5, PA6, PB5, DPB6, PC5 and PC6

Six postholders PHA3, PHA4, PHB3, PHB4, PHC3 and PHC4

Six non-postholders NPHA1, NPHA2, NPHB1, NPHB2, NPHC1 and NPHC2

I retired DES Inspector.

Total = 19 interviewees

18 teachers (6 Senior Management, 6 MLM and 6 other teachers) and 1Inspector.

I opted for the letters A, B and C for categorising the teachers and I hope the reader finds this coding helpful.

A is for administrative – large primary schools have an administrative principal.

B is for in between i.e. a principal or teacher in a medium-sized school.

C is for country- most schools are small schools in rural areas.

I will begin by looking at each of the questions in turn. The same questions were asked of all teachers. A modified version of the interview was given to a retired inspector.

6.4 The Success of SSE

For this question I will begin with the inspector's response. She gave a very detailed answer and interestingly introduced a different approach to the question by describing the engagement as being on a continuum. She takes the perspective of all schools. She references the Chief Inspector from a recent presentation to principals telling me 'he answers it very

well in saying there is evidence from inspection that SSE is successful to a point'. The inspector described the engagement as follows

the engagement is on a continuum so that goes all the way from – yet to engage with SSE in any meaningful way right up to excellent, effective SSE where there is collaboration among all the partners, and in between there are the people who are engaged in SSE.

The retired inspector acknowledges that schools have made a good start with SSE

there are people who have initiated the process who need now to move it in to the next stage and there are people who are genuinely focussing on an area of teaching and learning to improve.

The fact of the variance of engagement with SSE justifies the retired inspector's comments when she says,

so there's a whole continuum from not yet engaging meaningfully, right up to being successful. So it's not a question of yes, it's successful or no it's not successful. That has to be qualified by the fact that when we introduced SSE on a mandatory basis in 2012 we accepted that it was a change of culture in schools and changing a culture is very slow and very, very difficult. I don't know if you are aware that we had John MacBeath over for a major conference in 2013 or 2014, and what he would have said was if you get something done in ten years you will be doing very well.

In summary regarding SSE being successful the inspector tells us, 'so it is only at this stage that you can say in any meaningful way if schools have engaged and the answer is some have - some haven't.' The inspector says

the main reason why and why not has to do with the fact that it is a change of culture. We had a choice when we were introducing SSE. That choice was either to say you must comply and you must use this form in the same way as the English system, Ofsted, use. We opted not to do that and we fought hard with politicians not to do that and we said we want this to be a meaningful engagement in collaboration for improvement.

The inspector explains, 'that's very different to focussing on we're doing this for compliance reasons. It's also much slower and much more difficult to do.'

Turning my attention to the postholders we read from postholder PHB3

yes, the implementation of SSE in primary schools has been successful. The reason I think this is well schools can decide themselves specific areas of the curriculum which they feel themselves they need to develop or improve on. Those areas will obviously vary from one school to the next.

We read from PHC3, 'I think it's a good idea because schools are able to find out what needs improvement in their own school. It's very particular I suppose to their school.' Overall this question shows agreement with the outcome of the questionnaire which shows that SSE has become well established in the schools.

6.5 The Strengths and Weaknesses of SSE

Postholder PHB4 informs us the strengths are as follows:

Ok well strengths first of the SSE process in primary schools, well first of all schools can focus on the needs in their own particular school. Secondly all staff are involved in improving the focus area in the school. Thirdly schools are taking responsibility for improvement and monitoring the improvement over time. Fourthly, schools are actually taking ownership of the SSE process and they're happy to do so in order to improve the particular areas in their own school.

The retired inspector tells me 'I think the main strengths where it is effectively happening is collaboration between teachers. I think the strengths of SSE are that teachers are talking to each other and that their talk is focussed on teaching and learning, improving teaching and learning.'

PHB4 describes the weaknesses as follows:

I feel that the monitoring of the implementation of the focus area of the school can be difficult. Secondly, I also think the lack of resources, lack of equipment or money needed to help school improvement in particular areas and thirdly there can be difficulty in ensuring that teachers continue to work on the previous focused areas in SSE once the school moves on to a new focus area of SSE.

The difficulty of ensuring that teachers continue to work on an area as they engage with a new area is problematic and was emphasised by DPB6 who says '... our experience is it's not effective...it's not an effective way of evaluating schools. At the start of the process it is good but as it continues it becomes cumbersome.' She continues, 'our postholders have designated roles and they're big - and this is added on to it so you would nearly want to have a postholder with the responsibility for SSE'.

The inspector outlines the weaknesses as follows 'I think the main weaknesses are the custom and practice in a school. Custom and practice has been teachers working in isolation and that's what Lowry in the 1970s talked about 'the egg crate mentality' and that 'egg crate mentality' is still there so the weakness is getting teachers to be confident enough and willing to share practice.'

6.6 The Main Role of MLM regarding SSE

According to PHB4

ok I think the main role of MLM regarding the implementation of SSE is to oversee, to overlook the implementation of SSE throughout the whole school. I think MLM must take responsibility for SSE in the school and this involves going in and leading a regular discussion at staff meetings regarding the implementation of SSE.

PHC3 offers a different perspective ‘I’ll go by my own school here - the MLM wouldn’t do it - really it would be a whole school, all staff would be fairly equally involved and the principal would be more involved’. As we can see the expectations from the MLMs themselves and what’s happening in practice in the schools are different.

Linked to the role of the MLM team we have the style of their approach. In describing the style of MLM in her school PHA3 says it’s

collaborative in the sense that postholders discuss things on a regular basis. Even though we all have our own separate posts of responsibility in a particular curricular area we support each other especially at critical times in the year such as Sports Day.

PHA3 continues saying ‘Also, with the introduction of the NPLC there was great collaboration with the two postholders in these subject areas.’ PA5 tells me the style of the MLM team in her school was distributive saying

I suppose I could say distributed in the sense that postholders set up committees such as the I.T. committee. These committees are great in the sense that you can have a representative from each class level and they share their ideas, knowledge and expertise.

PHA4 describes the style of leadership from the MLM as follows:

I suppose mainly democratic because trust is given for different things.....we are trusted.....free to do things. We are given the opportunity for things so I suppose from that point of view it is democratic for sure.

PB5 speaks positively of his MLM team saying ‘I feel that the MLM has been supportive of SSE and has a positive influence for change in this school.’

Here again we see the questionnaire results confirmed in that there is, in these interviews, a very positive view of the role of MLM in the implementation of the SSE process.

6.7 The extent to which MLM leads SSE in primary schools

PB5 responded to this question by saying

under the new model of Management and Leadership there is a lot more discussion about meeting the needs of the school. Whether the responsibilities are curricular, pastoral, managerial there is a leadership role for MLM. SSE is seen as a whole school approach where teacher leadership is supported by MML and all leaders. All are encouraged to lead and MLM are given the freedom to get on with the roles and responsibilities of their position.

PA5 tells me in her school that the MLM would lead SSE to a very large extent. She said that they have postholders covering key curricular areas and these postholders really ‘stepped up to the mark when it came to SSE’. She recalls how the first subject they chose

was maths and the postholder for maths showed 'exemplary leadership in leading the SSE with regard to maths in our school'. This postholder did it on her own initiative. 'She was fantastic. She got all the staff on board. She presented the results at staff meetings and it was great for everyone to see the results. The improvement was great.' PA5 continues

Likewise, this practice was continued by other postholders. We chose English and then Irish after that. The postholders in these two areas did a huge amount of work with regard to SSE. Again, they got the staff on board and we saw great improvements in the pupils' work.

PHC3 says, 'In our school really it's mainly led by the principal and then we just all do our part really - the MLM included.' This school only has one postholder and the approach is as she describes, 'I suppose really it would be more collaborative. Everybody working fairly equally. The principal would have a bigger role. I think that works as well.' This postholder is mindful of the fact that theirs is a small school and things are probably different in bigger schools saying

Yes we only have six classroom teachers. It would be totally different in a much bigger school you know. Everyone pulls their weight really and everyone works equally. Everyone knows what tests you have to do in the beginning, every teacher takes a role in it.

