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CSL

Centre for
School Leadership

Learning to Be a School Leader in Ireland

Foreword

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. - John F. Kennedy

The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) is pleased to present the ***Learning to Be a School Leader in Ireland*** research document. The document is the culmination of lengthy and broad-based consultation involving desk and field research, consultative forums with stakeholders, written feedback, and a series of follow-up workshops. It is intended to inform the planning and designing of professional learning provision for the continuum of school leaders into the future.

CSL acknowledges the generosity of the many stakeholder groups who engaged with the team throughout this process and the support of the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education. We look forward to continuing engagement with the system to ensure that school leaders can avail of high-quality professional learning at every career stage. CSL's vision is that high-quality professional learning will result in improved leadership practices in schools, and better outcomes, experiences and well-being for students and for the entire school community.



Mary Nihill
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Glossary

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
BITC	Business in the Community
BOM	Board of Management
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
CUREE	Centre for the Use of Research Evidence in Education
DE	Department of Education
EPNoSL	European Policy Network on School Leadership
ESCI	Education Support Centres Ireland
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate (Northern Ireland)
ESEN	École Supérieure de l'Éducation Nationale (France)
GTCS	General Teaching Council of Scotland
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
JMB	Joint Managerial Body
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
LDS	Leadership Development for Schools
LAOS	Looking at Our School 2016
LfTM	Leading from the Middle
LSP	Learning Schools Project
MU	Maynooth University
NAEL	National Academy of Educational Leadership (Wales)
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NCSL	National College for School Leadership (England)
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NSC	National Succession Consultants (England)
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDSL	Post-Graduate Diploma in School Leadership
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PKE	Provincial Knowledge Exchange (Ontario)
PQP	Principals' Qualification Program (Ontario)
SCEL	Scottish College of Educational Leadership
SIP	School Improvement Partners (England)
SLAR	Subject Learning and Assessment Review
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TES	Teacher Education Section, Department of Education
TLLP	Teacher Learning and Leadership Programme (Ontario)
UCD	University College Dublin
UL	University of Limerick

The CSL Model of Professional Learning



Executive Summary

Introduction

Leadership is increasingly being recognised as central to the development of a quality education system in many jurisdictions, including Ireland. CSL recognises that every teacher is a leader and therefore the references in this document to leaders and leadership should be read as referring to this leadership potential at every stage of a teacher's career. Providing high-quality professional learning for a variety of school leaders, from teacher leaders to system leaders, has become the focus for policy makers in education. Based on a review of the literature on professional learning for leadership, CSL has developed a graphic entitled "**Learning to Be a School Leader in Ireland**" that both illustrates the various leadership roles in Irish schools and defines the central focus and key interconnected elements that the literature identifies as important for high-quality professional learning for leaders.

Learning to be a School Leader in Ireland

The centre of the graphic illustrates the purpose and intended impact of all professional learning: to improve learning outcomes and wellbeing for students and school communities. Professional learning for school leaders must impact on both the person and the practice of the leader; these are represented by the two purple semicircles that surround the centre. The graphic describes several key interdependent and interconnected elements that support the professional learning of leaders, both those aspiring to leadership roles and those who already occupy leadership positions. The elements of professional learning proposed are:

- Reflection on Practice
- Relevant Experiential Learning
- Cognitive Development
- Flexible and Sustainable Learning
- Individual and Collaborative Learning
- Professional Standards

CSL is proposing that if change and development of leadership practice in schools are to become a reality, professional learning activities need to incorporate some or all of these elements, as appropriate, into the context and objectives of the professional learning activity, so as to best develop and enhance leadership practice in primary and post-primary schools.

The Continuum of Leadership

The continuum identifies a number of leadership stages, defined in terms of their need for bespoke learning. On that continuum, **teacher leaders** are those who are willing to work alongside others to build a better school community and overcome challenges and obstacles, and who desire to improve the learning for the students in their care. Teacher leaders flourish

in an environment where they are supported, empowered, and encouraged by their principals and where they are given opportunities to practise leadership. In Ireland in recent years, both the Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning¹, published by the Teaching Council (2016: 22), and the statements of practice for the teaching and learning dimension of the 2016 *Looking at Our School* (LAOS)² Quality Framework document, remind teachers of their leadership role.

The term **middle leader** is often used as an overarching title to describe a leadership position in a school that involves additional responsibilities outside of the classroom in addition to instructional leadership roles in classrooms. Middle leaders in schools may have different areas of responsibility, including pastoral leadership, curriculum leadership, leadership of additional student supports, leadership of a team which is delivering a specific programme, or leadership of a particular school improvement priority. In this context, middle leadership is therefore being interpreted as those roles that have an additional 'out-of-classroom' remit and a strategic leadership focus. Domain four of *Looking at Our School* (DE, 2016c, 2016d) identifies the need to develop leadership capacity and gives an added impetus to the concept and practice of distributed leadership in schools. In addition, the SSE process, the two circulars on leadership and management in post-primary and primary schools (DE, 03/2018, 44/2019), and the development of a continuum of professional learning in leadership (CSL, 2017) signal a further focus on this area. Middle leaders, due to their significant role in schools, need well-constructed development opportunities that are facilitated effectively by senior leaders.

Many teachers **aspire** to become senior leaders in schools. These leadership roles are defined on the CSL continuum as being those of a deputy principal or principal. Research indicates that future senior leaders should be identified and developed. As currently there is no mandatory qualification for senior leadership in Ireland, there is a greater emphasis on the induction of newly appointed leaders in the Irish system than is seen in other jurisdictions. Internationally there is a variety of practices in relation to aspiring school leader preparation.

Newly appointed senior school leaders require targeted professional learning and system support during that critical period at the beginning of their career. This induction phase usually lasts for the first three years of their role. The absence of compulsory, focused, leadership professional learning along the continuum in Ireland means that professional learning for newly appointed senior school leaders continues to be more extensive than is evident in other systems. Ireland's induction programmes remain non-compulsory but are available to all newly appointed principals and deputy principals. The extent of professional learning required by a newly appointed senior leader is dependent on the preparation and learning opportunities which they have received prior to appointment, and on the new appointee's familiarity with their context, school culture, and the legacy of the leaders ahead of them. In the event of the introduction of a mandatory qualification for principalship, induction would need to take cognisance of this and be amended as appropriate.

Effective **established leaders** are those who have continued to work from a strong ethics and values base and are trusted by students, staff, parents, and the wider school community to optimise learning and teaching opportunities for everyone in their school community. Research by Fitzpatrick Associates (2018), suggests that established school leaders in the Irish context

1 Cosán: Framework for Teachers' Learning (2016) www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Cosan-Framework-for-Teachers-Learning.pdf

2 Looking at Our School framework for leadership and management (2016) www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf and www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf

are motivated towards continuous learning, strengthening the system, and networking with colleagues. The report cites the most critical areas of respondents' professional development to be in the areas of conflict management and resolution, and managing challenging behaviour. In the feedback, principals reported that bespoke professional learning is needed for established principals to sustain them in their leadership role, and that opportunities are necessary to opt out of the leadership role with dignity due to its demanding nature. In addition, CSL has identified leading learning as a system need for all school leaders.

System leadership is a developing concept and practice in many jurisdictions as policy makers attempt to harness the potential of schools working collaboratively as a mechanism for school improvement. The concept of system leadership in Ireland needs further exploration and development, but there are existing avenues through which school leaders at all levels in the Irish system can have an influence outside of their own school setting. Promoting system leadership between schools reflects one of the recent policy initiatives in Ireland, the Schools Excellence Fund.³ This initiative is aimed at supporting clusters of schools that are involved in a wide range of leadership activities, focused on improving learning outcomes for students. Clustering helps schools to harness and optimise internal leadership, management capacity and collaboration at all levels. Internationally, there is quite a range of system leadership roles emerging in many jurisdictions and variation in interpreting what system leadership actually involves.

This book contains a chapter dedicated to the research around each of the leadership stages outlined above.

3 The Schools Excellence Fund facilitates and funds schools to explore new and innovative solutions to tackle education disadvantage and improve learning outcomes for students. It was launched by the then Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, in 2017. www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR17-11-13.html



Chapter 1

Professional Learning for Leadership

*"Learning for leadership is characterised by career
-long learning and is linked to national expectations."*

Introduction

Like in many other jurisdictions, there has been growing attention in Ireland on the pivotal role that school leaders have in improving the quality of education. This led to an awareness of the need to develop a more strategic approach to meeting the needs of both newly appointed and established school leaders. Discussions between the Department of Education (DE) and the representative professional bodies for school principals, the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) and the National Association of Principals and Deputies (NAPD), led to the establishment of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) in 2015. The decision to establish CSL on a partnership basis between IPPN/NAPD and the DE represented a new departure and presented a unique opportunity to develop a coherent continuum of professional development for school leaders. A key role for the new centre was to foster a culture of engagement with professional learning among school leaders. Therefore, this document outlines research conducted by CSL on professional learning for school leaders at every stage of the continuum of leadership roles in the Irish system.

In 2016, the DE published a quality framework, *Looking at Our School*, for primary and post-primary schools. The framework notes that the two key areas of the work of a school are (i) teaching and learning and (ii) leadership and management. It views leadership and management as inseparable. It defines school leadership by its impact on learning, and it acknowledges that effective leadership is essential for schools to be places where successful learning happens.

The Department's focus on leadership and management has been influenced by research and policy developments both nationally and internationally. The establishment of the Teaching Council created the environment for professionalising teacher leadership at all levels in schools. *Cosán*, the Teaching Council's Framework for Teacher Learning, published in 2016, outlines the values and principles that should underpin continuous learning for teachers. This was further supported by the 2017 Action Plan for Education,⁴ which includes a specific action targeted at exploring how best to develop professional learning more effectively for both teachers and leaders, by establishing a centre of excellence that will have 'oversight of the supports for school improvement and professional development of teachers, including research and identifying international best practice' (DE, 2017: 40).

More recently the publication of circulars (DE, 03/2018, 44/2019)⁵ outlining new appointment procedures and responsibilities for assistant principals, together with School Self-Evaluation (SSE),⁶ has emphasised the critical role of leadership, at every level in the system, in ensuring high-quality learning outcomes for all.

However, it is important to look initially at some of the broad themes and challenges that are identified in the literature on professional learning in general, but particularly on professional learning as it applies to leadership development.

4 Action Plan for Education (2017) www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/Action-Plan-for-Education-2017.pdf

5 www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0003_2018.pdf and www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0044_2019.pdf

6 http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/post-primary/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/01/School-Self-Evaluation-Guidelines-2016-2020-Post-Primary_web.pdf and http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/primary/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/01/School-Self-Evaluation-Guidelines-2016-2020-Primary_Web.pdf

Professional Learning

Professional learning for leadership is intended to improve the quality of leadership and learning in schools. A report by the OECD (2009) noted that professional learning for leadership can play a key role in shaping leaders' performance. Guskey (2000: 16) described professional development as:

processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of educators so that they might in turn improve the learning of students.

He noted the need for educators to change the way they go about their jobs and to redesign the culture in which they work, to provide for changes in the way schools are organised, in addition to shared decision-making and alternative school governance policies with efforts to encourage greater parent and community involvement.

This definition places student learning firmly as a focus for professional learning. The literature supports the view on the importance of professional learning for the development of good school leadership practice, and it has become a priority in many jurisdictions, including Ireland. Schleicher (2011) noted that the development of effective school leaders has become a key part of educational reform, and it is widely accepted that it is an essential part of the terms and conditions of appointment to a leadership role in most jurisdictions.

A 2013 focus on leadership development by the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL),⁷ promotes a special issue of Educational Management Administration and Leadership edited by Walker and Hallinger (2013), emphasising the essential role that professional learning has on the development of effective leadership practices.

In Ireland, reforms in professional learning for teachers have been spearheaded by the Teaching Council in developing the National Framework for Teachers' Learning, *Cosán*, which sets out proposals for the values and principles that should underpin continuous learning for teachers. This development, combined with CSL's proposals in this document for a model of professional learning and for school leadership in the Irish context, will heighten awareness of the importance of ongoing professional learning for teachers and school leaders at every stage. Professional learning is widely acknowledged as essential for the development of good school leadership practice.

Emerging Themes

A review of literature on professional learning highlights several themes associated with it. Some of the most common themes are discussed briefly here.

The first theme that emerges from the research is about the most prevalent forms of learning that are best suited to support school leaders in their development. Activities such as networking, communities of practice, mentoring, and coaching are now included as part of many professional learning programmes for both aspiring and established school leaders.

A second theme is about the optimum mode or modes for facilitating professional learning for school leaders. This encompasses issues for discussion such as the balance of face-to-face

⁷ EPNoSL is a partner-run consortium created in 2011 to address the increasing European focus on professional development, preparation and selection of school leaders. www.schoolleadership.eu/portal/resource/international-perspectives-leader-development-definition-and-design-july-2013

and online, the combination of individual learning and collaborative practice, the balance of practitioner and academic inputs to design and facilitation, and formal accreditation.

Contextualising professional learning is a third theme that arises. Moos (2011), in his paper on the development of Danish school leaders, acknowledges the variety of contexts that school leaders operate in, from small rural schools to much larger urban schools. He makes the point that context also impacts on the shape and form of professional learning for leadership, and he raises the question of whether the purpose of educational development is to produce compliance in what policy makers view as good leadership or to develop educational leaders as confident lead professionals. The development of a model of professional learning for Irish school leadership, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, acknowledges the variety of leadership contexts that exist in the Irish school system, from very small primary schools where principals have full teaching responsibilities, to large post-primary schools where principals lead a large staff and a senior leadership team of perhaps three deputy principals.

Finally, there is growing emphasis on the connection between effective leadership and positive learning outcomes for students. Establishing that connection is a fourth theme highlighted in the research. Forde (2016) points out that placing leading learning as a focus for professional learning broadens both the scope of the professional learning itself and also the pool of teachers legitimately involved in professional learning for leadership.

Challenges for Professional Learning

There is a growing emphasis on the importance of professional learning for both teachers and leaders in many jurisdictions. Policy makers and others understand that every proposal for educational reform and every plan for school improvement requires high-quality professional learning for those charged with implementing the necessary changes. Like practitioners in other professional fields, educators must keep abreast of emerging knowledge and must be able to use that knowledge to develop their skills and capacities.

There is increasing emphasis on identifying the challenges that teachers and school leaders encounter in accessing quality professional learning, and in identifying the factors that contribute to effective professional learning.

One challenge highlighted in the literature is that of finding the appropriate balance between the needs of the individual and those of the school and system. O'Brien and Murphy (2016) note that individual needs may be conditioned by career and current responsibilities related to their current role. Oman (2015), in his study of professional development in the further education sector, found that decisions about the content of continuing professional development (CPD) provision tended to be shaped by institutional priorities identified by members of the senior leadership team, and that often the leaders and teachers were not included in the planning process. Forde (2016) makes the point that cultural traditions influence and shape approaches to leadership development. She cites the balance between political and professional power as significant in determining the focus and approach taken to professional learning. This concern about balance is common to many leadership programmes in education and also in other areas, such as health care. Fitzpatrick Associates (2018) evaluation report on CSL⁸ posed the challenges of:

8 Fitzpatrick Associates (2018) www.cslireland.ie/images/downloads/csref.pdf

how to strike the right balance between leadership training per se – regardless of context/setting and country – and leadership training for operational needs which would be specific to the challenges faced in a particular school at a set time (p. 19).

Another challenge is the valuing of professional learning as an essential part of what it means to be a professional. The focus on learning and enabling leaders to enhance their practice is not always evident. There is increasing recognition of the need for ongoing professional learning for leadership (DE, 2017) and a re-focus on the role of school leadership in leading teaching and learning. There are an increasing number of system supports in place to achieve this. The Teaching Council has highlighted the importance of professional development and learning. The Council is engaging with the profession through a framework for professional development. The outcome of this process is therefore an important milestone in understanding effective professional development in the Irish context.

Although the importance of professional learning for school leaders has been recognised, there is a further challenge in establishing a direct link between quality professional learning for school leaders and improved learning outcomes for students. Guskey (2000) makes the point that although professional learning alone may not be sufficient to bring about significant improvement in education, a well-structured professional development component is at the core of every successful educational improvement plan.

Leadership development and learning is a high-leverage activity that offers the potential to empower schools to lead improvements, build capacity, and provide better learning experiences for students. Learning for leadership is characterised by career-long learning and is linked to national expectations. It can be provided by a variety of providers, but what is important is that there is a consistency of message as well as continuity and progression from the perspective of the practitioner.

