

Selecting Primary School Principals in Ireland.

The Extent to which Competency Frameworks are used.

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List of Abbreviations

BOM	Board of management
DES	Department of Education and Skills
SFH	Standard for Headship
DoE	Department of Education
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
ECS	Education, Community and Society
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
LDS	Leadership Development for Schools
RTU	Regional Training Unit
PwC	PriceWaterhouseCoopers
OLF	Ontario Leadership Framework
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
CPSMA	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association

SAF	Standard Application Form
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ETB	Education and Training Board
NYC	New York City
NZSTA	New Zealand School Trustees Association
LNCT	Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers
QIO	Quality Improvement Officer
GOI	Government of Ireland
RTU	Regional Training Unit
NI	Northern Ireland
SSE	School Self Evaluation
HR	Human Resources

ABSTRACT

Competency of a leader is vital in setting the direction of an organisation, especially when that organisation is a school. A competency framework defines the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to carry out a role and serves as a solid foundation for recruitment, assessment, development and succession planning. The need to establish and implement a high quality competency framework at the point of selecting primary principals within an Irish context is vital.

There has been little research undertaken in Ireland on the competencies required by school leaders to effectively run our primary schools. This study aims to address this gap. It examines the process in place for selecting and appointing primary principals within the broader context of the education system. It examines the extent to which competency frameworks are used to support this process and it also looks at the qualifications on the part of those entrusted with overseeing this process.

The preferred method of data collection for the examination of the selection process and the use of competency frameworks was interview. The views of newly appointed principals, chairpersons of boards of management, representatives from the IPPN and CPSMA were sought for this purpose.

Evidence from this study suggests that competency frameworks are not used in the process of selecting and appointing primary principals, nor is such a framework readily available to selection boards. The guidelines in place (DES circular 16/73, DES circular 02/02, Education Act 1998) are not deemed appropriate by the interested parties to address the needs

associated with this recruitment process. The research demonstrates that there is no standardised approach to appointing a principal teacher within an Irish context.

Recommendations from this study include the introduction of a competency framework to support the selection of primary principals, mandatory recruitment training for all persons involved in this process, expansion of the role of boards of management and finally, the provision of specialist Human Resource support to all persons engaged in the recruitment of primary school principals.

Acknowledgements

This research project would not have been possible without the support of many people. Firstly I would like to say a special thank you to Liam, Rebekah and Mikey. As with everything I have done in life so far, they have supported me and backed me all the way xx.

To the fifth member of the family – thanks for being a great study partner Buddy. Thanks also to my brothers and sisters who are always there ‘no matter what’. A special thanks to Trish who offered guidance with writing and editing over the course of this project.

Secondly, I would like to thank Ciaran. For the hours he has given to reading my drafts, mentoring, advising and supporting me over the past four years, I cannot thank him enough. He has been a constant source of support from day one and for this, I will always be grateful.

I would especially like to thank those who participated in this study. To the newly appointed principals, chairpersons, assessors and the Irish Primary Principals’ Network representative who gave of their precious time, I would like to extend my gratitude. This research could not have happened without their input.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Anthony Malone and Paula Kinnarney, for their guidance throughout this journey.

To Kathleen Egan (RIP) whose belief in human kindness when dealing with people made her a great principal, leader and the very best of friends. You are never too far from my thoughts

K x

This study is dedicated to Mick and Annie Lynam

‘All That I Am I Owe To Both Of You’

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

‘Selecting a school leader is one of the most important decisions for an education system’

(McKinsey, 2010:28)

In 2007, a report published by OECD¹ found that very little research had been undertaken in Ireland on the competencies required by school leaders to effectively run our primary schools (OECD, 2007:20). In 2017, it would appear that there remains a dearth of research in this area. The present discourse surrounding school leadership is grounded in role profile, responsibilities and duties attached to the role of primary principal. There has been little elaboration on the competencies required on the part of primary principals to effectively carry out their roles. A growing number of national education systems (Austria, Sweden, Hungary, Slovakia and Sweden) are drawing up competency frameworks for school leaders. These frameworks are intended for various reasons such as assisting performance management, informing the content of leadership development programmes, helping to write job descriptions and for recruitment and selection purposes (Earley, P., 2012:5). This study explores the process in place for selecting and recruiting primary principals within an Irish context with a specific focus on the extent to which competency frameworks are used

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

to assess candidates for the post of principal. It studies the stages involved in this process from the establishment of a selection board through to appointment. Furthermore, it examines the appropriateness and usefulness of competency frameworks to guide the selection process and examines the qualification and knowledge on the part of those entrusted with overseeing this process.

1.1 Background to the Study

The Irish Education system is undergoing a period of intensive change. It is a system marked by an increase in legislative and bureaucratic regulation. This change is reflected on an international level but the role of the Catholic Church within the Irish education system sets it apart from other education systems on a worldwide stage. The Catholic Church has played a major role in primary education in Ireland since the establishment of the national education system in 1831 (Coolahan, 1981). By the middle of the 19th century, state supervision of education had given way to a situation in which the church was about to take control of Irish education (Wolf and Meijers, 1991:62). While the state paid for the new school houses throughout the 19th century, it by and large; handed their supervision and control over to the church (ibid). Although the Catholic Church has continued to benefit from state funding, it has continued to be granted autonomy in the management of schools and in the formation and appointment of teachers (Drudy and Lynch, 1993:75-76). It can be said that the Catholic Church has been a dominant force within the Irish education system from the early 20th century to the present day. As the Catholic Church maintains control over 90% of primary schools at the present time (see Table 1, p.12), it is the case that they are responsible for

recruitment processes in the majority of Irish primary schools. The role of the state on the other hand has been somewhat ancillary in that it has provided funding to the churches in the provision of educational resources, both human and financial, over the years. It is evident that the separation between church and state in regard to education has created a system where the Catholic Church has been the majority stakeholder in running Irish primary schools.

In the past twenty/thirty years however, Irish society has experienced a dramatic change, becoming a more diverse, pluralistic society. Such significant societal changes have led to an increased demand for new forms of multi-denominational and non-denominational schooling. The programme for Government (2011) made a commitment to address the needs of this changing society by establishing a forum on patronage and pluralism in the primary sector. They sought to meet the demands for new forms of multi-denominational and non-denominational schooling. A series of recommendations were made in a report by the forum's advisory group (Coolahan et al, 2012) which included the divestment of patronage, future patronage arrangements and the inclusion of diversity in existing schools. While this has resulted in an increase in the number of schools under non-religious patrons and an increase in the establishment of multi-denominational schools, 96% of educational provision at primary level is denominational with 90% of primary schools in Ireland remaining under Catholic patronage. It is the case that divestment has been less than expected to date and while Irish society is moving towards a more pluralistic primary school system, change is slow. The present system is grounded in tradition and history and change will take time.

Boards of management manage schools 'on behalf of the patron' (Education Act, 1998) but when management boards were established in 1975, there was no legislative framework in

place supporting the Irish education system. Since that time, about twenty acts of legislation have impacted primary schools across legal, financial and human resource areas. The Education Act, signed into law in December 1998, provided for the first time; a statutory framework for the Irish education system and, while management boards were established in 1975, it was not until this Act was signed into law that statutory responsibilities were devolved onto such boards. Under section 24 of the Education Act, these boards are responsible for the recruitment of principal teachers and all teaching and non-teaching staff, subject to employment legislation and sectorial agreement. However, boards of management have been and continue to be made up of voluntary members of school communities and membership of these boards requires no mandatory experience or skill set. The only two members of the board with certain knowledge of education are the principal teacher and the teacher's representative. There is evidence to suggest that in these present times there is reluctance on the part of people, especially parents, to volunteer on boards due to the significant responsibility attached to membership (OECD, 2007:12). This research gathers data around the level of training received by board members in the area of recruitment, given the responsibility devolved onto board members.

The uniqueness of the Irish education system rests in the fact that while public funds are used to pay teacher's wages, the selection and recruitment of primary school teachers and primary principals rests with the patron bodies. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) establishes the requirements for training and registration, produces curriculum documents and sets out policies. It carries out and oversees inspections of primary schools and pays the wages of all teachers. It can be argued that the DES is the employer in everything but the legal sense. This can create challenges, especially in cases of liability. The recent case of O'Keefe

V Hickey [2008] IESC 72 highlights a difficult relationship between the state and the church and contextualises the uniqueness of the Irish education system. O’Keefe brought a case against the state for having been abused by her school principal in the 1970s. While the school was owned and run by the Catholic Church, it was recognised by the state as a national school. The state took the stance that they were not liable as they did not own or run the school or appoint the teachers. They claimed that they did pay the teachers but that they were excluded from the running of the school as a result of long standing legal arrangements brought about by a campaign by all the major religious bodies back in the 19th century (O’Keefe-v-Hickey, 2008:1). This case is indicative of a system complicated by history and tradition where the lines between the Catholic Church and state have been blurred.

1.2 Research Context

In the past fifteen years, there have been a number of studies undertaken in Ireland analysing the Irish approach to educational leadership (Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2007; PwC, 2009). In 2003, Haygroup management consultants examined the role of the primary school principal. They reported that defining this role highlighted a number of issues surrounding the role in general. The report found that principals faced a variety of challenges in effectively delivering the key elements of their role and that some of these challenges derived from a lack of clarity about the various elements of the role (Haygroup, 2003:3). This report presented a competency framework for principal teachers (See Appendix 1), suggesting that such a framework would give clarity to the key priorities of the role and would subsequently inform the process by which principals are selected and assessed. In 2007, personnel from the

Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) prepared a detailed background report examining school leadership in Ireland. This was conducted as part of an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) activity. The report entitled 'Improving School Leadership' found that 'very little research' (OECD, 2007:20) had been undertaken in Ireland on the competencies required by school leaders. It indicated a 'gap in the articulation' (ibid:62) of the professional qualities and competencies required for the role of school principal. It also indicated that the philosophy and ideology of the selection process for the post of primary school principal had not been fully developed and went on to note that very little attention had been paid to the selection and training of interview panels.

A subsequent report by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) into school leadership in 2009 supported these existing studies. This report focused on the perspectives of principal teachers who had recently been appointed to their posts and experienced teachers who had not yet applied for principalship. The report recommended that the system for selection of candidates to principalship positions should be more professional in approach and that provision should be made available for training of boards of management in the area of recruitment. From an international perspective, the McKinsey report (2010) looked at the world's top school systems and how they were building leadership capacity for the future. Even though these school systems were performing well on international tests, McKinsey regarded the improvement of leadership capacity as a top priority and an area where more had to be done. The report looked at selection processes and proposed that 'selecting a school leader is one of the most important decisions for an education system' (McKinsey, 2010:28). It went on to say that 'ensuring that the selection committees have the skills and capabilities required to make the optimum decision is therefore crucial' (ibid).

These studies are representative of the research undertaken in the area of leadership and management in the Irish education system and education systems worldwide. The above studies refer to the importance of the selection process attached to leadership positions and make recommendations in this area. They recommend the training of board members in the area of recruitment and the concept of leadership frameworks to inform selection and assessment as important areas to be addressed. In light of these report findings, the researcher believes this study to be relevant and the subject worthy of further examination and research at this time.

1.3 Education within the Broader Irish Public Service

Over the past number of years, public service stability agreements have been reached between the Irish Government and the various unions and associations representing the different sectors within the Irish Public Service in relation to pay and productivity measures. The various parties involved in discussions, which included partners in education, agreed that such measures were necessary to ‘underpin the delivery of a more integrated, efficient and effective public service’ (Haddington Road Agreement, 2013 – 2016:3). It is clear from this agreement that ‘strengthening performance’ is on the agenda across all areas of the Irish public service. The following excerpts from the agreement highlight this point:

- ‘The introduction of performance management systems will be accelerated at the level of the individual in all areas of the public service where they do not currently exist’ (Labour Relations commission Report, 3.16)
- ‘The performance of senior managers is critical to supporting the effective delivery of quality public services and never more so than in a climate of

significantly reduced resources. Measures will be introduced to further develop and enhance a culture of performance across the management cohort of the public service' (Labour Relations commission Report, 3.16)

Furthermore, as part of continuing public service reforms in Ireland, the integrated plan for reform in education (2015) states that the Department of Education is committed to 'ensuring that proper accountability measures are in place' (p.6), while section three of the plan states that the department will participate in initiatives being led by the department of public expenditure and reform, including the support of succession planning (p.18). However, there is no competency or leadership framework at primary level education to support the implementation of such measures. There is presently no framework in place to support performativity measures. A competency framework is a valuable tool for bridging the gap between education and the world of work. It sets out the knowledge, skills and attitudes a school leader is expected to possess in order to carry out her/his role successfully. A framework is based on the expectations of school leaders, aspiring leaders and trainers of leaders, policy makers and selection boards. It is a roadmap which acts as an assessment tool, a development tool and a facilitation tool.

It can be argued that there is a level of sensitivity around the area of performance and performance management within education. Nevertheless, it is evident that schools have been engaging with a number of practices which measure performance such as whole school evaluations, incidental inspections of teachers and more recently, school self-evaluation. In recent times, the chief schools inspector also raised the prospect of annual reviews of the performance of teachers and principals, stating that the purpose of regular performance reviews would not be "hard accountability but to foster genuine improvement for the individual and school" (Hislop, 2013:18). Although it is not the aim of this study to review the

merits of accountability, it is important to contextualise possible issues with the introduction of competency frameworks within an Irish context, given the level of sensitivity with performance management measures.

1.4 Professional and Personal Relevance

The reason for choosing the selection process for primary school principals as an area which requires further study originated from the experience of the researcher within different school settings over the past fourteen years. Having taught in two schools as a permanent mainstream teacher, the researcher has also worked as a permanent supply teacher and is currently employed as a Home School Community Liaison Coordinator between two DEIS² primary schools. This has afforded the researcher the opportunity to work within many different school contexts and observe contrasting styles of leadership. As a result of the experience gained working in those different schools and observing the leadership styles of different principals, the researcher has developed an interest in leadership styles and the qualities required to be an effective primary school principal. The researcher has a keen interest in the area of competency frameworks and the competencies required to be a primary school principal within a time of change in Ireland. A school leader plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment (Pont et al., 2008:2). Through the experience gained

² DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

from working in different school settings, it is the researcher's belief that the role of the primary principal is paramount to the effective running of the school. The implementation of a leadership competency framework is a priority for the creation of opportunities for the enhancement of self-evaluation of all stakeholders within the educational leadership sphere at primary level.

1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

As previously stated, the choice of such a research topic rests with the researcher's experience in different school settings and a subsequent interest in leadership styles. The aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the selection process in assessing candidate competencies for the post of primary school principal in Ireland. The objective of the research is to add to the existing corpus of research in the area of study and assist policy development in the area of selection and appointment of primary school principals.

In order to achieve the above aims/objectives, the researcher seeks to answer the following research questions.

1.5.1 Research Questions

- To what extent are competency frameworks used in the selection of primary school principals in Ireland?
- Are selection boards trained/knowledgeable in the area of principal teacher selection?
- Is the selection process adequate for appointing primary principals?

1.6 Research Method

In undertaking this study, it was hoped to establish the experiences, attitudes and views of newly appointed principals³, chairpersons of boards of management, independent assessors and representatives from the Irish Primary Principals Network (I.P.P.N.) / Professional Development Services for Teachers (P.D.S.T.) and the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (C.P.S.M.A.) as they are identified as the interested parties involved in the process of recruiting principal teachers. A qualitative approach to research involves a strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman and Bell, 2007:28). A qualitative approach constituted the main form of enquiry for this research topic and the main instrument used to gather data was interview. Interviews were carried out with a newly appointed principal and the chairperson of the Board of Management (BOM) from four Catholic primary schools, one Church of Ireland primary school, one Educate Together primary school, one Community National School and one Gaelscoil. These school categories represent 98.62% of all primary schools in Ireland as can be seen from the table overleaf (highlighted). Therefore, this sample provides a balanced representative sample from across the main school categories.

Interviewees were sourced from co-ed and single sex schools across a variety of urban and rural geographical areas, socio-economic backgrounds and school sizes. An equal gender balance was also achieved.

³ For the purpose of this study, a newly appointed principal is one who has been appointed in the last three years

Table 1: Total number of primary schools by patron body (2010/11)

This table outlines the patronage of mainstream primary schools in 2010/2011 and supports a balanced representative research sample

Patron Body	Number of Schools	% of total
Catholic	2841	89.65
Church of Ireland	174	5.49
Presbyterian	17	0.54
Methodist	1	0.03
Jewish	1	0.03
Islamic	2	0.06
Quaker	1	0.03
John Scottus Educational Trust Ltd	1	0.03
Lifeways Ireland Ltd	2	0.06
An Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lánghaeilge Teo	57	1.80
Educate Together Ltd (National Patron body)	44	1.39
Schools in Educate Together Network with their own patron body	14	0.44
Education and Training boards	5	0.16
Minister for Education and Skills Community National Schools	9	0.29
Total	3125	98.62%
Total	3169	100%

It was the objective that such a method would verify information and establish a chain of evidence. Qualitative research describes how things are at a particular place and a particular time. Coolican (1990:37) endorses a qualitative approach to research as emphasising meanings and experiences as well as descriptions. According to Crotty (1998:2-9), epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and method represent hierarchical levels of decision making within the research design process. The researcher used Crotty's approach to research design by outlining for the reader the epistemology informing this research, the theoretical perspective supporting the research, the methodology employed and the method(s) used for data collection.

Data from the interviews were recorded, analysed and interpreted by the researcher. Data gathered for the purpose of this study were analysed using a content analysis approach which involved coding and categorising the data (Denscombe, 2007:293). It was the intention that a chain of evidence would be established throughout the data collection process to verify key information. Hammersley (1990:57) refers to validity as 'the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers'. It was intended to achieve valid research through accurately representing the views of the various parties involved in this research to ensure correct correlation between the data collected and the conclusion.

Finally, it was expected that this research would make recommendations for the reform of the selection process of primary school principals in Ireland.

1.7 Thesis Overview

Chapter one provides the background to the research. It introduces existing research undertaken in the area of school leadership to date. It presents the research questions to be examined and it also presents the reader with a rationale and a general overview of the thesis.

Chapter two is divided into two sections. Section 1 deals with the process of selection involved in selecting a principal from the initial stage of the position becoming vacant through to appointing the new principal. Comparisons are made with selection processes in the top performing education systems of Ontario, New York, Finland, New Zealand and Scotland. Section 2 provides background to competencies and competency frameworks and their uses. It explores the competencies attached to the post of principal teacher in the context of the emerging view of effective school leadership in the 21st century. It elucidates for the reader those issues around which this research topic is built and outlines what the relevant literature has to say with regard to this enquiry.

Chapter three presents the research methods used to answer the research questions central to the thesis. Epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and method represent hierarchical levels of decision making within the research design process. The methodology chapter presents the research design process by outlining for the reader the epistemology informing this research, the theoretical perspective supporting the research, the methodology employed and the method(s) used for data collection. Furthermore, it examines aspects relevant to carrying out the research; such as ethical considerations, the form of enquiry used by the researcher to test the reliability and validity of the data, the process of data analysis and researcher reflexivity.

Chapter four presents the findings from the interviews carried out with the interested parties involved in this research study. Findings are presented in relation to the key research questions this study sought to address.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the perceptions of the interested parties involved in this research regarding the extent to which competency frameworks are used in the selection of primary school principals in Ireland, the process of selection involved in the appointment of primary school principals and the training received on behalf of interview boards involved in principal teacher selection.

Chapter six offers a conclusion to the thesis. It provides recommendations based on the research carried out and the resulting implications for the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals in Ireland.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

A good schoolmaster 'leaves the print of his teeth on a parish for three generations' (McMahon, 1992:9). Traditionally, the headmaster held a pivotal role at the heart of the Irish community. Even though the role of the headmaster or principal teacher in the 21st century is fast evolving, research confirms that the principal is still the 'pivotal figure when it comes to success' (Fullan, 2006:1). School leaders are facing challenges with the rising expectations for schools and schooling in a century characterised by technological innovation, migration and globalisation (OECD, 2007:1). The role of school leader has grown far beyond that of administrator (Schleicher, 2012:12). It requires the ability to create, communicate and implement a vision of learning and development for the school; to lead, coach, motivate and develop the staff within the school; to communicate and develop positive links with the wider community and relevant agencies which have a bearing on the well-being of the school as well as maintaining records and developing policies (Haygroup, 2003:11). Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn in school (Leithwood et al, 2004:5). The principal constitutes a key role in student performance and tends to impact student learning through their influence on teachers and structures (Leithwood et al., 2004; Hallinger, 2005:221-239).

Given the pivotal role of the principal teacher as leader, this study set out to explore the process of selecting primary school principals in Ireland and the extent to which competency frameworks are used in this process. In doing so, it firstly considered the selection process as

a whole within the legislative framework of the Irish education system. Secondly, comparisons were made with selection processes in the top performing education systems of Ontario, New York, Finland, New Zealand and Scotland.

Therefore, this chapter is divided into two sections. Section 1 deals with the process of selection from the pre-interview stage to that of post interview. Section 2 studies the background to competencies and competency frameworks and their uses.

Section 1

2.2 Selection

From the time a vacancy arises for principal teacher, a process is set in motion. This process involves the establishment of interview panels, shortlisting, selecting criteria for assessing and appointing candidates, advertising and interviewing and appointing the principal teacher. In Ireland, the procedures to be followed when appointing principal teachers are set out in paragraph 20 and appendix D of the revised Constitution of Boards and Rules of procedure for the Boards of Management of National Schools (DES, 2011). This is the only document which outlines the requirements for interviewing and appointing principal teachers across all school governing bodies at primary level. The following paragraphs outline the selection process in Ireland and contrasts it with recruitment processes in Canada, Finland, USA, New Zealand and Scotland. The most recent analysis of the education systems of top performing countries around the world (Pearson, 2014) ranks Finland, the U.K., Canada and Ireland in the

top ten performers globally. This Index combines national data and a number of international rankings such as PISA⁴, TIMSS⁵ and PIRLS⁶ to provide an interpretation of how education systems are performing relative to each other. Given the link between the role of the school principal and student outcomes, a comparative analysis of these countries and how they select their school leaders will serve to support and contextualise this study.

2.2.1 Pre Interview - Eligibility

In order for a candidate to be eligible for the post of principal in Ireland, he/she must be qualified and probated as a primary school teacher. In schools with 80 pupils or greater, a candidate must have five years whole time teaching experience, two of which must be in a primary school in the Republic of Ireland (DES, 2002). Similar requirements prevail in applying for post of principal in New Zealand. When examining qualification requirements or eligibility for the post of primary school principal in other countries, it becomes apparent that requirements can vary and be divided into distinct categories. The first category sets out teacher qualification and experience as prerequisites for application. This category, as outlined above, is evidenced in the countries of Ireland and New Zealand. The second category involves leadership training in addition to qualification and experience as a

⁴ Programme for International Student Assessment

⁵ Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

⁶ Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

prerequisite to application and is evidenced in the countries of Canada, Finland, Scotland and the United States.

In Ontario, Canada, a potential candidate for principalship must have qualification and experience as a teacher, school level certification, specialist qualifications and/or master's degree, and must have also completed a principal's qualification programme (Schleicher, 2012:14). As part of an educational improvement strategy, the provincial government of Ontario (2004) introduced a coherent leadership strategy with a view to raising student achievement, increasing public confidence in education and narrowing gaps in student achievement. This strategy focused on attracting good candidates into leadership roles and subsequently preparing them for and supporting them in their work. The focus of the strategy was to attract and prepare the right candidates for leadership roles before a vacancy needed to be filled. Similar emphasis is placed on leadership qualification in Scotland. The standard for headship (SFH) is the requirement for application to the post in Scotland in addition to teacher qualification and experience (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2016). There are two routes to achieving SFH in Scotland. There is a 'flexible route' which provides aspiring head teachers the chance to develop interpersonal skills and leadership qualities. This route is a practice based route, administered by Education Scotland and requires participants to self-evaluate against the SFH. Those undertaking this route to headship are required to deliver a whole school leadership project and demonstrate their learning at an interview facilitated by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). There is also the Scottish Qualification for Headship which is a course offered by various universities in Scotland in the form of taught seminars. This route requires participants to attend taught days and seminars, and to link academic research in the area of educational leadership to leadership practice.

Participants must complete a whole school leadership project to fulfil the requirements of this programme. GTC Scotland is responsible for the accreditation of both routes.

In New York City (NYC), candidates for principalship must apply to the principal candidate pool before attaining eligibility for application to post of principal. The objectives of the principal candidate pool includes aligning the screening process to high standards that are consistent with the expectations to which principals will be held accountable and to offer participants high quality professional development and training (NYC Department of Education, 2013). In order to apply for entry to the pool, candidates must be in possession of a school leader licence. This places candidates in NYC into the category of leadership training as an additional requirement to qualification and experience. Finland, considered one of the top performing education systems on the worldwide stage requires that candidates for post of principal should have completed a certificate in educational administration. They are also required to have a master's degree as well as a teaching qualification. It would seem that education and the role of the principal is held in high regard in Finland, Canada, Scotland and NYC in light of the standards they have placed on eligibility requirements for application to the post of principal.

In Ireland and New Zealand, the eligibility requirements within the legislative frameworks of the respective governments suggest that it is possible to be recruited into the role of principal of a primary school with a teaching qualification and five years' experience. Although the PDST and the Department of Education in Maynooth University provide leadership programmes for aspiring school leaders through the *Tóraíocht* programme (See Appendix 2), it is not a pre-requisite for applying for the post of principal teacher. Equally in New Zealand,

aspiring principals can pursue leadership training in the form of the National Aspiring Principals Programme (See Appendix 3) but it is not mandatory for application to post of principal. Ireland relies on self-selection to fill enrolments in training and development programmes.

2.2.2 Advertisement of the Post

The first step in the process of selecting a principal in Ireland is the advertisement of the post. Advertisements follow set rules and are generally standardised. In Ireland, the nature and status of the post, the date of commencement, nature of duties and closing date for receipt of application must be included. Also, advertisements must be accessible to all, non-discriminatory and in keeping with the provisions of the Education Act (1998) and the Employment Equality Act (1998). Other significant points to note in an Irish context include the notification of the vacancy to all the teaching staff and the advertising of the post in the national newspapers and on websites such as www.educationposts.ie and www.publicjobs.ie. In Scotland, the advertisement contains basic information about the post and school and further indicates where applicants can obtain additional information and application forms. Vacancies in the Scottish context are advertised in the national press usually but the Scottish government has also introduced legislation whereby an education authority can now redeploy members of staff, including principals, without recourse to the normal appointment procedures (Glasgow City Council, 2009). When the outgoing principal gives notice of retiring his/her position in Finland, a decision is made to open the post for external selection by the education board or the administration. The position is advertised by the administrative sector

of the municipality in the regional main newspaper, national teacher magazine and the job centre web site. Applications are expected to be received by a certain time in a variety of formats (Tihveräinen, S., 2009:43). Regulations in New Zealand stipulate that positions of at least one year's duration must be advertised nationally. Also, vacancies must be advertised in the Education Gazette and should specify a closing date (Primary Principals' Collective Agreement, 2013-2015). In New York City, regulations pertaining to advertising can be found in the Regulation of the Chancellor (C30) and specifies that all vacancies should be posted on the Department of Education (DoE) website for a minimum of fifteen calendar days.

With the introduction of a leadership strategy in Ontario, the many district school boards are required to plan for leadership succession and there are human resource departments attached to these district boards. In the Huron Perth district for example, the human resource department regularly prepares information for discussion purposes at executive council meetings. This information will inform the council on potential retirements, promotions and attrition, key positions of future vacancy and proposals for external recruitment in the absence of internal candidates. A steering committee oversees the implementation of leadership and succession planning. Leaders are identified and encouraged to undergo leadership training programmes and when a post becomes available within the district and the candidate feels ready, the next step is to seek recommendation for applying for a leadership post (Huron Perth District Schools Board Procedure Manual). The leadership strategy in Ontario ensures that candidates are prepared for leadership roles before they need to be filled. As is evidenced in all of the above jurisdictions, there are guidelines governing advertisement for posts of principal teachers although they may differ with regard to requirements.

2.2.3 Selection

After the post has been advertised, a selection board is then established. In an Irish context, the chairperson of the B.O.M. and at least two independent assessors constitute the selection board. The patron, in consultation with the chairperson choose the independent assessors, ensuring that there is a balance of one male and one female assessor. The chairperson and the independent assessors will form a selection board and will meet within a reasonable period after the closing date for receipt of applications. The general functions of the selection board at pre-interview stage include the selection of criteria and the weighting which will apply to the criteria, the shortlisting of applicants, the questions to be asked at interview, the allocation of marks, the setting of dates, times and venue for interview and lastly, written invitations to shortlisted candidates. The following paragraphs examines these functions in some detail.

