Walk a mile in my shoes: A case study of the everyday lives and work experiences of a group of Irish primary school Principals

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctorate in Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: _____   (Martin Stynes)

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Dedication

I remember some moments from my childhood quite clearly. Going off to school during the 1960's, my Granny Nolan would slip a few ha'pence into my hand so that I wouldn't ever be stuck. A shop nearby had no fridge, but we bought what we called "stale cream buns" and we shared them out. I remember too that my mother arrived one day to the school railings with a lemon ice-pop for me. It felt so strange. There I was in the schoolyard, the only boy with a cold ice-pop on a sunny day and nobody seemed to notice.

My father, God be good to him, worked endless hours of overtime sorting the post to put me through college and my fondest memory of him brings me back to Highbury where we went together as men to watch the Arsenal. They didn't win but it didn't matter. In college, I met my best friend Clare. On another sunny day we stood on the bridge in Mostar and we watched a man dive into the river below. We have the photo in our bedroom to prove it.

Hannah arrived. We sang Elton John's "Guess that's why they call it the blues". John came later. We learned to play Half Life together and he read Lord of the Rings, not just once but many times. Ellen was born on Christmas Eve so they placed her in the crib at midnight mass in the hospital chapel. Ellen shops in Stradivarius.

I read during the course of my Doctorate studies that the real lessons in life, in love and even in leadership are learned by seeing and appreciating the remarkable in the mundane and the mundane in the remarkable. I didn't get it at first. I do now, thankfully. This work is dedicated to my family and most of all to my wife. Thanks to you Clare, I've made it through.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Walk a mile in my shoes: A case study of the everyday lives and work experiences of a group of Irish primary school Principals. Martin Stynes B.Ed. Dip.Sp.Ed. M.Sc.

While much has been written about theories and practices of management and leadership in education in recent years, what school Principals actually do on a daily basis is relatively unresearched in Ireland. Moreover, how Principals experience the job personally goes largely unnoticed.

To investigate such questions, the researcher adopts a case study approach to gathering data from a group of 31 Irish primary school Principals. Researcher-driven diaries offer opportunities for self-observation by recording Principals' personal reflections on management and leadership activities as they arise during the day. On completion, all of the diaries are collated into a single bound volume and a copy of the booklet is returned to each participant. Principals report that it is both interesting and worthwhile to read the entries of others and to gain insights into the daily work practices and lived experiences of colleagues. 21 of the 31 Principals are available in the following weeks for a second round of data gathering in recorded interviews. They comment about their own experiences of keeping the diaries and about their impressions of the experiences of other school leaders also.

The diary and interview data are then coded and queried using QSR's NVivo computer application and an organised framework of thematic flowcharts. The results are presented in a case study report with supporting empirical evidence and 12 different aspects of journeying in the Principal's shoes through a myriad of daily work practices are explored. A narrative account explores Principals' engagement with the internal and external school environments. It demonstrates evidence of positive work ethic and time management issues. It details Principals' involvement with Boards of Management. Principals are vocal about their emotional investment in their roles and about the many positives and negatives that they encounter. Conclusions are drawn about career progression and about the sustainability of certain practices within the current system.

The collated Principals' diaries are available in the Appendices. They offer the opportunity to readers in different contexts to draw relevant and meaningful conclusions of their own.

List of Figures

Acronyms

ALN	Additional Learning Needs
BELMAS	British Educational Leadership Management and Administration Society
BOM	Board of Management
CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Management Association
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
GAM	General Allocation Model
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network
ISSPP	International Successful School Principalship Project
LDS	Leadership Development for Schools
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NPM	New Public Management
NT	National Teacher
NUDIST	Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PIMS	Principals' Information Management System
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
RCT	Relevant Contracts Tax

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 sites the research project within the broad landscape and scholarly setting of the Professional Doctorate. A brief description of the origins of the Doctorate Degree is provided and the architecture of the DCU Professional Doctorate Programme in Leadership in Education is explained. Background information on the researcher offers a rationale as to why the topic was chosen for investigation. The genesis of the research question is explained and the structure of the dissertation is outlined chapter by chapter.

1.2   The Professional Doctorate

The history of the Doctorate Degree is traced originally to the University of Paris in the 12th century but the Ph.D., as it is recognized today, has its origins in the 19th century educational reforms of the Humboldt University at Berlin (Smith, 2009). The search among western cultures for a standardisation of esoteric knowledge spreads throughout Europe and beyond in the centuries thereafter as the quest for the production of new modes of knowledge accompanies the quest for new methods of industrialization (Scott et al., 2004).

Universities author a system of formal accreditation from Bachelors, to Masters and on to Doctorate level degrees, with the award of Ph.D. or Doctor of Philosophy, being determined by evidence of advanced scholarship, by qualities that satisfy peer review, by research that extends the forefront of the discipline and by merited publication (Smith, 2009). While Professional Doctorates have existed in the USA and in Canada for almost a century in the area of medicine, the increasing complexities of modern work practices and the emergence of intellectual constructs that attempt to explain such complexities have brought about a growing trend in Professional Doctorates in other areas also.

This, it could be argued, has provided a challenge to Universities where courses of education and training "enabled the elite to take positions of power and authority and sustain the hegemony of the day" (Taysum 2006, p.324). The Professional Doctorate

has provided a renaissance within some of the modern Universities however and the comparisons between the traditional "professional scholar" of the Ph.D. and the newly arrived "scholarly professional" of the Ed.D. are debated by Gregory, who describes a coming-of-age of a new system of University accreditation that aims primarily to develop reflective practitioners (1995, p.182).

Internationally, it is now considered that the pace of change in postgraduate education has never been greater, particularly when the numbers of Professional Doctorate candidates are taken into account (Cryer 2006; Thomson and Walker 2010). The application of scientific methods and of practice-based research skills enables a growing population of Doctoral candidates to better understand and to improve upon professional practices in areas such as Engineering, Business Administration, Pharmacy and Education. Significantly, the Professional Doctorate in Education emerges in Australia in Melbourne University in 1990, in the UK in Bristol University in 1992 and in Ireland in Dublin City University in 2006.

The programme of study is generally undertaken through the Universities on a part-time basis while candidates continue to maintain daily career commitments. Courses typically include a taught component and a practice-based research study. Burgess et al. comment that the research for the Professional Doctorate in education is expected to include real-life issues and as such, the activity may be "a frustrating and messy business as well as an exciting process" (2006, p.vii). Scott et al. also describe such research terrain as "rewarding, but difficult and often frustrating" and they comment on the difficulty of the Professional Doctorate candidate existing "in the twilight zones between the University and the workplace" (2004, p.1).

Smith stresses that importance of considering one's own "ideological position and professional needs" in undertaking this course of study (2009, p.5). The Professional Doctorate project to hand is undertaken with an awareness of clear and distinct aims therefore. Firstly, it aims to develop the procedural knowledge of both the researcher and of the reader through an examination of the practice setting of the Irish primary school Principal. Such knowledge may be considered important in understanding the community of practice that exists among school Principals as leaders in their field (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It also aims to advance the technical knowledge base and

to produce an insight into aspects of professional practice that may be better understood and improved upon, in order to carry out Principals' work more effectively (Shulman, 1987).

The emphasis of the study however is not intended to add to any neoliberal interpretation of a knowledge economy in education studies or to offer support for new public management perceptions of making Principals more productive. Instead, the aim is to treat all of those involved as knowledge partners and to work towards a verstehen. The concept of verstehen is explained by Moriceau (2010) as a level of participative understanding that resides more in awareness, in experience and in an emic sociological perspective rather than in description, explanation or any reliance on scientific methods of proof.

The researcher, the participants and the readership all share the experience and the understanding democratically with a view to increasing a sense of shared personal awareness that life should be lived more meaningfully. Knowledge in this sense is based in human agency, in interpretations of human engagement, "in personal transformations and change and a continual becoming" (Thomson and Walker 2010, p.16). The study sets out neither to prove nor disprove any hypotheses. Its aims are investigative.

Practically, as a Doctorate Dissertation, the study and its presentation aim to meet the scholarly expectations of its examiners. McLean comments that a "Doctoral Thesis is written to contribute to scholarly arguments that are already underway" (2010 p.231). Machi and McEvoy concur, noting that researchers rarely "stumble onto a unique and previously unidentified topic of study" (2009, p.27). They also propose that much previous work has already been done on almost all interests that could be considered researchable and, as chapter 3 aims to consider, this is true as regards school leadership and management.

This research proposes a modest contribution therefore to the corpus of knowledge, one that is based on existing scholarship while at the same time discreetly extending the forefronts of the discipline. The project conceptualizes, designs and implements a study that examines the daily work practices of school Principals in a unique

approach. It gathers data from researcher-driven diaries and from qualitative interviews that are then analysed in a synthesis of modern and traditional approaches, thereby demonstrating "a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry" (Smith 2009, p.12).

The architecture of the DCU Professional Doctorate in Education is displayed in the following diagram, Fig. 1. Three taught modules in year one, MG610, ES603 and ES605, engage learners in a study of background literature and research and require evidence of a research trial in the field. A written reportage is presented in a format of publishable quality. Year two builds on the candidate's choice of topic and extends the range of background readings in three final taught modules, ES601, ES602, ES604. These include the more conceptual elements that are later used to underpin a pilot study and a formal research proposal. Year three of the Professional Doctorate engages the candidate in research design and in practical fieldwork. Year four draws the project to a completion in a synthesis of reviewed literature, in a structured analysis of the data and in the academic presentation of the body of work.

The Ed.D. Dissertation in the context of the overall DCU PDPE 2010 – 2014. An overview of personal progression and a synthesis of the learning.

PDPE1 Module MG610 Principles of Research Methodology. June 2011.	PDPE1 Module ES603 Leadership in Education and Training. June 2011.	PDPE1 Module ES605 Action Research in Organisational Contexts. 2011.
A study of journal research articles investigating various aspects of Principal's work.	A study of the literature on leaders' lives: The stages of Principals' careers and on the demands of leadership.	A study of the literature on the vocation to teach and on the transition from teacher to Principal.
The paradigms considered: How quantitative and qualitative research is used to investigate the role of the Principal: Trends and outliers.	Qualitative research approaches: Ethnographic investigations. Interviewing techniques - design and implementation: Data analysis.	Qualitative research: The potential for using researcher-driven diaries. Their design and implementation in a pilot with 12 Principals: Data analysis.

PDPE2 Module ES602 Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness. June 2012.	PDPE2 Module ES604 Evidence Based Approaches in Education and Training. 2012.	PDPE2 Module ES601 Formal Research Proposal. June 2012.
A study of the literature on the critical role of leadership in ensuring organizational effectiveness.	A study of school effectiveness and school self-evaluation in action. Concepts of leadership in education.	An outline proposal to study the leadership identities of school leaders: career paths, decision-making and personal affect.
Qualitative research: Case study design and implementation – leadership in action. Data analysis.	Qualitative research: Focus groups - Design and implementation. Self-evaluation workshops: Data analysis.	An outline proposal to conduct diary-driven research and follow-up interviews with 12-20 primary school Principals.

PDPE3. Research Preparation and Fieldwork. September 2012 – July 2013.
Literature: Reviewing research articles, academic books, published and on-line materials. Theoretical work. Practical handbooks. Legislation. Organisational materials.
Research Design: Case study. Re-drafting the pilot. Generating a selection of co-participants. Conducting the fieldwork. Gathering and transcribing the data: Data analysis.

PDPE4. Preparing and presenting the Ed.D. Dissertation. September 2013 – July 2014.
Literature: Presenting a scholarly account of the corpus of knowledge. A critical review of a variety of published materials that highlight a potential for new knowledge making.
Research Design: Providing the theoretical underpinning of the research process and defending the approach and its findings according to the required academic conventions and standards.
Research Findings: A case study presentation of the findings is based on an analysis of the accounts of 31 Principals, whose weekly researcher-driven diaries and follow-up interviews raise theoretical issues and issues of professional practice. Limitations are considered and recommendations for further research are made.

Fig. 1 The architecture of the DCU Professional Doctorate Programme 2010-2014

1.3   The Researcher and the Research.

The author of this research has worked as a primary school teacher since 1983 and as a primary school Principal since 1999. Being a Principal, at the "incumbency" stage of career development (Ribbins, 2008) allows for the significant potential use of insider knowledge in a case study that is largely participatory (Reilly, 2010). This proves significant both in designing a research tool that Principals might meaningfully use and it helps gain access to a research sample in their own naturalistic context through a sense of mutual trust and collegiality in a shared professional community (Olson, 2010).

The researcher's initial work for a M.Sc. Thesis in 2003 explores stakeholders' experiences of change and school redevelopment in a special educational setting (Stynes, 2003). The researcher's involvement in the professional Ed.D. programme continues a personal interest in focusing research directly on the lived experiences of those who engage in education. Bush explains that such subjective models of educational theory envisage schools less as "institutions with defined and concrete realities" and more as the "communities of practice that deal in human passion, weakness, conviction, hope, will, pity, frailty, altruism, courage, vice and virtue" (Bush 2003, p.114). Heck defends critical research approaches that critique existing social relationships in schools and ones that extend beyond the notion of sense making "to understand the surrounding societal reasons why various educational practices persist" (2002, p.86).

This research examines the working lives of a group of Irish primary school Principals in a case study approach and from a native point of view (Migliore, 2010). It studies Principals' own descriptions of a range of activities and it considers how Principals construct their management and leadership identities by investing themselves in various forms of belonging and by negotiating meaning in professional and personal social contexts (Wenger, 1998). Gunter describes such a research terrain as "challenging" but nonetheless it has interesting potential as a "site for the exploration of enduring questions about human beings" (Gunter 2001, pp.1-2).

Gardner and Lasking offer a widely accepted view of leadership and describe a leader as an "individual who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings or behaviours of a significant number of individuals" (2011, p.5). The idea of Principals having such an effect in school communities is widely echoed throughout books, journal articles and various publications in academia as well as in professional circles, but much of what is written is intended to inform a readership about how to be such a person, rather than what it is like to actually be one. An exception to the rule is found in the work of Kelchtermans et al. whose research on Principals in Belgium is concerned not with the formal structure of the role but on "the way it is experienced by the people who (have to) live it" (2011, p.94). From the evidence of educational research in general, one must concur with Ribbins and Marland's assertion that "we know surprisingly little about headteachers as people" (1994, p.1). Gronn observes that 'the question of what it means for individuals to engage with leadership is rarely if ever asked' (2009, p.198).

In the literature on school improvement, Troman (2006) describes the Principal as a shadowed figure and one about whom little thick description is available. Dawson describes "thick description" as the process of paying attention to contextual and experiential details (2010). Every year, as class teachers find themselves opting for promotional opportunities to take them out of classrooms and into Principals' offices, the short walk across the corridor is experienced as a quantum life-leap for many. Most significantly perhaps, teachers whose work experiences are dominated by interactions with children, now experience a seismic shift in their responsibilities, as they become group leaders in a world of adult interactions that extend well beyond the school perimeter. Sugrue's research indicates that "being cast in the role of school leader appears to carry significant expectations from the community itself" (2005 p.166). Further demands are imposed by the "vicissitudes and realities of life in society" (ibid, p.8). The transition from running a classroom to running an entire school is complicated by the turbulence of the external environment and this may bring about a range of unexpected consequences for any Principals and at any time.

The emergence and development of a model that categorises local schools as "educational organisations" also adds to the complexity for new incumbents (Bush 2003, p.1). Business and industrial efficiency models, based originally on the work of

Francis Taylor (1947) and the scientific management movement, have populated the landscape of educational thinking and a new lexicon, one that would have made little sense to school Principals only a generation ago, is now in standard use.

Such real-life anomalies provide the continuous thread or theme that runs through this research project. The quest for "knowing in action" by investigating Principals' daily practices from an insider's perspective, is offered as the optimum processes of knowledge-making in context (Trafford and Leshem 2008, p.61). Social constructivism enables researchers not only to describe the practices that are undertaken in research setttings, but it enables them to illuminate the meanings and values that actors imbue in their various actions. "Walk a mile in my shoes: A case study of the everyday lives and work experiences of a group of Irish primary school Principals" is the title chosen to describe the intended path of the research process and its outcomes.

A range of questions is addressed and while some are answered in research studies internationally, most are considered only in a limited way in the Irish context. The research asks the following: What do Principals manage during the typical school day? What exactly do they do that demonstrates management? How do Principals lead during the school day? What exactly do they do that demonstrates leadership? Do Principals understand management and leadership in education and can they identify these practices in action?

Other questions that are central to the study are asked much less often and some are perhaps never asked at all; at least not in the Irish context: What practical commitments do Principals make to school management and leadership daily? How do they explain their prioritisation of management and leadership activities? How do they experience management and leadership personally and in simple terms, is being a Principal in an Irish primary school enjoyable work?

1.4   The Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 opens the book with a general introduction to the thematic development of the text. It describes the scholarly setting of the Professional Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) and offers background information on the researcher and on the rationale for undertaking the topic. The genesis of the research question is explained and the structure of the dissertation is outlined. Chapter 2 describes the context of the research. It situates the project in the realm of scholarly work, it considers the challenges of building a theoretical framework and it introduces the work of the Irish primary school Principal.

Chapter 3 treats the literature as a well-used jigsaw puzzle. It attempts to manipulate a vast corpus of knowledge into five areas of study. The section commences by exploring what it is that Principals do and how they are considered successful. The phenomenon of the specialist Principal is noted. The chapter continues with a theoretical survey of the landscape of published literature as the development of the role of the school Principal is traced through the emergence of management and leadership thought. Literature on management and on leadership in education is differentiated and leadership preparation and practice is discussed. The chapter concludes by examining the demands of the role on school Principals. Literature on leadership and on leadership in education in particular, is analysed to offer various perspectives on how Principals experience the work, the affect of the work and how emotional components inherent in the demands of the work can lead to career burnout and difficulties with sustainability within the system.

Chapter 4 declares the researcher's position ontologically and epistemologically. It defines the research paradigm, it considers methodologies and it defends the choice of the case study method as an appropriate approach for investigating the work-life experiences of Irish Principals. Sampling is explained in the context of a sensitive research setting and fieldwork considerations are mentioned. A rationale for researcher-driven diaries is offered and the design and structure of a uniquely

formatted diary is examined. A second round of data gathering is employed through follow-up qualitative interviewing. An explanation of the custom and character of the researcher's approach to ethics concludes the chapter.

Chapter 5 commences the presentation of the data findings. The case study contains both quantitative and qualitative data and the case report presents an explanation of how both paradigms are employed to elucidate the findings. Quantitative data are presented to inform the reader about the various Principals and schools involved. Tables of information and supporting comments provide a perspective on how long Principals spend at work, how they avail of rest periods and how they engage in weekly management and leadership activities. A rating of Principals' positive and negative experiences and a survey of how they enjoy their work offer an insight into some of the personal dimensions of the leadership role. The use of qualitative data offers the greater potential within the study and an approach to coding and analysing the diary content and the interview transcripts is justified. A brief explanation of the QSR NVivo data analysis programme is offered and the use of an organized framework for conceptualising outcomes is described.

Chapter 6 presents as a narrative case study report that interprets the results of the qualitative data analysis and it offers a range of empirical evidence in support of the findings. Information from Principals' diaries and interviews inform the case report under 12 specific headings. The findings outline Principals' perceptions of dealing with the internal and external environments in schools. It describes Principals' engagement in leading teaching and learning activities. It demonstrates how Principals work on behalf of, and sometimes as, their Boards of Management. Insight is gained into aspects of Principals' work ethic and issues of time management are noted. Principals speak openly about their perspectives on leadership. They talk about career progression and about the human engagement that is demanded of them in their workplaces. The section concludes with a consideration of issues of sustainability.

Chapter 7 offers recommendations. The case findings are considered as a learning trajectory that includes inbound and insider knowledge. Explanations are offered as to how Principals learn leadership and how leadership styles may be identified from the data in the case. The real-life demands of the role are debated and key influencing

factors are determined. In spite of all that has gone before by way of countless books, articles and research papers and in spite of the seemingly insurmountable pressures on schools due to managerial policies and performativity initiatives, a number of aspects of Principals' daily practices emerge as the steadfast and immutable hallmarks of quality. These traits are identified in order that they may be fostered and developed in current and in future school leaders. Such a process is not intended to promote conformity of leadership practice nor to produce formulaic prescriptions for leadership success however. As social institutions become increasingly bureaucratic and well-defined in terms of specific functions, leadership runs the risk of becoming closely aligned with managerial skills that are largely manipulative in origin (Codd, 1989). The benefit of this research is intended critically as a prompting for individuals who choose to question the social forces that encourage the development of leaders as "cheerful robots" or "cultural dupes" (Corbett, 2010). It is a signposting for those who wish to question the directions of the leadership superhighway and who would migrate instead along a personal flight path that takes them from their origins in a teaching vocation to a place where they genuinely inhabit an agency of educational leadership. The Thesis concludes with a brief synopsis.

The appendices are offered as an integral aspect of the mental framework of the case study (Di Domenico and Phillips, 2010). They enable readers to engage in a personal praxis with the case. Nolan describes praxis as a union of action and reflection. Praxis in case study she notes, "must build in reciprocity, reflexivity, and interactivity" (2010, p.725). As part of the research process, the contents of the appendices enable readers to explore, to question, to theorise and to hypothesise from their own perspectives and to interpret similar or perhaps contrary findings to those of the researcher. Reading the Principals' diaries in the appendices, enables readers to relate the details to their own experiences in a shared and unique personal microanalysis of leadership practices (Corbett, 2010).

The appendices also detail the development of the project from the pilot phase through various methodological alternatives. They provide the reader with the complete first hand and unabridged account of the daily diaries of Principals. From a pragmatic perspective, all research may be considered cumulative and incomplete (Jacobs, 2010). Whilst the text of the Thesis offers the case report and supports this

report with empirical evidence of the findings, the appendices offer readers the opportunity to generate their own interpretive findings. The appendices conclude by demonstrating the application of NVivo as a data-coding tool and by outlining the organised framework for each of the 12 conceptualised outcomes in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2

The Context of the Research

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 offers an explanation of the researcher's perspective on the nature of scholarly work. It offers a perspective on exploring the seemingly vast and endless landscape of the corpus of knowledge. It debates the challenges of building a theoretical framework and in particular, it recognises the complexities of the terminology involved and it questions how such a terminology may be interpreted. The work of the school Principal is introduced and difficulties in addressing the role are highlighted. Overall, the chapter introduces the setting from which the researcher undertakes a journey and commences an engagement with the literature.

2.2 The Nature of Scholarly Work

Burgess et al. (2006) comment that Doctorate research, while scholarly in nature, is very rarely completely new and original. This research, like other Doctoral research therefore, is concerned with making a modest contribution to an existing and already extensive body of knowledge. This chapter aims to demonstrate that while much is written that directs the work of primary school Principals both nationally and internationally, little is written about how they experience the professional and personal aspects of the role at first hand. The chapter aims not merely to catalogue the literature, but to reflect upon and to critique a range of materials in the related field of knowledge production (Thomson and Walker, 2010). It aims to comprehensively cover the field of study by showing a breath of contextual understanding of the discipline, by examining various established positions and by engaging critically with the corpus of knowledge to identify possibilities for new knowledge generation (Trafford and Leshem, 2008).

The literature is not presented as a single set of homogenous texts. Instead, books, articles, policy documents, reports and other professional writings that sometimes offer diverse and contradictory viewpoints, are synthesized thematically in a progression of systematic enquiry. The aim is not simply to report on a variety of

perspectives. Neither is it to position the volumes chronologically nor to rearrange them on a metaphorical bookshelf so to speak. The aim is to consider the implications of issues that are raised in researching school leadership in order to better understand how new research into the work of Irish school Principals might best be framed.

Burgess et al. (2006) caution against the tendency of Doctoral candidates simply deferring to the authority of leading theorists in the field. As an alternative to compiling a compendium of established theory for its own sake, the material is intended as a firm foundation on which to build a research strategy. It would be legitimate to assume that much of the readership is already aware of some background theory, a range of research practices and some policy work in the area. It must also be recognised that the corpus is routinely expressed in a professional and scholarly lexicon, one that is particular to members of the specialism. While elements of such a lexicon are readily employed here, at no time is the use of such language intended either to obfuscate or to exclude non-members from the conversation. Terminology is intended merely to elucidate the complexities of the subject.

Cryer encourages assertiveness on the part of the scholar and advocates that the student uses the literature as "evidence" in the case, much like a barrister in a court of law, balancing arguments and counterarguments to move understanding forward (2006, p.63). Thomson and Walker propose a more modest approach however (2010). They set the student's fragile scholarly identity in perspective, in the early stages of its formation, against those recognised as giants in the field of academic and professional expertise. Novice writers face the trepidations of entering "occupied territory" as they attempt to evaluate and critique the works of those that they wish to someday emulate in scholarship.

The quest for scholarly enlightenment generally commences in the University's libraries, within either its imposing structure or through its web of online sources and materials. Smith (2009) describes the initial searching as an iterative process, where thinking loops backwards and forwards and where ideas are worked through, to be proved or discarded, depending on their perceived relevance to the emergent research question. Fink (2010) advises a structured approach to initial explorations. This is initiated by identifying a potential research area and by generating an associated

vocabulary of search criteria. The terms or tags "school leaders", "school Principals", "leadership identity," "leadership development," "Principal's diary," "ethnography" and "case study" are used to probe through publications, databases and websites. In the Dublin City University library database, EBSCO HOST is found to be beneficial. Limiters such as 'full text' and 'scholarly peer reviewed journals' inform the search criteria and options that include 'all my search terms' and 'Boolean/phrases' purposely narrow the field and deliver results.

A snowball technique is used for cross-referencing citations in bibliographies. Texts are studied for information that is both factual and opinion-based. Notes are compiled in hand-written form but in the majority of cases, information and communication technologies prove more useful. The "CamScanner" programme is used to scan images and figures into Microsoft Word and a voice-to-text "Dragon Dictate" programme is used to dictate passages for further study. A trawl through the first 150 results from 15 various combinations of the above tags yields a predictable cross-referencing and an eventual saturation of results. 42 research journal articles are identified as having information that could be considered relevant, if not highly significant, for the purposes of the study. Mostly, this information is downloadable for revision at a later time. Original works that make major epistemological contributions to the corpus and that bring about paradigm shifts in understanding are also included. Other works that operate as secondary sources with inferred understandings are considered less important. Nevertheless, some secondary sources are used to assess patterns of citations across the discipline.

A "descriptive synthesis" (Fink 2010, p.4) is used to interpret literature findings. Even from the outset, it is important to ensure that the final collation does not simply represent a random or entirely subjective examination of unearthed information. Materials are interlinked through citations in peer-reviewed publications and in some cases, through academic associations such as the British Education Leadership Management Administration Society (BELMAS). Ridley (2008, pp.1-2) advises a "thoughtful organisation" and a "written dialogue with researchers in the area." For an Ed.D., she recommends an engagement that is more professionally oriented than that required for a Ph.D. Such a presentation she adds, could outline the historical

background, the current context and could discuss relevant theories and concepts that underpin and authorise a research proposition.

2.3   A Theoretical Framework – The Challenge

Trafford and Leshem (2008) describe an investigation of the corpus of literature as the foundation upon which the Doctoral research process is built. For Machi and McEvoy (2009, p.4) it is a written argument that promotes a thesis position by "building a case through credible evidence based on previous research." Establishing a vantage point from which a researcher may survey the landscape, declare a position and commence a research journey depends entirely on the nature of the subject and its knowledge base. In an area such as educational leadership, exploiting the body of knowledge, with a view to validating the research, is an exercise grounded more in discussion and in theoretical pluralism rather than scientific theory and quantifiable evidence. Bush notes, "There can be no single all-embracing theory of educational management" nor for that matter of educational leadership (2003, p.25). This chapter examines therefore, the groundwork for the project in order that the firm foundations of a literature review may be mixed, poured and built upon, and so that the edifice of the research may take shape firmly and solidly.

Thomson and Walker (2010) note the importance of sketching the nature of the field, identifying major debates and locating gaps in the field, thereby creating a mandate for the research question and identifying the contribution that the study can make. As expected, this work proves to be an engaging and challenging intellectual task and one that raises questions of the author's own professional and personal identity. Scott et al, (2004) note that learning in such circumstances is "biographically contextualised". The "accumulated knowledge that resides within the corpus" emerges as the student intellectualises and presents opening chapters of the Dissertation (Trafford and Leshem 2008, p.68). Various contexts, pretexts, subtexts and post texts are assimilated with issues of gender, situation and circumstance to influence and shape the final document. Historical perspectives that are brought to

18

bear, also influence the interaction between the researcher, the material and others involved in the study. Specifically in this case, the national context is recognised in terms of its cultural and political heritage. The dearth of leadership research in Ireland is also a consideration. Trafford and Leshem (2008, p.72) describe a researcher's initial journey into the body of the literature as one of "becoming close friends" with significant sources that reveal meaning and nuances through repeated interaction.

Burgess et al. note that conducting educational research can be likened to planning a journey on which there are several pathways to reach an apparently predetermined destination. Arguably, the sheer volume of publications and the "abundance of theoretical perspectives" encountered may cause the greatest potential obstacle along the route (2006, p.42). Some educational policies appear initially as politically motivated constructs and may seem to offer concepts and versions of knowledge that are not contextualised and are therefore relatively meaningless, if not problematic for the study of everyday practice. Burgess et al. propose accordingly that a degree of "negative work" must be carried out initially, at least to the extent that we critically assess the degree of usefulness, or lack of it, that each volume brings to our own work.

Practically, in explaining the nature of scientific inquiry, Cohen et al. (2007) describe a "concept" as the relationship between a word or a symbol that we use, and the corresponding idea or conception that we experience. Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern linguistics describes a similar relationship between the "signifier" and the "signified" (Culler, 1976). The modern philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1967) illuminates the relationship between the writer and the reader through a process of deconstruction in his seminal cultural work "Writing and Difference". Ontologically, it may be considered wise from the outset to accept that differences exist in many respects between information that is intended and information that is received. An engagement with the corpus of knowledge must reasonably be approached with the understanding and with the realisation that multiple situational realities exist in the experiences of authors, researchers and readers. Multiple understandings also exist in the most basic of concepts and even "management" and "leadership" are open to interpretation, or misinterpretation depending on one's situated perspective. It is

important to attempt to avoid what Crawford and Cowie (2012) term, a partial truth or a representation of a representation.

2.4   Setting the Context: The School Principal

Day and Leithwood describe recent decades as "the golden age of school leadership" (2007, p.1). Leadership in business has transformed the economies of developed countries during the post-war years of the past century and while leadership theorising has engaged some of the world's greatest minds in Universities across the globe, some of their best and arguably their worst conceptions also, have found their ways into the education studies. Dimmock highlights the emergence of a new "global educational lexicon" in recent times (2002, p.34). Emanating from a culture of business management, this relatively new and emergent vocabulary is used to describe school ethos, goal setting, mission statements and evaluation criteria. The terminology is invariably Anglo-American in origin and an intellectual colonisation of the world of education by business terminology is now well advanced. The traditional not-for-profit and values-driven enterprise that education is long considered to be, is increasingly described in for-profit and value-driven conceptualisations of the world of modern industry.

Describing the work of schools and those responsible for them is a complicated undertaking. Thody comments generally that "Leadership is not a subject that has national boundaries" and that "conflicting expectations and understandings of leadership abound" (1997, p.8). Heck comments, "broadly speaking, several epistemological orientations towards the study of school leadership exist that have their roots in positivist, interpretive and socially critical theories of knowledge" (2002, p.80). A proliferation of approaches to the study of schools and their Principals makes it difficult to establish any "neat" system of categorising previous research. What is suggested is that researchers work to identify a particular problem or lacuna in the corpus, but from a relatively narrow focus. This type of tightly focused approach to enquiry has been called filling in "blank spots" in the empirical knowledge base (Wagner, 1993).

20

Smith recommends the use of a critical perspective in assessing the relevance of supposed forms of knowledge to current contexts. At Doctorate level, "critical thinking should be embedded in the strategies used to further develop and understand professional practice" (2009, p.37). The challenge set to this researcher is to attempt to guide the reader through a landscape of published materials about school Principals, noting the many landmarks and pillars of established knowledge along the way, while constantly questioning their relevance to the research site and to the research participants. To this end, the process aims to interact with the corpus rather than simply describing it. Engaging with the body of literature necessitates a heuristic function, which is to say that strategies are employed in an experience-based, rule of thumb and problem-solving manner rather than a strictly scientific or systematic investigation.

It must be recognised therefore that another researcher on an identical journey might well come upon other landmarks or might well treat a number of such landmarks as more or less significant. However, acquiring a working understanding of the body of literature inevitably involves selecting some route and travelling it in a set and limited time scale. The experiences of any such journey, if signposted correctly, are no more or less valid than those of another traveller. The views along the journey incorporate a perspective of "respectful scepticism" at various stopping posts and this aims to focus a variety of perspectives on how the management and leadership work of school Principals is perceived (Smith 2009, p.54).

Sergiovanni describes the school Principal as "the most important and influential individual in any school" (1995, p. 83). He notes that if students are performing to the best of their abilities, one tends usually to point to the Principal's leadership as the key to success. Day's findings from the International Successful School Principals' Project (ISSPP) propose that "there is no one model for the successful Principalship" and that a variety of context-based approaches may be considered (2007, p.14). An abundance of materials is available that describes how Principals may work towards successes. However, another commentator notes, "The challenge for those involved in leadership studies is to shift the emphasis away from the current policy imperative of what works to what it is like to work in education" (Gunter 2001, p.151). Sugrue asserts, "It is necessary to get to know much more about the lives and work of

successful (and unsuccessful) school leaders, by paying attention to context, idiosyncrasy and biography, to build the knowledge base of leaders and leadership out of the vicissitudes of their increasingly complex worlds" (2005, p.177). Morgan and Sugrue comment, "advances in the conceptualisation of leadership emanating from the academic community … may actually add to the confusion rather than providing appropriate guidelines and signposts" (2008, p.10).

The nature of leadership studies is that they are invariably either generalised or case specific. Case study research such as this, is always heavily contextualised within a bounded system (Stake 1995; Yin 2009; Swanbourne 2010) and as such it may be subject to specific influences such as to time, location or local culture. A notable influencer within the context of this research is the range of austerity measures that impact on the Irish national education system at the time of the fieldwork. This impacts consequently on Principals' experiences and explanations of their daily realities. For example, it is notable that heretofore, Irish primary schools operated with a graded middle-management structure of promoted teachers that assisted with the daily pastoral, administrative and curricular responsibilities of the Principal. The task of keeping records, co-ordinating additional learning needs or simply successfully sustaining the daily operations of the school in matters such as discipline and first aid could be assigned as reasonable duties to other teachers for additional allowances.

This structure was abandoned however in all but the largest of schools under the terms of national austerity measures at the time of case study (LRC, 2013) and the effects of such contextualised circumstances and their effects on Principals' perceptions of administration and leadership are commented upon in Principals' diaries and interviews. Additional austerity measures at the time, removed pay allowances for newly appointed honours batchelors graduates and for new post graduate qualifications. The salaries of all long-serving teachers and Principals earning over €65000 were also subject to percentage pay-cuts and the allowance for playground supervision was abolished. In addition to these measures at the time of the research, Principals were required to organise additional duties that increased the teachers' working year by 36 hours.

Against such a backdrop, an engagement with current literature and a practice-based research study of the real-life experiences of Principals in the Irish context may prove significant.

Chapter 3

Exploiting the Literature

3.1 An Overview.

Machi and McEvoy recommend treating the literature like "a well-used jig-saw puzzle" (2009, p.38). Some parts are missing, some parts are intermixed and ultimately the task is to piece together as clear a view as possible of the overall picture, allowing for its complexity and the time available. This puzzle is approached thematically rather than systematically. The focus therefore is on the construction of the unique characters and the various background details of this particular picture rather than using a rubric that applies generally to any puzzle by outlining the boundaries and the corners, so to speak.

The chapter is presented with an introduction, five main areas of investigation and a conclusion. In each of the areas, the information is "exploited" in a number of distinct stages using Trafford and Leshem's recommendations whereby Doctorate candidates are encouraged to summarise, synthesise, and analyse the material in order to authorise their own position for a valid research proposal (2008, pp.67-87). Materials are presented in a manner that aims to demonstrate familiarity with the historical antecedents and key contributors in the field of study. An engagement with the sources is offered by providing accompanying explanations of the relationships between the sources themselves, and between the sources and the research at hand. Trends, meanings and significances are included to synthesise the work. Clustered themes are developed either chronologically or systematically.

An analysis of materials is considered and conclusions are drawn to offer a theoretical perspective and to validate the need for further research. A research perspective is positioned within the existing traditions of the discipline. Drawing on the researcher's professional domain and scholarly experience, a case study approach is defended as an apposite means for new knowledge making.

Section 3.2 considers the nature of Principals' work, how success in the role may be considered and how context and culture are key determinants in understanding leadership achievements. Section 3.3 attempts to investigate how we know this. A

study of the growth in the literature is presented and an emerging conceptual landscape is explored. A critical evaluation of the current topography highlights a number of difficulties. Section 3.4 offers theoretical perspectives on the management and leadership tasks of Principals. There is a brief commentary on the relevance of Principal preparation courses. Section 3.5 presents a synopsis of some of the demands of the role as expressed by educational commentators. Observations are made about the role of schools in, what is considered by some to be, an increasingly neo-liberalist age of new public management. In this light, a brief deliberation is offered on the ethics of leadership and followership. Section 3.6 explores the corpus on how Principals are seen to experience the role. We examine writings about the affective dimension of the work. Human experiences of charisma, emotional work and burnout are explored. We end the section with a brief over-view of writings on career progression and sustainability. Finally, in section 3.7, a brief synopsis is offered and Chapter 4 is introduced.

3.2 What Do Principals Do?

The following section considers the nature of Principals' work, how success in the role may be considered and how context and culture are key determinants in understanding leadership achievements.

Dubin describes school as "the most common community center, institutional organization, bastion of cultural understanding that we all hold as part of our collective traditional heritage" (2006, p.85). It is in school that we experience key focal points in our childhood development and where key influences, outside of those of our parents, are first experienced in our lives. The teachers from our school days are remembered for different reasons and some of us are influenced to the extent that we decide to follow their walk of life. The Principal teachers of our childhood may be remembered also and one might ponder upon ever recalling if their influence inspired us to follow in their footsteps?

Undoubtedly, there are "good" Principals and MacBeath and Myers reveal that pupils, parents and teachers share almost identical perceptions of what they consider them to be. These center "almost entirely on the nature of relationships and personal qualities" that the Principal should exemplify (1999, p.9). While pupils talk about Principals cheering them up and taking care of them, adults stress the merits of effective communication skills and empathic interpersonal relationships. Like "good" teachers, "good" Principals are required not only to deliver in terms of occupational accountability, but also in terms of customer satisfaction. In addition to this, Lortie describes the work of the Principal as a "particular kind of occupation" where accountability for other workers, lower in rank, gives rise to managerial duties. The Principal, he notes, is a "focal point in the life of schools" (2009, pp.2-3). To be "good" it might be argued is to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that everyone is happy.

3.2.1 The Irish Context

In the Irish context, Principals are responsible for 531,973 children of primary school age in 3,293 schools (DES, 2013). A mixture of urban and rural settings and a tradition of parish-based smaller schools in many rural areas gives rise to a situation where almost three quarters of Principals also perform daily teaching duties, while only one quarter of Principals in larger schools occupy administrative posts. While their roles differ significantly in their daily duties, neither the literature nor the legislation that directs the work offer little differentiation as, in many respects, the general responsibilities of administration, management and leadership pertain to both.

In Ireland, according to The Education Act (Ireland, 1998), a Board of Management is established locally for each school. Each Board is required to manage the school on behalf of the patron and to be responsible for providing an "appropriate education" for each pupil in it (Part IV, 15(1)). It is the Principal who is "accountable" for this responsibility to the Board and who is required to provide "leadership" to the teachers and other staff and to the students of the school (Part V, 23). This effectively places the Principal in the role of manager on-site on a day-to-day basis; a duty that may be

considered onerous when one considers that the Board is comprised entirely of local volunteers and is required to assemble on a minimum of only five times per calendar year (CPSMA, 2013). McDonald (2008, p.29) comments that the current national school system, established from 1831 under Victorian structures of hierarchy and station, was designed purposefully to include formal management, but "at no time was it envisaged that the manager should also be the Principal teacher".

Descriptions of the Principal's duties and responsibilities are broad ranging and involve a myriad of functions from the objectively quantifiable, such as resource management in record keeping and budgeting, to the subjectively unquantifiable, like providing leadership and ensuring a positive working atmosphere. In Ireland, The HayGroup (Drea and O'Brien, 2003), on behalf of the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), define the role succinctly. Using both statutory provision and research, they identify seven categories as follows: Creating, communicating and delivering a leadership vision, delivering and developing high quality teaching and learning, resource management, human resource management, administration, policy formation and managing external relationships. Interestingly, only one of the seven categories, that of delivering and developing high quality teaching is school-specific. The remaining six could reasonably be applied to any business or industry.

Whether teaching or administrative by role, the Principal is therefore deemed to be primarily responsible for the standard of educational attainment in the school. It is noted however that schools now operate in the context of a new international "standards agenda" (Ainscow 2010, p.75) where, it is argued, that national curricula are increasingly narrowed, standardised test results are an end-game and value-for-money is a key factor is educational decision making.

The majority of Principals in Ireland lead and manage Catholic ethos schools and they face what Grace terms, "the dilemmas of Catholic school headteachers" (1995, p.159). Their school leadership ethos is rooted in "inspirational ideology", an ideal that derives from the edicts of the church's Second Vatican Council, held between 1962 and 1965. This directs not only the Catholic church but Catholic schooling and education generally, to have a central role worldwide in the development of society and citizenship through "Christian personalism'. Principals are perceived as critical

28

agents and are called to exercise "humaneness in the myriad of mundane social interactions that make up daily life". The Catholic Primary School Managers' Association (CPSMA) promotes and oversees this values-driven agenda, but few if any quality standards exist to assure Principals that they are successful in this regard.

3.2.2 The International Context

Internationally, demands on Principals are similarly and equally complex. Commentators differ in their appraisal of what a "good" or successful Principal might be. Cuban (1988) originally categorised the fundamental work of school Principals as political, managerial and instructional and asserted that success is achieved by finding the correct balance between these roles in the particular context of the school. Sergiovanni's seminal and widely cited work on "The Principalship" identifies eight characteristics of those who are generally considered to be "successful" in their work. Most "successful" Principals, he comments, do not intend to become Principals but are encouraged to do so by their superiors. Most express sincere faith in children and have the ability to work effectively with others on their behalf. They seek recognition for their schools, are enthusiastic about them, accept responsibility for them and are adaptable in their approaches to making them work. Finally, "successful" Principals are able strategists who are committed to planning and to achieving success in education (1995, p.16).

Recent research and academic debate into school leadership has attempted to assess commonalities and success determinants globally, but uncertainty still exists both in theory and in practice. Bush contests that "organisations exist primarily to accomplish established goals" (2003, p. 39). However, considering schools as organisations leads one to question the purpose of their existence at all and the nature of their supposed goals. Applying objective theory and treating the school as the concrete reality induces an inclination towards the sciences of achievement and measurement. Function and meaning are observable and the Principal's work is rationalised as the means to an end. Applying subjective theory and treating the school as the individual members who inhabit the structure, leads one to a person-centered paradigm where

issues such as passion, conviction or weakness are not objectively measurable but play a significant part in what is considered real, valuable and successful. Bush notes that "the concept of leadership fits rather uneasily within the framework of subjective models" because values, beliefs, interests and goals are experienced from multiple perspectives (2003, p.126).

3.2.3 How Principals are Considered to be Successful

Addison (2009) suggests that we cannot begin to understand the work of leadership without first understanding the work of organisations and contextualising how they influence leadership behaviour. Our perspectives and assumptions of what it is that schools do, essentially answers the question of how we determine success in them. On one extreme, schools are publicly funded educational institutions, bodies that operate modern business models to produce an efficient and measurable return into the future. On the other, they are the sites of child-centered learning experiences that exist in the here and now, producing fully socialised human beings. Taysum for example, describes a problematic dichotomy whereby the positivist influences of high-stakes testing and other measures of educational accountability are "leapfrogged" over the less tangible more interpretive dimensions of education, such as values development and inclusiveness (2013). Settling and existing comfortably between such polarities, balancing the scales of opposites and intellectualising beyond the binary, has occupied the minds of writers in educational management and leadership for decades. In general terms, vague and ill-defined conceptions of school leadership still abound both in policy and in practice and this may be due, at least in part to the wide range of school contexts. Potter et al. note, "the literature suggests that although many of the principles governing effective improvements are universal, some are context specific, and must be tailored to the individual circumstances of each school" (2002 p. 243).

The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) is one such endeavor (Day 2007; Drysdale 2011; Moos et al. 2011). Day claims that successful Principals exist in all countries and yet he questions that "even now relatively little is known about what constitutes success ... and how success is achieved and sustained in

different cultures and in different socio-economic contexts" (2007, p.15). The seminal author on organisational leadership, Kets de Vries, notes similarly that without comprehensive research, "it's just plain hard to assess ability (whether leadership or otherwise) on the basis of scant information and brief acquaintance" (2001, p.229). We must surely look beyond Goleman's over-simplification that "leadership gets results" (2000).

Leithwood et al. (2006) elaborate more fully and they provide credible wide-scale research, offering seven strong claims about successful school leadership. They claim that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning, that almost all successful Principals draw upon the same repertoire of basic practices and that these practices are operated in ways that are contextually sensitive. They also note that successful Principals improve learning by motivating staff, by distributing responsibilities, by aligning an agreed vision of a school and by demonstrating an open mind and a flexible approach to achieving high standards. These high standards are generally assessed first and foremost in reading.

Researchers Hallinger and Heck typically describe reading attainment as the "focal measure of school performance" (2010, p.655) in many studies. They caution against such a narrow focus and note that features of schools' external environments and their internal organisational processes must be included in any assessment of performance. They note the accountability focus that dominates international discussions on educational reform and its effects on the actions of many school leaders. Interestingly, Coe's research from the US National Assessment of Educational Progress reports that "performance in reading has remained absolutely flat since 1971 for all age groups" and that grades in mathematics by age 17 have not risen either (2009, p.364). Such evidence appears to go unheeded however and the search for school Principals who will drive continual improvement agenda continues regardless.