A Continuum of Leadership Roles in the Irish System

Leadership development can be seen as a lifelong learning process, related to the continuum of school leadership. It is now accepted that school leaders need formal and informal support and learning opportunities throughout the different stages in their career, with particular support when important changes occur. Therefore, the idea of a professional learning continuum for school leadership has evolved in many educational systems.

Developing concepts, such as teacher leadership and the notion of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), which sees leadership being 'stretched' across a school, have provided the impetus for many educational systems to challenge themselves to provide quality professional learning for teachers across their career. Indeed, teacher leadership has now become a feature of initial teacher education in many Irish third level institutions (King, 2017).

The OECD (2007) Country Background Report for Ireland, in describing the many organisations and groups providing professional learning for school leaders in Ireland, said there was a need to:

articulate a rich national understanding of school leadership as a construct that is agreed by all stakeholders in the system (p. 53)

The report welcomed the growth in the provision of professional learning for school leaders at every level in a school and recommended that ‘it is time to look at the overall continuum of professional development’ (p. 66).

Fitzpatrick Associates (2018) CSL evaluation report noted that it is common practice in many jurisdictions to divide cohorts of leaders into groups such as aspiring leaders, new leaders, and established leaders, and to offer bespoke professional learning to these distinct groups. Newly appointed principals are offered support in all jurisdictions, and established school leaders often access professional learning through networks allowing them to dictate the nature and type of learning they require. The use of established leaders as system leaders is a feature of the continuum of professional learning in many jurisdictions.

Forde (2016) comments that a crucial aspect of a leadership development framework is the building of links across the different stages of leadership in a school, and that:

leadership development is not solely about an upward trajectory and so we need to conceive each stage of leadership development as having its own integrity (p. 12).

A continuum of professional learning for leadership which includes cumulative opportunities for learning also ensures that there are enough teachers both willing and able to move into various leadership positions in schools, including principalship. A well-constructed continuum also provides a framework for both aspiring and serving school leaders at different levels to plan their own learning pathway.

In summary, leadership is increasingly recognised as central to the development of a quality education system in many jurisdictions, including Ireland. Providing high-quality professional learning for a variety of school leaders, from teacher leaders to system leaders, whereby ‘teachers can update their skills, reflect on their practice, challenge their thinking and share their experiences’ (OECD, 2007: 68) has become the focus for policy makers in education. It is in that context that CSL put forward a graphic entitled “Learning to Be a School Leader in Ireland” that both illustrates the various leadership roles in Irish schools and defines the central focus and key interconnected elements identified in the literature as important for high-quality professional learning for leaders.

Learning to be a School Leader in Ireland

The graphic below (Figure 1) outlines the Centre for School Leadership’s research findings on the focus and elements of high-quality professional learning for school leaders in Ireland. It also outlines the continuum of leadership roles that exist in the system.

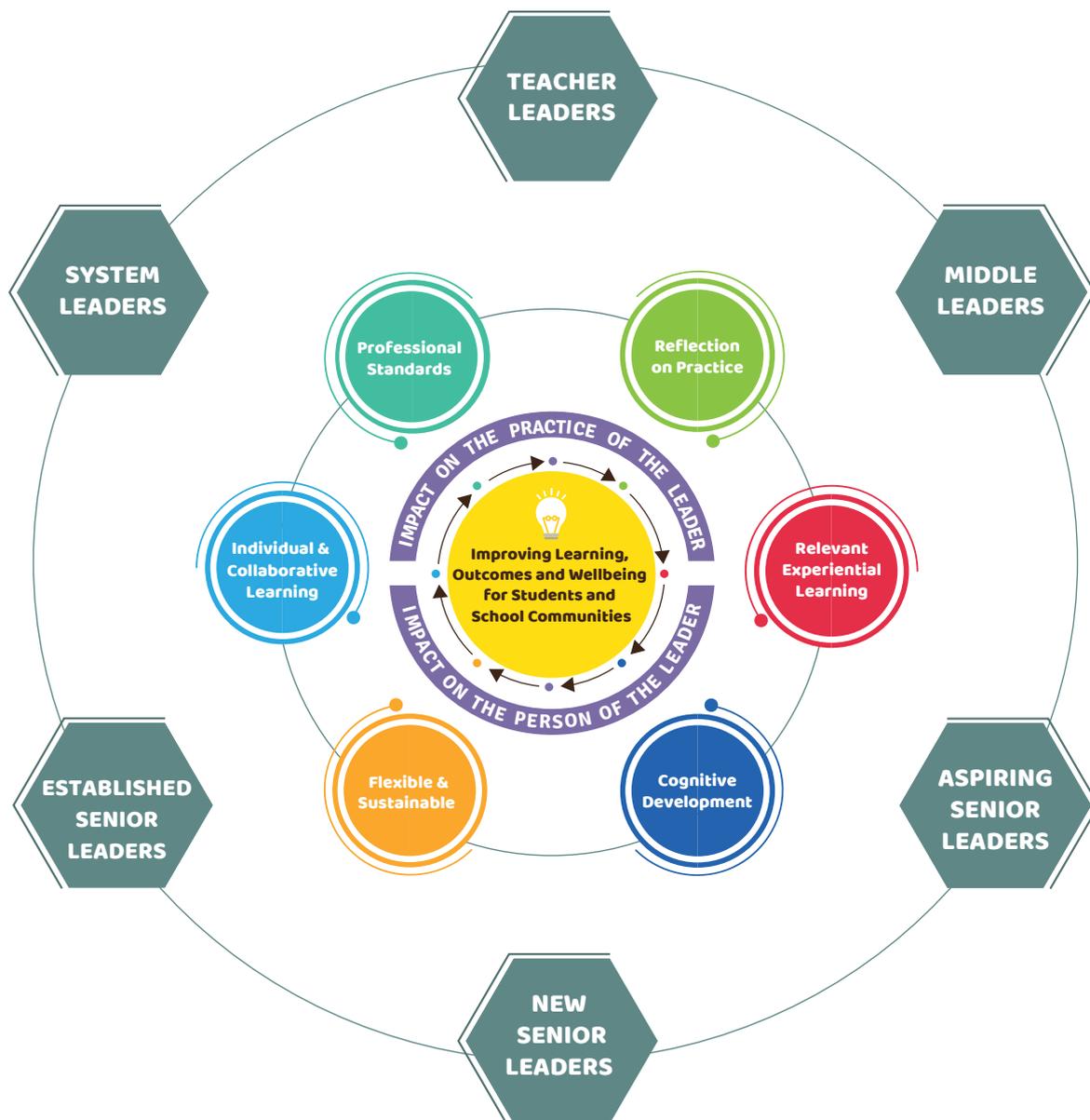


Fig.1 Learning to Be a School Leader in Ireland

This graphic is a result of extensive literature research and consultation with all stakeholders in the Irish system who are involved in facilitating professional learning for school leaders on the continuum. The centre of the graphic illustrates the purpose and intended impact of all professional learning: to improve learning outcomes and wellbeing for students and school communities. Professional learning for school leaders must impact on both the person and the practice of the leader, and these intended impacts are represented in the graphic by the two purple semicircles that surround the centre. The literature has identified six essential components that contribute to quality professional learning for school leaders, represented here as coloured circles. Chapter 2 examines each of these elements in more detail.

CSL's research has also identified six leadership roles that exist in the Irish educational system. These roles, represented as grey hexagons, are presented in circular fashion, emphasising a vision of a non-hierarchical approach to leadership in schools, with each stage having its own

integrity and value. CSL has defined these roles in terms of the stages in the leadership career that require bespoke learning. These leadership stages are: teacher leaders, middle leaders, aspiring senior leaders (in this context senior leaders are defined as principals and deputy principals), newly appointed senior leaders, established senior leaders, and finally system leaders. The research on each of these leadership stages will be outlined in Chapters 3 to 8 of this report.



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Chapter 2

The CSL Model of Professional Learning

“Professional learning should be linked to participants’ needs and consider the culture and context in which the teacher or leader works”

Introduction

This chapter describes several key interdependent and interconnected elements that support the professional learning of leaders, both those aspiring to leadership roles and those who already occupy leadership positions. The elements of professional learning proposed here are based on a study of research that focused on understanding and profiling professional learning for school leadership, and on an examination of the features of effective professional learning for teachers and leaders at each career stage. Figure 2 is a graphical representation of the elements of the model of professional learning for leadership. As outlined in Chapter 1, the centre of the graphic illustrates the purpose and intended impact of all professional learning: to improve learning outcomes and wellbeing for students and school communities. The two semicircles surrounding the centre emphasise the importance of professional learning, impacting on both the practice and the person of the leader. The following sections in this chapter outline some of the key research on each element identified in the graphic.



Fig. 2. The Elements of Professional Learning

1. Reflection on Practice

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions to engage in a process of continuous learning. According to one definition, it involves:

paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively.⁹

Reflective practice can be an important tool in professional learning settings, where people learn from their own professional experiences, rather than from formal learning or knowledge. It is an important way to bring together theory and practice: through reflection, a person can see and label forms of thought and theory in the context of their work. A person who reflects throughout their practice is not just looking back on past actions and events, but is taking a conscious look at emotions, experiences, actions, and responses, and using that information to add to their existing knowledge base and reach a higher level of understanding.

However, a challenging practice for school leaders is to engage in systematic reflection that serves to mitigate the time constraints and emotional upheavals of the job for maximum benefit. Reflection on one's leadership practice should not be a detached or disconnected action but one that is promoted by the culture and structures of the school. Reflection is an inherent component of what it means to be an effective leader. Reflective practice provides a continual means of understanding that translates into renewed action for the individual and the organisation alike. By engaging in a cycle of questioning, leaders move towards a developmental, nonlinear view of leadership that is necessary for a collective sense of direction, purpose, and meaning.

Carroll, Smith and Whewell (2008) describe reflection as 'a process to be engaged in rather than a product that can be acquired by ticking the appropriate box' (p. 15). The authors suggest that asking questions of those taken-for-granted moments acts as a key to reflective practice. They suggest that tools that can be used include learning journals, critical incident analysis, and coaching and mentoring. Mentoring and coaching are also highlighted as a tool for reflective practice in the Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning.¹⁰

Technological advances have enhanced the capacity to develop and share online reflective practice through blogging and journaling. The Cosán framework plans to further explore how 'cycles of planning, evidence gathering, reflection and ongoing learning' (Teaching Council, 2016, p. 21) will inform reflection for leadership learning. It explores models of portfolio-based learning and ICT-based solutions that could likewise be helpful tools for reflective practice for both aspiring and established leaders.

2. Relevant Experiential Learning

Experiential learning can be both formal and informal. It involves action as well as reflection. At an informal level, the learner may decide to make a change in a specific area in order to improve their leadership practice. They will then try out the change and observe and evaluate its impact on their practice and on learning outcomes for students. When experiential learning becomes more formal, it often takes the form of a structured professional enquiry combined

⁹ 'Reflective Practice' (2020). Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reflective_practice

¹⁰ Cosán: Framework for Teachers' Learning: Development Process (2016–2020)
www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Cosan-Development-Process.pdf

with action research. The evidence-seeking is supported in this formal process by theory generated from reading and discussion.

The Australian Charter for Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL, 2012: 6)¹¹ emphasises that ‘professional learning will be most effective when it is relevant, collaborative and future focused’ and that it needs to ‘address and adapt to the challenges faced by the practitioner’. The focus of the learning is on the identified needs of students and encourages teachers and school leaders to test out approaches that ‘find new solutions to persistent issues by challenging their assumptions about their practice’ (p. 6).

The Cosán Framework for Teachers’ Learning cites action research projects and piloting of new initiatives as examples of learning processes.

The CUREE (Centre for the Use of Research Evidence in Education) report (2012) draws on a range of published research addressing the question: ‘What are the characteristics of high-quality professional learning for practitioners in education?’ (p. 4). This report highlights the role of structured dialogue and group work as:

providing multiple opportunities for exploring beliefs and assumptions, trying out new approaches . . . and giving and receiving feedback . . . as well as exploring evidence from trying new things (p. 4).

3. Cognitive Development

The renewed focus on the school leader as a leader of learning makes the use of new knowledge and the engagement with new ideas and perspectives an important component of professional learning for leadership. Reading and research provide an alternative view and a different lens through which a leader can view their practice. It is therefore important that there are strong links forged between those engaged in leadership research that supports evidence-informed practice and those providing professional learning for school leaders.

Carroll et al. (2008) point out that if reflection on practice is not informed by new ideas and draws only on experiences, its capacity to inform learning is limited.

The CUREE report highlights the support by specialist expertise as an important component of professional learning for both teachers and school leaders. The importance of ‘practice-based current research on effective leadership’ (p. 6) is a recurring theme found by CUREE when it examined research on what constitutes good-quality professional learning. The Cosán Framework identifies research as a learning process and expands the definition of research to include:

- participation in a research-meet or other research event
- research carried out as part of an academic programme
- membership of a research engagement group
- action research.

11 Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (2012). Available at: www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/australian-charter-for-the-professional-learning-of-teachers-and-school-leaders

Therefore, the use of relevant research that challenges existing practice and outlines a pathway towards improvement in teaching and learning outcomes for students, is a core component of a quality professional learning activity for school leaders.

4. Flexible and Sustainable Learning

Professional learning should be linked to participants' needs and consider the culture and context in which the teacher or leader works. It is important that professional learning takes account of variables such as career stage, priorities, motivation, and the professional confidence of the learner.

Research by AITSL (2012) highlights the availability of flexible and nonlinear programmes of activity and support as a characteristic of effective professional learning for school leaders.

Other research highlights the importance of professional learning being available when needed, and stresses that engagement with learning is greatly improved if it addresses a specific need. Building a national strategy for career-long leadership development has to support the role of the individual practitioner in shaping their professional development. More personalised learning approaches are complex and make specific demands on learners. Forde et al. (2013) state that it is important to balance the system's need for leadership capacity with the scope for individual practitioners to shape their own professional learning pathways.

Researchers found sustained professional learning to be a key characteristic of effectiveness. Teachers and school leaders who received sustained professional learning over time were more likely to put strategies learned into practice (Tabernik and Williams, 2010; Wasik and Hindman, 2011). In addition, many of the learning processes cited in Cosán, such as working as a cooperating teacher, availing of a secondment, or engaging in an externship, fit into the category of sustained professional learning.

5. Individual and Collaborative Learning

Individual learning has benefits and should be part of all professional learning. It allows for leaders to develop their own personalised pathway towards their specific goals. Cosán acknowledges this, and in relation to teacher's learning argues for:

an appropriate balance between the enhancements of their own practice as individuals on the one hand, and the creation of a responsive and dynamic community of practice on the other (p. 12).

However, reflection and experiential learning, referred to here as components of a model of leadership learning, do depend to a large extent on collaboration for sustained impact on practice. Carroll et al. (2008) stress the importance of group dynamics, a safe working environment, and explicit discussions of trust, confidentiality, and power to allow for better outcomes from the collaboration. (AITSL, 2012) sees collaboration as having a powerful effect on magnifying and spreading the benefits of professional learning.

The charter stresses the need for a disciplined and purposeful approach to collaborating and encourages the use of technology to enhance and enrich collaborative learning. MacBeath (2011) cites networking which focuses on the development of practice, problem-solving, and sharing as important. A genuine, structured, collaborative process that involves leaders working together, identifying starting points, sharing evidence about practice, and trying new approaches can be a powerful component of any leadership professional learning activity.

6. Focused on Professional Standards

The *Looking at Our School* (2016) framework for leadership and management,¹² published by the DE Inspectorate, is designed for school leaders to use in enhancing the quality of leadership in their schools. This publication provides a common understanding of what constitutes high-quality leadership practices. It is therefore important that those involved in designing, developing, facilitating, and evaluating professional learning programmes and activities use the standards and statements of practice as a basis for planning such learning. The framework highlights the skills and knowledge that are essential elements of good practice. A focus on the standards outlined in the framework can also provide participants with tools for reflection as a support in developing their leadership capacity.

The flexibility built into the statements of practice allows for school leaders to reflect on and evaluate their level of proficiency in their specific context. The framework 'allows for selection of what is most relevant to suit the specific purpose of individual teachers or schools' (p. 10). It also provides an excellent tool for those providing professional learning to evaluate the strengths of their current provision, and it can be used to explore opportunities for further development. It can be used as a guide to identify good practice in a school as part of school self-evaluation and can be very powerful in developing good leadership practices at several levels in schools.

In summary: Rather than reliance on a single type of experience or a collection of disconnected experiences, CSL is proposing that if change and development of leadership practice in schools are to become a reality, professional learning activities need to incorporate some or all of these elements as appropriate to the context and objectives of the professional learning activity, so as to best develop and enhance leadership practice in primary and post-primary schools. The CSL leadership continuum is therefore aligned with this model of professional learning and highlights the relationship between learning and practice. The model is also closely aligned with the Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning published by the Teaching Council in 2016 (Appendix 1).