In the Irish framework, the selection board firstly establishes agreed criteria for the assessment of the applications (DES, 2011). Shortlisting criteria are established by the board prior to opening any applications. In establishing criteria, professional qualifications, registration with the Teaching Council, teaching experience and other relevant experience are taken into account (DES, 2011). All applications are then assessed in accordance with these shortlisting criteria. The board subsequently draw up a shortlist of applicants who will be invited for interview (See Appendix 4). The next step in the selection process engages the board in identifying the competencies required for the post of principal teacher. However, the board is expected to identify competencies in the absence of any competency framework for the post. The board can however refer to the 'functions of a principal teacher' as outlined

in Section 22 of the Education Act (1998) to act as a guide. They stipulate that the principal shall encourage and foster learning in students, regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents, collectively promote co-operation between the school and the community which it serves and carry out those duties which are assigned to him/her by the board. Equally, circular 02/02 lists the criteria as stated above and the duties of a principal teacher are outlined in circular 16/73.

Grummell, et al (2009:329-349), argue that selection boards in Ireland make decisions using 'local logics', management experience and personal qualities as selection criteria and these criteria can form the basis of the interview questions and the marking scheme. In their article *Logics and Authenticity in the Selection Process*, Grummell et al suggest that the use of local logics as selection criteria might include the location of a school for example. The location can be important as the school principal might be placed in a role of community leader as well as school leader. Likewise, in choosing a principal teacher for a DEIS school, the candidate would have to show understanding and empathy towards the pupils and parents of the school and be capable of the extra administration attached to schools with designated disadvantaged status. 'Local logics' as selection criteria is given considerable weight in the Irish process but Grummel et al also argue that assessors charged with selecting and recruiting principal teachers place a strong emphasis on interpersonal and communicative management skills as a core part of being a principal. They also give weighting to previous management experience, professional training and qualifications (Grummell et al, 2009). Boards of management establish their own criteria but there is no evidence in the literature of any framework to support this aspect of the selection process. Once the selection board has agreed upon the criteria which will be used for assessment in interview and on the weighting

which each will carry, they will then formulate the questions to be asked at interview, ensuring that the questions reflect the criteria. They will then decide the allocation of marks under each criterion and establish the date, venues and times for interviews. The shortlisted applicants will be given at least seven days' notice in writing of impending interview. A copy of the criteria will be sent to all candidates who are called for interview.

In New Zealand, all members of the board of trustees own the decision to appoint a person as principal (NZSTA, 2005:11). There are times however where a smaller appointment group may be deemed more reasonable and this is a decision made by the chairperson of the board. Boards of trustees in New Zealand can access the professional standards for principals to choose criteria for assessing potential candidates. However, many boards in New Zealand give some opportunity to members of the community in identifying the critical qualities that they believe make for a good educational leader (ibid, 2005:14). Boards make decisions using local knowledge (Barth, 1990) and take into account their local community, context and location of the school. These boards interview candidates with a view to a person best 'fitting' their school. Brooking (2003:4), suggests that the personal qualities being sought in a potential candidate ensure a comfortable fit and such qualities remain undiscussed as criteria or person specifications until their emergence at interview stage.

In Scotland, the area education, community and society manager leads the shortlisting process which involves another professional officer, together with members of the parents' council. The Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act (2006) places responsibility on local authorities to improve parental involvement within education. This has led to parental representation at important decision-making stages, such as appointment process. The

selection criteria for the post of head teacher in Scotland must conform to a general pattern as set out by the Scottish Education Services. The criteria include appropriate qualifications, previous experience, record of continuing professional development, evidence of ability to lead people, management skills, good communication skills and good interpersonal skills (Glasgow City Council, 2009).

Regulations in New York City delegate authority for appointment to different districts. According to the Regulations of the Chancellor (2014), there are two levels in the selection process; level one and level two. Hiring managers and superintendents oversee the process and form selection committees within 30 days of receipt of list of eligible candidates for the post. Parental involvement is evident within the selection process in NYC. The criteria for assessing and selecting principal teachers in NYC include educational, managerial, administrative and pedagogic experience and qualifications. Specifically, the Regulations of the Chancellor (2014) list the criteria for assessing and selecting as; instructional leadership, school culture, structures for school improvement and prior pedagogic experience.

The Teaching Qualification Act (1998) regulates the selection of staff in the Finnish context. Municipalities in Finland determine the appointment of principal teacher in each school and how the selection is carried out. Those charged with this recruitment process in Finland are a selection body which is a politically nominated committee, school boards, the director of each educational department and principals (OECD, 2007). Legislation in Finland guides the municipal decision making bodies such as the council to select and appoint candidates for the post of principal teacher on the basis of skills, abilities and tested citizenship. Skills refer to skills gained through accessing education or work experience. Abilities refer to natural traits

such as natural talent, initiative or other abilities relevant for the job and tested citizenship means recommendations received from general civic activity (Harajula and Prattala, 2004:356, in Tihverainen, 2009:21).

As already discussed, human resource departments attached to district school boards in Ontario prepare information for executive councils regarding positions of future vacancy with potential successors and a steering committee manages the implementation of leadership development and succession planning. Essentially, leaders are identified and candidates are prepared before vacancies need to be filled.

As already suggested in Chapter 1, primary education in Ireland is in a unique situation given its relationship with the Catholic Church. While the state funds human and other resources in primary schools, the various patron bodies are responsible for selection and recruitment. It is therefore the case that the Catholic Church oversees all recruitment processes in approximately 90% of primary schools. From the snapshot of the selection processes from the different jurisdictions involved in this study, there are some other noteworthy differences. It is clear that parental involvement in the selection process is valued and encouraged in New Zealand and Scotland. It is evident that those involved in establishing criteria in Ontario, Scotland, New York and New Zealand can access standards/frameworks to support selection and recruitment. In Ireland and Finland, there are suggested criteria for assessing and selecting principal teachers.

2.2.4 Interview

Interviews for the post of principal in Ireland are generally conducted in the school for which the post is being advertised. On the day, each board member should have the advertisement, criteria for the post, letter of application and references. They should also have in their possession the agreed questions, the marking sheets and timetable. On completion of interviews, the board members mark and tally their own marking sheets in accordance with the agreed marking sheet. The chairperson then collates the marks of the board members for each candidate and this will give a rank order of suitable candidates. The chairperson will then furnish the final marks and the ranking to the B.O.M. together with a written report, nominating the applicant(s) whom it considers suitable for appointment. References may be obtained in written or verbal format from the referees nominated by the candidate in their application form. A copy of the agreed ranking list of candidates will be retained by the B.O.M. for use in the event of the post not being filled by the highest ranked nominee and references of candidates will be checked prior to any offer of appointment being made. The B.O.M. will then appoint the highest ranked nominee to the post unless it has good and sufficient reason not to do so. Interview is the only method used at primary level in Ireland in the assessment of potential candidates for the post of principal.

According to information guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with NZ School Trustees Association pertaining to appointing a principal teacher, a semi-structured, competency based interview tends to be the most effective interview style. This guide suggests that selection boards request that participants respond to questions using specific examples of how they have managed similar situations in the past and how they felt

and thought at the time. An applicant's response is indicative of how these types of situations will be managed in the future. At interview, boards are also asked to consider the benefit of asking each candidate to give a presentation on the same prepared topic as a means of assessing communication skills on the part of the prospective candidate. Some of the procedural details for carrying out interviews relate to the arranging of a quiet, non-threatening place, allowing between 45 minutes to one and a half hours for interview. The interview board should comprise exactly the same panellists for each interview and upon completion of the interview, use standard assessment forms and score sheets for marking (NZ Government, 2005).

According to findings made by Saku Tihverainen (2009) in her research study on the selection process for the post of principal teacher in Finland, characteristics of principal selection vary from municipality to municipality. In Järvenselkä, Finland, for example, principals are selected on an annual basis. Typically, the education committee nominates the chairperson, assistant chairperson and committee member to participate in principal selection, yet only the chairperson tends to take part. Two education administrators and the chairperson rate the applications and decide on the interviewees. Part of the procedure ensures that the chair consults with the teachers of the school regarding their preference for a type of principal. The interviews are led by the same group. The administrators conduct the interviews using interview questions generated by the personnel department. After the interview, there is an open discussion about interviews and preferred candidate for selection (Tihverainen, 2009:47).

In the Huron-Perth district of Ontario, applicants are interviewed by a panel which may include the director of education, supervisory officers, administrators and/or designated staff. The questions focus on the leadership competencies identified in the Ontario leadership framework. Candidates should focus on articulating to the committee how they have demonstrated these competencies. On completion of the interview, candidates will be advised of the decision of the interview committee and post interview feedback will be provided (Huron-Perth leadership and succession planning/talent development procedures manual, p.11).

In a Scottish context, the Highland Council together with the Education, Culture and Sport Service is committed to improving procedures for the selection and appointment of Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers. They stipulate that the interview for head teacher should explore the experiences of the candidate and should last approximately 30 minutes. The interview panel should consist of three officers, including the area ECS manager as lead officer together with the quality development officer. Also, interview questions should relate to the essential criteria and candidates should be allowed to draw on their current experience to demonstrate their ability to meet the criteria (LNCT 23, 2007).

2.2.5 Post Interview

Bush (2008:14) describes induction as a learning process which is planned or unplanned. Although the search for a principal ends when the successful candidate signs the contract and takes up his/her post, in reality the journey for that person has just begun. In Ontario, for example, on successful appointment of a newly appointed principal, boards are required to

include a range of professional development opportunities for newly appointed school leaders. Part D of the Succession Planning and Talent Development Implementation Continuum provides information on such development opportunities for principals. Strategies include the provision of a training plan for newly appointed leaders, implementation of mentors, networking through accessing the expertise of those recently promoted or retired from the role as supports for those new to the role (Ontario Leadership Strategy, 2008 - 2011). The Ontario boards receive funding for the provision of a mentoring programme. The implementation of the leadership development strategy in Ontario is very much planned.

Early in 2006 the Scottish Government provided funds for local authorities to build coaching and mentoring capacity in schools and education services supported by an enabling project framework designed to share ideas, create connections and develop learning across individual projects (Finnie, 2007). According to the report entitled 'The Recruitment and Retention of Head teachers in Scotland' (2009), the support of coaches and mentors, where available, and the quality of mediation and support offered by Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) in many local authorities were especially important for Head teachers. Also, formally arranged cluster groups, informal meetings with fellow heads and other sources of information, encouragement and good ideas, such as Heads Together and Deputies Together played a role in sustaining commitment and motivation. However, this report states that, while the importance of coaching and mentoring is recognised, they are also often the first casualty of budget constraints within local authorities.

In recent years, the Helsinki district in Finland introduced programmes at university level for newly appointed principals. All incumbents assuming office in the Helsinki district attend a two year training programme containing aspects of municipal and national administration, occupational counselling, leadership training, educational management, organisational theory, economics and information technology (Gayer 2003:85). The NYC leadership academy provides short and long term consulting in school/leadership preparation, coaching/mentoring of current school leaders and comprehensive leadership development systems.

A decision to introduce a nationwide induction programme for first time principals in New Zealand was taken by the Ministry for Education in the 2001 budget. It was introduced as a one year programme but was not mandatory for newly appointed principal teachers. The First-time Principals Programme is a one-year induction programme comprising four related parts- residential courses, mentoring, online learning and research.

In Ireland, like New Zealand, Scotland and NYC, induction is provided for but not prescribed to newly qualified principals. The process of selecting and recruiting a principal teacher in Ireland ends with the sanctioning of the appointment by the Minister for Education and Skills. However, supports are offered for newly appointed principals through the IPPN and PDST, including a confidential advice service, a mentoring service and the Misneach programme. The Misneach programme (See Appendix 5) is facilitated by the PDST and aims to communicate the core principles of leadership for newly appointed principals. A positive and very recent development in Ireland is the establishment of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) in December 2015. The CSL was launched with the aim of providing support services for

principal teachers. The centre is in its infancy but it aims to provide a range of development programmes for school leaders, from pre-appointment training and induction of newly appointed principals to continuing professional development throughout careers. Since its establishment, the CSL has commenced a formal mentoring programme for newly appointed principals which is being rolled out in the greater Leinster area.

2.2.6 Conclusion

This section examined the process in place in Ireland for selecting and appointing school principals at primary level. This was undertaken with the aim of contextualising the process within the Irish legislative framework and further comparing this process with a number of the top performing education systems globally i.e. - New Zealand, Finland, Ontario, New York and Scotland. While there are regulations governing selection procedures in the jurisdictions of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, Scotland and New York and Finland, there are significant differences in approaches to implementing requirements and criteria that are applied at different stages of the respective processes. In Ireland, it is the case that a mainstream class teacher can go from teaching a class on Friday afternoon to leading a school community on the following Monday morning. There is no probationary period or mandatory induction period. Moreover, it is possible that the candidate moving into their new leadership role may not have any leadership qualification. As already discussed, there are leadership programmes available for newly appointed principals in addition to support services provided by the IPPN but none are mandatory. As is evidenced in the relevant literature, the process of selection is localised and situation specific and when compared with selecting a principal teacher at

second level and third level education in Ireland, it is the least formal of all of the processes (Grummell, et al, 2009:329 - 349).

Section 2

2.3 A Competency Approach

As it is the main aim of this study to examine the extent to which competency frameworks are used to assess candidates for the post of primary school principals in Ireland, it is important to firstly consider competency for the purpose of selection and recruitment. Some would argue that Harvard University psychologist, David McClelland was the real father of the competency movement as a result of his 1973 article in *The American Psychologist*. In this influential article, McClelland suggested that 'intelligence and aptitude tests and school grades are not good predictors of success in life' McClelland (1973). He argued that traditional forms of testing were not sufficient in predicting as to whether people could do a job well and that there were other ways to look for competencies to predict success in any given job. While McClelland uses the word 'competence' and 'competencies' in his article, he does not define them for the reader. On competence, he states that 'neither the tests nor school grades seem to have much power to predict real competence in many life outcomes (p.6). On competencies, he claims that 'tests should assess competencies involved in clusters of life outcomes (p.9). In an interview with Adams (1997), McClelland states that he coined the term

'competency' to replace the narrower term 'skill' and to include behavioural as well as technical abilities in predicting performance (Horton, S. et al, 2002:8). In McClelland (1973), competencies are task and organisation specific suggesting that competencies exist only with reference to a specific work related task carried out within a given organisation and a unique model of competency can be identified in each organisation. McClelland founded the consultancy group, McBer and Company in 1963 in which his ideas were implemented and in which competency models were developed for many of the world's top companies.

For the purpose of this study, the word competency will be defined as a 'measurable characteristic of a person that is related to effective performance in a specific job, organisation or culture' (Karthikeyan & Solomon, 2009: 574). This characteristic is defined in terms of a behaviour and as such, it is plausible it can be developed. This definition provided clarity and good support for this researcher. In order to examine the extent to which competency frameworks are used for primary principals, it is important to understand competency in terms of 'measurable characteristics' so that assessment, improvement, development and adequate training can be provided. This study seeks to highlight the importance of competency on the part of school leaders. This researcher acknowledges that the above definition is controversial in the field of educational leadership because of its behaviourist assumptions and further deals with this in 2.3.2.

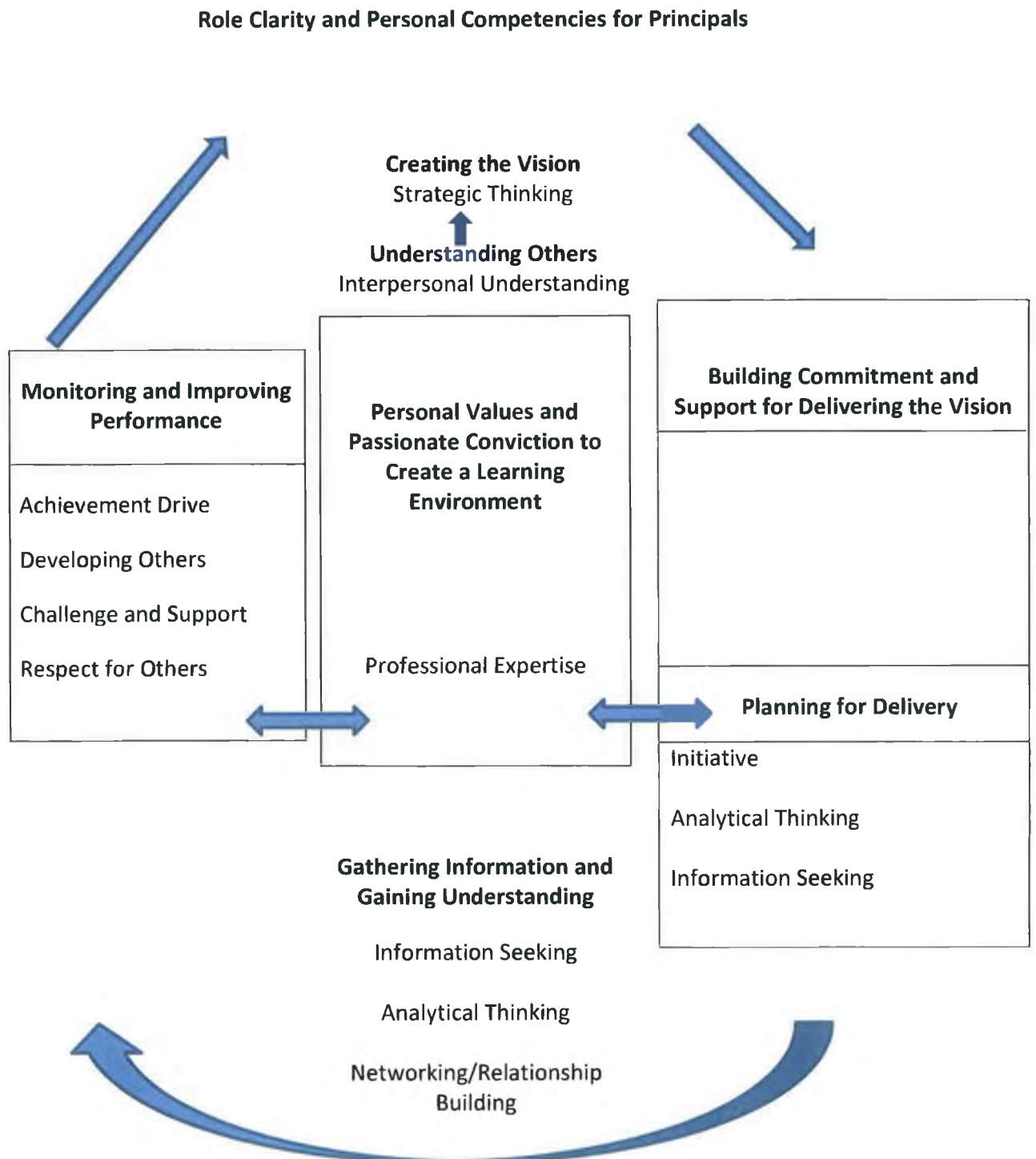
2.3.1 Competencies and the Primary School Principal

Haygroup identified the six most effective styles of leadership as coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and coaching. According to Goleman (2007:87), leaders

who have mastered four or more, especially the authoritative, democratic, affiliative and coaching styles, have the very best climate and performance. The most effective leaders are also those who demonstrate flexibility amongst the leadership styles as required. The emotional intelligence competencies underpinning authoritative, democratic, affiliative and coaching styles are those of empathy, communication, relationship building, team leadership and collaboration. The researcher believes that emotionally intelligent leaders are best placed to lead our school communities in times of change and instability. Such leaders are 'inspiring to others' and are 'able to deal with day to day problems as they work on more fundamental changes in the organisation' (Fullan, 2002:5). Research conducted by McKinsey Corporation states that most international evidence suggests that traits and practices of effective school leaders from Australia to Pakistan to Africa are remarkably similar (McKinsey, 2010:3). The authors present a set of practices which effective school leaders share and a common set of beliefs, attitudes and attributes which they possess. These might be referred to as personal competences and skills (See Appendix 6). Many national educational systems have drawn up standards or competency frameworks for school leaders (Earley, P., 2012:5). By assessing candidate competencies, employers can uncover differences likely to affect performance, helping to choose between candidates who may otherwise seem identical (Steiner and Hassel, 2011:3). In 2003, the IPPN engaged the services of Haygroup Management Consultants to define the role of the primary principal in Ireland. The ensuing report interpreted the role of the principal as a 'leadership role' and one which requires many of the core competencies associated with any leadership roles in any sector or organisation (Haygroup, 2003). A model for leadership for principals was presented within this report which clearly outlines the concepts of role clarity and personal competencies for the post of principal teacher. Within

this model, role clarity refers to the critical aspects of the job which are understood by the individual leader while personal competencies include a wide range of professional and technical skills together with personal traits, motivations and values (ibid). The model which is set out in Fig. 2.1 suggests a dynamic which has at its core; personal values, a commitment to create a learning environment and the required levels of professional expertise. In order to deliver on these values and commitment, the principal must be; capable of creating a vision which satisfies the need of the stakeholders, capable of understanding the overt and implicit concerns of the stakeholders, capable of communicating the vision to others and developing plans and policies around this vision; capable of gathering, analysing, understanding and distilling information in order to plan. Finally, the principal is responsible for keeping the focus on learning and development. As can be seen in Fig 2.1 overleaf, the dimensions of role clarity and competencies are separated into a sequence of activities and capabilities. The phases of the model are underpinned by competencies ranging from the organisational to the personal. This model encompasses people management competencies required in understanding the concerns of others and in leading and developing a team, organisational and political competencies involved in being able to impact and influence people and in being able to build relationships and network effectively. It incorporates cognitive competencies involved in seeking information and in analysing it effectively. Finally, it includes personal competencies of achievement drive, initiative and strategic thinking which are required to push for standards of excellence (p.24).

Figure 2.1 Role clarity and personal competencies for Principals as set out by Haygroup Management Consultants 2003



This model was recommended by Haygroup management as a fundamental starting point in understanding the role of the primary school principal and informing the process by which principals are selected and assessed. One of the key recommendations outlined in this 2003 report expressed the need for 'a set of management processes designed to enhance the selection and assessment of candidates for appointment' (p.36). It suggested that these management processes 'should focus primarily on assessing managerial and leadership capabilities' and that such processes should be based on the competency model contained within the report (p. 36).

In 2007, personnel from the LDS prepared a detailed background report examining school leadership in Ireland. This was carried out as part of an international study by OECD into school leadership across 22 countries. The report entitled *Improving School Leadership* found that 'very little research' (OECD, 2007:20) had been undertaken in Ireland on the 'competencies required by school leaders'. It showed that the focus in the past had been to articulate school leadership roles in terms of responsibilities and duties (DES, 1973; GOI, 1998) without further elaboration on competencies (knowledge and skills required to fulfil responsibilities and duties). It referred to the 2003 study carried out by Haygroup and the articulation of accountabilities and competencies set out in this report. It provided an abridged version of the table of accountabilities, success factors and key competencies required by the primary school principal presented in this report (See Appendix 7). In light of the OECD report (2007), PwC was commissioned by the LDS in 2008 to carry out further research into school leadership in Ireland. This was a cross border study and was linked with the Regional Training Unit (RTU) in Northern Ireland (NI). The purpose of this further research was to examine the reasons as to why some teachers apply for the post of principalship and

others do not. This report identified a number of actions which needed to be taken to attract and develop school leaders across Ireland. It acknowledged the 'wide-ranging implications of the choice of principalship for children and young people' (PwC, 2009:15) and found that 'it is essential that the selection process is sufficiently rigorous and tests a range of skills appropriate for principalship' (ibid). The PwC report recommended professionalising the system for the selection of candidates to principalship positions. It recommended that the process should 'comprise a range of activities to test the candidate's skills and could include an assessment centre or similar method of assessment' (p.15). It recommended consideration being given to succession planning through the identification of teachers with leadership potential early in their careers with the prospect of developing a pool of leaders for the future. It also recommended consideration being given to boards of management in the area of recruitment training.

The McKinsey report (2010) examined the world's top school systems and how they are building leadership capacity for the future. Although school systems in New York, New Zealand and Ontario perform well on international tests, they regard the improvement of leadership capacity as a top priority and an area in need of further improvements. Selecting a school leader is as an important decision for an education system (McKinsey, 2010:28) as making the correct match between a candidate and a vacancy and supporting the new principal during the transition period can greatly affect the ability of a school to perform to its highest potential (Burkhauser et al, 2013:1).

2.3.2 Competency or Capability?

Educational leadership is a highly contested field with ongoing debate around the development of leadership standards. There is somewhat of a shift from a competency based approach to a capability approach in the development of frameworks in recent years. However, the area of educational leadership is complex and whether a competency approach (describes something) or a capability approach (prescribes something) is taken, a lot of discussion needs to take place in between (Lyotard, 1985:17). The following paragraphs give a general outline of a competency versus a capability approach in the development of standards and frameworks.

In general terms, competency is synonymous with capability but in relation to professional standards and specifications, they mean different things. The aim of this section is to clarify for the reader the differences between both concepts. As already stated, this study defines competency as a 'measurable characteristic of a person that is related to effective performance' (Karthikeyan & Solomon, 2009: 574). Capability has been variously described as encompassing competence but going beyond it. Lester (2014: 31-43), argues that 'competency is reasonably easy to define and possible, if slightly less straightforward to assess' while 'capability is less directly amenable to either'. While a competency framework identifies requirements and definitions, a capability framework is an open model and supports continuous development. A capability approach looks for a depth of understanding which indicates potential to work effectively and it best reflects the idea of 'ability to become competent' (O'Reilly et al, 1999). According to Duignan (2006:142) in his work on capability, a competency only approach does not prepare educational leaders for decision making

involving contestation of values and ethical issues. It is his view that the role of the primary school principal is changing and the emphasis for leadership development and formation should be placed at the 'heart and soul as well as the head and hands of leaders' (p.144). In light of the changing nature of performance at work, the assessment of competency will need to focus on a person's ability to work in teams as well as focusing on their personal and interpersonal capabilities. The two approaches can complement each other and competency models must now look at what a person can do rather than the underlying dispositions that determines these activities. Lester (2014:31-43) argues that 'it is unlikely that capability frameworks will emerge to take the place of competence standards and frameworks'. The researcher agrees with Lester when he suggests that 'a capability approach is able to inform and modify competence frameworks so that they represent something that better reflects professional work' (ibid). While it is the aim of this study to determine the extent to which competency frameworks are used in the selection and appointment of principal teachers, the researcher is mindful of the varying definitions and approaches being considered for the implementation of leadership frameworks. For the purpose of this study, the researcher supports the use of a 'competency framework' for the selection and recruitment of primary principals as she believes this to be a preferable assessment tool for this purpose. The use of a hybrid framework such as a competency framework supported by a capability approach would however support professional development, ongoing practice and succession planning.

The development of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) is a good example of the evolving nature of a leadership framework which is reviewed at regular intervals. The OLF (2006) relied on an evolving body of professional knowledge and research in the area of effective leadership to define leadership competencies as the skills, knowledge and attitudes

of effective school or school system leaders. The framework defined leadership practice as a collection of patterned actions that draw on these competencies. Leader practices and competencies made up part 1 of the framework for principals and Deputy-Principals and were organised into five domains of; setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organisation, leading the instructional programme and securing accountability. The core leadership practices delineated in the frameworks are those that have been found to have the greatest impact on student outcomes. However, in the revised OLF (2012), weaknesses of efforts to define leadership and management competencies were cited. These included the assumption that a generic set of capacities is suitable in all contexts, a lack of empirical evidence linking competencies to the improvement of organisational outcomes, the fact that competencies focus on current and past performances rather than what is needed to meet future challenges (Leithwood, 2012). The revised OLF concentrates on organisational practices as opposed to competencies. Conceptualizing leadership as a set of practices reflects both the adaptive qualities and expert problem-solving processes. In doing so, it goes beyond any limitations associated with competencies (ibid). The revised OLF is representative of a capability approach but this is suitable to their overall approach to leadership development and succession planning.

Leithwood (2012:6) acknowledges the arguments put forward regarding the promotion of a static conception of effective leadership when competencies or practices are framed in models and standards in a field where knowledge is fast evolving. His response to this argument is the need to commit to periodic reviews of the field of research and previous understandings. It is his view that while the research field is very active now, it is not so active as to make a 'static' description of the field inaccurate for a period of at least six to eight years

(ibid). It is evident that the commitment to the leadership strategy in Ontario is being followed through. It has been reviewed after a period of four years and relevant changes have been made. The Ontario Leadership Strategy was born out of a discussion paper in 2006 by the Ontario Ministry for Education and Ontario is now being cited as one of the leading education systems on the world stage.