In Ireland, there is no official categorization for Gold's (2003) "outstanding" Principal and no distinction between what Duke and Salmonowicz term "typical" Principals and "expert" Principals (2010, p.36). A popular notion internationally however, is that of the exceptional or turnaround Principal as exemplified by Monroe (1997, 2003).

Thrupp and Wilmott present a convincing argument that the emergence of such a phenomenon is caused by global market structures that cause a "concomitant restructuring of educational systems geared to economical and technical imperative" (2003, p.12). They make the case that the main educational driving force among nation-states presently, is to provide human resources and servants that sustain global employment markets. Moreover, the sustained attempt internationally to rank countries on international testing has led for example, to the introduction of performance indicators by educational inspectorates such as OFSTED in England. This "highly selective objectification" of performance is designed to keep schools constantly focused on grades, a measure by which it is intended in some quarters that teachers will ultimately be paid (ibid, p.23).

3.2.4 The Phenomenon of the Improvement Specialist

In recent years therefore, governments in the UK and in the US have developed inspection mechanisms to produce evidence of pupil attainment at literacy and numeracy on standardised achievement testing, particularly in high poverty areas. In many cases, failure at testing is equated with failure of the school and a failure of leadership by the Principal. Odhiambo and Hii are entirely unambiguous on this point. Their research findings from diverse countries and differing school contexts draw the clear conclusion that "schools that make a difference in students' learning are led by effective leaders" (2012, p.233).

A rationale, based purely on performativity, therefore validates the dismissal of any Principals whose schools are deemed to be significantly underperforming on standardised testing. In their place, the authorities appoint other Principals to act as improvement specialists. The new appointees are highly driven and aim to turn the schools around by raising pupils' test scores. Duke and Salmonowicz (2010, p.34) report on a "turnaround specialists" training programme in Virginia, sponsored by the Microsoft Corporation. In theory, such programs typically involve dismantling ineffective instructional programs, establishing a culture of teacher accountability and developing new and more effective programs with staff. In fact however, critics like

Thrupp and Wilmott liken them to Machiavellian methods of leadership. Whatever one's perspective, there is little evidence as to the long-term benefits of such shock treatment. When the highly paid specialists leave and when their improvement budgets evaporate, educational commentators and researchers have long since up-pegs and left. Consequently little is known of the plight of post-turnaround schools when they revert to the regular daily life in their original environmental contexts and cultures.

Hamilton et al. (2012) report on extensive research in turnaround schools in the Pittsburg Urban Leadership System of Excellence (PULSE) project. They comment upon the incentive of initial and significant salary increases to Principals who demonstrate measurable improvements in pupil attainment on state testing in the short-term but their conclusions do not recommend payment by outcome for Principals in the long-term.

In reviewing the literature with a critical skepticism, it is worth noting Coe's observation that accounts of successful Principals' work are "inevitably selective". Highly credible accounts containing dramatic and compelling evidence of school turnaround are not the norm, nor should one expect them to be. Stories of Principals who "turned successful schools to failure" must undoubtedly also exist, but these are seldom if ever mentioned. This phenomenon of "publication bias" must be acknowledged (Coe 2009, p.368). For example, Fullan's (2006) title, "Turnaround Leadership" might be seen as a highly politicised work and as one that promotes government policies unquestioningly and supports those who implement them. Such educational and societal reforms are advanced through the reworking of grand systems theories and not through the empowerment of those already in seemingly underperforming positions. While they enjoy high levels of universal respect for their educational commentaries, it might be considered that such widely cited academics may command little relevance with the individuals about whom they write.

Leithwood et al. comment, "outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to context" (1998, p.4). Fink maintains that successful Principals "make connections by developing firm knowledge and understanding of the contexts" (2005, p.104). Iszatt-White (2011) is more cautious and considers that context may be seen as a

"moderating variable" rather than "an inseparable component" of success (2011, p.120). Nonetheless, sustainable success for schools and Principals, while perceived from differing perspectives, must reasonably be judged to be both context and culture specific. Grint contests that leadership and measures of leadership success are necessarily culture-bound because the existence of leadership on its own, in any culture-free context is untenable (2005, p.19).

What is it therefore that Principals can do in order to be considered successful? Tomlinson et al. propose that the "inter-relationship between agency and structure is the conceptual framework in which the voices, values and visions of the head teachers are located" (1999, p.xii). Put simply, it may be necessary to ask Principals themselves in order to find the answer. Hallinger and Heck point out that "a large body of international research supports the view that school leadership can have a significant indirect impact on student learning outcomes" and that in recent years scholars increasingly assert that leadership achieves this result through building school capacity and through fostering more effective teaching and learning processes (2010, p.656). To assess such claims, it is necessary to study the context and to engage directly with the cultural complexities within which Principals endeavor to succeed. One example of such an enquiry is Sugrue's research, in which the voices of school Principals are used as the primary evidence source. A narrative account of their daily realities led Sugrue to comment that Principals, in their successes and potential legacies, "impact on and leave indelible, superficial or entirely invisible "marks" on the wax and weave of these communities at individual and collective levels" (2005, p.164).

In summary, it can be argued that a realistic picture of what Principals do and a credible account of how their successes can be measured may only be achieved by including Principals themselves directly in the conversation. In advance of this however, it may be opportune to explore just how we have come to know all that we do about them in recent times.

3.3 How We Know This

Section 3.3 begins by theoretically surveying the landscape of published literature. It explores conceptually, the development of the corpus and it offers a perspective on the current topography. It concludes by highlighting a number of difficulties and by recommending a back-to-basics approach to further investigations.

3.3.1 Surveying the Landscape

Exploring the corpus of work on educational management and leadership could well be compared to holidaying in Florida. The landscape is vast but entirely man-made. It is quite recent in origin and every intersection appears similar to the last, with the predictable big names appearing in lights. There appears to be little history predating the current population and yet, one is sure that this land, the land of education in our case and not the Sunshine State, predates the current attractions and sideshows by centuries. In some strange and fascinating trick of the light however, the appeal of the new leads one quickly to forget the possibility of any past.

The leadership role of the Principal is described by the Irish Leadership Development for Schools initiative (LDS, 2007) as a relatively new phenomenon and as the wider, more visionary aspect of managing a school. Nevertheless, Principals have managed and directed school business for many generations, most likely in a quite effective manner and with few, if any, guidebooks or instruction manuals. Nowadays however, this is an area awash with printed publications, on-line networks and fledgling support organisations, much of which is considered almost indispensible. A search on the internet for "school Principal" generates 838,000 hits on Google books, 3.7 million references on Google scholar, 41,431 titles for sale through Amazon and 203,000,000 hits generally. If one were to read just one such publication per day, it would take over 113 years just to work through what is currently available and by then presumably, there would undoubtedly be many times more.

Ten years ago, Thrupp and Wilmott described how "academic bookshops and library shelves now groan under the weight of recent texts on school self-management … school leadership … and the like" (2003, p.3). Ten years previously, Hodgkinson commented,

> *"I set to explore the swamp of literature on leadership. It goes on and on and ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous with little in between. Taken as a whole it is a shambles, and mess full of philosophical confusion … (and) … is full of word magic of the worst kind."* (cited in Ribbins 1993, p.21)

More recently, Sugrue comments, "Despite increasing emphasis on leadership as a field of research during the past two decades in particular, such research is still at a relatively immature stage in its evolution and trajectory" (2005, p.164). It is worth investigating the pattern and the course of its growth as this may be significant in illuminating current issues.

It is somewhat significant that there is no mention of the Principal in Coolahan's (1981) authoritative and seminal volume on the history of the Irish education system. An absence of any credible account of the work of Irish Principals through the 20th century, except in rare accounts of biography and fiction (MacMahon 1992, McCabe, 2002) limits any investigation in the Irish context and therefore requires us to shift the focus abroad. In fact, the general scarcity of information and research on the Principalship in Ireland even today, necessitates that any comprehensive investigation must encompass an international dimension. In recognising the history and the influences of British colonisation on Ireland, particularly in areas such as the civil service and education, the development of the role of the UK's Headteachers is worth considering as a starting point. It is not intended to suggest that differing systems within the UK and in Ireland are at all identical, but similarities do exist, notwithstanding the influences of a "national" school system and the undeniable influence of Irish Catholic Church in educational management.

Day and Smethem consider the value of examining the work of Principals in the UK, given the fact that the role there has received a higher level of intensive and sustained Government intervention than anywhere else in the world (2009, pp.141-142). Tomlinson et al. trace the origins of the English "headteacher' back to the "great

Victorian" headmasters of the late 19th century (1999). It can only be surmised at this point that systems of social class and politics perpetuated a status quo for many decades in which Principals operated using hallmarks of authority and position that were typical of many disciplines at the time. The authors comment that it is "unsurprising to find that there is a dearth of guidance and training for the role" or much written about it at all, given the independence, power, authority and sense of educational elitism that was traditionally legitimated.

Gunter describes changes in post-war UK society whereby "class and privilege were being challenged, and private sector values were being acclaimed" (2001, p.23). Gradually, into the 1960's, the good old-fashioned "tight ship" analogy of the well-run school was influenced by waves of social transformation and a new educational professionalism came of age. In the following decade in Ireland, the two-year National Teacher (NT) qualification was replaced by the University accredited Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree.

3.3.2 The Emergence of Management and Leadership Studies

Sugrue comments on the development of the Principal's role in Ireland through the 1970's and 1980's and he points to increases in the nature of the administrative and managerial workload, possibly due to the influences of revised curricula (2003). Bush also describes a similar evolution of models of management. Through the 1960's and 1970's he notes, the "managerial" model provided a crucial technical role in ensuring successful operational and strategic management by overseeing "the implementation of externally devised solutions to social or educational problems" (2003, pp.185-189). Internationally, Mintzberg's publication includes a descriptive study of the daily roles and tasks of a managers and sparks a great deal of interest and study in later years as to what Principals actually do in terms of managing schools, in making key on-the-spot decisions and in ensuring some form of effectiveness (1973). The emergence of "effective schools research" in the 1970s portrays the successful Principal as one who improves students' achievements by demanding higher standards of teaching (Edmonds, 1979).

Tomlinson et al. report that the few available Principals' support initiatives from this period operated with narrow descriptions of Taylorism-type training (1999). Molloy also considers the influences of managerialism on education (2010). He details the original ideas of the engineer Fredrick Taylor (1947) and the scientific management movement that aimed, through individual time and motion studies, to eliminate wastefulness in production processes. In recent years the term "new public management" has evolved from such thinking. It implies that private sector productivity practices are adapted for management in public sector governance, including schooling. Gunter claims that much of our current thinking on educational leadership development has "uncritically accepted business management solution to organisational and leadership effectiveness. The claims made about this type of work are based on the deconstruction of leadership activity into behavioural and task functions" (2001, p.55).

Tomlinson et al. assert that "leadership methodology is often ahistorical" with the past only beginning in the late 1980's (1999, p.160). As expectations for higher standards emerge in many areas of social life, Principals are envisioned as the drivers of reforms in teaching and learning in schools. Hallinger describes the "boom in the start-up of leadership academies" during the 1980's as a result of external policy reforms in the USA (2005, p.222). Driven by an American business "infatuation" for higher performance standards at the time, these new institutions aim to drive school improvement forward by changing the work practices of Principals and by generating a paradigm shift through a new emphasis on leadership roles and responsibilities.

Potter et al. trace the intellectual background of the school improvement movement in the UK to the original writings of Kurt Lewin, a pioneer of modern organisational psychology (2002). Thrupp and Wilmott (2003) point to the influence of global business guru Tom Peters whose work on the concept of excellence in business management steadily finds its way into the new and ground-breaking area of management in education.

Addison describes how schools cannot escape the influences of "homo economicus." He observes, "the language, discourse and values of the business sector have become so much a part of the contemporary organisational landscape" (2009, p.330).

Tomlinson also highlights the emergence of a new lexicon in education, one that encompasses notions such as "strategic direction" and "communicating the vision" (1999). Hughes describes the Principal's role emerging through the era as that of the "leading professional" and "chief executive" in the school (1985). Into the 1990's and beyond, the responsibility for effectiveness, improvement and all forms of successes in the school house rests firmly on the shoulders of the individual Principal; in theory at least.

3.3.3 Differentiating School Management and Leadership

West-Burnham's definitions may offer a clutter-free starting point: Leadership, he notes, is doing the right things, making the path and handling complexity. Management is doing things right, following the path and maintaining clarity. Administration is doing things, tidying the path and maintaining consistency (2004).

The difficulty in differentiating between leadership and management in education studies is partly explained by Bush who comments that management is concerned with "goals, targets, aims and ongoing maintenance" while leadership is more difficult to define, is arbitrary, is subjective and has "no correct definition" (2003, pp.5-8). Often it is an unmeasurable force that acts on "vision, motivation and sense of purpose." Principals might therefore know when they are engaged in managing but may find it difficult to identify when they are leading. MacBeath considers that "shifting conceptions of leadership" cause a blurring of the lines in societies that are constantly changing and hyper-complex (2003, p.323).

Grint explains the origins of "management", deriving from the Latin "manus" or the hand that controls (2005). This is distinguished from the German origins of the word "leadership" which infers that one guides or shows the way. Cuban draws the distinction between managing as "maintaining what is" and leadership as "moving to what can be" but he also explains that leadership can sometimes involve preserving the status quo during times of change (1988, p.xxi). Iszatt-White distinguishes management and leadership roles by noting that literature on leadership development is multifaceted (2011). It can incorporate aspects of ethical leadership, spiritual

leadership and authentic leadership. Aspects of leadership may be abstracted from the context and considered theoretically. While this is not generally the case with management activities, Sugrue suggests that in reality "the boundaries between notions of leadership, management and administration are porous" (2005, p.5).

Spillane et al. explain that it is difficult to lead without managing and that in practice, Principals do not possess the luxury of distinguishing between leadership and management on the ground and are generally busy with the responsibility for the performance and the general execution of the duties (2007). Thrupp and Wilmott relate that the distinction is "often overdrawn" because many leaders in education actually spend large portions of the day at management and clerical duties (2003, p.142). They also speculate that the distinctions between management and leadership are less important than those that can be drawn between critical and uncritical leadership practices.

3.3.4 The Formalisation of the Principal's Leadership Role

Barber suggests that developed countries, 30 or 40 years ago, "could tolerate substantial underperformance in their education systems because there was a plentiful supply of unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in the economy" (2000, pp.5-8). However, the rise of Europe in the world, the death of distance due to access to travel, the discovery of social networking and the democratic imperative to provide education for all groups of citizens has brought about widespread social transformation. The consequences for schooling are unavoidable.

The successful "learning organization" models of the 1990's migrate rapidly from organizational theory into educational theory and bring about significant power shifts as hierarchical structures are replaced by flatter configurations that emphasise shared responsibility and collegial efforts (Senge, 1990). This drive is formalised somewhat by the independent establishment of preparation and development courses for Principals in a variety of countries, particularly in the U.K. where the "Headlamp" programmed emerges for newly appointed Principals and a "National Professional Qualification for Headteachers" (NPQH) is established for aspiring Principals.

Sugrue describes how the literature of the late 20th century persists in labeling schools as organisations and in describing Principals as holding leadership authority. A preoccupation with checklists of organisational accountabilities and responsibilities he notes, makes the 1990's "a dismal decade for the Principalship" (2005, p.8). The evidence for this summation he observes, is found in the research on the number of Principals voting with their feet to leave the post and the paucity of candidates applying to replace them.

Day comments on the growth in the literature at this time and he describes the plethora of policy documents, training manuals and development programmes as "more often than not statements of the obvious" (2007, p.15). Many publications attempt to offer one-size-fits-all checklists, tool kits and lists of competencies for what Fink describes as "superficial designer leadership" (2005, p.xi). Starrat laments the trends at the time and criticises them as a "roboticising" of leaders' roles (2005, p.xiii). As the decade comes to a close, Hall and Southworth recognise "In terms of research into headship in the UK, we are probably, at best, only approaching the end of the beginning in our understanding of headship". They argue in favour of "more research into the topic, new methodologies and more sophisticated reflections and understandings" (1997, p.168).

The new century commences with Gunter (2001) describing the emerging field of educational leadership as "a busy terrain" and as "a place of struggle" in which theory and methods are strongly contested. She argues critically that conceptions of leadership have been colonized by academic elites who set new paradigms and attempt to hold power over knowledge production therein. Institutions in the UK that hold the monopoly on Principal leadership development are cast as pragmatic and utilitarian "powerful groups" working primarily to "sustain political and economic interests." She is critical that leadership development focuses on "the best ways of doing things" rather than the best ways of preparing and developing "organic intellectuals" who could sustain leadership practices that are integral to successful pedagogy (2001, p. 7-11).

Meanwhile, Kets de Vries (2001) argues that modern organisations and collective structures, in order to ensure survival and relevance, must move beyond models of

leadership that are based on notions of control, compliance and compartmentalisation. The hierarchical and pyramidal power structure of the traditional headmaster working with a staff of assistants, now undergoes a paradigm shift, a hallmark of which is the international trend away from external inspection in favour of a more entrepreneurial model of professional self-evaluation. Despairingly however, Thrupp and Wilmott (2003) describe the new century as an era when school management clearly becomes the solution of our times, and when the educational management industry truly evolves and comes of age to give rise to notions of the performing school or the managerial school.

3.3.5 Current Perspectives

In recognising an obvious demand among a wide readership for information on how to succeed at the practical dimensions of the Principalship, a range of recently published titles are available. Presented as manuals that offer checklists and "how-to" templates, arguably the least useful are those that are written by individuals (Daresh and Arrowsmith 2003; Sorensen and Goldsmith 2009; Gabriel and Farmer 2012). The more useful are compiled by organisations with vast and wide-ranging membership experiences (NAHT 2007; IPPN 2008). While many striking similarities exist in such texts, each is offered with its own unique hallmark. Williamson and Blackburn (2009) provide advice in an A to Z format, while Joseph (2012) opts for a chronological study of the first 100 days in the post. Alvy and Robbins (1998) offer the analogy of the Principal taking care of the school as an ecosystem. Berry and Dempster (2003) choose instead to describe the Principal "blindfolded in a minefield", as does Connolly (2009). Bonnici (2011) continues this analogy and describes the Principal as a battle tested soldier, working in the trenches and attempting merely to survive the war.

Irish research and Irish publications about the Principalship are few in number: Morgan and Sugrue (2008) report on the rewards and challenges of the Principalship in the Irish context. Attitudinal surveys of over a quarter of Irish primary school Principals yield significant information about what they think but as the authors note, "we are still left very much in the dark as to what Principals actually do during their

working day" (p.13). McDonald offers a commentary on leadership issues for Principals and notes similarities between the Irish context and those worldwide (2008). In particular, he comments on the blurring of lines between management and leadership in a complex daily workload. He outlines the "significant contextual turbulence" from legislative, curricular and other change initiatives and he describes a range of anticipated and unanticipated implications (p.33). Importantly, he notes that more than five times the number retires for reasons other than age and he debates issues of sustainability in the workforce and the reluctance of new school leaders to come forward.

Two notable contrasts are found as one absorbs the affect of the literature. On one hand, some authors adopt an entirely optimistic if not idealistic perspective. Some, on the other hand, offer accounts that portray a sense of realism, if not outright pessimism. Loader's narrative accounts illuminate personal experiences of joy and despair, confidence and self-doubt, successes and failures (1997). Thomson describes it as "a job with very particular benefits and very particular costs" (2009, p.1). His ethnographic research illuminates the idiosyncratic existence of individuals working in sometimes isolated and frequently under-resourced workplaces, suffering stress, dissatisfaction and risk, as they take on incessant and ever-increasing demands. Kent offers light relief in a purposefully upbeat and humorous collection of anecdotes (2011). Recounting tales of daily plumbing problems, repairing pupils' glasses and other unlikely activities, this publication offers the individualistic perspectives of an English Principal, appointed in a time before the mass availability of leadership preparation programmes and what Gronn and Lacey (2006) describe as the "cloning" influence of the NCSL. The author offers insights from 30 years in the post and declares that such work could not be more important or enjoyable. The style of writing is such that it portrays a context-based, fully human and altogether positive daily dimension to the Principalship and as a perspective, this is somewhat unique in the genre. Chapters from the work have been published individually in The Times Educational Supplement.

3.3.6 Difficulties with the Roadmap

In the five decades since the conception and development of the embryonic corpus, ranges of authors highlight serious flaws in its current viability. Over-arching theories of organisational management and leadership may serve as useful keys to investigate an education roadmap of the past half-century but they tell us little about the practice and actual experiences of those on the ground. Bush notes, "research is required which combines observation and participants' perceptions to provide a comprehensive analysis of school and college management" (2003, p.196). Fink also points to a lacuna in the leadership research and literature. He signals a failure "to fully engage with its human dimension" and claims that research has avoided dealing with the messy, complex emotional terrain that inevitably faces leaders in their given contexts (2005, p.x). Southworth describes a literature of "lifeless lists" from the functionalist producers of effective leaders, and highlights the opinion that much of the literature demonstrates little of what the job actually means to those who perform it (2002, p.198).

The influences of political systems on educational writing are undeniable as the majority of publications still concentrate on issues of improvement and productivity. Sugrue speaks of "a narrowing of educational goals with increased preoccupation ... with "standards", that is actually promoting greater homogenisation of school provision and school experience" (2005, p.6). Robinson continues the debate on the "new" leadership role of Principals, but little is in fact new. Again, perceptions that standards have reached a plateau, cast a spotlight on the effectiveness of the individual in the Principal's office. It is acknowledged that retirements from the system may be difficult to fill under current circumstances, due to a "perceived lack of interest from existing staff in stepping up to leadership" (2011, p. 64).

Troman further acknowledges the dearth of sociological and ethnographic research into Principals' work. The "headteacher remains as a shadowy figure in most accounts of the social processes of the school" he adds (2006, p.119). Niesche proposes a solution (2011). Emerging theories of philosophy and sociology he advises, may be utilised and such theories may assist us to better understand the concept of leadership

44

in schools. It would at least move us beyond a purely skills-based approach to school leadership and offer a somewhat more sophisticated theorisation of the role.

Finally, geographical difficulties exist. Slater comments,

> *Writers in the USA presume to speak for the world, and English-speaking writers presume to speak for all languages. Anglo-American scholars represent less than 8% of the world's population, but propose theories and research that purports to represent everyone* (2011, p.221).

Piggott-Irvine (2011) comments that, from the New Zealand perspective, Principal leadership and development in schools is a relatively recent phenomenon. Furthermore, the proliferation of programmes available internationally for school leadership development, many of which originate from the USA, are too generic and broad-based. Considering leadership as a context-bound activity, Piggott-Irvine explores the possibility of leadership development through self-directed and evidence-based action research project work, commenting that the route to learning, and to attaining new and "real' knowledge, is best travelled through opportunity for reflection and dialogue with others in similar leadership positions.

3.3.7 Investigating School Leadership Practices

In a somewhat back-to-basics perspective, a small number of original, one-off and lesser-known texts are well deserving of a final citation. Patri's "A Schoolmaster of the Great City" is a highly personal account of the life of a Principal in a New York public school (1925). Almost a century old, the text seems timeless in its descriptions of how teachers and a Principal attempt to reconcile the differences between the social realities of their school and the external demands of the education system. Goodwin provides another personal account of "the art of the headmaster" that although it is highly dated in some respects, it retains a freshness and originality in its homely advice:

There is no harm in this remembering that the good Head is really one who makes a good attempt at the impossible task he has taken in hand. And it is impossible, because if we did all we should at the time we should in the way we should, we would need superhuman attributes and abilities. Truly we would (1968, p.13).

Edmonds offers similar advice and while it is also somewhat dated, aspects of the offering are no less real for today's Principals in many regards. He suggests that Principals all possess "certain qualities" in common:

Integrity of character, mental vigour, immense reserves of emotional energy, physical stamina, sound judgement, the ability to make decisions yet the will to consult and involve others in the process (1968, p.vii).

By any measure, such an account could pass as a credible description of the modern school leader. Composed almost half a century ago and before the development of the current corpus, one might reasonably question if any significant development has occurred since and if the conceptualisation of the role has advanced much at all?

Day and Leithwood offer an attempt at clarification: Leadership, they assert, is a "highly interactive business ... a relationship of almost imperceptible directions, movements and orientations having neither beginning nor end" (2007, p.4). Gronn asserts that being appointed to a senior position, such as that of a school Principal and being a leader are not necessarily one and the same. Managers, he notes, may be leaders but not simply by virtue of being senior. Management denotes authority while leadership denotes an influence and a relationship. Taysum describes a leader in the context of education as "a complex spiritual, emotional, intellectual, dynamic and creative human being" (2003, p.11). Leadership is determined by "inferred causation." In other words, it is a status "ascribed" to one individual by others in social groups (2002, p.428). Gunter notes that "a leader may have contractual authority from being a leader, but they may not necessarily exercise leadership" (2001, p.63).

Grint questions popular assumptions about the nature of leadership. He speculates that it could be person-centered and determined by who the individual is. It could be result-centered and determined by what is achieved. It could be position-centered and determined by social status. It could be process-centered and determined by how

things are done. Whatever the rationale and whatever the circumstances, Grint further proposes that "leadership, or a lack of it, seems to be responsible for just about everything these days" (2005, p.5). Griffith adds to the general ambiguity and asserts that a Principal's effectiveness is dependent on the school's instructional and social climate and that in many ways, Principals are captives of the environment (1999). Such social–psychological theories of leadership propose that effectiveness is contextually dependent and relies on an appropriate match between leader behavior, the organisational context and the environment within which the organisation operates.

Hallinger and Heck define leadership "as an influence process that shapes to behaviour of individuals and groups towards the attainment of goals" (2010, p. 656). In its application to education, they consider shared or collaborative leadership on a school-wide basis, operating formally and informally, as the preferred model and they conceptualise leadership as an organisational property aimed at school improvement. Conflicting opinions emerge from recent research that assesses commonalities in school leadership globally and the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) is one such endeavor (Day, 2007, Drysdale, 2011, Moos et al., 2011). Drysdale in particular highlights the opinion that certain commonalities do in fact exist, even across cultural contexts as diverse as China, Australia, the UK and Scandinavia. They admit nevertheless, "precisely how much the context matters was not totally clear from the studies" (2011, p.447).

Odhiambo and Hii identify strategic thinking in good decision-making as an indicator of leadership (2012). This involves forethought in the use of resources and an understanding of the interplay between actions and responses. Leadership they note cannot occur in a vacuum. It involves high levels of cognition and the mental capacity to bring about sense making in situations. Thrupp and Wilmott caution against the use of leadership ideologies that are influenced by gender-based stereotypes and that emphasise the merits of strong leadership, decisiveness, strength and other heroic attributes (2003). The Irish Leadership Development for Schools initiative (LDS) reinforces the idea set out below:

In general discourse, the school leader is considered to be the Principal ... In the Irish language, the word Principal is Príomhoide which translates as "Principal Teacher". The title embodies the concept of primus inter pares (first among equals) and implies a collegial interpretation and a "flat" management structure (LDS 2007, p.21).

3.3.8 The Value of School Leadership Preparation

To conclude this section, it is worth commenting on the debate about the value of school leadership preparation courses. Ireland offers a unique site for such a commentary given that no additional mandatory qualifications are required for appointment to the Principalship and that only one new and fledgling qualification is available, as a possible fore-runner to the introduction of any such measure (LDS, 2013). Internationally, the arguments for leadership preparation are quite convincing, but a number of caveats are worthy of note.

Day comments, "Many Principals (and teachers) mistakenly rely mainly upon experience and intuition - with all the limitations to change which these contain - to guide them through their careers" (2003, p.45). Bush cautions, "it is wishful thinking to assume that experience alone will teach leaders everything they need to know" (2010, p.266). Crawford and Cowie's research in the UK leads them to remark that there is "a shared belief that head teacher preparation is a crucial aspect of school development and progression" (2012, p.176).

Bush describes four main building blocks of policy, research, practice and theory in the field of educational leadership and management (2010). He notes that policy in particular is generally delivered externally from government authorities and can raise issues of control among those involved in the practice of education itself. Wallace et al. concur and describe the large-scale leadership development initiatives that have become popular among Western governments to promote the acculturation of school Principals into government driven policies (2011). One might reasonably consider the UK's National College for Leadership in Schools and Children's Services to be one such example.

Operating under the UK's Department of Education and Skills, the College identifies 10 areas of competency for official training and certification. These fall under two broad headings: The ability to lead staff and curriculum and the socialisation into the role both locally and nationally. However, writers such as Gronn, Gunter and Ribbins appear to frequently question the merits of such a highly formalised agenda, describing it as cloning and as designer leadership. Thomson's ethnographic research is also critical. In contrast with many of the taught conceptualisations of school leadership Thomson describes a variety of accounts from Principals' experiences, concluding that it is a "risky assumption" to assume that leaders can be even identified, let alone schooled into the process (2009, p.35).

Another issue with such programmes is that they involve more than simple one-off training courses. Some are presented as a deliberate and sustained initiative that assimilates individual leadership characteristics into an acculturate norm. The programmes are designed as a career-long conceptualisation of school leadership, with interventions at all stages of Principals' careers. The drive is centralized and information technologies link an extensive network of over 120,000 participants in real time. The effects of the £27 million budget in 2012 is felt across 21,000 UK schools where, it is considered that annual accountability to the organisation is ensured (Bush 2008; Wallace et al. 2011).

In areas of the US, promotion to the position of school Principal is treated somewhat differently and a certificate of competency is required for applications for the post. Examinations are conducted under the general headings of knowledge, disposition and performance and multiple-choice study guides are available to assist in the accreditation process (Wynne 2008; ISLLC 2012). The Australian model contrasts such a shallow conceptualisation of leadership competency and a high level of aspiration abounds there. School leadership is proposed as "exceptional practice" that requires "courage, tough mindedness, intuition, passion, self-confidence, optimism and wisdom" (Education Queensland 2005, p.14).

In Canada, there is little ambiguity. The Principal is cast as the "data driven leader, early literacy leader, instructional leader in literacy, and Mathematics leader,"

commanding professional learning communities and working towards excellence (OPC 2009, p.1). With a clear emphasis on "continuous learning" and "continuous improvement" it is difficult to assess whether such texts drive the agenda or respond to a wider social will in Canada. Internationally, it is difficult to assess the relevance of any such texts to the average working day of the Principal. The repetition of a formulaic layout from one skills-based checklist to the next demonstrates little by way of originality or difference. On a broad scale, it is impossible to assess whether such material simply perpetuate an international industry of academic conferences and congresses or whether they are of any practical value to practice in the field.

There can be no clear way of assuring if "successful leadership can be transposed from one context to another" (Drysdale 2011, p.454) or if leadership preparation is not merely the manifestation of centralised governments' agendas that employ "powerful intermediaries" to promote a culture of compliance among Principals as public service providers (Wallace et al. 2011, p. 266).

3.4 The Demands of the Principalship

Section 3.5 opens with a brief description of some of the demands of leadership as expressed by educational commentators. Observations are made on the changing roles of schools in society, followed by an informed reflection on the demands of school leadership in an era that is influenced by neo-liberalism and performativity. The section concludes with a brief deliberation on the ethics of leadership and followership.

3.4.1. *What leadership demands*

Slater analyses the high level of consciousness required to operate in leadership roles (2011). Utilising Kegan's theories of consciousness development from childhood to

adulthood and from self-centeredness to other-centeredness, Slater proposes that leaders must operate at a meta-cultural level, moving beyond the traditional and even the modern, to embrace post-modernist perspectives, in their attempts to deal with complex systems-level difficulties.

Southworth argues that for many, being a Principal "is not only a role but an identity" and one that is socially constructed by the expectations of others (2002, p.198). It develops through interactions with others and in the experience of an individual's occupational socialisation over time and in any given context. Iszatt-White proposes that leadership must be seen in terms of ethnomethodology, emphasising the necessarily situated real-time nature of action, in that leadership is only leadership because "the members of a particular setting inter-subjectively negotiate a shared understanding that this act by this person in this setting constitutes leadership" (2011, p.120).

Schein, a seminal author on organisational psychology, demonstrates the dilemma of defining effectiveness due to its "inherent ambiguity and complexity". If an organisation had a single clear-cut goal he notes, one could rate effectiveness in terms of how quickly and cheaply the goal process is occurring. But many organisations, and schools in particular, operate with multiple functions and multiple goals, some of which are actually in conflict with each other. As a result, "a systems level criterion of organisational effectiveness must be a multiple criterion involving adaptability, sense of identity, capacity to test reality, and internal integration" (1980, p.233). Thirty years on, Senge, another seminal author on organisation theory and design, bemoans the state of the American educational system and the over-simplistic and one-size-fits-all centralised attitude to school effectiveness. He describes the US government beating educators with the accountability stick, using good-guy bad-guy politics, mobilising public anger against schools and fear-mongering within schools "with tragic results" (2010, p.vii-viii).

3.4.2   Schools in Society

Addison assesses that "the economic field has held philosophical dominance for much of the last 30 years" in writings about the work of Principals (2009, p.327). Sugrue describes "the challenge of Principalship in times of unprecedented change and social flux" (2005, p.68). As Western societies transition from an industrial age to an era where knowledge operates almost as a new currency, school leadership is identified as a "key dimension" of the successful operation of schooling (McDonald 2008, p.27). Gunter proposes that the culture of directing policy in education has shifted from one of structure to one of performativity (2001). Pupils' efforts and achievements are now underpinned by values systems that have shifted away from child-centered experiential learning and towards national goal setting and a political agenda of producing a workforce that will be considered employable on the international market.

The USA, England and Wales, but not Scotland or Ireland where an independent educational systems exist, are all sites of an emerging and new political conception of schooling. Gunter describes the neo-liberal vision of "the performing school" as one with quite distinct hallmarks (2001, p.18). Here, education is a service to be bought and sold in the most efficient manner by teachers who teach to targets and testing. Management systems are designed to control and to deliver an appropriately skilled workforce. Leadership in the performing school is about the engagement of Principals and their middle management teams in all manner of entrepreneurial behaviours, in order that consistent improvements can be maintained towards externally predetermined targets.

Gunter further proposes that "the current anti-intellectual climate" of reducing research in education solely to a process of measurement is regrettable (2001 p.64). Coincidentally or not, recent initiatives in the Irish primary school system demand that schools submit their annual results of pupils' standardised testing to the DES and that measureable outputs in school self-evaluation are made available for inspection (DES 2012c; DES 2012d). These new initiatives take place at a time when research from school management authorities indicate significant underfunding across the

system generally (CPSMA, 2012). A drive towards modernisation that distances Principals from their educational values and their collegial processes is echoed through the literature and through the research. Gunter describes such an experience as "professional isolation" (2001, p.98). Starrat confirms this trend internationally and comments on Principals and teachers in schools "being smothered in relentless waves of policy directives from the national governments that are intended to create a thoroughgoing uniformity on the learning and teaching processes" (2005, p.xiii).

Hargreaves and Fink assert that the "standards movement has become a standard bubble" (2006, p.10). As with property and stock markets, once gains become quantifiable, societies respond to increase measurable returns on their investments, often to the point of unsustainability. In many ways, these authors argue, the bubble has burst internationally in education already. Evidence for this assertion exists they claim, in trends of early retirement, recruitment difficulties and the continual bad press in the literature about increased underfunding, the micromanagement of standards, the crisis management of continual change agendas and the stresses experienced by Principals in the workplace. Thomson comments that Principals are not alone however in their lot and that other senior professions suffer a similar sense of "premature evacuation" (2009, p.18).

In a government's drive to maximise individual and group productivity among its public services, Molloy depicts teachers and Principals merely as "passive instruments" in the new public management (NPM) of the education system (2010, p.544). He comments on increasing trends in business to source labour outside of the traditional full-time permanent workforce and indicates how this and other practices have been adopted in education in recent years. In the US, the charter school system is an obvious example. In Ireland, the availability of self-funded online teacher education to supplement state-funded colleges is another.

The Irish government's recent introduction of a cost-neutral pension schemes for all newly qualified teachers, embargoes on full-time appointments and the attempted introduction of internships in teaching are among the most radical of NPM reforms in Irish education. Thrupp and Wilmott assert, "Education management generally promotes the decline of the teacher as a professional educator." Instead of leaving

53

well trained people "to get on with the job", it promotes a compliance with reform initiatives (2003, p.5). As Clarke comments, educators are measured by what they do rather than who they are (2001).

3.4.3 What leadership in school demands

Connolly compares the work of the Principal to "Atlas carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders" (2009, p.vii). Hawk and Martin describe the responsibilities of American Principals who, they report, are directed to act primarily as facilitators of federal mandates rather than as leaders in situated contexts (2011). They experience the work as "an impossible job" with escalating and competing demands. The research notes that many school leaders face the stark choice of leaving the positions due to stress or staying to experience burnout and depression.

While it must be acknowledged that the leadership of any organisation is a complex task (DES, 1999), and that success demands a ballast of a comprehensive range of skills (LDS, 2007), many Principals around the world find themselves positioned by political systems to motivate teachers to work harder in order to make pupils perform better in what Fink describes as "a culture of politically biased, systematic, cleverly orchestrated criticism." Chasing perceived notions of "best practice" in such a "flawed system" is simply unsustainable over a leadership career he considers (2005, p.9). Thomson describes it simply as a "profession stifled by red tape" (2009, p.135).

Starr illustrates how public perceptions of successful Principals are invariably determined by evidence of visible change and improvement processes in action. However, Starr also comments on the increasing neo-liberal restructuring and reform of schools, cautioning that the evidence shows conclusively that the drive for externally imposed change agendas "nearly always fails" (2011, p. 649). Such a demand for change, where Principals operate publicly he adds, invariably creates its own stresses. Resistance to change by staff can leave Principals isolated and in extreme cases, at personal risk. Starr recounts distressing stories of aggression, both

active and passive, aimed at Principals by staff. He recounts tales of professional sabotage, of violence and of other unlawful activities. In less extreme circumstances in Ireland, Sugrue observes that "Principals find themselves in a crossfire" between the demands of external, administrative and political accountabilities on one hand and the desire to build communities of trust and deep human relations on the other (2005, p.105).

Research by the Hay Group (Drea and O'Brien, 2003) commissioned on behalf of the IPPN, expresses Principals' own perceptions of the role and provides a lengthy articulation of the accountabilities and key competencies required in the Irish primary school context. Instructional, transformational, organizational and ethical leadership competencies are evident, as are skills in resource management, human resource management, policy formation, external relations and administrative duties. That Principals serve two masters, the objective and the subjective, is an inescapable conclusion. Day's research on the International Successful School Principals' Project finds that Principals are driven by "a strong values orientation" and a "broad moral purpose" (2007, p.13). Balancing the personal agenda with the demands of the system's agenda can only be problematic.

Sergiovanni comments that the Principalship is a unique form of leadership in which teachers are engaged as colleagues in learning processes. To do so successfully, Sergiovanni finds that Principals must purposely leverage forces in a number of areas; a technical force in everyday management duties, a human force to meet interpersonal needs, an educational force to direct curricular learning, a cultural force to work with the community and a symbolic force to provide focus on matters of importance. Fullan provides a similar overview, offering five success criteria for Principals: Operating with a moral purpose while demonstrating individual capacity, collective capacity, intelligent accountability and resolute leadership (2010).

Starrat describes the realities of the daily life of Principals who balance the demands of the "happy and conflicted emotions" of the schoolhouse and the heavy expectations of "bureaucratic goals and objectives" (2005, p.xi). He also describes the "suffering and sacrifice that the pursuit of the dream over time entails" (p.xii). Sugrue reminds us of research evidence that shows a decreasing interest in the position of the

Principal teacher in recent years, noting that teachers perceive it as being too onerous, unattractive and "suffering from chronic workload" (2005, p.200). This perspective is supported by Hargreaves and Fink who describe initiative overload as "the tendency of organisations to launch more change initiatives that anyone could ever reasonably handle" (2006, p.8) thereby causing a sense of related chaos among employees, the most eager of whom either burn out or simply leave.

Starrat likewise comments on the increasing tendency of education authorities to prescribe new roles for Principals in line with various new initiatives. Autonomy in running schools he notes has become "something of a romanticised distant memory," as Principals experience less and less ownership of processes and more and more drift, demoralisation and disaffection (2005, p.xvi). Hargreaves and Fink also report on research where Principals experience high levels of stress, end up in hospital and are forced into early retirement through exhaustion: "They have been treated by governments as if they are bottomless pit of energy. They are not." (2006, p.202).

3.4.4   Followership

A number of somewhat extreme cases in the literature argue against leadership entirely. Oliver questions the ethics of the concept of leadership in education, given that leaders are inevitably positioned in power relationships with a view to influencing others through a range of actions, from dictating to moderately influencing them (2012). Such a critical analysis, based on issues of positional power and on how it is used, offers interesting insights that place the learners and the purposes of schooling at the heart of the debate. Ethically, can societies be assured that if leadership is legitimised in individuals, that they will all meet the ethical challenges of justice, power and sustainability? Arguing from a Platonic perspective, Oliver questions the justification of leadership as a concept, arguing that what people want is the end product of leadership, and not necessarily leadership in itself. Arguing from an Aristotelian perspective, Oliver contends that a happy life, based on moral virtuousness demands practical rationality, brought about by the sustainable and

responsible actions of all citizens. This, she argues, can be ensured, not through power relationships, but through "humane means" such as tenderness, sympathy and passion in a "bearership" relationship among equals. A practical critique from this perspective sees transformational leadership, not as a practical endeavour that increases output and performance, but as an act by a moral agent to transform others and to act for the general moral good. In this manner, there is no asymmetry between leader and follower. There is no transaction of power, only "bearership".

Crippen also offers a commentary on the authenticity of leadership-followership relationships. His summation is that Principals' origins as class teachers and their emergence from a collegial workforce, operating with a sense of "moral endeavor," is somewhat unique.   While leaders by definition, are singled out as visionary motivators, Principals are best cast as "master-leaders" he claims, given that they in fact share a unique leadership purpose along with their colleagues (2012, pp.192-193).

Grint debates a proposition that we, as humans, need to change the hardwiring that we possess psychologically and remove ourselves beyond "stone age" notions that we need leaders at all (2005, p.6). Luyten et al. take the ethical discussion to the heart of the entire education system itself. They pose interesting questions about the purpose of education and about how education is evaluated. They note claims that learning may be an unpredictable process and that for many, the quality of teaching and learning should not be judged according to results. In essence, taking this viewpoint leads one to evaluate education primarily in terms of its personal significance and meaningfulness to pupils; in other words, as its original conception as a child-centered enterprise. However, the authors are prepared to acknowledge an entirely contrasting perspective also, one that is shared by neo-liberalists generally. Considering the "enormous amounts of taxpayers' money" invested in education annually they note, it makes no sense and could even be considered highly unethical, to invest any money in a system, if the outcomes of the process are unpredictable and if students are not prepared with the skills for the labour market (2005, pp.251-253).

The demands of the Principalship, it could be concluded, are not attributable to any single factor that might reasonably be considered unmanageable. Difficulties are

attributable to a range of factors and the serving of many masters; the two most significant being the school community and the school authorities. This is not a new realization however. Goodwin's assessment from almost a half century ago, offers a somewhat dated but nonetheless unsurpassed and unrevised description:

> *First, the chances are that he is over-committed, over-involved and over-worked, going at it 100% for 100% of the time. This is chiefly his own fault and I question whether much good comes from this compulsive dedication. Certainly in some ways it does harm. It means that at home he is sometimes difficult to live with, and that at school his work is probably not as good as it could be, for all his blood, sweat and tears* (1968, p.215).

3.5 How Principals Experience the Role

Section 3.6 examines the literature on how Principals experience the role. It commences with a range of perspectives on how the role is perceived and the effect that it can have on individuals. Human experiences of charisma, emotional work and burnout are explored. We end the section with a brief over-view of writings on career progression and sustainability.

3.5.1   The work

Grint offers a somewhat organic and subjective definition of leadership learning, one that in many respects is at odds with the objective realities of the Principalship:

> *Just as adults learn to become parents by interacting with their children, so leaders learn to lead by interacting with their followers. In effect, children teach their parents how to parent while followers teach their leaders how to lead.* (2005, p.100)

The dichotomy in dealing with the human dimensions of the task in context and the singular accountability for school performance in policy is perhaps a worthwhile starting point from which to set out to explore the demands of the work.

Thrupp and Wilmott propose that school leadership is intensely intellectual. It involves analysis and differentiation in real life contexts and there are "many ways of being successful" at it they claim, particularly in inter-personal dimensions that are not measurable or readily quantifiable (2003, p.161). However, Starratt laments that the self-identity and passion that Principals bring to such an engagement is endangered "in this period of late modernity and globalisation" because many of the traditional norms, values and benchmarks associated with education in recent times are all but obscured (2005, p.xii). Hargreaves and Fink describe the exhaustion experienced by both teachers and Principals due to what they perceive as the "consuming obsession with reaching higher and higher standards of literacy and mathematics within shorter and shorter timelines" (2006, p.2).

Hallinger notes that Principals who ignore the omni-present drive for the improvement of standards "do so at their own risk" (2005, p.222). Fink also considers the pressures that individual Principals experience in "a culture of constant change and unceasingly improvement efforts" (2005, p.62). The Irish Leadership Development for Schools initiative elaborates the point by identifying a range of influencing factors (LDS 2007, p.31-33). These are summarized as an increased emphasis on achievement in the teaching profession, a constant emphasis on CPD, shifts in core educational values, a range of economic and societal changes and the inclusion and resourcing of pupils with additional learning needs.

It appears reasonable to add that most modern adult occupations are subject to some workplace pressures and also to evaluation criteria. The evaluation of performance in schools is no different in that regard. Schools are unique however in that they are populated mostly by children and the notion of extending new and increasingly complex evaluation rubrics to them inevitably leads to a sense of uncertainty among school leaders. Robinson (2011) and Hawk and Martin (2011) both report that Principals experience stress at the prospect of school inspection due to a disconnect between the actual standards of pupil attainment and nationally mandated improvement agendas.

In Ireland, the chief inspector of the DES comments that in 2011 alone, over one-sixth of primary schools have been subject to inspection. Not surprisingly, he considers that

professionals, including Principals, who work in the Irish education system "feel that their work is subject to greater and more intense scrutiny than ever before" (Hislop 2012, p.3). Government policy defines this scrutiny, almost all of which is defined by target-setting, as a "growing professionalisation." The positivist nature of such targets is explicitly defined in DES documentation as quality standards in human services, market mechanisms, international comparisons and a drive for value for money from the public purse (DES, 2011b). An absence of child-centeredness in the descriptive content is more than a little concerning.