She acknowledges how SSE 'is meant to be a whole school thing anyway and everybody has a role to play'. The inspector responds to the question regarding how the MLM can best oversee the implementation of SSE in primary schools by stating that,

there's a very broad question there and there's a very narrow question. The very broad question is what do we mean by overseeing the implementation of SSE? If we go back to what the definition of SSE is according to the DES we are talking about a professional, collaborative process that is ongoing and focussed on teaching and learning. So how can they oversee it?, well everybody has to be involved in order for it to take place because collaboration is the first thing. First of all the school principal has to ensure that there is time for collaboration and then the MLM team need to ensure that they are ready and able to not just take part in the collaboration but to lead it, if it's their responsibility to lead it. That depends on who has responsibility for the overall coordination of SSE or whoever has overall responsibility for the particular area being looked at. It is totally dependent on trust but it is also dependent on the resources being available and easy to use and easy to access. Then there is that issue of classroom observation - can I go into your classroom to see how you do it? Now that's a huge professional collaboration piece. When we get to that stage in primary schools, then we will be successful in the implementation of SSE because now we are actually confident enough to share good practice. So there's a confidence thing there. There's a competence thing as well. What will we agree to share?

PHB3 tells me regarding her role in the implementation of SSE the importance of committees 'Meeting with my committee and getting feedback at different levels.' They would 'address each issue, research it, whatever we need to do, look up for example this year we took on a new Spelling Programme. Then we presented that to the staff, we used the

curriculum day and everyone on the committee stood up and gave a presentation. They were amazing. I would not have been able to do that on my own. They were absolutely superb.'

PHA3 tells us in describing the role of MLM,

well, I definitely think it should be a role of leadership. It's a very important role and they should be leading it for sure. They know what their colleagues are thinking, they know what the students are thinking.

PHA4 tells us that,

the postholder is the one who organises it all and facilitates its implementation. It is necessary to get feedback from the whole staff regarding a particular area or aspect. The postholder would take the lead at the staff meeting to ascertain from the staff which aspect to focus on.

PB5 says how MLM can best oversee the implementation of SSE by 'being supportive, showing initiative, being practical, being doers, listening, sharing and being mindful of their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.' PHB3 describes the challenges of trying to get in touch with staff members

This is a tricky one because you have to now make contact with teachers, you have to call around, chat with them and have a clear plan that's relevant to their teaching day, have a realistic plan that is do-able and that you're not turning around increasing their workload.

PHA4 tells me in her school the principal approached the maths and English postholders with regard to the re-introduction of SSE.

Now I know the circular suggested one aspect from literacy and numeracy but the principal arranged a meeting with the two postholders and they decided the topics without any discussion with the staff or other postholders for that matter.

It was very clear in these interviews that the central importance of the role of MLM in implementing SSE is clearly understood and equally clear that there would be very little progress without the active involvement of MLM.

6.8 The main barriers or challenges facing MLM in their role overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools

The main barriers perceived by the interviewees in relation to the overseeing of SSE by MLM are time, training and paperwork.

NPHB1 says

Yes, I suppose it's hard for middle leadership to find the time to talk to people. There's only so much you can do in your Croke Park time and a lot of time is scheduled for specific things or you know it's kind of a limited amount of time and sure where else can you do it. You could do a bit at lunchtime but then people resent their lunches being used or you mightn't get all the people you

know and then people might be cross because they were never told about it- maybe they were on the yard or whatever. I suppose that kind of thing, the logistics of communicating.

Some postholders reported that they hadn't received any training in their new role.

NPHB1 tells us

I suppose like in reality they probably have no training in terms of leadership CPD or whatever, that kind of thing. I suppose we don't know what exactly people do on these courses but you know you've all sorts of people doing leadership courses so there must be something of value in them and yet it's not provided for. I know they're might be summer courses that you could do maybe but it's not an automatic thing like you know there's a principal's course isn't there that principals can do but I don't know if there's anything that would be put on for middle leadership and management. I suppose it certainly would be no harm if there was something. They could be released a couple of days maybe when they take over.

Apathy was acknowledged by some postholders such as NPHB2

I suppose one of the things really would be apathy for people. I mean some people can be really enthusiastic but I suppose equally you would have people that wouldn't be enthusiastic like whether that's because of just maybe they feel like they've nothing to gain from it or they don't see the point in it or maybe they're cynical. I suppose it would be a big thing to try and channel the apathy. I suppose really if it can be seen to be helpful for the children, I think people are a lot more willing to take something on board and to try it out or to engage with it I suppose.

The postholder questions whether more time should be allocated for SSE saying

I wonder then should more time be set aside for it. That time would have to be well used. Maybe more I was going to say micro-managing but maybe more kind of subgroup setup, you know small groups or maybe more input from PDST or people like that.

Another postholder PHB3 describes the challenges as 'Well I suppose teachers who won't cooperate or can't or lack of training maybe as well. You need training in leadership.' and she emphasises the importance of communication 'So communication and face-to-face talking and the staff meetings are very good'. A major challenge perceived by this postholder is training,

it could be lack of training. Class teacher has been in a class for years and years and does not want to see anything new or will not cooperate with anything. They have it worked out. This is what works for me. I'm not interested in anything else. So a lack of training.

The ways these barriers can be overcome as perceived by PHB4 is by, 'definitely making whatever you are doing, whatever changes you are making to make them practical for the teacher and do-able.' She continues

Any training I've done has been in my own time. I don't know, we're back to that week in July, our summer course or you could do online training like we did for the GDPR, Child Protection. Everyone has their degree, everyone is a professional so it's not as if it's a major undertaking. You don't need to go into this in depth. It's just really particular information on what you need to know really.

PB5 acknowledges teacher overload. He talks about overload in both classwork and the leadership role.

There can be a lot of negativity towards change and the leadership culture in the school due to recent cutbacks. There is apathy or indifference of staff to improvement and change. Expectations of others can be too high, too low or indifferent. There can be jealousy among staff with regard to posts. He says how there is not sufficient recompense for the role. The lack of leadership opportunities has led he tells us to disillusionment and negativity within staff and or parent body towards school and what is happening. This can lead to a lack of a shared vision or purpose in the school.

In answering the question on how the barriers can be overcome PHC4 says, well I suppose more collaboration and more training. Training for the MLM I suppose really and more time. There should be more time given for these things. I suppose everyone is so busy at school. Time to collaborate with other teachers really about the SSE.

When I mentioned to the inspector how these barriers were reported by teachers in the online questionnaire namely time, paperwork and data the inspector was keen to highlight the difference between data and evidence. SSE she reminded me should be evidence-based.

The other thing I would say about SSE and it's really important to understand the difference between evidence and some data. From the very beginning and this brings me back to the point that I made in the beginning that when we introduced SSE there were definitely politicians, very senior politicians who wanted the data, they wanted it to be data-driven and we were fairly adamant that it was evidence we wanted rather than hard data. Now even within the school support service, the PDST, there was a certain lack of understanding initially. Hopefully they have improved as time went on but there is a difference between hard data and evidence.

The inspector acknowledges that 'hard data is actually important for literacy and numeracy. It is important to use it but not to overuse it or abuse it. It is one measure. It's not every measure. So that's really important.' The inspector emphasises the importance of evidence.

Evidence is vital but evidence can be gathered in a number of ways. One way of gathering evidence is qualitatively, and one of the very big sources of evidence is people, the pupils themselves, the teachers, the parents, the management board, they are all people who can give us their view of what's going well and what else do we need, what are we going to prioritise. Children are very good at doing it, they're very capable of doing it, and we don't use them enough.

The responses here strongly support the questionnaire outcomes that training in data collection and analysis, enough time, and realistic levels of paperwork are central to making SSE work well, particularly for MLM who have full class teaching responsibility.