¹² Looking at Our Schools framework for leadership and management (2016) www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf and www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf



Chapter 3

Teacher Leadership

“Teacher leaders flourish in an environment where they are supported, empowered, and encouraged by their principals and where they are given opportunities to practise leadership.”

An Overview of the Literature on Teacher Leadership

For many years, teachers have served as informal leaders in schools. However, in 1986, the Holmes Group¹³ and the Carnegie Forum on Education and Economy,¹⁴ working independently of each other, both proposed a 'ladder system' for teachers. One wrote about 'career professionals', while the other described 'lead teachers'. In each case, they were referring to teachers who would remain in the classroom but would assume other leadership responsibilities in their schools.

Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing number of articles and books on teacher leadership. Alma Harris and Daniel Muijs (2005) discuss the nature and role of teacher leadership and use the following definition:

Teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher leaders and learners, and influence others towards improved educational practice (Katzenmayer and Moller, 2001, cited in Harris and Muijs, 2005: 5).

Harris and Muijs (2007) looked at three case studies of contrasting schools, and in these studies they define teacher leadership as teachers having the opportunities to lead school improvement and to partake in decision-making in schools. Lai and Cheung (2015: 675) reviewed the teacher leadership literature and conclude that there is a 'lack of a clear, agreed-upon definition of teacher leadership'. They look at common facets of the concept and conclude that while teacher leadership can be 'individually or collectively based' (p. 674), informal teacher leaders tend to be community based and 'gain their influence through earning the respect from students and colleagues through their expertise and practice' (p. 675). They also state that teacher leadership is transformational in nature, that it functions in communities of practice, and that it supports school development at different levels. They write:

Teacher leadership consists of three major acts, namely teacher participation in educational improvement endeavours, teacher learning in communities of practice and teacher influence beyond the classroom (Lai and Cheung, 2015: 666).

Finally, they identify the two distinctive qualities that distinguish leadership activities from collaborative activities: empowerment and agency. Empowerment is frequently highlighted in the literature:

Teacher empowerment entails the sharing of power by principals with their school's teachers, which gives teachers legitimacy to take on leadership roles and to participate in the leadership process, such as initiating new practices and mobilizing other teachers to join them with the goal of improved teaching and learning practices (Lai and Cheung, 2015: 677).

13 The Holmes Group was made up of deans and chief academic staff from colleges of education across the 50 American States. The goals of the group were: 1. To make the education of teachers more intellectually solid. 2. To recognize differences in teachers' knowledge, skills, and commitment 3. To create standards of entry into the profession. 4. To connect institutions to schools. 5. To make schools better places for teachers to work and learn (ERIC, 1986).

14 The Carnegie Forum was created in 1985 to focus on global economic development and its implications for education. It was organised by the Carnegie Foundation, which later established the National Center on Education and the Economy in 1987. The Carnegie Report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, published in June 1986, claimed that in order to achieve a vibrant economy, attainment levels in schools needed to rise. In the increasing demand for teachers, the report recommended the creation of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the raising of teachers' qualifications leading to a master's degree, the raising of salaries, making teachers accountable, and introducing the concept of the lead teacher to help colleagues uphold standards (ERIC, 1986).

In relation to agency, they quote Campbell (2012: 183):

the state of agency enables individuals to make free or independent choices, to engage in autonomous actions, and to exercise judgement in the interests of others and oneself.

Placing it in the school context, Priestley (2015), asks if 'agency (often defined as the capacity to act) is more or less important than structure (i.e. the drivers and inhibitors afforded by society) in shaping human activity' (para. 2). Priestley concludes that teacher agency is:

something that happens through an always unique interplay of individual capacity and the social and material conditions by means of which people act (para. 3).

It can be assumed, therefore, that school context and leadership development are key to the viability of teacher agency.

Smylie and Eckert (2018) focus on leadership development and look at four key insights which can be drawn from the literature on teacher leadership. They say that developing new leadership means developing a new system of leadership for all, because 'new leadership cannot be developed without developing current leadership' (p. 559). This highlights the importance of developing the school principal's practice so that they use 'more collaborative forms of leadership' (p. 562) in order that they, in turn, can play an important part in the development of their teachers.

The second insight is linked to the first. Smylie and Eckert conclude that 'the primary locus of and responsibility for teacher leadership development is in the school and district' (2018: 559). It is in the school that teachers will build their leadership capacity, therefore it is important that school leaders at every level create a climate that is conducive to developing teachers.

For the third insight, they draw on the work of many authors, in particular Day (2001), stating that there is a distinction between the development of the leader (the person) and the development of leadership (the process and practice). 'The implication for teacher leadership development,' they conclude, 'is that while developing the capacity of the teacher for leadership is important, it is insufficient. A crucial focus of development should be on the employment of this capacity in the practice of leadership' (p. 559).

Fourthly, they note that teacher leadership development should be informed by research, including research on 'adult and career development' (p. 560), since teachers and schools are all at different stages of readiness and motivation. Difference, they say, should be 'acknowledged and accommodated' (p. 560). Context therefore plays an important part in teacher leadership development, and schools carry a substantial responsibility to develop teachers.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), in their book *Awakening the Sleeping Giant*, attempt to raise awareness about the underutilisation of teachers as resources in our school systems. While researchers generally agree about the importance of teacher leaders in improving outcomes for students, Danielson (2007) argues that not every school welcomes the idea of developing teacher leaders. Therefore, in the area of building more collaborative cultures, professional learning opportunities for senior leaders are essential.

In summary, teacher leaders are those who are willing to work alongside others to build a better school community, to overcome challenges and obstacles, and who desire to improve

learning outcomes for the students in their care. Teacher leaders flourish in an environment where they are supported, empowered, and encouraged by their principals and where they are given opportunities to practise leadership.

Teacher Leadership in the Irish Context

Up until the 1990s in Ireland, the concept of a teacher as a leader was largely underdeveloped. Many teachers worked in professional isolation from each other and from those perceived to be leading the school. Leadership was associated with formal roles and responsibilities which attracted remuneration. However, teachers have always held informal leadership roles in schools, such as subject department coordinators, class tutorship roles, and voluntary extracurricular leadership roles. It could be said that 'teachers have often served as "representatives" of change rather than "leaders" who enact or initiate change' (Harris and Muijs, 2005: 16).

In the past few years, several Irish educational documents have highlighted the role of the teacher as a leader in their own classroom. There is also a focus on the teacher as a leader among colleagues. Since the 1990s, evidence of good practice in the promotion and development of teacher leadership has gradually been coming to the fore in Irish schools, and teacher leadership is now a focus in Irish educational research and practice.

Cosán (2016)¹⁵ states that the development of professional standards is central to the work of the council. These standards expect that teachers will be:

reflecting critically on their teaching and their learning, and the relationship between them, identifying areas for further professional learning, planning for their learning, celebrating their learning experiences and accomplishments, and demonstrating their ongoing commitments as learning professionals (p. 22).

This document clearly identifies the teacher as a leader of their own learning and allows them the autonomy to select what is appropriate for themselves in their specific learning environment. In the statements of practice for the teaching and learning dimension of the 2016 *Looking at Our School* (LAOS)¹⁶ Quality Framework document, teachers are reminded of their leadership role. They are expected to:

value their role within a professional learning organisation, and as a matter of course, share their expertise with other teachers in the school (p. 21).

The document reminds teachers that 'all teachers play a leadership role within the school', and furthermore that the leadership and management section of the document should:

assist all teachers in gaining a perspective on their own leadership roles in the school and how they can develop and expand their leadership skills over time (p. 7).

15 The Cosán Framework was published in 2016 by the Irish Teaching Council, the statutory professional standards body for teaching, which promotes and regulates the profession. Having already developed frameworks for initial teacher education and the teacher induction process, 'Droichead', the natural next step of the Teaching Council's work was this framework for teachers' learning (Teaching Council, 2016). Available at: www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Cosan-Framework-for-Teachers-Learning.pdf

16 *Looking at Our School* (2016), with separate documents for primary and post-primary schools, provides two sets of professional standards, one for teaching and learning, and one for leadership and management. The document was developed by the Inspectorate in consultation with system stakeholders, and underpins both the school self-evaluation process and the external inspection process, with a view towards school improvement and better outcomes for students. Available at: www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf and www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf

In the leadership and management dimension of *Looking at Our School*, the following statements appear in Domain Four. School leaders should ensure that their style of leadership:

empowers teachers to take on and carry out leadership roles (p. 28)

communicates the school's guiding vision so that it empowers the whole school community to translate the vision into action (p. 26)

leads learning through effective use of distributed leadership models (p. 28)

and:

creates and motivates staff teams and working groups to lead developments in key areas, thus building leadership capacity (p. 28).

While in the document, the onus is on the principal to develop the leadership capacity of their teaching staff, there is an obvious conceptualisation of the teacher having a leadership role both within and outside the classroom walls.

The School Self-Evaluation (SSE)¹⁷ process was developed in 2012 'as a collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal school review' (DE, 2016a: 6). It promotes teacher agency and empowerment, viewing schools as:

dynamic learning organisations, where teachers are enabled to work individually and collectively to build their professional capacity in order to support continuous improvement in teaching and learning (DE, 2016b: 16).

In recent circular letters (DE, 2018, 2019) on the development of leadership in Irish post-primary and primary schools, the following sentence appears: 'Every teacher has a leadership role within the school community and in relation to student learning' (DE, 2018: 67, 2019: 67). The post-primary circular refers to 'the enhancement of distributive models' in Irish schools which provides 'opportunities for teachers to develop their leadership capacity' (DE, 2018: 4). The primary circular refers to assistant principals working 'in teams in collaboration with the principal and/or deputy principal' and 'in line with the principles of distributed leadership' (p. 33), and states that the post of responsibility structure 'is based on a distributed leadership model' (p. 61). While these specific circulars relate directly to the more formal middle leadership positions, it can be clearly seen that distributive leadership (which includes both formal and informal leadership practices) is favoured by the DE. It is obvious, therefore, from the references above, that the role of every teacher as a leader in the classroom and beyond is being acknowledged and promoted.

When preparing this document, CSL held several workshops with stakeholders in Irish education and asked them to identify the professional learning on offer for teacher leaders. The resulting list is extensive. It is envisaged that teacher leaders will have access to this list of provision on the CSL Shared Calendar for providers,¹⁸ and from the CSL Model and Continuum of Professional Learning for school leaders. The professional learning identified by the stakeholders was mainly focused on developing teachers' competence in specific subject areas, in classroom practice, and in leading curriculum initiatives.

¹⁷ The School Self-Evaluation process (SSE) is a six-step reflective process of internal school review. It involves gathering information and making judgements to improve outcomes for students. Available at: www.schoolself-evaluation.ie

¹⁸ The CSL Shared Calendar was developed in consultation with system stakeholders in 2019 to ensure knowledge of available provision for all Irish school leaders, to promote CSL endorsement of provision ensuring the highest quality of learning for leaders, and to reduce duplication in the system. The calendar is available at: www.csfireland.ie/calendar.html

Some third-level institutions include a module on leadership in their initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. Although this stage of leadership is not referred to on the CSL continuum, it is nonetheless considered an important developmental area, in which impressions of leadership and its significance begin to formulate in the learning processes of student teachers. Indeed, leadership in ITE is fast becoming a significant issue. According to Forde and Dickson (2017), a focus on leadership in ITE may well empower novice teachers to bring about necessary change in the pedagogy, curriculum, and ethos of diverse schools. This links directly to the increasing focus on teacher leadership and the notion of a 'more democratic approach to the organisation and development of schools' (p. 83). A focus on leadership in ITE has the potential to promote teacher agency and advocacy but also brings to the fore the concept of 'layering of leadership', which is complex and entails a significant role for an effective head teacher in 'fostering connections within and beyond the school' (Mowat and McMahon, 2019: 181).

Third-level institutions also provide diplomas, master's degrees, and doctorate-level programmes in educational management and leadership. The CSL Professional Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) is a blended-learning 18-month programme for aspiring senior leaders. It is provided by a consortium of universities – University of Limerick (UL), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), and University College Dublin (UCD) – and is accessible to teachers in several centres around the country.

Some programmes, such as the Forbairt Programme¹⁹ provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) post-primary and primary level, the Instructional Leadership Programme provided by Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI),²⁰ and the Management Excellence for Teachers Programme provided by Business in the Community (BITC)²¹ have a greater focus on teacher leadership. The Forbairt Programme plays a significant role in the development of the school leadership team and offers teacher leaders, whether in a formal or informal role, the opportunity to attend with the principal and deputy principal. The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)²² also provides leadership opportunities for teachers who wish to act as mentors to newly qualified teachers.

Harris and Muijs (2005) argue that teacher collaboration and mutual learning are as significant in the effective development of teacher leadership as they are in building collaborative cultures and professional learning communities within and between schools that develop teacher leadership. The TL21 Programme offered by Maynooth University (MU) and Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI)²³ is a workshop-based CPD programme for teachers that promotes innovative practice and professional learning communities in post-primary schools. The Learning Schools Project (LSP)²⁴ is a similar programme organised in Education Centres in the Munster area. The School Excellence Fund is a new initiative designed by the DE to encourage

19 Forbairt is a leadership development programme provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). It is aimed at a school leadership team, comprising the principal, deputy principal, and two teacher leaders at post-primary level, and the principal, deputy principal, and one teacher leader at primary level. Available at: www.pdst.ie/Forbairt/Postprimary and <https://www.pdst.ie/Forbairt/Primary>

20 The Instructional Leadership Programme (ILP) provides a model of professional learning which offers engagement and submersion, modelling and practice, and the development of collegial networks of teachers as a means of support and encouragement. It is facilitated by the ETBI. Available at: www.instructionalleadership.ie/

21 The Management Excellence for Teachers Programme is provided by BITC and facilitates principals and teachers to access workshops delivered by senior business leaders. Available at: www.bitc.ie/business-action-programmes/business-action-on-education/are-you-a-school/

22 The National Induction Programme for Teachers supports the induction of newly qualified teachers into the teaching profession in both primary and post-primary schools in Ireland.

23 TL21 is a research-led programme which aims to strengthen teachers' capacities as cooperative and self-critical authors of their own work. Available at: www.maynoothuniversity.ie/TL21

24 The Learning Schools Project (LSP) increases awareness about the concept of a Learning School which is promoted by school-based activities and by empowering teachers to become teacher leaders.

and recognise excellence and innovation in schools. It involves schools working together in clusters and teachers undertaking leadership responsibilities to coordinate these clusters.

As already stated, Irish school leaders should focus on providing opportunities for teachers to develop as leaders in their own schools, empowering them to make decisions and be accountable for those decisions. Without senior leadership focusing on teacher leadership, teachers will not flourish and will not develop their leadership capacity. There appear to be increasing opportunities offered to teachers nowadays to lead various projects in schools. The new Junior Cycle Curriculum at post-primary level has introduced Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR)²⁵ meetings which encourage teachers to collaborate in their own school. SSE has become an integral part of the Irish school system at both primary and post-primary levels, and through it many teachers have opportunities to lead and collaborate with their colleagues. Distributed leadership is becoming embodied in everyday practice and being seen as a rich form of workplace learning. According to MacRuairc and Harford (2011: 2), the theoretical perspective underpinning distributed leadership as ‘leadership stretched/spread out to include all staff in schools’ creates a conceptual space to further explore the potential of teacher leadership. It is therefore incumbent on all members of the leadership team to ensure that further opportunities are available for Irish teachers.

However, in the Chief Inspector’s Report (2013–2016: 102–103), Dr Harold Hislop questioned the capacity of Irish school leaders at that time to establish goals and expectations in an environment of collaboration and collegiality:

The assumption that principals have the capacity to do so is not one we can rely on – professional learning opportunities for principals have been underdeveloped in Ireland and there is an ongoing requirement to develop programmes that nurture relevant leadership skills to cultivate collaborative, reflective cultures in schools and engage in the challenging conversations that will be necessary.

This view is corroborated by MacRuairc and Harford (2011: 5), who argue that while positive Whole School Evaluation reports in the country reveal ‘good collaborative and distributed models of leadership’, there is significant scope for further improvement, particularly in the case of pedagogical leadership. The development of teacher leadership in Ireland is therefore dependent on providing professional learning for those on the leadership team so that they can build collegial cultures in Irish schools. The CSL Excellence through Collaborative Leadership and Management Project, jointly facilitated by the DE and ESCI, provides opportunities for teachers and leaders in school clusters to work together on leadership projects, and to develop as professional learning organisations. In the words of Coolahan et al. (2017: 105):

Promoting a professional learning community in a school calls firstly on the principal and deputy principal to take initiatives to create conditions of dialogue, including, in particular, the time and opportunities needed for professional dialogue to develop.