Niesche (2013) argues that the approach taken through the development of frameworks or standards cannot capture the complex and contradictory phenomenon of leadership. He argues that a shift from a competency approach (1997) to a capability approach (2006) in developing standards for leaders in Queensland, Australia reflected a shift in terminology and language alone. He found that the way in which capabilities were outlined in the 2006 framework revealed little difference from other standards and competency frameworks. There are many arguments supporting the use of frameworks and standards and just as many opposing such categorisation. While this research uses the Karthikeyan and Solomon definition of competency, this researcher acknowledges that it is a contested and highly controversial field. She also believes that this definition will serve as a starting point for professional conversations in this field among the interested parties in the absence of a formal competency framework within an Irish context.

In 2003, the first research study was undertaken in Ireland on the role of the primary school principal in which a model for leadership was presented. It appears that there is no model for leadership in place to support succession planning or recruitment in Ireland in 2017. This obviates the need within the Irish context to implement a competency framework to support selection and recruitment as a starting point.

2.4 Conclusion

In order to answer the research questions upon which this study is built, it was important to firstly examine the literature pertaining to educational leadership, competency frameworks and standards for educational leaders, the selection process for principals in Ireland and; make comparisons with selection processes in other parts of the world. Therefore, the chapter was divided into two sections. Section one looked at the selection process in place in Ireland within the legislative framework and compared this process with those of Ontario, New York, Scotland, Finland and New Zealand in order to contextualize selection on an international level. Section two studied the background to competencies and competency frameworks and their uses. It explored the competencies attached to the post of principal teacher in the context of the emerging view of effective school leadership in the 21st century.

It is evident from the literature that the high degree of autonomy provided to selection boards in the process of selecting and appointing a principal at primary level in Ireland is localised and subjective. The process is not subject to any control and there is no accountability required at any level within the DES in the selection process. The various patron bodies⁷, in particular the CPSMA, are responsible for selection and recruitment and it would very much seem that this is due to the historical relationship between the state and the Catholic Church. This relationship, which dates back almost two centuries has given all of the power to the Catholic Church in relation to primary schools in Ireland, including recruitment. While every school in the country is autonomous in nature, and 'local logics' are being used as selection

⁷ See Table 1:12 for a list of patron bodies

criteria, it is autonomy, power and local logics employed by the boards that is gate-keeping a reproductive, homosociable culture in place (Brooking, 2003).

Hayes (2006:14) suggests that standards allow associations to articulate its values, beliefs, knowledge and practices, provide a focus for a range of professional learning and can be a powerful advocacy tool for educational professions trying to establish their credibility in the eyes of the public and within the education community. As an education system that has come out of the shadows to compete on a worldwide stage, Ontario has implemented many reforms over the last two decades. The leadership framework provided those involved in education with a professional roadmap which defined the nature and quality of the work for educational leaders. In this age of increased regulation and accountability, it is time to professionalise the selection process of primary school principals in Ireland. It is necessary to find appropriate means of holding all of the players accountable for the quality of our education system and not just the street level bureaucrats – the teachers. (Sugrue, 2006:193).

The next chapter describes the method(s) used by the researcher to gather information regarding the extent to which competency frameworks are used in the selection of primary school principals in Ireland, the extent to which selection boards are trained in the area of principal teacher selection and the adequacy of the selection process for appointing primary school principals in Ireland.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the extent to which competency frameworks are used in assessing candidates for the post of principal within the primary school sector in Ireland. The study explores the end-to-end process from advertising the post to the subsequent appointment. It examines the experiences, attitudes and views of newly appointed principals, chairpersons of boards of management, representatives from the I.P.P.N. and C.P.S.M.A. as they are the interested parties involved in this process. According to Crotty (1998:2-9), epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and method represent hierarchical levels of decision making within the research design process. This methodology chapter uses Crotty's approach to the research design process by outlining for the reader the epistemology informing this research, the theoretical perspective supporting the research, the methodology employed and the method(s) used for data collection.

Furthermore, it discusses aspects relevant to carrying out the research; such as ethical considerations, the form of enquiry used by the researcher to test the reliability and validity of the data, the process of data analysis and researcher reflexivity.

3.2 Rationale

As already discussed in chapter 1, the researcher's initial interest in this study was aroused by a personal interest in the study of leadership in primary schools. This interest evolved from

working in various primary schools and experiencing different leadership styles. This encouraged the researcher to reflect upon how primary school principals are selected and recruited, the criteria used in the selection process and the use of competency frameworks to support the process. In undertaking a review of literature pertaining to principal recruitment in Ireland, certain issues began to emerge and questions began to form for the researcher. The issues and questions raised in the literature served to provide a focus for this study. The issues and questions which form the basis for this research study include; the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals and whether it is standardised across all school types, training received by selection boards in recruitment processes and the adequacy of the same, the use of competency frameworks by selection boards to support the selection process, and the competencies required to lead/manage a primary school.

Research Questions

- To what extent are competency frameworks used in the selection of primary school principals in Ireland?
- Are selection boards trained/knowledgeable in the area of principal teacher selection?
- Is the selection process adequate for appointing primary principals?

3.3 Research Design

The design of a research study begins with a topic and a paradigm of enquiry. The topic for this research study is the process involved in the selection and recruitment of primary school principals and the extent to which competency frameworks are used to support this process. The paradigm of enquiry is the theoretical framework supporting the research. The

framework supporting this research is based on Crotty's approach to research design by outlining for the reader the epistemology informing this research, the theoretical perspective supporting the research, the methodology employed and the method(s) used for data collection.

Epistemology is about 'how we know what we know' (Crotty, 1998:2-9). Guba and Lincoln (2000:168) argue that constructivist research is transactional and subjectivist. Such research positions the world, including the psychological world of research participant, as unknowable and the role of the researcher is therefore to construct an impression of the world as they see it (Ratner, 2008). Knowledge is a process of actively interpreting and constructing individual knowledge representations (Jonassen, 1991:5). The constructivist stance is suggestive of a world where numerous interpretations can be uncovered and one in which research participants cannot be truly known. It is a theory of knowledge which argues that people construct the meaning of reality. Grbich (2007:8), argues that 'there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking' and reality is socially embedded and existing entirely in the mind. This makes reality a moving target, because it is 'fluid and changing' and is constructed 'jointly in interaction by the researcher and the researched'. Guba and Lincoln (2013:40) further explain the relationship between the researcher and researched as 'highly person and context specific'. The 'reality' or the knowledge borne from this encounter exists in the time/space framework in which it is created. As a constructivist, the researcher believes that the data gathered from qualitative interview is a construct of joint interactions between the researcher and the researched. In the context of this study, the researcher acted as a data gathering instrument with the goal of jointly and collaboratively constructing meaning and data regarding the process for selecting primary school principals. As a

constructivist, the researcher takes the stance that there is no absolute knowledge, just our interpretation of it.

Furthermore, the researcher argues that the selection process for appointing primary school principals in Ireland is socially constructed with selection boards defining the role of the principal. The autonomy and power afforded to selection boards for the appointment of principal teachers is indicative of a reproductive, homosociable⁸ process (Blackmore, J. & Barty, K., 2004:8). Those involved in selecting primary principals are selecting leaders with qualities like themselves.

This constructivist stance adopted by the researcher forms the basis for the next step in Crotty's hierarchical design which is theoretical perspective. This is discussed in the following paragraph.

Crotty defines the theoretical perspective of his research design framework as 'the philosophical stance informing the methodology (Crotty, 1998:2-9). Constructivism supports an interpretivist stance, as supported by Schwandt (1994:118) when he suggests that the interpretivist approach provides insights into the 'complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it'. Yanow (2007:409), also agrees stating 'the evidentiary material that the researcher analyses', from an interpretive perspective, is 'constructed by participants in the event or setting being studied'. This approach looks for interpretations of the social world from cultural and historical perspectives. Interpretivism is the theoretical perspective supporting this research study. This approach looks for culturally derived and

⁸ The selection of people like oneself

historically situated interpretations of the social world (Crotty 1998:67). Therefore, meanings can vary from person to person and in the context of researcher and participant, each one can impart their own story on the research encounter. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991:24) contend that people create their own subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them and therefore, an interpretive approach attempts to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them. Researchers using an interpretive approach seek a deeper understanding or, as stated above, try to make sense of something. This study is situated within the interpretivist tradition as it aims at arriving at a better understanding of the phenomenon that is the process of selecting primary school principals in Ireland with a specific focus on the use of competency frameworks to support this process. It arrives at this understanding through exploring and analysing the interpretations of those who have recently come through this process as candidates for selection and those who have assessed candidates for selection.

Having reflected on the theoretical perspective informing this research, the next question to consider is the methodology or the plan of action behind the choice of method. The choice of methodology is generally determined by the beliefs of the researcher and whether the researcher believes in some external truth out there that needs discovering or whether the task of research is to explore people's perspectives in natural, field settings (Gray, 2013:29). In considering the methodology to be employed for the purposes of this study, the researcher was influenced by phenomenology. The researcher deems phenomenology suitable for this research as it 'aims to focus on people's perceptions of the world in which they live and what it means to them, a focus on people's lived experience (Langdrige, 2007:4). Phenomenology holds that in order to understand social reality, it must be grounded in people's experiences

of that reality. It is the intention of the researcher to present for the reader the interpretations of those individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of the selection process. It is an attempt to bring to light the process involved in principal selection at primary level through the eyes of those who have recently experienced the phenomenon; newly appointed principals, board chairpersons as well as from members of the IPPN and CPSMA.

Methods are 'the techniques used to gather and analyse data related to some research questions or hypothesis' (Crotty, 1998:3). For the purpose of this study, the preferred method of data collection was interview. This method of data collection was chosen as interview can be best understood as an interactional event in which responses are treated as accounts rather than straight reports (Baker, 1997:131). It was hoped to gain insights into how the participants perceived/constructed the selection process for primary principals and how they would have conveyed those perceptions/constructions in the interactional setting of the interview. The process of interviewing the participants was undertaken with a view to generating rich data as opposed to simply collecting data. It was the expectation that the interviews would reflect a dynamic interaction in which the interviewer and interviewee would 're-encounter and re-produce social order in and for the site of the interview (Freebody, 2003:137). The following paragraphs discuss the process involved in data gathering in greater detail.

3.4 Research Sample

In order to obtain the most relevant data on the selection process, it was essential to get the insights of newly appointed principals as they had themselves just navigated the process

successfully. The aim for the researcher was to interview a newly appointed principal from four Catholic primary schools, one Church of Ireland primary school, one Educate Together primary school, one Community National School, and one Gaelscoil. These school categories (as already shown in Table 1 p.12) represent 98.78% of all primary schools in Ireland and were used to represent a balanced sample from across the main school categories nationally. It was also intended to source interviewees from co-ed schools across a variety of urban and rural geographical areas, socio-economic backgrounds and school sizes. Denscombe (2007:177) suggests that interviews are easy to arrange but this was not the case for this researcher. The researcher experienced great difficulty from the outset in securing newly appointed principal teachers for interview. Having initially accepted an invitation for interview, many declined to follow through and excused themselves immediately before the scheduled time. This created an unexpected challenge in managing schedules and interview candidates while maintaining the balanced sample size and source.

This hurdle was overcome and a profile of principal teacher respondents/school categories is included in Figure 3.1. (overleaf).

Figure 3.1 Principal Teacher Respondent / School Profile ⁹

Respondent	School Type/Patronage	DEIS Indicator	Geographical Indicator	School Size Approx. no. of pupils on roll*	Gender
Keith	Catholic	X	Rural	100	Mixed
Liam	Catholic	✓	Urban	300	Boys
Rebekah	Catholic	✓	Urban	200	Boys
Joy	Educate Together	X	Urban	60	Mixed
Ann	Church of Ireland	X	Urban	100	Mixed
Tom	Gaelscoil	X	Urban	20	Mixed
Peter	Community National School	X	Urban	600	Mixed

*Approximation was presented in order to maintain anonymity of respondents

In order to ensure anonymity for all participants, it was not feasible to carry out interviews with chairpersons from the same schools as the principal teacher participants. Therefore, in practise, it was necessary to secure fourteen schools who had recently appointed principal teachers. It was even more challenging to identify and locate chairpersons as contact had to be made through schools. The researcher was successful in securing participants from all but one of the main school categories. A profile of chairperson respondents/school categories is included in Figure 3.2. (overleaf).

⁹ For the purpose of this study a newly appointed principal is a principal who has been appointed in the last three years

Figure 3.2 Chairperson Respondents / School Profiles

	School Type/Patronage	DEIS Indicator	Geographical Indicator	School Size	Gender
Michael	Catholic	X	Rural	250	Mixed
Maura	Catholic	X	Rural	200	Mixed
Joseph	Catholic	✓	Urban	150	Boys
Michelle	Catholic	✓	Urban	150	Girls
Tara	Educate Together	X	Urban		Mixed
Joachim	Church of Ireland	X	Urban	100	Mixed
Sean	Community National School	X	Urban	N/A	N/A

The C.P.S.M.A. provides advice and support for chairpersons and principals of boards of management in over 2,800 schools in Ireland and the researcher sought an interview with a number of independent assessors who participate in selection panels for principal teachers as representatives of the C.P.S.M.A. Interviews were secured with three independent assessors representing two different dioceses. One of those participants also sat on an interview panel in a Gaelscoil so the researcher was satisfied that all school categories were represented from the perspective of a principal candidate and/or independent assessor.

In order for the researcher to compare and contrast the relevance and validity of the data gathered from the different participants, the researcher sought the views and opinions of a member of the I.P.P.N. and the P.D.S.T. The I.P.P.N. is an independent, professional association of school principals in Ireland (I.P.P.N, 2014). Ninety per cent of all Irish primary school principals are members of this organisation and it is therefore in a position to comment in a representative capacity on matters relating to school leadership. The researcher was successful in securing an interview with a former president of the I.P.P.N. on the use of competency frameworks to support the selection of principal teachers. The P.D.S.T. was established in 2010 as a cross-sectoral support service for schools. It encompasses a broad range of supports for school leaders and offers programmes such as the Tóraíocht programme for aspiring principals. The researcher also felt that the views of a representative from this organisation would benefit the study due to its role in leadership development in Ireland presently. However, having contacted a member of this organisation who had been recommended by a number of colleagues for the purpose of this study, the researcher received an email stating the following:

‘Our role in PDST Leadership is in providing Leadership Development for newly appointed principals after appointment. It is not within our remit to comment on the adequacy of the recruitment process. This generally would be considered the role of the professional association’.

3.4.1 Pilot Interviews

Prior to starting the research interviews, pilot interviews were conducted with principal teachers with whom the researcher works. Robson (2005:185) denotes a pilot study as a ‘small scale version of the real thing, a try-out of what you propose so its feasibility can be

checked'. These pilot interviews proved an invaluable experience for the researcher as they allowed the researcher to practice her interview technique. The pilot interview enables the researcher to test the questions and their appropriateness for the targeted informants (Brenner, 2006:366). While the planned questions proved appropriate, the pilot highlighted for the researcher the importance of the interview technique and skill, which must in itself be learned and practiced. The researcher was hesitant when approaching the interview process. She was conscious that she did not want to present as questioning the participants personally but to obtain their interpretation of the process they had just completed. The pilot interviews helped to alleviate some of those initial nerves and the feedback and advice from the participants was used to further prepare for the initial interviews. The first cohort to be interviewed was the newly appointed principals, all of whom were in busy posts. It proved challenging to secure interviews with this cohort as they were apprehensive about sitting for interview; there was similar apprehension on the part of the researcher.

The interview process is one which occurs on many levels including physical, non-verbal, cognitive, emotional and intuitive. These pilot interviews enabled the researcher; to examine her role as interviewer, to test the questions and their appropriateness, to alleviate nerves going into those first interviews, to practice interview skills and techniques with principal teachers who provided support and feedback.

3.4.2 Interview Process

All interviews with principal teacher respondents were conducted between January and June, 2015 in principals' own school settings. Two were completed during school time and all

others were conducted after school hours. All interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes and all participants were notified in advance of the proposed duration. The interviews with the chairperson respondents and the independent assessors were carried out between September and December 2015. With the exception of one interview which was carried out over the phone and two interviews carried out in the respondent's own homes, all others were undertaken in the schools to which participants are attached. The interview with the I.P.P.N. respondent was carried out in his residence in September, 2015 and lasted approximately forty minutes.

Prior to commencement of interviews, all participants were forwarded information letters (See Appendix 8) and at the start of each interview, all participants were asked to sign a consent form relating to the interview and the voice recording of the same (see Appendix 9). Interviews were recorded using the pro recorder app¹⁰ and were transferred to the researcher's laptop using software for this purpose. Recording of the interviews enabled the researcher to concentrate on engaging with the interviewees and ensured a complete recording of each interview for the purpose of analysis (Denscombe, 2007:195). It also enabled the researcher to listen back over interviews and reflect upon the veracity of data gathered. Prior to commencing the interviews, one principal teacher respondent and one chairperson respondent requested a list of interview questions. It had not been the intention of the researcher to distribute the questions beforehand and no other participants made the request. Having reflected upon the request, the researcher provided the respondents with the questions beforehand. She did so for the following two reasons. Firstly, the respondents

¹⁰ One interview was carried out over the phone and therefore was not recorded

had made the request as a precursor to organising their thoughts for the purpose of the interview. Secondly, the researcher felt that this would serve as a valuable comparative piece of data collection.

Based on learnings from the pilot, it was decided to adopt the semi structured format for interviewing to allow a more fluid approach to questioning during each interview and enable greater flexibility. Baker (1997:131) suggests that interviewing is best understood as an interactional event to which questions are central and where responses need to be treated as accounts rather than straight reports. The questions were formed with the aim of eliciting as much information as possible from participants with regard to the research questions. An interview schedule was designed with key questions for the different sample cohorts; principal teacher respondents (See Appendix 10), chairperson respondents (See Appendix 11), independent assessor respondents (See Appendix 12), representative from IPPN (See Appendix 13). The schedule included a range of question types from introductory questions to direct questions (Kvale, 1996:133 – 135). The introductory questions allowed both interviewer and respondent to settle into the interview. The first question on the principal teacher schedule for example asked ‘How long have you been teaching?’ followed with ‘how long have you been principal teacher?’ The first five questions were general questions and introductory in nature and allowed the researcher to introduce the topic. The researcher included a mix of probing questions and direct questions in order to collect relevant data. The researcher also allowed silent pauses in order to give respondents the opportunity to reflect and clarify or elaborate on their answers.

The schedule served merely as a guide while interviewing. It was not the intention of the researcher to ask questions that put the participants under pressure to give the 'right' answer; rather it was to ensure the quality of data collected. It was one's aim to ask questions that would elicit relevant data which recounted experiences as the participants perceived them. In the case of the chairpersons who served on boards for long periods and who had experience of recruitment in their professional lives, their data assisted greatly in improving the dynamic of the interview process as it enabled easier linkage between questions. Their knowledge enriched the data collected and enhanced the whole process. The immediacy of the face-to-face interviews allowed the 'first-feeling response' (MacGreil, 2011:60) to be articulated by respondents. By comparative measures, capturing non-verbal cues is not possible with interviews over the phone. The non-verbal cues of face-to-face interviews can indicate levels of discomfort or enthusiasm with questions being asked.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Approval to undertake this research study was received from the Maynooth University ethics committee in December 2014. The process of applying for ethics approval allowed the researcher to better understand her responsibility to all participants in the study. The *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2011) were used to support the researcher in her application for ethics approval and informed ethical considerations of this research. The aim of the guidelines is to 'enable educational researchers to weigh up all aspects of the process of conducting educational research within any given context' (BERA, 2011:4) and to 'reach an ethically acceptable position in which their actions are considered justifiable and sound' (ibid).

A number of ethical considerations based on the BERA guidelines were used to support this research study. Informed consent was an important consideration from an ethical perspective. Prior to the commencement of each interview, informed consent was obtained from participants (as recommended by Bell, 2010:46). In order to obtain informed consent, participants were supplied with an information sheet (See Appendix 8) outlining the details of the research study and also reassuring participants that they were free to stop their participation at any point in the process (BERA, 2011:6). In order to ensure that participants fully read and understood all aspects of the process, signed consent was sought. Consent was also sought for audio recording of interviews but participants were also afforded the opportunity to go 'off record' if they so wished. Audio versions will be deleted/overwritten within 6 months of completion of the study. Any paper notes will be confidentially shredded by myself (researcher) within 6 months of completion of the study. The BERA guidelines for ethical research state that 'the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research'. Anonymity of each participant is sacrosanct in this research project. Pseudonyms were used as a means of identification of each participant and every effort was taken to ensure anonymity was maintained throughout the process and thereafter. In order to further ensure confidentiality, the names and contact details of all participants are stored on an encrypted file on the researcher's laptop in the researcher's home. These details were stored for the duration of the study but pseudonyms were used in the thesis. All identifying details pertaining to participants were kept separately to thesis notes or any notes relating to the research in hand. The use of pseudonyms enabled the participants to express their opinions a little more openly without fear of being identified.

3.6 Researcher Reflexivity

Ruby (1980:154) suggests that 'being reflexive in doing research is part of being honest and ethically mature in research practice'. Reflexivity is concerned with examining oneself as researcher and also the research relationship. It is about examining one's preconceptions and assumptions on an ongoing basis. In the initial stages of this study, the researcher considered her position from the perspective of an insider¹¹ within the field of research and the potential difficulties attached to undertaking the research from that position. While insiders have a lived familiarity with the group being researched, the outsider does not have any intimate knowledge of the group being researched (Griffith, 1998:361). It can be argued that while there is a lived familiarity between the researcher and the researched within the study, the researcher does not hold a post of responsibility, nor has she been involved the recruitment of principal teachers. This places the researcher into the category as having no privileged access to particular kinds of information (Merton, 1972:11) and could therefore be classed as an outsider. The researcher moved 'back and forth across different boundaries' of insider research and outsider research (Griffith, 1998: 368).

As a phenomenologist, the researcher was prepared to approach the study with openness. The first task of the phenomenologist is to 'bracket out' any preconceptions that may 'taint the research process' (Tufford & Newman, 2010:80). This is a difficult endeavour as assumptions and preconceptions are formed through a person's own experience of events or

¹¹ Insiders are members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of statuses (Merton, 1972:21)

situations. It takes awareness and self-reflection to learn to 'bracket out' beliefs in order to be genuine and attentive to the participant's view.

The researcher considered her 'self' as a researcher and the 'self in relation to the topic of research' as a precondition for coping with researcher bias (Norris, 1997: 172 - 176). Every attempt was made on the part of the researcher to bracket or 'set aside existential assumptions made in everyday life and the sciences' (Schwandt, 2001:19). Moustakas (1994:85) describes the epoche process as 'a preparation for deriving new knowledge'. Engaging in this process enables the researcher to 'set aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions and allowing things, events and people to enter anew into consciousness and to look and see again for the first time' (ibid). Through reflection, the researcher engaged in the epoche process by examining personal beliefs, views and assumptions based on her own experiences and observations from working within primary school settings. As stated earlier, the researcher has always had an interest in leadership, the impact a principal teacher can have on the whole school community and as a result, how school principals are selected. In her early years as a mainstream teacher, it very much seemed that the 'next-in-line' approach to promotion was the norm. Researcher bias was acknowledged due to one's beliefs that the process for selecting and recruiting a principal teacher should be more than 'next- in- line'. Her beliefs have always been and always will be grounded in fairness and transparency. The researcher was of the opinion that the process for selecting a school leader should be rigorous, formalised and professionalised. On initial review of the literature surrounding the process and the apparent lack of a standardised approach to recruitment, there were times when the researcher found it difficult to 'bracket out' personal beliefs. However, on meeting the participants during the data gathering stage, a voyage of real discovery commenced from

which the researcher gained new eyes (Proust, 1923). In order to question a process which seemed to lack transparency, it was imperative that the views and opinions of the participants were represented in an honest and transparent fashion.

This epoche process allowed the researcher to acknowledge her bias and go beyond it for the purposes of responsible data collection

Being reflexive has made this researcher question every word written, every question asked and every answer sought. It has made this researcher question her reasons for undertaking and submitting this work. It has enabled this researcher to go into each interview with the confidence that each process was transparent and trustworthy. Being reflexive as a researcher has ensured that one can be accountable and stand over all aspects of the research.

Every attempt has been made to accurately represent the selection process for appointing primary school principals and the extent to which competency frameworks are used.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are central to the collection of any data. Bryman (2008:31) states that validity is 'the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research'. Hammersley (1990:57) refers to validity as 'the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers'. To achieve valid research is to ensure correct correlation between the data collected and the conclusion, in other words, a lessening of the gap between reality and representation. The more this gap is reduced, the greater the

validity of the research. However, valid constructivist research is problematic and achieving valid constructivist research is a contradiction. There is no lessening of the gap between reality and interpretation in constructivist research.

'Sound and appropriate constructivist research is demonstrated by showing that its design is robustly appropriate for the phenomena and research purpose' (Denicolo et al, 2016:37). For the purposes of this research, it was important to achieve credible, authentic research and that the methods used to gather data facilitated access to the meanings and interpretations provided by the participants. In order to maximise the credibility and authenticity of this piece of research, it was decided to interview newly appointed principals, chairpersons of management boards and a representative of the IPPN with the aim of triangulating different interpretations of the same phenomenon. The literature review also supports the triangulation of data.

In preparation for undertaking the interviews, the researcher asked herself the following questions before each interview;

- What am I researching?
- Why am I researching it?

These questions enabled the researcher to maintain a clear focus on the research aims and objectives and helped to counteract any preconceptions and assumptions on the part of the researcher.

The researcher is aware that reliability in fixed design research is associated with the use of standardised instruments, a thinking that is more problematic for most qualitative

researchers. According to Hammersley (1992:67), reliability refers to 'the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observers on different occasions'. To record the observations consistently is to have a reliable method. Although the researcher was aware of the common pitfalls in data collection and transcription, including equipment failure, environmental distractions and transcription errors, the integrity of this piece of research was imperative from the outset. With the exception of one interview carried out by phone, all other interviews were recorded and transcribed which allowed intensive engagement with the data. The researcher read and re-read the transcripts with the research questions alongside her. Every attempt was made to present reliable data and the use of participant's comments in the presentation of data supports this endeavour. Every attempt was made to be thorough from start to finish.

3.8 Data Analysis

Analysis is the researcher's equivalent of alchemy – 'the elusive process by which you hope you can turn your raw data into nuggets of pure gold' (Watling in Coleman and Briggs, 2002:262). Data analysis involves 'noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities' (Cohen et al., 2007:461). In analysing the data gathered for the purpose of this study, the researcher employed a content analysis approach which involved coding and categorising the data (Denscombe, 2007:293). The goal of content analysis is 'to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study' (Downe & Wamboldt, 1992:314). The goal of content analysis in this instance was to provide knowledge and understanding of the process involved in selecting and recruiting primary principals and the extent to which

competency frameworks are used to support this processes. Using this approach, it was important to firstly become familiar with the content of the gathered data. The researcher read and re-read the data until familiarity was achieved. The research questions were always in mind during this process. From this, the researcher identified themes which began to emerge as a result of reading and comparing data gathered from the newly appointed principals, the independent assessors, board chairpersons and the IPPN representative. As an example, it was clear that "training" was emerging as a theme across all participant groups. When all themes were identified, the researcher used the capabilities of Microsoft word 2010 to copy and paste the highlighted passages into computer folders that corresponded with the headings devised for each passage (Seidman, 1991:92). All data were categorised in this manner. For example, when 'training' emerged as a theme, the researcher read through all transcripts and copied and pasted all passages relating to training from each cohort into the 'training folder'. It was a very structured approach and the emerging themes emerged as; training, knowledge of competencies and competency based approaches, participants' perceptions of adequacy of selection process.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the qualitative nature of this study. Descriptions were provided of the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods underpinning the study. The merits of using face-to-face interview for the purpose of gathering data were explored together with an account of the various ethical concerns needing consideration throughout the study. The chapter examined the manner in which interviews with newly appointed

principals, chairperson of management boards and representatives from the IPPN, PDST and CPSMA were sought and granted or not granted. There was a conscious effort to engage in triangulation in this study as 'different sources of information on the same phenomenon [use of competency frameworks] were used as a means of challenging and corroborating different claims and interpretations' (Lynch and Lodge, 2002: 22).