6.9 School taking ownership of the SSE process

PHA3 tells us,

I think it's important to make SSE relevant to teachers and their teaching. If the staff is genuinely involved in the identification and selection of the topic they will come on board and take ownership of the SSE.

PB5 reports that

All in leadership need to help staff to demystify SSE, to see it for what it is, that is a reflective process that can lead to real change and improvement. Why? It's all about the teaching and learning and how as a staff we can move it on.

PHA4 explains how time is an issue,

it's hard for middle leadership. In our school it certainly was democratic to decide on what we wanted to improve on. We voted on it but I suppose it is hard because time is the big thing.' She continues 'You don't want to not abide by the conditions you know you'd agreed to work in. I know a number of years ago we'd a principal who used to pay a substitute teacher for two days to come into classrooms to allow class teachers to meet with learning support teachers so we were doing that outside the teaching hours so I mean you'd wonder could something like that be done. Could the BOM pay somebody you know to come in or would the DES do it so that people can engage properly? There are so many things going on. You know you've a staff meeting, there's so many every day to day running things of the school that you have to discuss at staff meetings you know that the time goes in on the curriculum, people are looking at their watches and want to get through this quickly so we are not doing things in depth at all but I'm not surprised that 50% schools engage with it for accountability reasons only because I think that in our school we do engage with it but I think it's just to get it down on paper and to be able to say we're doing it.

Another postholder PHB4 advises

Make it applicable to each teacher so that know what they're being asked to do, the targets are relevant. It's communicated clearly to them and that support is available along the way. This is why we're doing it and how are you getting on and so we're back to the communication again.

PHA3 tells us

I would think some postholders don't feel they have the necessary skills to lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of SSE. Maybe they find it difficult to get staff to come on board. I feel that if the process is followed properly and teachers are included from the start it would definitely make the implementation of SSE easier.

DPB6 questions administrative work versus teaching time saying

They shouldn't have to. They shouldn't have to. Principals and their next down the line as their duties are outlined at the moment are actually sufficient to run a school well. In order to make them paper-friendly you're taking them off the floor and you're making them tick boxes rather than being on the floor and this is not good. It's not good for schools. It's not an effective process in schools. My experience of it, we've abandoned it because other things have taken over. They're going to make it a thing where you know if it's all paperwork and it's all paper-friendly and it's all tick boxes that's not the way a school runs- that's the way an administrative dream runs.

PHC3 tells us ‘I suppose to promote it in the school really and it’s for the good of all, the good of everyone really. So get everyone on board that way.’ PHB3 addressed the issue as follows

Ok I think MLM can encourage teachers to take ownership of the SSE process by ensuring that all staff members contribute to the SSE process in schools. This can only be done by ensuring that SSE is discussed regularly at staff meetings and that the idea of implementation comes from the staff themselves and not ideas that are just handed to the staff. It is also important that MLM reminds teachers about the importance of documenting in their plan what they are doing in their class in relation to SSE in accordance with the school’s SSE plan. And also MLM can also encourage teachers to take ownership of the SSE process by pointing out to teachers the improvements, which will be seen over time in the school in the focus area and reminding teachers this is due to the hard work which was put into SSE in the school by all teachers.

Regarding how MLM take ownership of the SSE process the inspector says,

I think small successes are what you’re talking about. If you are responsible for an area that is the focus for SSE, make sure there is a small quick success for everyone so that everybody can see it. In other words, don’t bite off more than people can chew, take a small piece and say ok between now and the summer we’ll see can we improve oral language in two areas or whatever it is you want to do. So we will take these two topics, we will give them the vocabulary, whatever it is and we will measure it in terms of ‘have the children improved in their articulation in those two areas?’ And if you can say by the end of the term, yes they have, then that’s the small success that you can build on then for the next stage. You can say ‘do you remember we did this? Why don’t we try the same with our numeracy?’ That’s where I think it’s really good.

It emerges from these responses that leading the school in the direction of taking ownership of the SSE process is a key matter for all those in leadership roles but MLM by being so close to the non-postholding teachers are in a particularly good position to achieve this.

6.10 Any other comments regarding the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools

In responding to the final question PB5 tells me, ‘I think MLM can be instrumental in improving the teaching and learning, improving teacher empowerment and also bringing about a wellbeing of all agenda to the school community.’ DPB6 comments, ‘Well I suppose you see for it to work very, very effectively it should be a designated post of responsibility. At the very least, it should be a designated post of responsibility.’

PHA3 tells me, ‘there is no doubt that MLM is playing a greater role in overseeing SSE in schools. As I said if their subject area is the topic identified they automatically take on this role.’ She continues ‘I feel it’s important for the postholder to realise and accept that yes

they have a role in overseeing the implementation of SSE but it's a collective responsibility too. It's important to get everyone on board.' NPHA1 tells me that,

just based on the survey that you did here it seems that MLM do require the skills to be able to encourage and cooperate with the staff so maybe they need to explain the SSE to the rest of the staff in an easy to understand way and to focus on the main points. And not be too technical.

PHC3 says,

as I say it's more a team effort in a smaller school whereas in a bigger school I think you have more challenges for MLM. I suppose the principal in our school anyway mainly mentions it at the staff meeting and everyone is aware of what's in our SSE policy or what's in the plan and it just reiterated at every staff meeting and then usually generally we just get on with it actually. As I say a smaller school is quite different to a large school. It's more challenging I think in a bigger school.

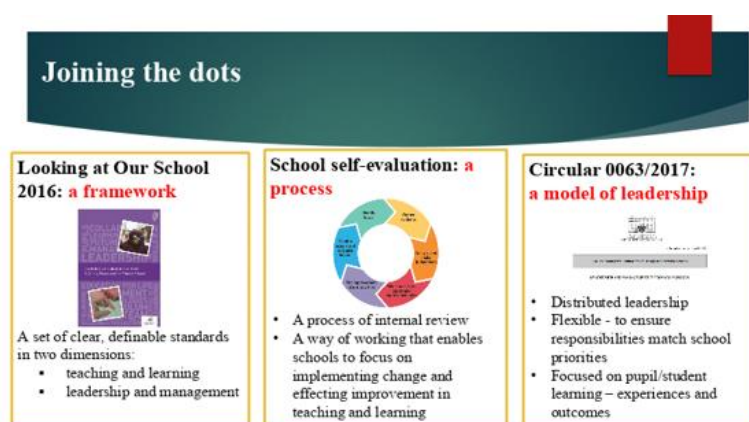
According to PHB3

Ok well I certainly think that MLM have a very important role to play in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools but they also have lots of other responsibilities also. As a conscientious and hardworking member of MLM in my own school I must say I'm finding it very difficult at the moment to get all my duties covered. So, in my opinion I think more people need to be promoted to MLM in schools going forward.

This is a very significant closing comment from a hardworking assistant principal.

In her concluding comments the inspector responds with,

Again I would go back to my initial thoughts of saying we expected this to be a long-term project. Again the Chief Inspector used a slide that I used a couple of years ago and I think it's really important. We developed it over time. We have developed *LAOS* which is the framework, that's the **framework** for quality. We have introduced SSE and provided guidelines that's the **process** for quality. And then we introduced the Circular in relation to MLM and that clarifies the **role** of management and leadership in the process. If you link the three of those together they align the framework with the process and with the individual roles of the people. It is the MLM who needs to support the whole SSE process. So it is that leadership is distributed, it has to be, the principal can't do it all.



(Diagram 6.10, DES, 2018)

I have included here a copy of this slide that the inspector gave me to illustrate how the three documents are interconnected. The inspector continues, there has to be flexibility in relation to roles and responsibility in schools. They can't always just have an agreement, for example that my role is PE because that's what I agreed to do ten years ago. There has to be flexibility and *Circular 0063/2017* allows for that. It allows for a review of roles. And then everything has to focus on improving teaching and learning for the pupils. If we don't focus on that, on both their experiences of learning and their outcomes of learning, SSE will not be about improvement. I think that in order for MLM to become effective in terms of implementation of SSE they have to first of all begin to understand that there is a framework, there is a process and then there are roles and responsibility. And they are key: roles and responsibility.