The measurement of effectiveness in schools it could therefore be argued is multifaceted. Southworth proposes, "We may never discover all there is to know about effectiveness. School leadership may be just too complex, too organic, too unpredictable, and too contingent that we can never be sure of very much" (1998, p. 20). Fernet's study recognises the increasing diversification of the Principal's role internationally (2011). Highlighting the demands of the administrative role, instruction leadership role and community-based role, the research set about examining the work experiences of 568 school Principals with a view to designing a psychometric tool to assess occupational difficulties such as work dissatisfaction and burnout. The resulting affects are predictable.

3.5.2   The affect

 Woods comments on the vast literature on the Principalship and argues that there is "neglect" with regard to the affective side of the work or "what the job does to them" (2002, p.3). Gunter reports "Research seems to be telling us that those who take on a leadership role (and their families) find themselves travelling a difficult but worthwhile journey" (2001, p.91). Hargreaves and Fink, writing on leadership sustainability, comment that there is no language in the research on "wounded leaders" and to describe feelings of "isolation, fear, vulnerability and loss" (2006, p.85). This may be explained by male stereotyping, given that males dominate not only the world of the Principalship but the researching of it as well (Chard, 2013).

Southworth recounts research narratives that describe "the implicit loneliness of the role" and Principals' "strong feelings of isolation" (2002, p.198). Tomlinson et al. comment that Principals are too often cast into roles whereby "children and teachers are constructed as objects to be managed; they are relegated to follower status." Consequently, Principals who once operated as teachers at the heart of educational practices, now experience a potential distancing affect. Any over-reliance on power structures can give rise to a collegial disconnect between the parties involved. Principals can then find themselves in bargaining and negotiating roles and resorting to forms of communication that Gronn describes as "officially sanctioned language" (1996, p.7). This form of experience is not unique to school Principals.

Goffman (1959), the renowned social and cultural theorist, writes that many people engage in "multiple selfing" or the creation of differing social identities for differing social audiences. Usually, the control of such identities is mediated, if not entirely determined, by the expectations of the group or audience rather than the individual themselves. The resulting affect is one of performance however, which for many may not sit well within certain philosophies of education.

Hargreaves and Fink question the sustainability of Principals' current "physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energy" (2006, p.201). Overwhelming evidence of busy agendas with multiple and complex demands, lead them to believe that Principals may be neglecting various aspects of self-care as they attend to the needs of others. In Ireland, direction and care for primary school Principals is available from managerial bodies and trusteeships such as the CPSMA (2013), from the teachers' Trade Unions (INTO, 2013), from the IPPN national network (2013) and the Government funded LDS leadership initiatives (2013). Carecall, a confidential counseling organisation is also available on request. A limited range of best selling professional support literature is available at trade fairs and at most educational conferences but Principals resort to Internet booksellers and their accompanying reviews for more specialised titles. Most such publications offer only generic job descriptions with theoretical advice (Kowalski, 2010). Some offer interesting perspectives on the daily demands experienced by others, without being overly prescriptive in nature (Lortie, 2009). None offer advice or support that is specific to the Irish primary school context.

3.5.3   Charisma, emotional work and burnout

The language used in the literature to discuss Principals' experiences of the role is varied and it offers contrasting perspectives. Sergiovanni considers the "charismatic" Principal, who demonstrates a vision to challenge the status quo and a willingness to take personal risks and make self-sacrifices (1995, p.123). Kets de Vries defines charisma simply as "energising subordinates for positive action" (2001, p.211) while Schein, who also sees benefits in leadership charisma, describes it as "that mysterious ability to capture the subordinate's attention and to communicate major assumptions and values in the vivid and clear manner" (2010, p. 235).

Franke and Felfe propose that some degree of this quality is required in order to achieve the desired effects of transformational models. They determine that high levels of "idealised influence" and "charisma" must be evident to followers, in order that they opt to join the leadership team. Maintaining the team also requires charisma however and at a human level, the researchers found that transformational leaders may experience health benefits in the short term by enhancing self-efficacy, but long-term, such practices could lead to "aggravated strain in the sense of over-commitment and exhaustion" (2011, p.298). The charisma needed to guide fellow leaders may be altogether different to the style of charisma needed to rally followers.

Gunter proposes that the role of the Principal has evolved from that of the "Headteacher" tradition into that of the charismatic leader and that it now resides close to that of the business manager (2001). This final position, at times of economic difficulties particularly, is characterized by a growing separation between managers and those whom they manage. In schools, Principals report that disproportionate amounts of their time are taken up with duties that have little or no connection with pupils or their education. Rayner and Ribbins comment that research on leaders should be biographical and should take the personal positioning of leaders into account. They claim that it should in essence, move away from investigating the "charismatics of leadership" to focus more enlighteningly on the "character of leaders" (1999, p.3).

Grint goes further and argues against the need for charisma at all, or for notions of singular vision or strategic competence that is centered in any one individual. He contends that successful leadership is determined by a capacity to learn from followers in iterative relationships (2005, p.115). This perspective is supported by various modern sociological doctrines such as Wenger's (1998) "community of practice" and Bourdieu's (1996) "social capital" and "habitus". Ontologically, such perspectives only gain credence among interpretivists however and those who see knowledge making through processes of meaningful engagement and lived practice. They appear to hold little purchase with national policy makers.

Lave and Wenger's theories of learning and of becoming a different person through processes of learning, advance conceptualisations of the construction of identity as individuals grow and mature into new roles (1991, p.53). This is of particular relevance in the personal and professional socialisation of newly appointed Principals who emerge onto the scene to face altogether new challenges with altogether unpredictable societal expectations. For many, the demands are accompanied by a self-imposed sense of "emotional labour" (Hochschild, 2012). This concept, first devised in 1983 and revised in 2012 by Hochschild, describes how workers create "a cheerful sense of shared mission" through emotional modeling (p.x). Emotional labour occurs in certain occupations where employees are expected to express emotions and portray a persona that serves the organisation's ends, rather then their own. The research of Briner et al. identifies the causes and consequences of harm in emotionally damaging occupations, occupations where expressions of emotions are required to complete tasks successfully (2008).

The research of Johnson et al. shows that a significant amount of work-related stress among teachers and Principals is due to factors of emotional labour (2005). Interestingly, due to less face-to-face contact, Principals record less stress and more job satisfaction, as do senior police officers in comparison with to officers on the beat. Harris (2007) develops the theory further, acknowledging the potential stresses caused by criticism, negativity and apathy in modern societies where "the current social, political and economic climate has depersonalised communities" (2007, p.5). If, he argues, school leaders are lost in the spaces between policies and practice, the emotional cost is wounding, heartbreaking and often soul destroying.

Kelchtermans et al. describe "the lucid loneliness of the gatekeeper" in their research and detail the struggles that Principals experience in webs of conflicting loyalties. Feelings of responsibility for emotional well being in the school are complicated by the reality that "the Principal-as-Principal does not have a peer group" or any "real colleagues" within the school. Such structural isolation gives rise to feelings of loneliness and issues of belonging in many individuals (2011, p.101). Sugrue's research proposes that burnout could be connected with conditions of leadership such as time at work and the organization of tasks. More significantly however, he cites the fluid nature of relationships: In the Principal's day he notes, "there is too little time for each other to give and receive care" (2005, p.100).

Thomson's ethnographic research describes the burnout effects of low levels of job control, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion and work overload (2009). Hallinger speculates, "One of the major impediments to effective school leadership is trying to carry the burden alone" (2005, p.234). Starr's research describes Principals having to put on a brave face to deal with opposition in rational ways, noting that while others can resort to a range of emotions, Principals feel professionally bound to act confidently, diplomatically and courteously at all times, no matter what the circumstances or the personal result might be. Adopting such a "bullet-proof persona" cannot always be easy (2011, p.650).

3.6 Career development and sustainability

Walker and Hallinger suggest that we cannot "discuss successful leadership without reference to leader development" (2013, p.401). While Southworth (1995, p.290) contends that "the idea of phases of headship is notional" and that it is unclear whether leadership development occurs due to time in one post, experience in different posts or due to personal circumstances such as age and maturity, it cannot reasonably be argued that development does in fact occur and that it is progressive; if not regressive towards the end in some cases (Woods, 2002). Notable research from the UK in the 1990's sees Day and Backliogu (1996) identify four distinct phases of professional maturation, beginning with initiation, moving to development and autonomy and ending in disenchantment.

Paschal and Ribbins research the idea further with in-depth qualitative interviewing and through the lens of life portraiture, realigning the phases as formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture (1998). Significantly, they find that the final phase of Principals' careers may conclude extremely positively and they offer "enchantment" as an alternative possibility to Day and Backliogu's "disenchantment". Bridgehouse and Woods return to a bleak and pessimistic outlook for Principals' career paths and offer three phases: Initiation, development and decline (1999). The latter, they note, is characterised by a withdrawal, a brief evening in their careers where Principals lose their power and cease to plan for tomorrow.

The concern for the sustainability of the educational system is that "the shrinking pool of potential candidates raises the issue of quality into the future" (LDS 2007, p.45). Apart from such a seemingly unquantifiable issue, the reality in some circumstances is that few people, if anybody, actually wants the job. An INTO study from 2006 indicates that 9.2% of primary school Principal positions, many of which were teaching Principalships, were not filled in the first round of open competition. An IPPN study of attitudes and aspirations to Principalship, indicates that the major reason why teachers would not apply for a Principalship at some stage in the career is

that "combining the role of class teacher and Principal means that both roles suffer" (2006, p.15). IPPN information from 2010, sourced for this study, reveals that the average ratio of applicants to vacancies has increased from a low of 1.98:1 in 2006 and 1.96:1 in 2007 to 5.4:1 in 2010.

While this figure corresponds to the 1996 level, the IPPN is careful to note that the figures are averages. They maintain, "larger schools frequently attract 6+ applicants. Teaching Principalships in smaller schools may receive just one application. The single applicant often emerges after a second or third round of advertisements". They note that in recent years, 27 schools have been without Principals for more than one term. A high rate of early retirements among Principals has resulted in many "less qualified" and unprepared teachers taking up positions. Since 2008, due to recession and reduced family income among teachers, individuals are applying for the job simply for the higher pay, even if they consider it undoable (IPPN, 2014). Hargreaves proposes that when individuals in the education profession feel devalued or want to leave and when fewer and fewer want to join or are not interested in leading, "it is a crisis of disturbing proportions" (2003, p.2).

3.7   Conclusion

Machi and McEvoy recommend that an engagement with the literature should reveal two arguments: The arguments of discovery and advocacy (2009). In the above study, the argument of discovery has attempted to consider at least some of what is known about the field of leadership in education at present. It has considered what Principals do and how it is felt that they do it successfully. It has examined how we know this by utilising available knowledge sources. It has investigated some of what is known about management and leadership. It has offered perspectives on the demands of the workload and on how such demands are experienced. The argument of advocacy described throughout and below, analyses and critiques the body of knowledge to identify potential gaps that may be addressed in a research question. While much is written about what Principals do and about how they might do it better, little is known about how they actually experience what they do and the affect that their experiences have upon them.

Investigating the management and leadership practices of school Principals is complicated by what Thrupp and Wilmott term the "considerable academic struggle" and the "managerial colonisation of education" in the corpus of knowledge (2003, p.144). This is particularly the case when leadership literature is overtly framed within managerial government policy (IPPN, 2014), when individual texts on school leadership are presented unashamedly in either a business management format (Schlechty, 2009) or as no more than "how to" problem-solving checklists (Bubb and Earley, 2004).

Niesche speculates that the literature is preoccupied with the portrayal of leaders as "great" individuals, with "fads" and with ideas of "best practice" (2011, p.1). He bemoans the "crude understanding" of leadership that is evidenced in "the repetitious search for the blueprint of competencies, capabilities and models that can be implemented" as part of a never-ending change agenda. Kelchtermans et al. outline an abundance of literature on the formal leadership role of the Principal (2011). Duke and Salmonowicz remark on the multifaceted phenomenon of leadership and on the

67

range of investigative processes employed to study it (2010). In this domain, knowledge abounds, to the point that it has become almost a massive fermentation of ideas.

Interactions between leaders and followers, symbolic and political dimensions of leadership, moral and ethical leadership, and effective leadership practices are all subjects of considerable scrutiny. Interestingly though, "How leaders think about what they are doing sometimes has failed to receive much attention" (ibid, p.34). Day agrees: "If we are to understand what being a successful Principal really means, we must drill beneath the outer, visible, layer to uncover more detailed knowledge of their work in schools which are in different developmental phases and in different social contexts" (2007, p.13).

In 1996, Gronn questioned the lack of ethnographic enquiry into the practice of the Principalship and he proposed that professional biographies would add to a critical rather than a domesticating dialogue. More recently, Thomson considers that talking up or talking down the job, offers little by way of assistance to anyone. What is needed he contends, is that attention is paid to the "actual material conditions of headteachers' work" (2009, p.133).

Crawford and Cowie recognise the disparity between the academic knowledge of the conceptual foundations of school leadership and the common language used to describe field-based practice (2012). Sugrue insists, "We must not lose sight of the flesh and blood realities of Principals as schools of the future are created. Rather, their voices must be heard above the cacophony of policy prescriptions" (2005, p.181). Brazer and Bauer call for a return to basics for researching the work of Principal teachers. They deplore the "preoccupation with mundane management issues at the expense of leadership that would help to resolve intractable problems in challenging schools and districts" (2013, p.649).

With the increased efficiency of transportation and communication systems, the influences of globalization are undeniable, even in primary schools. However, as Dimmock assesses, the use of the term "globalization" does not necessarily imply "planetary-wide acceptance" (2002, p.37). The importance of societal culture is ever-

present. Many of the grand schemes that hold such high importance among publishers and many of the theories and the arguments that rage so enthusiastically among educationalists might command little relevance in the actual classrooms, corridors and playgrounds of our local schools.

In an age of perpetual educational reform, on apparently a worldwide basis, "educational reformers paint negative images of the past" that are bound up in poor practice, chaotic curriculum and lax progressivism (Hargreaves and Fink 2006, p.239). The future, conversely, is typically directed towards best practice, revised curriculum and performance management. The intellectual spaces that individual Principals inhabit between versions of the past and visions of the future must be examined outside of the boundaries of the current "idolatry of measurement" (Thrupp and Wilmott 2003, p.146).

The renowned Finish educator Pasi Sahlberg recommends that Principals lead schools beyond a knowledge society that prioritises individuals' test-based accountability and their expectations of "unbridled wealth accumulation" in adult life (2009, p.48). Schooling, he argues, must develop conceptual learning, intelligent forms of accountability, relations, and moral purposes among groups of students rather than competition and self-promotion. The schools of today must look towards the future, to develop networks of international co-operation that are ethically motivated in what is possibly our final attempts as humanity to retain an ecosystem in sustainable balance. To work towards such high ideals one must surely begin the journey with school leaders themselves rather than the theorists or the politicians or those removed from the first hand experiences of school. The argument of advocacy contends, that in order to find out what is best for our schools in an age of social flux, we should ask those that we placed in leadership positions there and trust in what they have to say by way of reply.

Chapter 4

Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in 10 sections. Beginning with ontology, the chapter opens by declaring a position from which the research is undertaken. It considers the nature of reality in the social world and in educational research in particular. Epistemological agility is demonstrated in a consideration of the nature of knowledge and philosophical assumptions with implications for the research practice are outlined. An interpretivist research paradigm is explored as a viable approach for an investigation into the work of school Principals. A requirement for sense making in context underpins the choice of an approach to the research question and a variety of methodological perspectives are evaluated.

Case study is defended as the research method of choice and a case design is analysed. Yin's single-case design with embedded multiple units of analysis allows for the collection and analysis of multiple sources of data from 31 Principals. The difficulties of achieving an appropriate sample are explained and the limitations of conducting educational research in sensitive settings are described. A section on fieldwork explains the choice and the design of a uniquely formatted researcher-driven diary. Qualitative interviewing supplements the data.

The chapter concludes with a section on ethics and introduces the second part of the dissertation, in which the findings of the study are analysed and presented.

4.2 Declaring a Position: Beginning with ontology

Protocol in the world of scientific research demands a philosophical underpinning or rationale in order to distinguish how new knowledge work may be framed as "episteme" or true belief, and differentiated from "doxa" or mere opinion (Eidlin 2010, p.782). Ontological assumptions, concerning the nature of reality and referring to the study of the nature of existence are an assumed starting point (Bakker, 2010). At one extreme of humankind's understanding of the scientific method, reality exists quantifiably as "a single apprehensible reality" based on objectivity (Morais 2010, p.841). On the other, qualitative research embraces the idea of "multiple realities" (Creswell 2007, p.16). Quantitative-based laboratory sciences for example, rely on direct methods of research such as controlled experimentation where the measurement of findings, in order to be considered valid, must be consistent in all laboratories and across the external world. In this way, an understanding of what is real in the world is based exclusively upon what is demonstrably authentic, factually based, true, actual, substantial, sensible, corporeal, tangible and palpable (Eidlin, 2010).

However, as science continues to discover more and more about the universe, the nature of knowledge is shifting continually and humankind's understanding of it requires newer and broader approaches in many contexts. The basic question of "what is ontic?" or "what is really real?" is addressed by Bakker who comments on the continuing evolution of the scientific understanding of the nature of the very particles that form the matter of which we are made. "Newtonian ideas are no longer accepted, and post-Einsteinian subatomic particle physics challenges the imagination" he declares (2010, p.628). Contemporary physical science, he posits, continues to struggle with the alleged reality of "strange particles" such as "leptons, mesons, kaons, baryons, and hyperons". On a less sublime note, one might consider everyday occurrences in social settings, how they are experienced and how a reality is constructed in the minds individuals or among groups. Eidlin describes the world as "a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions that has to be organised by our minds, largely by the linguistic systems in our minds" (2010, p.783). Recognising the possibility of the coexistence of multiple non-apprehensible realities in the mind has opened up the

world of social science research to new avenues of investigation in recent decades. That humans, as biological organisms can experience differing personal realities as determined by individual personalities for example and that networks of interacting minds can conspire together to create socially perceived realities, unlocks the possibilities that social reality is, by its very essence, socially contrived and not a constant and absolute phenomenon.

As Burgess et al. note, "in the social world is it only individual people who exist, or socio-historically located interactional processes that exist" (2006, p.53). Schools and their Principals therefore may reasonably be considered as much more than buildings and the functionaries that manage them. Ontologically, this research study endeavours to probe beyond positivist and objectivist considerations of reality. It asserts that social entities such as school communities and their Principals exist independently of the prescribed definition of the institutions and even beyond the social actors who inhabit the roles. A constructivist ontological position is adopted, as everyday discourse is examined in order to investigate the existence of realities that are beyond our expectations and perhaps beyond the expectations of even the actors themselves.

4.3 Demonstrating epistemological agility

Cohen, Mannion and Morrison's guide to research in education outlines how ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions that in turn define methodological considerations and eventually determine instrumentation and data collection methods (2007). Thomson and Walker advise that Doctoral candidates must develop "epistemological agility" in determining and justifying an appropriate methodological approach (2010, p.27). As Burgess et al. explain, the term epistemology is derived from the Greek words "episteme" meaning knowledge and "logos" meaning theory. "The most fundamental epistemological question is whether or how we can know anything" (2006, p.54). A positivist perspective determines that knowledge may be generated through experimentation with subjects and it may be seen as something that can be discovered. Therefore, positivist knowledge is

considered to be hard, objective and easily communicable. Alternatively, a range of post-positivist perspectives propose that knowledge may be constructed through various interactions in research processes with co-participants, sometimes yielding new and unexpected results in the process. Knowledge, according to this perspective, is considered to be personal, subjective and unique. Stake declares that in terms of constructivist knowledge work, "most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered" (1995, p.99).

Bryman explains that epistemological issues concern the question of "what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline" (2001, p.11). In this research context, the stated aim of the knowledge work is neither to develop nor to prove testable scientific theories. Neither is it intended, like much of what is considered "modern knowledge," to "manipulate the world" nor "to control its fate" (Palmer 1998. p.56). Where scientific description is understood as the only possible way of seeing the world and of generating new knowledge, as in Doctorate Dissertations in engineering for example, Scott et al. describe such research in the language of Habermas, as "scientistic" (2004, p.44).

In contrast, many aspects of educational research utilise live professional contexts as research sites and base their findings on the behaviours of individuals and groups. Research in education moves beyond narrow and positivist notions that science is in fact knowledge or that knowledge cannot be generated without forms of scientific measurement that rely exclusively on human sensory experiences. From the outset of this investigation for example it must be declared that key elements of the research question can neither be proved nor disproved by testable hypotheses or by generalizable forms of analysis. The data generated are subjective and context bound and are neither quantifiable nor value free. In the end, a range of conclusions about how the co-participating primary school Principals manage, lead and experience daily life at work, is in some ways only verified in the mind of the reader through a process of "naturalistic generalization".

Melrose describes "naturalistic generalization" as a process where readers gain personal insights by reflecting on details and on thick descriptions that are presented in case studies. Readers of research become involved, through an immersion in the

text, with a transfer of knowledge from the natural and in-depth depictions of rich case details to their own personal contexts. "Naturalistic generalisations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well-constructed the readers feel as if it happened to them" (2010, p.599). Thomson and Walker's advice to Doctorate candidates is framed in the philosophies of Foucault: The world as it is, may rightly be considered to be "complicated, confused, impure, uncertain" and the aim of research should not be the formulation of "global systematic theory, which holds everything in place". Instead, researchers might aim to "build, little by little, a strategic knowledge" (2010, p.69).

The authors also cite Bourdieu, who urges readers to treat his own finished works as "exercise books" rather than developed theories. Similarly, the report at hand should in no way be considered as the magnum opus. The limits of the social sciences cannot define the limits of the human mind nor predict the knowledge generation that may occur between readership and text, particularly where findings are applied and made relevant to the readers' own contexts. Such a readership may consider "yes, I think that too, that expresses something that I have never been able to quite capture into words" (Thomson and Walker 2010, p.69).

Cryer describes the two distinct paradigmatic positions adopted in research dissertations as "traditional" and "interpretivist" (2006, pp.76-77). The traditional approach undertakes a mathematical or statistical treatment of a question. It uncovers a truth that is grounded in logic and it offers a reliability that is based on an analysis of the present data and that should lead to dependable predictions in future events. This traditional approach cannot however explain why something is happening, particularly when living beings are involved. When an investigation compels us to question issues that are beyond assumed certainties and beyond reliable facts, a paradigmatic shift away from the traditional is required and another worldview, one of "interpretivist" enquiry is necessary (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Data gathered within the interpretivist research paradigm is primarily descriptive and although it may be quantitative at times, the emphasis is on exploration and insight rather than on experimentation (Cryer, 2006). Burgess et al. comment that such a post-positivist perspective accepts that society is really imperfect, that absolutes are difficult to

establish and that claims to knowledge are fallible, particularly in complex human situations (2006).

As Creswell notes, the end goal of knowledge work might be "social theorising ... the desire to comprehend and in some cases, transform (through praxis) the underlying orders of social life" (2007, p.27). Greene comments on the assumption that all forms of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, are partial and that research must aim to overcome the alienation of and the separation of "abstract knowledge (i.e. scientific and managerial) and practical knowledge" (2007, p.91).

The process involved in this research is therefore offered as self-reflective in that it allows readers the opportunity to explore their own ontological values through an intimate consideration of first-hand written and oral accounts from Principals' diaries and interview transcripts about their personal experiences of daily management and leadership activities. Operating as knowledge co-workers, the readership is offered the opportunity to consider "discipline-based knowledge" and to engage intellectually in the development of their own living educational theories (Scanlon, 2000). As an over-view, Creswell's model of the "philosophical assumptions with implications for practice" is provided below (2007, p.17). It considers the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological assumptions inherent in the work and summarises the researcher's position with regard to the research question, the research characteristics and the implications for practice under each heading.

Philosophical Assumptions With Implications for Practice.			
Assumption	Question	Characteristics	Implications for Practice
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	The participants in the case offer multiple realities that are both subjective and complex.	The researcher uses the words of participants from written transcripts and interviews to provide evidence of different perspectives.
Epistemological	What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?	The researcher is a co-participant in the study and is a colleague in the professional community under investigation.	The researcher is accepted by participants as an "insider", has established credentials and operates in the case context.
Axiological	What is the role of values?	The researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and that biases are present.	The researcher openly discusses the values and personal approaches that shape the narrative. Both the researcher and the co-participants influence approaches to data collection and analysis.
Rhetorical	What is the language of the research?	The researcher writes in a literary and traditional academic style using the passive voice, with qualitative terms but with limited specialised terminology or definitions.	The researcher attempts to combine an elaborate code from research reports and from published materials with the first person vernacular of co-participants' evidence to form an engaging narrative.
Methodological	What is the process of the research?	The researcher utilises a case study methodology to study the topic within its context and to present an emergent narrative for readership consideration.	The researcher utilises a body of established information, designs open-ended data gathering opportunities for new knowledge work, concentrates on particulars rather than generalisations, and allows for on-going revisions by participants.

Fig. 2 Adapted from Creswell's Philosophical Assumptions With Implications for Practice (2007, p.17)

4.4 Defining a research design

In the qualitative research paradigm researchers may undertake to explore how people understand themselves and their settings. They may investigate the underlying reasons for people's feelings or perceptions, or their experiences of what is happening (Gillham 2000). Bush defends the use of such approaches in educational settings and comments that educators "are not simply automatons carrying out routine activities with mechanical precision" (2003, p.130). Issues of "feelings" and "subjectivity" do not imply a neglect of accountability however. A high degree of rigour must underpin the exploration and the hallmarks of social scientific investigation must be clearly evident in the application of reason and sense making to the evaluation of any hypotheses or conjectures.

In this case, the "plausible rival hypotheses" that school Principals are the managers and/or the leaders of schools is examined in context, by exploring Yin's ideas of "extended networks of implications" (Yin 2009, p.vii). This approach is chosen in preference to a more positivist exploration of context independent evidence. Put simply, there is no laboratory for such an undertaking. Conclusions about Principals' management and leadership activities and about how they experience them must be generated in the field of practice by studying a wide range of experiences as they happen.

A choice of research design is therefore heavily influenced by considerations of sense making in context. The influences of philosophy in the late modern age, or in one that may in some aspects be considered as post-modern are also deserving of mention. Balancing subjectivity and objectivity in research is one such philosophical dilemma. Objectivity is "unavoidably complex and controversial (and) most contemporary thinkers regard objectivity as impossible to achieve, at least in the traditional sense of positivist science" (deRoche and deRoche 2010, p.623). That researchers would reach the same objective conclusions by examining the different working weeks of different groups of Principals is unlikely for example. It may even be unlikely that agreed

objective conclusions could be reached with any one group and a single researcher, studied one week after the next; such is the complexity of the role.

Knowledge in such contexts, as deRoche and deRoche assert, is shaped by the psychological, cultural and biological sensitivities and limitations of the observers and of the observed. Knowledge and sense making in context is also influenced by the identity construction of those involved. Clues that are extracted from research sites invariably focus on certain areas of human interest and they sometimes ignore others completely. Human description is arguably more often plausible than accurate. Sense making is social and enactive of the environment (Weick, 1995) and it must reasonably be recognized that reporting in qualitative research, in this case the self-reporting of Principals, is highly influenced by mood and circumstance. However, it is arguably these very variables that comprise the core and the essence of an investigation. Such a perspective lies more in the domain of post-modernist philosophising rather than in modernism.

Modernism typically values reason and science over faith and religion (Ahern, 2010). It envisions the future as an age in which progress is associated with quality, discipline and the achievement of merit. A modernist outlook might perceive the Principal teacher as one who has achieved a high degree of professional success. Emphases for determining success in the role would be mediated by such factors as social status within the educational community, professionalism, discipline and the achievement of what might be generally considered to be high standards. Post-modernist philosophising may be considered as a development or as a critique of modernism. Linstead (2010, p.694) explains that in post-modernism, "totalising theory is rejected in favour of local narratives and micro-politics". In other words, not all Principals or school communities may perceive the role of the Principal similarly. Perspectivism and relativism at the social level may lead one to presume that ideas of "convergence, coherence, and evolution and notions of causality are replaced by concepts of multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation, and indeterminacy" (ibid).

A post-modernist perspective of school Principals might consider them all initially as differing individuals who operate in similar occupational roles. It might emphasise a need for verstehen or deep understanding of the complex realities experienced both

collectively and individually in such a multifaceted role. Rather than researching improvement strategies or performance indicators for Principals, a post-modernist perspective might consider possibilities such as Frederick Nietzsche's argument in action, that we encounter every moment as new. Alternatively, one might investigate Heidegger's argument of a celebration of the new in daily encounters. As Linstead asserts, such a form of investigation would by necessity display a philosophical "openness to otherness".

Attempting to adopt a position therefore, guided by the principles that "there is no single absolute (knowable) truth about any object of social enquiry, only provisional truths filtered through changeable cultural frameworks" we are led to a choice of best-fit or optimal methodology rather than one definitive and laboratory-tested approach (deRoche and deRoche 2010, p.624). The over-riding factor in selecting a methodological perspective is the balancing of the advantages and limitations of a range of accepted research approaches in order to generate a foundational proof for the question at hand: How do Principal teachers manage and lead in school contexts and how do they experience the processes personally?

Initially, grounded theory is considered as a possible option. This emergent process offers the potential advantage of theory development through practice but has a significant limitation in that a broad range of management and leadership theory already exists "off-the-shelf". Narrative approaches offer the potential advantage of rich first-hand description but the sample size and the time available provides little opportunity for in-depth biography. Phenomenology offers the possibility of gaining new insights into Principals' shared understandings of their human experiences but high levels of trust are required to negotiate personal sensitivities and potential issues of confidentiality.

Ethnography, as a context-specific enquiry and as a derivation of the science of anthropology, appears to be a more likely option but the potential problems with extended observations of Principals' practices and long-term immersion into the world of the Principal's Office appears too problematic. Case study is therefore chosen as the best-fit methodology. Morais describes case study as a "rather versatile qualitative research technique because it may be aligned with any philosophical

80

stance". Within the realist philosophical stance he notes, it is regarded as having high external validity, because "the emphasis is on the synthesis rather than the measurement and on analytical factors rather than statistical generalisations" (2010, p.842).

Selecting a Methodological Perspective.	Advantages	Limitations
Grounded Theory (Sense making in context: Developing theory through practice.)	A focus on individual's experiences. An emergent process. Direct participant involvement. Moving beyond descriptions of experience in order to formulate theory.	Setting aside established "off-the-shelf" theory development. Reliance on first-person disclosure from a group of up to 31 individuals. Potential problems due to sensitivities of 'elite' participants, confidential issues and ethical considerations.
Narrative (Sense-making in detailed and sequenced story telling.)	A focus on individual's experiences. An emergent process. Direct participant involvement. Involves detailed biographical and rich life-history descriptions.	Reliance on extensive first-person disclosure. Potential limited data gathering opportunities. Generally confined to an individual or a small study group.
Phenomenology (Sense-making in the essence of the human experience.)	A focus on individual's experiences. A focus on individual's understandings. An emergent process. Direct participant involvement. Commonalities in the human experience are explored.	Somewhat theoretical in nature. High trust levels are required for access to field-contacts. This judgement-free investigation requires an in-depth practitioner understanding of the philosophical underpinnings.
Ethnography (Sense-making through cultural investigations.)	A range of experiences combines to provide a focus on the entire cultural group. A focus on individual's understandings as group members. An emergent process. Direct participant involvement. Context-specific enquiry.	Reliant on direct extended observation. Immersion could be ethically problematic. Possible sensitive and confidentiality issues. Reliant on disclosures over time from a large groups of up to 31 individuals.
Case Study (Making sense of issues explored within bounded systems.)	Multiple sources of evidence are used. A focus on individual's experiences. A focus on individual's understandings. An emergent process. Direct participant involvement. Context-specific enquiry.	The case must be explained a priori to co-participants – thereby possibly influencing the nature of the data generated. Emergent data can alter the case. Deciding on boundaries and time limits can be problematic. Generalisability, for those who seek it, may be an issue.

Fig. 3 Selecting a Methodological Perspective (Creswell 2007, pp.53-85)

Validity in such a case, it must be asserted, is based on post-positivist assumptions. Bush's definition that validity is the concept used to judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon which it intends to describe, requires elaboration (2002). Cohen et al. comment that "the suitability of the term in qualitative research is contested" (2007, p.148) while Yue proposes, "there is no easy, formulaic approach to assessing the validity in case studies" (2010, p.963). Notwithstanding such arguments, a number of writers on case study research offer practical advice on matters of validity. Swanborne proposes that the "tests, instruments, questions and observations schemes" must be designed to investigate the concepts that they are intended to measure (2010, p.36). Machi and McEvoy advise that data used in the construction of evidence must be relevant and authoritative (2009). Yue addresses face validity, noting that the study must fit within commonplace understandings of the phenomena (2010). He also draws attention to ecological validity, in that the findings must represent the lived experiences of participants, rather than a version of it. In short, as Bryman points out, "validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated in a piece of research" (2001, p.30). Generalising from the conclusions and attempting to claim a high degree of external validity in the quantitative sense is problematic, given the very nature of case study research.

As Greene notes, "It is only possible to observe from within one's own historical location; thus human inquiry is inevitably interpretive and inherently subjective. Subjectivity is not bias" (2007, p.40). Gillham describes getting "under the skin" of the matter in qualitative research in order "to explore complexities that are beyond the scope of more 'controlled' approaches" (2000, p.11). Kelchtermans et al. describe their own investigations of Principals' experiences as an "interactive and contextualised processes of sense-making in schools"; one that "aims at disentangling the complex and situated interactions between Principals thinking about themselves and the particular context they have to work in" (2011, p.93). For a broadly similar endeavor, this research is therefore undertaken and defended as a case study methodology within the qualitative research paradigm.

4.5 Methodologies and the Case Study Method

In a world that appears to be increasingly engaged with "spontaneous empiricism, casual epistemologies, theories by numbers, and ... the governmentalities of scientism" (Thomson and Walker 2010, p.70), case study research offers an alternative in which the "truth" in a situation is not grounded in statistical confidence or in mathematical logic (Cryer 2006, p.79). The "truth" in case study research he notes, has to be "a conclusion in the mind of the reader (or listener), based on the researcher's power of argument". Different recipients of the research he adds "may come to understand different 'truths'".

Case study research typically involves the use of multiple sources of evidence, without the restrictions of a priori theoretical notions, in an investigation of a phenomenon. In this case, it could be generally assumed that Principal teachers fulfill management duties and provide leadership in schools, at least according to the literature, but what exactly those duties and provisions are can only be understood by getting in there, getting hold of the data and getting to understand the context as Gillham explains (2000, p.2).

Stake originally presents case study research in education and in social science as a means of investigating people and programs for both their uniqueness and their commonality. His early explanation of a case in context offers quite a narrow interpretation of the investigation however, in that it relies as much on art as on science in determining the results. He proposes "modified generalization" in which an entirely new understanding is seldom reached. He describes such knowledge work as a "refinement of understanding" (1995, p.7) and he limits the case under investigation to the study of people or objects in bounded systems rather than processes in action.

Yin develops the potential use of case studies further and adds that while a case study can be an individual person, or "the primary unit of analysis" as he expresses it, a case can also be "some event or entity other than a single individual. Case studies have been done about decisions, programs, the implementation process, and organizational change" but always in concrete terms (2009, p.29).

Swanborn elaborates that case study may be employed as an intensive approach to study one specific instance of a phenomenon, or alternatively a handful of instances in order to study a phenomenon in-depth. Data may be collected using many sources of information but what is essential he notes, is that the each instance of the case, originating from the Latin "casus" meaning "event", "situation" or "condition," is studied in its own specific and natural context (2010, p.2). The individuals involved, or the "actors" as they are commonly known, may be persons and their interpersonal relations operating on the micro level. They may be organisations or institutions operating on a messo level or they may be larger communities or nationstates acting on a macro level.

This case aims to explore the daily experiences of 31 Principal teachers in Irish primary schools over a five-day period. It offers an opportunity for the participants to become co-researchers in the case and to build data based on their own observations of themselves and of others in the performance of their duties. It moves beyond notional or generalised investigations of management and leadership in education by uncovering the realities that are embedded in specific school contexts and in lived practices. To plan for such an undertaking is illustrated below according to Yin's model. The subject, the unit of analysis, the context, the illustrative types of theories and the case study design are made explicit:

Designing the case	
The subject or "phenomenon" under study	(a) Management (b) Leadership (c) Principals' personal perspectives
The unit of analysis	A group of 31 individual school Principals – the field contacts.
The context	The Irish primary school system
Illustrative types of theories	(A) societal theories – theories of how schools are managed and operated (B) individual theories – theories of individual leadership development.
Single case study design	Yin identifies representative typical case study design as an appropriate approach "to captures the circumstances and conditions of an everyday commonplace situation" (2009, p.48).
The analysis of data	Data analysis must be linked to the original propositions in the case in order to reflect the purpose of the initial study.

Fig. 4 Designing the Case

The preferred design is the single-case design with embedded multiple units of analysis. School management and school leadership are proposed as rival hypotheses and the case investigates individuals' practices of management and leadership and their personal perspectives of both. The study takes place in the context of a sample group of Irish primary schools.
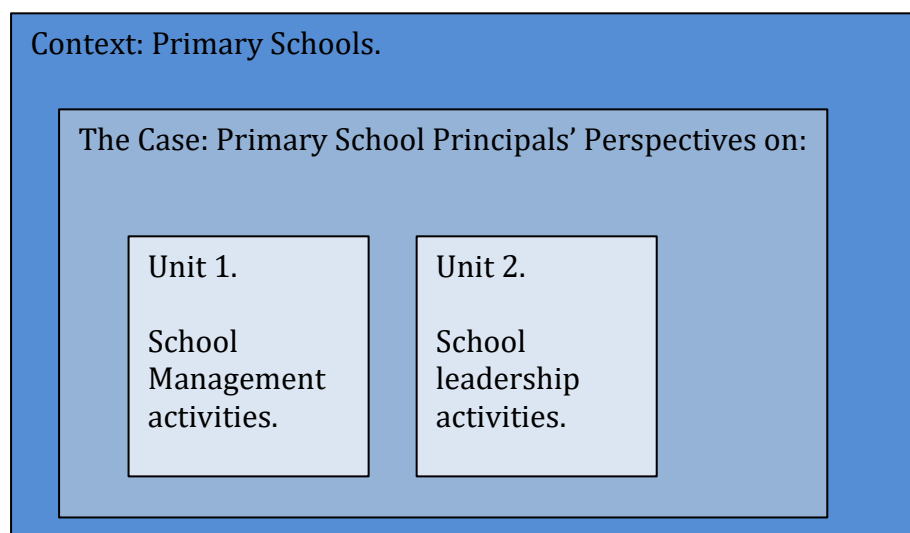
Fig. 5 A basic type of design for a case study: The single-case design with embedded multiple units of analysis (Yin 2009, p.46)

Attending to construct validity in Yin's model demands that the investigation is initiated with a clear plan to include multiple sources of evidence, from published material on school management and leadership in the initial engagement with the academic literature to context specific information in the fieldwork. "Kinds of data" and data gathering tools and processes are made explicit below using Yin's planning template:

Kinds of Data		
Background Data	Individual Data	Total System Data
- Historical literature - Academic literature - Professional literature - Studies in management - Philosophies of leadership - Philosophies of education - Research in management - Research in leadership - Studies in education - Research trends - Research outliers - The function of schooling - The role of the Principal - Effectiveness and success - School leaders' careers - School leaders' lives - What Principals do - What Principals say	- Participant's gender - Educational qualifications - Experience teaching - Experience in the Principal's role - Role category (administrative/teaching) - Contact details phone and e-mail (Held confidentially) Intermediate data - School details (Held confidential) - School gender type - School location (generalised) - School status - Staffing details (approximated) - Other relevant information - Experience sampling information on daily practices.	(A) Management Researcher-Driven Diaries - Time at work - Management of teaching and learning - Management of pupils - Management of staff - Management parents/families - Management of administration - Written reflections on daily management Semi-Structured Interviews - Reflections on personal management experiences - Reflections on the management experiences of other Principals - Reviewing the data gathering - Concluding comments (B) Leadership Researcher-Driven Diaries - Leading pupils - Leading teachers - Leading other staff - Leading parents/families - Leading others - Experiencing the day - Reflections on daily leadership Semi-Structured Interviews - Reflections on personal leadership experiences - Reflections on the leadership experiences of other Principals - Reviewing the data gathering - Concluding comments

Fig. 6 Kinds of Data (Yin 2009, p.51)

4.6 Sampling

Gillham concedes that a "case" may be difficult to define but in essence it is a unit of human activity embedded in the real world that must be investigated in its own context. Like daily management and leadership events in schools, the case exists in the "here and now" and it merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw, even when evidence of the case is abstracted and collated (2000, p.1).

Machi and McEvoy declare, "the secret to selecting any researchable interest is to isolate a particular perspective and vantage point" (2009, p.17). The first step in preparing to collect case study evidence in this case involves engaging a sufficiently large group of school Principals who will act as the primary information resource. Cohen et al. note that the "quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only on the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adapted" (2007, p.100). Furthermore, they highlight the difficulty of engaging co-researchers both generally and particularly in sensitive situations where high profile individuals, such as school Principals, may not wish to expose themselves to scrutiny. Some may feel bound by ethical confidentiality or by voluntary self censorship. Others may have neither the time nor the inclination to engage in work that does not serve their own purposes.

Judgments, the authors note, have to be made about four key factors in sampling: The sample size, representativeness, access to the sample and the sampling strategy to be used. Initially, a "volunteer sampling strategy" was considered (Cohen et al. 2007, page 116), aiming for a sample size of 10-12 Principals drawn from friends and colleagues. Due to the fact that many of this proposed volunteer sample have already participated in research project work on previous Ed.D. modules, it is decided that an over-familiarity with the group could lessen their potential as a purposive sample. A different selection of Principals might yield fresher and even richer information, particularly a selection comprised largely of strangers if possible. Fletcher and Plakoyiannaki advise, "Information rich cases are those from which the researcher

can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose and investigated phenomena of the study (2010, p.837)."

Initially then, efforts are made to engage a new set of participants using snowball sampling across two informal networks; The INTO and the IPPN. Cohen et al. report that networking is a popular technique when it is difficult to penetrate formal organizations or professional groups (2007, p.122). Gaining access to the network involves a four-stage process: Initially an "approach" is made and access is attempted through the researcher's membership of both organisations and through the researcher's involvement as a school Principal in various sub-committees. Secondly, "interest" is expressed through first-hand personal contact and by explaining the nature of the research. Third, a "desire" is sought by offering the potential benefits of participation. Last, a "sale" is secured if participants agree to engage. This final step can often be assisted by a sense of security when the researcher and the contacts are known and trusted members of the same "snowball". This particular method of generating a sample group proves to be almost an entire failure however and after much e-mailing, internal advertising and leaflet dropping, only five participants are engaged.

Fink describes convenience samples as "participants who were selected because they are available" and cluster sampling as "naturally occurring groups" where "the population is divided into batches" (2010, pp.91-93). In a process described by Cohen et al. as "outcropping", the researcher then begins targeting evening meetings of newly appointed Principals in the local education center and various PDST in-service training days for Principals on School Self-Evaluation (2007, p.121). This was done with the approval of the organisers and information leaflets about the purpose and scale of the research were designed, printed and distributed at the meetings; all however to little or no avail. At this point, with few if any other options, a "volunteering" strategy was again employed, but this time in a different manner and with quite unexpected results (Cohen et al. 2007, p.114).

The researcher e-mailed an informal daily chat and blogging-style discussion forum through the IPPN head office and the message was forwarded directly to the desks of over 80% of the country's primary school Principals. The message was short, offered

little information about the project but was written as an appeal from a colleague who was desperate for help in order to finish a Thesis. Within two days, a groundswell of collegial support and/or altruism resulted in over 20 replies in the inbox and it was this group, consisting almost entirely of strangers that provided the bulk of the research sample in the coming months. While the sample is in no sense random and should not be conceived as such in case study design, its composition and size offered a considerable and unexpected potential for new knowledge generation; a potential that far exceeded the researcher's original expectations.

4.7 Sensitive Research

In case study research, Migliore describes the concept of "native point of view" as the understanding that "individuals or groups at the centre of ethnographic case studies have their own ways of seeing, understanding, and experiencing reality" (2010, p.596). An emic or insider's point of view is critical therefore in ensuring any degree of access to information. Similarly, Lave and Wenger's theory of a "community of practice" is regularly cited. It is defined as "a set of relations amongst persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (1991, p.98). It may be reasonable to speculate that the process of researching school Principals is in itself a highly sensitive undertaking. As Gillham notes, "in an institution like a school… people may be suspicious or uncomfortable about being questioned" (2005, p.4). Cohen et al. define "sensitive educational research" as any research that "potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are involved or have been involved in it" (2007, p.120). Potential consequences for the participants or for other people involved as a result of personal or professional disclosures may prove to be an impediment. Similarly, any perceived intrusion or a fear of scrutiny or exposure would most likely lead to an artificial interpersonal dynamic in which the negotiated order that underlies everyday interactions would be distorted.

The process of engaging Principals in the study and in eliciting data of optimal quality is complicated therefore by a number of factors. Firstly, Principals operate in the public arena and "answer to many publics" during the course of their work (Janesick 2010, p.52). This demands a high degree of transparency in any approaches to data gathering. Secondly, Principals engage in a fluid but constant process of decision-making and daily problem solving, mostly in inter-personal settings. O' Leary notes that "problems are amazingly complex things. What might appear straightforward at first glance can have a plethora of complexity hidden right below the surface" (2005, p.11). It might be reasonable to assume therefore that alternate realities may exist between public and personal processes and between surface dilemmas and murky undercurrents, as one attempts to research beyond theories of "observed regularities" and to incorporate something of the unobservable human dimension into the data (Bryman 2001, p.5).