25 These SLAR meetings provide Junior Cycle teachers with the opportunity to share and discuss samples of their assessment of students’ work, and to build a common understanding of the quality of students’ learning.

Teacher Leadership: An International Perspective

While some countries provide generic professional learning opportunities for teacher, middle, and aspiring senior leaders, other countries offer specific professional learning opportunities to teachers in order to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to develop as teacher leaders.

Scotland has taken a proactive approach to leadership development. In 2015, the former Scottish College of Educational Leadership (SCEL) engaged proactively with over 1,000 teachers across Scotland to hear their thoughts on teacher leadership, the challenges and opportunities of engaging in professional learning in teacher leadership, and how SCEL as an organisation could best support the profession. They commenced a pilot teacher leadership programme in 2016,⁴ which was designed to support classroom teachers to develop their leadership of learning and teaching. In the programme, which is mainly online, participants engage with literature as well as regularly reflecting on and enquiring into their own practice. They are supported and challenged by a critical friend and a programme tutor.

This structure provides opportunities for other teachers to act in these leadership roles. More recently, in 2018, as SCEL was incorporated into the Education Scotland Professional Learning and Leadership Directorate, the Supporting Teacher Leadership Programme was developed.²⁶ It aims to facilitate teacher leadership through practitioner enquiry into practice. This entails taking an enquiring approach to an aspect of learning and teaching in order to understand what teacher leadership means and looks like in practice.

Our neighbours in **England** have over 500 alliances of teaching schools.²⁷ These schools assist other schools in their locality, and teachers have opportunities to share good practice with their colleagues. In **Austria**, a small-scale research project which began in 2007 has now become a mandated school reform nationally. A new leadership position has been created in the schools – that of ‘teacher leader’. Together with the school’s principal and other teacher leaders, they serve as change agents in their schools. Networking events provide a venue for learning, peer learning, and dissemination of good practice. There is now a specially designed two-year national accredited programme for teacher leaders and an online platform for sharing ideas and practices among themselves.

In Ontario in **Canada**, since 2007, the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) is an annual project-based professional learning opportunity for experienced classroom teachers. It funds proposals from classroom teachers seeking peer leadership roles in curriculum, instructional practice, or supporting other teachers. One of the aims of the programme is to foster teacher leadership. Once a TLLP project is complete, the Provincial Knowledge Exchange (PKE) provides school boards with the opportunity to mobilise the knowledge and experience of the TLLP teacher leaders across schools, districts, and the province, thus impacting on many other teachers and schools. Since the last change in government, the next phase of the TLLP programme remains under review.

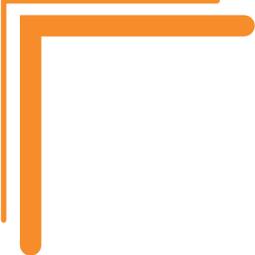
In *Lessons from New Zealand*, McPhearson and Borthwick (2011: 23) described the teacher leadership innovative model in **New Zealand**:

26 <https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/learn/programmes/teacher-leadership-programme/>

27 www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-schools-a-guide-for-potential-applicants#teaching-school-alliances

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand supports teacher leadership through a Cluster Model. Clusters bring together a group of like-minded schools to leverage their resources and create a collaborative learning environment. The Cluster model provides teacher leaders with opportunities for professional development, consulting, digital technology and educational conferences.

New Zealand also has a programme called ED Talks, which is a repository of videos featuring good practice from leaders and innovative educators to help teachers develop their professional practice.



Agency
Empowerment
Professional learning

Informal leadership

Leadership capacity

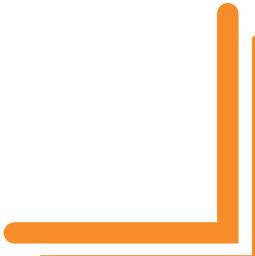
Professional learning communities

Pedagogical leadership

Career professionals

Individually or collectively based

Transformational leadership



Pastoral leadership

Curriculum leadership

Leadership of a team

Leadership of student supports



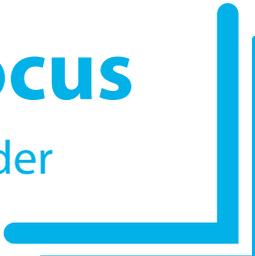
Collaborative leadership

Motivational
and organisational role

The engine of the school

Strategic leadership focus

Tension of being both teacher and leader





Chapter 4

Middle Leadership

*“Middle leaders in schools need specific forms of support
and development to maximise their potential”*

An Overview of the Literature on Middle Leadership

'Middle leader' is often used as an overarching term to describe a leadership position in a school that involves additional responsibilities outside of the classroom. Middle leaders in schools may have different areas of responsibility. These may include pastoral leadership, curriculum leadership, leadership of additional student supports, leadership of a team which is delivering a specific programme, or leadership of a particular school improvement priority. Therefore, middle leadership in this context is being interpreted as those roles which have an 'out-of-classroom' remit and a strategic leadership focus.

What has filled this middle leadership space has evolved over several years in different systems and is largely related to the hierarchical organisational structure of schools in that system. The common theme running through most of the definitions of this role refers to it as the teachers who are the 'middle layer' in the school's organisational structure between senior leadership (i.e., the principal and deputy principal) and classroom teachers.

Dinham et al. (2013) state that maximising leadership influence in schools is a collective responsibility. There is a growing belief that single-person leadership, such as that of the principal, is insufficient when it comes to leading learning and teaching in a complex organisation like a school, hence the emphasis on collective responsibility for leadership in schools. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) observed that the leadership of principals and the assumption that school leadership is synonymous with the principal have preoccupied educational leadership literature for too long. Therefore, given the increasing reform agenda currently being experienced globally, the development of this leadership layer in schools is particularly significant.

Robinson and Aronica (2015) also recognise the motivational and organisational role that middle leaders play in reform and change. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) refer to 'the complexity in describing middle-level leaders when multiple terms are used to describe similar roles' (p. 57). Odhiambo (2014) acknowledges 'the rival expectations of monitoring and collegiality' (p. 1) inherent in the role. Anecdotally, most middle leaders find their role rewarding, but they experience the tension of being both teacher and leader. The challenge, particularly for newly appointed middle leaders, involves navigating these conflicting expectations and coping with the transition from peer to leader of others in a time of changing policy.

The importance of middle leadership in impacting on learning outcomes for students is highlighted by Harris and Jones (2017):

In short, a significant part of the within-school variation can be found at the middle tier implying that this is a critical layer for support and development (p. 214).

Similarly, Grootenboer et al. (2015), when commenting on the role of the middle leader, noted that because of their positioning 'in the middle', they can 'directly impact classroom practices' and as such can be in 'a powerful position to be professional development leaders and to promote and sustain quality teaching and learning practices in schools' (p. 509). Robson and Bassett (2017) make the point that classroom teachers frequently move into middle leadership but that they are often not provided with specific middle leadership training nor effective meaningful appraisal in order to undertake what is a complex role. The authors argue that being trained for the role of a teacher is in no way an adequate preparation for teachers moving

into middle leadership roles. This would imply that a leadership focus is fundamental in initial teacher education and should be given further consideration.

Robson and Bassett also point to the need for middle leaders to experience effective appraisal with both a developmental and an accountability focus, which involves productive conversations about practice and improvements. A key area of development, seen as a priority for middle leaders, is the skill of managing conflict. Developing a set of conversational skills to conduct difficult, challenging, and productive conversations requires specific training. The literature points to the fact that those defined as middle leaders in schools include teachers who carry out a wide variety of roles, but the most significant identifying factor is that the roles and responsibilities involve an out-of-classroom remit. The potential of middle leaders as the engine of the school, particularly in times of change, is very dependent on the capacity of the senior leaders to distribute that leadership effectively. Finally, middle leaders in schools need specific forms of support and development to maximise their potential.

Middle Leadership in the Irish Context

The development of middle leadership as a significant and key leadership position in the Irish school system is now coming to the fore. Historically, when posts of responsibility were introduced into the Irish education system as a middle management tier, they were not really conceived of as leadership posts but as positions which provided the means to recompense staff who took on duties in addition to their classroom responsibilities. Seniority was an important criterion in the appointments to these posts. There was a wide range of tasks from which the specific areas of responsibility could be assigned to post holders. This led to criticism in the OECD review of National Policies for Education: 'it is regrettable that an effective middle management capability scarcely exists' (OECD, 1991: 108, cited in MacRuiric and Harford, 2011: 3). This statement became the impetus for reform in the whole area of middle management in Ireland.

Dr Eilis Humphreys' doctoral thesis 'Distributive Leadership and its Impact on Teaching and Learning' (Humphreys, 2010) explores how the concept of distributed leadership is understood in the context of the overall work of the school principal in Irish post-primary schools. The research, which involved school principals, deputy principals, and teachers, makes particular reference to the impact that distributive leadership can have on teaching and learning, but pointed to the fact that many post holders did not perceive themselves as having any genuine leadership roles or any role in decision-making in schools. The research identified the potential effectiveness of middle leaders in the Irish context in leading teaching and learning. In the conclusion, Humphreys argues for a more focused approach to instructional leadership in the post of responsibility structures and existing subject department structures.²⁸

O'Donovan's case studies of three post-primary schools (O'Donovan, 2015) highlight the evolutionary nature of collaborative practice in second-level schools in Ireland. She identifies the isolationist culture that is still prevalent in schools and the difficulty that this presents to operate a distributed leadership model with respect to instructional leadership. However, on a positive note, the author identifies volunteerism as a uniquely Irish characteristic and one that does not receive significant attention in distributed leadership literature.

²⁸ <https://www.pdst.ie/Toraiocht/Primary>. It is available in ten Education Centres nationwide.

More recently, the set of professional standards on leadership and management contained in the quality assurance framework *Looking at Our School* (DE, 2016c, 2016d) marks a heightened policy focus on leadership and its impact on school improvement. Domain four in the framework identifies the need to develop leadership capacity and gives an added impetus to the concept and practice of distributed leadership in schools. In addition, the SSE process, the two circulars on leadership and management in post-primary and primary schools (DE, 03/2018, 44/2019) and the development of a continuum of professional learning in leadership (CSL, 2017) signal a further focus on this area. The role and development of middle leadership as a management tier is embedded in these broader discussions of leadership.

Essential features of the Leadership and Management Circulars are:

- The post of responsibility structure in schools is based on a distributive leadership model involving the establishment and facilitation of leadership teams with appropriate defined and shared responsibilities.
- There is provision of opportunities for teachers to build their leadership capacity.
- There is a requirement that post holders be reassigned to specific responsibilities to meet the needs and priorities of the school.
- There is a need for a school to review its needs and priorities at least every two years.
- The introduction of reporting and regular review as an integral part of building strong leadership teams is new in the Irish system.
- The significant responsibilities of BOMs/ETBs in setting the direction of a school has ensured that the building of leadership capacity is a focal point for those with management and governance responsibilities.

Forde et al. (2019) note that these circulars describe a new vision for middle leadership in Irish schools, one that sees a move from 'delegation to distributive leadership where the delegation of tasks is replaced by collaborative leadership across the school' (p. 302). The authors write that 'organisational tasks' are now replaced by much broader areas of responsibility which are 'much more strategically focused on learning, including professional learning' (p. 304).

There are some challenges that need addressing to make what is envisaged by the circulars a reality in Irish schools. These challenges are at different leadership levels, including governance level, senior leadership level, and middle leadership level. Some of the challenges are common to both primary and post-primary, but there are also specific contextual challenges in each sector. In making effective distributed leadership a reality in primary and post-primary schools, the following should be considered:

- Developing an understanding at management and governance levels of the potential that distributed leadership has as a support for student learning.
- Developing the skills of principals to engage with middle leaders around a vision for distributed leadership that would result in the building of leadership teams in their school.
- Changing the perception of posts as 'jobs' that individuals are paid to do without having a leadership focus.

- The phasing out of seniority as a criterion for appointment will be a challenge as principals manage the expectations of their longer-serving staff.
- The reassigning of roles to established AP1s (previously assistant principals) will be challenging for principals, as many post holders have held these positions for a significant number of years.
- Heretofore, many principals did not view their role as having to build the leadership capacity of their post holders. The SSE process, the circulars, and LAOS speak of developing leadership capacity as an essential part of their role. This role will bring challenges for principals unaccustomed to this approach.
- Some newly appointed principals come directly from the teaching profession, have not had opportunities to manage other adults, have worked only in one school setting, and do not have specific leadership qualifications.

There are specific challenges for the primary sector in developing this middle leadership tier. These include:

- A focus on the role of the deputy principal is currently in development at primary level. Due to leadership supports in the Irish system, the perception of the role is gradually changing, but it will take time to disseminate to all primary schools.
- Deputy principals' positions for schools of certain sizes are now being advertised externally for the first time, and again, this will be a feature of all deputy principal positions in the future.
- The SSE process, particularly a focus on the second dimension of leadership and management, will need to be supported with sustained guidance and advice for schools from the relevant stakeholders in the system.
- The large number of primary principals who have significant teaching responsibility and have no alternative but to prioritise their teaching and classroom duties, before having time to consider their additional leadership roles, need to be considered.
- Middle leadership positions have not yet been restored adequately to primary schools since the downturn of 2008.

Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of providers such as support services, professional associations, management and trust bodies, and unions in the Irish system providing bespoke professional learning for both aspiring and established middle leaders. As referenced in the teacher leadership section, CSL's Post-Graduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) is focused on developing leadership skills. An average of 250 school leaders, aspiring to senior leadership positions, completed this postgraduate qualification each year in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

The PDST Comhar Programme²⁹ provides school leaders with 'the opportunity to consider demands in the context of current challenges and helps school leaders build skills, knowledge and attitudes through reflection of practice, dialogue and school initiatives'. The programme is available in ten Education Centres nationwide. Although there is scope for an expansion

²⁹ <https://www.pdst.ie/Toraiocht/Primary>

of learning for middle leaders in the Irish system, the professional learning provided by CSL and PDST, as well as that provided by the other stakeholders, supports leaders, encourages and empowers others to show leadership, and provides further engagement in promotional opportunities for teachers.

Middle Leadership: An International Perspective

Research into schools' potential for distributing leadership has grown in recent times, with an increasing emphasis on leadership as a collective responsibility. Internationally, research is suggesting that middle leaders can have a positive influence on classroom teachers in seeking to improve learning outcomes for students. The literature is clear that the extent to which this can happen depends on the level of autonomy and responsibility given to the middle leader to engage with teachers in supportive and innovative ways.

In **Scotland**, the Standards for Leadership and Management consist of a *Standard for Middle Leadership and Management* (GTCS, 2012a) and *Standards for Headship* (GTCS, 2012b), thus recognising the importance of middle leadership as an integral leadership level and not simply as a stepping stone to principalship. These 24 standards describe the professional actions of middle leaders and are grouped into the following five areas:

- i. Develop a range of strategies for individual and collective self-evaluation which contribute to school improvement.
- ii. Develop coherent approaches to professional learning which build and sustain teachers' practice.
- iii. Lead and work collaboratively to enhance teaching which leads to high-quality learning experiences.
- iv. Build and sustain partnerships with colleagues, learners, parents, and other stakeholders to meet the identified needs of all learners.
- v. Manage allocated resources proactively and effectively to meet learning and development priorities.

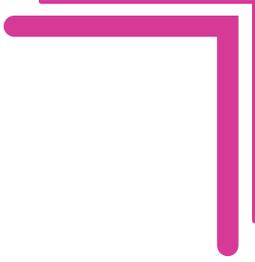
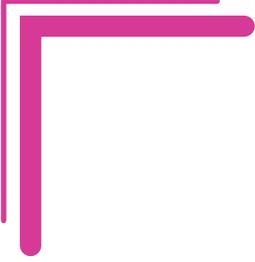
The two sets of standards chart a progression towards more complex leadership, with middle leadership being more operational and headship being more strategic. However, both sets of standards are value-based and provide a broad framework for leadership development. In Education Scotland, the Professional Learning and Leadership Directorate provides professional learning for both aspiring and serving middle leaders, including the development of confidence in the use of coaching as a reflective leadership tool. A programme for teachers aspiring to middle leadership supports teachers to develop an understanding of the roles of middle leaders and the skills required to carry out key aspects of that role.

Odhiambo (2014), in his study of leadership development provision in **New South Wales (NSW)**, analyses the role, purpose, and development of middle leaders, specifically the assistant principal, which is a key leadership position in the NSW Department of Education. He writes that middle leadership has not yet reached the point of maturity where it is a self-sustaining entity, and that most systems have yet to develop fully satisfactory ways of recognising, nurturing, and promoting this middle level of leadership in schools. He stresses the urgent need for this development.