The inspector concludes by saying

So that's the first thing - that understanding. If you get that understanding right then over time understanding responsibility in terms of being familiar with what SSE is about is necessary. Then ensuring that when the area of focus is decided, those with responsibility need to make the implementation phase do-able and also ensure that the review always happens. There needs to be collaboration at the beginning to agree what we're going to do, collaboration at the end to say well how did we do? And if we didn't why not? I think that's probably the main thing. From your research point of view a really important element is that we, in the DES, always knew SSE would be a slow process. Therefore we're not saying it has or hasn't been successful. Even though we're nearly 8 years down the road.

6.11 Positive Outcomes

It is very clear from the analysis of the interviews that primary school teachers consider the SSE process to be a very worthwhile exercise. Almost all interviewees reported seeing the process as an invaluable experience. The interviewees explain how their schools are engaging with the SSE process and that it has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. SSE is acknowledged as being a collaborative process which improves teaching and learning.

6.12 Negative Outcomes

It is equally clear from the analysis of the interviews that primary school teachers are still experiencing many challenges with regard to the implementation of SSE in their schools. The main challenges revolve around time and paperwork. Respondents understand the collaborative nature of the process but actually getting the time to do this is problematic for most teachers.

6.13 Conclusion

The diagram above perfectly bookends this research. The three interconnecting documents describing the framework, process and roles related to SSE in our primary schools

were analysed in depth in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6 set out to gather data on the extent to which these documents have and are being implemented in schools. This chapter has provided, through nineteen extensive interviews, a deeper richer picture of the quantitative data explored in Chapter 5. Importantly and interestingly though, both chapters confirm a very similar outcome. Since SSE became a compulsory process in 2012, the interviews confirm that it has progressed steadily to be now perceived as an invaluable methodology of improving schools. These interviews, despite concerns over resource issues, are overwhelmingly positive in tone, emphasising, that although it has been very gradual, schools and teachers are increasingly willing and able to use SSE as a tool of school governance and development.

The next and final chapter will bring all these strands together, reminding us of the main themes of the three key policy documents studied in Chapter 4 and using the research data gathered in Chapters 5 and 6 to analyse the successes and failures, positives and negatives, of their implementation as seen from the perspectives of the schools.

Chapter 7

Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This research involved a documentary analysis of the three key policy documents from the DES concerning SSE and leadership and management, a ‘snap-shot’ online questionnaire administered to primary school teachers and principals and a series of semi-structured one-to-one interviews with teachers, principals and a retired inspector (using a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews).

The three key documents are in the public domain, available on the DES website at www.education.ie. I have outlined in detail the way teachers were selected for the online questionnaire and subsequent interviews in Chapter 2, the Research Methodology and again in their respective chapters, Chapters 5 and 6.

7.2 Rationale for Methodology Chosen

The documentary analysis ensured that I was familiar with the policy, processes and framework before attempting to ascertain teachers’ views and perceptions regarding them. This analysis further helped to inform the line of questioning of the online questionnaires and subsequently the interview schedule. The primary reason for choosing both the online questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews was to allow me give teachers a voice on the issues concerning this study. Choosing both these methodologies ensured a qualitative and a quantitative approach to the study was adopted.

7.3 Key Findings from the Research

Using the above three methods of research enabled me to triangulate the results. The overall findings are presented in this chapter.

7.4 Key Findings from the Documentary Analysis of the Policy Documents

The documentary analysis of the three key policy documents provided me an opportunity to familiarise myself with the education policy before attempting to ascertain teachers’ attitudes to and perceptions of it. The themes that emerged helped shape the questions of the online questionnaire and the subsequent interviews.

7.5 Key Positive Outcomes from the Documentary Analysis

The documentary analysis of the three key policy documents highlighted the recent changes in education policy in the last few years. A clear emphasis is placed on leadership roles in education particularly with regard to the new role of an Assistant Principal. The

theory of distributed leadership is very much evident in these documents. Other terminology such as collaboration and professional review are central to these documents.

In *LAOS 2016* the DES has set out for the first time a comprehensive and clear set of criteria for evaluating school effectiveness. *Circular 0063/2017* introduces the leadership role of MLM and opens the door for the removal of seniority as a criterion for appointment to such a post. *SSE 2016* sets out a revised process of implementing SSE in schools.

7.6 Key Negative Outcomes from the Documentary Analysis

Although *LAOS 2016* sets out clear descriptions of school effectiveness criteria, for some this may be perceived as being too prescriptive. The DES acknowledges that it is not a one-size fits all system and it will vary in accordance with school context. The limitations of having a prescriptive set of criteria is that schools may lose autonomy. It may lead to Biesta's (2007, p.35) fear of measuring what we value as referenced earlier in this thesis 'whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure'. By being too focused on performance indicators and measuring targets schools may lose a lot of the essence of what they're about, namely the education of pupils but also caring for them. Wellbeing is an integral part of *LAOS 2016*. Too much emphasis on performance indicators and measuring targets may diminish a lot of the good practice that exists in schools. The recent school closures as a result of the pandemic have highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to education and the central role of the teacher-pupil relationship.

Themes emerged from the documentary analysis that I was able to explore further in the subsequent questionnaires and interview schedule. The leadership and management framework is very much based on distributed leadership and this is something I examined further in the subsequent research. Although the theory of distributed leadership is very much evident in these documents, the practice of it is not made clear.

Professional collaboration, dialogue, professional responsibility and monitoring the implementation are key themes evident in the SSE policy document which I examined in more detail in the online questionnaires and interviews. The domains and standards of *LAOS 2016* outline the role and responsibilities of MLM. The statements of practice delineate the role of all management further. These standards were examined in more detail in the online questionnaire with regard to the confidence levels of the MLM teachers.

7.7 Key Findings from the Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaires afforded me the opportunity to ascertain teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards SSE and the role in particular of MLM in leading SSE in their schools. The role of MLM in leading SSE was described in ways such as collaborative, collegial, democratic, distributive and supportive. MLM reported its confidence levels in each of the domains. The most problematic and challenging domains as reported by MLM were explored further in the interviews.

In Chapter 4, I presented the key results and findings from the online questionnaire. As we saw in Chapter 4 the feedback from the questionnaire showed both positive and negative outcomes.

7.8 Key Positive Outcomes from the Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire highlighted a lot of key positive outcomes. Overall, teachers view the SSE process as a worthwhile experience. The results show that schools are engaging with the SSE process and that it has a positive impact on teaching and learning. MLM were seen to play a pivotal role in leading SSE. Their roles and styles were viewed in a positive light such as collaborative, distributive and democratic.

Over one third of respondents had reported their SSE findings to parents and the wider community with another 1/3 saying they were going to do so. 81.82% of respondents reported that SSE is part of their teaching responsibility and almost half of respondents mentioned Croke Park time as the time used to do SSE. Less than half of the respondents reported *SSE 2016* as being a useful or very useful document and less than half of the respondents reported *LAOS 2016* as being a useful or very useful document. 50% reported their engagement with SSE to be for compliance reasons only.

More than two thirds of those who replied claimed that SSE brought about a positive change. This positive change led to better curriculum focus, collaboration and improvement in teaching and learning. Very importantly, over three quarters claimed SSE helped them to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Over half reported that it helped with external inspection by providing evidence, improvement, ownership, collaboration, paperwork and transparency.

A variety of reasons is given by the respondents with regard to the purpose of SSE such as improving teaching and learning, ensuring accountability, identifying strengths and weaknesses, allowing schools take ownership and providing opportunities for reflection. The

role of MLM was perceived as one of assisting, leading and informing. Almost one in four respondents describe the role of MLM as being collaborative. Others reported it as being supportive and distributed.