Such a humanist perspective, one that is concerned with describing and understanding the experiences of Principals at work in their schools, builds on the work of researchers such as Gunter (2001, 2012), Ribbins (1994, 2003) and Sugrue (2003, 2005). Sociologically, the work is underpinned by the thinking of Bourdieu, whose concepts of "habitus", "field" and "cultural capital" offer a linguistic mechanism by which the study of the Principal may legitimately probe beyond that of the Office, status or positional responsibility of the role, to attempt to capture the individual identities of those involved. By examining what Sugrue refers to as, "the water we swim in" (2005, p.47), from the sometimes fast-paced currents of rapid decision making to the stagnation of form-filling and beureaucracy, the complex life experiences of Principals may be elucidated.

O' Leary advises that researching in potentially sensitive and problematic circumstances, such as Principals' offices, "is something you simply can't go off and do" however (2005, p.18). In planning to successfully undertake the task one must consider issues of trust and confidentiality. Then, the development of realistic research approaches must follow; approaches that embody logical and practical methodological designs and that are grounded in ethically responsible theories and techniques. On trust and "confidentiality", Cohen et al. clarify that although the researcher knows the co-participants' personal details and can readily identify each

set of data, a clear written and verbal undertaking is given that no such information will be made public at any stage (2007, p.65). In the case of this research, confidentiality among the participants is also ensured so that no participating Principal knows the identity of any other Principal involved. This caveat is made quite explicit from the beginning and it adds to the potential value of the process in terms of generating somewhat sensitive and highly personal disclosures. O' Leary (2005) addresses issues of ethics, of informed consent and of the responsible management of the process by the primary researcher. Participation in this research is at all times voluntary and risk-free. Every conscious effort is made to avoid potential harm to or exposure of participants. Identities were purposefully deleted in all feedback documentation, crude report categories are designed to replace incidental details and micro-aggregation is employed to concentrate the focus of the data on the general behaviours of the average person in preference to an in-depth treatment of any one individual in the study.

4.8 Initial Fieldwork Considerations

Trattford and Leshem advice Doctorate candidates to provide a technical description of the research with "very detailed accounts of the methods" used in the data collection (2008, p.46). Cryer comments that it should be clear to the reader that the evidence has been "assiduously collected, compiled and reviewed, with alternative perspectives given credence and weight, and attributed suitably to origin" (2006, p.80). In professional Doctorates in particular, Smith advises the study of the "particular" rather than the "universal" and he notes that the investigation must embody "critical" or "higher level intellectual thinking, reasoning and analysis imbued with reflection" (2009, p.34). Such an undertaking must demonstrate originality in the construction of an independent argument, analysis, question or viewpoint.

Smith utilises Kuhn's (1996) definition of originality as an activity that is "bespoke, unique and individual," one that challenges and shifts the prevailing theoretical norms in particular paradigms and disciplines. Practically, Cryer discerns originality in terms of the application of new approaches, improved research techniques and a critical and in-depth exploration of a topic area in the field of study (2000).

Thomson and Walker emphasise the "search for understanding" in Doctorate research work. Understanding, they note, "involves the construction of ideas in a framework" with a strong conceptual foundation. "The researcher is both the consumer and purveyor of concepts, with the successful negotiations of transactions being dependent upon the clarity of communication" (2010, p.86). Scott et al. (2004) describe the University's responsibility in awarding the Doctorate as ensuring that the researcher has ventured beyond the current ways of thinking and behaving by developing and demonstrating appropriate dispositions and evidence of reflective capital. New knowledge work that is both original and critical, has the potential to change practitioners' approaches in how they think and consequently how they act in their professional roles. The research operates in effect as a dialogue or conversation between those who participate in it and others working in the field that engage as a readership.

The audit trail that follows in this section attempts to demonstrate "proof of a rigourous research design" (Fink 2010, p.144). Specifically it attempts to provide evidence of Yin's three principles of data collection (2009): Firstly, multiple sources of evidence have been employed to strengthen "converging lines of inquiry" in order to draw conclusions that are convincing and accurate. The 31 Principals involved will contribute a range of data that is focused specifically on daily occupational activities and on their personal perceptions and experiences of them. A second principle is that the case study database is assembled as a comprehensive and readily retrievable source of information. In this case, purpose-made researcher-driven diaries operate as the main data-generating tool and the completed diaries are available for review in the appendices. The information provided in the diaries is supported by data from semi-structured interviews with the participants and samples of three such interview transcripts are also available in the appendices. These interviews take place after a period of time when the contents of the hand-written diaries are re-typed by the

primary researcher and are returned in an anonymous format to all members of the group.

Yin's third principle of maintaining a chain of evidence implies that the information presented to an external observer must be obviously reliable and that the conclusions derived are clearly related to the initial research question. This triangulation, or the obtaining of a "true" position (Wolfram Cox and Hassard, 2010) is attempted by collecting data at different times and from different sources, by using multiple methods of data collection and by employing different theories to interpret the data set. At the mid-point for example, the Principals compare, contrast and validate the data and their input is recorded and analysed as a measure of the "true" position established.

The case study is proposed in essence as a single case with a "revelatory" rationale given that The Principal's Office could reasonably be considered as a site of research that is difficult for many to access (Yin 2009, p.48). New knowledge generation may well serve to reveal aspects of the Office to the participants themselves as well as to outsiders who are interested in the matters at hand. O' Leary (2005) advises that researching real world problems should be undertaken as a collaborative process "with" others rather than "on" others and she recommends that optimum participation is achieved through minimising the distance between the researcher and local stakeholders. Scott et al. offer similar advice as novice researchers enter established communities of practice. In order to gain access to credible and worthwhile data, the importance of personal acceptance into the arena cannot be over-emphasised. The researcher must be conversant with the language, with the behaviour registers and with specific repertoires of meaning from the precise setting. "Participants form close relationships and develop idiosyncratic ways of engaging with one another that outsiders cannot easily enter. They have detailed and complex understanding of their enterprise as they define it, which outsiders may not share" (2004, p.54).

In case study research and in educational research in particular, this perspective is frequently referred to as "over-rapport". Roberts comments that investigating the world of personal experiences is not the work of "disinterested researchers" and he highlights the benefits that insider expertise and intimacy may bring to bear in order

to add to the believability of findings (2010, p.644). In this case study on the work of Principal teachers, it is important to consider throughout that the primary researcher declares his position to co-participants as a practicing colleague with 14 years experience in the field. This undeniably shapes the ensuing narrative and the reality that is exposed. Continual assurances of confidentiality and deep levels of collegial inter-personal empathy and professional understanding offer opportunities for the possibility of revelations that prove highly worthwhile. The ontological value of such narratives extends beyond the form and content of the written word to articulate the reality of social structures and the identities of those who work within them (Harling Stalker, 2010).

This "native point of view" (Migliore, 2010), employed in the study of a group of 31 Principals by a fellow Principal-researcher, carefully balances forms of scientific investigation and the intimacy of an insider's perspective. It adopts the ethnomethodological notion of 'mutual elaboration' (Pye, 2005) whereby actions are deemed to only have meaning in their specific setting. Management, leadership and Principals' experiences of them are examined in the situated contexts of individual school communities and within the limits of local shared understanding. Limitations of generalizability must therefore be acknowledged: Yin notes, "that case studies, like experiments are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes (2009, p.15).

Gunter advises against forms of educational research that treat classrooms exclusively like the mechanical "black box" and she advocates putting relationships at the centre of the learning. "If we do not take the lead in developing sophisticated accountability and productivity measures, others with less sophistication will impose simplistic measures upon us" she notes (2001, p.140). Sugrue comments that for each individual Principal, as for each individual child, the experience of school is uniquely personal and involves "flesh and blood realities" (2005, p.181). Capturing such realities through the written and spoken words of Principals themselves is essentially the aim of this research.

4.9 The Choice of Primary Research Instrument

Ideally in a case study setting, the data generated by first-hand observation forms the foundations of the entire undertaking. In some cases or circumstances, the observation process in a case study can be described as quite "overwhelming" in its intensity (Gillham 2000, p.47). On the other extreme however, some cases offer few occasions for direct observation and it may be difficult, if not impossible, to organise. Such was the case in this research where a number of situational difficulties arise. In the first instance, the primary researcher is a serving Principal with daily duties in the workplace. Attending at the workplaces of others is therefore not feasible. Notwithstanding the geographical difficulties of arranging and carrying out 31 site visits and observations, the prospect of shadowing any of the participants for any period of time would prove to be ethically sensitive; given that most were strangers with no inherent bond of personal trust. Furthermore, the first-hand observation of Principals in sensitive and oftentimes confidential work circumstances is not included in the research approval received from the DCU Ethics Committee. Investigating Principals as "reflective practitioners" therefore and attempting to provide information that captures the naturalistic context in a descriptive and interpretive manner necessitates the choice of a method other than that of direct observation (Schon, 1983).

Morrison offers the use of diaries as a possible "substitute" for observation. He cites examples where researchers have used diaries as an "observational log, maintained by subjects which can then be used as the basis for intensive interviewing" (2002, p.222). Such a format is described by Bryman as a "researcher-driven" diary and he deems it to be "a relatively underused method" in social science research (2001, pp.136-137). It may he adds, be employed by those specifically interested in precise estimates of different kinds of behaviour, it may be operated in a similar manner to self-completion questionnaires and most importantly he agrees, it may be used as an alternative method of data collection in place of direct observation. In qualitative research, "structured diaries" may assist in an ethnographic exploration of

circumstances to which other individual researchers may have restricted access due to the circumstances or simply due to the time restrictions involved (Corti 1993; Sullivan 1996). Morrison considers that diarists offer the view that "research informants are in especially advantageous positions to record aspects of their lives and work" (2002, p.218). The use of personal logs and reports he notes, make available "insider" information that might not otherwise be available or visible to the researcher or consequently to the readership audience.

Bryman advises an open format that is similar to a self-completion questionnaire, noting that both qualitative and quantitative information may be obtained, as appropriate to the study (2001). Typically respondents might use researcher-driven diaries to estimate the amount of time devoted to a particular activity within the working day and they could also offer a long-handed note or description about some aspect of the work. In Sullivan's research, diaries are considered significant in that they are used to investigate not only how couples divide household labour but also how they find enjoyment at differing tasks (1996). More recently, Camburn et al. utilise researcher-driven diaries to investigate school Principals' daily activities.

When used in parallel with direct observation and with experience-sampling instruments, researcher-driven diaries are found to present highly reliable and worthwhile information: "Daily logs appear to be a viable means of measuring important aspects of Principal practice and overcoming measurement errors associated with one-time surveys that are common in leadership research" (2010, p.708). The authors advise that participation rates with single surveys may be low due to constraints on Principals' time. Significantly low response rates to such surveys may lead to invalid inferences from the data and furthermore, single self-report surveys that are completed a long time after an event, may yield skewed or inaccurate information.

The advantage that researcher-driven diaries possess over surveying is that they are capable of capturing multiple instances of a variety of activities close to the time of an event and in a low-cost instrument that utilises the voice of the respondent directly. Significantly, if such events occur over time during the completion of the diary, patterns of behaviour may be investigated to build a more complete picture and to

generate a more informed perspective.

A pilot researcher-driven diary was used in previously unpublished research by the researcher in module ES605 of the DCU PDPE1. A daily log of the activities and attitudes of 12 school Principals investigated the potential dichotomy in theory and in practice between feelings of teacher vocation and attitudes to organizational management in decision-making processes. A two-page per day layout of the original pilot is included in Appendix A.

Positive feedback from participants indicates that a double-page entry per day with a Fellowes 8mm comb binding makes the document quite manageable and user-friendly. The paper quality of the textured Conqueror 100 g/m2 cream pages adds to a pleasing visual impact but overall, the document is found to be very cluttered and too content-heavy. The repetition of long questions and a limited opportunity for personal responses, result in a number of participants simply giving up and failing to complete the process. In summary, the pilot required improvements with regard to clarity, ease of completion and formatting (Morrison 2002, p.229). As recommended by Bryman, the pilot in 2011 was not carried out on the same people who would comprise the final sample group in 2013 (2001). The entire revision of the document was undertaken with a number of key considerations in mind as explained below (Appendix B).
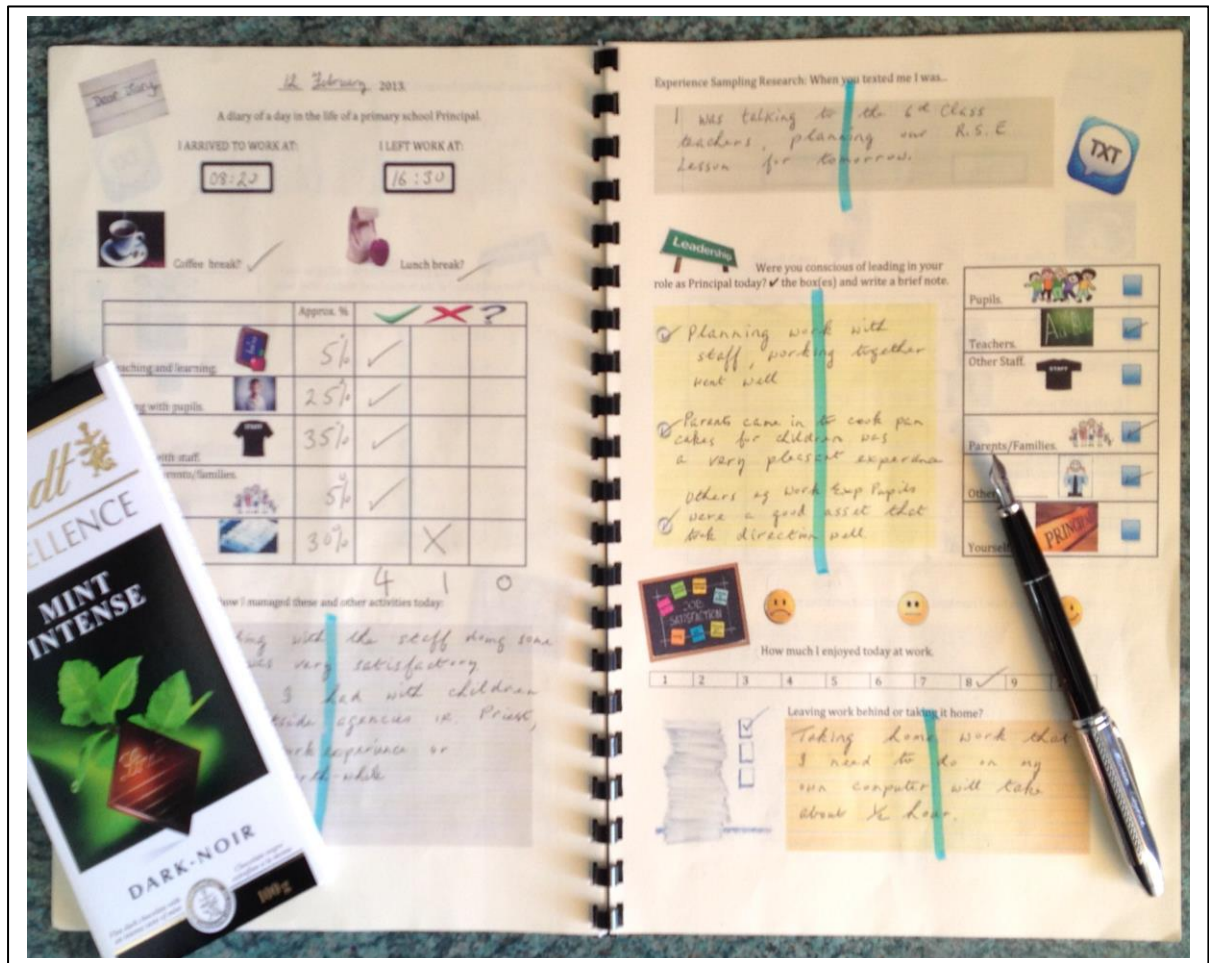
Fig. 7 The researcher-driven diary format 2013.

The research question is clearly stated in the document in plain English and the University logo and permissions are available in the introduction. A section on personal and professional information follows, thereby giving a more personalised context to the diary. This information also proves valuable in building the case data. All ambiguous terminology and references to academic work are removed. Closed-response surveying is decreased and the option for more open responses is increased considerably. A visual ploy to use images of sticky post-its and copybook pages aims to make the layout more appealing and to encourage quick note-taking responses. This, in general is quite successful (Appendix B).

Clear and simple headings are adapted from the IPPN Principals' Information Management System (PIMS). It is likely that the PIMS document is familiar to the majority of participants (2010). The monochrome format is replaced by a full-colour print and a page of instructions is provided in advance of the first entry. In order to optimise the rate of return across the entire group of 30 participants, it is decided to limit the number of entries to five days, corresponding to one working school-week in situations where Principals commence the diary on a Monday and follow through on each subsequent day. In some cases it is reported that Principals chose not to complete the diary on consecutive days but in all cases a 100% completion is ensured on return. Such a time-scale fits with Bell's recommendation and balances the "intrusion" into the participants' working days with the "trade off" of assisting in the research. Bell states unambiguously that a five-day diary might be considered to be the "optimal length" (1987, p.153).

O' Leary's advices are useful in the designing of the data gathering tool. Posing the same questions day after day, allows for the generation of data that provides descriptive information and explanatory information. It also allows for the possible analysis of trends in individual and group behaviours and attitudes. O' Leary also highlights the potential problem of getting people to respond: "Some will not want to tell you what they've been doing – they may think it's none of your business. Others simply couldn't be bothered" (2005, p.178). Greasing the wheels as she describes and gaining a commitment for an optimum completion rate requires persistence and thoroughness in the fieldwork.

Initially, after a verbal commitment by phone to engage in the research, the participants receive a package containing the researcher-driven diary, a stamped addressed envelope and a specially commissioned pen, designed by the researcher and sourced from www.penseurope.com for the purpose. Participants also receive sachets of herbal teas, cappuccino coffees and Lindt Excellence chocolate. This is sent with the documentation initially and again on each subsequent Friday for the following three weeks in a process described by Cohen et al. as a series of "polite reminders" (2007, p.223). The cost of the postage, the materials and the colour printing of the bound booklets on high quality paper exceeds €500.00. This is covered through a bursary for educational research awarded by the Irish National Teachers'

Organisation (INTO) and PrimEd publishers to the researcher for the purposes of the project.

Hinds (2000) and Cohen et al. (2007) offer advice on the use of financial incentives with a view to increasing the rate of return from participants. In this instance, while no personal financial reward is offered to participants, a pledge of €1 per day per participant is made by the primary researcher as a charitable donation to St. Francis Hospice, a hospital in Dublin 5 that provides palliative care to patients with advanced diagnoses of cancer. It is difficult to assess whether this or any of the other ideas employed actually adds to the success rate of the overall return. As Cohen et al. comment, it may equally be the "perceived importance of the topic… the personal interest in the research… a personal liking for or empathy with the researcher (and/or) feelings of duty" that influence a successful return (2007, p.224). What is important however, in terms of the research and the potential to make sense of the data, is that the optimum rate of return is achieved in the allotted time.

4.10 The Structure of the Researcher-Driven Diary

In relation to survey research, Hinds offers advice that might reasonably be applied to researcher-driven diaries also (2000). She comments that instruments should be user-friendly and should clearly outline the purpose of the study from the beginning. The opening pages therefore offer a brief explanation of how entries may be recorded (Appendix B).

The cover page offers evidence of affiliation to the School of Education Studies at Dublin City University and proclaims the document to be private and confidential. Yin argues the point on anonymity in case study generally and claims that identities of participants should be disclosed, albeit within the constraints for protecting human subjects. Identification, he argues, makes the case easier to review and easier to validate. In this case however, there can be no suspicion of deception in the research

process as anonymity is not an issue. At all times, the researcher and the University authorities have access to the identities and all content is traceable to its source.

Confidentiality on the other hand is the key safeguard offered to participants, and while data can be authenticated at all times by the University, no names or personally identifying features are disclosed in any other manner. The cover page also offers a brief checklist whereby the primary researcher can monitor the return of the diaries. Pages two and three offer, in plain language, a background and rationale for the research. They provide evidence of ethical approval for the work and of bursary support from the INTO.

Page four commences the data gathering for the case. It concentrates on the participant's own details; their name, gender, academic qualification, length of service as a teacher, length of service as a Principal and other information that they may feel is relevant in this regard. Page five requests information about the school involved; the name, address, contact details, enrolment numbers and gender, school type, number of staff and any other information that the participant may deem to be relevant. Page six offers some practical examples of how information may be included in the following sections.

The first page of the daily two-page diary entry begins with a recommendation of Hinds that information sought need not be complex (2000). The times at which Principals arrive to school in the morning and leave the premises later in the afternoon can be used to yield even more in-depth information, particularly when talking to them in follow-up interviews. Similarly, the frequency and length of coffee breaks and lunch breaks taken over the course of the week may prove valuable in initiating discussion about the more personal aspects of the role. Management activities are the focus of the remainder of this page and in a closed response section, Principals are asked to estimate approximately how much of their day is given to managing teaching and learning activities, dealing with pupils, working with staff, meeting parents/families or attending to administration tasks. An open response section, designed for effect in the format of a torn copybook page is available for handwritten responses or comment about the day's management activities. Responses to this

section vary from quite short, 10-15 words responses for some, to quite long, over 100+ words for others.

The second page of the daily two-page entry provides an opportunity for experience sampling research. During each day of the period of the study, the Principals receive a text message by mobile phone from the primary researcher at a random time. On returning to the diary later that day, the Principal is asked to report on the activity in which he/she was directly engaged at the time of the text. The work of Lemmens et al. proves interesting in this regard (1988). In the weekly recall and the daily estimates of alcohol consumption among Dutch participants, they demonstrate that daily self-reporting yields estimates of alcohol consumption that were 22% on average higher than those based on end-of-week recall measures in the study. They cite further research that clearly indicates how time lapses between the occurrence of events and the recording of such events leads to a distortion of the facts, particularly in settings that are stressful or where people may choose to put things out of their minds.

Camburn et al. also demonstrate the effectiveness of experience sampling techniques but their research, much like this research, examines the working day of the Principal teacher (2010). They note that self-reporting strategies may often induce reporting errors associated with brief or non-continuous events and that quite meaningful activities can often be excluded from Principals' diaries if recording is left until the end of the school day. Experience sampling therefore, built purposefully but unobtrusively into the diary may prove valuable.

The remainder of the second page is devoted to leadership tasks and to how the Principal experiences the working day personally. Principals are asked to reflect upon their perceived leadership activities during the day and to indicate on a diagram if they feel that they have led pupils, teachers, other staff, parents/families or others. There is an option to include any reflections on leadership of self also and an open-response section allows for comments. Principals then score their enjoyment of the working day on a scale of one to ten. Finally, there is an option to comment on whether work is taken home or left behind in the school.

As the research period draws to a close after day five, there is an additional section in which participants may offer further observations or personal comments on management and leadership. Once again, in order to elicit a response, this is presented very purposefully in an attractive format that encourages at least the briefest of notes on images of sticky post-its. The booklet concludes with a final open-response section in which the Principals are asked if they could describe the experience of walking a mile in their shoes to others. They are thanked for their involvement and are offered a copy of the collated responses of all 30 Principals' should they wish to read them. They are also asked to participate in a short telephone interview in which they will reflect upon their own experiences and on their impressions of the experiences of others in the project.

The purpose of the activity, in generating such a body of data through the Principals' diaries, is not to construct a definitive account of school management or leadership. Silverman cautions against such an approach. He also cautions against the tendency to wrap a case into "a good story" with "speed and action" and a "satisfying ending" (2007, pp.26-27). Instead, the case presents an incomplete tale or a snapshot in real-time within a continually unfolding story of school life that involves actual people. In many ways, aspects of leadership, or of what we each understand and signify to ourselves linguistically as leadership, are bound up in the subconscious and cannot be analysed and summarized using only conscious forms of expression. While the data offer opportunities for structured analysis, in many respects they simply speaks for themselves and make sense in the consciousness of the readership. Thomson and Walker assert, "research is necessarily a heuristic endeavour, the outcome of which cannot be prespecified. When we asked open questions, we cannot presume to know the answers" (2010, p.85). Through the Principals' diaries we are offered a unique insight into a conversation that sets out to conceptualise leadership in schools and to reconcile theory and practice in the reality of new knowledge work. The aim as Freire describes is reflection upon action: "a conscious objectification of their own and others' actions through investigation, contemplation and comment" (1972, p.67).

4.11 Follow-up Interviews

When Principals' handwritten diaries are returned to the primary researcher, they are typed and collated and all of the data for the case, both qualitative and quantitative, are amassed into a single 110 page spiral bound volume (Appendix C). Tables of figures indicate how long Principals spend in school, how often they avail of coffee and lunch breaks, how they manage time and how they report the experiences as either positive or negative. Leadership is examined similarly and incidences of individual leadership experiences are tallied and averaged. The document provides an overview in confidential terms, of participants' general details.

Principals may choose to read their own feedback and to compare it specifically with others of the same gender, length of service or school type. An opportunity for reflection is provided, particularly in the long-handed transcriptions and qualitative responses (Appendix C). As with the researcher-driven diaries, particular attention is paid to the quality of the presentation in the feedback document. A variety of fonts and colours is considered and the opinions of critical friends are sought before decisions are made about the final format. The document is printed in full colour on Conqueror A4 100g/m2 high white textured paper and it is bound with Fellowes 14mm binding combs for ease of access to the text within. Graphics and topically humourous content are inserted.

Bryman observes that the collection of data in researcher-driven diaries is sometimes "supplemented by a personal interview in which the diarist is asked questions about such things as what he or she meant by certain remarks" (2001, p.137). Janesick defines qualitative interviewing as "a meeting of two persons to exchange information and seek ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic" (2010, p.45). Hinds concurs that one-to-one research interviewing is used "when more in-depth information is required or when the issue under investigation would benefit from development or clarification" (2000, p.49). Interviewing Principal teachers falls into the category described by Gillham as the "elite" interview; one in which the interviewee "is

usually an expert person or person in authority who is capable of giving answers and insight that offer a comprehensive grasp on what is being researched" (2000, p.63). Such interviews he notes are relatively unstructured in order to allow the extent of the interviewee's knowledge, authority and experience to determine the course and flow of the interview.

Following participants' receipt of the collated diary information, the primary researcher initiates contact by phone with all participants to arrange a suitable time for a "one-shot" feedback interview (Charmaz 2002, p.682). It is decided to conduct the interviews by telephone in as open a manner as possible and to allow for a wide range of individual interpretations and responses. Bryman recommends telephone interviewing for a number of key reasons (2001). The remoteness of the interviewer in sensitive exchanges may actually aid the prospect of disclosure as the likelihood of interference from body language cues is removed, particularly with student or novice interviewers. Cohen et al. comment that telephone interviews avoid "counter-transference" whereby hints of judgement, support, condemnation or other aspects of the interviewer's own human bias go unnoticed (2007, p.130). In this research, telephone interviewing is chosen as the preferred method mainly due to factors of time and the geographic location of participants.

Yin asserts that interviews are essential sources of case study information and that they should be employed as a form of "guided conversations rather than structured queries" (2009, p.106). He suggests that interviews should pursue the line of inquiry in the case but should also encompass a friendly and non-threatening conversation about the human affairs and the behaviours that are central to the events. Burgess et al. (2006, p.72) describe such a tactic as giving the interviewees "the latitude to talk about themselves and issues that connect with their own individual and unique experiences". While Yin declares that the use of a recording device is determined by the researcher's personal preference and that careful listening is paramount, other authors on qualitative research methods advise that the interview should be recorded in order to "correct the natural limitations of our memories and of the intuitive gloss was that we might place on what people say in interviews" (Bryman 2001, p.321). Most agree that recording also allows for thorough and repeated examination, accurate transcription and a more comprehensive and reliable data analysis.

Interviewing school Principals is becoming an increasingly popular method of investigating aspects of school management and leadership in the academic world, particularly in the vein of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis' work on the art and science of leadership portraiture (1997). Recording and interpreting the experiences and perspectives of Principals in their own voices through a phenomenological lens and treating Principals as active co-participants and collaborators in knowledge-making places such researchers squarely in the constructivist domain epistemologically. Considering Principals not as passive conduits to accessing knowledge but as meaning-makers and as knowledge co-workers, whose "speech events" can hold importance both narratively and contextually, imbues their role with a powerful significance (Gubrium and Holstein 2002, p.83).

A trawl of recent Irish University research yields the following notable results among Master Theses: O' Mahony combines surveys of 100 Principals with four face-to-face follow-up interviews to explore the perceived professional development needs of recently appointed Principals (2003). Flynn offers a similar study and surveys 44 Principals with three follow-up interviews to assess Principals' attitudes to the effectiveness of leadership development programmes (2005). Ryan combines surveys of 62 Principals with 8 telephone and e-mail follow-up interviews to investigate why so many promoted leaders in education simply 'hand back the keys" and relinquish their positions (2003). Among the Doctorate Dissertations, Cuddihy employs a mixed-methods research approach to study the context and needs of aspiring secondary school Principals (2012) and Ummanel traces the career paths of primary school Principals in Ireland, Cyprus and Malta (2012).

In this research, some of the Principals initiate a dialogue directly upon receipt of an initial phone-call and the interviews are conducted there and then. Others request time to read the contents of the diaries more carefully and prefer a callback option at a later time. While no Principal declines to be interviewed, some are unavailable for interview during the following months despite a number of reminders. Their interview responses to the collated diary are therefore not included. Of those interviews that take place, all are conducted by phone and the experience is very positive and worthwhile. This is assisted somewhat by the collegial bond or shared "membership

categorization" that both the interviewer and the respondent are primary school Principal teachers (Baker 2002, p.783).

All interviewees give permission for the conversations to be digitally recorded and transcribed for data analysis. All phone calls are made from the privacy of the Principal's office in the researcher's school, the interviews are held on speakerphone and a Zoom H1 Dictaphone is used to record the audio signal. No other individuals are present during the recording or during the subsequent transcription process. The researcher produces the transcripts using "Dragon Dictate for Mac", a voice-to-text computer programme. The work is not outsourced and no third party is involved. A final typed transcript, representing the entire interview content, is prepared without "tidying up" and with a clear emphasis on "what was said" rather than "how it was said" (Poland 2002, p.634).

Janesick's categories of interviewing questions offer specific guidance for the process (2010, p.46). "Basic descriptive" questions prompt reflection: What are your impressions of your own findings or of those of others? "Follow up or clarifying" questions prompt action: Could you add anything more about school management or leadership? "Structural/paradigmatic" questions prompt evaluation: What are your impressions of the qualitative/quantitative findings from the other Principals? "Closing" questions consider future action: Would you like to offer advice to prospective Principals about walking a mile in your shoes?

The structure of the interview format reflects Gubrium and Holstein's interpretation of Glasser and Strauss's analytic strategy and theoretical formulation that knowledge and meaning is constructed from the ground up. While it is not proposed strictly as "grounded theory", it is acknowledged that multiple and emergent realities may be derived from the data of individual diaries and interviews, or from the data set collectively. The information, as with Dubin's conversations with Principals is offered as an unfolding story, as "the irrefutable and pure reality of the experience" and not as a conclusion as such (2006, p.86).

In this regard, aspects of life-story interviewing invariably enter the research investigation as participants offer a variety of anecdotes during the conversations.

Atkinson notes, "a life story narrative highlights the most important influences, experience, circumstances, issues, themes, and lessons of a lifetime" (2002, p.125). Gillham however is cautious and stresses the necessity for methodological rigour in collecting and analyzing such information; "this does not mean that we get lost, as researchers, in a welter of subjectivity, rather, that we have to consider our role of this dimension" (2005, p.6). Overall, the details of the Principals interviewed, of the audiofiles and of the durations of the interviews are included below:

Interview Schedule				
Principal	**Interviewed**	**Audio File**	**Duration hrs:mins:secs**	**Transcribed & Coded**
1	5th June 2013	Zoom 26	00:24:10	Yes
2	20th May 2013	Zoom 04	00:17:30	Yes
3	No	No	No	No
4	No	No	No	No
5	24th May 2013	Zoom 14	00:31:38	Yes
6	21st May 2013	Zoom 08	00:25:05	Yes
7	20th June 2013	Zoom 35	00:33:27	Yes
8	31st May 2013	Zoom 16	00:42:00	Yes
9	15th May 2013	Zoom 03	00:23:10	Yes
10	10th June 2013	Zoom 33	00:29:03	Yes
11	13th June 2013	Zoom 34	00:38:45	Yes
12	5th June 2013	Zoom 25	00:29:34	Yes
13	6th June 2013	Zoom 31	00:22:28	Yes
14	No	No	No	No
15	20/21st May 2013	Zoom 07	00:22:17	Yes
16	No	No	No	No
17	30th May 2013	Zoom 15	01:20:11	Yes
18	13th May 2013	Zoom 18	00:17:32	Yes
19	No	No	No	No
20	21st May 2013	Zoom 06	00:58:42	Yes
21	No	No	No	No
22	No	No	No	No
23	10th June 2013	Zoom 32	00:24:11	Yes
24	No	No	No	No
25	23rd May 2013	Zoom 12	00:46:47	Yes
26	24TH May 2013	Zoom 0013	01:00:25	Yes
27	No	No	No	No
28	10th July 2013	Deleted	No	No
29	No	No	No	No
30	4th July 2013	Deleted	No	No
31	14th May 2013	Zoom 21	00:44:50	Yes
Total	**21 Interviews**	**19 Files**	**11:08:27**	**March 2014**

Fig. 8 Interview schedule

110

4.12   Ethics

Smith asserts that "ethical practice and ethical research should underpin professional doctorate study" and especially so when the research aims to explore and develop professional practice (2009, p.144). William adds that etymologically, "ethics" implies both custom and character in research processes (2010, p. 258). The following section aims therefore to explain the customary "dos and don'ts" of verifiable University ethical guidelines and to explore the somewhat more unexaminable character and underlying philosophies of ethics upon which research may be based.

Customary ethical practices are generally determined by a sense of non-maleficence and University approval to undertake a study such as this is granted on the understanding that the researcher will abide by the terms of a written submission that guarantees informed consent, a respect for privacy and assurances against deception and any real or potential harm to participants (Bryman, 2001). While it is not possible to identify all of the circumstances under which such conditions may be maintained in social science research, a number of precautions are mandatory.

The "cost/benefit ratio" described by Cohen et al, whereby the benefits to the research community is balanced against potential harm to participants, is weighted entirely in favour of participants in this undertaking (2007, p.51). In researching the activities and experiences of Principals therefore, the communal codes of educational research studies determine that, at no time can there be any consideration of an "affront to dignity, embarrassment, loss of trust and social relations, loss of autonomy and self-determination and lowered self-esteem" (ibid, p.52).

The researcher maintains the participants' identities in the strictest of confidentially. This is ensured by deleting personal and geographic identities, by employing crude reporting categories and by the micro-aggregation of details, which therefore removes any potential threat of identity exposure from the transcribed materials (ibid, p.65). Participants are given the opportunity at all times to withdraw their participation and/or their data, should they so wish. Significantly, the process does not involve

children or communities at risk and is undertaken as a low-risk study (Appendix B). No intimate or potentially discrediting information is sought. There is no risk of harm or exposure to physical or mental stress. Contributions are voluntary, every effort is made to minimize intrusion and there is no prospect of coercion or manipulation. The purposes and boundaries of the research are clearly explained and maintained throughout (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). It is made clear to participants that the findings of the study will be available as Doctorate research through the University and in other appropriate settings. At no time will the identities of participants be made available, except to University examiners for the purpose of accreditation at a viva voce.

Apart from customary practices, the character of ethical research must also be addressed at Doctorate level. Bryman notes a wide range ethical stance in social science research from universalism where ethical precepts should never be broken, to situated ethics where arguments for deception are considered on a case-by-case basis, to principled relativism where ethical transgression is pervasive and almost "anything goes" (2001, p. 475–486). Philosophically, a researcher's position on such a spectrum is determined by assessing the scientific "right to know" and by gauging its importance in relation to other rights; such as the rights held by participants (Williams 2010, p.257)

One must also consider the ethics and rights of the knowledge community. Burgess et al. (2006) demand that Doctorate research in education should respect all educational research and not be conducted in any way so as to harm the perceived value of research in society. In researching educational leadership, one considers Starratt's assertion that ethical leadership is "responsible" leadership (2004, p.49). It is responsible in terms of its quality and authenticity "for" a range of activities and responsible "to" a range of audiences and individuals. Similarly, Williams describes the inherent complexity of research that it is invariably conducted for somebody as well as on somebody. Ethically therefore, the researcher must be conscious of the degree to which the validity of the process may be threatened by an attempt to simply package a good final report for the purposes of accreditation. Being ethical in the character of research requires something more than simply adhering to the "structural and cultural demands of University accreditation processes" (Williams 2010, p.259).

112

Putting oneself in the position of those being researched and aiming to establish the "truth" for a readership are possible signposts given by Cryer (2006, p.85).

A further consideration in determining the character of ethical research is the ethical ownership of the intellectual property and the avoidance of plagiarism. In case study research, Stake notes that participants may be "pleased to have the story known" or may be "happy to help someone do their job" (1995, p.58). In general terms, Silverman comments upon "the moral and political beliefs of the researcher" (2000, p.200). Trattford and Leshem further elaborate upon the "maintenance of trust" (2008, p.105). All such comments and others combined, contribute to an almost unexaminable sense that research of this nature is only possible through the "goodwill and generosity" of the participants and through an understanding that the research of others in the field must be recognized, acknowledged and honoured to a high degree (Lankshear and Knobel 2004, p.112).

4.13 Conclusion

Morrison cautions against the "simplistic assumptions" that diary data may be used as a substitute for observation by researchers and that on occasion, diary accounts can produce data that are at variance with direct observations recorded by researchers (2002, p.223). The limitation must also be considered that diarists may simply record what they think researchers might wish to read. They might amend "usual" behaviour during the recording period for a number of reasons and quite reasonably, it must be considered therefore that diaries share the same strengths and weaknesses of all forms of qualitative reporting."

Minimising such a possibility is dependent upon Gillham's notions of "penetrating culture", an acknowledgement that the data does not necessarily provide a complete representation of the reality but instead it provides evidence for a credible investigation, much like "detective work where nothing is disregarded, everything is weighed and sifted: and checked or corroborated" (2000, pp.25-32). O'Leary proposes that researching in the real world is "riddled with problems" and that in fact, the school or the Principal may be the actual problem at times (2005, p.3). It may be aspirational to assume that research can ever solve problems or even be instrumental as part of their resolution. At best we can merely hope to provide a chain of evidence through a narrative account based on "specifics, uniqueness, interpretation and subjectivity" (Burgess et al. 2006, p.60).

The author of this research argues that a case study narrative, derived from the voices of multiple actors in similar professional settings, but with various backgrounds, experiences and personal qualities can prove relevant in highlighting the complexities of school leadership. An analysis of the narrative and of the accompanying case study data is intended to generate some understading in the following chapters.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Watling declares, "analysis is the researcher's equivalent of alchemy" (2002, p.263). He describes analysis as a magic mixture of science and art, one that transforms raw data into "nuggets of pure gold". He points to a generally held acceptance that analysis is not simply an isolated and penultimate step in generating new understanding about a topic, but that analysis pervades each and every aspect of a qualitative enquiry. Initially, a researcher considers a research question and methodological assumptions define and determine the nature and type of data to be collected. How it is collected, how it is stored, reduced and reproduced for the purposes of report writing, all form part of the analysis process. From beginning to end, the quality of the research is underpinned by the researcher's response to the most elementary of questions: "What am I asking of the data?"

The following chapter explores this question, considering initially the specifics of case study research, moving to an evaluation of the more quantitative data in the study and concluding with an exploration of how the qualitative data may be managed. The chapter examines theories of explanation building and how credible case study reports may be formed. It investigates specific data analysis practices and in particular, how the QSR NVivo computer-based coding programme may be employed to code and interpret researcher-driven diary entries and transcribed conversations. The use of matrices, flow-charts and similar constructs assist in the development of understanding as codes are synthesised and meaning, like gold, is extracted. In support of the author's arguments and findings throughout this chapter and the following chapter, the reader is introduced to the specifics of the case study findings through the inclusion of empirical evidence as details of the case study report begin to emerge and as findings and recommendations are drawn.

5.2 Approaching Data Analysis

The questions of how Principals manage and lead in schools in their actual daily practices and the question of how they experience the processes personally is essentially the "how" at the center of this case study investigation (Swanborn, 2010). Yin's approach to case study, proposes that the data or "study outputs" are analysed systematically at this point in order to extract meaningful patterns through the frequency of codes or code combinations (2009, p.128). Essentially, it is incumbent upon case study researchers, as the persons who initially pose the research questions, to apply their own analytic rationale. Progression through such a rationale must however take place in a manner that is highly structured and the analysis must demonstrate both accountability and credibility in the research world.

In order to ensure that the data will be analysable, the case study researcher must employ one or more of four general strategies from the outset (Yin 2009, pp.130-134). In this case, the researcher relies on theoretical propositions, by reviewing the literature, posing the questions and designing a data collection plan specifically to provide opportunities for possible answers and to allow for a structured analysis. The researcher also deliberately integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in the investigation. In an evaluative case study, the inclusion of quantitative data is recommended by Yin in cases where it adds to possible "outcomes" and provides explanations related to the embedded units of analysis within the broader study. Essentially, the quantitative data provide a "fine-grained" exposure of one aspect of the case, but the answers to the case's questions will only be found in a "higher level" and overall analysis of the qualitative data. The approach to this analysis is explained in the second half of this chapter, the narrative analysis is displayed in Appendix E and the results are considered in the following chapter.

Yin proposes a number of strategies for analysing data in case studies. Pattern matching is a suitable technique in cases where dependent variables exist. In a case that enquires about work productivity for example, patterns of behaviour and possible rival explanations may be considered key to answering the case question. Time series

analysis also examines patterns of behaviour, but over time. In cases that enquire about the prevalence of neighbourhood gangs or about infant mortality rates for example, data about the phenomena is analysed with time related data to provide possible answers to the case questions. Logic models are used typically to analyse patterns of activity involving dependent variables and independent variables simultaneously. In cases where institutions provide courses and where students' grades are questioned, logic models may provide answers in a case study investigation. In multiple case studies, a cross-case synthesis may be employed to investigate common patterns of behaviour across businesses, organisations or other institutions. In this case, Yin's "explanation building" (2009, p.141-144) is defended as the most appropriate approach to source meaningful answers to the research questions given that we seek to explain how Principals carry out their daily duties and how they experience the work involved.

Explanation building typically takes place in narrative form and frequently it includes aspects of theory building. In this case we investigate management theory, leadership theory and social theories related to issues such as identity construction and professional role formation. Explanation building is proposed as an iterative process, one that considers initial theories and sets of findings, followed by a series of comparisons and revisions in the case in order to provide reliable and convincing outcomes. In this case, the iterative process considers, among other aspects of the study, how Principals in general are positioned theoretically as "school leaders". Diary evidence of their daily practices, written in their own words and in real time, may or may not yield evidence of this. Further questioning of the data through qualitative interviewing allows for comparisons, revisions and clearer outcomes. Yin (2009) recommends strict adherence to the chain of evidence, to the case study protocol and to the case study database with a view to providing complete and compelling answers to the original questions, rather than offering explanations for other somewhat peripheral observations.

Orienting the case study report to an audience's needs is crucial and the danger of composing a report from an egocentric perspective can best be avoided, according to Yin, when a specific audience and their readership needs are identified. In all likelihood, the readership audience of this report will be University based or will

come from a school leadership background. For any audience, irrespective of their approach or specific area of interest, Yin advises that field study evidence must be presented in a manner that convinces the reader that "the investigator has indeed been in the field, made penetrating inquiries while there, and has become steeped in the issues about the case" (2009, p.189).

In a classic single-case study, according to Yin, the format for writing the case study report involves the use of a single narrative that describes and analyses the case and presents the findings with the support of empirical evidence. The narrative may be supplemented with "tabular as well as graphic and pictorial displays" and must be composed in an engaging manner (2009, p.170). A good final report should also seduce the eye, Yin claims: "Your eye will not want to leave the page, and you will continue to read paragraph after paragraph, page after page, until exhaustion sets in" (2009, p.189).

Case studies such as this, conducted from an interpretive paradigm, are aimed at understanding multiple social perspectives in context and the realities that individuals in such contexts experience. They also offer insights into how these realities are constructed through social interaction. The results of an interpretive case study are based on theories that emerge from the data, rather than any a-priori hypotheses that the researcher might wish to test. When case study is used to investigate the general character and specific embodiment of socially constructed phenomena such as management, leadership, poverty, crime or unemployment for example, it considers them as macro level social mechanisms (Mills et al., 2010) given that they convey the effect of sociocultural and political macro structures. Case study investigations can explain why and how macro structures operate and how they can be understood through the interactions of individuals and groups in bounded settings. Macro mechanisms are not designed for in-depth explanations as to why specific individuals operate differently to others. They aim instead to explain the general effect; in this case it is management and leadership, which is more or less valid for all cases in the context of the study.

The alternative approach and one that adds somewhat to the case findings, is that of attempting to explain the actions of individuals through the use of micro level

sociological theory. This is characterized by the studies of Goffman, whose work on impression management and on the presentation of the self in everyday life offers a phenomenological understanding of how individuals' actions are determined by such factors as time, space and audience (1959). While a phenomenological investigation is not intended, the use of such a lens is nonetheless valuable in exploring for meaning and in assisting with sense making, where circumstances allow.

5.3 Quantitative Analysis of the Researcher-Driven Diary

5.3.1 Participation

The following section displays and explores the more quantifiable data, returned from Principals' diaries and summarised by the primary researcher. All of the data below are returned to the participants and their comments about it add value to subsequent interviews. Pages four and five of the researcher-driven diaries enquire about Principals' professional details and about the details of their schools (Appendix E). A summary of the information is displayed in the tables below. Principals' names, the names and addresses of their schools and their personal contact details are omitted. These details were not transcribed and remain on the original documents under conditions of safe data storage.

The details below in Fig. 9, "Confidential Information on Research Participation: Section 1 – The Principal" indicates a high level of return on the research instrument. Notwithstanding the current gender imbalance in the primary teaching profession in Ireland and the anomaly that a disproportionate amount of males are promoted as Principals, the sample includes a reasonable gender balance among participants in the national context. Due to the nature of the sampling method employed, there is a high representation of Principals with Post Graduate and Masters qualifications included. Those involved also have wide ranges of experience, both in the teaching profession

and in their roles as Principal. Only four of the thirty-one participants have served as Principals in another school during their careers. While the majority of Principals in Ireland operate in smaller schools with less than eight staff and consequently fulfill both teaching and administrative duties daily, the sample set in this case study is more representative of Principals' in larger schools whose duties are classed as solely administrative.