Lacey and Gronn (2006) recognise that in **Australia**, the large number of principal retirements presents education with a significant challenge. Policy makers are looking to the role that middle leaders can play in a more distributed leadership responsibility. To facilitate this, school system policies are promoting and supporting a strong commitment to sharing leadership responsibilities and encouraging greater leadership density and capacity at the middle leadership levels.

In **New Zealand**, middle leaders are referred to as Team Leader, Syndicate Leader, Head of Department, Teacher in Charge or Dean. They are seen as influential leaders in schools and are expected to drive curriculum change and innovation. Bassett (2016) found that middle leaders in schools in New Zealand were expected to undertake a variety of tasks, including leading the curriculum, with a strong focus on improving learning outcomes for students, tracking and recording student achievements, and developing staff in their departments.

In summary, most of the international research agrees that middle leaders are significant leaders in schools, but that in order for them to feel valued and developed as leaders, meaningful appraisal experiences and well-constructed development opportunities need to be prioritised by educational systems wishing to maximise the potential of this leadership level.



Self-identification

Opportunities to learn

Additional responsibilities

Mentoring and coaching

Instructional leadership

Succession planning

Shadowing and observing

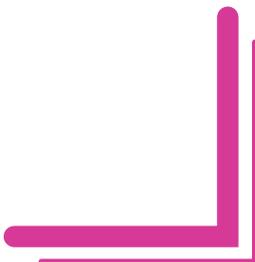
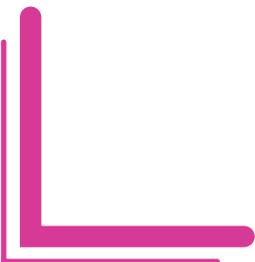
Internships

Quality professional learning

Leadership capacity

Structured learning opportunities

Talent management strategies





Chapter 5

Aspiring Senior Leadership

“School systems around the world need to find a fair and equitable method of identifying the most suitable candidates for senior leadership positions in schools.”

An Overview of the Literature on Aspiring Senior Leadership

Many teachers aspire to senior leadership positions in schools. These leadership roles are defined on the CSL continuum as being that of a deputy principal or principal. Aspiring school leaders may be teacher leaders, who hold an informal leadership role in their schools, or are members of communities of practice and have availed of opportunities to lead on certain projects in their schools. Aspiring leaders may also be middle leaders who have specific areas of responsibility in schools. Both groups may aspire to move towards senior leadership roles – or they may decide to continue their work in their teacher or middle leadership roles. CSL advocates for the integrity of each stage of leadership in its own right and acknowledges that while some school leaders will use the stages as a pathway to senior leadership positions, others will be happy to remain at a teacher or middle leadership stage.

In the McKinsey report (Barber, Whelan, and Clark, 2010: 9),³⁰ the authors suggest that globally, school systems rely on three types of approach to unlocking and developing future leadership talent:

1. Self-identification by the potential leader and informal mechanisms by which these leaders are coached and are given opportunities to develop in their own schools.
2. Providing potential leaders with the opportunities to take programmes/courses to build their leadership capacity.
3. Proactively guiding the careers of future leaders by offering them new roles and a myriad of opportunities in their schools along with guidance and support.

AITSL (2016: 1)³¹ states that there is:

no single defined and common pathway to becoming a principal. Leaders develop in part through individual, on-the-job development activities such as mentoring and coaching, taking on additional responsibilities or shadowing and observing a principal in a school. Most leaders also develop through formal principal preparation programmes.

In another AITSL paper (2017: 12), the authors promote the importance of offering:

extended experiences that involve learning within the context of work to allow individuals to practise and refine their skills in real situations.

In a report commissioned by the Wallace Foundation (2007),³² the authors examined exemplary leadership development programmes worldwide. They identified that these leadership programmes shared the following:

- a curriculum aligned with professional standards
- a philosophy and curriculum which emphasised instructional leadership and school improvement

30 This report was undertaken by McKinsey and Company in collaboration with the National College of Leadership of Schools and Children's Services in 2010 in New York. It compared school leadership over a wide range of high-performing systems and included interviews with experts, policy makers, school system leaders, and 1,850 middle-tier, high-performing, and randomly selected leaders. The countries and regions involved were Alberta and Ontario in Canada, England, New York in the US, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Singapore, and Victoria in Australia.

31 AITSL sees its mission as 'Developing expertise and empowering teachers and school leaders to create better education outcomes for Australian children' (www.aitsl.edu.au/about-aitsl).

32 The Wallace Foundation is based in New York and is a philanthropy which works to foster improvements in learning for disadvantaged children (www.wallacefoundation.org/about-wallace/pages/default.aspx).

- active, student-centred instruction that integrated theory and practice and stimulated reflection
- social and professional support in the form of mentoring and advising by expert principals
- vigorous, targeted recruitment and selection to seek out expert teachers with leadership potential
- internships which allowed participants to engage in leadership responsibilities for substantial periods of time under the tutelage of expert veterans.

Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012: 41), who examined five innovative principal preparation programmes, concluded that these programmes contained several common features:

Each is driven by a theory of action that locates instructional leadership at the heart of school reform and where effective school leadership is best developed through the integration of practical and problem-based experiences and research-based knowledge. Each program is also highly selective, under the theory that exemplary leadership best emerges from the cultivation of highly experienced, dedicated, and instructionally competent teacher leaders with strong motivations to become school administrators.³³ And each program provides either full time or part time mentored internships at school or district office sites other than the candidate's school of employment.

Research appears to indicate that future senior leaders should be identified and developed. According to Schleicher (2012) in an OECD report, many countries rely on self-selection to fill training and development programmes:

While this approach rewards initiative, it can be inefficient . . . self-selection does not address a school's or a jurisdiction's specific needs for succession planning (p. 24).

Some countries do take a proactive approach to identifying and developing future leaders. In the McKinsey report (Barber, Whelan, and Clark, 2010: 10), which describes how the world's top school systems are building leadership capacity, the authors maintain that:

High-performing organizations identify potential leaders early and have mechanisms for developing their talents over time, for example, by providing them with opportunities to gain leadership experience, rather than expecting them to emerge or send them through training programmes just before they assume leadership responsibility.

The importance of both the professional learning and the development of aspiring senior leaders is evident in school systems throughout the world. The research is indicating that these teachers need opportunities to develop in their own schools, experience internships in other settings, and be supported by senior leadership preparation programmes. These programmes should admit high-potential candidates, and school systems around the world need to find a fair and equitable method of identifying the most suitable candidates for senior leadership positions in schools. These programmes should also place an emphasis on the importance of leading learning as a core activity for senior leaders.

³³ Principals and deputy principals are referred to as school administrators in North America and Canada.

Aspiring Senior Leadership in the Irish Context

As there is no mandatory qualification for senior leadership in Ireland, there is a greater emphasis on the induction of newly appointed leaders in the Irish system than is seen in other jurisdictions. Coolahan et al. (2017: 99) state that:

Until the mid-1990s, educational leadership was not regarded as a priority in Irish educational policy or in the management and daily work of schools and colleges.

However, several new developments over the past two decades have highlighted the importance of educational leadership and the essential nature of quality professional learning in this area. The growth of master's-level programmes in educational management in the 1990s, the development of the Teacher Education Section (TES) in the DE in 2004, the setting up of the NAPD³⁴ (1998) and the IPPN³⁵ (2000) all indicate that leadership in schools was being valued by Irish policy makers. The establishment of the Leadership Development for Schools (LDS)³⁶ (2002) and the development of postgraduate designated educational leadership courses indicated that there was a definitive need to provide specific professional learning to support school leaders and those aspiring to it.

LDS became part of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST),³⁷ and a leadership section of PDST was established in 2011. In 2015, the Centre for School Leadership (CSL),³⁸ a partnership between IPPN, NAPD, and the DE was established. In recent years, the development of the Domains and Standards for Leadership and Management: *Looking at Our School* (LAOS) (2016), the promotion of school self-evaluation by the Inspectorate, and the new Leadership and Management Circulars³⁹ all served to strengthen leadership in schools, and to prepare those aspiring to senior leadership positions to gain perspective in advance of appointment to the role.

One of the remits of the CSL was to start an Aspiring Leaders' Programme for those interested in senior leadership in schools. The postgraduate diploma at level 9 (PDSL),⁴⁰ introduced earlier in this document, is based on the Domains and Standards for Leadership and Management (2016), with additional modules in coaching and mentoring. The programme commenced in 2017, is open to all teachers with five years' experience, and is part-funded by the DE. It attracts not only those aspiring to senior leadership but also those who may not hold middle leadership roles in their school and who aspire to do so. The PDSL programme includes leadership visits to observe leadership practice by work-shadowing leaders in another school and in a non-educational setting.

34 The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) was established in 1997 and is committed to the development of school leadership for post-primary leaders based upon philosophical and moral principles as well as professional skills (www.napd.ie).

35 The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) was established in 2000 to support and advocate for exemplary school leaders at primary level (www.ippn.ie).

36 The LDS support service was established in 2002 to provide formalised, residential and one-day programme support for school leaders –principals and deputies – in the form of induction for newly appointed principals, professional development for deputies and established principals, and dedicated support for principals leading disadvantaged and special schools. It was incorporated into the PDST in 2011.

37 The PDST was established in 2010 to offer professional learning opportunities to teachers and school leaders in a range of pedagogical, curricular, and educational areas (www.pdst.ie/about_us).

38 The CSL was established in 2015 to develop a community of school leaders who are supported and valued as professionals, and who have access to high-quality continuous professional learning (www.csfireland.ie).

39 Circular 03/2018 Leadership and Management in Post-Primary Schools (www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0003_2018.pdf) and Circular 44/2019 Leadership and Management in Primary Schools (www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0044_2019.pdf).

40 PDSL: Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (level 9) provided by a Consortium: University College Dublin (UCD), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), and led by the University of Limerick (UL).

Other third-level institutions also offer postgraduate leadership programmes, and they too are aimed at those who aspire to leadership in schools, but again not exclusively. The Forbairt programme (PDST) aims at developing senior school leaders as a team. At post-primary level, two positional leaders have the opportunity to accompany their principal and deputy to this programme and work with them on an action research project in their own schools to address an area of challenge for them. These two teachers may or may not be positional school leaders. At primary level, the principal attends with the deputy principal and another teacher leader.

None of the programmes mentioned above are a mandatory qualification for principalship. Such a requirement might appear to be desirable, but due to the current shortage of applications for principalship, it might limit the field even further. An average of 10% of principal positions at post-primary level had to be re-advertised annually in 2018 and 2019, and 11%–14% at primary level. This indicates an urgent need to provide valuable learning opportunities to those teachers who show leadership potential.

Many of the programmes on offer to teacher leaders and to middle leaders are also on offer to aspiring senior school leaders.

Research indicates that when teachers are offered professional learning opportunities at school or local level, they flourish. This model of professional learning is dependent on senior leaders encouraging aspiring leaders and being willing to provide learning opportunities for them. As referenced in Chapter 3: Teacher Leadership, in the Framework for Leadership and Management LAOS (2016), school leaders are expected to build the leadership capacity of others in their schools.

There is an increasing number of schools with developed and effective practice in this area, but there is also a significant need for improvement. In the Chief Inspector's Report (2018),⁴¹ school inspectors reported that school leaders in the majority of schools provide opportunities for post holders to build their leadership capacity. The report stated that unsatisfactory middle management structures are reduced to 11%–15% of schools, in contrast to 18% in 2012. It is now very important that principals continue to build the leadership capacity of their teachers and to be especially cognisant of supporting those who aspire to senior leadership positions.

In summary, there is no specific mandatory qualification to become a senior leader in the Irish education system. A number of programmes exist aimed at aspiring school leaders, but there is an absence of structured learning opportunities that focus on preparation for senior leadership. There is no proactive selection of candidates to offer them work-shadowing, internships, mentoring, and other learning experiences in order to recruit them as future senior leaders. Ireland is not alone as a country in this approach, but increasingly, other nations such as New Zealand and Scotland are moving towards talent-management strategies and the introduction of mandatory programmes for aspiring senior school leaders.

Due to the lack of such a mandatory qualification for senior leadership in Ireland, there is a greater emphasis on the induction of newly appointed principals and deputy principals in the Irish system than is seen in other jurisdictions, and an extensive and comprehensive induction programme is offered to them in the first two years of their role. This takes the form of the Misneach programme provided by the PDST. The programme:

41 Chief Inspector's Report (2018): January 2013–July 2016: Excellence in Learning for All. Department of Education and Skills publication.

seeks to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and qualities of beginning school leaders, empowering them to respond effectively to the realities of managing and leading in the Irish school context (PDST, 2019: para 2).

Newly appointed principals on this programme simultaneously access the support of a mentor for the first year of their role and a professional coaching service from CSL. This menu of supports is in addition to bespoke supports provided by professional organisations, other support services, management and trust bodies, and unions.

Aspiring Senior Leadership: An International Perspective

School systems around the world have different approaches to preparing their aspiring leaders for the role of principalship. According to an international survey, conducted by the Finnish National Board of Education (2012: 21), they can be divided into three different groups:

1. Countries where, like Ireland, principal training only starts after appointment but prior to accepting the position, immediately upon taking up the position or within a certain period after taking it up. This procedure is used in **Germany, France, China (Shanghai), and South Korea.**
2. Countries where eligibility as a principal requires participation in pre-service training (completing or starting a qualification programme). This procedure is in place in **Canada (Ontario), Singapore, the United States (New York, California), and Russia (St. Petersburg).** In 2019, **Scotland** introduced a mandatory qualification for headship. Under section 28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, holding the Standard for Headship (SFH) became mandatory on 1 August 2020, with only two exemptions. Permanent head teachers appointed to a position in a school on or prior to 1 August 2020 are exempted, and head teachers who have not attained the qualification and are appointed from 2 August 2020 onwards have a period of 30 months to attain it.
3. Countries where those interested in a career as a principal are offered various preparation courses, which do not specifically qualify them for principalship but may have a bearing on recruitment opportunities. This procedure is in place in **Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.** Very often, the person takes on a leadership position during their participation in these courses.

In the case of the first group above, this would imply that the first exposure to leadership development in these countries would be during the induction phase when the principal has been appointed. Pre-appointment professional learning for teachers in the area of leadership is underdeveloped in these jurisdictions. In the second group of countries, where qualifications are mandatory, McKinsey (2010) cites **Ontario** as a strong example of providing opportunities for aspiring school leaders. The Canadian Province of Ontario has the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP), a two-part pre-service programme, which includes a practicum. Part One is an introductory programme that includes course work and development of a practicum proposal. Part Two focuses on leadership and programme planning. Candidates explore the theoretical and operational aspects of the principalship in more depth. Both parts consist of 125 course hours. The participants pay their own course fees, and the programme is open to teachers with five years of teaching experience. School districts may also organise and implement various pre-service programmes. All districts in Ontario are required to have a succession and

development plan. Some have gone further and have begun to manage succession proactively. For instance, the York Region, where principals and superintendents are expected to nurture aspiring leaders, has identified 800 potential future leaders across its 200 schools.

The **New York** Leadership Aspiring Principals' Academy⁴² is focused on identifying, developing, supporting, and then mentoring school principals. It runs an Aspiring Principals' Program. There are many elements to this mixed and extensive 14-month programme, which combines theory with experiential learning and includes a six-week summer simulation of leadership challenges. Participants are selected following the completion of two written essays, worded problem-solving questions, data analysis, group-based activity, and an individual interview.

In her book *Cleverlands* (2016), Lucy Crehan describes the development of teachers in **Singapore**. After three years as a teacher, they can choose to move into one of three different tracks:

- The Teaching Track, where teachers specialise in teaching and may advance to becoming master teachers.
- The Leadership Track, which assists teachers in becoming vice principals, principals, or superintendents (CEOs of school districts). The learning provides them with a series of progressive opportunities to take on greater leadership responsibilities, combined with a set of formal training programmes and international study visits.
- The Specialist track, which specialises in the area of curriculum. Such teachers end up running training programmes across schools in their district.

In all three tracks, teachers receive extra responsibilities, which is reflected in higher salaries.

The third group of countries mentioned above by the Finnish National Board of Education, in its 2012 report, do offer various forms of leadership training but do not proactively select and identify leaders from among the teaching profession. In these countries, teachers self-select to avail of leadership training. In the **Netherlands**, recruitment training programmes are organised, but because there are no formal qualification requirements, none of the programmes specifically grant principal qualifications or guarantee a school leadership position. Professional development for educational staff is not coordinated by the government. Principals are typically experienced teachers who have worked at the same school for quite some time. **Sweden** does not have consistent pre-service or recruitment training practices. Individual universities provide various school leadership courses and other such training. Similarly, local authorities may organise recruitment training in cooperation with higher education institutions, but this is currently uncommon. The programmes vary in terms of scope and content. For those schools with assistant principals, the position as such works as informal pre-service and recruitment training, because assistant principals are often later appointed as principals. **Denmark** has become conscious of the looming shortage of principals and has launched three training programmes for teachers: 1) 'From teacher to leader', 2) 'Talent for leadership', and 3) 'Will I lead the way?'