Almost half of the 99 respondents, 49% think that MLM lead SSE and school improvement to a large or a very large extent with 26% saying to a small extent or not at all. Almost half of the respondents reported they are familiar or very familiar with the ‘School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020’ and the ‘Looking At Our Schools 2016-2020’ documents.

7.9 Key Negative Outcomes from the Online Questionnaire

The key negative outcomes as highlighted by the online questionnaire are the huge demands placed on teachers. Issues such as time, data-gathering and paperwork were the major obstacles to implementing SSE successfully in schools. The lack of personnel such as an SSE coordinator is also highlighted as a hindrance. MLM was perceived as doing a good job but the lack of time and training was acknowledged.

The key negative outcomes were that teachers are still experiencing many challenges with regard to the implementation of SSE in their schools. According to respondents the lack of time and support were two main obstacles to the successful implementation of SSE. Too much emphasis on paperwork was not advised.

7.10 Key Findings from the Interview Schedule

Conducting the interviews afforded me the opportunity to drill deeper with regard to the domains the MLM teachers found most challenging. It allowed me to examine more closely the emerging themes from the previous research such as distributive leadership, professional responsibility and as mentioned the confidence levels of MLM expressed by them and perceived by other staff in relation to their posts. It was interesting to see that the key findings from the online questionnaire were evident in the interviews also.

In Chapter 5, I presented the key results and findings from the interview schedule. The feedback from the interviews showed both positive and negative outcomes.

7.11 Key Positive Outcomes from the Interview Schedule

The responses of the interviewees illustrated a very good appreciation of SSE in schools and the role of MLM in leading SSE. Teachers value the SSE process and have experienced good results as a result of engaging with the process. MLM where such exist

were acknowledged as playing a key role. The key positive outcomes were that almost all interviewees reported seeing the process as an invaluable experience. SSE is acknowledged as being a collaborative process which improves teaching and learning.

7.12 Key Negative Outcomes from the Interview Schedule

The main negative outcomes that emerged from the interviews were the lack of resources such as time and personnel. Paperwork was perceived as being un-necessarily heavy. The key negative outcomes were that primary school teachers are still experiencing many challenges with regard to the implementation of SSE in their schools. The main challenges revolve around time, paperwork and training. Respondents understand the collaborative nature of the process but actually getting the time to do this is problematic for most teachers.

7.13 Summary of the Key Findings from the Policy Documents, Online Questionnaire and Interview Schedule

When we examine the findings from the policy documents, the online questionnaire and the interview schedule we see some consistency in the emerging themes. Indeed, the key findings from the online questionnaire were elaborated on and consolidated in the interview schedule.

7.14 Overall Outcomes from the Research

As with the individual findings the overall findings can be categorised as both positive and negative.

7.15 Key Positive Outcomes from the Research

When we look at the overall research some key positive findings are evident. Examples of some of the overall positive outcomes are

- Collaboration and Collegiality

A central theme that emerged from the data was the importance of collaboration and collegiality in implementing SSE. MLM have a role to play in facilitating this in their schools.

- Clarity of Purpose in Identifying the Focus

If SSE is to be engaged successfully in schools there needs to be clarity of purpose in identifying the focus. All teachers should be included in this process to enable them to

take ownership of SSE. MLM can play a significant role in facilitating this among teachers.

- Improvement in Teaching and Learning

Teachers have reported improvements in teaching and learning as a result of engagement with the SSE process.

- Role of MLM

The role of MLM is perceived as being collaborative with MLM making a positive contribution in leading SSE, particularly in bigger schools.

- Teamwork and Committees

Teamwork and committees play a pivotal role which again is more prevalent in bigger schools.

- Volunteerism

Volunteerism is a big feature of all schools. The profile of schools is a determining factor as to how SSE is being led in schools. In small schools, all teachers tend to get involved by default, with bigger schools having a formal structure overseen by MLM who may distribute leadership. Recognition should be given to teachers who don't have formal leadership roles in schools but nonetheless contribute to the leadership in their schools. Leadership is being distributed in schools.

Overall, teachers reported the SSE process to be a very worthwhile exercise. There is evidence, as reported by the teachers in the research, of SSE resulting in improved teaching and learning outcomes in primary schools. Teachers welcome the reflective and collaborative nature of the process. MLM was reported as playing a significant role in leading SSE in schools with their style being described as collegial, democratic and distributive.

7.16 Key Negative Outcomes from the Research

The results of the research show that primary school teachers are still experiencing many challenges with regard to the implementation of SSE in their schools. The key negative outcomes of the research, however indicate the lack of time available to implement SSE in schools properly. The main challenges revolve around time and paperwork. Related to this is the need for dialogue, discussion and collaboration. MLM teachers in particular need more release time from classes in order to facilitate worthwhile and fruitful discussion and collaboration with their colleagues. Training is an important part of a teacher's professional

development. MLM teachers would like to have more access to training to support them in their role in leading the implementation of SSE.

- Time

A key issue for MLM in leading SSE is time. There is not enough time at all levels, particularly for discussion and collaboration and to follow the process through thoroughly.

- Paperwork

The demand for paperwork and documentation is increasing the workload of teachers according to the respondents of this research.

- Distributed Leadership

Although distributed leadership is positive in theory it can be very difficult to implement in practice. MLM reported some difficulties in this particular aspect of their role. Volunteerism is dependent very much on the goodwill of teachers.

- Training

A serious lack of training provided by the DES for MLM was noted in this research. The role of MLM has changed radically from a post of responsibility to Assistant Principal with no opportunities provided by the DES for teachers to upskill in this regard. The role has changed from management only to one including leadership. Postholders expressed the need for training in their new role particularly with regard to interpersonal, communication and motivational skills. The DES has begun providing training for MLM through its agency the PDST.

Looking at the overall findings we can see that the theory of the SSE process is accepted by teachers as being a very worthwhile exercise. The role of MLM in implementing SSE in their schools varies considerably from school to school depending on the size of the school. MLM plays a more significant role in a formal way in leading SSE in larger schools due to their greater numbers. This role usually involves the setting up of committees and teams. Teamwork is particularly used for obvious reasons in the bigger schools with representatives from each class level being given a voice and leading to more inclusivity in the process.

MLM reported that they would like more CPD and in-service training to be available to them on the uptake of the role. Release time from classes would help support the facilitation of professional collaboration among teachers and the monitoring of the implementation of the process. Less emphasis on paperwork or documentation would be welcome. The possibility of a designated post as an SSE coordinator in the school was

suggested. The SSE coordinator could have the overall responsibility of overseeing the implementation of SSE in the school. Leading SSE is however a formal part of an assistant principal's role, so where these teachers exist they have a role to play with regard to leading SSE in their schools.

In large schools that have a greater number of MLM teachers, these teachers tend to oversee and lead the implementation of SSE. Their roles vary from collaborative to distributive to supportive as we saw from the online questionnaires and interviews. The formation of teams and committees is becoming very popular in larger schools regarding the implementation of SSE with teacher representatives from each of the class levels.

Postholders, we can see from the online questionnaire found some of the domains particularly challenging. MLM expressed concern over the expectation for distributing leadership in their schools. They found this particularly challenging. Although the expectation is not explicitly stated in the statements of practice it is more or less gaining increasing currency in the WSE reports of the Inspectorate. Inspectors are commenting more frequently on distributed leadership in these reports and stating who is actually distributing the leadership. This varies from principal only to MLM to whole staff. *Circular 0063/2017* we saw is very much based on the distributive framework. MLM feel that they need more training to support them with this going forward.

Overall the results show that schools are engaging well with SSE. MLM plays a very significant role in the implementation of SSE in schools where MLM exists. MLM feel that they could be supported in their role by having more time, training and resources at their disposal with a reduced emphasis on paperwork and documentation.

7.17 Conclusion

In conclusion, the following are the key themes that emerged from this research with regard to the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the ROI.