Information on Research Participation: Section 1 – The Principal.
The number of Principals to whom researcher-driven diaries were issued: 32. Total returns: 31 participants.   Total non-returns: 1 participant
Gender: 11 male Principals   20 female Principals
Principals' academic qualifications: Primary Degree: 6 participants Post Graduate Diploma: 8 participants Master's Degree: 16 participants Doctorate: 1 participant
Principals' length of service teaching: 1-10yrs: 1 participant, 11-20yrs: 6 participants, 21-30yrs: 12 participants, 31-40yrs: 12 participants.
Experience as a Principal teacher: 1-3yrs: 2 participants, 4-6yrs: 9 participants, 7-9yrs: 8 participants,   10yrs+: 12 participants.
Participants who had experience of the role of Principal from a previous school: No: 27 participants.   Yes: 4 participants
Participants who had full-time administrative roles: 28 Principals. Participants who had class teaching duties also (smaller schools): 3 Principals.

Fig. 9 Information on Research Participation: Section 1 – The Principal

The details below in Fig. 10 "Confidential Information on Research Participation: Section 2 – The School" indicates that the case study covers a wide range of schools in the sample set. Schools in urban and in rural settings are included. Some school locations are designated as socially disadvantaged settings and some are not. The table also reveals a wide spread of participating schools according to pupils' ages, gender and enrolment figures. Schools of differing staff sizes are also evident. What is not evident is that the schools represent all of the main patronage bodies including Catholic faith schools, Church of Ireland faith schools, Educate Together ethos schools and Irish language ethos schools. Even allowing for crude report categories and the micro-aggregation of data, it is considered necessary in the responsible

management of the process by the primary researcher, to avoid such a categorisation due to an obvious ease of geographical identification in several cases.

Information on Research Participation: Section 2 – The School.
Numbers of Principals according to staff size (total number of staff):   < 20 staff: 9 participants, 20-30 staff: 16 participants, 30+ staff: 6 participants.
Numbers of Principals according to school size (number of pupils):   <100 pupils: 3 participants,   100-200 pupils: 6 participants,   200-300 pupils: 11 participants,   300+ pupils: 11 participants.
Numbers of Principals according to school type (range of classes):   Pre-school, infants and juniors (3-7yrs): 4 participants,   Senior classes (8-12yrs): 3 participants, Vertical (4-12yrs): 22 participants,   Special education settings (12+yrs): 2 participants.
Numbers of Principals according to school type (gender of pupils):   Single-sex (male): 3 participants, Single-sex (female): 6 participants,   Co-educational: 22 participants.
Numbers of Principals according to school setting: Urban: 24 participants, Rural: 7 participants.
Numbers of Principals according to school status: Designated socially disadvantaged: 7 participants, Not disadvantaged: 24 participants.

Fig. 10 Information on Research Participation: Section 2 – The School

5.3.2 Time Spent in Work

The researcher-driven diary commences and ends daily with a practical activity, that of recording the times when the Principal arrives to school and departs for home. The accumulated information is provided as a snapshot of activity within a week. While it is not intended in any way to be generalisable, such an activity is considered worthwhile in the building of the case details. It provides significant evidence, on an individual basis and collectively among the group, of the time that Principals spend in the workplace. While such detail is reported as both interesting and worthwhile in its own right by Principals during subsequent interviews, the main intention of gathering this data is its potential to prompt further discussion in interviews about individual

commitments, work practices and Principals' attitudes to the demands that are made upon them and their willingness to fulfill such demands. The information returned from the Principals reads as follows:

Principal	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Total
1	8h 15m	8h 10m	7h 10m	8h 15m	8h 10m	**40 h 00m**
2	7h 55m	8h 00m	9h 45m	8h 20m	8h 00m	**42h 00m**
3	6h 30m	6h 50m	7h 00m	6h 00m	6h 40m	**33h 00m**
4	-	-	7h 38m	7h 05m	7h 40m	Incomplete
5	8h 05m	9h 00m	10h 30m	10h 15m	8h 10m	**46h 00m**
6	7h 00m	6h 40m	7h 00m	6h 45m	12h 45m	**40h 10m**
7	8h 05m	8h 20m	7h 40m	8h 10m	8h 50m	**41h 05m**
8	8h 10m	7h 55m	8h 25m	8h 25m	7h 35m	**40h 40m**
9	7h 55m	8h 20m	8h 25m	7h 00m	7h 30m	**39h 10m**
10	9h 00m	8h 45m	8h 30m	8h 45m	9h 30m	**44h 30m**
11	7h 40m	7h 50m	7h 30m	7h 40m	7h 30m	**38h 10m**
12	8h 25m	8h 40m	9h 30m	7h 40m	9h 10m	**43h 25m**
13	6h 55m	6h 00m	6h 45m	7h 45m	6h 20m	**33h 45m**
14	7h 30m	7h 15m	6h 30m	7h 20m	7h 00m	**35h 35m**
15	7h 25m	7h 45m	7h 45m	7h 50m	6h 30m	**37h 15m**
16	8h 20m	8h 00m	8h 25m	7h 55m	8h 55m	**41h 35m**
17	10h 05m	10h 10m	10h 05m	10h 10m	9h 20m	**49h 50m**
18	9h 05m	8h 20m	7h 45m	7h 46m	8h 15m	**41h 11m**
19	7h 45m	7h 00m	7h 15m	7h 15m	7h 35m	**36h 15m**
20	7h 40m	8h 55m	7h 00m	6h 30m	7h 40m	**37h 45m**
21	9h 30m	8h 10m	8h 40m	8h 15m	7h 40m	**42h 15m**
22	7h 50m	8h 25m	9h 35m	7h 70m	7h 50m	**41h 30m**
23	6h 55m	8h 10m	7h 30m	6h 45m	6h 55m	**36h 15m**
24	8h 20m	8h 10m	7h 55m	8h 50m	9h 15m	**42h 30m**
25	7h 50m	6h 55m	8h 15m	7h 30m	7h 30m	**38h 00m**
26	9h 35m	8h 20m	8h 00m	8h 55m	9h 40m	**44h 30m**
27	8h 15m	8h 30m	7h 20m	8h 30m	8h 00m	**40h 35m**
28	6h 55m	5h 40m	7h 10m	5h 45m	7h 25m	**32h 55m**
29	8h 00m	8h 00m	8h 00m	7h 30m	8h 00m	**39h 30m**
30	9h 00m	8h 00m	7h 45m	7h 30m	11h 00m	**43h 15m**
31	8h 20m	11h 00m	8h 20m	9h 45m	7h 45m	**44h 50m**
For the 31 Principals involved in the research, the average time spent in school during this week, not including work taken home, was:						**40h 15m**

Fig. 11 Time spent in work by Principals during the five-day period

Significant comments made about the entries and about the length of the working day are included in Appendix C. Typically, the snapshot shows that the exercise prompted worthwhile reflection among the participants:

I thought that was very interesting actually. It was great to see where you were in relation to others. You could say, "I'm not the worst" or "I'm not the best" because that is what I struggle with all of the time. I constantly tell myself that I am going to get out of here early but then I find myself not doing it. It is an ongoing battle that I have with myself so I thought that was really interesting actually, to look at how you compare to others (Interview with Principal 12).

No, it would be way more than 12 because yesterday I was here at work at 7:30 am and I got home at about 11.00 pm last night. So, I would have worse weeks. My aim would be to have about a 35 hour week but I don't always achieve that, but that would be my aim. At one stage my youngest daughter was here in school with me. That was great discipline because she was minded locally. She had a few activities that I had to get her to, so I was obliged to leave at a certain time. You can sort of faff around in the afternoons and not get out (Interview with Principal 12).

The activity and the subsequent comments also demonstrate that the demands of the work are extremely diverse and that Principals' responses to these demands are varied also. A more complete analysis is offered in Chapter 6. The following interview comments on the quantitative data are also noteworthy:

Principal: I am surprised at all of the Principals. They were all spending 30, 35 or 40 hours per week each.

Interviewer: Yes, the average was 40 and some people work 43, 44 and I am looking at one person with 49. There is a 46 and right enough, yours was just under 40 at 38. Mine wasn't far off yours because we have the same alarm arrangement.

Principal: Now, I don't know how anybody is doing 50 hours a week to be honest. You would want to be in school until about 6 PM every day. Well, I know Principal down the road who is there until 6 PM every day and he is one of them. But, I don't know. If I were staying back, I wouldn't be just staying back just to say I stayed until 6 PM. You would want to be making good productive use of that time. I find that it is a great time for doing tots. You can't do a tot in this place during the day because somebody always interrupting you and you have to go back and start again and again. Anything to do with figures, I would leave it until after 2:30 PM and until they are all gone home (Interview with Principal 11).

5.3.3 Taking Rest Periods

Principals are also asked to make a note of the frequency of their morning tea/coffee breaks and of their mid-day lunch breaks. The information returned from the Principals indicates that an average of 54% of daily tea/coffee breaks are taken and an average of 60% of lunch breaks are taken during the period of the case study.

Principal	Coffee Break	Lunch Break.
1	3	3
2	2	3
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	3	2
6	3	3
7	0	0
8	2	3
9	4	4
10	5	4
11	4	1
12	0	5
13	3	1
14	4	5
15	1	3
16	5	5
17	5	5
18	5	5
19	4	4
20	2	5
21	4	3
22	1	1
23	3	4
24	0	0
25	5	0
26	2	1
27	4	4
28	1	1
29	1	3
30	0	3
31	1	5
During the five days that 31 Principals kept diaries...		
	An average of **54%** of coffee breaks were taken.	An average of **60%** of lunch breaks were taken.

Fig. 12 Coffee and Lunch Breaks

Subsequent interview comments from Principals about these figures present as quite individualistic and multiple perspectives are offered on the topic of taking rest periods. The excerpts below offer a brief sample of Principals' perspectives. Principals' general comments about rest periods and time spent in school form part of the qualitative data analysis and are presented in chapter 6.

Yes, I do like the job and I wouldn't really be counting time at all, except for the fact that you asked me about time. I just like the job and generally people are very supportive. I get great job satisfaction. I don't mind not getting a coffee break because I can grab a cup of coffee at any time. I don't mind that. I am very flexible. I just like the work. I know that it is demanding and it is challenging but I like the work (Interview with Principal 23).

I wasn't surprised with the coffee breaks because most days I would get one of them but very rarely would I managed to get both of them. I would find that the very minute that you sit down for a lunch break, everyone seems to sense that you are after sitting down so they come looking for you. (Interview with Principal 11).

I was looking at a lot of the Principals skipping the breaks because they are dragged different directions. That would happen to me too but I try to make a point of meeting the staff at those breaks. I think that they are enjoyable for everybody. I don't know whether they are enjoyable for the staff with me there or not but I like to try to get to them and I generally do, yes (Interview with Principal 15).

We try our best. I definitely would be committing myself to getting more coffee breaks with staff because that is important for the informal stuff that you might hear when you are sitting down chatting. Sometimes we can under-estimate the importance of that and that definitely came out from reading some of the comments of other principals about linking in with their colleagues at break times. Again, it's great to see it and that is coming up again in the positive experience of the teaching profession. (Interview with Principal10).

As sure as night follows day, the very minute that I sit down at lunchtime with one of those groups, somebody will come out with, "you are needed here or up in the office". I don't know if it's old age or am I getting wiser or am I getting crankier (laughs) but at the start, I used to jump up. If the secretary came up and said that there was somebody at the office looking for you, I might be just after pouring out a cup of tea but I would leave it there and get up to see what they wanted. Now I have taken the attitude that they can wait until I have finished my tea and they can sit up there for 10 or 15 min. It would want to be very important now for me to jump up, but at the start I would go up straightaway. Now, I am letting them wait or I'm getting smarter by telling them that I am not here at all (Interview with Principal 11).

5.3.4 Weekly Management Activities

Principals' weekly management activities are categorized under five headings. A summary of their responses is presented below:

Principals	Teaching & Learning	Pupils	Staff	Families	Admin
1	10%	29%	28%	13%	20%
2	25%	11%	29%	20%	15%
3	09%	08%	31%	04%	48%
4	14%	16%	14%	28%	28%
5	11%	15%	22%	23%	29%
6	15%	11%	17%	04%	53%
7	06%	10%	29%	14%	41%
8	22%	09%	13%	04%	52%
9	19%	26%	23%	23%	09%
10	12%	06%	12%	08%	62%
11	18%	21%	23%	17%	21%
12	19%	13%	17%	25%	26%
13	26%	24%	13%	03%	34%
14	16%	08%	02%	04%	70%
15	54%	06%	11%	08%	21%
16	12%	09%	31%	10%	38%
17	23%	14%	16%	05%	42%
18	35%	18%	20%	09%	18%
19	23%	12%	10%	06%	49%
20	00%	14%	32%	10%	44%
21	13%	18%	13%	10%	46%
22	11%	08%	18%	21%	42%
23	56%	19%	4%	11%	10%
24	07%	25%	31%	01%	36%
25	26%	04%	15%	16%	39%
26	03%	14%	23%	45%	15%
27	64%	20%	07%	01%	08%
28	08%	07%	26%	21%	38%
29	16%	15%	11%	08%	50%
30	04%	09%	10%	12%	65%
31	16%	30%	32%	06%	16%
Overall %	**15%**	**14%**	**20%**	**14%**	**37%**

Fig 13 Managing the Week

127

Principals reflect in their diaries during each day on whom and on what they have managed. They tick the available boxes and are invited to write a short note as to how they have managed. It is accepted that this is not an exercise in single categorisation and that many of the duties of the Principal could be classed under one or more of the categories simultaneously. Being called upon to deal with serious indiscipline for example may necessitate work in all categories. The data is collated with the intention of stimulating a sense of reflection among Principals and of generating conversations in subsequent interviews. While the quantitative data is informative in its own right, the process also aims to elicit qualitative data about how individual Principals perceive their personal prioritisation of management functions, as well as those of other colleagues.

Principals in smaller schools with daily teaching responsibilities are represented in blue in the table above. Understandably perhaps, due to their full-time engagement with pupils, they rate "teaching and learning" and "dealing with pupils" with the highest percentages while managing interactions with staff and parents scores lowest. Principals in larger schools with full time administrative responsibilities spend the largest percentage of the day dealing with administrative duties. While daily circumstances vary considerably from school to school and while administrative Principals are afforded the time to engage with staff and family members in larger schools, a noticeably low return of 15% is recorded for managing "teaching and learning" activities. One Principal's comment is typical of many others:

> *I was disappointed but not surprised that only 16% of my own personal time was spent on teaching and learning. I felt that this was typical of my life here ... like I said already, I'm not surprised* (Interview with Principal 31).

As a self-monitoring activity, the exercise proves valuable for the participants. One Principal offers an opinion that is echoed throughout:

> *Ah no, it was a kind of a pat on the back that you were doing all right. It's not that I would ever feel that I am doing badly. When you read others you say, "I'm up there and I'm not much different from the others." Do you know what I mean? It is good to get that an odd time and for us to feel that we are doing all right* (Interview with Principal 23).

The entire data set of long-handed diary entries and interview transcripts that describe how Principals undertake their daily management responsibilities is compiled and analysed separately in the following chapter.

5.3.5 Positive and Negative Experiences

As Principals consider the division of the working day between various management activities, they are also asked to rate the experiences as positive, negative or neutral. Once again, it is accepted that the exercise is undertaken with very broad categorisations and that in reality, overlap most likely exists in certain practical activities. The data is collated and is returned as follows:

	Positive. ✔	Negative. ✘
Teaching and learning experiences.	**105**	**09**
Experiences dealing with pupils.	**96**	**32**
Working with staff.	**118**	**16**
Meetings parents/families.	**88**	**17**
Administration.	**67**	**30**
The total number of positive and negative experiences recorded by the 31 participating Principals over the 5 day diary period:	There were **474** positive experiences reported.	There were **104** negative experienced reported.

Fig. 14 Managing as a positive or negative experience

Principals' positive experiences are rated the highest when working with staff and when engaged in teaching and learning activities. Their negative experiences rank highest when called upon to deal with pupils and to undertake administration. Each Principal is given a personal breakdown of their own responses to this section and significant comments are made about the results and about the overwhelming positive experience that is indicated. Once again, as a reflective activity, the exercise generates significant comments:

I was very aware of my practice when I had the diary for the week let's say. I was watching myself so to speak. I was conscious, more conscious than normal. I found it a very good exercise in terms of self-evaluation of where I was at myself. I found it was a positive experience, yes. The day is challenging, yes, it is hard and tough, but positive overall (Interview with Principal 9).

Having said that and having read an awful lot of the booklet, I think that no matter what people do or what kind of a bad day they have, they get up from it and we all seem to be very alike in that. You have good days and you have bad days but you get up. You might have gone home negative but you get up positive to take on the next day. I couldn't believe how positive people were after what they put up with from parents, from outside agencies or from whatever else. They seemed to be just willing to get up again and do their best for the job. It is extremely professional I think (Interview with Principal 1).

Principals' comments also provide for a meaningful elaboration of what might be perceived as either positive or negative.

I would always look at the glass half full and I would always look on the bright side. I think it's that kind of job. If you start looking at the negative side, it will bring you down very quickly and it could get on top of you. To be honest, 80 to 90% of the day here is very positive. There could be some hair-raising moments but the positive outcomes definitely outnumber the negative ones (Interview with Principal 11).

Principal: Yes, overall everybody had more positive than negative which goes to show.

Interviewer: Well, what does it go to show?

Principal: It goes to show that Principals experienced more positive than negative in the job, even though their jobs are very hard and they have to work very hard to strive for the balance, but it is still a more positive than negative. I don't know is that just being in a school with young people, I don't know (Interview with Principal 9).

The positives and negatives on page 7 were very interesting in that the most positive experiences were with the staff at 118 and the most negatives were with the pupils at 32. It's just that when you are at any of these gatherings, IPPN or INTO or whatever they are, a lot of principals say that their real difficulties are with their staff. Not that they have a lot of difficulties with them but that there may be one person who is causing a lot of bother so that is interesting for me that their most positive experiences are with their staff. That is encouraging rather than anything else because I was beginning to think that there are so many principals in strife with one or 2 members and that things were extremely difficult for them (Interview with Principal 31).

5.3.6 Weekly Leadership Activities

Principals' weekly leadership activities are categorized under six headings. A summary of their responses is presented in the table below:

Principal	Pupils.	Teachers.	Other Staff.	Families.	Others.	Yourself.	Totals
1	4	3	0	3	2	2	**14**
2	3	3	1	3	0	0	**10**
3	3	3	1	0	2	0	**09**
4	4	4	1	2	1	0	**12**
5	3	4	1	3	3	1	**15**
6	3	3	3	0	1	0	**10**
7	1	5	3	5	0	0	**14**
8	4	3	3	1	4	1	**16**
9	5	4	3	5	2	2	**21**
10	2	2	0	1	1	3	**09**
11	5	5	5	5	3	4	**27**
12	2	2	1	3	1	0	**09**
13	3	2	0	0	2	0	**07**
14	0	2	1	1	0	1	**05**
15	4	4	3	3	2	3	**19**
16	5	5	3	2	0	2	**17**
17	3	5	5	3	5	1	**22**
18	5	3	2	2	1	1	**14**
19	3	3	1	2	1	1	**11**
20	3	4	0	1	1	3	**12**
21	3	3	1	2	2	0	**11**
22	5	5	4	5	2	2	**23**
23	4	3	2	3	0	3	**15**
24	1	3	0	0	1	1	**06**
25	5	5	5	3	5	3	**26**
26	3	3	1	3	1	1	**12**
27	1	2	1	1	0	1	**06**
28	2	3	2	2	3	0	**12**
29	4	5	3	4	2	0	**18**
30	1	3	0	3	3	2	**12**
31	4	4	5	2	1	4	**20**
Totals.	**98**	**109**	**59**	**74**	**52**	**42**	**434**

Fig. 15 Weekly Leadership Activities

Principals are asked to deliberate upon the idea that they may have found themselves acting or felt that they were called upon to act in a leadership capacity. In completing their daily diary entries, they simply tick a box to indicate as many of the categories of leadership activities as they wish. Fig. 15 offers a tally of results.

Principals in smaller schools with daily teaching responsibilities are represented in blue. They demonstrate an even spread of scores across most categories, except leading "others". This may very likely be due to the time-consuming nature of class teaching responsibilities. Principals in larger schools with full time administrative responsibilities indicate high leadership awareness in the leading of teachers. While daily circumstances vary considerably from school to school and most likely from day to day, the Principals demonstrate a wide divergence in their reports. Some Principals report that they experience an awareness of leadership little more than once a day on average, while the average recorded is fewer than three experiences per day. Two male Principals with 21-30 and 31-40 years experience of teaching, with 7-9 and 4-6 years experience as Principal and a total staffing of 42 and 23 respectively report the highest tally of leadership awareness.

However, it has to be recognised and clearly stated that leadership is essentially a "human enterprise" and is not measured quantifiably in tallies of one-off events (Kets deVries, 2001). The tally merely offers an opportunity for reflection. It functions as a snapshot, an image about which one can elaborate and discuss more essential issues. One Principal notes, "When you are going around the school during the day you are not saying in your head that you are leading people. This would be a thousand miles away" (Interview with Principal 11).

A more thorough analysis of Principals' leadership activities is described in the following chapter. A range of comments offer insights into Principals' understanding and awareness of their own roles in enabling leadership generally in school communities:

Yes, I have always bought into that policy or that belief that you are no use as a leader unless you are bringing other people around you towards leadership. Now, I don't mean that every teacher in your school should be interested in being a deputy or Principal or whatever. It's just that we can begin to get a sense that we can all aspire to this, that I know in my heart and soul as a 3rd class teacher, that I don't want to be the Principal but it would help me in my position as a teacher if I had some understanding of what is an average day for the Principal or the Deputy of the school. For those people, who have no intention of ever becoming one, I would like them to understand what it is about (Interview with Principal 31

The leadership thing is in helping the whole school to develop into something that maybe wasn't possible six months ago or wasn't possible a year or two ago but now it can be and we can pull it in and make it part of the picture, do you know? (Interview with Principal 17).

I try to lead teaching and learning but it is not easy. I would say that that is the least easy part of it, because everybody, like the staff, are up to date with their own methodologies and all of the rest. They don't, well a lot of staff don't like you to ask for a change in methodologies. Isn't that right? They are good at what they do themselves and it is just hard to get everybody around to your way of thinking. But really, I am… That is my focus, leading teaching and learning, yes (Interview with Principal 23).

No, not really. As I said earlier in the conversation, I just feel and I think I said this as well in my questionnaire, that I am not always certain about what you mean by leading and I think the People's perceptions may differ. I try very very rarely to be "the boss". Yet, I try to lead by example, if that is a correct interpretation? (Interview with Principal 2).

Interviewer: When you think about it and you put down that you had 21 times in the week where you were leading various situations, that was quite high really?

Principal: Yes, yes and I think as Principals that we don't quite realise that. We are always leading and always in the front line (Interview with Principal 9).

5.3.7 Do Principals Enjoy their Work?

Principals are asked to rate their personal enjoyment of the working day on a scale from 1-10 in the researcher-driven diaries as shown below. A summary of their responses is presented in Fig. 16.

Principal	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
1	6	8	8	6	8
2	9	9	10	6	9
3	4	6	9	7	7
4	8	8	7	6	7
5	5	8	4	10	5
6	7	9	7	5	-
7	6	6	5	3	3
8	8	-	8	9	-
9	10	10	9	8	9
10	6	7	7	6	7
11	10	7	10	9	7
12	6	2	10	3	8
13	7	7	8	9	8
14	8	8	8	8	8
15	9	9	7	5	-
16	8	8	8	9	9
17	6	6	7	7	7
18	9	9	5	10	10
19	8	7	5	6	9
20	7	9	3	9	9
21	4	6	6	6	7
22	7	6	8	8	9
23	10	6	9	9	6
24	3	7	6	4	5
25	8	9	9	10	10
26	7	7	-	6	6
27	7	7	8	8	8
28	10	6	2	10	10
29	3	3	6	6	6
30	10	-	8	7	-
31	4	10	9	8	9

Fig. 16 Do Principals enjoy their work? Daily scores 1-10

While satisfaction scores rate as low as 2 on some days and as high as 10 on others, the average response for Principals' enjoyment of the school day is 7/10. Quantitatively, the figures are not generated with any sense of generalisability in mind. They are presented within the case for the purpose of promoting discussion among participants. They are also presented to allow a reader of the research raise his/her own questions and possibly draw his/her own conclusion in an individual interpretation. A reader may wish to identify with a particular Principal from the list of 31 and to follow the Principal's ratings of management and leadership activities, matching them against comments in the qualitative analysis below. This may be particularly relevant for a reader who wishes to explore the experiences of a particular group, such as recently appointed Principals or Principals in designated disadvantaged schools, either for the purpose of personal enquiry or for further research. Interview transcripts offer a range of responses to this topic. These are analysed in a detailed process and a set of findings is presented in the following chapter. Some examples of the comments are included as follows:

I suppose that is reaffirmed that I am positive about the job that I am doing. I enjoy going to school every day and I haven't got a sense of fear or dread. I would be hard on myself I suppose. I would have enjoyed the work. Some days I might have scored a 9 or a 10 and I might be a bit low in my scoring anyway. But, I was positive (Interview with Principal 10).

Yes, I think it is just a job and it is the job I do. Now, I would give it 110% but it is just a job. Somebody else is a nurse or somebody else is a pilot or somebody else lays tiles or is a roofer or puts in CCTV. We all have jobs. It is a livelihood, I give it 110% and I am absolutely passionate about it but I would go out and socialise. I would have the phone on in case there was an issue like the security of the school but I love locking the gate and going home (Interview with Principal 17).

In saying that, I do intensely enjoy my job. I really do. I wouldn't swap it for any other job I think and I don't know how many people can truly say that. Despite the pressure and despite sometimes feeling that the buck stops here and feeling that pressure on you sometimes, I really enjoy my job. I find it hugely rewarding and I cannot complain too much (Interview with Principal 15).

Yes, I did a Masters a few years ago ... In the research a number of Principals retired early ... Contacting them was fascinating. Some of them had a shit job I can tell you. Some of them were hardy men I can tell you ... I really enjoyed it but I can tell you that some people have an awful life (Interview with Principal 11).

5.4 Qualitative Analysis of the Researcher-Driven Diaries and Interviews

Miles and Huberman comment on the strengths of qualitative data and note that qualitative inquiry into naturally occurring and ordinary events that takes place in the natural settings, is best placed to generate knowledge about what "real life" is like (1994, p.10). In a specific case within a bounded setting, they note, qualitative data has the potential to reveal the richness, holism and complexities of lived experiences.

Silverman advises that good qualitative data analysis is "never just a matter of using the right methods or techniques but is always based on theorising about the data using a consistent model of social reality" (2000, pp.151-152). To examine the daily management and leadership functions of the school Principal and to determine how Principals experience the role, a traditional five stage framework is considered as follows (Pope, 2000): Initially, there is immersion in large quantities of raw data in its various forms. Key issues are then identified under prescribed headings and data is annotated and rearranged thematically so as to explore meaningful associations. A plausible explanation of the observed phemonena is proposed for the readership and it is supported by excerpts from the raw data.

Cohen et al. describe the analysis of qualitative content as "a strict and systematic set of procedures" that verify and examine the contents for meaning (2007, p.475). Through such a process, the "enduring problem" and the challenge to the reaearcher is that of extracting conclusions by reducing large texts that are thick with detail to manageable proportions. The analysis process must venture beyond simply imposing catagories or attempting any form of technical fix with the data (Barbour, 2001). Similarly, Bryman and Burges advise against a bumper-sticker approach that offers broad thematic labelling with little chance for interpretation (1994).

Initially it is necessary to generate an intimate knowledge of the data by listening back to recorded interviews and by rereading the original handwritten diaries "without taking any notes or considering the interpretations" (Bryman 2001, p.398). In this

case the process also involves an oral reading as the material as it is transferred from audio to text using the speech recognition software, Dragon Dictate for Mac. The recorded materials and written transcripts are then reviewed and proof read. Cohen et al. describe the process of data analysis as moving beyond the manipulation of text at this point by coding, catagorising, comparing, making links and drawing conclusions (2007). The complexity of these final stages has been aided somewhat in recent years by the introduction of computer-based data analysis software.

NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software programme from the Melbourne-based company QSR International. It is a development of their earlier 1981 NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising) programme. It was launched for Windows in 1999 and at the time of the writing of this research it is on version 10 for Windows and on an open public beta release for the Mac platform. It is designed to assist qualitative researchers working with rich text-based data and to enable them to organise, classify and arrange their information into manageable components in order that they might discover patterns and linkages more fluidly in their analysis. Bryman describes it simply as a development of the traditional "pen and paper" manual coding process; one that depended on scissors and glue for cutting and pasting (2001, p.398-404). The program also eliminates the dangers of data loss and enables coding efficiency. It makes the findings explicit through a uniquely transparent and efficient process, thereby adding to researcher accountability. Much like the traditional processes however, NVivo still requires that the researcher listens back to interview recordings, makes transcriptions, re-reads written materials and decides on categories and sub-categories for coding. The researcher must also arrange and rearrange the data as it managed through a sense making process that involves displays and matrices.

With NVivo, as with manual coding practices, the researcher carries the responsibility during open or initial coding, not to fragment or fracture the data. It is important not to deconstruct the narrative into segments so small, that when reformed, they produce an altogether different reality than that originally intended. Boje outlines a number of challenges in post-structural approaches to the analysis of narrative (2010, pp.592-593). Interview data, he proposes, may be considered as an interactional and contextual production, even before it is transcribed and interpreted. Interview

137

narratives are conducted as highly individual real-life encounters that are "rooted in family beginnings, gender, race, and social class". The poststructuralist challenge, identified originally in Derrida's work on "Writing and Difference" centers on the ethics of how the analyst potentially distorts the original encounter by conducting an inquisition in order to elicit meaning (1967). The coding process, explained below, therefore considers the implied meanings of statements rather than the categorisation of words, sentences and short utterances.

5.5 Coding in NVivo

Saldaña describes a code as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (2009, p.3). More an interpretive act than a precise science, coding is described as a heuristic exploratory problem-solving technique. However, it is only a first step in the sense-making process. A more important and more rigorous analysis of the data takes place in the interpretation of the completed coding. Miles and Huberman comment that the choice of the word used to describe the code must be semantically close to the term it represents (1994). The tag or label however is much less significant than the cluster of information that is contained within the code. Considered as the "bones of the analysis", coding is presented in NVivo as "nodes" rather then codes (Saldaña 2009, p.8). Bazeley (2009) describes nodes simply as the categories in the data that may be readily identified through reading and interpretation.

Fig 17 NVivo Beta for Mac: Principals' Management and Leadership Experiences. The Internals: The researcher-driven diaries and interview transcript documents from the computer's hard drive are imported into NVivo.

Through elaborate graphic processes of organising, analysing, visualising and presenting the contents of diaries and interview transcripts, NVivo assists the researcher in a manner that demonstrates rigour and validity. In NVivo, the researcher employs standard qualitative coding practices but with the unique benefits of the programme. Documents in the computer's hard drive that contain diary entries and interview transcripts are imported individually by drag and drop into an "Internals" folder in NVivo, as shown in Fig. 17 above.
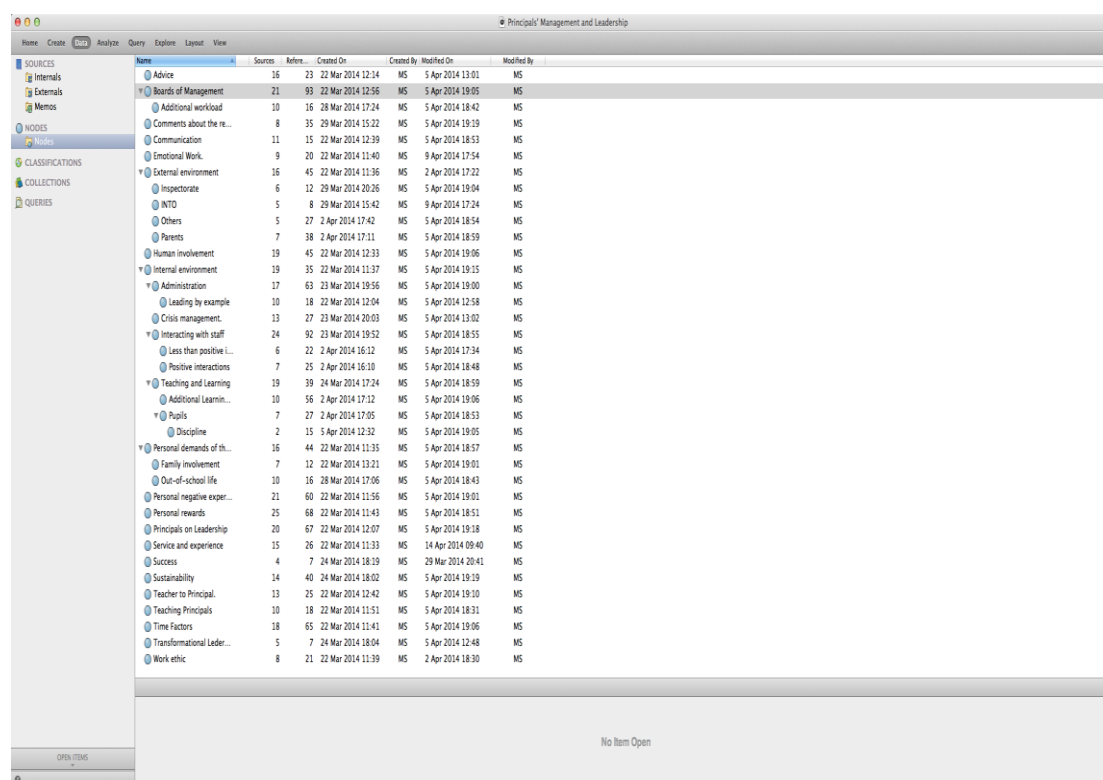
Fig 18 NVivo Beta for Mac: Principals' Management and Leadership Experiences. The Nodes: Collections of references to specific areas of interest in the data.

A document may then be accessed from within the NVivo programme and may be clearly viewed in its own window. Another window is available for the creation of nodes as the researcher reads the data and becomes aware of emerging themes (Fig. 18 above). The newly created nodes represent a nonhierarchical coding structure that enables the researcher to sort remarks and statements in the diaries and interviews, into themes or units of observation. The full Windows version of NVivo also works with audio files, with photographs or images and with external source materials such as journal articles and textbook content. Coding in NVivo or classifying meaning

units into nodes according to their attributes is achieved in what the program developers QSR call, a "paperless repository" (QSR, 2014).

Saldaña describes all coding as a judgement call since we bring "our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, and our quirks to the process" (2009, p.7). While the mechanics of manual coding typically entail "circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining and colouring rich or significant participant quotes" and presenting them as "codable moments" (ibid, p.16), NVivo offers a smoother option. Text in the internal documents may be transferred into the nodes, which operate similarly to folders, by highlighting, then dragging and dropping them. Colour coded notes in the margin are provided automatically in the programme and are termed "coding stripes". These stripes may be analysed further as the questioning of the data becomes more involved (Fig. 19 below).
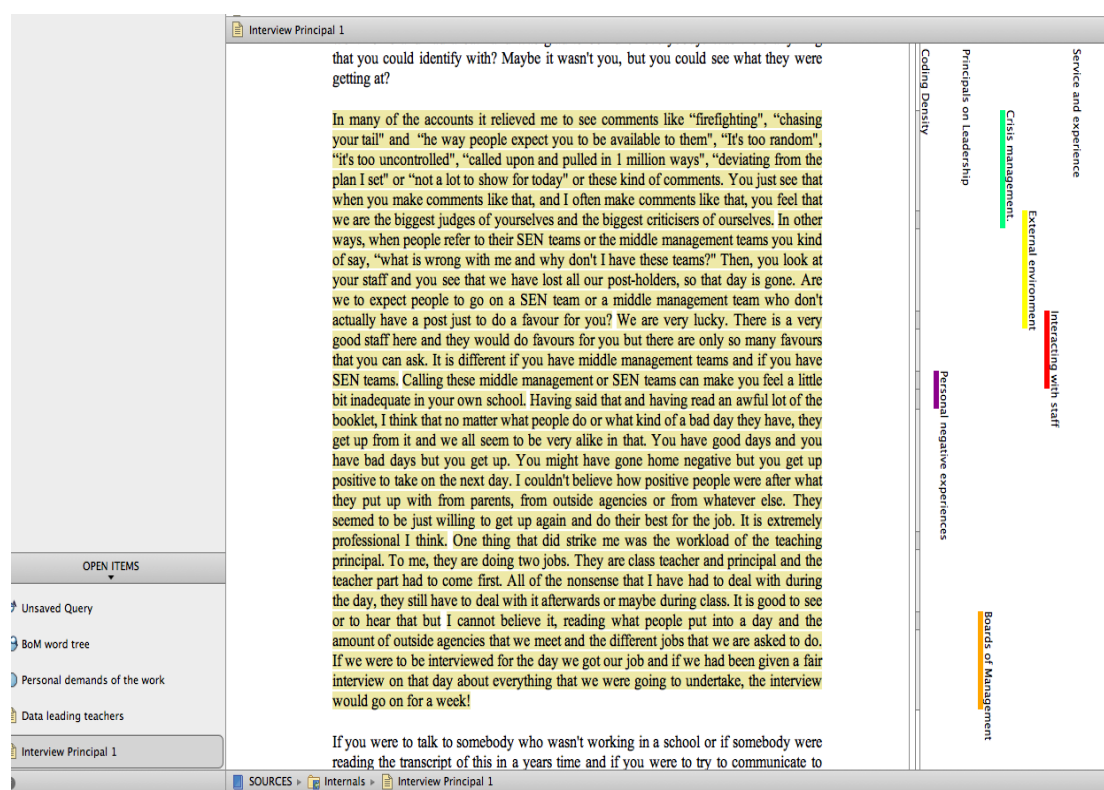
Fig. 19 NVivo Beta for Mac: Principals' Management and Leadership Experiences. Coding to the nodes: An example of a coded interview transcript showing coding highlights and coding stripes.

When all of the data are coded, the original information is retained in the "Internals" folder in NVivo but it is also available in its newly organized format in the individual nodes folders. The coded information may represent various "acts, activities, meanings, participation, relationships or settings" (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.61). The nodes may then be revised or sub-divided into what QSR describe as "child nodes". Each statement in the node is labeled and is referenced back to its original data source for purposes of accountability and verification.

Bazeley advises moving beyond a superficial categorisation of simply partitioning information thematically (2009). Programmes such as NVivo, she adds, may be utilised to develop concepts through processes of describing, comparing and relating the data in the research analysis. The data may be queried, as key statements are linked and cross-referenced within and across the various nodes. The results of such an investigation may be displayed in a text format as in Fig 20 below. Alternatively it may be displayed as a visual image in a "word tree" as in figure 21 below.
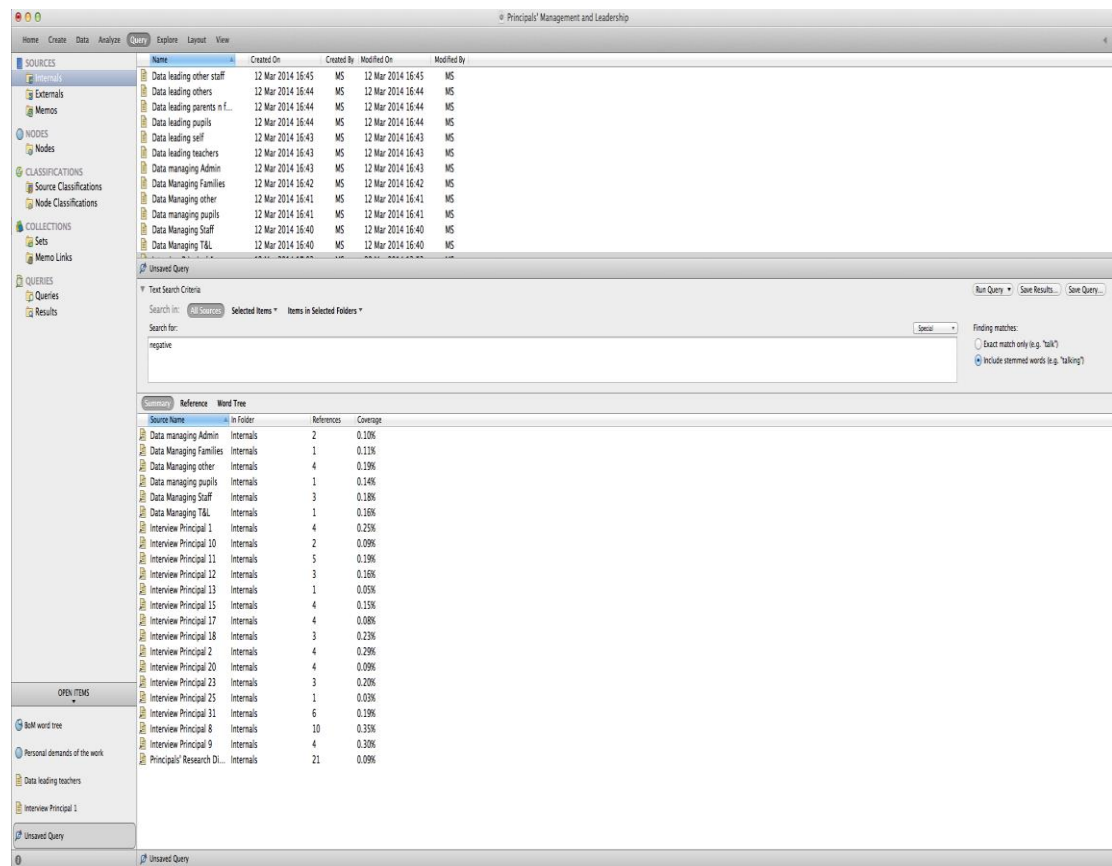
Fig 20 NVivo Beta for Mac: Running a text search query to build a summary of all sources where Principals comment on any "negative" aspects of the role.
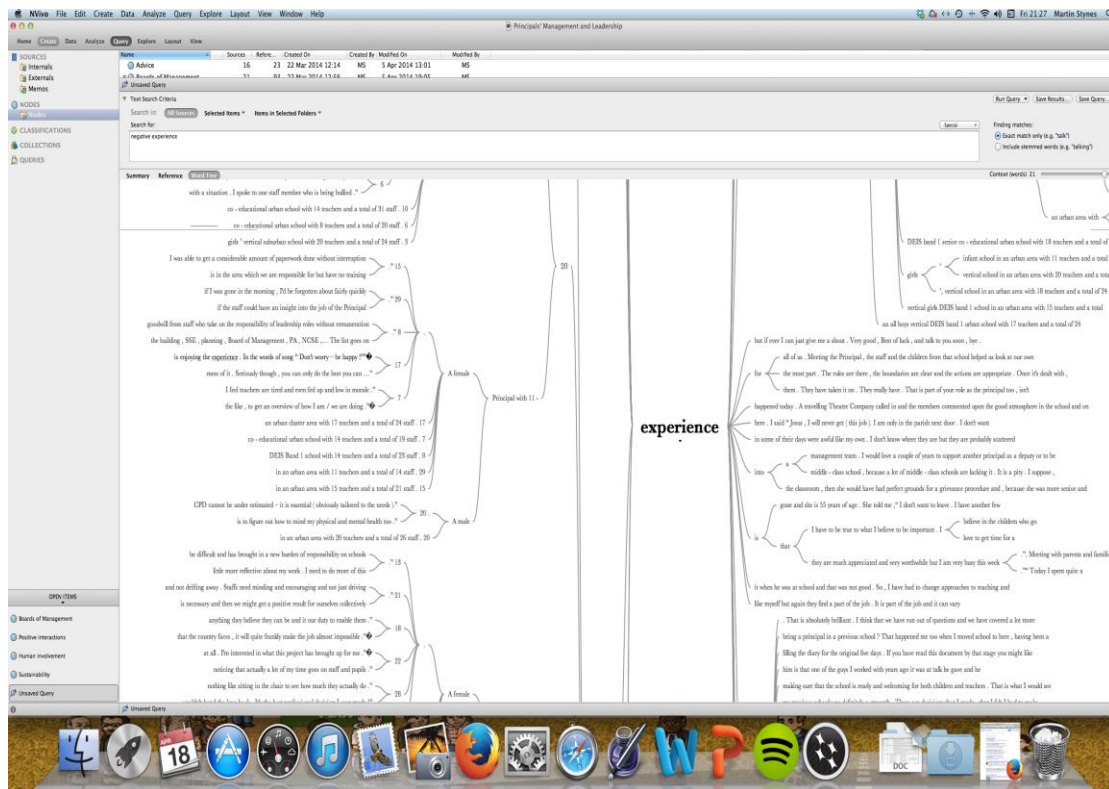
Fig 21 NVivo Beta for Mac: Running a text search query to build a word tree that allows for exploration of Principals' comments about their "experience" of the role.

The use of flow charts, matrices and other thematic structures allow researchers to illustrate the development of their conceptual analyses and enables them to write convincing final reports without an over-reliance on direct quotations to form the findings. Direct quotations are used instead as empirical evidence, as proof to the readership and as a form of traceability along the intellectual journeying. Miles and Huberman emphasise that "the ultimate power of field research lies in the researcher's emerging map of what is happening and why" (1994, p.65). Iterative cycles of analysis are therefore applied to the coded content in a manner that involves putting information into different arrays, making matrices of categories and creating data display flowcharts.

5.6 An Organised Framework for Qualitative Analysis

Saldaña explains that the success of such a process is dependent on a number of key criteria. Primarily, it requires that the researcher demonstrates an organised framework for qualitative analysis. It also requires perseverance over extended periods of time and an ability to deal with ambiguity. Flexibility is considered essential as coding schemes may change and evolve during the period of analysis. Creativity in the construction of possible outcomes must be balanced with a sense of scholarly integrity and the researcher must be rigourously ethical in drawing conclusions (2009, pp. 28-29).

Miles and Huberman offer "rules of thumb" for constructing matrices and visual thematic structures (1994, pp.239-240). The objective, they note, is that the reader can recreate the researcher's intellectual journey with some confidence. While there are no fixed canons for constructing a matrix, the final display should demonstrate creatively, the researcher's understanding of the substance and meaning of the database and of the analysis process. A "correct" matrix therefore, demonstrates descriptive intent. It displays the data and provides evidence of a process through which it is systematically questioned. It also provides some indication of the findings in descriptive categories. The "natural progression" in the treatment of qualitative information is the basis upon which the narrative case study report is written.