Difficulties arose during the process of securing interviews with potential respondents and the researcher was surprised at the reluctance of some to engage with this study. However, the researcher is satisfied with the data gathered through the use of qualitative interviews. Areas regarding researcher reflexivity, reliability and validity were also addressed. The data gathered from the interviews with the parties involved in the study will now be presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the views and attitudes of the research participants involved in this study. Analyses and discussions of the findings will be presented in Chapter 5. The research participants are identified as newly appointed primary school principals, independent assessors who sit on interview panels, a representative from the IPPN and chairpersons of boards of management. The purpose of presenting the data in this chapter is to relate the views of the above outlined participants regarding the issues upon which this research is built.

4.2 Perceptions of Newly Appointed Primary School Principals

The views and opinions of newly appointed principals in relation to training, rationale for applying for the post of principal teacher and competency based approaches are presented in the following paragraphs.

4.2.1 Rationale for Applying for the Post of Principal Teacher

On interviewing the newly appointed principals, each respondent was asked to outline their rationale for applying for the post, their responses included 'I was eighteen years teaching and I fancied something different'. One stated 'The principal was retiring and said to me – you should go for this' while another was Deputy Principal in the school for past 16/17 years, and

'knew the running of the school'. These replies reflected the views of school personnel who were already working in the school in which the vacancy arose (internal candidates). The replies from those principals who were not members of staff of the school in which principal posts were advertised (external candidates) included the following; 'For the past five – ten years, I'd been thinking I'd like to go for principalship and I wanted admin¹² principal - that was really what I wanted'. One respondent said 'I knew I was kind of ready – because I had leadership experience and a post and the responsibilities that come with that'. Another one of the respondents said 'I wanted principalship – My brother's a principal and I had worked closely with my principal in my previous school', while another stated that 'Having spent 18 years as Deputy Principal in another school, I felt I was getting stale and that it was time for change'. While these responses suggest that all newly appointed principals had, in their opinion, adequate experience to apply for principalship, it is reasonable to suggest from the data gathered from this cohort that the candidates who applied as internal candidates did so because the opportunity arose within their schools. Application for the post of principal had not been a priority for the internal candidates prior to the retirement of the principal of their schools. Those who applied as external candidates were actively seeking principalship positions. It was part of their career path moving forward in education.

¹² Admin Principal denotes administrative principal. It is the term used to refer to non-teaching principals or 'walking principals'. Administrative principals may be appointed to schools with seven mainstream class teachers

4.2.2 School Leadership/Management Training

In respect of school leadership/management training, there were two aspects to the data collection process. The first aspect sought information regarding school leadership/management training undertaken by respondents prior to taking up the post of principal teacher. When the respondents were asked if they had undertaken leadership/management training, one of the internal candidates confirmed that he had completed a master's degree in school leadership/management through The Open University. Of the remaining three internal candidates, one respondent had started her master's in leadership/management but had not completed the course prior to taking up her post. The other two internal candidates had not completed any leadership/management training prior to applying for the post of principal. In the case of the external candidates, one respondent had completed the master's in educational leadership while another was in the process of completing the post-graduate diploma in educational leadership (Tóraíocht) on application for the post. Another respondent stated that he had undertaken 'I.P.P.N. stuff for aspiring principals' and one other stated that she 'didn't do any specific course but she 'did a lot of admin courses and on line courses'. It is evident from the data gathered that it is possible to be appointed to the post of primary school principal within an Irish context without additional qualifications. It was also noted that those candidates who had aspirations for principalship were more prepared to undertake leadership/management training in preparation for the post of principal.

The second aspect sought to present the views of newly appointed principals in relation to school leadership/management training becoming mandatory for application for post of

principal teacher. There was a general consensus among all respondents that such training/qualifications should become a pre requisite. One respondent stated that 'it would bring a certain level of professionalism to the process'. Another respondent said that 'it should be a pre requisite to be honest about it'. A respondent who had not undertaken any leadership/management training herself stated that she 'would be aware of a lot of principals in roles who really should have undertaken some management training'. She went on to say that 'it would be a great help, a good base'. The consensus seemed to support mandatory qualification for application for the post of principal. However, one respondent expressed concern with regard to those teachers who are 'ruled out of the selection process for principalship due to lack of qualification'. He gave the example of the teacher who applies for the post of principal with 'years of experience and a fantastic manager of people' but 'never got around to doing a master's and questions the exclusion of this candidate on the grounds of lack of qualification alone.

Irrespective of whether respondents had undertaken training, all newly appointed principal respondents deemed that a qualification should become a pre requisite for the post of principal.

4.2.3 Knowledge of Criteria and Competencies attaching to the Post for which Principals Applied and were Recruited

Each newly appointed principal respondent was asked if they had received a copy of the criteria for the post of principal teacher when they were called for interview. All respondents said that they had received a copy of the criteria for the post for which they were subsequently appointed but only three of those said they could recall any of the criteria. The remaining four respondents could not recall any criteria attaching to their post of principal. One respondent listed 'experience of schools with disadvantaged status and leadership experience' as criteria listed for his post but could not recall anymore. Another of the respondents who had requested a list of questions prior to being interviewed could recall all six criteria and he named these as follows: 'Qualifications and professional development, vision for the school, ethos, managerial/organisational/ leadership skills, understanding the role of principal, legislative obligation'. Another respondent recalled the criteria for the post of principalship for which he applied and subsequently was appointed under the headings of 'leadership ability', 'knowledge of the G respondents and the when the aelscoil movement', 'knowledge of the policies', 'the legal status of primary schools, 'knowledge of the role of the patron', 'ethos of the school' and 'competence in the Irish language'.

Both respondents who listed all criteria attaching to their post had undertaken leadership training and fall into the category of external candidates who were actively seeking to be appointed as principal teachers. They had invested time in professional development with a view to becoming principals and they both displayed ease in answering this question. It is evident from the responses that 'leadership' is an important criteria and that qualification is

sought as criteria even though it is not mandatory for application. Also, it can be inferred from this data that the criteria are not standardised for the post of principalship but are established to suit the needs of individual schools.

The respondents were also asked if they 'could name some competencies associated with the role of principal teacher'. In all cases, the respondents did not initially understand the information being sought by the question, and sought clarification by asking, 'What do you mean by competency?' As an example and in keeping with the focus of the study, the researcher gave 'interpersonal communication' as an exemplar. In answer to the question, one of the newly appointed principals suggested that 'maintaining relationships would be the most important thing' and to 'keep a cool head'. She also mentioned 'communications' as being important but she would 'definitely put relationships number 1'. A 'safe pair of hands' was another response from a male respondent. To support this point further, he added that as principal, 'you cannot be rash nor impulsive when facing the many different situations on any given day' as such reactions may 'jeopardise the school, the safety of pupils or the integrity of the board'. Other responses from the newly appointed principals included 'organisational skills', 'communication skills' and 'to be positive' while one of the respondents stated that as principal 'you may have to deal with 8/10 live happenings at any one time' and he stressed the importance of being 'able to multi-task'. The ability to 'motivate people' and 'bring people along' were also offered as replies to this question.

It was clear from the outset that none of the respondents understood the term 'competencies' associated with the role of principal teacher even though their responses displayed an awareness of what it is to be competent in the role of principal.

4.2.4 Knowledge of competency based approaches used in the recruitment process for primary school principals

Having discussed the competencies associated with the role of principal teacher, the respondents were asked if they had any knowledge of competency based assessment used for the purposes of selection and five out of the seven respondents stated that they had no knowledge of such assessment. Two of the male respondents said that they knew what competency based assessment was with one stating 'It involves questions such as 'What would you do if?' The other respondent answered that it involves questions such as 'Tell me a time when an angry parent confronts you in the yard? He further added that they are 'scenario based questions to try to see if this person will follow protocol'.

For those respondents who stated that they did not know the nature of competency based assessment, the interviewer briefly explained this phenomenon in the context of this research study. It was important to do this as the next question sought to clarify the respondent's perceptions of their interview experience for the post of principal and whether it reflected a competency based assessment. One female respondent thought that her interview was more to do with 'procedures and how a principal runs a school'. She said that 'they [the interview panel] would have asked about numeracy/literacy', the supports in place for a principal teacher and 'How would you deal with a difficult teacher?' This respondent stated in response to the same question that 'it was very straight forward'. Another stated that his interview reflected a 'standard assessment', it was about an hour long with three interviewers. He stated that 'it was like a teacher's interview except it dealt with far more in depth issues that were more relevant for a person taking on a role of leadership'. When another of the respondents was asked the same question, he replied by saying that 'probably

50% of the interview reflected a competency based assessment'. He stated that in an interview, 'you talk about yourself and why you feel you're right for the job'. In his opinion, these answers are 'deeply based in your experiences'. He went on to say that you talk about 'what you've done to date and how you feel you can drive that forward in a big school'. After being made aware of what competency based assessment was in the context of this study, another respondent exclaimed 'I couldn't say whether it was competency based. The only scenario based question I can remember is – How would you promote the school for inclusivity'? It was the view of another respondent that her interview for her post of principal 'did not reflect a competency based interview'. She said that 'it was mainly about administration and leadership. She went onto say that 'the interview panel knew her and the work that she has undertaken so she wouldn't be asked the same as the other candidates'. A male respondent simply said that 'his interview had indeed reflected a competency based assessment'.

While some of the respondents were aware of the nature of competency based assessment, the majority of the respondents had no knowledge of this means of assessment. Even after providing a brief explanation, it was clear that some of the candidates were still unsure as to whether their interviews had reflected a competency based assessment. It became apparent through discussion that all candidates had been assessed using a competency based approach albeit unknowingly.

Having discussed the views of newly appointed principals with a view to answering the questions set out at the beginning of this study, the researcher would now like to present the views of independent assessors in relation to the same questions.

4.3 Views and Perceptions of Independent Assessors

The views and opinions of Independent Assessor respondents in relation to selection/recruitment procedures for primary principals are presented in the following paragraphs. The researcher felt it was important to garner the views of this cohort in relation to the extent to which competency based approaches are used in the recruitment of primary principals. The perception of their role on a selection panel, the training they receive and their thoughts on the adequacy of the process are presented also.

4.3.1 Perception of the role of the independent assessor on the interview board for principal teacher

In response to the question pertaining to their perceived role on interview boards for principal teachers, the independent assessors answered that 'they were there to help the chairperson of the board of management to select a suitable candidate'. One of the respondents stated that he perceived the role to be one of 'aiding the chairperson of the board' and 'bringing some balance to the interview process'. Another of the respondents thought that her role was that of a 'neutral person' which helps with the transparency and fairness of the process while the third assessor interviewed perceived her role as one that 'works with the chairperson to ensure the best person gets the job'. This respondent added that when interviewing, she keeps in mind that 'the best qualified person might not necessarily be the best suited' to the role of principal teacher. One respondent also made the claim that being an independent assessor is 'not what you do for popularity' as there are 'hard decisions to

make at times'. The responses provided by all three respondents suggest to the researcher that the role of the independent assessor on the board is to support the chairperson.

Having discussed the role of the independent assessor with the respondents, knowledge of competencies and competency based assessment was examined with the respective respondents. This data will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

4.3.2 Knowledge of competency based approaches used in the recruitment process for primary school principals

As an introduction to this theme, the researcher asked the respondents to name some competencies required to lead a primary school. It is evident from the data gathered that two out of the three respondents placed huge value on interpersonal communications and interpersonal understanding as important competencies required to lead a primary school. For example, one of the assessors suggested that the most important competency required to lead a primary school is grounded in 'being a good people person' adding that 'it is hugely important to have a good empathy for the children and colleagues and for human situations'. Another of the assessor respondents stated 'you need to be able to empathise with pupils, teachers and parents' and further supported this by saying 'the bottom line is, you have to be a real people person and you have to be seen to be fair'. Other responses alluding to interpersonal communications and understanding included 'the ability to compromise' and 'fairness'.

It became apparent from all responses given in reply to this question that the independent assessor respondents could name those qualities required to be competent in the role of principal teacher. Such responses included; 'leadership', 'enthusiasm', 'fairness', 'flexibility', 'good knowledge of the education system', 'conflict management' and 'cop on'. While it is evident that all respondents value interpersonal communication as an important competency for the post of principal, none of the respondents used terms such as interpersonal communication, interpersonal understanding, team-building to imply a professional knowledge of competencies associated with the post of principal teacher. Issues arising from the data will be analysed further in chapter 5.

The respondents were then asked to name the competencies sought after by schools when interviewing candidates for the post of principal. According to responses provided by all three respondents in answer to this question, schools look for 'qualifications', 'experience' and 'organisational skills'. One respondent emphasised that in his role as independent assessor, it is important to bear in mind a number of things when going through applications for the post of principal teacher. While he examines the qualifications listed, he believes it is important to look at experience also, so he can form an opinion as to the 'personality or guile of the applicant or whatever it takes to get the school to where it needs to be'. One of the other respondents recounted from her experience as independent assessor 'when the board meets as a group, they look at what the school needs'. This respondent added 'we are looking for a candidate who is enthusiastic, fair, good at conflict management but in different capacities depending on the school in question', noting that what a DEIS school needs is different to what a non DEIS rural school needs. The third respondent recounted that a school might 'look to see if someone has been bettering themselves' and makes the point that 'it's

almost a given that a newly appointed principal has a master's and it doesn't have to be a master's in education'. As is evidenced from the responses given to this question, the respondents listed the criteria sought after by schools as opposed to competencies on the part of a potential principal candidate. While qualification is a criterion, the competency from which this criterion might be established is professional expertise. The competencies underpinning organisational skills could be characterised as thinking and acting strategically, managing resources and information seeking.

This data also suggests that qualification is sought after by schools even though it is not a pre requisite to applying for the post of principal teacher and criteria are set with the needs of the school in mind.

Two out of the three independent assessors, when answering the question on the competencies sought after by schools when interviewing for the post of principal teacher mentioned schools that are experiencing or have experienced conflict. In relation to dealing with the avoidance of conflict when appointing a principal teacher, one respondent stressed the importance of bearing in mind 'what will be left in the school after the appointment has been made'. He made the point that internal candidates have proven abilities that have to be acknowledged. He supported this view in the following example:

'There may be a fantastic external candidate but a person who is looking to be promoted and they're the right person be it the DP who has helped to keep that machine oiled – you have to think that person might be suitable – you certainly have to give them a good hearing and in a lot of cases, you'd want to have a very good reason not to give it to that person'.

The other respondent, in discussing the avoidance of potential conflict believes it is important to take into account a 'helicopter view of what the school needs' and a 'history of conflict in a school will have to be taken into account when looking at applicants for the position'. This suggests to the researcher that the possibility of conflict after an appointment has been made can have a bearing on the selection of a principal teacher.

The researcher asked all three independent assessor respondents if the interviews for principal teacher, in their experience, reflected a competency based assessment. In answer to this question, all three candidates agreed that interviews are competency based in that they ask candidates to give examples of a time when 'x' happened or how would you deal with 'y' happening. Also, they agreed that there is no apparent competency framework in place supporting the process and when drawing up criteria, they are 'guided by DES circular 02/02 (See Appendix 14) and by the 'Duties of the Principal' (See Appendix 15). However, circular 02/02 does not set out a list of competencies as suggested by one of the respondents and when the respondent refers to the role of the principal teacher as a guide, she is referring to the functions of the principal teacher as set out in section 22 of the Education Act which provides a list of duties attaching to the role.

4.3.3 Training for independent assessors in selection/recruitment procedures

In seeking the views of the respondents regarding training for independent assessors acting on interview boards, it is evident from the data gathered that training is provided in the form of seminars and talks by patron bodies, the Irish Primary Principals' Network and Irish National Teachers' Organisation. One of the assessors attended diocesan seminars and she

described the training provided by the diocese as outlining the different steps in the recruitment process – ‘it gives you step 1, step 2, step 3 and so on’. Another respondent attended seminars given by the INTO and she stated that the seminars go through the process from advertising to interviewing. The third assessor respondent stated that he had not received training in the area of recruitment but that he ‘learned on the hoof’. He said that by ‘working with people who are very good at interviews’, he became good at it himself.

The researcher asked the independent assessors who had attended the seminars to give their opinion on the relevance of this training. The assessor who attended diocesan seminars said that it didn’t give you the practical training like ‘how to decide what’s required for each school or even if there’s standard questions’. The respondent who attended INTO seminars said that ‘there should be more in the whole area of questioning and how you can develop questions’. She also thought that ‘training should be more formalised’ and that ‘if you do the training, then and only then should you be chosen as an independent assessor’.

It is evident from this data that it is possible to act as an independent assessor on an interview board for the selection and recruitment of a principal teacher without having undertaken any training in recruitment or selection. It would also appear that the training provided for independent assessors is more of an overview of the process as opposed to practical training in how to carry out assessment.

4.3.4 Assessors' perception of the adequacy of the process for the selection of primary school principals

The final question in the interview with independent assessors explored the effectiveness of the recruitment process and whether they would make changes to the existing process. In expressing his views on selecting primary school principals, one respondent considered the process to be adequate but he suggested doing a number of 'little things' to ensure that 'the right candidate is chosen'. He spoke about the importance of following up on references and phoning referees. He makes the point that written references are like Christmas cards, as they can say nice things 'but a referee will actually give you the low down on a candidate'. He also stressed the importance of having 'good faith in the other people acting on the interview panel along with you, as people actually want the best for their school'. In contrast to this, another independent assessor responded that she does not perceive the process to be 'adequate'. She believes that the criteria for selection for principalship should be more 'specific' and that previous experience should be 'points weighted' and have 'relevance'. She would query the validity of the Standard Application Form (SAF) as in her opinion, 'the SAF lends itself to answers being googled and spun off and believes the CV is a better alternative'. Furthermore, she proposed mandatory training for independent assessors and chairpersons of boards of management in the area of recruitment and subsidisation of the same. She stated that 'the chairperson's experience may be very limited and they're given a huge role in it all' and she believes that 'chairpersons should be trained but it should be formalised and expenses should be paid'.

The third respondent also stated she thought the process 'inadequate for a number of reasons'. She stated that the application form lends itself to 'embellishment of answers' by

candidates. She also held the view that 'nobody should ever be appointed to a permanent job immediately'. In her opinion, 'there should be an element of probation' and she went on to add that 'if you appoint somebody at 35 years of age in the current situation, they could be there for a possible 30 years'. One definite change this respondent would make to improve the process related to 'probation' and 'induction of a principal teacher'. She argued that 'should an external candidate be appointed to a school, they should be able to go in to the school in advance and engage in shadowing the principal teacher from whom they are taking over to see how the school works'. She finished with the suggestion that there should be 'something in place for those principals who just don't settle into their role for whatever reason – perhaps a structured induction period'.

In summary, the views of the independent assessors concerning the changes they would make to the selection process for principal teachers can be presented as follows; Two of the respondents would make changes to the standard application forms as they do not profile, in their opinion, the 'characteristics or capabilities or qualities of those applying' and candidates give 'googled' answers which may or may not reflect the quality of candidate to be interviewed. There is strong consensus that the standard application form does not 'really give the profile of what you're looking for in a candidate' and that it allows for 'embellishment' of information and all respondents stated that 'it's very hard to judge a candidate until a person is sitting in front of you'.

Having presented the views and opinions of newly appointed principals and independent assessors who are involved in the recruitment of primary school principals, the researcher will now proceed to present the views of the IPPN with regard to use of competency frameworks

and the process of selection involved in the appointment of primary school principals as well as the training received on behalf of interview boards involved in principal teacher selection.

4.4 View and perceptions of Irish Primary Principals' Network

To represent the views of the Irish Primary Principals' Network, the researcher met with their representative who is a retired primary school principal, a past president of the IPPN and who is still heavily involved with the organisation. As an introduction to the interview, the researcher made reference to the studies carried out in Ireland over the last number of years regarding professionalising the process of recruiting primary school principals in Ireland, with specific reference to the Haygroup report commissioned by the IPPN. The respondent was asked for his opinion, based on his knowledge and experience as to whether such professionalisation had occurred. In his opinion, it had not with the respondent saying 'Nowhere near it'. The respondent further added that 'it varies from parish to parish and diocese to diocese'. The respondent was then asked to give his perspective on the use of competency frameworks to support the process of selection in recruiting primary school principals and if such frameworks are in use. His reply to this was 'not particularly' and that the IPPN organisation 'have been trying to bring in a competency framework but one doesn't exist at the moment'. The respondent stated that in its absence, 'selection panels draw up their own criteria and this varies from diocese to diocese, the location of the job, where the school is, how big the school is, it depends on any number of factors'. When asked about the use of a standardised competency framework, the respondent would agree with and recommends the introduction of a competency framework to support job description and to

support selection processes. He believes that it would offer specific criteria to candidates and to those involved in selection. However, he insisted that applicants for the post of principal should have 'some level of professional development done in relation to leadership and management as a base line for applying for the post'. He is not saying that it should specifically be a 'master's but he stated that 'in a lot of OECD countries, Finland, Korea etc – level 9 or its' equivalent (which is a post graduate diploma in Ireland) is a pre requisite for being even called for interview'. It would seem that the respondent is questioning the weighting being awarded to leadership qualification in an Irish context in comparison to other countries.

The respondent was asked if he had any knowledge as to whether a 'competency based approach' is used at interview. He stated that a competency based assessment is used in that the questions asked at interview are generally 'scenario based'. However, he claimed that even with this approach, 'there is no way that competencies can be fully assessed during the interview for principal teacher in Ireland at present' and deemed it impossible 'in the length of time given' to hold the interview. He maintained that this part of the process of selection 'should be based on a series of interviews rather than just one 20 minute to a half hour interview' and further added that 'you can't really assess all the competencies in that timeframe by the time you've introductions done and have given the candidate the opportunity to introduce themselves and have asked a few general questions'. In the respondent's estimation, a standard interview for principal teacher lasts between twenty minutes to half an hour but there are 'more professional instances' where it can go beyond the half hour. It was his view that this method of assessing candidates is completely

inadequate given that when recruiting for the post of principal, 'you're possibly recruiting the candidate for a 20 – 30 year period'.

The respondent claimed that 'lip service' has been paid to professionalising the process with provision of professional development and the various leadership programmes and while such programmes are providing 'that which wasn't there before' or 'filling a gap', there is no filtering process in place for candidates undertaking continuous professional development'. He supported this statement by saying that candidates applying for leadership professional development are self-directed and are not emanating from schools that recognise 'leadership or how to bring about improved management structures' in schools. He spoke about the Ontario Leadership Framework and how they plan for succession in Ontario and added that the IPPN base their structure and recommendations on the Ontario model.

The final part of this interview dealt with selection boards and whether they are sufficiently trained in the process of selection for primary school principals. When asked if he thought that the training provided to those who sit on interview boards was appropriate, his response was; 'Absolutely not - that's an unequivocal NO'. He referred to the fact that there is 'one evening training provided for members during the board term' and mentioned that 'board members can be anyone who is willing to put themselves forward, the chair can be someone with absolutely no training in recruitment'. He stated that he supported the provision of appropriate training in recruitment for selection boards, especially chairpersons and is firm in his belief that clear guidelines with specific criteria must be in place for the selection of members for interview boards. He also stated that he personally holds the view that there should be a minimum of five persons on an interview board (at present it is a minimum of

three) with one of those involved having no involvement with teaching. He also stated that due to the significance of the appointment, he would propose the establishment of 'centralised recruitment boards consisting of highly trained personnel'. This would bring it in line with the appointment of the inspectorate who are selected and appointed through the public appointments service.

Having presented data from the interview carried out with a representative of the Irish Primary Principals' Network, the data will now be presented from the final group of respondents, the chairpersons of boards of management.

4.5 Views of Chairpersons of Boards of Management

In interviewing the Board of Management chairpersons, the researcher asked about the length of time they each had served as chairperson on their respective boards. Six out of the seven respondents had served as chairpersons for 'more than one term'¹³ with the seventh only having served for two and a half years. The four catholic school chairpersons include two females who have just commenced their third term as chairpersons of management boards, one male chairperson who has just completed two terms and has stepped down in the last changeover of boards, and one male chairperson who has just started into his second term. The chairperson from the Church of Ireland patronage has served as chairperson of boards for more than ten years while the chairperson representing Educate Together has acted as chairperson for two and a half years to date. The respondents also included a representative

¹³ One term on a Board of Management lasts four years

from the Community National School model. This school patronage does not appoint chairpersons to boards but a manager directs and oversees the 11 schools within the Community National model. All chairperson respondents have been involved in recruiting primary school principals during the course of their terms. The views and opinions of this cohort in relation to knowledge of criteria used to shortlist applicants for the post of primary school principal, training for chairperson in selection/recruitment procedures, perception of the adequacy of the process and knowledge of competency based approaches used in the recruitment process for primary school principals are presented in the following paragraphs.

4.5.1 Knowledge of the criteria used to shortlist applicants for post of primary school principal and the manner in which this criteria is arrived at

The first question put to each chairperson was; 'who sits on the selection board for principal teacher?' The responses included 'the chairperson sits automatically and two other persons – normally principal teachers', 'there is a list of people to choose from and the chairperson has to establish the board with two other people from this list'. One of the respondents stated that securing the two independent assessors from the list of assessors was the most difficult part of the whole process as she maintained that 'they [the assessors] don't want 'to go to the trouble of it' and in her experience, they [the assessors] are 'afraid they'll make a mistake'. In further discussing the make-up of the selection board, one chairperson stated that 'when the outgoing principal had handed in her notice of retiring her post and the patron had been informed, the outgoing principal was informed that the selection process would not be discussed with her in any form'. In contrast to this, another chairperson within the same

patronage stated that the selection board for the appointment of principal teacher within his school was established in conjunction with the outgoing principal, the patron and the three independent assessors. This seems to suggest that although the selection board members are chosen from a list of interviewers, how they are chosen and by whom can vary.

In the case of Educate Together, the chairperson stated that the Educate Together patron body 'put the interview boards together for recruiting principal teachers' and added that in her experience of recruiting the principal for the school to which she is attached, the interview panel was made up of 5 persons including herself. The chairperson from the Church of Ireland patronage said that 'there would be a patron's representative and an independent assessor' on their selection panel and a representative from the Community National School model stated that the interview panel for the appointment of their principal teacher is made up of other principal teachers within the model.

With regard to the use of competency frameworks to support the selection and recruitment of primary school principals in Ireland, the researcher asked the respondents the following question; 'To your knowledge, is there a competency framework in place to support the selection process?' One respondent who has experience of recruitment processes with the civil service and has been involved in the appointment of two principal teachers simply said 'No'. When another respondent was asked about the use of a competency framework, he asked for clarification on competency frameworks and when the researcher provided an explanation, he stated that 'There is no standardised framework, the selection board agree upon criteria and inform the candidates of what the criteria will be'. He added that the criteria can be different from school to school and that 'there is no rigid formula for establishing

competencies'. He further stated that 'the framework is assessing them on the criteria you choose – qualifications, professional competencies, teamwork'. Another respondent suggested 'there is a framework to support the process' and straight away added 'well there's a template from the rules of national schools'. He then stated that the criteria would be in line with the needs of the school and the competencies would be set in line with the needs of that framework and all those would be set and agreed by the selection panel'. It is evident from the data above that there is no standardised competency framework in place to support the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals in Ireland and that selection panels use their own templates and resources to establish criteria. It is clear that criteria are being established in the absence of a competency framework to support the process.

The researcher then asked the respondents to list some competencies they thought attached to the post of principal teacher. The following list is a compilation of the competencies from respective chairperson respondents. They suggest the principal should 'be motivated', 'be a good listener', 'be decisive in decision making', 'use common sense when it's needed', 'respect staff and pupils and parents and to be able to gain respect', 'be suitably qualified', 'have vision as to where the school is going', 'encourage and direct teachers in the right way', 'lead by example' and 'have the ability to inspire'.

The evidence suggests that there is knowledge among chairpersons of competencies attaching to the post of principal teacher. There was no knowledge displayed on the part of this cohort that suggested a professional understanding of the competencies attaching to the post of principal teacher. None of the chairpersons mentioned interpersonal communications, the ability to think strategically or analytically. This suggests that criteria

are being established in the absence of a clear knowledge of competencies attaching to the post of principal teacher.

Having gathered data as to the chairpersons' knowledge of competencies attaching to the post of principal teacher, the researcher went on to ask about criteria used to shortlist applicants for the post and how they are chosen. In response to this question, the respondent who is experienced in recruitment procedures recounted that 'the traditional route of looking at educational qualifications, experience etc. was taken'. Another chairperson who had just been appointed to the board after the local priest asked him to 'come on board' said he was guided by the independent assessors from the diocesan panel when choosing criteria used to shortlist candidates and he mentioned 'qualifications, leadership, vision, to be a good listener, to have the ability to inspire others and to be decisive'.