- **School Size**

The findings from this research highlight the fact that the role of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools depends on the school profile. It is by no means a one-size fits all scenario. Schools vary significantly in size with over two-thirds of schools being classified as small schools. These schools have a teaching principal. Many of these schools have only one MLM member. Bigger schools have more MLM members on

their staff. Very often these members have responsibility for specific curricular areas. These curricular areas tend to be identified as the area of focus for SSE. The MLM in these schools by default take the leading role in overseeing the implementation of SSE in their schools. This is now a formal part of the role and job description of an Assistant Principal (DES, 2017, p4). The MLM in these larger schools tend to operate by forming teams and committees ensuring that all teachers have a say in the implementation of SSE. SSE is part of every teacher's teaching responsibility. The respondents to the online questionnaire indicated that 81.82% concur with this statement. Smaller schools by their nature don't have a significant MLM structure and the leading of SSE in these schools tends, according to this research, to be principal-led. All teachers play an equal role regarding the implementation of SSE in these schools. School size as we see from this research is a significant factor in how SSE is being led in primary schools.

- **Distributed Leadership**

As we saw from the documentary analysis the framework is very much based on distributed leadership. As mentioned earlier distributed leadership is very good in theory but can be difficult to put in place in practice. Schools have been dependent on the goodwill of the teaching profession for years. Teachers by their nature in primary schools are very generous with their time, energy and skills. Teacher volunteerism has been evident in schools for years and is acknowledged by the interviewees in this research. With the changing of the roles of postholders to assistant principals there is an implicit expectation in the domains, which form the job description for this new position, to distribute leadership. However, it must be noted as mentioned in the documentary analysis, that distributed leadership doesn't form part of the statements of practice for MLM.

MLM find this aspect of their role more challenging as shown in the online questionnaires and subsequent interviews. The selection criteria for appointment to MLM positions in schools changed in 2018 with *Circular 0019/2018*. As a greater emphasis is now being placed on expertise MLM may become more confident in leading their chosen curricular area, in distributing the leadership and empowering other staff. The standard of empowering others is quite challenging according to the responses in this research. Linked to distributed leadership is the whole idea of building leadership capacity in the school and empowering others. It is something perhaps that MLM could benefit from with extra training which brings me to my next point.

- **Training**

Training is a key theme that emerged from the MLM members themselves regarding their role. Some expressed the fact that they felt they didn't have the necessary skills to fulfil their role and responsibilities properly particularly with the change in 2016 from postholder to assistant principal. The lack of upskilling was particularly evident with regard to the leadership part of their role. Training is afforded to principals and deputy principals and the responses to this research show that MLM would benefit greatly from and appreciate opportunities for training in their role. This training could be provided by the DES, through their agency the PDST (which has offered in-service regarding MLM to some schools such as the schools involved in the Forbairt Programme) and the INTO (who give good support to principals).

- **MLM structure**

Another theme that emerged from the research was the lack of a proper MLM structure in place in schools. In Chapter 3, the documentary analysis of the three key policy documents, the MLM structures in primary schools were examined and the serious effects of the eradication of posts was addressed. There is no doubt we are seeing the results of this in primary schools across the land. MLM is under more pressure now than ever before with their increasing workloads. This is set against the backdrop of a lack of training and time being afforded to them to carry out their roles and responsibilities properly. The flipside of this is that, as a result of the cutbacks, younger teachers are not now being afforded the opportunities to aspire to these roles in their schools. On the one hand senior and middle management are expected to 'empower other teachers to carry out leadership roles' (DES, 2016, p.6) in their schools but this experience, however invaluable may never translate into actual leadership roles in a formal capacity. Some young teachers, as evident in the interview responses, want to play a more significant role in their schools with regard to leadership. The only way this may happen is for them to apply for positions in other schools. This is very disillusioning for young teachers who are ambitious and want to progress and further their leadership development. These teachers have a lot to offer with regard to their talents and expertise and want to contribute more in a formal capacity in their schools.

- **Time**

Time is a huge factor according to MLM members and other teachers. MLM need more time to lead the implementation of SSE more fully in their schools. They need to be afforded time to talk to teachers. Collaboration is considered essential to the proper implementation of SSE in schools. MLM need to be afforded time to collect and collate data. They need time to complete the documentation and paperwork. Time is needed too to monitor the implementation of the SSE process. In general teachers including MLM consider SSE to be a very worthwhile experience but time is a debilitating factor in the process. All teachers, as shown in the responses, are experiencing significant increases in workload with more and more demands being made particularly with regard to paperwork.

- **Outside Agencies**

49% reported the use of an outside agency in supporting their engagement with SSE as beneficial or very beneficial. 20% reported them as not beneficial or very beneficial. The main role played by an outside agency in supporting the implementation of SSE was according to 29% of respondents advisory.

Similarly, the main way envisaged by teachers as to the role an outside agency could play in supporting SSE in schools is mostly advisory and the sharing of expertise according to 71 responses. Over half of the respondents think their schools should engage the use of an outside agency with 11% saying not to. Over half of the respondents would recommend the use of an outside agency to another school and 16% wouldn't recommend the service to another school. 27% of respondents would like to avail of the services of an outside agency once a year with just over 2% saying once a term.

7.18 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research the following four recommendations are proposed as possible ways of improving the situation going forward with regard to the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the ROI.

1. There is an urgent need to reinstate posts that were lost as a result of the moratorium in 2009. Primary schools cannot operate proficiently without an adequate MLM structure being in place in schools There is a serious lack of posts of responsibility in primary schools. Every school in the country would benefit from the allocation of an extra MLM post with

immediate effect. This post could be designated as a position of SSE coordinator who would oversee the implementation of SSE in the school. This coordinator could support other assistant principals who have responsibility for a curricular area in their role in leading SSE. If the DES is to take SSE seriously it would make this appointment as a matter of urgency. It could be a goodwill gesture to compensate for the almost eradication of posts in primary schools over the last ten years. 5,000 posts of responsibility were lost to primary schools in the last recession. To date only 1,350 of these posts have been re-instated. The appointment of a designated SSE coordinator to every primary school in the country would address this discrepancy and ensure the successful implementation of SSE. If after a number of years a school feels SSE is firmly embedded and established as a practice the post could be allocated as a DES new initiative role. Any new initiatives introduced by the DES could be overseen by this postholder such as, for example, a new primary language or maths curriculum, digital strategies, wellbeing etc.

2. Training needs to be mandatory and provided by the DES to all MLM teachers in primary schools, particularly on the uptake of these posts. Upskilling is needed particularly with regard to the leadership skills required. In-service training should be provided on a regular basis, at least once a year, for MLM in a similar way to available to Senior Leadership and Management.

3. Time has to be made available to MLM to support them in their role. As Assistant Principals, MLM teachers are paid an allowance to perform their duties and carry out their role. For this reason their work must be carried out after school time. However, this research has shown that a lot of MLM are spending a greater amount of personal time in carrying out their role and responsibilities. MLM need time in school also to facilitate professional collaboration among colleagues. Time should be afforded to these postholders to do this in order for them to lead SSE successfully in their schools.

As performativity, accountability and professional responsibility are key terminology of the new education policy it is incumbent on the DES to ensure that MLM is properly trained for the new role. If MLM is going to be evaluated on certain criteria as outlined in the domains and standards the least that should be expected of the DES, on the uptake of these roles by MLM, is proper training and the resources to be made available to support and facilitate MLM.

4. Due to the recent changes to the appointment procedure for Assistant Principals with *Circular 0063/2017* it would be interesting to carry out follow-up research regarding the

confidence levels of MLM in the domains and standards. As increasing emphasis is placed on a teacher's experience and expertise in the appointment of posts, the confidence levels of assistant principals being appointed may increase in the areas that were highlighted in this research as being challenging for MLM, such as empowering others and critiquing their own leadership. Similarly, the confidence levels of existing postholders may increase with experience as they evolve into the role.