Fig. 22 below displays aspects of the data coding and analysis from the NVivo nodes that relate to "Managing and Leading in the Internal Environment". When the data in the diary entries and interview transcripts are questioned to reveal how Principals manage and lead in the internal environment, a number of emergent themes come to light and empirical evidence is formed. Comments are interpreted and are assigned to sub-categories that describe aspects of administrative work, crisis management and dealing with staff. The latter category is further sub-divided when comments are differentiated between the challenges and rewards of interacting with staff. Fig. 23

below displays a similar thematic approach to investigating Principals' management and leadership activities in the external environment.

Administration	Crisis Management
✓ A key component	✓ Firefighting
✓ A time-wasting distraction	✓ Unable to avail of breaks
✓ A boring aspect	✓ Unpredictable nature of the day
✓ An oasis of tranquility	✓ Random and uncontrollable
✓ Ownership or delegation	✓ Staff support
✓ Policy work, timetables, tax...	✓ Family support
✓ Admin relating to past, present and future events	✓ No two days are the same
✓ Correspondence	✓ Can be an appealing aspect of the work
✓ Local DES staff clustering	✓ Principals are unsupported
✓ New initiatives	✓ No template for success
✓ All of the responsibility and none of the power	✓ God only knows what I'm facing today

Managing and leading in the internal environment

Interacting with Staff (1)	Interacting with Staff (2)
✓ Informative list of duties Advising, explaining, supporting	✓ Some staff are unsupportive, whingers, incompetent, lazy, bullying...
✓ Support of Deputy important	✓ Recession and budget cuts
✓ Social aspects of break-times	✓ Unpopular decisions fall to the Principal
✓ Approachability/Collegiality	✓ Ancillary staff cuts
✓ Trust and boundary management	✓ Staff members are under stress
✓ A work-related focus is rewarding	✓ Some are ill or have personal problems
✓ Appreciation is important	✓ Appeasing often appears impossible
✓ Staff enjoy a positive focus	✓ Solutions follow retirement
✓ Most of the staff are incredible	

Fig. 22 Managing and Leading in the Internal Environment

Members of the external environment
  ✓ Priests, past pupils and those on work experience
  ✓ HSE – Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists
  ✓ HSE – Child protection social workers and vaccination teams
  ✓ DES – Admin workers and inspectorate
  ✓ Parents and Parents' Association Committee members
  ✓ Ancillary workers' Trade Union reps
  ✓ NCSE – SENOs ALN reviews and staff audits
  ✓ NEPS – psychological assessments and training programmes
  ✓ NEWB – attendance officers
  ✓ Student teachers and college inspectors
  ✓ Builders, architects and security companies
  ✓ Sales reps, international visitors and charity workers.

Managing and Leading
in the External Environment

Local Community
  ✓ High parental expectations
  ✓ Parents' Associations
  ✓ Fundraising
  ✓ Assuming ownership
  ✓ Difficulties in low-income areas
  ✓ Role of principal
  ✓ Implications for staff
Public Service
  ✓ Pay/productivity deals
  ✓ Austerity and public perception of schools
  ✓ Impact on staff morale
  ✓ "Deplore the lack of resourcing"

Parents
  ✓ Meet and Greet
  ✓ Parents' Association politics
  ✓ Problem resolution
  ✓ ALN meetings
  ✓ Family support and advice
  ✓ Discipline meetings
  ✓ Bullying allegations
  ✓ Supporting staff in problematic situations
  ✓ Importance of active and open communication from school
  ✓ Majority are supportive

Fig. 23 Managing and Leading in the External Environment

The following chapter commences with a narrative description of the case study findings of how Principals manage and lead in the internal environment therefore. It aims for some understanding as to how Principals experience this work and in particular how they experience administration, crisis management and the positives and sometimes less than positive aspects of dealing with staff. Principals' real-life encounters with the external environment are illuminated in the following section as interactions with parents and local community members are explored. A list of the range of callers who occupy the visitor's seat in the Principal's office reveals the wide-ranging complexities of the work. The narrative is supported throughout by representative quotations, sometimes in the form of short utterances and at other times by the inclusion of longer and more elaborate accounts, in the Principals' own diary entries and voices.

The chapter progresses the narrative in a series of 12 sections, each detailing differing aspects of the Principal's management and leadership responsibilities and each providing first-hand insight into how this is experienced day-by-day.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Findings

6.1 Introduction to the Narrative Case Study Report

Chapter 6 presents a narrative analysis of the findings in twelve sections under various headings. The headings are derived from a qualitative coding of long-handed diary entries and interview transcripts using the NVivo for Mac programme. Themes emerge in the different nodes or sub-categories of information and each theme is analysed further for patterns of meaning. As these patterns emerge from the data they are drawn together into a narrative description or case study report. The empirical evidence from the analysis that validates each aspect of the report and that offers data-driven authentication is included below in a selection of representative quotations from Principals' diaries and interview transcripts. All such quotations from Principals' diaries are available in Appendix C.

Fig. 24 on the following page, derived from the work of Miles and Huberman, demonstrates the staged progression of the research (1994). It commences by offering a design for potentially useful data gathering methods that will assist the researcher in better understanding the work practices of Principals. These involve gathering background information on the case participants, conceptualising and designing data gathering tools and setting about the task in a meaningful and organised manner. It proceeds to identify areas of Principals' work that may be explored and studied ethically according to the approved parameters. This study explores aspects of the Principal's working day and how the Principal experiences the management and leadership activities involved in dealing with pupils, families, staff and other members of the community. Aspects of managing and leading the curriculum are also included. Data analysis is applied and findings and conclusions are drawn.

The chapter commences therefore with a summary of the findings on how Principals manage and lead in the internal and external school environments. It focuses specifically on how Principals explain their leadership involvement in teaching and learning. Work ethic, time-related factors and Principals' involvements with Boards of Management comprise three separate sections. The report considers the affect on individuals of being the Principal and describes the emotional elements of the work. It

also portrays how Principals describe their personal rewards. Principals' perceptions of the negative aspects of educational leadership are explored. The report concludes with an analysis of Principals' comments on career progression and on sustainability in the role.
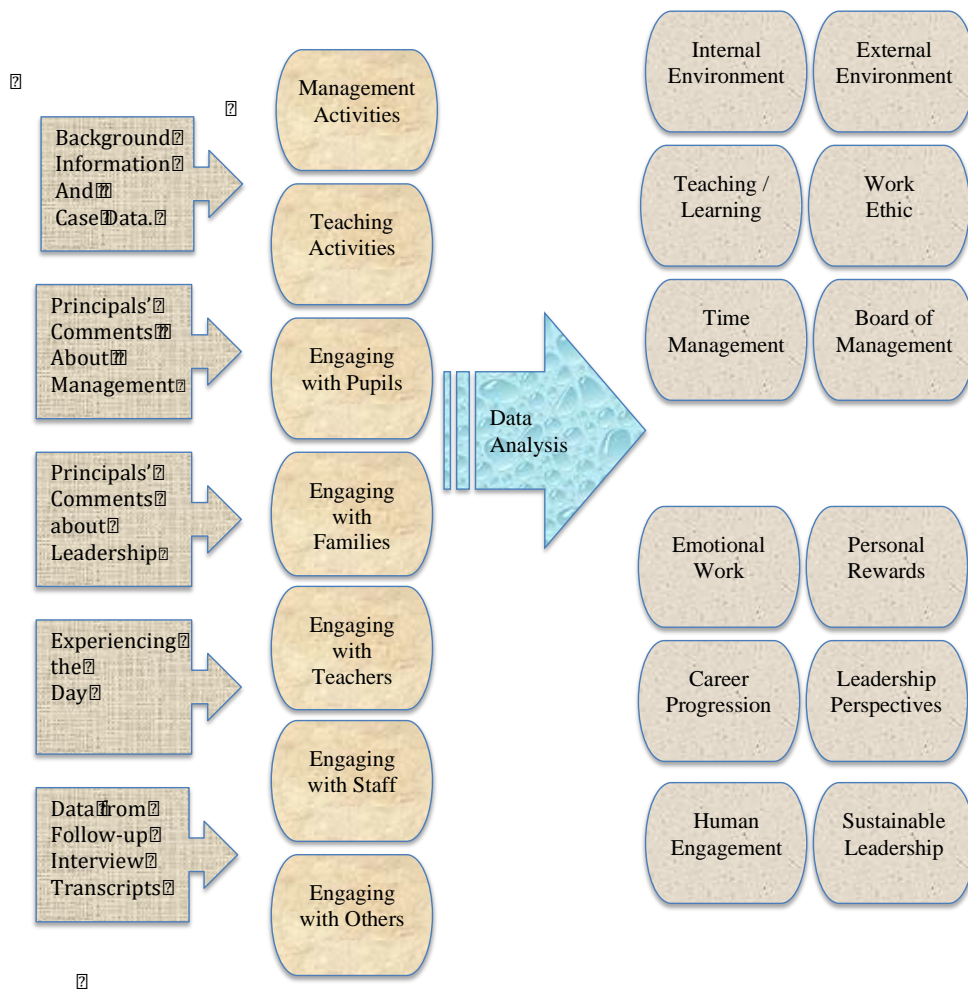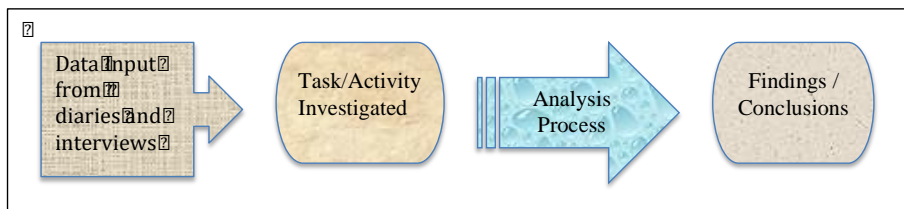
Fig 24 Within Case Display: Exploring and Describing. Adapted from Miles and Huberman, 1994)

6.2 Managing and Leading in the Internal Environment

6.2.1 Administration

Individual contributions from diaries and interviews highlight considerable differences in Principals' attitudes to school administration (Appendix C). For some, administration is seen as a key component of the Principal's duties. Principal 6 comments, "Administration: it always very positive to be ticking off items in the diary and clearing the desk (though it's still a mess). For others however, administration is perceived as a time waster and a distraction. Principal 3 comments "It's difficult to feel any way positive about management and administration as a Principal, even when I probably should". Some describe it as a "boring" aspect of their day but interestingly, some others appear to enjoy the oasis of calm it offers, with the office door closed and the over-busyness of the school corridors kept at bay outside. Principals vary hugely in their attitude also to the ownership of administration duties. Some accept the full ownership and go so far as posting their own correspondence while others are content to delegate. Administrative tasks may be considered into three distinct time ordered categories: Planning for the future involves tasks that relate to enrolment, employment or other such preparatory work. Recording the present involves duties related to attendance, dealing with daily finance and other pressing issues of immediate concern. Reviewing the past typically involves activities such as updating policies or gathering evidence in legal cases for example. A firm grasp of computer and ICT skills, as well as the availability of competent secretarial support, appear to be the key areas noted by Principals themselves in determining any chance of success at managing this time-consuming workload. Principal 31 offers the perspective that, "With a good secretary, administration is not a problem. I personally attach as little time as possible to it".

In-house administration duties such as sorting correspondence and drafting school policies draw little negative criticism and are seen as "absolutely vital to the smooth and efficient running of the school" (Principal 17). Principals are vocal however about the responsibilities that the DES place upon them to carry out pay-roll functions and

to organise local teacher-employment clusters to support children with additional learning needs. Principal 28 describes the workload as "absolutely ridiculous". Much like organising the government's relevant contract tax (RCT), school leaders express the opinion generally that, in principle, the workload of tax collecting or operating employment clusters should not fall to them. In practice, they express a criticism that all such initiatives involve a degree of administration that invariably adds to their workloads and takes from teaching and learning time. Harris describes this as "peddling against the policy current" (2007, p2). The findings of the Irish Leadership Development for Schools initiative (LDS, 2007) report a similar situation for Principals across the country. In attempting to balance the workload and responsibilities, Principal 26 comments "I find that I have all the responsibility to deal with whatever is in hand, but effectively I have no power or control." (Appendix C).

6.2.2 Crisis Management

Aspects of crisis management or "firefighting" arise in the narrative and while stories from individual schools differ considerably, all Principals in the case are called upon to demonstrate leadership capabilities at various times. In some schools, particularly those in socially disadvantaged areas and those with integrated ALN units, Principals and staffs face each day with high levels of unpredictability as random and uncontrolled events take over. Principal 1 relates the following:

> *I suppose, say the worst that can happen in our school is being lifted out of it or attacked by an angry parent. It is the unannounced attack, the unannounced vicious attack, where you are not used to it and not used to being ranted and roared at and all of that kind of stuff. That is what I find the worst.*

Principals accept responsibility as the first line of defense in dealing with problematic individuals. They physically manage problematic situations, they negotiate outcomes and they support traumatised staff where and when necessary. Through such activities they work together with staff towards common goals and enhance authentic leadership-followership relationships (Crippen, 2012).

The variety of "no two days being the same" is reported in some cases as an appealing aspect of the work but not in others. One can only assume that too much unpredictability or a relentless amount of difficulties in some instances, leave Principals feeling somewhat unsupported and personally vulnerable. As the public face of the school, the Principal carries high levels of expectation and a weight of responsibility in times of difficulty. Principal 13 reports somewhat ominously "God knows what I'm facing today".

6.2.3 Interacting with Staff

Interacting with staff in the internal environment proves to be a significant part of the research and results highlight both positives and negatives. Informative lists of duties emerge from the data. This supports Bubb and Earley's proposition that management 'is characterised by a fragmentation of tasks and a myriad of activities, each one taking up a relatively short period of time", like "a series of spinning plates on poles" (2004, p.109). In general terms, Principals appear to manage staff with a variety of collegial approaches. Verbs such as "advise", "support", "explain" and "mentor" set the tone. A sense of approachability and trust is considered highly important between Principals and their staffs. When a positive and work-related focus dominates and school success ensues, staffs look to Principals to express appreciation and to affirm achievements. Principals in such instances use adjectives such as "incredible", "wonderful" and "positive and professional" to describe staff.

Some significant and less-than-positive experiences are categorised also and these relate a different set of daily realities for some Principals. In a number of cases Principals report sizable disparities between their levels of expectation and the performances delivered by staff. In an interview, Principal 1 recounts the following:

> *The other thing that you said there, that could be upsetting and that could make a day horrible is having to deal with a member of staff who maybe is not doing what they should be ... I mean being constantly late. Or, every teacher had to leave the room and go to another room but you know teachers who are always out of their room and it's not on school business. Having to tell another adult to go back to their place of work and to take charge of what they are meant to be*

154

doing is different from when you were a mainstream class teacher. You were used to dealing with children like that but you are not used to correcting adults like that and you don't expect to have to correct them

An impression of over-dependence, a lack of delegation or some other localised arrangements lead school leaders to form the impression expressed by Principal 13 that "the buck lands with the Principal no matter what happens in the school". This reflects the findings of Moos et al. whose research on Principals' leadership, school ethos and governance change in Australia, Denmark, Sweden and England describes a "hurricane of accountabilities" (2011, p.199).

Stress in such situations appears to be compounded as some Principals describe a minority of staff members as "whingers" or as "unsupportive", "lazy", "bullying" or "incompetent". The research illustrates complex aspects of a number of long-standing interpersonal relationship difficulties in some of the schools. It must be stated that the difficult circumstances recorded in this research pre-date the appointments of the participating Principals and that no blame is attributable or intended in any way. The suggestions emerge consistently that appeasement in such cases may not be possible and that a peaceful resolution only comes about when one of the problematic parties leaves or retires. The interview with Principal 11 offers one such perspective:

> *Some of the Principals ... working in bigger schools, had to jack in the job. They had been brought in from outside when there were three or four internal candidates who had applied and who didn't get the job. Now Jesus, talking to them, their life was fecking hell I can tell you. It was absolutely hell on earth. They felt sick coming in. They had blood pressure tablets. They were going to the doctor. They were dreading Sunday nights. They would go home Friday and they couldn't wait but they would dread Sunday nights coming around. What a way to live as an adult! Some of them had awful experiences. People on the staff turned against them. It was through no fault of their own. They had done nothing wrong ... No, they had just applied for the job ... Most of it has gone away now ... The problem only goes away if you leave or if all of those people retire because you will never get around them ... No, no and sometimes it gets more bitter as time goes on. You were all right if they are two or three years from retirement age but if they are all in their mid-30's,...*

In similarly difficult circumstances, Principal 20 reports in the research that he finds himself "hiding amongst the children nearly for the satisfaction in the job". A broad range of such human emotion is expressed as Principals also recognise that some staff

members operate in stressful settings themselves or that others may be ill or may come to work pre-occupied with difficult home or personal circumstances. In general, all Principals in the research demonstrate skills of "contingent leadership" as they respond to the unique, complex and unpredictable organisational circumstances and problems within their own schools (Bush 2003, p.188). They also emphasise the importance of collaborative work practices and of positive work cultures in the internal school environment (Elmore 2000; Gronn 2008).

6.3   Managing and Leading in the External Environment

The diary entries and interviews with Principals in the research offer a unique insider-perspective on the world of Irish primary schools in 2013. An analysis of the available data offers an insight into how schools function in relation to their external environments (Appendix E). Schools operate in association with many other enterprises, often in an atmosphere of "significant contextual turbulence" that gives rise to a range of anticipated and unanticipated implications (McDonald 2008, p.33). It is the Principal who generally presents as the public face of the establishment and who carries both the authority and the responsibility for its various operations. In the Principals' diary entries a somewhat astounding array of characters enter the narrative at different points during the week, each bringing his/her own agenda to the office door. These include priests, past pupils, people on work experience, parents, psychologists, health workers, builders, architects, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, inspectors, members of parents associations, trade union workers, sales reps, student teachers, security companies, VEC trainees, nurses, doctors, education welfare officers, special educational needs officers, international visitors and charity workers.

Schools operate at the heart of local communities and children provide clear evidence of the levels of affluence or poverty that may exist. Parents bring varying levels of expectation either individually or through organised Parents Associations and the implications for school staff are considerably. In more affluent communities,

Principals report their engagement in highly lucrative public fundraising activities for school building and for renovation projects. In poorer areas, Principal 12 describes parents as having difficulties with punctuality while Principal 17 describes a more problematic environment that is "harsh… negative… difficult… and sometimes it can be downright criminal". In affluent communities, Principals are challenged to manage professional boundaries with highly active and enthusiastic Parents' Associations. In poorer areas, Principals provide a first line of defense for staff and children against confrontational and aggressive behaviours. To meet such broad-ranging challenges and in order to ensure functional outcomes, Principals demonstrate leadership by moving beyond the formalities of their office and position to engage in micro-sociological theories of negotiated order (Parsons 2010, p.605-606). Typically, everyday interactions between individuals in small groups are led by those who operate pragmatically to negotiate and renegotiate a sense of shared meaning through persuasion, mutual agreements and personal contracts. This aspect of the Principal's work is conducted very subtly and often perhaps, it goes unrecognised. In an interview with Principal 31 a leadership strategy is proposed as follows:

> *What I try to do is not just to delegate, it is a case of taking this project on, as for whatever help you need and running the project. I will stand beside you, I will give you every help you need but I will not do the project for you. It is about me taking the person forward in a supporting way. That would be the way that I will set about the Board of Management, in-school management, the Parents' Association and staff meetings.*

What is recognised throughout however is that schools operate as part of a national public service and are subject to the influences of pay and productivity rationalisation in times of austerity. They are also subject to frequent revisions in policy directives. During the period of this case, the most notable influencer is a public service and trade union negotiation known as the Croke Park 2 or Haddington Road Agreement (LRC, 2013). Comments from Principals in this research point to a conclusion that, as an austerity measure, its influence is entirely negative. Principal 19 comments,

> *Croke Park 2 has really caused me to look at retirement. It is cost neutral but I feel it is important to remember that my life, family, dreams, ... etc must be honoured too. The trick is to figure out how to mind my physical and mental health.*

157

Furthermore, as Principals become responsible for implementing new productivity measures such as school self-evaluation (SSE) and for timetabling staff for a longer working week, a wave of subsequent retirements among senior staff lead to new recruitment possibilities. Significantly though, an embargo on appointment to middle management or "special duties" teaching posts as part of the LRC agreement leaves many Principals somewhat isolated and unsupported in the performance of a role that may they themselves express as "unsustainable". Principal 19 for example, makes the following entry in the daily:

> *The Deputy Principal and I are the only two post holders left in a school of 19 teachers, so this makes things very tough in terms of planning and teamwork ... There was an overwhelming sense of being a bit of a "headless chicken" today: I was trying to manage the school self-evaluation process, resource teaching hours, union issues with an ancillary staff member, plumbing problems, band practice, preparation for First Holy Communion, ... etc, to name but a few issues. It left me feeling as if I did lots but achieved very little today. Overall, I am feeling very tired, which is worrying after a week off ... The Diocesan advisor (on religious education) was in school today so I had a discussion with her. I went around supporting and thanking staff and pupils also ... Overall, it was a busy and varied day. There was a good buzz around the school. We gave homework off ... There were issues about the minutes of the last Parents' Association meeting causing concern. So, that needed careful handling with staff. It was alleged that a mobile phone had been used in class!! Administration, having no post holders, is a big part of each day – too big ... The current situation with no post holders is not sustainable with all of the initiatives coming at us. I really need to limit the interruptions.*

A sense of Principals feeling unsupported is echoed throughout the narrative as and when difficulties arise. Principals mention a number of external school support agencies in this respect. The school inspectorate is portrayed in several accounts as a body whose function is strictly confined to curricular evaluation and not school trouble-shooting. Principals described the INTO teachers' trade union as a body that does not reflect Principals' needs. Whenever disputes may arise, it is felt that the trade union supports the teachers and not the Principal. In such cases, the Principal's role in the formal management structure of the school is clearly drawn. Principals describe the IPPN support network more favourably but recognise that its support extends only to advice. In dealing with the external school environment, the Principals in this research appear to operate with extremely limited levels of personal or professional support in most situations.

6.4 Teaching and Learning

Section 22 of the Irish Education Act 1998 sets out the functions of the school Principal, and among them is the responsibility for instruction and an obligation to encourage and foster learning in students (Government of Ireland, 1998). Principals report high levels of satisfaction through a wide range of positive comments in diary entries and interviews about this aspect of their work. When the data are analysed, a number of conclusions are drawn (Appendix E). A "hands on" approach is taken in numerous journal entries as Principals engage in curricular and extra curricular teaching activities. In some cases, Principals support class teachers by assisting directly in lessons. In others, they lead whole school instruction in areas such as music and sport. Principals' leadership of CPD and SSE initiatives is widespread, as is the feeling that time management is an issue. Several Principals express the concern noted by Brazer and Bauer that the "mundane management issues" and administrative function of the role takes from their effectiveness as instructional leaders (2013, p.649). In a small number of cases, Principals express extreme frustration in the bluntest of terms at dealing with teaching staff that appear lazy and unmotivated. Principal 26 describes the annoyance freely in an interview as she recounts both personal experience and opinion:

> *(She is) ... absolutely downright lazy ... a bit of a bully herself ... what I find frustrating about the job ... she's not co-operating with the younger staff ... I have had enough garbage in that regard and it's not worth the battle ... She couldn't be bothered, knowing ultimately that nothing can actually be done ... You see, I don't have the class allocation done yet because my difficulty is that (she) was in in-class support and wanted to get out so I moved her into a class even though I knew she was lazy cow. It has been an appalling year ... I am desperately upset about the kids who sat in that class with an unmotivated teacher. How uninspiring, how unfun, what boring shite, and I look at all of the answers in your research and all of the people who are satisfied with their jobs!*

Wood comments that Principals see teaching and learning as "an abiding passion" (2002, p.10). "There is nothing I love better than interacting with the pupils," writes one Principal and this statement is echoed in most of the other diaries and interviews (Appendix C). Gunter describes such a position as "the habitus where headteachers are disposed towards children and their colleagues" and comments that similar

research using self-reported evidence bears this point out (2001, p.97). Principals' direct interactions with pupils and their families, from their enrolment ceremonies to their final graduation programmes, are underpinned throughout by a sense of personal engagement and responsibility. The findings support the work of Collay, whose investigations into "everyday teacher leadership" demonstrate that Principals assume responsibility for the "broad development" of the children in their care, including their physical, emotional and moral development (2011, p.51). Principals seem to fully embrace the role of a parent or a family carer who works in "loco parentis" to "keep in touch" with as many of the children as possible by first learning their names and then visiting them as regularly as possible. While some use school assemblies and yard supervision for this purpose, others go further and make the point of visiting all classrooms daily (Interview with Principal 6). The emphasis is not so much on curricular progress in these instances but on matters of school ethos, such as building positive relationships and on sustaining peer friendships.

It is notable that a wide range of comments is attributable to school discipline. Some Principals report having no discipline issues in their schools but for those who do however, their role is not perceived as the traditional authoritarian figurehead, but more so as that of counselor or mediator. Teachers and parents regularly seek the support of the Principal and the Principal is active in investigating and managing problems, as well as imposing sanctions. A child-centered leadership that evidences pastoral care seems to be very much in evidence, rather than other more traditional approaches that are simply based on order, control and conformity (Bush 2003, pp.120–121). One Principal describes this work as "worthwhile though not enjoyable" and significantly in the real-world perhaps, it is not always successful. Problems with stealing and with bullying in particular, appear to be an almost normal and acceptable aspect of the role in some instances.

The research highlights particular annoyances and frustrations expressed by Principals about the levels of support that are afforded to schools to cater for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). While Principals appear to be fully engaged in inclusive practices at school level, from mainstream individual education planning (IEP's) to running ALN units, difficulties arise in dealing with external agencies. Principal 24 offers the following example:

160

The SENO - who I like very much and is very good to us - brought another "evaluation" folder for us to beat ourselves up with! Comply comply comply! We are knee deep in "initiatives" and they are cutting our pay as well. I'm usually very placid but I feel swamped and peed off! Demoralised!

While a number of Principals express an understanding of the resource limitations of government health boards and of other support agencies such as the NCSE and the NEPS, a situation appears to exist whereby certain Principals see themselves as the primary advocates for children's needs in meetings and in processes where staffing levels and other resources are discussed. This is unsurprising perhaps, given that it is the Principal who is called upon to personally come to the aid of staff and to offer first-hand immediate assistance when upsetting incidents take place, such as those described below in the diary of Principal 18.

It was a terrible day ... A pupil with behavioural issues (ASD) is restricted to a school day of 1.5 hours. He refused to sit in the taxi with his escort (provided by the DES) and he proceeded to thrash the taxi, to kick, bite and spit at the two SNA's and myself, who were trying to keep him safe. I eventually got back to the class. A resource teacher had to fill in for me while all of the above was going on. The staff concerned are traumatised by this almost daily occurrence. A SNA told me today that she wasn't happy about being bitten. I have got help from NEPS, the SENO and the HSE for this pupil. We have now got sanctioned for a SNA for him. Up to now, he has been one of 6 boys in the ASD unit with a teacher and 2 SNA's. However, I got a letter from the HSE telling us that the pupils in the ASD unit would in future and not be getting support in the form of speech and language therapy, occupational therapy etc.

6.5   Work Ethic and Workload

An analysis of the diary and interview data leads to a range of conclusions about Principals' work ethic and workload (Appendix E). Principals demonstrate a "strong work ethic", they report the ability to see the "whole picture" and they are aware of the high levels of expectations that their jobs entail. While it may be the case that such expectations originate externally in more affluent school communities, it could reasonably be argued that it is the Principals themselves in socially disadvantaged areas who generate the highest levels of expectation. One Principal described herself

as "a bit of a lunatic" in terms of work ethic (Interview with Principal 31). Spindler and Biott's research similarly describes an enormous personal investment of time and energy as Principals are "prepared to go beyond what is expected in the call of duty" (2005, p.123).

Principals state that they enjoy the flexibility of the work. They enjoy problem solving and a commitment to the task at hand. A sense of successful completion and closure appears to be important also. The work is described as "all-encompassing" and is undertaken with the sense that one is constantly being judged. There is a drive among Principals to do as well as possible and it seems that there is nothing that Principals will not do for their schools. Principal 24 reports the following in a dairy entry:

> *I spoke to a colleague who is out on long-term sick leave and who was worried about her leave and if she would run out of days. I can't talk to anyone else about her condition and it's not widely known. It is difficult to keep these things inside! I cleaned the floor of the 4th class toilets. Somebody is making a mess. I think it's the unruly pupil but I can be sure–yet!*

During that time of the research a number of external demands are pressing. Principals speak about a "constant demand for more" and of being swamped with "daunting" initiatives. Productivity pay deals appear unpopular and quite problematic as Principals report that work is less like leadership and more like managing an enterprise at times. The challenge to more organic forms of leadership such as stewardship and servant leadership comes in the shape of "new public management" (NPM) or "managerialism" (Molloy, 2010). This mechanistic, time and motion, value-for-money approach to running cost-effective businesses and modern organisations is already described in previous chapters. The research provides clear evidence as to how the work of Irish school Principals is impacted upon by this phenomenon and how they themselves experience the effects personally in their schools.

In the midst of such demands, Bubb and Earley remark on the importance for school leaders of managing their time, their work-life balance and their general wellbeing (2004). In reality however, the question of how school leaders could actually master such a challenge is seldom, if ever answered. The workload that Principals undertake

in this research is described variously as "ridiculous", "shocking", "hard going" and "worrying". Principals described themselves as being like a "piggy-in-the-middle" under pressure and demoralised at times. One Principal comments, "We put in the hours a lot more than people realise. You can have horribly days, absolutely horrible days and you can go home wrecked" (Appendix C).

As economic decisions affect appointments to schools' middle management teams, Principals appear to take on the additional workload themselves in various entrepreneurial ways. In some cases, evening time is spent at fundraisers to cover shortfalls in school maintenance projects. Principal 29 offers the following example:

> *Initially I loved the job and was extremely challenged in leadership. As the years have progressed I am now starting to feel very overwhelmed by the constant competing demands of the position. I feel a reduction in funding to schools, through the capitation grant and in particular the minor works, has led to a constant need for fundraising with the Principal leading this process. Over the last 8 years I have been involved in fundraising for a soccer field, dressing rooms, Jubilee and literacy resources and IT in the region of €300,000. In all, this can be extremely demanding in addition to the normal job. The constant battle with the Department in relation to building can also be energy draining.*

In others, Principals report giving personal time to writing policies, dealing with school correspondence and other administrative tasks, even while on maternity leave. The question as to whether Principals take on too much personal responsibility for their schools appears to have some significance in this case study.

6.6   Time-related Factors in the Work of the Principal

An analysis of the data shows that the Principals in this study report being on demand continuously during the school day rather than being in control of their schedules (Appendix E). This appears to be readily accepted as the nature of the work. The importance of competent secretarial support is emphasised but difficulties arise nonetheless in differentiating important and urgent activities in some schools on days during which "firefighting" and "chaotic" events predominate. Principals comment on

the absence of any clear job specification and operate under the assumption that they need to be freely available at all times to all comers. For Principal 12, the job description "is so broad and you can be doing so many different things in the day. At times I find that very frustrating. I don't know if that makes sense."

Work-related after-school demands are numerous. Some Principals record working a 12-15 hour day due to the combined demands of government productivity initiatives, Board of Management matters, Parents' Association meetings, curriculum CPD, meetings with professional support organisations or community events. Principals also report a range of on-call circumstances during which they are available out-of-hours, such as supporting the work of their volunteer Chairpersons. In some cases, they return to the building to complete unfinished tasks late into the evening.

Principals' comments about self-management of time at work prove to be significant and wide disparities exist within the data. Some comment on the long working days and on the perceived need for prioritisation.

> *Most of the time you notice that very little of your time goes into teaching and learning. Sometimes very little time goes into staff or educational matters. Quite a lot of time goes into management and administration of other areas like dealing with the local priest, security people, reps from book companies ... etc (Principal 1).*

Some report being shocked at the amount of time spent in schools by colleagues and at the lack of appreciation generally for the lot of the Principal. However, experience and length of service as a Principal prove significant in this regard. While many newer incumbents report a sense of enjoyment, even in spite of significant time-commitments, those with longer service appear to achieve a better and more sustainable work-life balance. As time passes in some Principals' careers, skills and competencies at areas such as problem solving and conflict management develop to the extent that unexpected and time-consuming daily events are handled in a more timely and efficient manner. Consequently, the mental pre-occupation of taking work home "in your head" diminishes (Appendix C).

Irrespective of the stages of career development, all Principals involved in the research appear to manage their time on task with the professional commitment of dedicated and complete finishers. Task completion is a clear priority for the most part and experienced Principals do so in a more measured and self-assured manner by keeping a "clear focus" on their priorities (IPPN, 2014). A comment from Principal 12 typically expresses this attitude:

> *I enjoyed today. I spent most of the day in classrooms and always enjoy time spent with the students. We are working on positive mental health and I had some really good moments in class. I managed to clear my desk before leaving for the weekend. I love that feeling!*

6.7   Principals and Boards of Management

Bush comments that "Managerial leadership is a vital part of the armoury of any successful Principal" (2003, p.185). The vision and mission that individual Principals appear to display and that seem to be grounded in a sense of vocation (Palmer 1998; Adair 2000) require strategic and operational management in order to be achieved. Unsurprisingly therefore, when the data is analysed, it becomes apparent that Principals comment extensively about their engagements with Boards of Management (BoM) in the research (Appendix E).

In terms of content, it is represented as the single most populated node in the NVivo coding process. Comments about Boards of Management are analysed under four key headings in order to draw conclusions into a cohesive narrative as follows: The section titled "Internal BoM Business" describes Principals' involvement in regular and on-going BoM affairs. Sections on "BoM Finances" and on "Buildings and Maintenance" indicate how Principals perform functions that relate specifically to these areas in spite of policy directives declaring such work to be beyond their remit (CPSMA, 2014). A section on "BoM Policy Direction" provides evidence of an anomaly in the system whereby the employer or Board of Management looks to the

employee or the individual Principal for leadership and guidance in matters of general governance.

In describing the leadership relationship of the Principal and the school's Board of Management, the Irish "Leadership Development for Schools" initiative of the DES (2007) cites The Education Act (1998). It notes that the Principal is responsible for "the day-to-day management of the school" and is accountable to the Board for that management (Section 23 3.3.4). In theory this reflects a model of leadership described by Bush as a hierarchical model; one that stresses "vertical relationships" (2003, p.49). In practice however, one could draw the conclusion from reading Principals' diaries and interview transcripts that a much flatter organisational structure exists on the ground in schools and that Boards of Management are entirely dependent upon Principals for their guidance and expertise. Principal 29 prepares a submission for an 8 class room extention while Principals 17 and 21 report speaking with architect and engineers and advising the Chairperson and Treasurer to ensure progress with their Boards' building projects. On a separate matter, principal 30 is "leading the Board in so many areas, including a current legal situation with the Equality Tribunal". Principal 28 offers the following perspective:

> *We have a new Chairperson on the BOM this year who has no education background and his only experience it when he was at school and that was not good. So, I have had to change approaches to teaching and try to lead him too. He is a nice man but it is weird trying to lead your boss!*

The evidence points arguably to the existence of other models of leadership in practice. A "collegial model" may be considered applicable in instances where the aims of the school are achieved through a sense of shared understanding (Bush 2003, pp.64-67). In some situations, where a Board comes to rely on the manifestation of the values and beliefs of the Principal rather than its own collective decision-making capabilities, a "subjective model" of leadership may be considered applicable (2003, p.113).

In regular and on-going Board of Management affairs, Principals are frequently called upon to prepare and maintain the grounds on which Boards themselves are built. Principals describes how school Boards are constituted from volunteer members of

166

local communities and how such members may be inexperienced and unqualified for the running of schools. Principals describe how they prepare and circulate minutes and agendas for regular meetings, how they deal with written correspondence, how they manage local politics and how they handle industrial relations complaints on behalf of the BoM. Principal 18 recounts the following:

> *Being secretary to the BOM involves preparation of minutes of previous meetings, setting out agendas, dealing with correspondence – some of which may be dealt with without liaising with the BOM and indeed by the time the BOM meeting comes around, the issues may sort themselves. Indeed, what inevitably happens is that I solve them with the help of the Chairperson of the BOM and they need never take up time on the BOM. This all depends on the issue of course.*

Not surprisingly, Principals in some instances report feeling unsupported by their Boards, particularly when they run into difficulties. One Principal describes planning for the training of Board members while another describes the difficulties of simply constituting a Board itself. The difficulty of mustering over 30000 volunteers nationally, to serve on Boards of Management, is also expressed in the LDS document "Improving School Leadership". It comments on a reluctance among professional people to put their names forward due to the "significant responsibilities" that the work entails (2007, p.15). In an interview with Principal 1, the following perspective is shared:

> *I agree with that but as I read in some peoples diaries about the board of management, sometimes it's just easier to do it yourself. Many people outside of schools, and even in schools, don't realise that the board of management is a voluntary job. I don't think that the board of management themselves realise the responsibilities of the job and maybe that is our fault. In areas like disadvantaged schools, people have to be dragged screaming onto a board of management, kicking and screaming! We, the principals, end up doing the ground work for the board of management because we know what is expected and what is to be done rather than dragging the board into it. These are people from other jobs and this is a voluntary thing for them. I do think that people have to understand them make up of the board of management. First of all, it is not a paid management team as such. You are talking about ordinary parents with ordinary lives doing ordinary jobs already.*

It could be argued that in order for schools to continue to function at any level, a disproportionate amount of the Board's responsibilities falls to the one qualified and experienced person available; the Principal.

This is particularly the case when one considers "BoM Finances" and to "Building and Maintenance" projects. With regard to finance, Principals report that they engage in a range of activities that, in accordance with management guidelines, should rightly be undertaken by the volunteer Treasurer (CPSMA, 2014). Principals write cheques, calculate tax, negotiate insurance premiums and organise the payment of staff. In some cases, they meet to advise Treasurers and to prepare the accounts for upcoming BoM meetings. In other cases, when finances fall short, it is the Principal who organises and leads fundraising events and who prioritises the fundraised spending. In many cases it is the Principal who prepares and submits funding applications to the DES. In one extreme case, it is the Principal alone who is called upon by the BoM and by the Trustees to lead a "fraud" investigation in the school and to represent the school in court (Interview with Principal 5).

Buildings, maintenance, renovations and school extension project work is, by its nature, complex and time-consuming. A number of Principals in the research describe how they find themselves leading this work. They describe how they organise painting, landscaping, heating, electrical, CCTV maintenance and computer and blinds repairs. They assume responsibility for car park safety, for out-of-hours key holding and for the secure opening and closing of the premises where no caretaker is employed. In terms of the day-to-day running of the school, they negotiate contracts and on-going relationships with many of the regular service providers.

On large-scale building and construction projects, the data indicates that it is the Principal and not the Board of Management in many instances that takes the lead and engages with architects, engineers, consultants and builders. It is the Principal who handles disputes with "rogue builders" and with unsatisfactory architects when matters go awry and it is the Principal also who deals directly with staff on all fallout. Principal 21 explains:

I was dealing with rogue builders. We have an ongoing saga with the builders (not the current ones). It has now progressed to legal action, so I was in contact with the solicitor today. I'm relieved they have left my orbit and have moved into the solicitor's!! ... We are in the early stages of a building job which has gone badly wrong. I'm dealing with an architect who is not doing his job properly and the fallout from this is very stressful. I find I learn new things about admin everyday. The issue of RCT and VAT has come up for the BOM as we have construction work under way. It is finally starting to make sense. Until today, I thought RCT and VAT were the same thing! Ouch!

In some instances, possibly due to the inexperience of Board volunteers, Principals find themselves leading in areas of BoM policy direction. In the research, Principals describe spending time reading employment law and other legal documents. They appear to deal single-handedly with the employment and retention of casual staff and they advise on entitlements and on contracts. In times of difficulty, they represent the Boards of Management at Equality Tribunals and at other hearings. In terms of school expansion and inclusive educational policies and practices, it is the Principal who sets up, monitors and staffs additional units for pupils with ALN and it is the Principal or designated assistant teacher who operates as the point of contact for all external support agencies.

In the Irish education system, the management authorities of schools recommend that Board meetings be scheduled approximately every eight working weeks (CPSMA, 2014). Between such meetings, the management activities summarised above and those described at length in the research, provide clear evidence the fact that many Principals control much of the management function in their schools on a day-to-day basis and during times of exceptional workload also. Principals lead in these activities and in the management of the meetings that oversee them. To perform such tasks, Principals devote considerable amounts of time during the school day to carrying out Board of Management functions. They also make themselves available to Chairpersons and to Treasurers as sources of advice. They find themselves on call in the evenings, not simply for attendance at BoM meetings but for trouble-shooting and for problem-solving whenever necessary.

6.8   The Principal's Work Necessitates an Emotional Engagement

Kelchtermans et al. describe how "emotional relationships are pivotal to the concept of educational leadership" (2011, p.94) and in this regard, an analysis of the diary and interview data illustrate a number of conclusions (Appendix E). Some Principals describe how they meet the daily challenges of their role with openness and transparency. They claim that staff could read their faces "like a book" and could see through any effort to fake emotional responses. Some claim to genuinely enjoy the emotional aspects of the role and they report feeling energised daily by pupils and staff. Some recount building on their experiences as class teachers and approaching daily tasks in an upbeat manner. Principal 20 offers the following diary entry:

> *If we didn't have the pupils and staff that give us encouragement and positivity, the job would drown me. I find on occasion that the staff and pupils carry me to a better place so that I can face the challenge. I don't tell them that because they need a leader not a crutched follower. The bugger must not give pain to the teacher's ears, but rather a spark to get up and tear into it once more ... If there was ever a need for staff to feel supported, it is now. Principals need them more than they need Principals. They can all teach, work and love the children. I just keep them in the boat and not drifting away. Staffs need minding and encouraging and not just driving.*

Others produce a remarkably different narrative however. A sense on vocation, an aptitude for social engagement and an apparent disposition towards leading is weighed against the personal and home-life demands that the work necessarily entails.

> *I find the personal end of the role difficult. By nature, I'm more introverted than extrovert and I find the public nature of the job difficult. I find I bury my feelings about it quite a bit or I wouldn't be able to do it at all. I'm interested in what this project has brought up for me* (Principal 21).

Principal 28 reports the opinion that being a leader in public is like walking "on eggshells, like an actress on a stage and your reputation suffers any time you are losing face". Others report the consequences of dealing with disgruntled staff whose pay and conditions have been adversely affected. Some Principals also express dissatisfaction due to their own pay-cuts. It is noted in several entries and interviews

that a perceived "battering" of teachers in the national media has a demoralising effect at school level (Interviews with Principals 8, 12 and 15). Principal 20 elaborates on a real and everyday dilemma of such circumstances:

> The younger teachers and the teachers now seem to be spiteing the system with an I-don't-care attitude. You want to make sure that this doesn't impact upon the children. We have to say, "Fuck it, we are going to get cut by 7% or 8% if we are above 65 grand. With our allowances, there is a good chunk of us going to be hit like that but we still have to put the sunny side out and say, "look, we have to get on and teach these kids ... They are looking for a way of making it a bit easier for themselves because the department doesn't appreciate them, and the Department doesn't appreciate them ... *We cannot afford to express that. We can only be embittered in our own little offices and we have to keep it inside our offices. If we become embittered and we let that be seen and the staff witnesses and the staff take note of it, then it will open almost anarchy and free rein for the teachers to turn around and say, "I'm not going to train the football team any more" or "we are teaching the curriculum and that is what we are paid to do, so I am not going to do the green school flag." You are relying on goodwill and you don't want to overstep the mark. They will turn around and say, "Look at that fellow over there. He's doing that for the Principal.*

Several Principals recount how they end their day with a sense of guilt and how they go home "worn out" to face their families. One in particular tells of how she only reports the "good bits" of the day (Appendix D). Another is pleased that the family is out as she arrives home. Enjoying the solitude, she falls asleep and later runs a bath (Appendix C).

> *I had a relaxing bath when I came home. There was nobody in at all and I was glad as I had nothing left to give anyone. I sat down in the chair exhausted and I fell asleep. When I awoke I have the bath. Then, I felt human again.*

Harris proposes that the "current social, political and economic climate has depersonalised communities" and that it leads school populations to see teachers and Principals more so as functionaries and less so as people. The consequent effects can be emotionally challenging and draining for those involved in the service of others (2007, p.5).

Personal responses to the emotional demands of the Principal's role are varied but there is general agreement that school leadership demands that the Principal presents a good face and appears strong; whether one adopts the challenge instinctively or

171

needs to don "a magic cloak" (Interview with Principal 9). There is evidence of Goffman's theories of "multiple selfing" therefore in many cases as the self in the role is conceptualised as a kind of performance (Goffman 1959; Meier 2010). Principals' self-awareness in some cases may therefore be heavily influenced by how they feel they are perceived by others and by the demands of others' expectations, rather then by what they themselves bring to the engagement personally.

Consequently, the perception among Principals in many instances appears to be that their negative emotions cannot be exposed to the school community. Kelchtermans et al. describe similar experiences, those that may give rise to a sense of vulnerability and isolation as "the endemic and chronic condition of leadership life" (2011, p.94). An outgoing and somewhat extrovert personality may perhaps be of benefit but critically, whatever personal approach is adopted, it can be concluded that school leaders must rely on their own personal resources above all else and that they must be seen to lead by practical example and with an overtly positive disposition.

6.9   Being a Principal is Rewarding Work

The personal rewards of being a school Principal are drawn from the data under four headings: "School-based" and "professional" rewards relate to the enjoyment of working in the school while the satisfaction of "task completion" and the rewards associated with displays of "emotional intelligence" are considered separately (Appendix E).