Another of the respondents who is serving a third term as chairperson and has no experience of recruitment or education organisations other than being chairperson of a board of management stated that in her experience, 'criteria are chosen by the selection board and together a list is drawn up – it's usually organisational, leadership etc.'. Another respondent stated that the 'needs' of the school are 'taken into account as criteria' and while she regards qualifications as important, she believes that the following criteria are hugely important for a person who is about to embark on the journey of running a school. She suggests the person should 'be prepared to take ongoing training', 'be professionally competent', 'have a vision for the school', and 'most importantly to understand the principal's role'.

Another of the respondents suggested that best practice in establishing criteria for principal teacher selection by boards of management was arrived at in an ad hoc fashion. He stated the following:

‘you’re looking at the needs of the school and reading the relevant circulars and finding out the role of a principal. There’s not a lot of supports. There’s nothing really and as a chairperson, you’re very much on your own – even trying to get the process set up’. ‘You have to be resourceful yourself. You spend a lot of your time googling and making phonecalls and to be honest, you end up contacting people who have maybe recently appointed a principal and look at where they got their criteria from, trying to get information and then bring it all to a meeting’

The last respondent interviewed stated that the criteria were chosen with the school in mind and she listed the criteria used for shortlisting applicants in their case of recruiting a principal teacher as follows: ‘qualifications, relevant work experience, ethos and approach to education, partnership and participation in the school, leadership, organisation and management and communication skills’. She stated that ‘questions were divided up into categories according to those criteria’. With the exception of the chairperson who was experienced in the recruitment procedures outside of his role as chairperson, it became apparent throughout the process of interviewing that chairperson respondents displayed a complete lack of knowledge when asked about competencies and competency frameworks when recruiting a principal teacher.

The researcher then went on to gather information around competency approaches used in the selection of primary school principals. It was important to do so in order to establish as to whether competencies were being assessed at interview in the absence of a competency

framework or is there was some knowledge of competencies on the part of those charged with assessment of candidates.

4.5.2 Knowledge of competency based approaches used in the recruitment process for primary school principals

The chairpersons were asked if a competency based approach had been taken when interviewing candidates for the post of principal teacher. This was done with the aim of establishing as to whether a competency based approach had been undertaken at interview in the absence of a framework to support this approach. One respondent stated that assessment at interview wasn't consciously competency based but that 'questions were scenario type questions or if someone on the board had experience of competency based interviews, they would ask questions from that perspective, e.g- What would you do in the event of? Tell me a time when?' In following this theme, all respondents said that scenario type questions were asked at interview to assess candidates for the post of principal teacher. Responses included 'scenario based questions are asked at interview', 'interviews are '100 per cent competency based'. Another response included, 'you would have competency based questions such as 'give me an example of how you would deal with conflict?' How you would show leadership? How would you ensure the curriculum is being taught if it's for a walking principalship?' It can be concluded from these responses that interviews carried out for the post of principal follow a competency based approach for assessing candidates but there is no framework in place to support this method of assessing candidates.

4.5.3 Training for chairperson in selection/recruitment procedures for primary schools

A question concerning the level of training undertaken on the part of each respondent to fulfil their roles as chairpersons of management boards was put to all chairperson respondents. When asked to respond to the question – ‘Have you received recruitment training in your role as chairperson of a BOM?’, four out of seven respondents indicated that they had not received training in the area of recruitment. One of the chairpersons stated that he had not received training nor has he any experience in selection or recruitment. He added that he was asked to be chairperson by the Parish Priest and he had concerns around his lack of experience in the area of selection and recruitment of staff from the outset. He recounted the ‘the burden of responsibility’ he felt when appointing a principal teacher as in his opinion, the ‘appointment of a principal teacher can have a lot of repercussions for a lot of people’. One of the respondents who had not received any training in recruitment stated that ‘there is training to the best of my knowledge. I think it mightn’t be a bad idea if they had one for chairs’. Another of the respondents stated that he had no training in his role as chairperson of a board of management although he had received training outside of this role to include competency based approaches to recruitment.

The three remaining respondents all received training in selection and recruitment. One of those stated ‘Yes I have training, training has been provided and I have attended but you gain experience with every process’. One other received training from Catholic Primary Schools Management Association and training was provided by Educational Training Board for the last respondent to be questioned on this topic.

It is evident when summarising the above data that training is available for board chairpersons in the area of selection and recruitment. However, it is not required that chairpersons of boards of management attend recruitment training to fulfil their roles. In leading on to the final theme, the researcher wanted to get the chairpersons' perspectives on the adequacy of the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals and if they might suggest changes to be made to the existing process.

4.5.4 Chairpersons' perception of the adequacy of the process in place to select primary school principals in Ireland

As a conclusion to the interviews, the chairpersons were asked to comment on the adequacy of the selection process for primary school principals and suggest any changes they would make to the process in place. The chairperson with training and experience in selection and recruitment did not think the process in place was adequate and thinks the whole process 'should be re-examined critically with a view to implementing a competency framework to support the process'. For the purpose of this study, this respondent presented a competency framework outlining the competencies he believes are required to carry out the role of principal teacher. In relation to changes he would make to the selection process in place at present, the respondent stated that there is a need for better communication between the patron and boards of management of schools. He made reference to 'the disconnect between the patron and boards' in relation to selection and recruitment of principal teachers. Another of the respondents believes the selection process is inadequate at present and thinks the 'candidates for the post should be given a bit more information as to what is being sought'.

She held the view that 'the chairperson of the board should not be on the interview board' and added that while she's on a board, she does not know the 'daily running of a school'. She further suggested that the selection and recruitment process for principal teachers should be carried out by an independent body, stating 'I feel it should be totally independent'. One other of the chairpersons believed the selection process to be totally inadequate and used the word 'unbelievable' when referring to its inadequacy. She wanted to see more input from the board of management into the process and advocated more time for the assessment of candidates with perhaps a second interview for candidates competing for the post of principal teacher.

In contrast to these responses, the respondent representing the Community National Schools stated that the schools in the patronage to which he is attached 'tend to get good principals' and the process in place to recruit principal teachers 'suits what they are trying to do'. Another respondent said that he would not change anything with the exception of training for the chairperson. Another respondent deemed the selection process to be 'very adequate' but said that it requires a lot of work on the part of the chairperson. When asked about changes she might make, she strongly believes that chairpersons should not proceed with selecting and recruiting a principal teacher if they are not 'competent' to do so or if 'they are not on top of things' themselves.

One candidate would not comment on the adequacy of the process involved in selecting and recruiting primary school principals, but said that he would change the format of the interview a little to 'make it what you want'. He deemed this necessary as a lot of people attending for interview 'almost have the answers rehearsed'. He added that experienced interview

candidates are 'in the know' and are familiar with the types of questions being asked at interview. He an interview for principal teacher in which he was involved where the candidate was asked to prepare a presentation on a topic as part of the interview and he actually found that very helpful. He said 'they were given a power point presentation to prepare on topic X and that was very enlightening... you got to see what this person is like in a classroom, their skills of communication, their presentation skills'. He stated that 'adding the presentation to the interview worked in terms of originality'. It would seem from all data gathered for the purposes of this study that the process in place to appoint a primary school principal within an Irish context lacks a framework to support those charged with the process.

The researcher would now like to summarise for the reader the following points arising from the data gathered from the newly appointed principals, the independent assessors, a representative from the IPPN and the chairpersons of management boards.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the views and attitudes of newly appointed primary school principals, independent assessors who sit on interview panels for primary school principals, a representative from the Irish Primary Principals' Network and chairpersons of boards of management. The data collected through interviewing newly appointed principals provided important insights for the purpose of this research study by way of the following. This cohort agrees that training for the post of principal teacher should be mandatory. All newly appointed principals received criteria pertaining to their post on application but were unable to recall the listed criteria. All newly appointed principals displayed an awareness of what it

is to be competent in the role of principal teacher but were unsure of what was meant by competencies when asked to name competencies associated with role of principal teacher. According to newly appointed principals, competency based assessment was used to assess them at interview for their present posts.

The data collected from independent assessors can be summarised as follows. According to the independent assessor respondents, it is the role of the independent assessor on the selection panel for principal teacher recruitment to assist the chairperson. The criteria for the post of principal teacher are established based on the needs of the school. According to this cohort, there is no competency framework to support the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals. The data gathered also suggests that qualifications in management/leadership are sought after by schools, and that interviews for the post of principal teacher are competency based. Training is provided for independent assessors but it does not appear to be mandatory and finally, it is the view of this cohort that the process of selecting primary school principals is inadequate and could be improved.

The data gathered through interviewing a representative of the IPPN is outlined as follows. It was his representative view that the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals in Ireland has not been professionalised and lip service has been paid to professionalising the process. It was his view that there is no competency framework in place to support the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals and that criteria are established based on the needs of individual schools. A post graduate qualification or its equivalent should be a pre requisite for application to the post of principal teacher to bring Ireland in line with other OECD countries. As a representative of the IPPN, he also expressed

the following views; competency based assessment is used when interviewing candidates for the post of principal teacher, training for those appointed to selection boards for the post of principal teacher is inadequate, improvements can be made in the selection and recruitment of primary school principals in Ireland and more time needs to be given to assessing candidates for the post of principal teacher.

The views and opinions of the chairpersons of boards of management can be summarised as follows. According to the data gathered from this cohort, criteria are established for the post of principal teacher based on the needs of the school, there is no standardised competency framework in use to support the process, competency based assessment is used to assess candidates for the post of principal teacher, chairpersons of boards of management are acting on selection boards for principal teachers without any training in the area of selection and recruitment. It is the general view of this cohort that the process of selecting primary school principals is inadequate and improvements need to be made.

In chapter 5, the researcher will analyse and discuss the data gathered from interviews in terms of the issues raised and will discuss the data in terms of positive action and implications for good practice in regard to the extent to which competency frameworks are used in the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals in Ireland.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The findings of this research as presented in chapter 4 raise a number of questions about the procedures in place to select and appoint a primary school principal within an Irish context. As part of greater public service reforms in Ireland, the integrated plan for reform in education (2015) states that the department has engaged with the IPPN and PDST in taking a more strategic approach to the development of leadership skills among new principals (p.8). Section 2 of this plan outlines a programme for government which includes commitment to devolve greater autonomy to schools, 'while ensuring that proper accountability measures are in place' (p.6) while section 3 of the plan claims that the department will participate in initiatives being led by the department of public expenditure and reform including the support of succession planning (p.18). However, this programme has been drawn up without a leadership framework in place to support the above. This chapter will analyse and discuss the data and findings of the newly appointed principals, chairpersons of boards of management, independent assessors and IPPN representatives and establish the extent to which competency frameworks are used in the process of selecting primary school principals. It is the aim of the chapter to compare and contrast the views and opinions of the various cohorts involved in the study and analyse this data in the context of the literature review, the issues around which the research is built and the research questions. During the initial stages of data analysis, all data collected were examined with the aim of identifying emerging themes. The findings will now be analysed and discussed under these themes which are; training for

selection boards for the recruitment of principals, training and preparation for the post of primary school principal, the process of selecting principals and the extent to which competency frameworks are used in the recruitment of primary school principals within an Irish context.

5.2 Training for Selection Boards

Recommendations have been made over the past twenty years (Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2007; PwC, 2009) in relation to training for those who act on selection boards and are responsible for the recruitment of primary principals. These recommendations were made in the context of professionalising the selection processes for primary school principals. Haygroup (2003:36) recommended addressing 'the capability and qualifications of those entrusted with the selection process'. The PwC report (2009:97) recommended professionalising the system for the selection of candidates to principalship to include consideration being given to boards of management in the area of recruitment training. In making their submission to the joint committee of the Oireachtas on education and social protection, the IPPN (2014:7) recommended that 'anyone charged with responsibility of appointing principals must undertake appropriate and continuous training in recruitment and selection'. However, over half of the chairpersons interviewed for this study stated that they had not received recruitment training and as a result, they felt 'daunted', 'isolated' and 'burdened' with the responsibility of selecting principal teachers. Independent assessors endorsed this view when they stated that chairpersons had admitted to them 'they had not got a clue' and they just simply 'handed over the whole process to them'. This supports findings from a research

study undertaken by Grummell et al (2009) when they found that chairpersons are reliant on independent assessors for advice, guidance and support when selecting and appointing primary principals. It is quite evident from this data that although chairpersons and independent assessors are aware that there is training available, that a distance still has to be travelled in order for chairpersons to feel confident in directing the process of recruitment for primary school principals. The data suggests that the effectiveness of the training provided for selection boards should be further examined. This lack of effectiveness in regard to the training can be substantiated by the independent assessors when one stated that he hadn't 'really received training – being honest about it' and that he learned 'on the hoof', adding that he felt he 'became good at it' himself. Another assessor stated that 'we had two or three sessions but it didn't give you the know-how to decide what's required for each school or even if there's standard questions'. It is obvious from the above data that training provided for the selection of primary school principals is not achieving the goal that was intended and falls short of the recommendations made by (Haygroup, 2003; PwC, 2009; IPPN, 2014).

5.3 Pre – Appointment Qualification for the Post of Principal

Eligibility for the post of principal in Ireland mandates that a candidate must be qualified and probated as a primary school teacher and have a minimum of five years teaching experience. Aspiring principals are not currently required to undertake any form of continuous professional development relevant to the role of principal prior to applying for the post (IPPN, 2014:9). It is evident from the findings that it is possible to step off the classroom floor as

mainstream teacher on a Friday morning and into the role of principal on a Monday morning without having undertaken any training in leadership/management. Three of the newly appointed principals interviewed did not have any additional qualifications with one stating that she 'didn't do any courses' while another stated that he undertook some 'IPPN stuff' for aspiring principals but 'nothing besides that'. One other said that she hadn't done 'any courses or undertaken any training' prior to applying for her post. This was further evidenced when two of the newly appointed principals stated that they 'had started' post graduate courses in leadership/management but had not completed the respective courses prior to applying for their posts. However, there was also evidence in the findings to suggest that there is an increasing awareness of the need to have some level of post graduate qualification on application for the post of principal. This was confirmed by a chairperson when he stated that if a candidate does not have a qualification in leadership/management, 'it puts [them] on the back foot straight away' while another stated that it 'is in a person's favour to be shortlisted' if they have an educational management qualification.

Analysis of the data highlights a lack of consistency and standardisation in the extent to which training/qualification is sought as criteria for post of principal across schools. Qualifications are listed as criteria for shortlisting applicants for the post but are subject to different interpretations by different selection boards. Qualifications as criteria can be interpreted as anything from a basic teaching qualification to a doctorate and selection boards can interpret 'qualifications' as criteria to suit themselves. To further demonstrate the lack of standardisation, the data reflects an inconsistency in the weighting given to 'qualifications' by selection boards. All principal candidates do not appear to be subjected to the same standards with regard to level of qualification required for the post of principal. This was evidenced in

the findings when one of the independent assessors stated that he would 'go through the applications to see who had what' in terms of qualifications and would then and more importantly 'look for the person who has the experience or the personality or the guile or whatever to get the school to where it needs to be'. He further stated that a candidate did not have to have a post graduate qualification to be shortlisted when he is 'going through' applications. Conversely, one of the chairpersons stated that all candidates shortlisted for the post of the principal for which she had recently recruited were in receipt of additional qualifications such as master's in leadership/management. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that equal weighting is being given by some selection boards to post graduate qualifications in education and post graduate qualifications in other disciplines. This was corroborated by an independent assessor when she stated that it is becoming more of a given that candidates applying for the post of principal have a post graduate qualification and that 'it doesn't have to be a post grad in education'. It would seem that there is no definitive effort being made by those charged with the process of recruiting primary school principals to ensure that a distinction is being made between a qualification in leadership/management and other qualifications when weighting post graduate qualifications.

The IPPN (2014) hold the view that 'a pre-appointment qualification in school leadership should not be made compulsory but should earn a candidate additional weighting during the shortlisting process'. However, views expressed by all the newly appointed principals supported mandatory pre appointment qualification as it was their view that 'somebody engaging in a programme like a master's is showing they are prepared to engage in continuous professional development' and that 'it [qualification in leadership/management] would be a good base'.

In discussing pre appointment qualification with the different cohorts, the prospect of succession planning as a more appropriate route for school leadership development was introduced. One of the chairpersons supported the philosophy of identifying those with leadership potential early in their careers and developing those skills and planning for succession. He proffered the following by way of supporting this idea;

I think potential leaders should be identified early in their careers and encouraged and nurtured. There is a notion that teachers are good communicators and will naturally make good principal teachers but this is not true in all cases. While I feel it is necessary that a principal of a school be a teacher in order to understand education, they need the necessary skills to manage people.

Haygroup (2003:36) made recommendations around the provision of 'opportunities for potential principals to spend time working closely with effective principals in preparation for promotion to principalship'. IPPN (2014) also highlighted the importance of creating 'a leadership pipeline' through the provision of 'opportunities for all teachers to engage in leadership activity early in their careers'. Succession planning has also been highlighted as an area in need of support as part of the Integrated Reform Delivery Plan for Education and Training (2015:18). Leadership strategies in countries like Canada, England and America ensure that candidates are prepared for leadership roles before they need to be filled. It has been found that 'systems adopting these strategies are more effective at supporting the development of leaders than those that rely on other approaches' (McKinsey, 2010:11). There are three steps to attracting and selecting those with the right qualities to become school leaders (ibid:9). The first step is self-identification by potential leaders themselves. The second step is the provision of opportunities for potential leaders to take courses and engage in leadership activities to build leadership capacity. The third step goes further by 'proactively

guiding the careers of potential leaders so that they can gain progressively greater leadership experience' (ibid). It can be argued that the first step is being realised within an Irish context. It is also evident that the second step is valid to some extent. However, there is some difficulty around opportunities for teachers to engage in leadership activities with the present moratorium on posts of responsibility¹⁴ in primary schools. There is no formal structure around the proactive identification of potential leaders with the aim of creating a leadership pipeline within an Irish context.

5.4 The Selection Process

This section will deal with the establishment of selection boards, the criteria for the post of principal and the use of interviews as assessment for the post of principal.

5.4.1 Selection Boards

When establishing a selection board for appointing a primary principal, guidelines stipulate that 'it shall be constituted and shall comprise the chairperson of the board of management and at least two assessors independent of the board of management, to be appointed by the patron after consultation with the Chairperson (circular 02/02). In discussing the process of establishing selection boards with chairpersons and independent assessors, it was evident

¹⁴ In March, 2009, the Government implemented a recruitment and promotion moratorium across civil and public service. Schools could no longer make an appointment to posts of responsibility (promotion posts). (Circular 0022/2009)

that they were cognisant of the guidelines as outlined in the above mentioned circular. It was clear from the data that most of the selection boards for recruiting principal teachers were made up of the minimum of three persons. There were slight variations with one stating that she was part of a five person panel and one was part of a four person panel. In further discussion around this topic with the IPPN representative, it was his personal view that 'there should be a minimum of five persons on an interview board'.

In regard to selection boards, there was also some variation with the ease in which chairpersons sourced independent assessors. One chairperson had to make a 'number of phonecalls' before securing two assessors to act on his board. Another chairperson expressed dissatisfaction with the 'amount of hassle in trying to get independent assessors'. Conversely then, one chairperson interviewed stated that 'the outgoing principal and the diocesan panel' chose the independent assessors while another chairperson stated that the 'patron chose the independent assessors to act on the selection board'. Once again, this highlights a lack of consistency and standardisation with the 'make up' of the selection boards and how boards are chosen. It would seem that there are instances where the patron is more involved in selecting the independent assessors to sit on selection boards for recruiting principal teachers. There was also evidence in the findings to suggest that the chairperson of the board of management is the only person involved in the process with no input from the BOM at any other point of the process. While a selection board is established by the chairperson, 'all appointments in the school shall be made by the board of management' (DES, 2015:63) and yet, according to the research findings, the only part of the process for which the BOM in its entirety is involved is 'sanctioning the appointment'. This is a precarious practice and one which raises further issues for board membership and the transparency involved in the

recruitment process. Appendix E of The Governance Manual for Primary Schools (ibid) states that 'it is the responsibility of each employer to maintain effective procedures to ensure openness and transparency in the process of appointment to publicly funded posts' (Rule 1.1). However, given the fact that the only part of the process for which the BOM is involved is sanctioning the post, questions could be asked of the openness of this practice. To add to this, a post may be sanctioned with a quorum of board members which raises further questions. This whole practice leads to potential for bias and leaves board members open to repercussions in the event of appeals and tribunals.

5.4.2 Criteria for the post of Primary Principal

When a selection board meet to draw up the criteria, the findings from this research indicate that those who sit on the selection boards are guided by DES circular 16/73, DES circular 02/02, and the functions of the principal teacher as outlined in the Education Act (1998). The 16/73 circular lists the duties of the principal, circular 02/02 lists eligibility criteria for application to the post, and sections 22/23 of the Education Act outline the functions and responsibilities of the role of the primary principal. Apart from information on eligibility criteria and the duties of the principal, there is no framework in place outlining the competencies required to carry out the role. In the absence of a framework to support the process, the traditional criteria of qualifications, experience, ethos, organisational and management skills are typically employed by selection boards. This approach was also supported by the assessors and chairpersons to establish criteria for shortlisting applicants. They listed 'qualifications', 'management skills', 'leadership skills', 'teaching and learning' and

'classroom management' as criteria used to shortlist applicants. Also, the newly appointed principals included 'leadership skills and knowledge of DEIS', 'leadership skills and administrative skills', 'management skills' and 'ethos and approach to education' when asked to recall criteria listed for their posts. According to Grummell et al (2009) the 'local logics' of the post is also a key criterion, it can vary from diocese to diocese and can depend on a number of factors. In small rural schools for example, activities which link the school with the community are, in some instances, considered as criteria. This was evident in the data when one respondent stated that the board used the 'broad skills' of art, drama and music as criteria as they thought this was important for their school and area. He also stated that they gave 10 marks for 'suitability for the position'. Another chairperson stated that she was looking for someone who was fluent in the Irish language and was willing to promote it in the school. According to the findings, the process of appointing a primary principal in Ireland is an autonomous, localised function that looks for a candidate to 'fit' the needs of the school. The process is not subject to any form of central departmental control with no accountability required at any level of government (Brooking, 2003:1).

5.4.3 Interview

Competency-based interviews use questions which aim to find out how you have used specific skills in your previous experience and how you approach problems, tasks and challenges. These interviews are based on the premise that past behaviour is a good predictor of future behaviour (jobs.ac.uk). Findings from this research indicate that semi-structured, competency based interviews are a widely used method of assessing candidates for the post of principal

within an Irish context. Those who had recently been interviewed for their respective posts indicated that the interviews had reflected competency based assessments and interview questions and answers were based in [their] experiences. Those who had acted as assessors in the form of chairpersons and independent assessors also agreed that interviews [were] competency based in that they asked candidates to give examples of a time when 'x' happened or how would you deal with 'y' happening. The IPPN representative also concurred with this when he said that interviews are generally 'scenario based' for the post of principal. It can be concluded from these responses that interviews carried out for the post of principal follow a competency based approach for assessing candidates but without a structure in place to support the use of such assessment. Competency based questioning is being used by selection boards to assess candidates albeit unintentionally or unknowingly. There is no competency based interview training provided to selection boards. When members of interview panels are trained they are enabled to 'focus on the key competencies for a particular position (Kessler, 2006:54) and such training 'helps the interviewers to know what to listen for and observe, to be able to assess the candidate more accurately' (p.54). Competency based assessments use past experiences as a predictor of future ability.

5.4.4 Appointment of Primary Principals

In Ireland, induction is provided for but not prescribed for newly qualified principals. The process of selecting and recruiting a principal teacher in Ireland ends with the sanctioning of the appointment by the Minister for Education and Skills. There are no regulations governing the induction phase of a newly appointed primary school principal within the Irish context.

There are courses and services available through the Misneach programme and the mentoring service provided by the IPPN but it must be noted that it is still possible in an Irish context to make the move from classroom teacher to principal with no transition phase, no induction and no training in leadership / management. It is also worth noting that while there are courses available to newly appointed principals, they are not mandatory. In discussions with the newly appointed principals, the final question put to them was; 'Knowing what you know now, would you still apply for principalship?' and it can be argued that one of the responses provided one of the most revealing pieces of data from the entire study. One of the principals gave a curt 'No' when asked the question and when probed further, she revealed the following;

'It is a lonely job' with 'no backup.....the board of management are volunteers and to say you manage the board of management is not right – they are there as a matter of format – they have no more of a clue than you do they are no back up..... you are trying to find your way in the dark and there is nobody there above you that will give you guidance'

After listening to this response, the researcher asked about mentorship as a support but the respondent 'felt that the present mentor scheme is a bit haphazard and should be more structured'. This respondent held the view that the 'ideal scenario would be to step into principalship for five/six years and go back into the classroom'. This principal echoed the views of the IPPN (2014) when they recommended that 'provision should be made to allow those who wish to 'step down' from principalship back to a teacher role within the defined contracted period of time, without pension or reputational loss'. At present, if a principal wishes to step down from his/her role for whatever reason, they are placed at the most junior position of the seniority ladder. It can be argued that the recruitment process should not end

with the appointment of principal but there should be an onus on the BOM to ensure that the newly appointed principal is aware of supports on offer and is willing to engage with these supports.

5.5 The extent to which competency frameworks are used in the recruitment of primary school principals within an Irish context

International evidence suggests that leadership and practices of effective school leaders are similar irrespective of whether the school is in Dublin or Pakistan (McKinsey, 2010:3). The role of the primary school principal in an Irish context has been defined over the last fifteen years through various studies undertaken (Haygroup, 2003; OECD, 2007; PwC, 2009) and it has been concluded that the role is a leadership role requiring many of the core competencies associated with any leadership roles in any sector or any organisation (Haygroup, 2003). The role of the principal is the senior most managerial role in education at primary level and yet, there is no set list of competencies attaching to this role. Haygroup (2003) presented a list of competencies for the post of principal which included people management competencies, organisational and political competencies, cognitive competencies and personal competencies. OECD (2007) again provided a list of the key competencies required to carry out the role of principal teacher. It is recognised and accepted that competencies provide clarity for those aspiring to take on the role of principal, for those already in the role and for those involved in recruiting for the role. They serve as a solid foundation for all HR activities such as recruitment, assessment, development and training, performance management, career planning and succession planning. An analysis of data gathered for this study in

relation to competencies attaching to the post of principal confirmed that there was a significant lack of knowledge in regard to the same. There was a clear lack of understanding of the meaning of the word competency when newly appointed principals were asked the question about the competencies required to carry out the role of principal. All respondents had just come through the process of preparation for application for the post to which they were subsequently appointed but were unable to name one professional competency attaching to their post. It was expected that this cohort would display a knowledge of the competencies required to fulfil their roles as primary principals but this was not the case.

As the independent assessors are chosen by the patron to serve on selection boards for the recruitment of principals and are experienced as educational leaders, it was the expectation that this cohort would display and provide a clear understanding and knowledge of the professional competencies underpinning the post of principal but as already stated in presentation of data, the independent assessors displayed a knowledge of what it is to be competent in the role by providing responses such as it is important to be 'a good people person' and it is important 'to be fair' in the role of principal. The responses from this cohort lacked the professional interpretation expected from members of a selection board charged with the appointment of a principal. With the exception of one chairperson who has a background in recruitment, none of the chairpersons displayed an understanding of the professional competencies underpinning the post of primary principal. The chairperson with experience in recruitment procedures provided a competency framework which he established for the post of principal as he was involved in the appointment of two principal teachers. He organised the competencies into four areas of management and change, team leading and standard setting, people handling skills and communications. His knowledge and

experience in the area of selection and recruitment placed him apart from all other respondents in his understanding of the importance of knowledge of competencies attaching to all posts for recruitment purposes (See Appendix 16).

It is evident from data gathered for this research that those charged with selecting primary school principals are establishing criteria and assessing candidates for the post in the absence of a professional knowledge of the competencies associated with the role of principal. It would also seem that those applying for the post do not display a knowledge of the competencies for the post of principal. The chairperson who spoke about having to make phone calls to people 'who have maybe recently appointed a principal to see where they got their criteria from' summed up the lack of knowledge in this area. It can be argued that the process of choosing criteria for the senior most post in primary schools is flawed and lacking basic HR structures required for the recruitment of such a post.

As already noted, education systems around the world have drawn up competency frameworks. In New Zealand and Scotland for example, professional standards for primary principals provide a baseline for job description for those charged with choosing criteria for recruitment purposes. In an Irish context however, when a selection board meet to draw up the criteria to advertise a post, there is no competency framework in place to support this process. Those who act as assessors on selection boards are guided by DES circular 16/73, DES circular 02/02 and the functions of the principal teacher as outlined in the Education Act (1998). However, none of these set out the skills/competencies required to lead a primary school. Haygroup (2003) highlighted the 'need for a set of management processes designed to enhance the selection and assessment of candidates for appointment' (p.36), adding that

these management processes 'should focus primarily on assessing managerial and leadership capabilities' and that such processes should be based on the competency model contained within the report (p. 36). The IPPN have been trying to introduce a competency framework to support job description and selection processes for the last number of years as they believe it would offer specific criteria to candidates and to those involved in selection (IPPN, 2014). However, when asked about the use of competency frameworks or standards to guide or support the process of outlining job description, shortlisting applicants, setting questions for interview purposes, the respondents indicated that there was no 'standardised framework' or 'rigid formula' for establishing criteria or competencies.