7.19 Limitations of the study

Having carried out this research I have learnt a very important lesson and that is to narrow the focus of the research. The online questionnaire in this research in hindsight was too long, gathering too much data, a lot of which was not relevant to the research question itself, but nonetheless was interesting. A shorter version not alone would limit the data to be collected and collated but also would have been more attractive and appealing to potential respondents thus perhaps increasing the responses. Although I still feel the questionnaire perhaps never reached its intended audiences in the initial plan due to the busyness of primary schools and perhaps also the fact that the topic may not have been perceived as relevant by the vast majority of teachers due to a lack of MLM structures currently in schools. The modified plan did, however, provide good data to support the research in question.

Likewise, with the interviews I could have reduced the number of questions and perhaps focussed on two or three questions to get a deeper insight into key themes. It would have been sufficient for this study to narrow the focus to the three domains perceived as most challenging and problematic by the MLM. Conducting interviews is time-consuming and also the transcription and analysis of interview material requires a significant amount of time.

Again, I ended up with a vast amount of material most of which was not relevant to or included in the final analysis. Due to the word restrictions of this study it was not possible to include all the analysed data of the research.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Plain Language Statement

Dublin City University
Plain Language Statement

The role and impact of Middle Leadership and Management in implementing School Self-Evaluation in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

THE STUDY

This study is being undertaken by Ms Irene Quinn, DCU Institute of Education, in order to fulfil the requirements of the Doctor of Education programme in DCU. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Gerry McNamara and Dr Martin Stynes (both of DCU Institute of Education).

WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM PARTICIPANTS

Participant involvement in the study will involve (a) interviews and/or (b) completion of an online questionnaire.

The interviews will be of approximately one hour's duration and will be audio-taped for analysis. The online questionnaire will take 15 minutes to complete.

Participant involvement may result in an increased appreciation and understanding among participants of the role of middle leadership and management in primary schools and their impact on driving the implementation of school self-evaluation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law.

HOW WILL DATA BE USED?

Your data and the data from other participants will be used to publish the findings in a thesis to be submitted for the award of Doctor of Education. On successful completion of the award, the thesis will be published online via DCU's Open Access Repository (DORAS. www.doras.dcu.ie). The findings of the study may also be published in academic articles or presented at conferences. In all instances, no identifying personal information will be used in these publications or presentations.

HANDLING OF PERSONAL DATA- GDPR COMPLIANCE

- The data controller for the study is the researcher, Ms Irene Quinn. If you have any queries regarding your personal data, or any other aspect of the study, she can be contacted at: irene.quinn@mail.dcu.ie
- If you have any concerns regarding your personal data you can contact the DCU Data Protection Officer, Mr. Martin Ward at data.protection@dcu.ie
- Any data collected will be retained by the data controller and stored electronically on an encrypted laptop, in a password-protected computer file. Data may be shared with the supervisors for the purposes of validating the findings
- The data will be retained for a maximum of five years

This is a voluntary study and you may choose to withdraw from the research study at any point.

GIVING INFORMED CONSENT

If you wish to participate you must give informed consent by completing the informed consent section prior to the interview commencing.

RESEARCHER DISCLOSURE

The researcher, Ms Irene Quinn, is a part-time student on the Doctor of Education programme at DCU as well as a full-time primary school teacher. The researcher is an Assistant Principal.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact The Secretary, DCU Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, DCU, Dublin 9 rec@dcu.ie

Appendix B
Consent Form

The role and impact of Middle Leadership and Management in implementing School Self-Evaluation in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Principal Investigator: Ms Irene Quinn, Supervisors Prof. Gerry McNamara and Dr Martin Stynes, Institute of Education, St Patrick's Campus, DCU.

The purpose of the research is to get a deeper understanding of the role and impact of middle leadership and management in overseeing the implementation of school self-evaluation in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

<i>I have read the Plain Language Statement</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>I understand the information provided</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>

I am aware that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

I am aware that arrangements have been made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

I am aware that arrangements have been made regarding retention/disposal of data and that any data collected will be stored securely and disposed of safely after five years
I consent to the use of my data for future studies by the researcher if required.

Signature:

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

Participant's Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C
Copy of the Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

1. Do you think the implementation of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) in primary schools in the ROI has been successful?

Why/why not do you think this is so?

2. What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of the SSE process in primary schools?

3. What do you consider to be the main role of Middle Leadership and Management (MLM) regarding the implementation of SSE in primary schools?

Describe the style of the MLM team in your school.

4. 19% of respondents to the online questionnaire on 'The Role and Impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools' think that MLM leads SSE and School Improvement in their school to a very large extent.

To what extent does MLM lead SSE in your school?

How does MLM lead SSE in your school?

How do you think can MLM best oversee the implementation of SSE in primary schools?

5. What do you think are the main barriers or challenges facing MLM in their role overseeing the implementation of SSE in schools?

How do you think these barriers or challenges can be overcome?

6. Almost 50% of respondents to the online questionnaire think their school engages with SSE for accountability reasons only.

12% felt their school took ownership of SSE to a large extent.

How do you think can MLM encourage teachers to take ownership of the SSE process?

7. In the online questionnaire 18% of MLM who responded to the question on confidence levels in the various domains said they were very confident in the following domain

Lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation.

Why do you think only 18% of MLM said they were very confident in this area?

How do you think can MLM improve their ability in this role?

8. In the online questionnaire 10% of MLM said they were very confident in the following domain

Critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership.

Why do you think only 10% of MLM said they were very confident in this area?

How do you think can MLM improve their ability in this role?

9. In the online questionnaire 11% of MLM said they were very confident in the following domain

Empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles

What are the main challenges facing MLM in this area?

How can MLM improve their ability in this role?

Why do you think only 11% of MLM said they were very confident in this area?

(Extra question for the Inspector)

What is the rationale for the inclusion of the standard *Empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles*?

10. Have you any other comments regarding the role and impact of MLM in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools?

Appendix D
Copy of the Online Questionnaire



The role and impact of Middle Leadership and Management in implementing School Self-Evaluation in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland

Welcome to the Questionnaire!

Description and outline of the study

Please read Section One to learn about the purpose of the research, the benefits and risks involved, the requirements for participation, rights for withdrawal and contact information.

Purpose of the Study

This survey is being conducted as part of an EdD study at the Institute of Education, DCU. The purpose of this research is to get a deeper understanding of the role and impact of middle leadership and management in overseeing the implementation of SSE in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland as perceived by primary school teachers.

How to participate in the study

Participant involvement in the study will involve completion of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire asks a series of questions regarding middle leadership and management and SSE. It takes 15 minutes approximately to complete the questionnaire. Please note that some questions are important for analysis and others are optional. A progress bar shows how far you are through the questionnaire.

Benefits of the Study

The benefits to the participants will be indirect. Participant involvement may result in an increased appreciation and understanding among participants of the role of middle leadership and management in primary schools and their impact on driving the implementation of SSE. The information obtained may provide general future benefits to Irish primary school teachers and pupils. The information may also inform policymakers in the future regarding key elements of leadership and management and SSE in primary schools.

Risks

The research carries no risks beyond those of everyday life (as experienced by the intended participant population). All data will be collected anonymously meaning the risk of breach of confidentiality is minimal.

Confidentiality of information provided cannot always be guaranteed by researchers and can only be protected within the limitations of the law.

Any data received will be used for the purpose of this research only. All electronic copies of data provided will be stored securely with encrypted passwords and any physical copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only by the principal investigator of the study. The data will be stored securely for five years only and will be disposed of safely after this time.

Requirements for participation

In order to participate, you must currently be a teacher in a primary school in the Republic of Ireland.

Researcher Contact Information

If you have any further questions about this research study, you may contact any of the following:

- Irene Quinn, DCU, irene.quinn5@mail.dcu.ie (principal investigator)
- Prof. Gerry McNamara, DCU, gerry.mcnamara@dcu.ie (supervisor)
- Dr Martin Stynes, DCU, mstynes62@gmail.com (supervisor)

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

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

Freedom of withdrawal

Participant involvement in the research study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the research study at any point.