By far the most popular expression of personal satisfaction relates to teaching activities and to engaging directly with pupils in their learning. The Principals display and report unashamedly that they possess a positive emotional disposition towards their daily work. Typically they "love" teaching, they "love" children and this is a "favourite" aspect of the job (Appendix C). In terms of a national population and a

172

general workforce, it may be worth taking a step back and questioning honestly who else and in what other occupation might a case study report find such an outright and intense enjoyment of any feature of an employee's daily work? A diary entry from Principal 27 expresses a typical sentiment:

> *Leading a school community is a privilege. Yes, GAM, resource hours, CP2, parents, staff and pupils make it more difficult than it need be sometimes. However, if you take the time to stop, listen and view outside the classroom, from the infants right up to 6th class, within 10 seconds you can see learning happening. Happy children and fantastic teachers are making a huge difference. I wouldn't hand the keys back. It's the best professional decision I ever made!*

Only three of the participants are teaching Principals whose daily responsibilities include full-time classroom responsibilities. The majority are administrative Principals in larger schools. Some of the Principals in the larger schools avail of opportunities outside of their full-time management and administration remit however to engage in co-teaching in literacy lessons and in whole school instruction in sports and arts activities. Others are content to close the office in order to cover for absent colleagues in their classrooms and some stay late after school hours in a voluntary capacity, outside of the additional hours agreed in productivity agreements (LRC, 2013), to coach sports activities. Principals enjoy encouraging and motivating their staff members also. They report experiencing a sense of pride in the fabric and appearance of the school and they welcome any positive feedback that is given by visitors. They are enthused at the prospect of representing the school at public events and they enjoy a sense of the possibility that their schools are active in making a difference in their local communities. Principal 11 offers a generally held perspective:

> *Also I think that with Principals and with teachers in general, you feel that you are making the difference and especially with kids with problems. If you refer them to agencies or to services, you can see an improvement over the years taking place or if you better the life of that child. You can see that the child's life has improved because of your intervention and that is a good buzz in the job as well. You feel as if you are making the difference. You are helping these kids. Then of course, when the kids finish the secondary school and a comeback to you and they say that they had great fond memories of the school here, is a great boost for everybody as well. They are actually gone from the school and they can say whatever they want. You have no handle over them. But, they always have fond memories and are always courteous. They are all hard men but they will (address the teacher is courteously by name). In any really disadvantaged area, where they spend a lot of their lives in school, isn't*

it great that they have such fond memories and that they will come back to the school? There is great personal reward and satisfaction.

Some Principals express a value in the sense of respect and appreciation that the Office sometimes brings. They display a professional openness to an attitude articulated by Green, that upskilling can improve school leadership performance (2000). A willingness to take time out of the building, particularly for purposeful CPD is noted. The positional power of being the Principal also allows individuals to devote themselves to whole-school improvement projects and while a considerable effort is involved in such projects, the extra work is undertaken without any reference to additional personal financial gain. That Principals appear willing to do more for less tangible reward at a time of public service pay restrictions, is evidence perhaps for Adair's nine characteristics of vocation (2000, pp.2-16), of Greenleaf's descriptors of servant leadership in education (1977, pp.176-214) and of a disposition towards Block's conceptualization of "stewardship" (1996).

In general, the Principals in the research who undertake school-based improvement projects appear to experience most satisfaction from them when the work is undertaken as a team activity involving the school community. Ultimately however, it could be assessed that what Principals appear to enjoy most about their work is a sense of completion. From large-scale fundraisers to simply clearing the desk on Friday evenings, Principals express immense personal satisfaction in simply getting the job completed (Appendix C).

Emotionally, Principals appear quite astute in that they demonstrate an awareness of a range of everyday difficulties and a willingness to accept the complexities of problematic situations. They evidence a disposition towards the positive and a resilience to overcome. They carry aspects of their teaching vocation and personal formation into the role of Principal and they demonstrate an acceptance of and an empathy with members of the school community (Stynes, 2011). They appear naturally disposed towards positive interpersonal interactions, even in the face of antagonism and confrontation. While the researcher-driven diaries and interview transcripts contain many negative comments from Principals about aspects of their roles, for the most part, Principals demonstrate outwardly and in public that they are

committed to the good of their schools. This is found across the group, at all career stages and for both males and females. As Green asserts, Principals "become the embodiment of the school" (2000, p.2). Principal 12 offers a possible explanation:

> *The other thing that came out over and over again in lots of people's responses is that we are all the same. We absolutely love of our work with children. We love when we get in to teach. I absolutely love when I get in to read a story or when I get to take a lesson. That came out in so many of them. Ultimately, we are teachers and we are teachers first. That is why we came into the profession and it is what we like to do best and it is probably what we are best at. That came out and it was interesting to see so many people saying that.*

6.10   Principals' Perspectives on Leadership

An analysis of the data illustrates that Principals comment extremely favourably about their previous experiences as class teachers before their promotions. Their reasons for seeking and achieving promotion differ remarkably. While some pursue a career plan, others appear to simply fall into the role, almost by accident. In some cases there is neither "inbound" nor "insider" knowledge (Hargreaves and Fink 2006, p.73). Preparation for the role is sometimes non-existent and anticipation of new challenges appears futile. Newly appointed Principals rely on adrenaline to launch their careers and invariably they find administration entirely overwhelming. Some note that teachers in their schools are reluctant to follow suit and to seek promotion because of their perceptions that the Principal's role appears too challenging. Bubb and Earley support such a perception and comment that "headteachers often put the needs of others before themselves" and thereby undergo the risk of overloaded responsibilities, which can in turn give rise to evidence of a work-life imbalance at times (2004, p.108).

A large number of individual strengths are identified however in the research, offering an optimistic outlook for Principals' leadership practices. In general, while management and leadership roles merge often indistinguishably during daily activities, Principals report a self-awareness of leadership practices at meetings, in their dealings with senior teachers, with staff in general, with pupils, parents and with the wider community. Principal 15 reports:

> *Leadership for me is keeping focused on what's best for pupils and on how to achieve this ... giving staff opportunities to develop their own leadership skills, the need for good communication skills, to be levelheaded and keep focused on long-term goals and not get caught up in the endless amount of tasks and "distractions" that occur.*

Sergiovanni notes that the primary trait of Principals' leadership behaviour is to "inspire all concerned to join in accomplishing the school's mission" (1995, p.4). Leadership is portrayed as an attractive process that requires juggling, flexibility, quick thinking, willingness, common sense and energy. Green describes it as an exercise in "mental gymnastics" (2000, p.3). It is lived and experienced in the process of focusing on simple tasks such as improving punctuality and it is best demonstrated in active team membership. The leadership of the Principal teacher permeates all school activities and is required at all times. Perhaps the most significant commentaries involve Principals who build self-resilience, leadership aspirations and leadership capacities in those around them. Principal 12 explains as follows:

> *I would never see myself as someone who wants to be the boss and who tells people what to do. I have never been like that and I have never liked working in those sorts of places. I have worked in schools that had very much top-down leadership and that wouldn't appeal to me. I have always liked schools where decision-making was shared and where people were encouraged.*

Bridgehouse and Woods maintain that such a leadership perspective is grounded in a sense of moral purpose and a willingness to accept teachers as the real leaders in the everyday business of schooling (1999). Principals offer a realistic and common sense approach to a myriad of real-world leadership challenges:

Just realise very quickly that you cannot change all the problems in the world. No matter what you do, all of those problems will still be there. There will be a lot of them that you cannot solve no matter what you try to do. The world is still a bad place and you cannot solve all of the problems. You can just do your best (Principal 11).

It is very difficult to get the headspace to be an effective leader when one has too many practical issues to face on the ground: Issues with staff, issues with finance and the pressure of diminishing resources, issues about special needs, issues about poor morale, issues about numbers, issues responding to external factors like the media, the DES and society. Leadership is vitally important (Principal 17).

Schools and their wider communities invariably generate conflict and this is exacerbated in the research setting by issues of low morale that are attributed to economic factors (Appendix C). In particular, Principals note that their hands are tied in their dealings with unsupportive staff and particularly with teachers that they consider to be underperforming. Lengthy and cumbersome industrial relations processes leave Principals feeling powerless, isolated and frustrated as they attempt the "difficult conversations" unaided.

Principals demonstrate a sense of ethical leadership in their approaches to such dilemmas. The role of a vocation, examining the influence of values, caring, decision-making, reliance on moral principles, the human value laden aspect of the work, accountability, setting standards, identity and integrity, perceptions of personal success and a sense of a personal calling all reside at the heart of the problem-solving rationale.

6.11   A Demanding and a Negative Experience

The quantity of 474 positive experiences, indicated by Principals in a tally during the keeping of their daily diaries, far outweigh the 104 negatives recorded. However, their long handed accounts and interview transcripts accentuate the negative aspects and provide a more balanced and significantly complex professional narrative. An analysis of the qualitative data shows similar results to that of Southworth's (2002) research, in that it offers a more detailed elaboration of the demands and negative experiences associated with the role (Appendix E).

MacBeath and Myers comment that educational leadership "has many facets and many faces, it is dependent on the school and community context and there is no simple linear relationship between leaders and followers" (1999, p.3). Similarly, the nature and the level of work-related demands of the Principals in this research vary widely. While most Principals comment about the implications of being constantly available to everyone and about feeling responsible for everything, including unblocking the toilets, this aspect of the work appears to be taken for granted.

> *Principals do put in an awful lot of their own time and we are all the same I think. My school, I treat like my home with how much respect and how much I care for it. With a lot of Principals, it was coming through that that's how they feel about their schools as well. They would do anything to keep this show on the road even if it does impede on their day* (Principal 13).

What is notable however is a range of activities that emerge from the data to demonstrate Day and Leithwood's model of "leaderful" relationships at work (2007, p.4). Principals report on the subtle and complex inter-personal challenges that they experience in dealing with staff with personal or family problems (Appendix C). In other instances, Principals handle issues of staff division. In somewhat minor cases, Principals attempt to handle bullying allegations and to deal with uncooperative staff. In extreme cases, Principals undertake the legal and industrial relations workload on behalf of their Boards of Management (Interviews with Principals 5 and 10). There is some evidence that being the only male in an otherwise all-female teaching staff may give rise to certain questions:

178

Definitely, the caretaker is only part-time ... there are days when he doesn't show up. We share the grounds with (another school) and it usually falls to me. I would be in early anyway. The caretaker might contact me and ask me to open up. I don't mind and it doesn't happen too often anyway. He might go off sick or he might go AWOL for a day or two so I take that over then. That is an issue. Well, it's not an issue but a reality. I'm n male among an all-female staff and that is an issue not just for me but for parents and children as well, in trying to promote a male role model and gender equity in relation to working with young children. I think that is always a reality check (Principal10).

Relationships with parents are noted also and these bring extremely diverse pressures to bear on Principals. In more affluent communities, parents are vocal about pupils' test performances. The pressure on improving standards leads to staff engagement in curricular CPD during out-of-school hours (Interview with Principal 13).

For a lot of them, yes, having their children attain high standards is what they want from schools and when that is done then they are finished. That is something that is not nice about the position but I think it is typical of the school that I am in ... Oh yes, the big thing where I work is, "why isn't my son at a STEN of 10?" You are kind of saying, "well, he is at a STEN of 7 and he is doing fine. If he keeps working, he will go to university. I am probably a STEN of 6 or 7 myself. Most of us are. We are in that average curve in the centre". The pressure is on all the time to get these children up there because that's what their parents want. Now, they do get a lovely holistic and rounded education here because we do everything and we don't just concentrate on English and Math's but there is that kind of pressure and it's not nice.

In less affluent communities, problems with challenging behaviour are widely reported. Principals in DEIS schools in particular, report incidents of physical confrontation where they are verbally abused in unannounced and unprovoked attacks from parents. When questioned on this, they clarify that such incidents involve bad language, roaring in loud tones and the fear of physical violence (Interview with Principal 1). In one extreme case in the research, a Principal reports on fears for her personal safety from being "beaten, kicked or stabbed" by an out-of-control pupil with ALN (Appendix C).

Unsurprisingly, a significant number of the Principals describe a frustration, an exhaustion and a sense of stress that they associate with their roles. They described the health impacts of sleep problems and, in one particular case, of weight gain, that result from feelings of isolation and lack of support in their daily management and leadership experiences (Appendix C). Kelchtermans et al. explain that this situation is

far from unusual when the work-life balance of Principals is studied internationally (2011). Moreover, it is far from unexpected in their estimation, given the dominant managerial discourse that prioritises efficiency, effectiveness and performativity over the quality of emotional relationships in schools, as a means of determining educational leadership success.

Family and out of school life is impacted upon by Principals' commitments and workloads. While family life is described in terms of its own demands by way of newborn babies, dinners and evening routines, Principals in the research narrative describe bringing home both physical work and work "in their heads" (Appendix C). Physical work generally involves administrative duties or even returning to the school on occasion to attend meetings but more significant perhaps are the instances where Principals are occupied mentally with problems of staff relations or child protection issues. Principal 7 reports being in the attic of the school on one particular day inspecting the roof. When asked "why?" she replied somewhat bemusedly:

> *Yes, why was I in the attic? It a little bit like when I find myself in the supermarket buying toilet rolls. I'm buying 500 toilet rolls and I ask, "how did this happen?" (Laughs).*

Feelings of carrying the sole responsibility for house-keeping and other school-related situations are offset and compensated for somewhat in Principals' private lives, where distracting, time-consuming, active and engaging personal interests are found. Examples mentioned in the research include community work or "Tidy Towns" committees (Interview with Principal 6).

Incidental accounts of Principals' human engagements with others emerge from the data. The findings support those of MacBeath and Myers, whose investigations into school communities' perceptions of what makes a "good" school leader, demonstrate that people's opinions depend "almost entirely on the nature of relationships and personal qualities" exemplified by the Principal. The various personal narratives witness the Principals in this research embroiled in the flesh and blood realities of complex life situations with individuals inside and outside of the work situation. Principals recount how they support others through a series of "ordinary troubles",

those described by Goffman (1959) and Meier (2010) as mistakes or events for which nobody can be blamed but that give rise to feelings of insecurity and upset nonetheless. In various instances, Principals support colleagues with serious illnesses and bereavements and they support them through pregnancy and miscarriages (Appendix C). Principals recount handling the raw emotion of painful encounters, mediating in relationship difficulties and facing down out of control situations. They offer empathy and an absence of ego as possible success strategies. Principal 17 offers the following explanation:

> *I don't have a huge ego either ... my objective is the future of these children really and that they would be ready for the next stage; if they are in 5th class that they would be ready for 6th and if they are in 6th, that they would be ready for secondary school and looking to the future and that their families would be repaid for the investment that they are putting into their schooling.*
>
> *(Is) there is no room for ego in the job?*
>
> *No, the thing is that you would become like Ozymandias. You would come crashing down ... A good Principal is as good as their staff. If you have that good and hard-working staff and if you have class teachers who aspire ... when you have that calibre of person, sure you are laughing.*

6.12   Principals' Comments on Career Progression

An analysis of Principals' commentaries raises many unexpected results. Off-the-cuff remarks in particular, demonstrate both the remarkable similarities and the differences between the various school contexts (Appendix E). Experience appears to play an important role in how Principals handle daily situations but there are no clear indications as to whether this is dependent upon age, maturity, teaching experience or experience as a Principal. Principals themselves are also unsure on this point. Kowalski adds to the complexity in noting that variables such as individual personality difference, role difference and institutional difference also have their parts to play (2010). What can be clearly established however is that Principals are called

upon as key problem solvers in schools and that a number of strategies prove valuable. These include offering a listening and supportive persona, being honest and solution focused, drawing on one's experience as the class teacher, having faith in one's own perceptions when weighing up the opinions of others and the judicious exercise of the authority of the Office of the Principal in order to prioritise the needs of pupils above simply keeping the adults in the building content.

As with all leaders, the Principals in the research appear driven by success. To this end, Principals demonstrate MacBeath's and Myers' three leadership styles: The collaborative and collegiate, the flexible and mixed and the strong and upfront (1999, p54). When the data is analysed, a number of important success-related themes emerge that prove insightful. Success is stated in terms of having parents on board and employing the right staff. Parents and teachers should embrace a shared responsibility and a shared ownership to enable the successful operation of the school. When this happens, problematic situations such as indiscipline are more easily resolved. Principal 3 offers the following example:

> *There was one incident in the afternoon when a young teacher needed help with a 6th class boy who enjoys throwing temper tantrums, again and again. My experience as a teacher and authority as a Principal combined to solve the problem. He returned later - the teacher that is - for a chat. We spoke as colleagues. We genuinely shared the difficulties and it was all quite positive.*

A sense of enthusiasm, vibrancy, hard work and trust permeates successful schools. Appreciation, encouragement, praise and recognition are important also. Principals mention commendations from school visitors and from school inspections in extremely favourable terms.

Some of the qualities required in school Principals in order that they may lead schools towards their various successes are also drawn from the data. Principals, as school leaders, require a personal resilience of character and a commitment to hard work. They require reserves of energy and stamina throughout their careers in order to successfully meet challenges that are described as sometimes "wearing" and "wrecking" (Appendix C). Aspects of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002) and of stewardship (Block, 1996) are obvious in approaches to daily tasks that are

182

underpinned by principles of morality, conscience and contribution, above almost all else. Principals are required to balance the sole responsibility of running the school with an acceptance of teamwork and successful delegation. Ultimately they are required to be steadfast, self-reliant and self-sustaining and to do all that is humanly possible to manage and to lead in circumstances where they feel that children come first in the universal order of importance over everything else imaginable. Principal 11 offers the following insight:

> *Some people's problems would not be major problems at all. I am working in a DEIS band 1 and I have problems of a much higher scale. Like, a kid coming in without a full uniform wouldn't bother me in the least in the morning. I might say, "would you be sure to have your uniform on the next day" but I wouldn't lose any sleep over it. Some people really get hot under the collar. At Principal's meetings as well, it really bugs people that they don't have the full uniform or that the tie isn't straight. I look at a lot of those things with a different perspective. The kid would probably love to have a full uniform if the bloody parents would get up and wash it and have it ready for them in the morning. It's not the kid's fault. It's the parents' fault for sending them out.*

When asked for advice during the research process as to how aspiring or newly appointed Principals might approach such a challenge, the participating Principals again draw heavily upon models of servant leadership and stewardship in their efforts to balance their personal and professional commitments. Professionally, in "doing the right thing, rather than doing things right", they signal a conviction to prioritise the importance of responsible decision-making over popularity (Interview with Principal 10). Problem solving in complex human situations is best achieved, they advise, through pragmatic, measured, appropriate and timely actions. The school community requires that Principals be seen as forthcoming, welcoming and honest. School leaders are advised to act like conscientious and careful motorists by undertaking each new journey afresh. Similarly, Southworth describes successful leaders as those who are "profoundly aware of their responsibilities for the school" (2002, p.198). They are advised in colloquial terms by Principal 20 to connect with those around them by investing in the social capital of their schools, by "wading around in the gutter" so to speak and "hopefully not losing a welly along the way!"

6.13   Issues of Personal and Professional Sustainability

In commenting on "being a successful school leader" Green notes that "it's a great life, if you don't weaken" (2000, p.10). From the primary researcher's perspective, with 15 years experience in the role, coding the data to investigate "sustainability" proves to be the most interesting and personally meaningful area of the narrative (Appendix E). In this section, Principals demonstrate a high level of trust and openness in talking openly about their human engagement in their leadership roles and about the challenges they experience over time as they handle the "ever-changing but constantly contradictory pressures" of school life (Thody 1997, p.8).

Principals offer a comprehensive list of their multiple and competing daily demands from a variety of school backgrounds. While one might expect such a list to be populated by routine tasks such as visiting classrooms, mentoring teachers or meeting with parents to discuss issues such as bullying and school standards, a number of the activities described appear to be quite surprising. Principal 29 recalls his experiences over an 8 year period in which he has been involved in fundraising for "a soccer field, dressing rooms, Jubilee and literacy resources and IT in the region of €300,000." The same Principal notes the following:

> *Initially I loved the job and was extremely challenged in leadership. As the years have progressed I am now starting to feel very overwhelmed by the constant competing demands of the position. I feel a reduction in funding to schools, through the capitation grant and in particular the minor works, has led to a constant need for fundraising with the Principal leading this process.*

Other Principals remark on their willingness to do "anything" for the school and their availability and readiness to do "everything" that others will not, but in a system that appears largely devoid of middle management and that is described as too dependent on the energy and drive of one person, the challenge appears to be that Principals feel that they ultimately are responsible for everything; even projecting a positive appearance.

It seems that no cracks are allowed to appear in the leadership veneer, even when individuals undertake work that they describe as overwhelming, exhausting, energy draining and all consuming. In any walk of life, issues of sustainability would be entirely understandable under such circumstances. One Principal comments quite candidly that the pressure is "full on" at times and that "it takes its toll" (Interview with Principal 25).

Principals appear to approach daily tasks with a sense of lived personal engagement rather than simply setting targets and ticking boxes of "lifeless lists" (Southworth 2002, p.198). However, the emotional component that they invest in their work appears in many cases to lead to a sense of frustration and negativity. Principal 31 describes how the role "builds barriers" inside her that effect her personal life. Principal 29 reports working through personal illness and not being able to afford the "luxury" of taking time off. "Remaining positive in these difficult times has me exhausted" she comments.

A comment that Principals simply could not do the job if they didn't enjoy it appears to ring true as a number of Principals describe how they experience an increasing sense of burnout due to assumed obligations and responsibilities in their work. These findings, while not explored in depth, raise issues of micro level sociological theory as Principals undertake strategic leadership practices in order to control how others see their actions. As social actors, Principals' activities are influenced by time, space and audience. They engage in in various aspects of "self-presentation" and invest their energies in the "management of impressions" (Goffman 1959; Moore 2010; Di Domenico and Phillips 2010). A key tenet of this understanding is that perception impacts upon our construction of reality and as time passes, some Principals appear to tire of the performance and like it less and less.

Those who have passed through the initial stages of a leadership career progression offer a different perspective from those who are beginning their journey. LDS outlines the terms of service for Irish Principals (2007, p.38): "Leadership posts, generally, are occupied to retirement age, which is normally 65" although those appointed to the public service before 2004 "may retire on reaching their 55th birthday" on completion of at least 35 years teaching service. The Principalship in Ireland is therefore seen by

most as a job for life in the school to which one is promoted, unless one seeks voluntarily to apply for a Principalship in another school or to return to class teaching. Significantly, the latter option affects both pay and pension entitlements.

Several of the Principals in this research speak of leadership succession and of a preference for cyclical leadership periods. Principal 26 suggests the following:

> *I have always believed in the idea of the rotating Principalship. Not rotating around the staff but maybe a contract every 7 or 8 years. I think that would be very good and I think it would be good for Deputy Principal because there is an awful lot of management and leadership involved. I felt that I gave my absolute all in (my previous school) but I didn't think that I could sustain it. I couldn't sustain it. I needed to get a break because it was full-on.*

Instead of the role simply being "a matter of stamina" (Thody 1997, p.168) or of working out the remainder of one's career in a school as Principal, they suggest that a shorter period of tenure might benefit both a school and its Principal. This finding supports the earlier work of Hargreaves and Fink who describe leaders reaching a "summit" in their career at around 4-10 years. After this time, they maintain that leadership engagement changes. Typically, "they begin to feel that their work is done and that it's time to move on." (2006, p.78). The Principals in the research recognise however that for such a system to operate successfully, satisfactory employment safeguards would be required, particularly in relation to payment and the possibility of returning to the Principalship from class teaching at a later time, should a person so wish.

Of those who spoke about retirement, a clear and vivid picture is portrayed of life after the Principalship. There is little mention of the academic theories of leadership succession, of outbound knowledge or of leaving a legacy (Hargreaves and Fink 2006, p.73). Instead, there is talk of the practical prospect of a well-earned rest, a sense of enjoyment and a feeling that the weariness of the burden of being solely responsible for so much that is so important will finally be lifted from one's shoulders (Appendices B and D). Conclusions and recommendations, other than one that simply promotes retirement from the Principalship, are included in the following and final chapter of the case study report.

Chapter 7

Recommendations and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 concludes the case study report by considering a range of recommendations and a summary of the case. In a narrative commentary, it explores the limitations of the questioning process and the implications of its answers. A perspective is offered as to how the study contributes to academic work in the field of research in education and the value of the learning outcomes for professional practice in Ireland is considered. Recommendations for further studies are included throughout. The chapter is supported by the empirical evidence of Principals' first hand accounts of their own experiences and selected parting words of advice are offered from a range of sources. The Thesis concludes with a synopsis of the work.

7.2 The Case Study and its Findings

While the previous chapter reviewed the research question and offered a number of possible answers, this chapter concludes the study by addressing a number of the issues raised within the available structures. It is hoped that a process of naturalistic generalisation of the case details will have raised considerably more questions and answers in the consciousness of readers (Melrose, 2010). The final chapters of this report are therefore intended to draw out various threads in the literature review and to weave them together with strands of the methodology chapter. Along with elements of the fieldwork and the data analysis chapters, they aim to produce a report of the general tapestry by binding together the various materials and experiences into a cohesive structure; thereby providing a good yarn as it were, to stand the tests of time.

Exemplary case study reporting is dependent upon the structure and the logic of the theory developed within the case (Yin 2009; Weatherbee 2010). The theory building structure must provide evidence that the case is presented in as complete a manner as possible and the arguments must be based upon a method and an analysis that is transparent and understandable to the reader. Ideally it should be critically reviewed by someone other than the author before its presentation and to this end, the work at

hand was shared and discussed with a number of critical friends in advance of its submission to the University (Acknowledgements, p.iv). The recommendations below therefore, are drawn from a number of perspectives.

7.3 Limitations and Implications of the Study

It must be acknowledged initially that a key limitation of the study is that it provides merely a snapshot of one group of Principals during a set period of time in 2013. In some cases the Principals describe it as a typical week in that no week is typical of any other and all that is typical is that the unexpected continually happens. From this perspective it could be argued perhaps that interpreting any such snapshot of any such an event is a limited experience at best. This seemingly bizzare perspective is perhaps best explained in the Principals' own words:

> *These other diaries, they are extremely typical of what Principals do. You never know what is coming through your door at any time. It is typical in that it's untypical because you never know what's coming at you. I cannot say to (the secretary) that between 9am and 10am we will go through the e-mails ... because any time that I have written out a little timetable for myself to do, especially with going to classes to visit teachers, something always comes up ... All of these diary returns are all typical in that they are so untypical. A Principal never knows what they have to do* (Interview with Principal 8).

> *I would say that in many ways it was a particularly busy week but at the same time it was not so far away from normal, where everything happens. After reading everybody else's, and after looking at everybody else's, everything seems to happen everybody do you know? Anything can seem to happen on a day I think. That would have been normal enough. It looks on paper that I was particularly busy with ups and downs but at the same time it was not too much away from normal* (Interview with Principal 1)

Another limitation exists in the form of human language and how it is used. The input data and the conclusions of the research process are mediated by a sign system that is open equally to human interpretation and misinterpretation (Begoray and Banister, 2010). The writings of Ferdinand de Saussure (Culler, 1976), Michel Foucault (1972) and Jacques Derrida (1967) on such matters elaborate the complexities of the signifier

and the signified, conceptualisations of discourse and potential distortions in meaning and in language difference from that which is intended and that which is received. How we know that participants in a case study meant exactly or even approximately what they said when the utterances are read out of context, following the rigour of a researcher's transcription process, is entirely a matter of trust and human intuition. While all precautions have been taken by the researcher to ensure a verbatim authenticity, including the presence of colloquialisms and even expletives at times, the human tone is absent from the written exchange and no guarantee exists therefore that the diaries and interview transcripts will be received and interpreted or signified in the minds of the readership as they were intended by the authors, speakers or signifiers. This however, is a limitation of all such work.

A territorial limitation exists also. The virgin territory of Irish school leadership studies remains, for the most part, almost untouched by the influences of the outside world. A number of brief encounters between Irish school leaders and outside influences have taken place in recent years (Fullan, 2010; Hargreaves 2012) but these have been well chaperoned by the overseeing gaze of school authorities and little, by way of critical research enquiry is published or made available en masse. Most Irish Universities offer a number of independent self-funded courses for individual study and personal advancement in educational leadership but other leadership development initiatives may be considered perhaps to be less than independent in nature as they are sponsored by the employer, The Department of Education and Skills, either directly or indirectly (IPPN 2008, 2014; LDS 2014).

Short courses are also sponsored by the teachers' Trade Union but these are typical of almost all the others in that arguably, they arrive too late and are short-lived. In methaphorical terms, there appears to be little logic in teaching the Princess the facts of life while she dances with Princes at the ball and in this respect, it could be argued that the system in Ireland fails its incumbent school leaders by providing no real home-truths about what can be expected in the real-world when the Princes, suitors and the boogeymen come calling:

I would say that for myself, it's a great shock to the system the first time that you have conflict or something. You get more used to dealing with it. I'm not saying that it doesn't knock the stuffing out of you but you get calmer ways of dealing with conflict and dealing with hassle or problems ... I go to meet it rather than waiting for it in the long grass or whatever. It does make you a lot more experienced and able to cope. You build stuff inside of yourself. It's how you explain how you deal with it and you get better ways of dealing with it (Interview with Principal 1).

In the absence of formal leadership preparation programmes, Sugrue's research describes newly appointed Principals in Ireland simply "keeping afloat" during their "initiation" period (2005, p.138). Dempster and Berry's analogy of Principals "blindfolded in a minefield ... strewn with many decision making dangers" (2003, p.2) is perhaps apt. Research in such an under-developed context might be considered somewhat more investigative or anthropological than similar research abroad and one has to recognise that it may have limited appeal on an international scale where progress in knowledge generation in the field of leadership in education is well advanced.

On a national scale however, this research is presented as a significant insight into school leadership. It highlights a range of local issues such as the wide variance in the daily experiences of Principals in more socially advantaged communities and those who work in the poorer areas of Irish society. It demonstrates that Principals' self-awareness is based on how they feel they are perceived by others and that this "multiple selfing" is stressful (Goffman 1959). Significantly, it provides evidence that Principals feel unsupported and often isolated and that their workload is daunting. "The lucid loneliness of the gatekeeper" is clearly palpable in the voices and sentiments of those who have no peer group and no real colleagues in the workplace (Kelchtermans et al., 2011).

7.4 Contributions of the Study

Texts exist that offer advice and instruction to Principals (Adair 1983; McEwan 2005; Schlechty 2009) and texts exist that shed light on the first hand experiences of lived leadership (Sugrue 2005; Thomson 2009). This case study adds to the latter body of knowledge by exploring individual school leaders' professional and personal engagements in their daily practices at the crossroads between context and agency. Thomson's description of the "apparent paradox of stress and job satisfaction existing side-by-side" is reiterated by Cuddihy (2012). The anomaly that 83% of the Principals in Cuddihy's research reported spending "too much ... time on paperwork and non-educational matters" and yet 91% reported being satisfied or very satisfied in the role raises serious concern as to the reasons behind such findings.

This study produces similar findings in that it provides evidence that Principals report high levels of job satisfaction while at the same time, they report high levels of stress and frustration at taking on significant and additional amounts of administrative responsibility. It describes the experiences of Principals who spend long periods at work, who undertake fundraising to supplement State building programmes, who encounter personally challenging circumstances and who deal frustratingly with staff underperformance and labour relations issues. The paradox of experiencing such a broadranging workload and yet, remaining positive in the circumstances is worthy of note; for those in the role and for those who wish to study it. One Principal comments,

> *The first thing that I would say to them is that I love, I like it, okay? The second thing is that it is hard work. It is very diverse and every day brings something new. Some days are better than others. I would say that it is very worthwhile and for me as a person, I get a lot out of it. ... I get a kick out of that, when a teacher says that they enjoyed teaching ... The parents use you. When they are finished with you, that's it! When the children have scored their high results, and this goes for the teachers as well, there are very few thank yous from the parents as such, well from the majority of them but not all of them. ... That is the way that they see us and how they see me as the Principal* (Interview with Principal 13).

A further contribution of this study is that it touches briefly on the implications of micro level sociological theory and in particular the studies of Goffman (1959). Such theories, along with Hochschild's theories of "emotional labour" and "the managed heart" provide some insight into why Principals may be reluctant to divulge feelings of negativity about their work experiences and perpetuate a "cheerful sense of shared mission" at times (2012).

It is somewhat of an anomaly in this research that different forms of data gathering record different impresions of Principals' experiences. Principals record 474 positive experiences and only 104 negative experiences in their survey of the working week. However, when the data gathering process changes to that of long-handed written diary entries and qualitative interviewing, an unexpected and significantly greater degree of negativity comes to light. Principals' descriptions of the stresses and strains of going home "wrecked" and of having to energise themselves for the following day offer a somewhat cautionary note that still waters run deep.

> *Well, I think it would be good advice coming into the job not to bring work home. I know that you do bring work home in your head but not to physically bring work home ... I think that I have probably failed at this because you shouldn't hold the job first. ... You don't get that much reward out of it from that point of view and I am not talking about monetary reward now. I think that people are inclined, well I did anyway, I put all of my energy into the job to the detriment of everything else you know, including family life and everything else. Yes, I think that would be good advice to Principals actually, to have a time and to get out of there* (Interview with Principal 18).

A recommendation arises from this research therefore that further study in the vein of Briner et al. into "The nature, causes and consequences of harm in emotionally damaging occupations" should be conducted with Principal teachers (2008). It might be considered a professional healthcare concern that an occupation built on the foundations of integrity, care and trust, such as the Principalship, operates with an assumed requirement that employees must subsume their emotions into a false professionalisation of the role in order to serve the organisation's ends. In an occupation where long-term contextualised leadership is required as part of the overall deal, writers such as Gunter (2001), Taysum (2003) and Ribbins (2008) stress the need for a deep, intellectual and holistic treatment of what it is to be a leader.

193

It is unsurprising that Thomson reports that initial high levels of job satisfaction among Principals "declines, the longer they have been in the post" (2009, p.133). Hargreaves and Fink's writings on sustainability have never perhaps been more relevant (2006). Further study on the demands of the role and on their impact and influences on individuals Principals, particularly through the lens of ethnography, would undoubtedly be of value both to those who occupy the position and to those who oversee its practical and moral long-term sustainability. It could be considered reasonable to assume that any research that sustains "enchanted headteachers" in our schools over time would undoubtedly be worthwhile (Wood 2002, p.3).

7.5 The Value of the Study in Context

Gunter notes, "Teachers and students who tell their stories enable the struggles surrounding identities, relationships and meaning to be made visible" (2001, p.41). The Principals who participated in this research and who trusted their narratives to both the researcher and the readership have made a significant contribution as critical knowledge workers in context. Thomson comments that "toilets are not generally discussed in books about Principals but, as any serving Principal will agree, their operation can consume enormous amounts of time and energy, due to malfunctions or vandalism" (2009, p.87). Similarly in this research, a number of less than attractive aspects of the Principal's working day have come to light through Principals' stories, but in tandem with the more down-to-earth anecdotes we have gleaned valuable and practical first hand accounts that demonstrate the complexities of true leadership disposition. One Principal comments:

> *I believe that it is my job here to make sure of the smooth running on the education of the kids, that it goes on in a smooth fashion ... The second thing is to ensure that the kids get as much of a variety as possible because every one of them is so different ... I make sure that the classes are warm, that they have the best of technology as far as finance will go and that really is my purpose here. I think they do a good job and I think things do run smoothly. I don't get a lot of praise for it. I think you will find that in general, that Principals don't get praised. I do try to praise ... everything that is going on.* (Interview with Principal 6).

Numerous mentions are made in this research of the demoralising effect of the national austerity measures and their impact on primary schooling (LRC, 2013). As a result of such measures, Principals are called upon to operate in situations without middle-management support and a range of daily responsibilities, previously attended to by promoted special-duties teachers, now fall solely to them. Furthermore, Principals are also required to organise additional duties that increase the teachers' working year by 36 hours. Principals handle the demoralising effect of pay-cuts to the salaries of new entrants and they contend with the experience that their own salaries and those of long-standing colleagues are subject to percentage pay-cuts also. The abolition of an allowance for playground supervision impacts upon all teachers during this time. The empirical evidence from the case research illuminates the contextual negativity and disillusionment experienced by some school leaders under such circumstances. The following comments from different Principals' diaries offer a sample of the sentiment expressed:

> *We have a Croke Park meeting after school and I have to get stuff ready for that. It's always a pressure day when this is the case.*

> *Croke Park 2 has really caused me to look at retirement. It is cost neutral but I feel it is important to remember that my life, family, dreams... etc. must be honoured too. The trick is to figure out how to mind my physical and mental health...*

> *I forgot to add that those last two weeks have been overall very negative ones for me as (A) Croke Park and all of that... I never felt this demeaned and low, profession-wise...*

> *Leadership can be more difficult – trying to motivate teachers and staff with all of the cuts they have taken and there are more to come with Croke Park 2. The Department is not helping by rolling out initiative after initiative and by not giving enough time for each...*

> *Croke Park 2 has left me feeling very disillusioned. I don't believe the work of Principals is properly valued. I have a feeling that we are not fully or properly represented by the INTO. Cuts to pay and conditions leave me feeling demoralised. Sometimes it's hard to stay feeling positive and yet a positive attitude is the most important quality from me as a leader...*

> *There is much talk about Croke Park. However, at this time we all just want to work for the pupils.*

It is a recommendation of this research that the effects of the Irish national austerity measures, commonly known as the "Croke Park 1" deal and the "Haddington Road" deal, and their implications for Principals in particular, be further investigated. The consequences of such measures for leadership practices in education and for the development of leadership identities among Irish school Principals are difficult to assess in the short-term. Further study, over a longer period might be considered worthwhile.

7.6 Parting Words of Advice

Theories of democratic leadership in societies and changes in modern organisational design have brought about significant advancements in recent years. However, schools exist and will most likely continue to exist long into the future with formal structures of leadership and authority that are conservative in nature and that remain relatively unchanged. Overall authority is formally invested in a single individual, appointed with the legislated and onerous responsibility for the leadership of the school's strategic vision and for the management of on-site day-to-day local systems' maintenance. In Ireland, this position has evolved, since before the founding of the State, from a culture grounded in vocation and in religious ethos. Rather appropriately in the circumstances, Adair proposes that "leadership is a calling, and that – like all other vocations – its end is service" (2000, p.136). It could reasonably be argued, given the content and meaning of Principals' statements, even in the modern and more secular Ireland of the 21st century, that aspects of vocation, of servant leadership and of stewardship still hold a dominant influence in the leadership practices of the Irish principals in this case study (Greenleaf 1977; Block 1996). One Principal comments:

> *The advice that I got is what I would pass on. It was from a retired Principal who was my schoolteacher down (home). She said, "don't do things right, do the right thing, in relation to anything that you have to do in your role as Principal." ... Sometimes you have to make decisions that may not be easy but if it is for the greater good of the school and of the community, then you*

have to make those decisions ... It's the whole thing of leading by example. I would definitely agree with the other colleagues who have mentioned that. You need to promote a positive and professional outlook among staff. Parents see that. If parents see that you are working and that you are doing the job in a way that you are enjoying what you are doing, in how you behave and responsd to parents, that is worthwhile as well (Interview with Principal 10).

In spite of the much publicised emphasis on performativity and standardisation of test scores in Irish schools and notwithstanding the ominous dark clouds of new public management that undoubtedly loom on the horizons of education, when Principals are asked for parting words of advice, their thoughts turn to matters of community, child-centeredness, collegiality and a sense of the moral good that appears to underpin their leadership identities. Sergiovanni's research on Principals and their schools, finds similar results and he proposes that the prime responsibility of school leaders is that of moral leadership and that their objective should be the creation of the virtuous school (1999). One Principal comments:

I think that one of the first things that I would like to communicate is that I know everybody. To me, that is really important ... I am always trying to make sure that I am visible and that I am approachable and that I am that there ... There was something else. To me, it is very important that the children have an authentic voice and that we are not overly controlling them ... After that then, I would hope that somebody would get it that I trust all of the professionals in the building to be doing what they are doing (Interview with Principal 12).

Hargreaves and Fink propose, "Leadership isn't and shouldn't be easy" (2006, p.272). For newcomers to the Principalship, The National Association of Head Teachers in England offers the advice that one needs to be prepared: "The day is never as you planned it. Remember the interruptions are the job" (2007, p.191). Somewhat ominously, Bristow, Ireson, and Coleman's title heralds the arrival of a mammoth task for those who seek to undertake it: "A life in the day of the head teacher" (2007). As long ago as 1968 Goodwin asserted that "no headmaster can perform this task unless he wields a proper measure of authority: without it he is a sawdust Caesar. Yet there is no automatic authority vested in his office and he can rely on no divine right of headmasters" (p.65). During the same era, Edmonds offered similar advice for new incumbents. It involved none of the management training of current Principal programmes and instead was based on such intangible properties as trust,

intuitiveness and a capacity to accept frustration. "No system of training can give a potential head these qualities, still less measure them," he added (1968, p.vii).

Almost a half-century later, Edmond's sentiments regarding the intrinsic qualities of school leaders hold equally true but a wealth of knowledge has since been generated and disseminated in a variety of fora that assists educators to meet the challenges of a seemingly ever-changing modern society. It is planned that this research will form part of such a process. In the professional world, discussions with the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) following their assistance with the gathering of a sample group of participants has led to an invitation to their national conference for a presentation of the findings in 2015. The researcher has served for a number of years as Chairperson of a regional Principals' and Deputy Principals' Forum of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO). The research was awarded an INTO research bursary in 2013 and it is envisaged that the findings will be made available to Principals through INTO channels also. In the academic world, the findings will be presented to the Education Studies Association of Ireland at their national conference and a synopsis will be submitted for consideration and publication (ESAI, 2014).

On leadership capability, Fink comments that "most of us involved in educational leadership are just ordinary people who are just trying to do the best we can with the tools that we were born with" (2005, p.xiv). These tools include intangibles such as reason, memory, imagination, intuition, common sense, and ethics. Almost a century ago, Angelo Patri demonstrated such qualities when he undertook the role of "schoolmaster of the great city" as Principal of a New York school (Patri, 1917). His meandering account of the minutiae of daily life in the slums of little Italy requires close reading, not because it involves complex theories of educational leadership but because it demonstrates them. A reader wishing to glean similar lessons in leadership from this report is directed to the first hand evidence in the unabridged diary entries from 31 Irish Principal in Appendix C. Equally meandering at times, they also demonstrate leadership in action and a sense of a phenomenon described appositely by Silverman as "the remarkable in the mundane" (2007, p.16).

7.7 Conclusion

The case was made initially in Chapter 1 that taught elements of the Professional Doctorate in Leadership in Education at Dublin City University combined a synthesis of learning opportunities from which the candidate could acquire a critical understanding of selected aspects of theory and practice, specifically in relation to leaders' lives and leadership in educational and in other settings (Fig. 1). Elements of the course merged academic study and the fundamentals of information gathering. In particular, the development of the skills of surveying, diary keeping and interviewing enabled a clear understanding of practical processes. The Doctorate candidate could then successfully undertake fieldwork and produce practical and useful research results, in line with the protocols of responsible and ethical practices.

A background to the research and the researcher presented a rationale and a structure for underpinning an approach to the research question in this study. The context of the research was explained with reference to the nature of scholarly Doctorate work and the challenges of constructing a theoretical framework to investigate the daily experiences of a group of Irish primary school Principals were outlined. A comprehensive evaluation of literature was offered under a number of headings and themes were analysed chronologically and systematically in order to defend the researcher's assumption that a lacunae existed within the corpus of knowledge.

The nature of Principals' work was explored in both the Irish and international contexts and a wide range of opinions were considered on the much-debated notion of the good or successful Principal. The history and geography of a complex and man-made leadership landscape were plotted and in many ways, the journey came full circle. The management and leadership dichotomy was examined in a focused investigation of instructional and transformation practices. Aspects of leadership preparation and the demands of leadership practice were weighed up in the context of child-centered environments. Questions were raised about the nature of followership. The evaluation of the literature also considered Principals' experiences of everyday

work practices and the affect on them, caused by emotional and other contextual demands. An examination of career development and sustainability raised a number of further questions.

A chapter on research design established the researcher's position ontologically and epistemologically. A study of the everyday lives and work experiences of a group of Irish primary school Principals was undertaken from a perspective that considered the potential for knowledge construction in context and the valid interpretation of research findings as a naturalistic generalization (Melrose, 2010). Yin's single-case study design with embedded multiple units of analysis was defended as an appropriate research approach to harness and structure the data from a sample group of 31 volunteer participants (2009). The complexities of conducting fieldwork in sensitive settings and in oftentimes problematic real-life settings determined an optimum choice of research methods. Researcher-driven diaries were piloted, modified and circulated.

All of the Principal teachers involved in the study completed the diaries over a five-day period and a range of information about daily management and leadership activities, both quantitative and qualitative, was provided. Upon return, the entire data set was collated into a single bound document and a copy was returned to each participant. Principals reported that it was both interesting and worthwhile to read the entries of others and to gain insights into the daily working practices and lived experiences of colleagues. 21 of the 31 Principals were available in the following weeks for a second round of data gathering in recorded interviews. These were transcribed and processed along with the contents of the Principals' diaries in a structured programme of qualitative data analysis using QSR's NVivo application.

The results of the analysis were presented in a case study report. It commenced with a detailed description of participating Principals' professional backgrounds and of their school contexts. A quantitative investigation of how Principals managed their time, introduced a more comprehensive set of qualitative data that explored weekly management and leadership activities. Qualitative feedback on Principals' personal perceptions of the demands, challenges and rewards of the work were coded to yield significant results. A more comprehensive analysis was then conducted on the codes

through an organised framework using thematic flowcharts (Miles and Huberman, 1994). A narrative account of the findings was presented in Chapter 6 and unique insights were provided into 12 different aspects of Principals' daily work practices, or of walking a mile in their shoes. Snapshots of daily life, provided honestly and authentically through Principals' own accounts and in their own voices, offered a rare insight into aspects of leadership in Irish schools.

The conclusions bring the readership beyond the theories of many of the published policy imperatives and leadership guidebooks and they offer a contextualised understanding of the lived realities of school management and leadership. The report and the appendices are offered as an engagement in praxis or learning in action, particularly for readers with a professional interest in the topic or for those aspiring to a school leadership role. The Principals in the study offer a range of experiences and opinions about managing and leading in their schools' internal and external environments. They demonstrate a positive work ethic but they exhibit a range of time management issues. Their focus on the curricular aspects of the role, the facet of work that they find most energising, is diminished in many cases by carrying out more mundane tasks. In some instances this happens when Principals undertake to cover time-consuming Boards of Management responsibilities in areas such as building works and finances. Principals are vocal about their emotional investment in the role. They describe the personal rewards and the somewhat less than positive experiences that they encounter in frank detail. They offer a clear insight into diverse perspectives on management and leadership. Conclusions are drawn about the sustainability of certain practices and about career progression within the current system.