Frameworks like the Ontario Leadership Framework and the Scottish Standards for Leadership and Management inform a number of HR activities such as self-evaluation for leadership roles, the designation of programmes for aspiring principals, succession planning, the process of recruitment and selection and contributes to dialogue about leadership and management. A competency framework identifies the requirements of the role and how a teacher might develop the necessary skills to move into a leadership/management role and one of principal. It would appear that there is some negativity around competency frameworks in an Irish context. The INTO believe that the implementation of competency frameworks will lead to benchmarking and performance management exercises but this has not been the case in Scotland or Ontario. Such negativity in an Irish context will continue to impede progress needed to introduce and implement the necessary changes.

5.6 Conclusion

As already stated throughout this study, recommendations have been made in relation to defining the role of the primary principal within an Irish context for the past fifteen years. Fullan (2006:16) concluded that the development of the role of principal within an Irish context had been neglected and the fact that principalship was not improving was a system failure. He maintained that there was insufficient attention being paid by 'the system' to re-examine the post of principal to make the role more effective and he agreed with the Haygroup recommendations regarding the establishment of processes to enhance selection for the post. PwC (2009) also recommended professionalising the system for the selection of candidates to principalship. IPPN (2014:7) stated that the recruitment process for principals was in need of 'review and radical overhaul' and further highlighted the need 'to put in place a model for selecting principals that is based on international best practice'.

The Integrated Reform Delivery Plan for Education and Training was delivered in 2015 as part of wider public service reforms and it prioritised the enhancement of school leadership through developing leadership skills among new and long serving principals as well as the support of succession planning for leadership development. It can be argued that this plan for government is naive given that there is no competency framework in place to inform or support the development of skills or succession planning. The question might be asked as to whether it is too late post appointment to talk about skills development if the candidate has not displayed competencies required to carry out the role during the selection process. International best practice has taught us to identify those with leadership potential early in their careers and develop those skills and plan for succession. It has also taught us that

reforms need to be considered, planned and implemented carefully with a supporting framework. To create a leadership pipeline requires firstly the identification of emerging leaders. In these times of change and uncertainty, schools more than ever require strong organisational leadership and structures in place to support the same. It can be said that this plan for reform on the part of the government has failed to recognise the role of principal as one which should be the catalyst to enable school improvement in the context of national educational reforms (Fullan, 2006:17).

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

As outlined in chapter one, the aim of this research was to examine the effectiveness of the selection process for the post of primary school principal in Ireland, with a particular focus on the extent to which competency frameworks are used to support the process. The three research questions at the centre of the study were:

- To what extent are competency frameworks used in the selection of primary school principals in Ireland?
- Are selection boards trained/knowledgeable in the area of principal teacher selection?
- Is the selection process adequate for appointing primary principals?

In order to answer the above research questions, semi structured interviews were carried out with newly appointed principals, chairpersons of boards of management, independent assessors and an IPPN representative. Data were gathered and a number of findings were made in regard to each research question. The following paragraphs outline the findings and conclusions under each research question.

6.2 To what extent are competency frameworks used in the selection of primary school principals in Ireland?

This study set out to examine the extent to which competency frameworks are used in the selection and recruitment of primary principals within an Irish context. It can be concluded from the data gathered that competency frameworks are not used in this process, nor is such a framework readily available to selection boards. There are guidelines to be found in DES circular 16/73, DES circular 02/02 and the Education Act 1998 but the evidence suggests that these are not deemed appropriate by the interested parties to address the needs associated with recruiting primary principals. Boards of management and selection boards are interpreting the guidelines and criteria listed in the above circular and legislation but these interpretations at best can be described as loose and do not carry with them a standardised, universal approach to recruitment. Consequently, standards when interviewing for the post of primary school principal can vary from region to region and patron body to patron body. Studies carried out by Haygroup (2003) and PwC (2008) made recommendations pertaining to professionalising the selection process for primary principals but as it stands to date, there has been no apparent change in practice. If the quality of leadership in primary schools is to be addressed and maintained into the future, the matter of recruitment for primary principals must be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Selecting a school leader is one of the most important decisions for an education system, as making the correct match between a candidate and a vacancy can greatly affect the ability of a school to perform to its highest potential (Burkhauser et al, 2013:1). Leadership is the scaffolding that supports the successful delivery of teaching and learning in our classrooms and the process involved in selecting the leaders we place in our schools should reflect the significance of the role.

6.3 Are selection boards trained/knowledgeable in the area of principal teacher selection?

The evidence of the research findings suggests that those charged with appointing primary school principals are not receiving appropriate training in recruitment processes. Training is made available by the patron bodies and the INTO but it is not mandatory for chairpersons and independent assessors to avail of it. Furthermore, there is evidence from the findings to suggest that the training provided by the above mentioned bodies does not adequately prepare selection boards for the task of appointing a principal. It is delivered over the course of one session and takes the form of a broad overview of the recruitment process from advertising the post to making the appointment. It does not appear to offer the necessary support to selection boards in establishing criteria, choosing effective selection methods for identifying the most suitable candidate for the post or developing techniques to get the best out of recruitment interviews. As a result, selection boards involved in the appointment of primary school principals perceive that they lack the necessary expertise required for the important task of recruiting primary school principals.

The people charged with the responsibility of selecting a principal teacher play a vital role in the process. It is with this in mind that recommendations have been made over the past twenty years in relation to training for selection boards. There have been entreaties during this time for consideration to be given to boards of management in the area of recruitment training (Haygroup, 2003; PwC, 2009; IPPN, 2014) to ensure that those who are entrusted with the responsibility of recruiting primary principals are capable, qualified and experienced in recruitment processes and have undertaken the appropriate training to be involved in the recruitment of teachers and principal teachers. There is a duty on those charged with

selecting the selection boards to ensure that those persons have undertaken appropriate recruitment training, are competent and understand the significance of appointing a person to the senior most post in primary schools. In order to professionalise the process in place at present, it is vital that this aspect of the process is reviewed and overhauled to bring it in line with processes in place for similar appointments in other areas of the public service.

6.4 Is the selection process adequate for appointing primary principals?

The research findings highlight that there are a number of deficiencies with the present process in place for recruiting primary school principals. It could be argued that the process is 'working' because principals are being appointed to posts all over the country but there is no measure of the effectiveness of the process. To what extent are primary principals affecting the ability of the schools to which they are appointed to perform to their highest potential? Within an Irish context, principals are appointed to their roles 'for life' with no opportunity to step down without affecting their seniority in the organisation. There is no element of probation or induction for newly appointed principals. The research demonstrates that there is no standardised or consistent approach when appointing a principal teacher. While there are guidelines in place outlining the general procedures, certain aspects of the guidelines are too broad, lack clarity and are open to interpretations. There is a lack of standardisation in relation to establishing criteria and how selection boards are constituted. It is unclear the extent to which patron bodies and selection boards communicate when appointing primary school principals.

A summary of the findings can be presented as highlighting lack of standardisation in relation to recruitment practices for the selection of primary principals within an Irish context. The practices in place are loose and open to interpretation by the various patron bodies. Training for members of selection boards irrespective of patronage is not mandatory, adequate, nor does it provide necessary direction. Finally, there is no quality control system in place to ensure the efficacy of the selection process of primary principals.

6.5 Recommendations

In considering the findings as outlined above, the following recommendations are made in order to professionalise the process in place to select and appoint primary school principals within an Irish context:

1 Introduction of a competency framework

It is recommended that a competency framework is established and implemented to support the selection and recruitment of primary principals.

A competency framework will define the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to carry out the role of primary principal. It will provide guidelines for those involved in selection boards and standardise the process in place. This will provide greater transparency in the recruitment process.

A competency framework will also support succession planning. This involves identifying potential leaders early in their careers and encouraging them to develop their leadership skills. Potential leaders might be encouraged to enrol in courses for aspiring leaders, to take on leadership projects in school and to shadow current leaders.

A competency framework will support the development of training programmes for school leaders.

It is important that the process of establishing a competency framework is open and transparent and subject to regular review.

2 Mandatory Recruitment Training

It is recommended that training, as a pre requisite, for all persons involved in recruiting primary principals is mandatory.

To ensure consistency, fairness and transparency, all persons involved in the recruitment of primary principals must be trained appropriately in selection procedures. This involves board chairpersons and independent assessors undertaking recruitment training and updating that training at regular intervals.

3 Role of BOM in Recruitment Process

It is recommended that the role of the BOM in the process of selecting primary principals is expanded.

It is important that all members of boards of management are aware of their legal responsibility for recruitment in schools. Board members should be more aware of their role and have a say in establishing criteria for the post of principal as well as being informed throughout the process.

4 Provision of HR Specialist Support

The provision of a centralised HR consultant or helpdesk should be made available to all selection boards involved in the recruitment of primary principals. This support should operate from an independent platform with a standardised approach to recruitment. Selecting a school leader is one of the most important decisions and appointments a school board will have to oversee and all assistance should be provided to those involved in the process.

6.6 Conclusion

In the intervening years since starting this research project, there have been developments in the 'leadership landscape' in primary education. In December 2015, the Centre for School Leadership Ireland (CSL) was established with the aim of providing support services for principal teachers. The centre provides a range of development programmes for school leaders, from pre-appointment training and induction/mentoring of newly appointed principals to continuing professional development throughout their careers. The establishment of the CSL would seem to indicate a recognition of the importance of the role

of school leader. This suggests that we are moving towards professionalising the role of the primary principal and must consequently professionalise the role of those charged with appointing principal teachers.

Further developments in the leadership landscape recently saw the introduction of a draft framework (See Appendix 17) by the Inspectorate as part of the School Self Evaluation (SSE) process. This SSE framework sets out the domains, standards and statements of practice for school leaders and primarily serves to deepen the culture and practice of self-evaluation. It was envisaged that the evaluation of school leadership and management would be included in the next phase of SSE. However, Hislop (2015:8) stated that he 'hopes that the framework will provide a set of national standards to inform not only inspection but also principals' self-reflection and self-evaluation, the initial and continuing professional development of school leaders and indeed the recruitment process'. While this is a step in the right direction for professionalising systems in place for leadership development, including recruitment processes, it is still in draft format and needs to be further developed as a matter of need and urgency.

The concluding remark of the study must be given to the relationship between the church and the state. It is a relationship which places the Irish education system in an unusual, and at times difficult situation. The DES is charged with the implementation of accountability measures as part of the integrated plan for reform in education (2015:6). However, the DES has no legal responsibility for the recruitment of staff within the majority of schools at primary level, where the church retains ownership. The present system in place for recruiting primary principals is autonomous and an anomaly which leads to a lack of consistency, transparency

and accountability. It is a cause of confusion for all those involved in the recruitment process. Ireland is not the Catholic nation it once was and our education system needs to be more reflective of modern Irish society. The present system is grounded in tradition and history and it would seem that change will take time.

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Appendix 1: A Model Of Leadership For Principals (Haygroup, 2003)

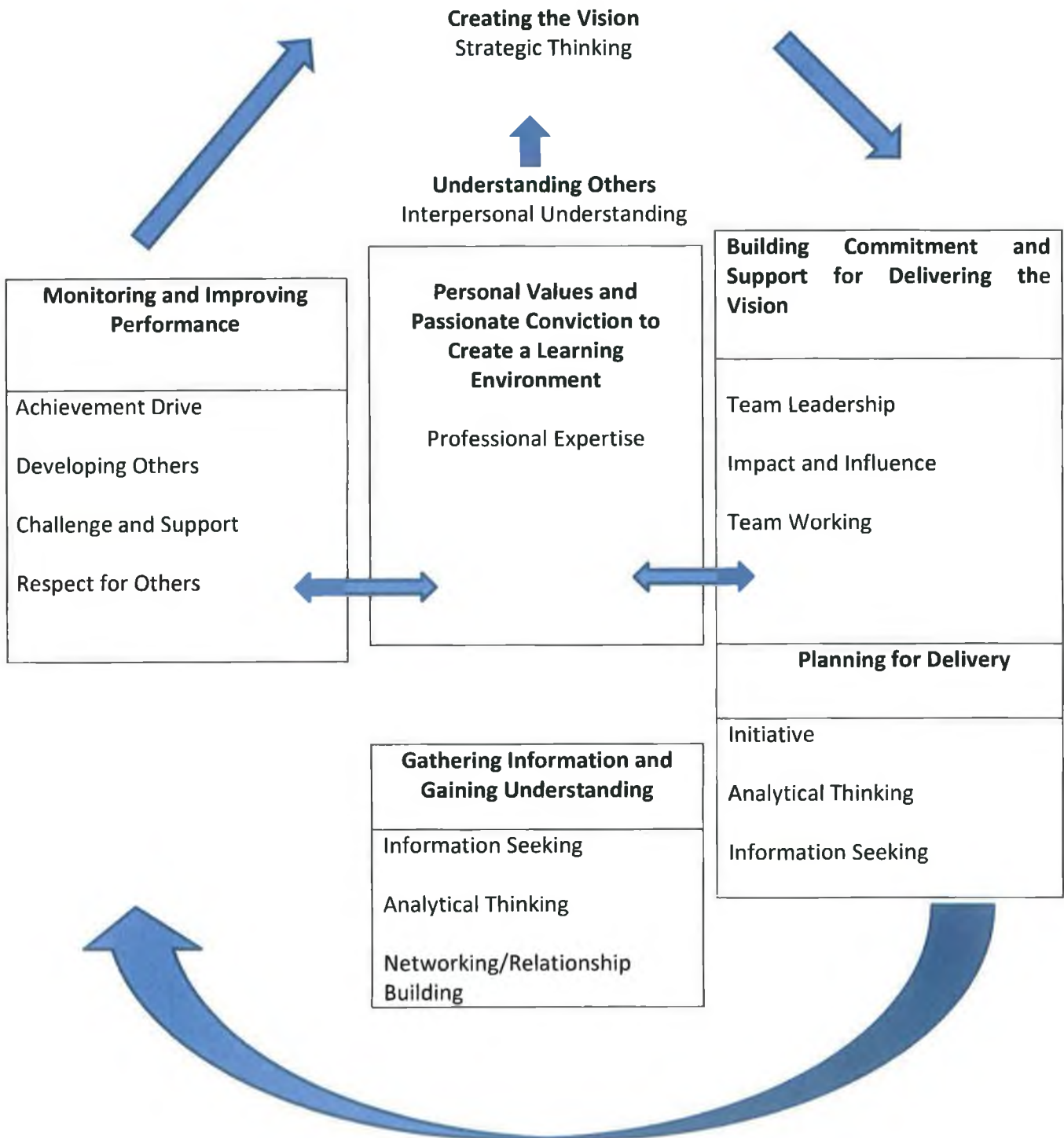
There has been a considerable level of interest in comparing schools to other organisation units from the point of view of culture, management style and leadership challenges. The development of the role of Principal needs to be placed in the broader context of the school environment and, more importantly of the kind of environment which enhances and maximises the learning experience for pupils. While there is a widely acknowledged level of sensitivity around the concept of school performance, there is, nonetheless, an obligation to consider this issue in developing any meaningful model of leadership. Research in this area in the Irish education context is relatively slim, however, and there is a significant challenge in developing concepts which are useful and which are capable of measurement and validation. A well researched model of organisation performance which Hay uses in a wide variety of sectors is set out graphically in Figure 1 below. This model has been adapted for use in the education sector through some interesting research which Hay has undertaken in the UK. We include this model in this analysis to pose the challenge around how a robust model of leadership for the role of Principal should be used and placed in a performance context.

In summary, the model proposes that the performance of any organisation is determined by a combination of factors, the most important single one of which is the concept of Organisation Climate. This is the combination of perceptions which people have about working in any particular environment. There is extensive research evidence to suggest that the more positive the climate, the better will be the performance of the organisation. Research places this variation at up to 30%. In a school context, the climate will largely constitute the factors which directly create a positive learning environment. In the Hay

research in the UK, the organisation climate of the school was measured through an instrument called the Context for School Improvement (CSI). This was a measure of factors such as the perceived drive for high standards, the responsiveness of the school to special learning needs and the sense of professional accountability and authority afforded to teachers. The biggest single influence on climate has been found to be the Leadership Style of the relevant leader. Up to 70% of the variance in the climate of an organisation can be attributed to the leader. Leadership styles refer to a pattern of behaviour which individuals choose to demonstrate in a wide range of managerial situations. Research has shown that there are a limited number of such styles which tend to account for the bulk of such behaviour. These styles are summarised as:

- **Coercive:** Demanding immediate compliance/**Authoritative:** Setting out a longer term rationale and vision for required tasks, etc. /**Democratic:** Obtaining broadly based and participative inputs to ideas and decision-making/**Affiliative:** Placing harmonious relationships at the forefront of priorities/**Pacesetting:** Personally modelling high levels of performance and standards /**Coaching:** Focusing on the longer term professional development of people.

Role Clarity and Personal Competencies for Principals



Our research in industry and also in the education sector indicate that a combination of the Authoritative, Affiliative, Coaching and Democratic style has a positive impact on climate over time. Conversely, Coercive has a negative impact on climate over time if used inappropriately.

In the Hay UK research, correlated to the creation of a positive Context for School Improvement, the top three dominant styles in a sample of outstanding Headteachers were found to be - Authoritative, Affiliative, and Coaching.

The other parts of the model set out are the concepts of Role Clarity and Personal Competencies. Role Clarity is the agreed sense of the critical aspects of the job which are clearly understood by the individual leader, whereas Personal Competencies include a wide range of technical and professional skills, together with personal traits, motivations and values.

From our research, we are proposing that these dimensions of Role Clarity and Personal Competencies can, in turn, be separated out into a sequence of activities and capabilities which have a series of inter-linkages.

In particular, we are highlighting the personal commitment to the creation of a learning environment which appears to us to be the fundamental starting point in understanding the Principal's role. Thus, the model which is set out proposes a dynamic which has at its heart a set of personal values, a commitment to create a learning environment and the required levels of professional expertise. To deliver on these values and commitment, the Principal must be capable of creating a vision which satisfies the needs of the stakeholders. This, in turn, demands a capability to understand both the overt and implicit concerns of these stakeholders. The vision must then be communicated to others to win their buy in and

support and must be translated into plans and actions for delivery and performance. Such plans require the gathering, analysis, understanding and distillation of information. Finally, they must be monitored, evaluated and delivered on and fed in to further refinements and developments of the vision. Throughout the process, a firm focus must be kept on the values of learning and development and the role of the Principal is critical in keeping this value system to the fore.

The various phases of this model are underpinned by a range of competencies. For example, there are people management competencies required in understanding the concerns of others and in leading and developing a team, while at the same time challenging and supporting people in equal measure. There are the more organisational and political competencies involved in being able to impact and influence people and in being able to build relationships and network effectively. There are a range of cognitive competencies involved in seeking information and in analysing it effectively. Finally, there are personal competencies of achievement drive, initiative and strategic thinking which are required to push for standards of excellence.

The following sets out in more detail the various behavioural indicators for the competencies outlined as part of this model.

The Role Profile

The Role Profile which is set out brings together the key accountabilities of the role together with an outline of the kinds of success indicators which would be associated with their

effective delivery. It also outlines the key competencies which appear to us to be the likely differentiators of effective performance in the role. A number of introductory comments are offered in relation to each of the categories within the Role Profile.

Accountability

These are each of the seven areas of accountability which have been explored earlier in this report. By "Accountability" we mean the broad area in which results are expected from the Principal and for which he or she is responsible. They are not designed to be a listing of all of the tasks and activities which the Principal undertakes on a daily basis to deliver on the accountability. However, they are proposed as a blueprint for the role which would form the basis of the range of management applications including selection, assessment, training and development.

Success Indicators:

To determine success in any role, there needs to be an agreed set of indicators against which performance is measured. This is a complex area in most roles and particularly so in roles in which commercial criteria of profit margin, market share and financial performance are not relevant. The success indicators set out in the Role Profile are a mixture of quantitative and qualitative factors. Most jobs of any degree of complexity will involve this combination and it is particularly important that this balance is recognised in the education sector. It is also acknowledged that, in many cases, little or no current data would be available under the categories of indicator proposed. However, in our view, it is critical that a start be made to

identify what success looks like in the role and, subsequently, that devices are developed to measure such success.

Key Competencies

By Competencies is meant that range of personal characteristics which differentiate superior performers. They are to be distinguished from the range of technical skills (such as IT skills or budgeting skills) which are also required. Part of Appendix I sets out some of the major areas of technical skill which were identified during the course of our analysis. One slight exception to this broad distinction is in the competency called "Professional Expertise". While this has its roots in the professional and academic training and experience of Principals, its key feature is the extent to which Principals have the capacity to use this foundation effectively, particularly in coaching others.

The following section (overleaf) gives some further behavioural indicators of the competencies.

Accountability	Success Indicators	Key Competencies Required
<p>Leadership:</p> <p>Create, communicate and deliver a vision for the school, taking account of the concerns and aspirations of all the stakeholders in the school.</p> <p>Education:</p> <p>Deliver high standards of teaching and learning through personal teaching standards and the development, monitoring and coaching of teaching standards of others.</p> <p>Resource Management:</p> <p>Plan, manage and evaluate the use of the physical resources of the school</p>	<p>Clearly articulated vision as expressed through a school plan; Evidence of processes for staff and parental involvement in consultation regarding plan; Positive feedback from all stakeholders regarding plan; Well motivated and high performing pupils and teachers.</p> <p>Evidence of a positive learning environment as measured through attainment in academic, social, cultural, sporting and other norms; The quality and quantity of professional development afforded to teaching staff; Positive School Inspection reports.</p> <p>Cost effective use of resources; Effective processes and procedures in place for the identification of resource needs; Effective utilisation of the available processes for winning resources both centrally and locally.</p>	<p>Achievement Drive Team Leadership</p> <p>Strategic Thinking Conceptual Thinking</p> <p>Developing Others Team Leadership Professional Expertise Inter-personal Understanding Challenge and Support</p> <p>Information Seeking Financial Management Skills Analytical Thinking</p>

<p>STRATEGIC THINKING</p> <p>The ability to formulate the school’s long-term vision and objectives and incorporate them into day-to-day tasks and activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans beyond day-to-day activities • Recognises impact of actions/decisions on the school’s overall strategic objectives • Develops operational objectives/goals in line with the school’s strategic direction • Communicates the school’s strategy to teaching staff to achieve understanding and commitment from all the team • Shows awareness of the projected direction of education policies and of how changes might impact on the school • Considers how current policies, processes and methods might be affected by future developments and trends • Develops a school plan congruent with the external environment • Wins support and commitment of colleagues and staff to implementation of strategy 	<p>PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE</p> <p>A command of the professional teaching and education skills expected of all teachers, allied to an ability to use those skills to coach and support the professional development of other teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an accepted exponent in teaching and instructional skills through formal qualification and through significant practical experience • Coaches/trains/teaches others through formal or Informal processes • Advises and guides others through what are new experiences for them • Is willing to give of one’s own time to inform others • Is accepted by peers and colleagues as an authority in the area in question • Used by others as a major resource • Sees applicability of current or emerging education practice and policy to the needs of the school
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Accountability	Success Indicators	Key Competencies Required
<p>Human Resource Management:</p> <p>Select, coach, develop and hold accountable the human resources of the school.</p> <p>Administration:</p> <p>Comply effectively with the various reporting, recording and data management obligations to which the school is subject.</p> <p>Policy Formulation:</p> <p>Research, draft and present policy documents and statements as required by legislation and policy provisions.</p> <p>External Relationships:</p> <p>Create channels of communication to support and facilitate effective relationships with external parties which impact on overall school effectiveness.</p>	<p>Suitably skilled and experienced staff in place to deliver agreed curriculum and to adequately man support functions agreed in School Plan; Effective utilisation of the middle management personnel within the school; Motivated staff; Effective processes in place to handle staff problems.</p> <p>Timely, relevant, accurate and accessible records and data regarding school business; Effective use of available technology to assist in school administration.</p> <p>Existence and availability of up-to-date policies for the school in all appropriate areas of policy; Processes in place to ensure the communication of policies to all relevant parties.</p> <p>Positive and supportive relationships with relevant external parties; Regular fora for communication with external parties.</p>	<p>Team Leadership Developing Others Challenge and Support Inter-personal Understanding Impact and Influence</p> <p>Information Seeking Analytical Thinking Initiative</p> <p>Strategic Thinking Conceptual Thinking Networking/Relationship Building</p> <p>Networking/Relationship Building Inter-personal Understanding Impact and Influence Analytical Thinking</p>

INTER-PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING

The ability to accurately hear and understand both the spoken and unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings and concerns of others.

- Judges and makes inferences about the concerns of others across differing age groups and intellectual / emotional capacities
- Predicts people's responses and makes appropriate replies
- Interprets behaviour and uses past experience to anticipate reactions
- Picks up subtle, unspoken messages between people in group settings
- Understands other people's underlying problems
- Understands the reason for someone's ongoing or long-term feelings, behaviours or concerns
- Presents a balanced view of others specific strengths and weaknesses
- Recognises different values and motivation in other's behaviour

TEAM LEADERSHIP

The intention to take a role as a leader of a team or other group.

- Communicates a compelling vision that generates excitement and commitment
- Ensures that others buy into the vision
- Gets people working together in pursuit of specific aims or objectives
- Gives clear direction to the group in times of uncertainty
- Knows what skills and aptitudes are possessed by the group
- Establishes agreed norms for group behaviour
- Sets a good example; models desired behaviour
- Encourages team members to air their views and communicate openly within the team
- Obtains needed resources, information for team
- Creates opportunities to recognise and celebrate success.