Respond to Questionnaire

To complete the questionnaire please click 'Next' to proceed to Section Two.
Thank you for taking the time to read Section One.



The role and impact of Middle Leadership and Management in implementing School Self-Evaluation in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland

*Required

Informed Consent

Section Two allows you consent to participation in the study.

Understanding what's involved in the study

If you have read Section One and are satisfied that you understand

- (a) what is expected of you if you choose to participate
 - (b) the purpose, benefits and risks of this study
 - (c) that you can withdraw from the study at any time prior to submission
 - (d) that it may not be possible to withdraw your data once the anonymous survey has been submitted
 - (e) that your data will be treated with confidence, within the limitations of the law
 - (f) that your anonymised data may be shared with the researcher's supervisory panel
 - (g) that your participation is voluntary
 - (h) that the findings from the research may be published in the future as a thesis, a research paper or a conference proceeding and
 - (i) that your data may be held securely, on an encrypted laptop in a password-protected file, for up to five years after the study and that all personal identifiers will be removed from these files
- you may continue to proceed with your consent to participate

Consent to Participate

If you consent to the processing of your responses in the questionnaire for the purpose of research please complete the following and then click 'Next' to proceed to Section Three.

*

Tick to Consent

Yes, I consent to the processing of my responses in the questionnaire for the purpose of research



Background Information

Section Three allows you to give basic information about your teaching status and school profile.

What is your role in the primary school? Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Teaching Principal
- ☐ Administrative Principal
- ☐ Deputy Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal 1
- ☐ Assistant Principal 11
- ☐ Mainstream Class Teacher
- ☐ SEN Teacher
- ☐ Prefer Not To Say
- ☐ Other: _____

What type of school do you teach in?

- ☐ Mainstream English-medium school
- ☐ Mainstream Irish-medium school
- ☐ Special school
- ☐ Other: _____

How many teachers are in your school?

Your answer _____

How many pupils are in your school?

Your answer _____

School Self-Evaluation (SSE)

School Self-Evaluation (SSE) is a method of internal evaluation recommended by the Department of Education and Skills. This section invites you to answer some questions regarding the implementation of SSE.

Is your school engaging with SSE this year? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

If your school is engaging with SSE this year please state which area you are looking at.

Your answer _____

If you have chosen a curricular area for evaluation please state which aspect of it you are examining.

Your answer _____

How did your school decide on this area or aspect for evaluation?

Your answer _____

Who was involved in deciding this area or aspect for evaluation?

Your answer _____

What data did you collect to support your SSE?

Your answer _____

How did you collect your data?

Your answer _____

How useful do you think your data was to the SSE process?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very useful

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

SSE narrows the curriculum in subject areas

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither disagree nor agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

If you agreed with the previous statement In what ways do you think SSE narrows the curriculum in subject areas?

Your answer _____

Did your school report the SSE findings to parents and the wider school community?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not yet but will do
- ☐ Not sure

Do you think that SSE is part of your teaching responsibility? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

How time-consuming would you describe the implementation of SSE in your school?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not very time-consuming ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very time-consuming

How well do you think does the process of SSE support learning and teaching in your school?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not very well ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very well

When did you get time to engage with SSE?

Your answer

What impact do you think does engaging with SSE have on your workload?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not very significant ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very significant

How useful do you think is the document 'School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020' to implementing SSE?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not very useful ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very useful

How useful do you think is the document 'Looking At Our School 2016-2020' to implementing SSE?

- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not very useful ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very useful

What do you think was the main reason for your school's engagement with SSE?

Your answer _____

Do you think your school engages with SSE for accountability reasons only?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

To what extent do you think your school took ownership of SSE?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ To a small extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To a large extent
- ☐ To a very large extent

Do you think SSE was beneficial in bringing about a positive change in your school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

If yes, how do you think SSE was beneficial in bringing about a positive change in your school?

Your answer _____

Did your engagement with SSE enable your school identify its strengths in learning and teaching ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Did your engagement with SSE enable your school identify its weaknesses in learning and teaching?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Do you think the process of SSE helps your school with regard to external school inspection?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

If yes, how do you think the process of SSE helps your school with regard to external school inspection?

Your answer

How do you think might the process of SSE be improved?

Your answer

How do you think might the process of SSE be improved?

Your answer

What do you think is the purpose of SSE?

Your answer

Role of Middle Leadership and Management with regard to SSE

Section Five invites you to answer some questions regarding the role of Middle Leadership and Management with regard to SSE

Who do you think has the overall responsibility for the implementation of SSE in your school? *

- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Deputy Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principals 1
- ☐ Assistant Principals 11
- ☐ Mainstream Class Teachers
- ☐ SEN teachers
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other: _____

To what extent do you think does middle leadership and management lead SSE and School Improvement in your school?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ To a small extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To a large extent
- ☐ To a very large extent

To what extent do you think non postholders voluntarily lead SSE and School Improvement in your school?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ To a small extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To a large extent
- ☐ To a very large extent

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

SSE is a box ticking exercise

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither disagree nor agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

SSE is truly transformative in improving learning and teaching

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither disagree nor agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

[Back](#)

[Next](#)

Looking At Our School 2016 has four domains

1. Leading Learning and Teaching
2. Managing the Organisation
3. Leading School Development
4. Developing Leadership Capacity

How do you interpret School Self-Evaluation?

Your answer

How familiar are you with the 'School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020' document?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very familiar

How familiar are you with the 'Looking At Our School 2016' document?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very familiar

The following statements are taken from 'Looking At Our School 2016'
Please indicate how confident you feel regarding each statement on a scale of 1-5

Leading learning and teaching
Please indicate how confident you feel regarding each of these statements

Promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Managing the organisation

Please indicate how confident you feel regarding each of these statements

Establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment and maintain it through effective communication

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very confident

Leading school development
Please indicate how confident you feel regarding each of these statements

Communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation

12345

Not very confident○ ○ ○ ○ ○Very confident

Lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation

12345

Not very confident○ ○ ○ ○ ○Very confident

Build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools and with the wider community

12345

Not very confident○ ○ ○ ○ ○Very confident

Manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education

12345

Not very confident○ ○ ○ ○ ○Very confident

Developing leadership capacity
Please indicate how confident you feel regarding each of these statements

Critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership

12345

Not very confident○ ○ ○ ○ ○Very confident

Empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles

12345

Not very confident○ ○ ○ ○ ○Very confident

190

Promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation and pupil leadership

1 2 3 4 5

Not very confident ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very confident

Build professional networks with other school leaders

1 2 3 4 5

Not very confident ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very confident

Back

Next

Outside Agencies

Many schools engage the services of outside agencies to support them in their implementation of SSE. In this final section all teachers are invited to answer some questions regarding these agencies.

Did you employ the services of an outside agency to support your engagement with SSE?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

How beneficial do you think the use of an outside agency is in supporting the implementation of SSE in your school?

1 2 3 4 5

Not very beneficial ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very beneficial

What role do you think did an outside agency play in supporting SSE in your school?

Your answer

What role do you think an outside agency could play in supporting SSE in schools?

Your answer

Do you think your school should engage the use of an outside agency again in supporting the implementation of SSE in your school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Would you recommend the use of an outside agency in supporting SSE to another school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

How often do you envisage your school in availing of the use of an outside agency in supporting the use of SSE in your school?

Your answer _____

Please add any other comments regarding the implementation of SSE in your school.

Your answer _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

[Back](#)

[Submit](#)

Appendix E
Copy of REC Ethical Approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Ms Irene Quinn,

School of Institute and Education

2nd January 2019

REC Reference: DCUREC/2018/230

Proposal Title: Examining the role and impact of middle management in implementing school self-evaluation in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Applicant(s): Ms Irene Quinn, Professor Gerry McNamara, Dr Martin Stynes

Dear Colleagues,

This research proposal qualifies under our Notification Procedure, as a low risk social research project. Therefore, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this project.

Materials used to recruit participants should state that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee



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