The McKinsey report (Barber et al. 2010) says there is some evidence that a more proactive approach to identifying and selecting leaders produces school leaders who are more

42 The New York Aspiring Principals' Academy was established in 2003 to build the capacity of educational leaders, at every level of the system, to confront inequalities and create the conditions necessary for all students to thrive (www.nycladershipacademy.org/about-us/).

representative of society as a whole. Many countries are experiencing a shortage of applications when recruiting for principalships. The authors reported that:

New York is researching ways to overcome the reluctance of some schools to develop future principals (their reluctance stemming from a fear that they will lose good deputy principals when they are promoted to principal positions). Options include paying financial bonuses to schools which develop candidates who are successfully appointed as principals and making the development of future leaders an indicator in principals' performance reviews (p. 12).



Chapter 6

Newly Appointed Senior Leadership

“The extent of professional learning required by a newly appointed senior leader is dependent on the preparation and learning opportunities which they have received prior to appointment.”

An Overview of the Literature on Newly Appointed Senior Leadership

Newly appointed senior school leaders require targeted professional learning and system support during that critical period at the beginning of their career. This induction phase usually lasts for the first three years of their role. In the international context, specific support and professional learning is generally provided for their first two years. In the research, authors such as Reeves et al. (1997) outline two stages: from settling in to a head teacher post (up to 2 years) to feeling thoroughly settled (4–10 years). The 2008 OECD Report⁴³ noted that induction programmes in other countries generally run from one to three years and provide a variety of support arrangements for taking up the position and for supporting initial steps into school leadership.

Newly appointed senior school leaders require the highest-quality induction. Providing it is challenging by nature, due mainly to the variance in aspirant professional learning that is experienced by newly appointed senior leaders, which currently remains non-compulsory in many jurisdictions, including Ireland. The demands of school culture, ethos and context add to the complexity of the induction period. According to research by Fitzpatrick's Consultants (2018), the challenges in the provision of learning in the induction period are similar in many jurisdictions and include:

- the contradiction between being theoretically and conceptually challenging, and being practically relevant
- the different work situations of participants
- solving their problems or dissemination of evidence-based knowledge.

Dr Harold Hislop, chief inspector, lists the broad challenges for leadership in the Irish context in his presentation *Reflections on Leadership Challenges in Irish Schools* (2015) to the Annual Conference of European Network for Improving Research and Development in Education Leadership and Management:

- The Leading and Assessment Challenge
- The Evaluation and Accountability Challenge
- The Sustainability and Growth Challenge.

He stated:

I readily admit that none of the leadership challenges that I have spoken about is easily addressed, and few of the practical tasks arising from them are readily solved (Hislop, 2015).

Draper (2016: 66) listed the satisfiers and dissatisfiers associated with the role, with the latter described as:

No time to do the job, buck stops with the head, limited discretion over staffing appointments, multiple conflicting accountabilities, multiple auditing and reporting, salary differentials and anomalies, inspectorial accountability, and work-life balance.

43 OECD (2008) Improving School Leadership. www.oecd.org/education/school/44374889.pdf.

According to Earley and Bubb (2013: 794–795):

No matter how good leadership preparation programmes and head teachers' prior experiences are, a major transition occurs in the first year of headship that requires bespoke responses to that particular situation.

One principal's experience of the isolation associated with the overwhelming responsibility of their new role is cited by Earley and Bubb (2013: 790):

I have to fight hard against 'the bunker syndrome'. So much can come at you that if I'm not careful I find I hardly get out of my office into the real world where there's children and joy and happiness and creativity.

Spillane and Lee (2014: 431–432) found that:

the volume, diversity, and unpredictability of tasks emerge early in the tenure of a newly appointed principal and intensify over the first 3 months on the job, largely due to new principals' sense of ultimate responsibility.

Mumby (2009) states that 30% of leadership development should be done through course work, and 70% through learning on the job. He suggests that access to coaching and mentoring from credible peers is needed to achieve this. A formal approach to mentoring and coaching supports for senior school leaders in the early years of the role can be further enhanced by a menu of other learning opportunities on topics of need and interest, experienced by the mentees on their own or with their mentors.

Induction, therefore, is that critical period in the senior school leader's role, directly after recruitment and for the first three years in the role. The main challenges include the newly appointed leader understanding the context, demonstrating respect for the school's culture, and building sustainable relationships with the school community in order to develop a collaborative vision and to set goals to achieve it. It is evident from the research that the learning experiences of the newly appointed senior leader are crucial to their successful progression and retention, and that this period in their leadership development warrants the highest quality of professional learning and targeted system support.

Newly Appointed Senior Leadership in the Irish Context

Currently, in Ireland, there is no mandatory qualification for senior leadership positions. In recent research by Fitzpatrick Associates (2018), 69% of the principals and deputies surveyed said they had attained qualifications other than a teaching qualification over the past 20 years. The research does not indicate whether these qualifications are in the area of leadership or were before or after appointment. When they were asked whether they had received formal leadership professional development over the previous two years, 50.2% said they had not.

While the CSL does not have the exact data on prior experience or prior learning of Irish senior leaders, evidence suggests that a significant number of newly appointed leaders do not have qualifications in school leadership and management. The emphasis that other countries place on developing teacher leadership and middle leadership, and then selecting and training middle leaders who can show readiness for senior leadership, is not present in Ireland.

A significant piece of feedback from the focus groups of school leaders to the research carried out by Fitzpatrick Associates (2018: 53) was:

The future leadership capacity of teachers needs early development. Aspiring leaders, year heads and those with or seeking leadership roles, require early development of their capacities and need practical assistance (cover, allowance, permission, etc.) to be able to engage with supports that build such capacity.

The absence of compulsory focused leadership professional learning along the continuum in Ireland means that professional learning for newly appointed senior school leaders continues to be more extensive than is evident in other systems. Ireland's induction programmes, described below, remain non-compulsory but are available to all newly appointed principals and deputy principals.

The programme for newly appointed principals, *Misneach* (Irish for *courage*), was launched in 2002. An early evaluation by Morgan and Sugrue (2005) showed that most newly appointed principals felt that in the absence of initial training, an induction programme was necessary to prepare and support them to deal with issues arising in the early years of practice. They asserted that only 18% considered that they were well prepared to take on their role as principals before participating in the programme. This report also noted that the *Misneach* Programme helped to address isolation and to encourage the development of professional networks.

Misneach is under the auspices of PDST and is attended by newly appointed principals in the first two years of their role. Newly appointed senior leaders appreciate the learning and networking opportunities that the course facilitates. According to recent participants:

Misneach is an excellent programme which I found invaluable as a new principal. The quality of presentations, practical advice and professional conversations was excellent. The most invaluable aspect for me was the chance to meet fellow new appointments to leadership and to share experiences of our first 18 months in the job.

Excellent management training for newly appointed principals. The content and learning experiences are very well thought through and delivered at the right time. It gives headspace away from the school so you can reflect and plan. The legacy of this training is the professional network developed with colleagues around the country with who you can share common issues and advice.⁴⁴

Tánaiste (Irish for *deputy*) is a leadership training programme for newly appointed deputy principals and acting deputy principals which aims to support them in their role as senior school leaders. It provides opportunities for them to explore their leadership role in order to lead high-quality teaching and learning in their school. The course has an emphasis on effective communication and conflict management strategies, on the principal and deputy principal as a leadership team, on exploring distributed leadership, and on leading change and positively impacting on the school's learning culture.⁴⁵

The professional organisations IPPN and NAPD also provide dedicated support for newly appointed principals. In 2018, IPPN and PSDT collaborated on making the former IPPN Head

44 www.pdst.ie/Misneach/Postprimary and www.pdst.ie/leadership

45 www.pdst.ie/Tanaiste/Postprimary and www.pdst.ie/Tanaiste/Primary

Start programme for newly appointed principals an integral part of the primary Misneach programme. In addition, the extra supportive work undertaken by the management and trust bodies and the teacher unions serves to ensure that newly appointed principals in Ireland benefit from a variety of supports which are easily accessible and provide salient information essential to them as they begin in their new role.

The CSL mentoring service⁴⁶ for newly appointed principals is offered as a support which ensures that all newly appointed principals countrywide have access to an experienced mentor and a formal mentoring relationship in their first year of the role. This is enhanced by access to group mentoring by IPPN and NAPD in their second year, and by the aforementioned dedicated supports provided to newly appointed principals by all the stakeholders in the Irish system.

Whilst considering the demands and challenges of this induction period in the newly appointed senior leader's role, there is a significant need to consider the historically complex tapestry that is Irish education. Schools are managed by a variety of organisations in varying contexts. Most other countries have simpler governance and management structures, with most operating within local authority structures which have responsibility for education (among other public services) in an area. Professional learning for newly appointed leaders must consider the many contextual differences in the Irish education landscape.

Fitzpatrick Associates (2018) identified the professional learning needs of principals. The research task was to explore what a range of school leaders in Ireland perceive as their professional development needs, and to explore how these vary for different sub-groups or categories of school leaders. The top five critical areas as indicated by all respondents, and the percentage who identified them as such, are as follows (two areas are in joint fifth place):

1. Conflict management/resolution (34.8%)
2. Managing challenging behaviours (32.2%)
3. Distributing leadership roles and responsibilities (31.1%)
4. Curriculum development and planning (30.4%)
5. Leader personal development and wellbeing (30.2%)
6. Technology-enhanced learning (30.2%). (p. 36)

The availability of such research should help to inform providers of the professional learning needs of newly appointed principals and deputy principals in Ireland.

Spillane and Lee (2014: 44) write that:

for the (newly appointed) principals, along with their sense of ultimate responsibility came a) increased stress, b) a constant alertness to what might go wrong, and c) an inability to leave the job behind, even at weekends. Furthermore, principals reported this stress was manifested in things such as sleep loss, physical exhaustion, frustration, nervousness, and constant worrying.

The responsibility is therefore on stakeholders and providers of professional learning to ensure

⁴⁶ www.csireland.ie/mentoring-for-newly-appointed-principals.html

that the new school leader's time is optimised and their commitment to learning is honoured by the highest-quality provision:

as with much CPD in education, peer led, context specific, co-designed and co-delivered support are the cornerstones of effective delivery (Fitzpatrick's Associates 2018: 19).

Newly Appointed Senior Leadership: An International Perspective

The professional learning opportunities for newly appointed senior leaders vary significantly around the world. It depends on the prior professional learning of the new principals and on whether or not they were required to participate in pre-service training before they were appointed.

An international review of school leadership by Barber, Chijioke and Mourshed (2010) looked at opportunities offered to school leaders at every level of the continuum in eight countries worldwide. They found that all of the systems provide for new school leaders, and there is a consensus that this is essential both for improving their effectiveness and for supporting their transition into a full leadership role. Most programmes last one or two years and include mentoring, formal training sessions, and opportunities to network with other new school leaders.

Though support for new leaders is universal, there is wide variation in how much training individual leaders receive in different jurisdictions.

Education **Scotland** offers a postgraduate programme called In Headship. It supports new principals to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills, and understanding required of them. In Headship is delivered in partnership between Education Scotland, local authorities, and four universities and takes 12–18 months to complete. Principals identify a critical colleague to support them in their professional learning throughout the programme.⁴⁷

In **France**, École Supérieure de l'Éducation Nationale (ESEN) is a higher education institution operating under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education and responsible for training supervisory personnel for secondary-level schools. It organises training during the first and second school year, with a total of 45 in-class days. During this induction phase, each new principal has a tutor (an experienced leader) appointed by the regional school authority, who works at a different school from the inductee. The tutor's role is to meet the trainee regularly and monitor the progress of their induction into the profession.

In the **German state of Baden-Württemberg**, a free-of-charge three-week continuing education course is organised for those appointed as principals. The first week, introduction, is organised during school holidays. The second week, assessment and guidance, takes place during school days in October/November. The remaining sections are HR development, quality management, and teamwork, which can be taken within two years of starting work at the discretion of each participant.

In **Ontario**, newly appointed leaders are expected to have a formal principal qualification before applying to principalship. Mentoring and coaching are then used to improve practice in the role. In the Ontario Leadership Strategy (2010), the needs of newly appointed school leaders were described as follows:

⁴⁷ <https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/learn/programmes/in-headship/>

The first two years in a school leadership role are both rewarding and challenging. Newly appointed principals and vice-principals are making the transition to the role, enhancing their leadership practices and competencies, and building relationships with the school community, and at the same time implementing key school, board, and provincial priorities.⁴⁸

In **Los Angeles**, there is a state-accredited programme which must be completed within the first two years of the role and includes the following components:

- Leadership Skills
- Instructional Leadership
- Organisation of School Work
- Evidence of Self-Motivation
- Continuous Professional Learning
- Updating of Skills.

In **Singapore**, the emphasis, like in Ontario, is on mentoring/coaching and providing opportunities for principals to network but in advance of being in the role.

In **South Korea**, newly appointed school leaders have in-service training of 180 hours over 30 days. They do 10%–20% in general education, 10% in a major subject area, and 70%–80% in management.

Just 23% of **Australian** principals complete principal training pre-appointment. In a recent report, the Australian government identified the need to develop a pool of potential principal candidates to seamlessly fill vacancies when current principals retire, and they have decided to establish a clear pathway into principal roles including identification of potential candidates.⁴⁹

In conclusion, the extent of professional learning required by a newly appointed senior leader is dependent on the preparation and learning opportunities which they have received prior to appointment. It is also dependent on the new appointee's familiarity with their context and school culture, and the legacy of the leaders ahead of them.

The demands of the role are well documented and have many similarities internationally. It is interesting, therefore, that the emphasis is placed on qualifications and preparation in advance of achieving the position in some jurisdictions, whilst the opposite is the case in as many more, including Ireland. However, the research gives a clear message that all leaders, including newly appointed leaders, need to continually update their skills and knowledge and to engage in continuous professional learning. Newly appointed senior leaders around the world also require additional support such as mentoring/coaching, involvement in networks and professional learning communities, attendance at professional learning events, and participation in a variety of ongoing leadership programmes organised collaboratively in the system.

48 Ontario Leadership Strategy (2010), Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders, Ministry of Education.

49 Australian Department of Education and Training, 2018: Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools.

Targeted professional learning

System support

Highest quality induction

Leading learning and assessment

Evaluation and accountability

Sustainability and growth

A formal approach to mentoring and coaching

Understanding context

Building sustainable relationships

Collaborative vision

A proven track record of success

Extraordinary commitment, effort and determination

Strategies to maintain motivation and challenge

Capacity building

Bespoke professional learning

Familiarity with leadership literature

Leaders of continuously improving learning

Innovative practice

Renewal and fresh enthusiasm



Chapter 7

Established Senior Leadership

“Effective established leaders are those who have continued to work from a strong ethics and values base and are trusted by students, staff, parents and the wider school community.”

An Overview of the Literature on Established Senior Leadership

The word *established* is defined as ‘something or someone who is well known, totally trusted and usually has a proven track record of success.’⁵⁰ There are many differing opinions on when educational leaders make the transition from newly appointed or emerging to established leaders. Generally, their first two/three years in the role are considered to be the induction phase, and the next two/three years move the newly appointed leader into the emerging phase.

Reeves et al. (1997, cited in Draper, 2016) outlined two stages: the settling in to a head teacher post (up to 2 years), then feeling thoroughly settled (4–10 years). Others, like Elmore (2012, para. 3), speak about the focus of established leadership:

The focus of established leaders should be to act on behalf of the younger generation that follows. Our words, actions and attitudes are models to be emulated. In fact, we should be constantly mindful of the example we set for them. By the time we are “established leaders”, our life is about preparing those who come behind us. It is no longer about our own success, profit margins, victories, or ego. It is all about getting the next batch ready. . . . Established leaders are marked by the fact that their life is about someone else’s. The first generation is about practising. The second is about preparing.

There is much literature available on the characteristics of the established leader, but evidence on how long it takes to become established is harder to source, because established leadership is highly dependent on the individual’s strengths and leadership qualities, the context they find themselves in, the legacy of previous leaders, and their own openness to professional learning. Fink (2005: xvii) writes about the main focus of school leaders, that of leading learning:

Leaders of learning . . . are not heroes, or even people uniquely blessed by the Almighty with leadership abilities. . . . Rather they are ordinary people who through extraordinary commitment, effort and determination have become extraordinary, and have made the people around them exceptional. Educational leadership is more art than science; it is more about character than technique; it is more about inspiration than charisma.