<p>TEAMWORKING</p> <p>The intention to work co-operatively with others, to be part of a team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses positive expectations of others in public • Gives credit publicly where it is due • Takes steps to share experiences and lessons learned with others • Takes an active interest in others work and provides support where appropriate • Encourages people to participate as part of a group • Seeks the input of others before acting • Encourages others to support the team and focuses on common objectives • Notices people who appear to be 'left out' and actively seeks to involve them • Resolves conflict when it arises 	<p>IMPACT AND INFLUENCE</p> <p>The intention to make an impact, to influence others to take notice and/ or to follow a particular course of action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts a presentation or discussion to appeal to the interest and level of audience • Undertakes careful preparation of data / information for presentation. • Uses concrete examples, visual aids, demonstrations etc. • Uses interaction within the group to stimulate deeper involvement in the subject matter, and to influence perceptions and actions of others
<p>ACHIEVEMENT DRIVE</p> <p>A deep seated concern for matching and surpassing standards of excellence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifies goals and targets to ensure progress towards achievement of them • Aims to do each task "better" than before, e.g. more efficiently, quickly, etc. 	<p>DEVELOPING OTHERS</p> <p>A genuine intent to foster the long-term development of others, in order to achieve/ maintain high standards of teaching / learning .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes specific helpful suggestions • Creates positive constructive environment to avoid perceptions of professional criticism

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors own performance, sets improvement targets and takes steps to reach these over time • Benchmarks own performance against others; wants to be the “best” • Questions accepted and traditional approaches – asks “how can it be done better?” • Makes specific changes in the system or in own work methods to improve performance • Takes overall tasks through to final completion • Makes decisions and sets priorities on the basis of calculated inputs and outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks questions, or uses other methods to verify that others have understood explanations or suggestions. • Gives specific positive or mixed feedback for developmental purposes • Gives negative feedback in behavioural rather than personal terms • Reassures and/or expresses positive expectations for the future when giving corrective feedback • Gives individualised suggestions for improvement.
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<p>CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT</p> <p>The ability to hold people accountable for standards of performance and to support them in delivering that performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes explicit the standards of performance required of self and others • Challenges others to develop new standards of performance and excellence • Takes appropriate actions to address under-performance • Monitors performance against agreed standards • Gives balanced feedback to others regarding their performance • Helps others to take developmental actions to improve performance and raise standards • Uses coaching and developmental styles of management to help others address long term professional development needs 	<p>RESPECT FOR OTHERS</p> <p>The ability to recognise and understand other people's concerns and anxieties and to respond to these concerns in a sensitive and empathic way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises emotional and intellectual needs in others • Endeavours to utilise people's strengths and capabilities in the tasks assigned to them • Recognises the diversity of people's values systems and beliefs • Seeks to avoid placing people in situations which create ethical, emotional or intellectual problems for them • Develops people's skills and capabilities based on personal strengths and interests • Creates an environment in which diversity of viewpoint and expression is encouraged
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<p>INFORMATION SEEKING</p> <p>The ability to “dig” for information and use it effectively beyond the questions that are routine or required. This may be done for information currently required or for information that may be of future use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks direct questions of the people who are responsible for the situation • Uses available information effectively • Asks a series of probing questions to get at the root of a situation • Does not stop with the first answer – finds out why something happened • Reads about issues concerning own area and keeps self up to date with what is happening • Pulls thoughts/data together from a number of different sources when making decisions in order to have as much information as possible • Obtains specific feedback from others on a regular basis • Goes to some lengths to gather critical information beyond own immediate area of concern 	<p>ANALYTICAL THINKING</p> <p>The ability to understand a complex situation by breaking it into smaller pieces or tracing the implications of a situation in a step-by-step way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructs plans that flow logically and sequentially • Analyses relationships among several parts of a problem or situation • Anticipates obstacles and thinks ahead to next steps • Generates a number of possible causes and solutions to any given situation • Identifies the key issues in ambiguous, inconsistent data • Balances long term projects and immediate concerns • Looks to others to challenge and question analysis made • Assesses what are the critical or key factors involved when making a decision • Knows how the cycle of the academic year moves and assesses plans/decisions against this
<p>NETWORKING/RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</p> <p>The ability to develop and maintain a network of contacts through a personalised approach and to use this to influence people and situations.</p>	<p>INITIATIVE</p> <p>The ability to think and act creatively and ahead of the current situation, particularly before problems or crises occur.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses others to sound out ideas and get them “on board” • Uses contacts to obtain information • Keeps colleagues well informed about activities • Uses others in the school to help support own cases • Shares information with others in the Education Sector in order to gain allies • Sees relationships as long term – working towards a level of trust and understanding • Goes out of way to communicate and build rapport with others • Uses chains of indirect influence, e.g., get A to show B so B will tell C... • Builds behind-the-scenes support for ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipates problems by getting behind issues • Thinks about the longer term benefits of particular courses of action • Is persistent in pushing through ideas • Identifies improvements across all areas • Willing to go against the grain to improve process/procedures • Uses knowledge of changes in the external environment to formulate positions • Applies strategic vision • Willing to champion a new idea even when it is not initially popular • Frequently makes forward plans for change
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Appendix 2: Tóraíocht Programme Course Description

Course Description

The Post-Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership (Tóraíocht)

The Post-Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership (Tóraíocht) is offered in partnership between the National University of Ireland Maynooth and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The course is a level 9 qualification (60 Credits) and aims to enhance the capabilities of teachers in their current work and to support their preparation for future senior leadership positions.

Eligibility: The course is open to teachers with a minimum of four years full-time qualified teaching experience. Selection may apply.

Course fee: €2,000

Programme Content

The Tóraíocht programme is developed in partnership with experienced school leaders and aims to develop the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills required for successful modern school leadership. The guiding principles for the programme are to focus on the participants' own journey in school leadership and learning; build a competence and confidence in leadership within a legislative framework; and to place emphasis on personal development & contextual awareness.

Participants are required to undertake a leadership 'Action Research Project' in their own school. The school leader as a 'Reflective Practitioner' is fundamental to the programme.

(PDST, 2016)

Appendix 3: National Aspiring Principals Programme N.Z. Course

Description

Course Description

National Aspiring Principals Programme – New Zealand

The focus of the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP) is on developing adaptive, culturally responsive, digitally literate leaders through inquiry learning, and building their understanding of the research base around leadership.

The National Aspiring Principals Programme is run by Te Toi Tupu Leading Learning Network. Te Toi Tupu is a consortium of providers, contracted by the Ministry of Education, and coordinated by Waikato University.

Participants will have a rich and engaging year of leadership learning covering:

- A leadership for learning inquiry focused on their own leadership of colleagues in raising the achievement of students in the school, with a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika students, and students with special needs.
- An online reflective blog journal and active participation in the NAPP online community throughout the year.
- Four online modules of work based on the role of the principal.
- Three personalised inquiry coaching sessions with an experienced facilitator.
- Peer coaching.
- Contributing to a professional learning group located in My Portfolio and four regional meetings.
- Shadowing leaders in another school.

About the online modules: The four online modules focus on school operating systems in the New Zealand context and show how to link those systems effectively to student achievement.

- Using a mix of shared online interaction and individualised self-managed learning, the modules explore: school contexts, resourcing, personnel and employment, and strategies and planning.
- They require online interaction with other aspiring principals and are structured to ensure that everyone expands their online skills and their capability in using social media tools to organise their learning.
- A wide range of resources will be used, including those on this website.

Aspirants will build their online capacities in: prioritising learning time as and when it is available, following their own defined learning paths, relating learning about school systems to the everyday processes around them.

(Ministry of Education – New Zealand, 2016)

Appendix 4: Sample Shortlisting Criteria Template

Name of School:

Address:

Appointment of:

Date of meeting:

Selection Board Members:

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

Criteria for Short listing:

Sample Shortlisting Criteria Template continued.....

Decision of Selection Panel - The following applicants were short listed:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Signed:

Date:

(Chairman of Selection Panel)

Appendix 5: Misneach Programme Course Description

Course Description

Misneach Programme for Newly Appointed Principals

The Misneach Programme of Induction for newly appointed principal teachers has provided professional development and support for the vast majority of principals appointed in the past 10 years. The programme assists principals in “walking the tightrope” of the induction to principalship and affords them the opportunity to develop as a school leader in their own school.

The Misneach Programme is offered via a blend of residential modules, local support settings, mentoring and online support. It is funded by the Department of Education and Skills. Misneach is designed and delivered by a team of experienced school leaders.

Misneach offers participants support in the key professional areas of school leadership including - Leading Learning, Leading People, Leading the Organisation and Managing Self. Modules covered during the Misneach programme include –

Beginning Principalship	Managing Special Needs
Communication	Record Keeping
IPPN	Leading Curriculum Change
Mentoring	Assessment & Evaluation
Managing Self	The Principal and The Inspectorate
School Finance	Emotional Intelligence
Time Management	Managing Conflict
Team Building	Professional Issues
The Extended School Community	Leading People
Stress Management	Selection & Interviewing
INTO/ProfessionalPractice	Unpacking Leadership

Appendix 6: Personal Competences & Skills (McKinsey)

Effective leaders: practices, beliefs, attitudes and personal attributes

Effective leaders - Practices

- Building a shared vision and sense of purpose
- Setting high expectations for performance
- Role modelling behaviours and practices
- Designing and managing the teaching and learning programme
- Establishing effective teams within the school staff and distributing leadership among staff
- Understanding and developing people
- Protecting teachers from issues which would distract them from their work
- Establishing school routines and norms for behaviours
- Monitoring performance.

Effective leaders - Beliefs, attitudes and personal attributes

- Focused on student achievement; puts children ahead of personal or political interests
- Resilient and persistent in goals, but adaptable to context and people
- Willing to develop a deep understanding of people and context
- Willing to take risks and challenge accepted beliefs and behaviours
- Self-aware and able to learn
- Optimistic and enthusiastic.

(Barber et al, McKinsey, 2010:6)

Appendix 7: Abridged Version of Table of Accountabilities

ACCOUNTABILITY	KEY COMPETENCIES REQUIRED
Leadership: Create, communicate and deliver a vision for the school, taking account of the concerns and aspirations of all the stakeholders in the school	Achievement Drive Team Leadership Strategic Thinking Conceptual Thinking
Education: Deliver high standards of teaching and learning through personal teaching standards and the development, monitoring and coaching of teaching standards of others.	Developing Others Team Leadership Professional Expertise Inter-Personal Understanding Challenge and Support
Resource Management: Plan, manage and evaluate the use of the physical resources of the school	Information Seeking Financial Management Skills Analytical Thinking
Human Resource Management: Select, coach, develop and hold accountable the human resources of the school	Team Leadership Developing Others Challenge and Support Inter-Personal Understanding Impact and Influence
Administration: Comply effectively with the various reporting, recording and data management obligations to which the school is subject	Information Seeking Analytical Thinking Initiative
Policy Formulation: Research, draft and present policy documents and statements as required by legislation and policy provisions	Strategic Thinking Conceptual Thinking Networking/Relationship Building
External Relationships: Create channels of communication to support and facilitate effective relationships with external parties which impact on overall school effectiveness	Networking/Relationship Building Inter-personal Understanding Impact and Influence Analytical Thinking

(OECD, 2007:20)

Appendix 8: Information Letter

Information Letter

**Ballykilmurry
Tullamore
Co Offaly**

26 Sep 2014

**Xxxxxxxx
Xxxxxxxx
Xxxxxxxx**

Dear Principal,

My name is Geraldine Gaffey and while I am presently working as the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator attached to St. Philomena's N.S. and Scoil Bhríde N.S. in Tullamore, I am also a part-time research student with the Department of Education at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The aim of my research is to examine the effectiveness of the selection process in assessing candidate competencies for the post of primary school principal in Ireland. Essentially, I am gathering data around the selection process in place for primary school principals in Ireland and the use of competency models in this process. In order to gather my data, I hope to carry out semi structured interviews with newly appointed principals, chairpersons of management boards, members of the IPPN and PDST.

With this in mind, I would be very grateful if you would consider acting as a participant in this research study. I am so very aware of how busy everyone is at the moment so I can only say already how very grateful I would be to you for your participation in this study.

Agreeing to participation would involve sitting for interview and answering a series of questions based on your experience of the selection process for your post of principal and

the selection process in general. It is hoped to record the interviews (audio versions) for the purpose of this data gathering process.

At this point, I would like to point out that all data gathered for this study will be stored in a secure place and archived in a way that is consistent with college policy. Every effort will be made on my part to protect confidentiality and in order to protect identities, pseudonyms will be used throughout. Also, all data gathered will be held only for the duration of the study and will be destroyed on completion of the study.

Should you consent to participation in this research, could you kindly reply to this e-mail by declaring your willingness to participate in the study. In doing so, it will permit me to arrange a date and time for interview and answer any more questions you may have regarding the study, the interview etc.

With many thanks,

Geraldine Gaffey

Please Note

'It must be recognized that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

Appendix 9: Consent Form

Consent Form

Consent for participation

Researcher: Geraldine Gaffey, Education Department, NUIM – (086 8531000)

Research supervisors: Anthony Malone, Education Department, NUIM

Paula Kinnarney, Education Department, NUIM

Please read and sign the following: _____

I _____ consent to participate in a research study being undertaken by Geraldine Gaffey (Research Student at NUIM). I am aware of the aims of the study and am willing to be interviewed by the researcher. I am aware that I can withdraw at any time during the process. I also give consent for the audio recording of the interview.

Signature of Interviewee: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Please note:

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Appendix 10: Principal Teacher Interview Schedule

Interview Questions : Newly Appointed Principal Teacher Respondents

- 1 How long have you been in your post as principal teacher?**
- 2 How many years were you teaching prior to taking up your post?**
- 3 Did you have a post of responsibility?**
- 4 Why did you apply for principalship?**
- 5 Were you teaching in this school prior to your appointment as principal?**
- 6 Would you have applied for the post of principal were you not a member of the school staff?**
- 7 Did you undertake leadership / management training before applying for the post?**
- 8 What was your knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of a principal teacher before applying for the post?**
- 9 Did you have a pre conceived notion of this role? How does it match the reality?**
- 10 Did you complete professional interview training?**
- 11 Did you receive a copy of the criteria for the post when you were called for interview?**
- 12 Could you name some competencies associated with the role of principal teacher?**
- 13 Do you have any knowledge of competency based assessment or what is your understanding of such assessment?**
- 14 Did your interview reflect a competency based assessment?**
- 15 Have you undergone any leadership/management training since taking up your post?**
If so, do you think that it has supported you in your role as principal teacher?
If not, do you think that by doing so might benefit you in your role as principal teacher?
- 16 Do you think that a management/leadership qualification should become a pre requisite for applying for the post of principal?**
- 17 Knowing what you know now, would you still apply for the post of principal?**

Appendix 11: Chairperson Interview Schedule

Interview Questions : Chairpersons Respondents

- 1 How long have you served as chairperson of a board of management?**
- 2 Have you been board chairperson in the event of the recruitment of principal teacher?**
- 3 How do you choose the independent assessors to sit on the board?**
- 4 What is your perception of the role of the chairperson on the interview board?**
- 5 In your opinion, what competencies are required to lead a primary school?**
- 6 In your experience, what competencies are sought after by a school when interviewing for the post of principal teacher?**
- 7 How are these competencies arrived at? Do you use a standard framework to choose competencies or do you set competencies with the other members of the selection board?**
- 8 In your opinion, is the selection process for principal teacher adequate in Ireland?**
- 9 Have you had training in selection/recruitment procedures? or is there any training available specifically for chairpersons?**
- 10 What changes would you make to the process of selecting principal teachers in Ireland at present?**

Appendix 12: Independent Assessor Interview Schedule

Interview Questions : Independent Assessor Respondents

- 1 What is your perception of the role of the independent assessor on the interview board?**
- 2 In your opinion, what competencies are required to lead a primary school?**
- 3 What in your experience are the competencies sought after by schools when interviewing for the post of principal teacher?**
- 4 How are these competencies arrived at? Do you use a standard framework to choose competencies or do you set competencies with the other members of the selection board?**
- 5 What template is used for marking the candidates?**
- 6 Do you try to match the skill set and experience of the candidate with the profile of the school?**
- 7 As an independent assessor, have you received training in the area of recruitment? What form did this take and do you feel it's adequate?**
- 8 In your experience, when interviewing for the post of principal teacher, do internal candidates have an advantage over external candidates? If so, why is this the case?**
- 9 As an independent assessor, have you an opinion on internal candidates having an advantage over external candidates for the post of principal teacher?**
- 10 Is the interview process adequate, in your opinion, to secure the 'best' person for the post of principal teacher?**
- 11 In your experience, how familiar are boards of management with the rules and regulations governing the appointment of principals?**
- 12 What changes would you make to the process of selecting and recruiting primary school principals?**

Appendix 13: IPPN Representative Interview Schedule

Interview Questions : IPPN Representative

- 1. In a number of studies carried out in the last decade on the role of principal teacher in Ireland, recommendations were made regarding professionalising the selection process when recruiting a principal teacher – has this happened?**
- 2. To your knowledge, is there a competency framework used to support the selection and appointment of primary school principals in Ireland and is it adequate?**
- 3. Is there a competency framework used to support the implementation of professional development programmes for newly appointed principals?**
- 4. Are selection boards sufficiently trained in the process of recruitment – should there be more training for boards in the area of recruitment?**
- 5. Is there a need for outside agencies to be involved in this process as the role of principal is such an important role? Should there be for example, a centralised recruitment board for the appointment of principals on the same basis as the appointment of inspectors?**
- 6. Should responsibility for the appointment of principal teachers be withdrawn from boards of management completely?**

Appendix 14: Section 4: Circular 02 / 02

Circular letter 02/02

Department of Education and Science Primary Branch

To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and all Teaching Staff in Ordinary Primary Schools and Special School

APPENDIX D – Revised Version

Section 4: Circular 02/02

4. Assessment of applications/shortlisting
 - (i) The Chairperson of the Board of Management shall submit all completed application forms to the Selection Board.
 - (ii) Established criteria of the Board shall take account of the provisions of the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Code of Practice of the Equality Authority.

- (iii) Care must be taken to ensure that the criteria do not lead to discrimination against any applicant on the grounds of gender or marital status.
- (iv) The Chairperson of the Selection Board shall keep a record of the criteria used.
- (v) The following factors should be taken into account, having regard to the requirements of the particular post and the Rules for National Schools, though not exclusively nor necessarily in this order:
 - professional qualifications
 - teaching experience and reports on competence
 - other relevant experience
 - references; in this regard applicants should be advised in good time whether or not additional documentary information is required.

Appendix 15:

Responsibilities & Duties of the Principal Teacher (Circular 16/73)

Responsibilities and Duties of the Principal Teacher (Circular 16/73)

(overleaf)

AN ROINN OIDEACHAISBRAINSE AN BHUNOIDEACHAISImlitir do Bhainisteoirí agus do Phríomhoidí Scoileanna NáisiúntaPoist Fhreagrachta : Dualgais agus Freagrachtaí

Is mian leis an Aire Oideachais go ndéanfainn tagairt do na liúntais chéimnithe atá iníoctha le príomhoidí, le leas-phríomhoidí agus le hoidí eile i bpoist fhreagrachta i scoileanna náisiúnta, de réir moltaí Choiste Uí Riain. Sa chomhaontú a dtángthas air ina leith seo bhí moladh go mbeadh sé mar choinníoll in íocaíocht an liúntais go saineofaí freagrachtaí sonracha don oide agus go gcomhlíonfadh sé iad go sásúil.

Bhí ábhar na bhfreagrachtaí seo faoi chaibidil idir an Roinn, na cumainn bhainistíochta agus Cumann na Múinteoirí Náisiúnta. De thoradh na caibidil sin thángthas ar chomhaontú maidir le liosta dualgas agus freagrachtaí i gcás príomhoidí agus oidí i bhfeighil scoileanna náisiúnta. Tá cóip den liosta seo coimhiata. Féadfar cóipeanna breise a fháil ón Roinn má táid ag teastáil.

Circular to Managers and Principal Teachers of National SchoolsPosts of Responsibility : Duties and Responsibilities

The Minister for Education desires me to refer to the graded allowances payable to principal and vice-principal teachers and to other teachers in posts of responsibility in national schools in accordance with the recommendations of the Ryan Tribunal. The agreement arrived at in this connection included the recommendation that payment of the allowance be contingent on specific responsibilities being assigned to and satisfactorily carried out by, the teacher.

The matter of these responsibilities has been the subject of discussions between the Department, the managerial associations and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation. As a result of these discussions, agreement has been reached on a list of duties and responsibilities of principal teachers and teachers in charge in national schools. A copy of this list is enclosed. Additional copies may be obtained from the Department where required.

Baile Átha Cliath

Bealtaine, 1973

S. Mac Gearailt,

Rúnaí.

Department of Education

Primary Branch

RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF PRINCIPAL TEACHERS

and

TEACHERS IN CHARGE OF NATIONAL SCHOOLS

Section A

1. The Manager of a national school is charged with the direct government of the school, the appointment of the teachers and, subject to the Minister's approval, their removal and the conducting of the necessary correspondence (Rule 15 (1)).
2. Subject to the authority of the Manager, the principal teacher is responsible (in addition to teaching duties which may vary according to the size of the school - and which may be determined by the Minister either generally or in relation to any particular school but from which the teacher can, in no case, be completely relieved) for the discipline of the school generally, the control of other members of the teaching staff, including the co-ordination and effective supervision of their work, the organisation of the school, the keeping of the records of attendance, the promotion of pupils, the time-table arrangements and their observance, the books used by the pupils, the arrangements in connection with the Free Books Scheme for necessitous children, and all other matters connected with the school arrangements in each division. (Rule 123 (4)).
3. The authority of the principal teacher for the organisation and conduct of the school derives from the authority of the Manager. Subject to the authority of the Manager, the over-all responsibility for the day-to-day activities of the school devolves on the principal teacher. The duties set out at Sections B and C hereunder arise out of such responsibility.

Section B

The Principal Teacher and the Manager

1. The principal teacher should consult with the manager as the occasion demands and keep him informed on all matters concerning the school.
2. He should see that all lawful instructions issued by the Manager are understood and carried out by the staff.
3. When a vacancy occurs on the staff, the principal teacher should make known to the manager the desirable qualifications

of a new teacher having regard to the needs of the pupils and the organisation of the school.

The General Discipline of the School

4. The principal teacher should organise supervision of the order and general behaviour of the pupils during school hours. In particular, he should organise and participate in the effective supervision of the pupils during breaks, lunch periods, assembly and dismissal. A table of names and times of supervision duties should be on display in the staff-room.

The Principal Teacher and the Staff

5. The principal teacher should ensure that each member of the staff carries out his duties in accordance with the requirements of the Rules for National Schools.
6. He should avail himself of opportunities to visit classrooms to become familiar with the quality of the teacher's work. He should give encouragement, advice and teaching demonstrations or arrange for teaching demonstrations, particularly in the case of weak teachers and teachers on probation.
7. He should hold regular conferences with his staff on matters concerning the general work of the school.
8. To enable his staff to keep abreast of modern educational theory and practice, he should, from time to time, arrange for suitable lectures, demonstrations and visits to selected schools, with the consent of the manager and on the advice of the inspector.
9. He should encourage the teachers of admission classes to take all reasonable steps to co-operate with the parent in easing the introduction of a child to school.

The Principal Teacher and Organisation

10. At the beginning of each school year the principal teacher, in consultation with the staff, should plan a comprehensive scheme of work for the school based on the requirements of an integrated curriculum.
11. After consultation with the staff, he should promote the pupils in accordance with the relevant sections of Rule 64 (Amended) and the terms of Circular 10/67.
12. In consultation with the staff he should decide on the organisation of the pupils for teaching purposes.
13. He should arrange a fair distribution of teaching duties among the staff taking into account the needs of the pupils and the abilities, experience, personality and preferences of each teacher. He should utilise the services of staff teachers, with special qualifications or aptitudes, in an organising and advisory capacity. The areas of Arts and Crafts, Music and Physical Culture may be of particular relevance in this connection.

14. He should arrange teaching duties for himself which may vary according to the size of the school. Such teaching duties may be determined by the Minister either generally or in relation to any particular school.
15. In consultation with the staff he should draw up a suitable time-table and ensure its general observance, bearing in mind the degree of flexibility and freedom required by the curriculum and modern teaching methods.
16. He should ensure that each teacher prepares a long-term scheme of work and makes appropriate short-term preparation in accordance with the comprehensive scheme for the school taking into account the ability and attainments of the pupils assigned to him.
17. At the end of the month he should arrange that each teacher indicates in a Record of Progress that portion of his annual scheme of work dealt with during the month. So as to avoid unnecessary repetition of work, it should remain available in the school for at least one school year after the year to which it relates.
18. In consultation with the staff he should arrange for regular assessment of the pupils' progress.
19. As far as is practicable, he should organise the normal staff so that additional help can be provided for pupils who may require it.
20. Where pupils are appropriately placed in a special class or remedial class the principal teacher should ensure that the pupils' progress in these classes is reviewed regularly, that there is liaison between the ordinary class teachers and the teacher of the special or remedial class and that pupils are re-integrated as soon as it is feasible to do so.
21. The principal teacher should ensure that additional opportunities and facilities are available to allow the more gifted pupils to make the fullest use of their natural abilities.
22. He should arrange adequate supervision and work for pupils whose teacher is absent.

The Principal Teacher and School Records

23. The principal teacher should carefully carry out all official instructions in connection with Roll Books, Daily Report Books, Registers, Teachers' Reports, School Record Cards, Annual School Reports on Pupils, Free Books Scheme and other official records.

The Principal Teacher and Officials

24. The principal teacher should co-operate with Government and Local Government officials in all matters relating to the school, bearing in mind the rights of the pupils and their parents. In particular, he should carefully comply with the requirements of Rule 123 (6) (see Schedule II) and Rule 125 (1) and (2).

The Principal Teacher and Parents

25. The principal teacher should seek to win the confidence, co-operation and good will of the parents of his pupils and should be prepared to discuss with them, individually or otherwise, any matter relevant to the education of their children. At the beginning of each school year the principal teacher should discuss with the manager and the members of the school staff the question of group meetings of the parents of the pupils.

The Principal Teacher and Senior Pupils

26. The principal teacher should arrange for advice and guidance to pupils in their final year and to their parents on the opportunities, educational and otherwise, available to the pupils in the post-primary field.

Miscellaneous

27. The principal teacher, in consultation with the staff and having obtained the Manager's prior approval, should arrange for tours and visits to places of educational interest.
28. He should bring to the notice of his pupils the advantages, both national and personal, of the habit of saving.
29. He should see that an adequate stock of books and other requisites is made available for the use of the school and for sale to the pupils.

Section CDuties which may be Delegated

1. The effective supervision of the pupils during breaks, lunch periods, assembly and dismissal.
2. The care and safe custody of school requisites, equipment and teaching aids.
3. Co-operation with the Manager in matters relating to school maintenance, heating and cleaning, care and general appearance of school and school grounds.
4. The organisation and supervision of special and/or remedial classes.
5. Supervision and work for pupils whose teachers are absent.
6. School records and official forms.
7. Arrangements for talks and demonstrations and for visits to selected schools.

8. Arrangements, in agreement with the Manager, for effective liaison with parents.
9. Arrangements for educational tours and outings.
10. The promotion of saving.
11. The supervision of school and class libraries.
12. Responsibility for organising particular areas of the curriculum throughout the school.
13. Responsibility for a particular school activity e.g. games, choir, orchestra, drama, etc.
14. Arrangements for the supervision of pupils during religious exercises.

Section D

Vice-principal teacher

1. The vice-principal is required to assist the principal teacher in the day-to-day organisation and supervision of the school. In addition to his teaching duties the vice-principal should be assigned specific duties by the Manager. Before assigning such duties to the vice-principal the Manager should discuss the matter with the principal teacher.

Assistant Teachers with posts of special responsibility

2. The Manager should arrange in consultation with the principal teacher to assign specific duties to each teacher holding a post of special responsibility.

Section E

1. The lists of duties at Sections B and C are not exhaustive and may be amended by the Department of Education from time to time as circumstances warrant.
2. Responsibilities and duties of the principal teacher and other staff vary according to the type and size of the school. Where warranted the Manager, in consultation with the principal teacher, may make whatever amendments to the lists of duties at Sections B and C as may be necessary to suit the particular needs of the school.

Appendix 16: Competency Framework

Competency Framework *

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Management and Change</u></p> <p>The candidate should demonstrate the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, coordinate and implement plans and programmes • Think and act strategically • Evaluate organisational capacity and performance • Manage the allocation and best use of resources • Influence and promote a commitment to change • Promote and sustain a positive image of the school 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Team Leading and Standard Setting</u></p> <p>The candidate should demonstrate the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by example in terms of commitment and flexibility • Develop the competence of team members • Promote and develop the achievement of quality teaching outcomes • Provide for continuing professional development of team members • Give clear example and guidance of expected work standards
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>People Handling Skills</u></p> <p>The candidate should demonstrate the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster, build and develop team relationships • Evaluate and monitor personal performance • Motivate team members • Effectively manage under performance • Effective management of conflict • Build rapport with, empathise with and support staff • Encourage and empower staff to deliver/achieve school objectives 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Communications</u></p> <p>The candidate should demonstrate the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the value of effective communications with all staff, BOM and external stakeholders • Actively listen to others • Have and develop highly effective verbal and written communication skills • Present ideas/plans clearly and effectively to individuals and groups

- As designed and used by a chairperson participant for the purposes of recruitment within schools

Appendix 17:

**Draft : Domains, Standards & Statements of Practice for School Leaders in
Ireland**

DRAFT COPY

SELF-EVALUATION OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

DRAFT COPY

SELF-EVALUATION OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Domains, standards and statements of practice

The Inspectorate School Improvement and Quality Unit

DES

October 2015

Self-evaluation of school leadership

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

School self-evaluation was formally introduced in primary and post-primary schools in Ireland in 2012. The Department of Education and Skills published School Self-Evaluation Guidelines in that year, to support schools' engagement in school self-evaluation (SSE), with a focus on teaching and learning. The 2012 Guidelines referred to other dimensions of school provision that would over time become areas of focus for self-evaluation. The second dimension referred to was management and leadership, which is the focus of the quality framework set out in this guide.

Teaching and learning constitutes the core work of the school, and teachers continually strive to provide the best possible learning experiences for their students. Teaching and learning will therefore always remain the focus of whole-school engagement in the SSE process. However, research evidence and observation of practice confirm that effective school leadership has an impact on students' learning experiences second only to good-quality teaching. It is for this reason that the Department has developed a self-evaluation framework of domains, standards and statements of practice for school leadership.

1.2 What does school leadership mean?

The consensus emerging from the current literature is that school leadership is defined and demonstrated by its impact on learning. For example, the OECD publication *Leadership for 21st Century Learning* (2013) describes 'leadership focused on creating and sustaining environments that are conducive to good learning' as paramount. This view has informed the recent development of professional standards for school leaders in a number of jurisdictions. It is both powerful and challenging when applied to the development of such standards in the Irish educational context.

In the context of school self-evaluation, the development of these standards is an acknowledgement that effective leadership is essential for schools to be - and continue to be - places where successful learning happens. These standards acknowledge that creating and sustaining successful learning communities requires the skilful direction of action planning for improvement and the skilful management of ongoing change. These skills are defining characteristics of school leadership.

Professional standards for school leaders therefore play a key part in extending and deepening the culture and practice of self-evaluation. They provide a framework to support individual and collaborative reflection, by promoting a shared understanding of what school leadership means and how it is demonstrated. This shared understanding can then inform the design of leadership programmes, and the criteria used to fill leadership positions and to evaluate the effectiveness of school leaders.

In developing these standards, it has been necessary to consider carefully the related concepts of leadership and management. A much-used distinction is that management is 'doing things right' and leadership is 'doing the right things'. However, it is simple common sense to conclude that a combination of these - 'doing right things right' - is required in practice.

This view that successful leaders 'do right things right' provides a sound basis on which to establish guiding principles for effective leadership in Irish schools. Leadership skills are required to create a vision and a shared sense of purpose within a school; management skills are required to provide and maintain the systems and structures through which the vision and purpose are realised. It is essential that both skillsets be considered at all times as serving the school's core work: learning and teaching.

1.3 Guiding principles for effective leadership in Irish schools

The domains and standards for school leadership are founded on a number of principles about what is required of leaders to ensure effective teaching and learning in schools. These principles are:

- A set of core professional values that includes commitment, trust, care, integrity, social justice and respect for all
- A clear understanding and knowledge of the core work of schools, which is the continuous development of a successful teaching and learning culture
- The ability to manage the school environment, structures and resources in a way that enables the development of a successful teaching and learning culture
- The ability to distribute leadership responsibilities in order to build leadership capacity and effective teams, with a view to sustainability and succession planning
- Recognition of the principal as lead learner who manages the creation, sharing and review of the strategic vision, ethos and aims of the school
- The ability to inspire and create a commitment to constant improvement through modelling and communicating the practice of self-evaluation and reflection

1.4 Who are the domains and standards for?

The domains and standards are intended to fulfil a range of purposes in any context where effective school leadership is a central concern. They provide a shared vision and understanding of leadership throughout the Irish education system, and are intended for:

- trustee and patron bodies who may wish to use them to support the leadership culture in their schools, to inform their recruitment of school leaders and to develop leadership capacity across their school organisations
- boards of management, principals, deputy principals and school leadership teams to enable them to reflect on their own leadership practices, to review practice in light of the domains and standards and to plan for further development and improvement of their practice
- teachers who are currently engaged in, or who aspire to, formal management and leadership roles within schools
- all teachers, to assist them in gaining a perspective on their own leadership roles in the school and how they can develop and expand their leadership skills over time
- professional bodies and educational institutions involved in the design and delivery of programmes for current and aspiring school leaders
- the Centre for School Leadership, as a reference point in its work to promote excellence in school leadership
- the Inspectorate, as a basis on which to develop criteria to support self-evaluation of leadership and management in schools. They will also be used in revising criteria for external evaluation of leadership and management

School leadership manifests itself in varying ways depending on the particular roles and responsibilities of the different bodies, teams and individuals that constitute the leadership structures in Irish schools. The proficient and expert practice described on pages 6 to 13 refers for clarity to specific leadership roles. These roles include 'patron', 'board of management', 'principal' and 'deputy principal'. The leadership and management responsibilities assigned to these roles in the guidelines are informed by the relevant sections of the Education Act (1998), and by relevant circulars.

In addition to these specific roles, the guidelines include some other terms that encompass areas of leadership and management in schools. Schools will vary considerably in the way in which they address these areas of leadership and management, depending on a range of contextual factors. The terms are listed below with a brief explanatory description.

- **Those in leadership and management roles:**

This term typically includes the school patron, the board of management, the principal, and the deputy principal. It is used where the area of responsibility is connected to ownership and management of the school, or to the school's ethos and mission.

- **Other leaders in the school:**

This term includes those with posts of responsibility in specific areas, and those who have undertaken roles related to the school's priorities.

- **Those leading the school self-evaluation process:**

This term refers to individuals or teams with lead responsibility for school self-evaluation of teaching and learning. The individuals and teams involved will vary depending on the current focus of the process in the school, and school context and size.

1.5 A note on school context

The domains set out below are applicable to all schools, regardless of the size of school or the extent of the leadership team. Similarly, almost all of the standards are applicable to each school, regardless of context. In considering the domains and standards, the focus of all those in leadership and management roles will be on school improvement.

School context will be a determining factor, however, in looking at the statements of proficiency. In the case of small schools, for example, it will not be necessary for school leaders to evaluate themselves against each statement. Small school contexts might dictate that only certain statements will be used to evaluate the quality of leadership and management. The emphasis should be on the relevance of the statement to the school, rather than on the number of statements.

Therefore, schools will use each of the domains and standards to reflect on key areas, but will have considerable flexibility in deciding which statements to focus on in evaluating and describing their level of proficiency.

2. Domains, standards and statements of practice for school leadership

Standards for school leadership have been developed in five domains. The standards for each of these domains are stated as the behaviours and attributes characteristic of school leaders in a well-functioning school. For each standard, statements of proficient practice and expert practice are given. The statements of proficient practice describe leadership operating at a competent and effective level. The statements of expert practice describe very effective and successful leadership.

The domains

I. Leading learning and teaching

II. Leading school development

III. Building culture, capacity and teams

IV. Professional growth and development

V. Organisational management

The standards

I. LEADING LEARNING AND TEACHING

A well-functioning school requires leaders who:

- create a culture of professional learning that fosters continuous improvement in learning, teaching and assessment as the core functions of the school
- foster the development of the full range of teacher competencies, and work to ensure that teacher professional development leads to improved student learning
- foster a commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity and develop goals to realise the holistic potential of each student
- develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability
- manage the design, planning and implementation of the school curriculum

II. LEADING SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

A well-functioning school requires leaders who:

- establish and communicate a guiding mission and vision for the school and empower and support others in the achievement of the vision
- engage in a continuous process of evidence-based school self-evaluation and implement strategic action planning for improvement
- build and maintain relationships with parents, other schools, relevant agencies, and the wider school community
- promote communication within the school and manage challenging and complex situations
- manage and lead change to respond to the evolving needs of the school

III. BUILDING CULTURE, CAPACITY AND TEAMS

A well-functioning school requires leaders who:

- promote a learning culture that fosters improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity, and recognises and celebrates individual and collective contributions and achievements
- build teams and empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles, thus building leadership capacity within the school
- facilitate the development of student voice and student leadership

IV. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

A well-functioning school requires leaders who:

- maintain and further develop leadership competencies and awareness of leadership research through continuing professional development
- recognise the need to manage workload to ensure a sustainable work/life balance
- critique and develop their own practice as leaders of learning
- build professional networks with other school leaders at local, national and international levels

V. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A well-functioning school requires leaders who:

- manage human and physical resources and organisational structures and strategies to create and maintain a learning organisation
- foster ethical standards, implement the values of the school and demonstrate equality, fairness and justice for all
- maintain a climate of security and well-being that enables and supports learning, and ensure the safe functioning of the school on a day-to-day basis
- encourage and facilitate the development of communities of practice in the area of management and leadership

3. The Statements Of Practice

DOMAIN 1: LEADING LEARNING AND TEACHING Standards

Standards	Statements of proficient practice	Statements of expert practice
<p>Create a culture of professional learning that fosters continuous improvement in learning, teaching, and assessment as the core functions of the school</p>	<p>Those with leadership and management roles are supportive of, and are developing, a culture of professional learning.</p> <p>The principal recognises his or her role as lead learner, and is seeking to prioritise it.</p> <p>The principal, with those leading the process, uses SSE to encourage teaching that is engaging and challenging, and to increase students' interest in learning.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school are supportive of new teaching</p>	<p>Those with leadership and management roles create a very strong culture of professional learning.</p> <p>The principal recognises and prioritises his or her role as lead learner with responsibility to develop, support, and evaluate high-quality teaching.</p> <p>The principal, with those leading the process, uses SSE very effectively to encourage teaching that is engaging and challenging, and to enable all students to become active and motivated learners.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school encourage teachers to develop innovative practices and to share those which have proven successful at improving learning outcomes.</p>

	<p>approaches and encourage teachers to share good practice.</p> <p>Teachers increasingly view themselves as leaders of learning with a responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of their practice. They are developing their practice in gathering and analysing assessment data on their students.</p>	<p>Teachers, as leaders of learning, rigorously monitor the impact of new teaching methods on learning outcomes. They gather a rich variety of assessment data, both formative and summative, on each student, and use this data effectively and purposefully to improve students' learning outcomes.</p>
<p>Foster the development of the full range of teacher competencies, and work to ensure that teacher professional development leads to improved student learning</p>	<p>Those in leadership and management roles support teachers' continuing professional development in a range of areas.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal seek to identify relevant and purposeful professional development opportunities for teachers. They encourage participation as a means of improving teaching and learning.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal support teachers' participation in professional networks.</p>	<p>Those in leadership and management roles support high-quality teaching by providing for the continuous development of teachers' competencies in subject knowledge, assessment, methodologies, classroom management, and ICT.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal ensure that professional development is firmly based on action research and is adapted to the identified needs of the school. They maximise opportunities to develop teachers' capacity and competence to improve teaching and learning.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal support and encourage the active participation of teachers in professional networks to improve student learning.</p>
<p>Foster a commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity and develop goals to realise the holistic potential of each student</p>	<p>The board of management and principal ensure the provision of a broad curriculum and a variety of learning opportunities.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles promote an inclusive school community.</p>	<p>The board of management and principal foster students' holistic development by providing a very broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles promote an inclusive school community which demonstrably values diversity and challenges discrimination.</p>

	<p>Those with leadership and management roles are committed to ensuring that all relevant school policies are inclusive and are implemented accordingly</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles promote equality of opportunity for students in most aspects of school life. They strive to ensure that all members of staff support this ethos</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school have good systems for monitoring students' progress and development. They recognise the importance of systematic monitoring to help students reach their full potential.</p>	<p>Those with leadership and management roles ensure that all relevant school policies are inclusive, and are implemented accordingly.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles establish clear principles of inclusion, equality and social justice to promote equality of opportunity throughout all aspects of school life. They do so in collaboration with all members of staff.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school ensure the regular and effective monitoring of the academic progress and social development of each student, with the aim of ensuring that students realise their full potential.</p>
<p>Develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability</p>	<p>The principal encourages staff to evaluate their own practice.</p> <p>He/she encourages teachers to engage in collaborative review of their practice and its outcomes, in the interests of professional accountability.</p> <p>The principal meets teachers annually to discuss their work.</p> <p>The principal identifies teachers in difficulty, and offers appropriate support. The principal understands his or her responsibility and endeavours to ensure that appropriate action is taken</p>	<p>The principal expects and facilitates teachers to critically analyse and evaluate their own practice.</p> <p>He/she promotes a culture of collaborative review of teaching and learning practices and outcomes, as part of an effective professional accountability process. He/she does so in an affirming and developmental manner.</p> <p>Within this culture of collaborative review, the principal meets teachers annually to discuss and evaluate their work.</p> <p>The principal, with the board of management, ensures that teachers who are experiencing difficulties are supported effectively, recommends appropriate action where necessary, and ensures that action is taken.</p>

<p>Manage the design, planning and implementation of the school curriculum</p>	<p>The board of management and the principal provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Some more strategic curriculum planning is possible.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal have a good handle on curriculum-related planning, and ensure that the planned delivery and assessment of learning experiences is of good quality.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal are committed to ensuring that the school curriculum is implemented in a way that provides valuable learning experiences, and are working to that end.</p> <p>(Post-primary) For the most part, the principal ensures that the timetable allocation for each subject is in line with syllabus/subject specification guidelines and best practice.</p>	<p>The board of management and the principal provide a broad and balanced curriculum, making deliberate and informed efforts to meet the needs of the students.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal strategically manage curriculum-related planning, and ensure that the planned delivery and assessment of learning experiences is of high quality.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal work purposefully to ensure that all aspects of the school curriculum are implemented in a way that provides all students with valuable learning experiences.</p> <p>(Post-primary) The principal ensures the allocation of appropriate time for each subject on the school timetable, in line with syllabus/subject specification guidelines and best practice.</p>
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DOMAIN 2: LEADING SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Statements of expert practice	Statements of expert practice	Statements of expert practice
<p>Establish and communicate a guiding mission and vision for the school and empower and support others in the achievement of the vision</p>	<p>The principal has established a guiding mission and vision for the school, which is supported by the trustees and board of management, and shared with the teachers. This mission and vision sets out goals and expectations but may require greater clarity and strategic focus.</p> <p>Staff members assume leadership roles and are generally aware of how</p>	<p>The principal has very effectively established a clear guiding mission and vision for the school. He/she does so in collaboration with the trustees, board of management, and teachers. He/she ensures that specific goals and explicit expectations, derived from the guiding mission and vision, are formulated and ensures that they are focused on improvement.</p> <p>The principal clearly communicates the strategic vision to all partners and articulates it in a way that empowers the whole school community to translate the vision into action.</p>

	<p>their responsibilities connect with the school's mission and vision.</p> <p>The principal takes positive steps to support and motivate staff, and to set high expectations for learners.</p>	<p>The principal inspires and motivates students, staff and the whole school community. He/she sets high expectations for every learner.</p>
<p>Engage in a continuous process of evidence-based school self-evaluation and implement strategic action planning for improvement</p>	<p>The principal and deputy principal recognise the changing learning needs of students and of the school, and have identified areas for development. They are driving action planning for improvement and are developing the structures to make it a whole-school process.</p> <p>Those leading school self-evaluation engage with it as a structured process with a focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment.</p> <p>They endeavour to establish high expectations through the school improvement plan. The plan may require further detail or greater linking between its elements.</p> <p>They are focused on the effective implementation of agreed actions and are committed to measuring their impact.</p>	<p>The principal and deputy principal recognise that a crucial part of their role is to lead and manage action planning for improvement. They ensure that the improvement-focused strategic plan of the school is put into action on a whole-school basis and that the goals are realised.</p> <p>Those leading school self-evaluation engage in a continuous process of evidence-based self-evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment.</p> <p>They ensure that the school's improvement planning is underpinned by a culture of high aspirations for staff and students.</p> <p>They work purposefully and very effectively to ensure that actions implemented lead to measurable and identifiable improvements in learner outcomes.</p>
<p>Build and maintain relationships with parents, other schools, relevant agencies, and the wider school community</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school build good working relationships with stakeholders and the wider community. They value and support partnership with parents.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school have good links with other schools and agencies. These links could be further developed.</p> <p>The principal communicates with parents and other partners through various means. While two-way communication occurs, he/she could further develop the structures that enable dialogue with partners.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school build and maintain very constructive relationships with parents, all school partners, and the wider school community. They value these relationships as a means of enhancing students' learning opportunities.</p> <p>Those in leadership and management roles build and maintain very constructive and purposeful relationships with other schools and agencies.</p> <p>The principal builds and maintains constructive relationships through effective and regular communication with all school partners using a range of media. He/she seeks and listens to the opinions of others and formally</p>

		engages in very effective dialogue with partners.
Promote communication within the school and manage challenging and complex situations	<p>The principal facilitates good communication and openness in expressing views within the school.</p> <p>He/she provides opportunities for staff, students and parents to express views, and takes their views on board. He/she could further develop the way that such views inform strategic development in the school.</p> <p>The school's leadership and management team recognise challenging situations when they arise, and sometimes anticipate them. They look for solutions and generally resolve matters satisfactorily</p> <p>They establish procedures for dealing with conflict and, for the most part, are able to follow them through successfully.</p>	<p>The principal encourages open communication and the free expression of views.</p> <p>He/she provides staff, students and parents with appropriate opportunities to offer their views and opinions. He/she values their views and inputs and ensures that they feed into the strategic development of the school.</p> <p>The school's leadership and management team are alert to potentially challenging situations. They work pre-emptively and effectively to manage them, and adopt a solution-focused approach.</p> <p>They establish and communicate very clearly the procedures for dealing with conflict and follow them as necessary. They successfully implement and monitor agreed solutions.</p>
Manage and lead change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and the changing educational environment	<p>The principal adapts to changes in context or policy environment and manages the implementation of the changes well.</p> <p>Those in leadership and management roles are aware of the school's changing needs, and seek to respond to them.</p> <p>Those in leadership and management roles are aware of educational developments and see their relevance to the school. They seek to use this information constructively.</p> <p>The principal and those leading SSE use the SSE process as a means of managing change with increasing effectiveness.</p>	<p>The principal demonstrates a clear understanding of change processes and approaches the management of change in a collaborative, flexible and sensitive manner.</p> <p>Those in leadership and management roles are alert and responsive to the changing needs of the school.</p> <p>Those in leadership and management roles keep abreast of thinking, developments and changes in the broader educational environment and use this information positively for the benefit of the school.</p> <p>The principal and those leading SSE use the SSE process very effectively to manage the school's response to changing needs.</p>

DOMAIN 3: BUILDING CULTURE, CAPACITY AND TEAMS

Standards	Statements of proficient practice	Statements of expert practice
<p>Promote a learning culture that fosters improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity, and recognises and celebrates individual and collective contributions and achievements</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school foster a culture in which learning flourishes. They lead the school community to continuously strive for excellence by setting high expectations for students. They promote a culture of continuous improvement by supporting colleagues to become reflective practitioners.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal collaborate well, and encourage collaborative work.</p> <p>They encourage innovation and creativity. They recognise the value of individual and collective contributions and achievements.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school foster a culture in which learning flourishes. They lead the school community to continuously strive for excellence by setting high expectations for students. They promote a culture of continuous improvement by supporting colleagues to become reflective practitioners.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal collaborate visibly and effectively, and foster collaboration among colleagues.</p> <p>They actively promote innovation and creativity. They welcome and celebrate individual and collective contributions and achievements.</p>
<p>Build teams and empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles, thus building leadership capacity within the school</p>	<p>The principal understands the importance of the quality of leadership and management for organisational learning within the school.</p> <p>He/she encourages teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, and is willing to distribute significant leadership responsibilities.</p> <p>The principal encourages the formation of teams to address school priorities. He/she understands the potential for building leadership capacity, and seeks to develop this.</p> <p>The principal provides a mentoring programme to support teachers in new roles.</p>	<p>The principal recognises and affirms the defining role of the quality of leadership and management for organisational learning within the school.</p> <p>He/she empowers teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, through the effective use of distributed leadership models.</p> <p>The principal encourages teamwork in all aspects of school life. He/she creates and motivates staff teams and working groups to lead developments in key areas, thus building leadership capacity.</p> <p>The principal provides and manages an effective mentoring programme both to support teachers in new roles and to develop the leadership capacity of mentors.</p>

<p>Facilitate the development of student voice and student leadership</p>	<p>Those in leadership and management roles ensure that the student council is democratically elected.</p> <p>They ensure that the student council is included in decision-making processes.</p> <p>The school ensures that students understand the roles and responsibilities of the student council.</p> <p>Those leading the SSE process recognise the importance of listening to the student voice. They are developing ways of consulting students on their own learning.</p>	<p>Those in leadership and management roles ensure that the student council is a democratically elected body, representative of the whole student population.</p> <p>They ensure that the student council plays an active role in decision-making and policy development, and is a catalyst for change.</p> <p>They support students in taking leadership roles by providing relevant training and opportunities to lead school practices.</p> <p>Those leading the SSE process actively facilitate the development of the student voice. They consult students on teaching, learning and assessment practices.</p>
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DOMAIN 4: PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Standards	Statements of proficient practice	Statements of expert practice
<p>Maintain and further develop leadership competencies and awareness of leadership research through continuing professional development</p>	<p>The principal and deputy principal engage in continuing professional development relevant to their leadership and management roles.</p> <p>They seek to apply the understanding they acquire in a meaningful way to their practice as school leaders.</p> <p>They are aware of current educational trends and have considered the possible implications for their work as school leaders.</p>	<p>The principal, deputy principal, and other leaders in the school actively maintain and further develop their leadership and management skills and understanding.</p> <p>Their continually developing understanding of leadership and management demonstrably informs their practice as school leaders.</p> <p>They are very aware of current educational thinking and its implications for effective leadership and management of teaching and learning.</p>
<p>Recognise the need to manage</p>	<p>For the most part, the principal, deputy principal and other school</p>	<p>The principal, deputy principal and other leaders in the school demonstrate awareness of the need</p>

<p>workload to ensure a sustainable work/life balance</p>	<p>leaders attend successfully to their own wellbeing.</p> <p>They respond well to pressing responsibilities and demands.</p> <p>The principal prioritises and delegates responsibilities well for the most part. Some rebalancing of responsibilities is possible.</p> <p>He/she is establishing systems and structures to meet the priority needs of the school.</p>	<p>to take care of their own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, as well as that of others.</p> <p>They respond proportionately and constructively to pressing responsibilities and demands.</p> <p>The principal prioritises and delegates responsibilities appropriately and strategically, thus ensuring a sustainable balance between personal and work life.</p> <p>He/she ensures that systems and structures are in place to meet the priority needs of the school.</p>
<p>Critique and develop their own practice as leaders of learning</p>	<p>School leaders engage consistently in personal self-evaluation against relevant professional standards.</p> <p>They question their practice through processes of personal reflection. They are willing to work on areas of their practice that require improvement.</p>	<p>The board of management, principal and other school leaders regularly review their own and each other's professional practice and development through the school's rigorous self-evaluation processes.</p> <p>They develop self-awareness by regularly questioning their own practice through personal and collaborative reflection. They identify and work on areas of their practice that require improvement</p>
<p>Build professional networks with other school leaders at local, national and international levels</p>	<p>The principal and deputy principal engage in professional dialogue with their peers at various levels on an ongoing basis. They seek to apply what they learn to their practice.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal contribute to the professional learning community of their peers.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles avail of the support of national bodies that support the development of effective management and leadership practices.</p>	<p>The principal and deputy principal actively involve themselves in professional associations for school leaders and managers at all levels, up to and including international level. They demonstrate learning from these associations in their practice.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal support the professional development of their peers, and make a purposeful contribution to the professional learning community.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles engage purposefully with the national bodies that support the development of effective management and leadership practices.</p>

DOMAIN 5: ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Standards	Statements of proficient practice	Statements of expert practice
<p>Manage human and physical resources and organisational structures and strategies to create and maintain a learning organisation</p>	<p>The principal works well with the board of management to create and maintain a learning organisation that delivers good learning experiences for all students and staff.</p> <p>The principal leads and manages the organisational structures in the school effectively.</p> <p>The principal and the board of management constantly monitor the use of budgets, personnel, and other resources and direct them towards identified learning priorities.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal manage human resources well, seeking to maximise students' learning opportunities. They deploy teachers with a view to making good use of their specific strengths and skills.</p> <p>The board of management maintains the building and grounds to a good standard. It ensures the provision and maintenance of teaching aids and equipment to a good standard.</p>	<p>The principal works very effectively with the board of management to create and maintain a learning organisation that delivers high quality learning experiences for all students and staff.</p> <p>The principal very effectively leads and manages the organisational structures in the school.</p> <p>The principal and the board of management constantly monitor the use of budgets, personnel, and other resources to ensure that they are closely aligned with identified learning priorities and the school's strategic plan.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal manage human resources very effectively to ensure the maximum impact on student learning. They deploy teachers strategically to make the best use of their specific strengths and skills.</p> <p>The board of management maintains the building and grounds to a very high standard. It ensures the provision and maintenance of teaching aids and equipment to a very high standard to enable their optimal use.</p>
<p>Foster ethical standards, implement the values of the school and demonstrate equality, fairness and justice for all</p>	<p>The board of management and the principal ensure that school policies are based on principles of justice and fairness.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal display mutual trust and respect. They foster a positive school climate and encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school community.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal act in accordance with the values of the school, and strive for fairness in their dealings.</p>	<p>The board of management and the principal ensure that the values of the school are clearly enunciated and enshrine equality, fairness and justice for all students and staff.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal model and develop a strong culture of mutual trust, respect and shared accountability. They foster a very positive school climate and encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school community.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal carry out their duties in a</p>

	<p>When required, the board of management and the principal are prepared to challenge actions, behaviours and practices that do not accord with the school's ethical standards.</p>	<p>demonstrably fair manner and in accordance with the values of the school.</p> <p>The board of management and the principal challenge actions, behaviours and practices that do not accord with the school's ethical standards.</p>
<p>Maintain a climate of security and well-being that enables and supports learning, and ensure the safe functioning of the school</p>	<p>The board of management and the principal maintain a climate of security and well-being in the school. They are committed to safeguarding all students, staff and visitors to the school.</p> <p>The board of management fulfils the SSE requirement to complete the legislative and regulatory and policy checklist on an annual basis.</p> <p>The board of management and the principal understand the school's responsibilities for child protection and health and safety matters and communicate these effectively.</p>	<p>The board of management and the principal maintain a climate of security and well-being in the school. They develop and implement clear policies to ensure the safety and security of all students, staff and visitors to the school.</p> <p>The board of management fulfils the SSE requirement to complete the legislative and regulatory and policy checklist on an annual basis.</p> <p>The board of management and the principal fully understand the school's responsibilities for child protection and health and safety matters and communicate these very effectively.</p>
<p>Encourage and facilitate the development of communities of practice in the area of management and leadership</p>	<p>The school patron supports the board of management and the principal in developing their leadership and management capabilities.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal participate in local communities of practice to improve their leadership and management skills.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal support the development of communities of practice within the school that foster management and leadership skills.</p>	<p>The school patron demonstrates active support for the board of management and the principal in developing their leadership and management capabilities.</p> <p>The principal and deputy principal actively participate in local communities of practice to improve their leadership and management skills.</p> <p>The board of management, and the principal and deputy principal encourage and support the development of communities of practice within the school that foster management and leadership skills.</p>

4. How the domains and standards might be used

While teaching and learning are always the core work of schools and the single most important determinant for successful student outcomes, they do not exist in a vacuum. We know that an environment that supports continuing learning and self-reflection in these areas is essential for student success. We also know that one of the key determinants in ensuring and sustaining good teaching and learning in schools is effective leadership. Finding the best ways to support effective leadership is therefore an imperative for our education system.

These domains and standards have been developed to support a wide range of partners across the system to facilitate and ensure effective school leadership is a hallmark of our schools and of the Irish education system. Some of the key uses of the domains and standards are identified below.

Reflection

A key element in the behaviour of effective leaders is the ability to reflect on their practice and improve as a result. This may involve self-reflection where leaders question their actions and examine the impact of those actions as a way of improving both. It may also involve structured reflection with others in seeking to enhance leadership in their school. These domains and standards can be used:

- as a tool for leaders' own self-reflection and as a support in the development of their own leadership capacity
- to provide a structure for peer-reflection within schools and also between leaders in different schools through clustering opportunities
- as a talking point to generate discussion and analysis of leadership within the school community
- as a planning tool for leaders and those aspiring to leadership positions for their own professional development

Identifying, developing and sustaining leaders

Individual schools, and the wider education system, have considerable interest in identifying, developing and sustaining both the current and next generations of school leaders. The domains and standards provide a framework through which:

- key stages in the development of leaders can be mapped out at school and system level
- schools and the system can gauge the appropriate supports and experiences needed in advancing the skillset of leaders and potential leaders
- consistency in any consideration of candidates across sectors, experienced leaders can provide advice and guidance for new and emerging leaders within schools and in the wider education system

Recruitment

The recruitment of principals and other school leaders is one of the most challenging tasks that trustees, boards of management and school principals face. This is an unavoidable truth because their decisions have the potential for long-term impact on teaching and learning in their schools. The domains and standards provide support in this endeavour by:

- highlighting the skillsets and elements of good practice which are central to good leadership in the education system
- providing clarity and trustee bodies and boards of management
- ensuring potential leadership candidates, and those recruiting candidates, have a clear understanding of the position and responsibilities of school leaders in our education system

Professional development across the system

Support for principals is currently offered by a wide range of bodies including Department support services, third-level institutions, professional associations, and management and trustee bodies. It is important that a common understanding of high-quality leadership permeates all of these. To this end the domains and standards will support these bodies in:

- developing professional development courses with a consistent view of what makes for high-quality leadership
- evaluating the strengths of current courses and exploring opportunities for further development
- considering demands from current and aspiring school leaders in the context of current leadership challenges

Transparency, accountability and improvement

Given the vital role leadership plays in supporting teaching and learning, there is a need for great clarity regarding what happens when leadership is working well. These domains and standards provide:

- clarity regarding what good leadership looks like and the various areas where its impact should be felt
- consistency in appraising leadership strengths, but also a means of identifying areas for leadership development
- a transparent guide to support leaders in being accountable to their communities
- a personal roadmap towards improvement