In the parallel world of business, Andy Singer (2014: para 4) in the *Hartford Business Journal* describes the experienced leader or manager as follows:

At this stage you have mastered the skills required of previous stages and can begin taking a holistic view of the organization. You understand there are competing dynamics among various departments and stakeholders and you are learning how to manage these for more optimal results.

Consideration must also be given to the established leader who is perceived as established due to longevity in the role rather than from any real sense of development in leadership practice. Cambridge Assessment International Educational (2017: 1) describes leadership as follows:

Most definitions of leadership imply that intentional influence is exerted by one person or a group, over other people or groups, to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation.

50 www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/established

This is a simple definition of leadership, and one that resonates with longevity in the position as against development as a leader. As far back as 2003, Bill Mulford writing for the OECD asked us to ‘Consider strategies to maintain motivation and challenge for experienced principals, including their not remaining a principal until retirement’ (2003: 47).

Therefore, the professional development, professional learning, and system supports available to established leaders from the induction and emerging phases through to the established phase are critical to the effectiveness and success of their leadership, and as a result, to the success of the school they lead and the outcomes achieved by their students.

Effective established leaders are therefore those who have continued to work from a strong ethics and values base and are trusted by students, staff, parents, and the wider school community to optimise learning and teaching opportunities for everyone in their school community.

Established Senior Leadership in the Irish Context

In the past, the established and successful Irish school leader was lauded solely for their ability to manage the school effectively. Writing for the IPPN in 2006, Michael Fullan stated that:

The Hay Group’s (2002) analysis of the Irish primary principal’s role notes upfront that there is a difference in emphasis between the 1973 and 1998 statutory provisions for the principals’ role, with the former stressing management and supervisory aspects of the role and the latter emphasising “the learning, developmental, consultative and leadership aspects of the role” (p. 9) . . . it seems probable that principals are expected to carry out all aspects of the 1973 and 1998 provisions. This would mean that the current role is hampered or rendered less effective because of role overload and lack of clarity (p. 13).

Using the recommendations of the report, and adding them to what Fullan himself considered in 2006 to be the needs of the system, he recommended a formal review of the role, a revision of the principal’s contract, a focus on recruitment and retention, and professional learning strategies based on a collaborative cluster approach. Fullan’s recommendations of a ‘blend of policy-led and bottom-up development – what I call capacity building’ (p. 18) should be considered one of the supporting factors in the many leadership initiatives which followed. These included setting up Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) in 2002, which effectively supported the needs of school leaders at various stages of their careers until 2011. More recent initiatives include the continuing successful provision of LDS supports by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) since 2011, the development of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process by the Inspectorate in 2012, and the establishment of CSL in 2015.

In 2016, the *Looking at Our School* quality framework for leadership and management presented a similar focus:

The quality framework sees leadership and management as inseparable. The framework defines school leadership by its impact on learning. It sees leadership that is focused on creating and sustaining environments that are conducive to good learning as paramount and acknowledges that effective leadership is essential for schools to be places where successful learning happens. It is a fundamental principle

of the framework that, for schools to be led effectively, they must be managed effectively. Therefore, both leadership and management skillsets are considered at all times as serving the school's core work: learning and teaching (p. 7).

The framework lays out the four domains of leadership and management, and the statements of effective and highly effective practice. It states that 'key stages in the development of teachers and leaders can be mapped out at school and system level' and that 'experienced teachers and leaders can provide advice and guidance for new and emerging teachers and leaders within schools and in the wider education system' (p. 11). Therefore, the framework serves to showcase the practice of established and effective leaders, whilst caution is recommended in its use:

All aspects of the framework should not be included in any one self-reflective or evaluative activity. School principals, in particular, should view the framework as an enabler of self-reflection and improvement and not as an inflexible checklist. In summary, the framework allows for selection of what is most relevant to suit the specific purpose of individual teachers or schools.

In the 2014 Report from the Teaching Education Section (TES)⁵¹ of the Working Group on School Leadership,⁵² the assistance of established leaders was cited as crucial to the development of a mentoring support for newly appointed principals:

The appointment of Principal Mentors would favour serving/practising principals, ideally with at least 5 years' experience of Principalship (TES, 2014: 19).

This decision to become a formal mentor to newly appointed colleagues is a significant step towards giving back to the system and towards 'generativity versus stagnation', a concept developed by Erik Erikson in 1963, in which he explained that generativity is a concern for the next generation and is a natural progression for those in established positions (Erikson, 1963, cited in Casey and Claunch, 2005: 97).

In the research by Fitzpatrick Associates (2018), the key motivator for established school leaders to become a mentor was their desire to support newly appointed principals. Two thirds of respondents said they were also motivated by a desire to broaden their own breadth of experience and activity, 60% mentioned an interest in learning, and 50% said they wished to network and meet new colleagues.

It is obvious therefore that established leaders in the Irish context are motivated towards continuous learning, strengthening the system, and networking with colleagues. As outlined previously, the report cites the most critical areas of respondents' professional development to be conflict management and resolution, and managing challenging behaviour. In the feedback, principals reported that bespoke professional learning is needed for established principals to sustain them in their leadership role, and that opportunities are necessary to opt out of the leadership role with dignity due to its demanding nature. Respondents placed a significant focus on the importance of familiarity with leadership literature and 'that being exposed to the latest national and international research findings and thinking is key to leadership stimulation' (p. 53).

51 The TES provides funding for and manages in-service training for primary and post-primary teachers. It supports curriculum reform and education centres, and oversees the supply of primary and post-primary teachers in the system. www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Management-Organisation/Teacher-Education-Section.html

52 Report of the TES Working Group on School Leadership (2014), DES unpublished document. This document set out a rationale for formal mentoring in Ireland, and for a professional coaching service for principals, including a strategic plan for the development of both.

Respondents offered feedback on the school 'as a learning community; as a local hub; as a cultural centre; as a focal point for progress, multiculturalism and inclusion' (p. 51). They stated that: 'regular and invited access to colleagues who can offer support, advice and networking is very important' (p. 52). The value of support from outside of education was repeated by many respondents, who spoke about 'the benefits of fresh, unfamiliar and new perspectives' (p. 53). They said that learning from 'networking, peer learning, cluster groups and regional fora are highly cost-effective ways for principals to share experiences and to improve their own approaches' (p. 53).

The respondents are reflecting the goals of the DE Action Plan for Education (2019):⁵³

- To shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.
- To advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special education needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.
- To equip education and training providers with skills and supports to provide a quality learning experience.
- To intensify the relationship between education and the wider community, society, and economy.
- To lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.

Effective established leaders in Ireland, therefore, are those who have established themselves as leaders of continuously improving learning in their schools, ensuring inclusion for all students. They understand the importance of their work in school, not only to further outcomes for their students and school communities, but also to impact positively on the system. They wish to make links with innovative practice both within and outside of education, and they seek support from the system for both autonomy and resources to meet the needs firstly of their students. Secondly, they wish to meet their own needs as continuous learners to ensure that creativity and innovation remain to the forefront of their practice. They are in need of renewal and fresh enthusiasm for the role. Being involved in system initiatives like mentoring can assist greatly, but the system must also ensure that the needs of established leaders, at their specific stage of career development, are met with quality provision.

Since 2017, principals in Ireland have been offered the opportunity to avail of a professional coach through CSL. Reports from these coaching companies have identified the developmental needs of school principals. On the personal side, they identified the need for greater personal resilience and assertiveness and the need to remain cognisant of stress management and self-care. On the skills side, they identified people management, performance management, team management, organisation and planning skills, introducing and managing change, succession planning, and the development of their own coaching skills as significant needs. Professional learning for established principals must take cognisance of these findings.

Established leaders in Ireland are also supported by the professional learning, development and events facilitated by their professional associations, IPPN and NAPD, and by the learning

53 www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2019.pdf

opportunities provided in Forbairt by PDST and the learning it provides in a variety of curriculum and management areas. Further opportunities for professional learning are also provided by third-level institutions at certificate, master's degree, and doctoral levels. In addition, both post-primary and primary principals benefit from a very wide range of bespoke supports provided by their management, trust bodies, and unions.

Such system support is referred to by Professor John Coolahan et al. (2017) when they refer to the crucial nature of collaboration in the system to support senior school leaders:

A sustained commitment to such exchange builds a tradition with its own singular benefits. Prominent among these is a regular renewal of the springs from which flow promising and practical ideas for realising the real potential of professional development itself, and for leading this potential to fresh woods and pastures new (p. 165).

Established Senior Leadership: An International Perspective

In the international context, the research on effective established leaders focuses generally on the centrality of the transformational model of leadership, with equal importance bestowed on the pedagogical or instructional leader.

Day et al. (2016) reported on the IMPACT research in England (2014),⁵⁴ which developed a model of successful leadership with the following elements:

- Improving conditions for teaching and learning
- Building relationships inside and outside the school community
- Redesigning and enriching the curriculum
- Restructuring the organisation by redesigning roles and responsibilities
- Enhancing teacher quality, including succession planning.

All the above are achieved by defining vision, values, and direction in a trusting environment, keeping high expectations for student learning, wellbeing, and achievement at the core.

In **Scotland**, the Excellence in Headship Programme is aimed at the established school leader. It supports head teachers 'who have been in the post for two years or more – to strengthen and expand their school and system leadership skills, with a strong focus on delivering excellence and equity for all children and young people'. It provides 'opportunities for collaborative learning, cross-system learning, coaching and mentoring, network development, issue exploration, international research and engagement with online learning'.⁵⁵ The programme focuses on school leaders who have been in the post for two years or more, and has six core themes:

- Leadership and critical self-awareness
- Leadership of learning

⁵⁴ This IMPACT Research conducted in England in 2014 investigated the association between the work of principals in effective and improving primary and secondary schools and the outcomes achieved by their students.

⁵⁵ <https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/learn/programmes/excellence-in-headship/>

- Values-based leadership
- People and partners
- Leading system change
- Organisational effectiveness.

In **Denmark**, leadership programmes are partially funded and go through a quality assurance process. The Danish Master's Degree in Leadership only accepts senior school leaders who have been in the role for at least three years.

In **Finland**, five to ten days' training provided by the municipal HR departments is compulsory, but the focus is on management issues like HR, finance, and governance, with little attention paid to leadership competencies. Although many third-level institutions provide a range of courses for established leaders, uptake is inhibited by lack of time and resources. There is no obligation to participate in in-service training, but efforts have been made to increase the attractiveness of the role by improving preparatory programmes, and plans are afoot to make in-service training compulsory for more established leaders. Most training is short-term and often concerns technical and financial issues. There is a real focus being placed on the importance of pedagogical leadership, and a move towards long-term training in this area of leadership (Taipale, 2012).⁵⁶ Pokka (2015: 55) argues that leading pedagogically is the most important object of a principal's work.

In **Norway**, school leaders are considered established when they have mastered a variety of competencies based on six roles, which place the school leader at the interface between the internal and the external and between the interpersonal and the setting of goals. To manage this position of attaining targets, whilst maintaining professional and collegial relationships and dealing with continuous change, the established school leader will move between all the following roles: mentor, facilitator, monitor, coordinator, director, producer, broker, and innovator.

In **Australia**, there are three requirements to being an effective and established school leader:

- **Vision and Values** by which school leaders are 'committed to the learning and growth of young people and adults guided by fairness, ethical practice, democratic values and lifelong learning. Principals understand, lead, mediate and serve the best interests of the community'
- **Knowledge:** 'Principals understand the practice and theory of contemporary leadership and apply that knowledge in school improvement. Principals are well versed in the latest research and developments in pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and reporting, and student wellbeing. They have knowledge of relevant national policies, practices and initiatives as well as relevant federal and state legislation, agreements and policies. They understand the implications of child safety, health and wellbeing, human resource management, financial management and accountability, and other legislative and policy requirements in relation to serving their community and broader society.'
- **Personality Qualities, Social and Personal Skills:** 'This requirement recognises the importance of emotional intelligence, empathy, resilience and personal wellbeing in

the leadership and management of the school and its community. Principals regularly review their practice and implement change in their leadership and management approaches to suit the situation. They manage themselves well and use ethical practices and social skills to deal with conflict effectively. They are able to build trust across the school community and to create a positive learning atmosphere for students and staff, and within the community in which they work.' (AITSL, para. 1)⁵⁷

The **Ontario** Leadership Framework (2010)⁵⁸ cites Core Leadership Capacities (CLCs) which all senior school leaders aspire to:

- Setting goals
- Aligning resources with priorities
- Promoting collaborative learning cultures
- Using data
- Engaging in courageous conversations.

The focus of the Ontario Ministry's provision of resources and funding for professional learning is based on these CLCs, which are used to continually improve practice as expertise develops to the established level.

It is obvious that being an established leader means different things internationally. However, in most jurisdictions, it relates to the length of time completed in the role and to the competencies attained, the goals reached, and the level of expertise developed to deal with particular schools' contexts. The research also points to the crucial role of the established leader as the interface between the school and the system.

However, a senior school leader is often deemed to be established due to their length of time in the role rather than because of their level of expertise in leadership.

Dr William Schultz (2019: para. 2) writes about the concept of servant leadership as those leaders who 'are passionate, strong leaders who are fiercely protective of their organization, not their personal interests. Their behaviour is humble and empathetic, focused on developing the people who work with them rather than gaining accolades for themselves'.

In conclusion, according to Sir David Carter (2013, cited in Morrison, 2013), effective established leaders should work relentlessly on behalf of their students, have a clear vision, work closely with the school community, balance strategic and operational roles, manage and understand change, and have a high level of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills and a sense of moral purpose. This might explain why Morrison begins his article with 'trying to pin down what makes an effective school leader can be a little like trying to eat soup with a fork' (para 1).

57 www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/understand-the-principal-standard/unpack-the-principal-standard

58 Ontario Leadership Strategy (2010), Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders, Ministry of Education.



Chapter 8

System Leadership

“System leadership is still an emerging concept in many jurisdictions as policy makers realise its potential in raising standards across schools.”

An Overview of the Literature on System Leadership

System leadership is a developing concept and practice in many jurisdictions as policy makers attempt to harness the potential of schools working collaboratively as a mechanism for school improvement. Dimmock (2016: 60) argues that there is a need:

to clarify the concept of 'system leadership', and that more is needed in developing both the concept itself and the set of associated practices and outcomes, before the potential of system leadership as a school improvement mechanism is fully realized.

Dimmock elaborates on what he means by system leaders:

However, if we consider the local authority or the nation as the system (macro level), then the head teacher of a school becomes leader of a sub system, and to be a system leader, s(he) must contribute to the greater good of other schools beyond their own (p. 62).

The Donaldson Report⁵⁹ on the future of teacher education in Scotland (Donaldson, 2010), had a number of key recommendations. Recommendation 49 argued that a scheme for national leaders of education should be developed, to enable experienced, high-performing head teachers to contribute to system-level leadership of education in Scotland. This significant report further recommended setting up a virtual college, which eventually materialised as the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL), now Education Scotland Professional Learning and Leadership Directorate.⁶⁰

SCEL (2016, cited in CSL, 2018a: para. 4),⁶¹ in developing the concept argued for by Donaldson, defined system leadership in the following way:

System leaders lead in their own organisations and are able to share their expertise and work jointly with leaders from other areas of the system in order to drive improvement and successful outcomes. System leaders care about and work for the success of other schools as well as their own. They have a key role in working with senior colleagues; empowering them in their leadership through dialogue, coaching, mentoring and planning, as part of their organisation's performance review processes.

David Hargreaves (2014) has written about a professional-led model of school improvement referred to as a 'self-improving school system'. The assumption underpinning this model is that professionals and school leaders, including principals and teachers, are more likely to be influenced by fellow professionals than they are by policy makers or civil servants. Hargreaves sees these principals as those who are involved in leading school-improvement initiatives.

59 Chief Inspector Graham Donaldson was asked by the Scottish government to review teacher education in Scotland in 2010. The review entailed consultation with each university providing teacher education, consultation with a selection of local authorities and schools, and questionnaires for serving teachers. The report provided 50 recommendations aimed at building the professional capacity of teachers and improving outcomes for students.

60 The Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) merged with Education Scotland in 2018. <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/what-we-do/professional-learning-and-leadership/>

61 CSL (2018) 'System Leaders'. Available at: www.csireland.ie/images/impll/system-a1.pdf

Hopkins (2012) recognises three levels of system leadership and says that all three are necessary and need to operate interdependently for whole-system transformation. The three levels are:

- 1. System leadership at the school level**, where principals take ownership and work to improve performance in other schools as well as their own – similar to Hargreaves’s definition of system leaders above.
- 2. System leadership at the local/regional level**, where practising principals involve themselves in local/regional programmes in order to secure alignment of good practice in schools in an area.
- 3. System leadership at the national level**, with broader social justice, moral purpose and a commitment to every learner providing the focus for transformation and collaboration system-wide.

In this model, Hopkins sees principals as fulfilling a role in their own right at level 1, but also collaborating with other system leaders at levels 2 and 3. Importantly, research tells us that significant change in practice is not effective if the impetus for the change originates at the top of the system, i.e., from policy makers alone, or if it depends solely on individual initiatives lacking coordination.

Consequently, the idea of Leading from the Middle (LftM) has emerged as a strategy for system reform, where the middle tier is recognised as being particularly important. In many jurisdictions, this middle tier consists of school leaders collaborating for the greater good of all the schools involved, with a view to strengthening system practice. Fullan (2015: 24) defines this type of system leadership as:

a deliberate strategy that increases the capacity of the middle as it becomes a more effective partner upward to the state and downward to its schools and communities, in pursuit of greater system performance.

The goal of LftM is to develop greater overall system coherence by strengthening the focus of the middle in relation to system goals and local needs. Hargreaves and Ainscow (2015: 48) propose that Leadership from the Middle involves districts working collaboratively. They note:

One way to reduce bad variation among school districts is to promote collaboration among them so they share resources, ideas, and expertise and exercise collective responsibility for student success. In this leading from the middle approach, districts don’t just mediate and manage other people’s reforms individually; they become the collective drivers of change and improvement together.

However, the concept of system leadership per se remains under-developed. Dimmock (2016) argues that system leaders need to be facilitated to develop a range of skills and capacities if they are to function effectively in leading change in the system. He suggests that successful system leaders need capacities to work with other leaders and teachers to solve problems and develop solutions to complex issues.

There is therefore, quite a range of system leadership roles emerging in many jurisdictions and a variance in the interpretations of what system leadership actually involves. It is still an emerging concept in many places as policy makers realise its potential in raising standards across schools.

System Leadership in the Irish Context

The concept of system leadership in Ireland needs further exploration and development, but there are existing avenues through which school leaders at all levels in the Irish system can have an influence outside of their own school setting.

As a starting point in the Irish context, the focus for developing system leadership should begin with principals becoming involved in school improvement within and between schools. The Looking at our School (2016) document advocates for school leaders to 'build and maintain very productive relationships with other schools and education providers' (p.27). A focus on this level is justified, firstly, because some tangible developments of this role in other jurisdictions can provide learning. Examples are the Education Scotland Fellows⁶² and the Welsh National Academy of Educational Leadership (NAEL) associates.⁶³

Secondly, it is because at this level, arguably, the professionalisation of Irish school leaders can best be developed.

Thirdly, promoting system leadership between schools is reflecting one of the recent policy initiatives in Ireland: the Schools Excellence Fund.⁶⁴ This recent initiative is aimed at supporting clusters of schools that are involved in a wide range of activities, focused on improving learning outcomes for students. Such an initiative has the potential to develop the sharing of good practice between schools and the emergence of system leaders. Schools were invited to apply to become part of clusters working together on innovative projects in teaching and learning.

More recently, the Centre for School Leadership has overseen another clustering initiative, Excellence Through Collaborative Leadership and Management,⁶⁵ designed to 'support projects that involve innovative approaches to school leadership and management' and to 'facilitate schools in harnessing and optimising internal leadership, management capacity and collaboration at all levels' (CSL, 2018b: 1). It recognises the potential of schools clustering together to develop a shared vision for school improvement and for the development of system leadership in the Irish context.

There has also been a long tradition in Irish education of recruiting teachers and school leaders as associates to national support services.⁶⁶ These associates operate at system level and can be regarded as system leaders. An associate is a registered school principal, deputy principal, teacher, serving or recently retired, who has maintained their registration with the Teaching Council. The associate is engaged to work part-time with a support service. They may work for a maximum of twenty days in any school year and are eligible for substitute cover, subject to Board of Management approval. These services then provide professional learning across a range of areas to both teachers and school leaders. Recruitment is by open competition. Associates typically

62 This programme was initiated in 2014 by the SCEL, which merged with Education Scotland in 2018. It supported the professional learning of a national cadre of experienced, highly credible head teachers with the ability and expertise to contribute to system leadership in Scotland (2016: 11). The fellowship programme no longer operates in Scotland.

63 Associates of the NAEL in Wales enable the academy to build its capacity and to support the research, design, and facilitation of leadership provision in addition to the endorsement of leadership provision available in the system.

64 The Schools Excellence Fund facilitates and funds schools to explore new and innovative solutions to tackle education disadvantage and improve learning outcomes for students. It was launched by the then Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, in 2017. www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR17-11-13.html

65 The Excellence through Collaborative Leadership and Management Scheme is a joint project between the DES, the ESCI, and CSL. It was launched by the then Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, in 2018. Its aim was to invite schools to engage in innovative clusters with other schools with a shared vision for improvement. www.cslireland.ie/images/downloads/leadershipclusters/Description_of_the_Scheme.pdf

66 The Irish Education Support Services include the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), the Junior Cert for Teachers (JCT), and the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT).

carry out tasks including the design, preparation, and facilitation of professional learning, both face to face and online, in a variety of venues to teachers and school leaders countrywide.

These associate members, as well as personnel seconded in a full-time capacity to the support services, and those employed in various ways by the professional associations, unions, trust and management bodies, and statutory organisations (National Council for Special Education, NCSE; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA; and Teaching Council) contribute in a very substantial way to system improvement, and can therefore be deemed system leaders in every sense of the word.

The role of the professional associations in system leadership in Ireland was recognised by the chief inspector, Dr Harold Hislop (2015), in his address to the Annual Conference of the European Network for Improving Research and Development in Educational Leadership and Management. He pointed to the fact that the professional associations:

have enabled extensive sharing of good practice and the provision of co-professional support and they have made significant contributions to national educational policy (p. 4).

There are therefore many evolving avenues for the development of system leadership in the Irish context, and they all involve principals and other school-level leaders working with other professionals in schools beyond their own, in order to raise achievement levels and secure more equitable student learning outcomes.

Coolahan et al. (2017: 107) make the point that a small country like Ireland has an advantage in developing leadership insights and capacities beyond the limitations of the school, with school leaders working together in school regions. The authors argue that the focus of such collaborations 'would include a richer conception of moral purpose than that of closing performance gaps'. They give examples of what might be a focus for leadership at this level, including ownership of induction and the probation of newly qualified teachers, working with policy initiatives, promoting professional learning communities, articulating and promoting new ideas on how time in school might be spent, contributing ideas, and engaging actively with other bodies, including the DE. They also cite the establishment of the Centre for School Leadership as an important development, and they point to the need for the Centre to have 'the freedom to speak fearlessly for and with school leaders' (p. 107).

The further development of leadership at this level in the Irish system will therefore require a focus on the professionalisation of both school leaders and school leadership, and will require the collaboration of all stakeholders. This collaboration will provide an exemplar platform for school leaders, on which they can share their practice and learn from others, both from within and outside of the education field, with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for their students. It is a requirement that the system acts effectively and collaboratively to ensure that school leaders become effective system leaders. One is largely dependent on the other to succeed.

System Leadership: An International Perspective

In recent times, there has been a focus in many jurisdictions on collaborative partnerships, sharing expertise, and identifying and disseminating high-leverage best practice. System leaders realise that classroom, school, and system all impact on one another, and they seek to engage with this in a meaningful way. The European Commission report (2018: 33) states that:

Many educational systems are now identifying system leaders, who usually have been successful in their own schools and are in a position to support other local schools, or, indeed, become involved in an even wider network. The involvement of system leaders is sometimes to support a school identified as weak, but equally, and more positively, the leader may be offering peer-to-peer support for other school leaders on developmental priorities or providing needs-based support for colleagues new in posts. These arrangements will be forward-looking and have a particular value through introducing fresh ideas and avoiding schools becoming isolated or introspective.

The report points out that:

Through their own endeavours as learners, teachers and school leaders act as role models, adding to the development of the school as a learning organisation. But they should also be supported in their efforts to increase capacity to work across networks of schools and professionals. Involving teachers and school leaders from the outset in the design of new initiatives and reforms will help improve the system.

The report cites examples of system leadership at a number of different levels – not just those pertaining to senior leadership. The example cited in the report from **Northern Ireland** sees education practitioners with a post of responsibility in their own school enhancing and supporting the inspection process by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) by becoming an associate assessor. The associate assessors are appointed through public advertisement and interview, and must successfully complete induction training. Their initial period of tenure is three years, and they normally join at least two inspections or inspection activities each year. The report outlines how this initiative provides the opportunity for school leaders to contribute not only at system level, but also in the inspection process.

In **Scotland, Glasgow City** trialled a form of principalship that could be described as a form of system leadership and may be applicable in the Irish school system. It involved primary schools and their associated secondary school setting up as learning communities: each school had their own principal, with one principal appointed as head of the learning community. In addition, many local authorities in Scotland have created school clusters (usually one secondary and three to ten primaries) which generate common development priorities and programmes and work together to achieve these. Although there is no designated head of the cluster, the way that principals are expected to collaborate for the good of their 'mini system' could be regarded as an exercise in system leadership.

In **England**, the former National College for School Leadership (NCSL), established in 2001, was instrumental in supporting the development of a range of system leadership roles. Hopkins (2009: 6) describes these roles and their potential impact. In all, five roles were identified, those who:

- develop and lead a successful educational improvement partnership across local communities to support welfare and potential . . .
- choose to lead and improve a school or centre in extremely challenging circumstances and then sustain them as high value added institutions over a significant period of time
- partner another school facing difficulties and improve it . . .
- act as a curriculum or pedagogic innovator who, with their staff, develop exemplary and increasingly precise curriculum, teaching and assessment practices and systematically share them with others
- work as change agents or expert leaders such as National Succession Consultants (NSCs) or School Improvement Partners (SIPs) (p. 6).

Therefore, system leadership can and often does go beyond principals to include other leaders and teachers in schools. This is sometimes referred to as 'systemic leadership', where a range of expert leaders and teachers in schools at different levels share a strong professional motivation to collaborate. In providing support and challenge to other schools, they themselves benefit and learn through observation, evaluation, reflection, joint practice development, and dissemination of the most effective practice.



Emerging concept

Work for the success of other schools

Dialogue, coaching, mentoring and planning

Leading school improvement initiatives

School level, local/regional level and national level

Strengthening system practice

Increases the capacity of the middle

Professionalisation of Irish school leaders

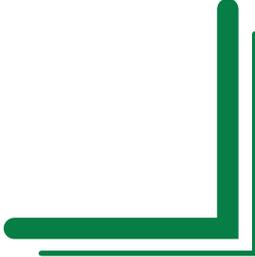
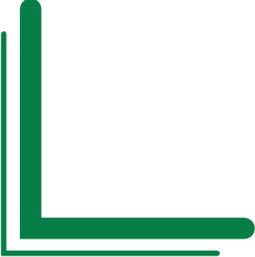
A shared vision for school improvement

Collective drivers of change and improvement

Co-professional support

Learning communities

Dissemination of the most effective practice





Chapter 9

Conclusions and Future Directions

“The Irish system needs to develop leadership attributes in all staff as well as systematically identifying and supporting its future senior leaders.”

Like in many other jurisdictions, there has been growing attention in Ireland on the pivotal role of school leaders in improving the quality of education. The formation of the Centre for School Leadership in 2015 was a recognition of the central role of leadership in the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students. The *Looking at Our School* Quality Framework for Leadership and Management, developed in 2016, and the SSE process, established in 2012, have brought a focus to the importance of leadership and the need to develop leadership qualities and skills from the outset of a career. More recently, circulars (DE 03/2018, 44/2019) which outline new appointment procedures for principals, deputies and assistant principals have brought into focus the crucial role of leadership at all levels in schools.

This publication has outlined the research conducted by CSL into the various leadership roles that exist in Irish schools and the focus and elements of a model of professional learning for both aspiring and existing school leaders in the system. There is an emphasis throughout the report on the integrity and value of each leadership role and the need for bespoke learning for that role, especially at key transition stages on the leadership journey.

CSL hopes that this publication will help to inform the planning and the design of professional learning provision for school leaders into the future, and that it will assist critical evaluation, debate, and improvement in the quality and coherence of professional learning for school leaders at every stage of the leadership continuum.

The Irish system needs to develop leadership attributes in all staff, and to systematically identify and support its future senior leaders. The type of extended professionalism advocated by the Teaching Council as part of its Cosán initiative for all teachers will provide a much stronger pool of potential leaders and will greatly assist in this development. In particular, the central role of the principal as both a lead learner and a key agent for leading learning will be strengthened.

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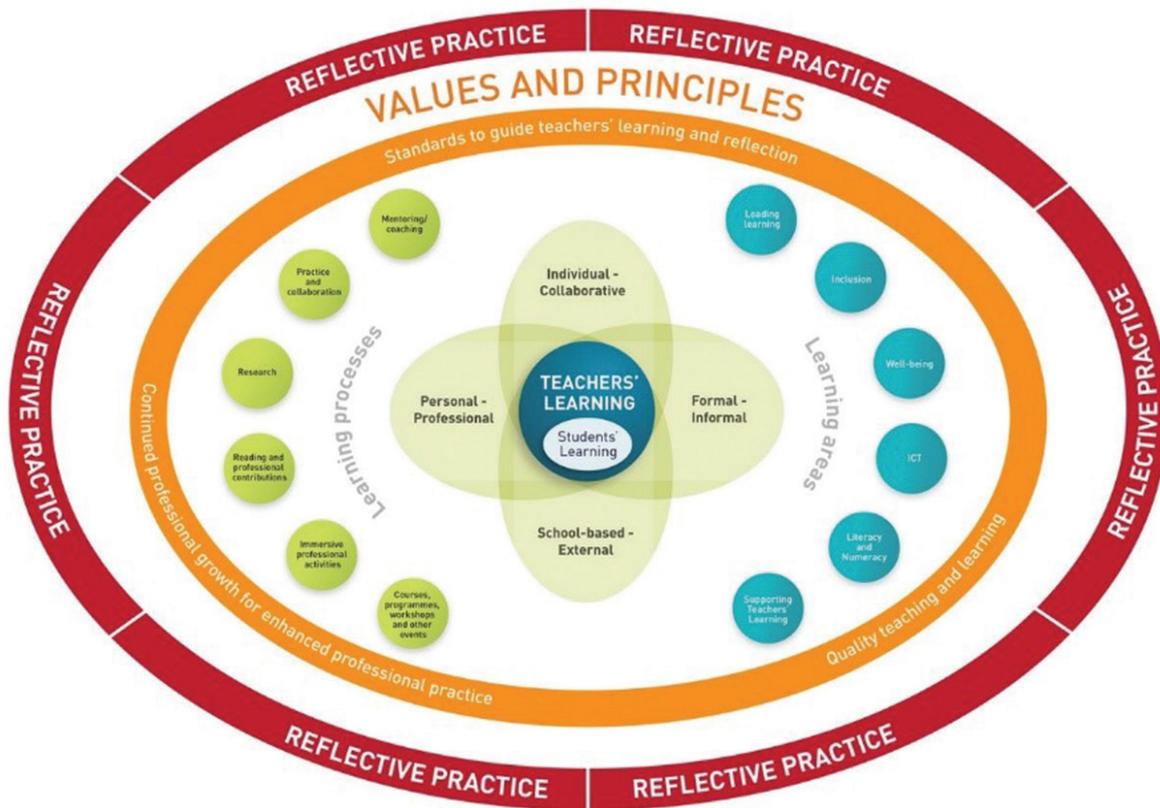
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Appendix 1: Cosán, The National Framework for Teachers' Learning



Appendix 2:

List of Organisations that engaged with CSL

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)

An Foras Patrúnachta Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge

Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)

Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI)

Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools (ATCS)

Business in the Community (BITC)

Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)

Church of Ireland, Primary Education

Department of Education (DE) Inspectorate

Dublin City University (DCU)

Education Support Centres in Ireland (ESCI)

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)

Educate Together (ET)

Gaelscoileanna Teoranta

Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN)

Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)

Joint Managerial Body (JMB)

Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)

Maynooth University (MU)

Marino Institute of Education (MIE)

Mary Immaculate College (MI)

Muslim Primary Education Board

National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)

National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)

National Parents Council (NPC)

National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)

Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

St Angela's College, Sligo

Teaching Council

Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education

Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI)

Trinity College, Dublin (TCD)

University College Cork (UCC)

University College Dublin (UCD)

University of Limerick (UL)

Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