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Appendix A

Pilot Researcher-Driven Diary 2011

Survey of Today: _30_ _03_ 2011

A Day in The Life – A chance to reflect on the demands of my work today as school Principal. Part of a DCU study of the work of eight Principals over a three-week period in term II of 2010/2011. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured under ethical research guidelines.

1. Time in school: A simple calculation of how long we spent working today.

h m
8 45

| Arrived at: _02_ : _00_ am. | Departed work: _3_ : _45_ pm | Other time: ___h ___mins. |

2. This part of the survey asks about how we actually spent time today at work and how fulfilling or otherwise this was.

Time spent today in 5 key areas.	Approx % of today.	Positive Experience (Fullfilment …etc) (Yes, no or n/a).	Negative Experience (Stress … etc) (Yes, no or n/a)
Teaching and learning – curriculum.	0		
Interactions with pupils.	25%	Yes	
Supporting colleagues.	25%	Yes	
Interaction with parents/families.	20%	Yes	Some stress
Administration and management.	20%	No	
Dealing with outside agencies.	5%	No	

[Adapted from IPPN 2009].

| Other / Comment: | *spent ages at various times. trying to get in touch with outside agencies* |

3. This part of the survey uses language from academic texts on school leadership to describe the work of Principal teachers. Tick any boxes that describe your own work and your approaches today.

Model 1.		Model 2.		Model 3	
Priority of the school.		Priority of improvement.		Priority of school mission and ethos.	
Overseeing staff performance - Tasks and time.	✓	Mentoring others to develop and progress.		Serving the needs of others.	
Instructional support – Supervising curriculum and policy implementation.		Staff development - Use of charisma - Modeling practice - inspiring others to work in your way.	✓	Self-efficacy – supporting teachers to work in their own ways.	✓
Monitoring school activities – Implementing strategies to avoid mistakes.	✓	Intellectual stimulation – Motivating others, empowering leadership	✓	Emotional stimulation - Personal involvement with others to share in problem mastery.	✓
Achieving and maintaining measurable high standards for pupils' work.		Providing opportunities for curriculum innovation and new learning for pupils.		Individual pupil success and welfare is the priority.	✓

(Adapted from Cecil 2009)

4. This part of the survey asks about how we felt today about about our calling and vocation to teaching and our responsibilities as Principals. Tick as many of the following as apply to today's workload and activities. (In some cases you may choose none, one or both on the same line. They are not intended to be exclusive.)

My Vocational Role as a Principal		My Professional Role as a Principal	
A sense of values and caring was obvious in today's work.	✓	Today I experienced a sense of occupational success.	
Today we made decisions based on ethical and moral principles.		Today we made decisions based on rules, procedures and school policy.	✓
Today was hard to plan or predict. (Human value-laden aspect of the work).		Today was well-planned. (Predictability and conformity).	✓
Today I was called upon personally to be of service.		Today I relied upon the importance of the position of the role.	
Today I felt personally accountable for standards.		Standards are set generally by the school through agreed policy and procedures.	
Today I experienced personal feelings of engagement.		Today was best handled with professional distance.	✓
Today problems were shared.		Today problems were solved.	✓
Today was about altruism and about helping people.		Today was about administration and task completion.	-
Work at teaching and learning is complex and on-going.		Teaching and learning targets are straight-forward and achievable.	✓

(Adapted from Schwarz 1998)

5. This part of the survey looks at how we might spend a part of every day working to the agenda of other people. At the end of this day, how much of your time do you consider was 'firefighting' and/or 'timewasting'? Please give your own honest response and feelings to the demands made upon you today?

	Briefly note any activities that apply	My response
Firefighting What were today's high priority, most urgent or most important tasks?	· Help with prat and pupil & trouble admin – arranging details for School children's don	Long talk with pupil
Timewasting What were today's low priority, non-urgent and least important tasks?	· Phone calls to agencies who don't answer ·	

(Adapted from Adair 2002)

Thank you for taking the trouble to complete today's survey. Hopefully it gave you a chance to reflect on your work. Your responses will contribute to a DCU doctoral research project to examine how Principals experience the early years in their roles as school leaders. All responses will be gathered and analysed in April/May 2011 for feedback to participants. Strict confidentiality, anonymity and university ethical guidelines will apply as discussed. Thank you again. Sincerely,

Martin Stynes
Research partner and fellow Principal

Appendix B

Researcher-Driven Diary 2013

Dublin City University
School of Education Studies

Principal's Research Diary

Private
and
Confidential

Diary ☐ Number ☐ Returned ☐

4th February 2013.

Dear Principal,

Thank you for agreeing to take part and for helping me prepare my final project for my Doctorate in leadership in education. This booklet may look daunting at first glance but really it is just a short set of reflections in diary form, on the cream pages, on how you feel you have managed and led in your school over any five days this February. The white pages contain the explanations and background information for the project.

In this first phase of the research project I am asking you to carry out the set of five daily reflections and to then comment upon them. Over 30 Principals have volunteered to keep the researcher-driven diary for five days and to participate in short interviews about it afterwards. Your contribution will be extremely valuable in shaping this process.

Your own comments and other information in the diary will be made entirely anonymously. The personal information about you and about your school will not be shared or made public at any point. You might give five or six minutes between the two cream pages if you could each day or you might like to reflect a little longer. Hopefully the questions will provide food for thought about how you structure your day and about how you respond to the situations that you face.

The project has been approved by the DCU ethics committee and has been awarded a bursary by the INTO. I hope that it will make a significant contribution to how we see our management and leadership roles in schools and I am delighted that you have volunteered to help. Without people like you, it simply wouldn't happen.

Thanks again for volunteering to help.

    Martin Stynes.

Principal, Scoil Fhursa, Kilmore West, Dublin 5.
Research student, School of Education Studies, DCU, Dublin 9.
(Mobile contact: 086 1585 011.)

DCU

Mr. Martin Stynes
School of Education Studies

14th December 2012

REC Reference: DCUREC/2012/209
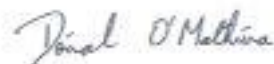
Proposal Title: Walk a mile in my shoes'. An ethnographic study of the
everyday lives and work experiences of a group of Irish
primary school Principals

Applicants: Mr. Martin Stynes, Prof. Gerry McNamara

Dear Martin

This research proposal qualifies under our Notification Procedure, as a low risk social
research project. Therefore, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this
research proposal. Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical
approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research
Ethics Committee. Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be
required at a later stage, a further submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Donal O'Mathúna

Dr. Donal O'Mathuna
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

DCU
Research & Innova

Confidential Information on Research Participation.

The following person has agreed to keep a semi-structured diary and to participate in semi-structured interviews to assist in data gathering for a Doctoral research project on school leaders' working lives. The School of Education Studies at Dublin City University approves the study. The researcher is Martin Stynes (martin.stynes3@mail.dcu.ie) and the supervisor is Dr. Gerry Mc Namara (gerry.mcnamara@dcu.ie). Information is held in the strictest confidence by the researcher and no individuals or schools will be identified in the research. Details included below are for verification purposes only and will remain confidential to the participant, to the researcher and to the supervisor (including any other internal/external examiners appointed for validation and awarding purposes).

Principal's Name: ....

Male ☐   Female ☐

Primary Degree ☐   Post Graduate Diploma ☐   Masters Degree ☐

Teaching Experience:

1-10 yrs ☐   11-20 yrs ☐   21-30 yrs ☐   31-40yrs ☐

Experience as Principal:

1-3yrs ☐   4- 6yrs ☐   7-9yrs ☐   10yrs+ ☐

Experience as Principal in previous school(s):

Yes ☐   No ☐   Duration: ☐

Teaching Principal ☐   Administrative Principal ☐

Other information about the principal that may be relevant at this particular time:

School Name: ....

Address: ....

....

....

School contact details: Phone: ....   Fax: ....

E-mail: ....

Pupil enrolment 2012-2013:

Girls ☐   Boys ☐   Co-educational ☐

Infant Education ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐   Vertical ☐

Urbanised Area ☐   Urban Cluster ☐   Rural Area ☐

Designated disadvantaged area: Yes ☐   No ☐

Number of teachers ☐   other staff (including part-time) ☐

Total staff (including Principal) ☐

Other information regarding the Principal or the school that may be relevant to the research at this time:

I confirm that this Doctoral research work has been approved by Dublin City University's Research Ethics Committee and that it will be conducted by me, in all its aspects, according to the ethical approval received. Information on participation, choice of non-participation at any point, on data gathering and storage and on confidentiality has been explained verbally to the participant and has been provided in written form.

Dear Diary

13 Februar 2013

A diary of a day in the life of a primary school Principal.

I ARRIVED TO WORK AT:

08:20

I LEFT WORK AT:

15:30

Coffee break? ✓

Lunch break? ✓

	Approx. %	✓	✗	?
Teaching and learning.	20%	✓		
Dealing with pupils.	40%	✓		
Working with staff.	20%	✓		
Meetings parents/families.	5%	✓		
Administration.	15%			?

4   0   1

My reflections on how I managed these and other activities today:

Today I spent a lot of my
time dealing with children and
doing the R.S.E. programme with
the 6th class boys - an enjoyable
experience
As there was work going on in
the school with the security system
I felt my office was gone from me
for the day so some of the
phone-calls and admin duties were hit and miss

233

Experience Sampling Research: When you texted me I was...

I was dealing with two children and two teachers trying to investigate an alleged bullying case between the two children

Leadership

Were you conscious of leading in your role as Principal today? ✔ the box(es) and write a brief note.

Pupils.	✔
Teachers.	✔
Other Staff.	
Parents/Families.	
Others.............	✔
Yourself.	

✔ I was conscious of my role dealing with the pupils and the R.S.E. programme - I feel the children enjoy the fact that the principal can be human at times!!

✔ It was one of those days when at 3 different stages different teachers felt they needed to chat to me about their personal lives

✔ Had to make several phone calls and form filling to change our gas supplier from Energia to Airtricity

How much I enjoyed today at work.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 ✔	9	10

Leaving work behind or taking it home?

☑
☐
☐

Leaving work behind, office in a state as men working on security system all day.

My head was also in a state as was ~~not~~ asked to visit a colleague in hospital and dreading whats ahead ??

234

29th February. 2013.

A diary of a day in the life of a primary school Principal.

I ARRIVED TO WORK AT: 8·20

I LEFT WORK AT: 4.30

Coffee break? ✓

Lunch break?

	Approx. %	✓ ✗ ?
Teaching and learning.	15%	Reading + trying to decipher SSE ✗ guidelines
Dealing with pupils.	20%	match organisg grp tble ✗ dealing with difficult b
Working with staff.	15%	dealing with teachers adpasing
Meetings parents/families.	10%	dealing with parents if child with psychiatric condition at busy 20 hours of 1st year.
Administration.	40%	SEND / and setting up book into scheme.

3   2   0

My reflections on how I managed these and other activities today:

Busy day with visitors - felt I was chasing my
tail and other agendas - SEND in revising
staff allocation - 2 inspectors in from colleges
of education - Senior teachers mad at Circle
Park deal and pay cut
trouble in the sixth class and match after school.
Not a whole lot to show for the day - I think
I need a what I've done today list.
Waiting for feedback from architect on building project

Experience Sampling Research: When you texted me I was...

Talking to a teacher about a child who was very upset and bleeding. (Child protection issue?) Parents contacted.

Leadership

Were you conscious of leading in your role as Principal today? ✔ the box(es) and write a brief note.

○ Supporting teacher with difficult sext.

SNA provision - making a case for the children, staff and
○ dealing with possible job cuts of SNA's

keeping a face on in light of demoralised senior staff
○ pained by pay cuts.

Pupils.	✔
Teachers.	✔
Other Staff.	✔
Parents/Families.	☐
Others	☐
Yourself.	☐

How much I enjoyed today at work.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Leaving work behind or taking it home?

☑
☐
☐

leaving it behind

236

During the completion of the diary you may wish to
make some additional comments on your experiences of
School Management and Administration.

I want to spend more time directing policy decisions, informing others leading through discussion + by example - but instead I spend most of my time doing small trivial jobs.

I feel I have a good working relationship with all of the staff. This eases my load in that the vast majority will do anything that is asked of them + indeed many volunteer for jobs for the good of the children. for the school.

- I'm not great at delegating to staff though. I feel they have enough on their
- plate without my adding to it.

During the completion of the diary you may wish to
make some additional comments on your experiences of

School Leadership.

○ So much of Principals time is
in responding to events or preparing
for event, it is hard to lead.

○ Dealing with ancillary staff can
be time-consuming + frustrating. If
each problem oc solved, Principal
○ may lead.

I find that administrative tasks take up much of
my time. It is up to the teacher in the class to
lead learning. I can encourage + show appreciation.
I endeavour to be positive + open to new ideas.
If staff feel that their response is forthcoming, they
are likely to be proactive.
I find that collaborative leadership works best.
Trust your colleagues. Encourage them. Appreciate
them. Be positive. Choosing the right staff is crucial.

During the completion of the diary you may wish to
make some additional comments on your experiences of
School Management and Administration

As teaching principal I am blessed to have support of good efficient secretary + D.P. (who is FS) and will step into my class when necessary (happens too frequently)

Guilt - should be completing both roles - teaching + school leader to a better standard!

Overload! Have 22 admin days this year (increase of 4 from last yr due to class teachers going up to 6) Totally inadequate to get around to number of tasks that need to be done.

Feel there is a number of tasks I do that should be done by others - BoM members - but in reality fall onto my shoulders - maintenance works, airgead bunscoile reports etc.

So little time, filled with tasks that may be described as urgent but are not really important and yet have to be done.

When appointed here - 96 pupils, 4 class teachers no SNAs now doubled and I feel under more pressure with increasing workload. However still love my job and wouldn't swap for anything- doesn't really make sense.

239

During the completion of the diary you may wish to
make some additional comments on your experiences of

School Leadership.

○ Leadership is more
challenging than ever.
○ Remaining positive in
these difficult times has
○ me exhausted.

I believe I have succeeded as a
leader because my deputy is capable of
taking over from me in the morning!
My staff are wonderful but they often
ground me by their demands, expectations
and problems. Perhaps this is a good thing.
I never feel on top of everything, no chance
of becoming too comfortable then!

- I wouldn't change my
School or job for the
world (apart from a short while!)
I am happy, challenged,
exhausted, satisfied!

Walk a Mile in My Shoes ... Your Feedback.

Page 1 attempts to gather some information on how you manage in a given day as a Principal teacher. It also asks about how you experience management tasks personally. Ideally, it will be elaborated upon in an interview, either face to face or by phone. Would you like to offer some suggestions on the suitability of the page for these purposes?

The structure and layout of Page 1 brought home to me that no two days are ever the same. The day is dictated by events - An angry parent, a match to be organised, a class to be covered if the teacher is sick, a staff meeting with J.E.N. teacher, class teacher, or a discussion with the Chair of the Parent Association. Administrative tasks such as RCT etc can be time absorbing. Work with staffing be done by e-mail rather than face to face contact. Some areas such as teaching & working with children, are more to each other.

Page 2 attempts a similar objective but this time with a focus on leadership activities during your day. Do you feel you are called upon to demonstrate leadership in a given day and how do you experience this personally? Once again, we could talk further about your comments in an interview but you may like to offer some suggestions on the suitability of this page for research purposes as part of the pilot study.

Very little opportunity for leading learning. Most leadership is leading people or leading the organisation. Morale among teachers is low-ish. Much negativity due to external factors - pay cuts etc.

Teachers may take a role in leading learning. JEN teachers organise Peer Tutoring etc. It is hard to accurately state whether it is appropriate to tick box on a certain day. I organised a Fire Drill - was that leadership? Was I leading teachers, children, staff?

Walk a Mile in My Shoes .... Your Feedback

Page 1 attempts to gather some information on how you manage in a given day as a Principal teacher. It also asks about how you experience management tasks personally. Ideally, it will be elaborated upon in an interview, either face to face or by phone. Would you like to offer some suggestions on the suitability of the page for these purposes?

> Very important to distinguish management from leadership 7 yet both are linked strongly. ~~Generally~~ If you are not on top of management issues I don't think effective leadership can happen.

Page 2 attempts a similar objective but this time with a focus on leadership activities during your day. Do you feel you are called upon to demonstrate leadership in a given day and how do you experience this personally? Once again, we could talk further about your comments in an interview but you may like to offer some suggestions on the suitability of this page for research purposes as part of the pilot study.

> "Leadership" as a concept can be quite difficult to describe in terms of "oneself." Do I feel like a leader? Sometimes. Do I have the personality traits, values and strength – I think so. Sometimes I feel I'm firefighting, reacting to what occurs rather than having time for reflection etc. Enjoyed having to reflect for this diary but is it all nonsense??

Finally...

Thank you for agreeing to help with the pilot of this researcher-driven diary. Please return it in the enclosed stamped-addressed envelope as soon as it is completed.

If you could find the time for a short telephone interview about this research topic I would be very grateful. I would like to record and transcribe the conversation, with your permission. Any details and opinions would be held confidentially as part of the research feedback. Please tick below and include a contact number if you agree to this. Thank you.

☐   Yes. You can phone me on the following number: ....

☐   No thank you. I do not wish to be contacted or interviewed.

You may be interested in research of this type – in the process and the reflection that it generates or in the outcomes and results. Ten Principals are willing to keep the diary for two to three weeks in March/April after the pilot version is refined. If you would like to join them and to participate in the sharing of data (anonymously) please indicate below. Thank you.

☐   Yes. I am very interested in research of this nature and would like to be part of the final group of participants in this project. Please include me.

☐   No thank you. I was happy to contribute to the pilot version. I wish you the best of luck with the final round of research.

Whatever your response, your help so far has been invaluable. I wish to thank the INTO who have generously offered Bursary funding for the project under their Research in Leadership in Education Scheme. The final result will be available to INTO members following its completion in 2014. I would also like to thank the IPPN for circulating information through the é-scale network and for generating significant interest among members. I would most especially like to thank you however. As a fellow Principal, I understand the demands of your busy day and I am sincerely most grateful for the time and effort that you have invested in this pilot survey on behalf of a colleague. Kind regards,

Martin Stynes.
February 2013.

Appendix C

Collated Diary Contents

Dublin City University
School of Education Studies

Research Diary
2013

"Walk a Mile in my Shoes"

Private
and
Confidential

Thank You.

Dear   ,

I want to thank you sincerely for trusting me with your diary, you and the other 30 Principals who volunteered to take part. What began almost three years ago as my own Ed.D. project has most definitely become '*our*' collective project and I am hugely grateful for the help I have received from everyone involved. The candid and honest responses to the many blank sections of the pilot diary have been typed up and have been collated to make a thought-provoking read. Here it is, in your hands.

When I say 'our' project by the way, I can assure you that there is no more work to be done on your part! The 31 diaries have produced significant data and there is no obligation of any sort on anyone involved to do anything more. I am enormously grateful to you and to all of our Principal colleagues for giving so generously in terms of time, commitment and trust.

What you hold here in this booklet, is in a sense, a type of 'thank you.' I believe that it is a valuable document for many reasons and I think that if you do start reading it, you will believe so too. Nothing is glamourized, sensationalized, or trivialized and what you will read, should you choose to do so, are the real-life accounts of walking in the shoes of 31 Principals for five days. Admittedly, there is some degree of repetition but there are also moments of genuine insight into the lives of real human beings.

For this reason and because it is part of an on-going DCU approved Doctoral project, I would ask you please to keep it entirely confidential. Please do not show it or do not give it to anyone else. It contains information, opinions and other details that people have provided with an enormous degree of trust. When you have read the booklet please shred it, destroy it in some other manner or simply return it. It is a working document only. A final Thesis will be sent to all those involved when it is completed in 2014.

In the coming month I would like to contact you again by phone to ask you about your experience of filling the diary for the original five days. If you have read this document by that stage you might like to offer some opinions on it. While this would help the study, it is not entirely necessary. There is a list of six short questions on the final page of this booklet as a guideline or possible beginning for a conversation but these are not essential reading because, for the most part, I would like to keep any follow-up more informal and conversational.

If possible and with your permission, I would like to record our phone conversation and to transcribe it as research data. Again, I promise total confidentiality in the process and I promise anonymity in any published materials. If you would prefer, I could simply takes notes after we have spoken instead of recording it. You can let me know at the time.

It is most likely that you will not read through the entire contents from beginning to end so here is a list of what the booklet contains and a reminder of the main questions asked in the original five-day diary:

In "*Time Spent in School*" (p.4) I calculated how long each of us spent in school over the five days and for the sake of curiosity I worked out an average. What is not shown is how long Principals spent doing extra work at home or on return to school in the evenings. You may also be interested in the page on the numbers of "*Coffee and Lunch Breaks*" taken (p.5).

I admit that "*Managing the Week*" (p.6) was very difficult to quantify. However, it is not intended to be exact science and could be considered more as a reflective tool. Even allowing that no two weeks are the same, perhaps your own percentages, those of others and the overall averages might generate some conversations about how our working days are lived.

The "*Positive and Negative Experiences*" sections (pp. 7-8) provide a breakdown on how many experiences were reported and in which areas of work. Combining this with the information in the "*Leadership Experiences*" section (pp. 9-10) may generate some reflection and conversation that assists a study on daily leadership activities. All in all, during the week, did we "*enjoy the work*" (p.11)? To end this section, you may like to read a brief, but anonymous, "*Who's who?*" of the other co-participants (pp.12-13).

The longest sections of the booklet are the transcribed diary entries from each Principal, grouped together under the diary headings as follows:

"*Reflections on Managing the Day's Activities*" (pp. 14-51).
"*Leadership Responses*" (pp. 52-82).
"*Leaving Work behind or Taking it Home?*" (pp. 83-93).
"*Experience Sampling Responses*" (pp. 94- 103).
"*Walk a Mile in My Shoes – Your Feedback*" (pp. 104-110).
"*Your Reaction.*" (p.111)

As you can see, even at first glance, there was considerable effort taken by all involved to share professional and personal experiences of the working day of the Irish primary school Principal. I hope that you enjoy reading it if you get the chance. I think that you will.

Sincere thanks and best wishes for the final term of 2012-2013,

      Martin Stynes.

Time spent in school

Did you ever wonder how long other school Principals spend in work? While the demands in your own school are not the demands in anybody else's and while no two weeks are the same, the information below may be of interest to you nonetheless. The details, taken from Principals' diaries have been calculated in hours and minutes. It is worth keeping in mind that there is a broad range of schools represented, that the information does not include the amount of time spent working from home and that the Principals involved have differing lengths of experience. It is intended only to represent a one-off snap-shot of a single week in March 2013. It would be very worth finding out if your own data represents a typical week's work and also if the information raises any comments or opinions?

Principal	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Total
1	8h 15m	8h 10m	7h 10m	8h 15m	8h 10m	**40 h 00m**
2	7h 55m	8h 00m	9h 45m	8h 20m	8h 00m	**42h 00m**
3	6h 30m	6h 50m	7h 00m	6h 00m	6h 40m	**33h 00m**
4	-	-	7h 38m	7h 05m	7h 40m	Incomplete
5	8h 05m	9h 00m	10h 30m	10h 15m	8h 10m	**46h 00m**
6	7h 00m	6h 40m	7h 00m	6h 45m	12h 45m	**40h 10m**
7	8h 05m	8h 20m	7h 40m	8h 10m	8h 50m	**41h 05m**
8	8h 10m	7h 55m	8h 25m	8h 25m	7h 35m	**40h 40m**
9	7h 55m	8h 20m	8h 25m	7h 00m	7h 30m	**39h 10m**
10	9h 00m	8h 45m	8h 30m	8h 45m	9h 30m	**44h 30m**
11	7h 40m	7h 50m	7h 30m	7h 40m	7h 30m	**38h 10m**
12	8h 25m	8h 40m	9h 30m	7h 40m	9h 10m	**43h 25m**
13	6h 55m	6h 00m	6h 45m	7h 45m	6h 20m	**33h 45m**
14	7h 30m	7h 15m	6h 30m	7h 20m	7h 00m	**35h 35m**
15	7h 25m	7h 45m	7h 45m	7h 50m	6h 30m	**37h 15m**
16	8h 20m	8h 00m	8h 25m	7h 55m	8h 55m	**41h 35m**
17	10h 05m	10h 10m	10h 05m	10h 10m	9h 20m	**49h 50m**
18	9h 05m	8h 20m	7h 45m	7h 46m	8h 15m	**41h 11m**
19	7h 45m	7h 00m	7h 15m	7h 15m	7h 35m	**36h 15m**
20	7h 40m	8h 55m	7h 00m	6h 30m	7h 40m	**37h 45m**
21	9h 30m	8h 10m	8h 40m	8h 15m	7h 40m	**42h 15m**
22	7h 50m	8h 25m	9h 35m	7h 70m	7h 50m	**41h 30m**
23	6h 55m	8h 10m	7h 30m	6h 45m	6h 55m	**36h 15m**
24	8h 20m	8h 10m	7h 55m	8h 50m	9h 15m	**42h 30m**
25	7h 50m	6h 55m	8h 15m	7h 30m	7h 30m	**38h 00m**
26	9h 35m	8h 20m	8h 00m	8h 55m	9h 40m	**44h 30m**
27	8h 15m	8h 30m	7h 20m	8h 30m	8h 00m	**40h 35m**
28	6h 55m	5h 40m	7h 10m	5h 45m	7h 25m	**32h 55m**
29	8h 00m	8h 00m	8h 00m	7h 30m	8h 00m	**39h 30m**
30	9h 00m	8h 00m	7h 45m	7h 30m	11h 00m	**43h 15m**
31	8h 20m	11h 00m	8h 20m	9h 45m	7h 45m	**44h 50m**

For the 31 Principals involved in the research, the average time spent in school during this week, not including work taken home, was: **40h 15m**

Coffee and Lunch Breaks.

Did you ever wonder if other Principals get time for a coffee or lunch break? This may not appear to be a major daily priority at first glance, but availing of the opportunity to mix with colleagues could be considered important. Also, the self-care aspect of actually taking a break at work is worth considering. Principals indicated the following during our five-day snapshot:

Principal	Coffee Break	Lunch Break.
1	3	3
2	2	3
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	3	2
6	3	3
7	0	0
8	2	3
9	4	4
10	5	4
11	4	1
12	0	5
13	3	1
14	4	5
15	1	3
16	5	5
17	5	5
18	5	5
19	4	4
20	2	5
21	4	3
22	1	1
23	3	4
24	0	0
25	5	0
26	2	1
27	4	4
28	1	1
29	1	3
30	0	3
31	1	5

In the five days that 31 Principals kept diaries...

an average of	an average of
54%	**60%**
of coffee breaks	of lunch breaks
were taken.	were taken.

Managing the Week (%).

We separated the daily management activities into five areas. This wasn't ideal because not everything in life can be neatly categorized, especially in the working life of a school Principal. Hopefully however, it may prove to be an interesting exercise to generate a conversation about what the actual priority activities are in the working day. (Teaching Principals are indicated in blue and they are not included in the final calculations as most of their day is spent teaching in the classroom.)

Principals	Teaching & Learning	Pupils	Staff	Families	Admin
1	10%	29%	28%	13%	20%
2	25%	11%	29%	20%	15%
3	09%	08%	31%	04%	48%
4	14%	16%	14%	28%	28%
5	11%	15%	22%	23%	29%
6	15%	11%	17%	04%	53%
7	06%	10%	29%	14%	41%
8	22%	09%	13%	04%	52%
9	19%	26%	23%	23%	09%
10	12%	06%	12%	08%	62%
11	18%	21%	23%	17%	21%
12	19%	13%	17%	25%	26%
13	26%	24%	13%	03%	34%
14	16%	08%	02%	04%	70%
15	54%	06%	11%	08%	21%
16	12%	09%	31%	10%	38%
17	23%	14%	16%	05%	42%
18	35%	18%	20%	09%	18%
19	23%	12%	10%	06%	49%
20	00%	14%	32%	10%	44%
21	13%	18%	13%	10%	46%
22	11%	08%	18%	21%	42%
23	56%	19%	4%	11%	10%
24	07%	25%	31%	01%	36%
25	26%	04%	15%	16%	39%
26	03%	14%	23%	45%	15%
27	64%	20%	07%	01%	08%
28	08%	07%	26%	21%	38%
29	16%	15%	11%	08%	50%
30	04%	09%	10%	12%	65%
31	16%	30%	32%	06%	16%
Overall %	**15%**	**14%**	**20%**	**14%**	**37%**

Managing as a Positive or a Negative Experience.
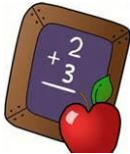
The diary also asked Principals to rate daily management experiences, in terms of their feelings about them, as either positive or negative. While a large number of activities were not marked or were marked as neutral, the results indicated below for positive and negative experiences might interest you. Your opinions about this would be appreciated as part of the research.

		Positive.	Negative.
Teaching and learning.		**105**	**09**
Dealing with pupils.		**96**	**32**
Working with staff.		**118**	**16**
Meetings parents/families.		**88**	**17**
Administration.		**67**	**30**
The total number of positive and negative experiences recorded by the 29 participating Principals over the 5 day diary period:		There were **474** positive experiences reported.	There were **104** negative experienced reported.

Individual Positive and Negative Experiences.

Your own experiences during the week of the diary are highlighted below, along with those of other Principals. Your comments and observations about this would be highly valuable to stage two of the research should you agree to an interview by phone in the coming weeks.

Principals	The number of positive experiences reported by each individual Principal.	The number of negative experiences reported by each individual Principal.
1	19	02
2	16	01
3	11	02
4	16	03
5	21	02
6	16	02
7	08	09
8	22	00
9	18	04
10	16	04
11	20	02
12	19	05
13	14	03
14	09	02
15	05	00
16	17	04
17	17	03
18	19	03
19	13	06
20	17	03
21	13	06
22	20	01
23	17	08
24	08	05
25	20	01
26	15	04
27	10	03
28	15	06
29	15	02
30	13	05
31	15	02
Total:	**474 positive experiences**	**104 negative experiences**

Leadership Experiences

Were you conscious of leading in your role as Principal during your week of diary keeping? Here are your accumulated responses in each of the categories.

Your opinions and responses on this would be very helpful to the study. You might like use the box below to jot down some notes or comments. Your initial impressions of your own data and of the data in general would be highly valuable in any follow-up conversations we might have.

Total leadership experiences.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES INSERTED HERE

Pupils.

Teachers.

Other Staff.

Parents/Families.

Others ....

Yourself.

Individual Leadership Experiences

You may be interested in seeing your own result in comparison to those of other Principals. Does this raise any comments or questions for you? If so, please note them down for discussion at a later time. All comments will be confidential.

Principal	Pupils.	Teachers.	Other Staff.	Families.	Others.	Yourself.	Totals
1	4	3	0	3	2	2	**14**
2	3	3	1	3	0	0	**10**
3	3	3	1	0	2	0	**09**
4	4	4	1	2	1	0	**12**
5	3	4	1	3	3	1	**15**
6	3	3	3	0	1	0	**10**
7	1	5	3	5	0	0	**14**
8	4	3	3	1	4	1	**16**
9	5	4	3	5	2	2	**21**
10	2	2	0	1	1	3	**09**
11	5	5	5	5	3	4	**27**
12	2	2	1	3	1	0	**09**
13	3	2	0	0	2	0	**07**
14	0	2	1	1	0	1	**05**
15	4	4	3	3	2	3	**19**
16	5	5	3	2	0	2	**17**
17	3	5	5	3	5	1	**22**
18	5	3	2	2	1	1	**14**
19	3	3	1	2	1	1	**11**
20	3	4	0	1	1	3	**12**
21	3	3	1	2	2	0	**11**
22	5	5	4	5	2	2	**23**
23	4	3	2	3	0	3	**15**
24	1	3	0	0	1	1	**06**
25	5	5	5	3	5	3	**26**
26	3	3	1	3	1	1	**12**
27	1	2	1	1	0	1	**06**
28	2	3	2	2	3	0	**12**
29	4	5	3	4	2	0	**18**
30	1	3	0	3	3	2	**12**
31	4	4	5	2	1	4	**20**
Totals.	**98**	**109**	**59**	**74**	**52**	**42**	**434**

(Teaching Principals are indicated in blue)

Do Principals enjoy their work?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

On a scale of 1–10, the table below indicates the responses of Principals during the five-day diary. Does anything noteworthy come to mind as you look through the figures? If so, please jot it down. Your opinions on this would be very valuable.

Principal	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
1	6	8	8	6	8
2	9	9	10	6	9
3	4	6	9	7	7
4	8	8	7	6	7
5	5	8	4	10	5
6	7	9	7	5	-
7	6	6	5	3	3
8	8	-	8	9	-
9	10	10	9	8	9
10	6	7	7	6	7
11	10	7	10	9	7
12	6	2	10	3	8
13	7	7	8	9	8
14	8	8	8	8	8
15	9	9	7	5	-
16	8	8	8	9	9
17	6	6	7	7	7
18	9	9	5	10	10
19	8	7	5	6	9
20	7	9	3	9	9
21	4	6	6	6	7
22	7	6	8	8	9
23	10	6	9	9	6
24	3	7	6	4	5
25	8	9	9	10	10
26	7	7	-	6	6
27	7	7	8	8	8
28	10	6	2	10	10
29	3	3	6	6	6
30	10	-	8	7	-
31	4	10	9	8	9

255

Who's Who?

Quite obviously, as we agreed from the beginning of the study, no individuals will be identified and anonymity will be ensured throughout. You may be interested however, to compare the responses in the tables or in the typed transcripts. If you are, here's the best we can do under the circumstances. I include below, a "Who's Who" gallery with some general details of our anonymous colleague Principals who participated.

(Researcher's note: The original document, returned to participating Principals during the research in 2013, contained some additional details not listed below. It was felt by the examiners at the Viva Voce that such details should be removed in the final version of the Appendices in order to further ensure and protect the anonymity of those involved).

Principal

1   A male Principal with over 30 years experience in education.

2   A female Principal with over 20 years experience in education.

3   A male Principal with over 20 years experience in education.

4   A male Principal with over 30 years experience in education.

5   A female Principal with over 30 years experience in education.

6   A male Principal with over 20 years experience in education.

7   A female Principal with 10 years experience in education.

8   A female Principal with over 10 years experience in education.

9   A female Principal with over 20 years experience in education.

10   A male Principal with over 20 years experience in education.

11   A male Principal with over 30 years experience.

12   A female Principal with over 30 years experience.

13	A female Principal with over 20 years experience in education.
14	A female Principal with over 30 years experience in education.
15	A female Principal with over 10 years experience in education.
16	A male Principal with over 30 years experience in education.
17	A female Principal with almost 20 years experience in education.
18	A female Principal with almost 30 years experience in education.
19	A female Principal with over 30 years experience in education.
20	A male Principal with almost 20 years experience in education.
21	A female Principal with over 20 years experience in education.
22	A female Principal with over 20 years experience in education.
23	A female Principal with almost 40 years experience in education.
24	A male Principal with over 40 years experience in education.
25	A male Principal with over 20 years experience in education.
26	A female Principal with over 30 years experience in education.
27	A male teaching Principal with 1-10 years experience in education.
28	A female Principal with over 20 years experience in education.
29	A female Principal with over 10 years experience in education.
30	A female Principal with over 30 years experience in education.
31	A female Principal with over 20 years experience. in education

Reflections on Managing the Day's Activities.

There were many comments from Principals about what was managed during the day and about how it was managed. In the section below, some slight changes have been made to punctuation for the sake of readability. Also, all names and identifying comments have also been removed to ensure anonymity. Apart from this, the comments are transcribed directly from colleagues' daily entries. I think that you will find this insight into the work of other Principals quite revealing. I did. I have repeated the "Who's who?" information to begin each entry. Setting the context may be helpful.

Principal 1.

"Today I went with one appointment that was booked from last week with parents. It was on time and it didn't run too long. There were 3 more incidental meetings with parents that weren't pre-arranged. Some admin work was done; form filling ... etc. and the stuff that needed to be done was eventually done. Any staff dealings were positive."

"Today, dealing with the staff and doing some planning was very satisfactory. Any dealings I had with children or other outside agencies like the priest, past pupils, work experience people or parents were worthwhile."

"Today I spend a lot of my time dealing with children and doing the RSE program with the 6th class boys – an enjoyable experience. As there was work going on in the school with the security system, I felt my office was gone from me for the day, so some of the phone calls and admin duties were hit and miss."

"Dealing with staff and pupils today were pleasant situations. Dealing with parents and families was not so pleasant: complaints about children/staff ... etc. These are situations that could have been discussed for 10 min or for the whole day (and it) would still have had the same result."

"Most of today was spent with three other staff members and we went on a visit to a special school. It was a great learning experience for all of us. Meeting the Principal, the staff and the children from that school helped us look at our own school to examine what we're doing right, and what can and needs to be improved."
"I think when you get into this job you get to see all the different hats the Principal has to wear during the day."

"Most of the time you notice that very little of your time goes into teaching and learning. Sometimes very little time goes into staff or educational matters. Quite a lot

of time goes into management and administration of other areas like dealing with the local priest, security people, reps from book companies ... etc."

"Organising drains to be dug/covered, bin bills, gas bills to be decreased if possible, parents who don't do appointments and many other callers like that, dealing with disruptive pupils ... these are but a few of the areas that we deal with – one answer may be to manage myself first, to delegate, etc. I think no matter how organised you are, a lot of the other stuff still happens unannounced."

Principal 2.

"There was a fundraising cake-sale today. There was a great buzz in the school. (I) met lots of parents with very positive comments about the school. Children in good form – cake sale high! (I) worked with a small group of teachers on "big books" as Gaeilge, deciding what we should buy. The desk is piled high. I hope to clear it. Met the Deputy Principal about school self evaluation (SSE) – very productive."

"I had a long meeting with one learning support teacher about SSE – very productive. Drew up a staff questionnaire and discussed the questionnaire with other staff."

"We had a staff breakfast this morning. I invited all staff (ancillary and teaching) in for a breakfast treat. It is an annual event and great (for) staff relations. I met with a teacher who is struggling with a difficult child. I helped her put some strategies in place. We had a communion meeting at 8:00 pm with parents, class teachers and the priest."

"I was teaching today as the infant teacher is on a course day. The work was piled up on my desk on my return. I finished the accounts so I wouldn't have to bring them home. I love teaching but couldn't be a teaching Principal. Its head wrecking the way people still expect you to be available to them."

"A teacher was on a self certified course day so I had to take her class. I spent the day chasing my tail but at least they and I were relaxed after mid-term so I wasn't too tired. I love teaching but I prefer to have advance warning! I have

loads of admin to do at home. I need to see how my numbers for next year are working out."

"I wanted to spend more time directing policy decisions, informing others, leading through discussion and by example – but instead I spend most of my time doing small trivial jobs."

"I feel I have a good working relationship with all of the staff. This eases my load in that the vast majority will do anything that is asked of them and indeed many volunteer for jobs for the good of the children and of the school."

"I'm not great at delegating to staff though. I feel they have enough on their plate without my adding to it."

Principal 3.

"The recession deepens. Today I met the Board of Management finance committee to budget for the coming year. I also met with a Principal of a local school and we began redrafting cleaners' contracts. This will involve the elimination of all bonus payments and there will be no cleaning paid for outside of the 183 schooldays. This is a sizeable pay cut but we have no option. The school won't be as clean either. It is very unpleasant work for a Principal teacher to have to plan this."

"Today the staffing schedule for the coming year was published online. It looks much the same as last year so I will have to break the news in June that two teachers, who were originally employed to work here, will have to get into their cars and works half-days elsewhere next year. The Minister asks us to concentrate on literacy but he cuts our supported teaching allocation from 3 teachers to 2.5. What a joke! In fact, it's not a joke at all. The Minister can pay for a grind for his children if they have reading problems – our DEIS band1 parents cannot."

"A busy day today with not as much admin as previous days. I took the time to talk to the parent of a child with an extremely rare syndrome. The SEN implications are unknown for this coming September. This will open a new and interesting chapter for us."

"Quite a lot of today was taken up with supporting staff: There were brief meetings in classrooms and on corridors about various things from SEN, career breaks and personal matters. The variety was good and the outcomes were generally positive. You could get the feeling you're liked and appreciated when you're able to be of use to people."

"I was on the phone today trying to cluster our general allocation hours with local schools. What a daft arrangement! I found myself basically trying to "sell" another

school half of one of our experienced teachers and trying to convince the Principal that it would be a good idea to clustering with us. She'll think about it! These local arrangements are impossible."

"It's difficult to feel any way positive about management and administration as a Principal, even when I probably should. Still, I was thinking today about the OLCS as I put in 16 days subbing this week. It is much better than filling the old forms, no matter how much Principals complain about it online."

"What I do not like about management is how the buck stops with me in this system that I cannot control. This week, managing a complaint to the Board of Management from parent, organizing GAM clustering, coaxing a parent to attend the Mater CAMHS with her child, delegating to a caretaker who will not work… It's all just too much really – too random and too uncontrolled."

Principal 4.

"Some details are prearranged, like meetings with a person regarding IT classes. Some were impromptu – pupils sent to me regarding "bullying". This is less satisfactory. Dealing with unexpected callers on what they regard as "urgent" business is frustrating. Today we start mid-term break so the mood is good."

"Today I sent out letters to parents of the 48 junior infants due to enroll in September 2013. I checked registration forms to comply with the enrolment policy. The senior infants teacher rang in sick. I had to organise cover for her morning supervision. I split the class and moved tables and chairs. I met the Deputy Principal regarding literacy and numeracy progress. I met with the secretary regarding Relevant Contract Tax. It is very technical for a layman. I liaised with the teacher and the SNA in 6th class about a meeting with parents of a child with special needs. I tried to flag issues that may arise between now and June 30th."

"I met with an angry parent who approached me in the yard at 9:05 am while I was doing morning supervision. I had to hear his grievance, although the correct procedure was for him to make an appointment to meet the teacher."

"1. I was following up a parental complaint from yesterday. It seems to have been resolved – hard to say if permanent. 2. I have a complaint from a teacher regarding an aggressive child in the playground. Expect a visit from his parent

tomorrow. 3. Chairman of the board visited for his weekly briefing – very useful. I can run ideas by him. 4. I spoke to pupils about safety in the playground – trying out new ideas. 5. Having ongoing issues with groups, for example, the Scouts who use the school premises."

"Much of the day was taken up with administration. Two teachers are going on maternity leave after Easter. There is an advertisement to be placed on education posts… Etc . Parental leave has to be put into OLCS – this is very technical. I met the Chairperson of the Parents' Association in advance of the meeting tonight. I gave her a "wish list". I asked her to test the water regarding a couple of ideas I had in mind. We discussed issues of concern to parents. This was a worthwhile meeting but tonight's meeting could be unpredictable."

"School management usually involves responding to events. Extra pressures such as RCT, for which we have no training, are very time-consuming. Child protection issues, in simple things like travelling to matches, are very time-consuming. Administration is deadline driven – DES deadlines such as OLCS… "

"Management involves so many parties. I discuss everything with my Deputy Principal to try to get a second opinion – a critical friend. Also, in the event of my being absent, the Deputy Principal needs to know the details of everything. I find that management is a one-man operation as regards the Board of Management. This is better than conflict or power struggles but the burden of work is not shared at all. They are volunteers in roles from which they have no training or expertise."

Principal 5.

"Today I rounded up the last 20 mobile phones for a laptop. Two VEC trainee workers cleaned the windows for free on their day off. A past (troublesome) student came to visit. He is much wiser following a jail spell and a slashed face. He is now a dad. He went home and got 4 old mobile phones and some boxes of floor tiles and gave them to the school, offering any help you can give to the school! I was his teacher and many tears were shed – tragic life."

"I did the OLCS approval. I dropped a leaver to a new placement for induction. I got the lend of a computer/laptop till we get the phone one. I did a pilot scheme with the NEWB on attendance. The stage curtain had no ropes and it's fixed. Yippee. I

cancelled the guidance officer's appointments. I spoke to 10 parents. I spoke to a psychologist who is leaving because of school priority needs. I spoke to a new teacher regarding her first IEP tomorrow. I am doing it for her. I got 2 volunteer teachers to cover 2 teachers' EPV days tomorrow. I spoke to 3 sets of University students who are on civic engagement projects in the school and one Ph.D. student who is working on behaviour management with a student. Phew! A busy and a good day."

"The day began with a parent informing me of a child protection issue over the mid-term. There were HSE calls and meetings… etc. This was followed by another parent with home issues. This was followed by another family who have a missing relative (presumed suicide). It was some day for my psychologist to finish now, with no maternity cover available and the school psychologist not back until the end of May. There was only an emergency social worker as well. Phew!"

"Today was a day for IEP's - meeting parents and sitting in on the most difficult cases. Good news for the accounts. A busy day but a good one."

"An assembly, a tour, in-class cover, an IEP, meeting teachers regarding staff issues, meeting with parents and family support, meeting the Treasurer, signing cheques and letters, meeting the accountant… I had coffee after-school with the social worker and a psychologist who had left."

"One thing flowed into the next but all went well. I was pleased with the outcomes of meetings and IEP's. I always love my teaching and interactions with students. I wrote my final check for the payment of an inherited oil debt."

"It's really important not to absorb raw emotions of meetings. There was lots of pain expressed by parents but not absorbed."

"Each day you are called on and pulled in a million different ways, right up to 5:00 pm. Staff wait till after 3:00 pm to appear, so admin is mostly outside of school time. It is very rare to have uninterrupted time during the day."

Principal 6.

"I was covering for a teacher and I did a programme with her group. I loved it – as always. We have a severely autistic child whose behaviour has changed over the past two weeks. This is a lot more difficult to manage because he is strong and he is pushing the boundaries. I met with the SNA's and we discussed the difficulties. I made phone calls to parents and these were very positive. We are re-negotiating the photocopying contracts. I was organising an open-day and getting presentations ready in PowerPoint."

"The Friday feeling had kicked in and everybody was in good form. I had decided not to visit classrooms today in order to catch up on office diary, which was over a week behind. I got the Board of Management meetings organised to year end. I really enjoyed my Math's class in the morning. I also managed to keep an eye on disruptive pupils during their classes."

"Smooth sailing today – everything went according to plan, which is unusual. However, a problem is surfacing with traveller children being withdrawn early from school to avoid the traffic, but every other excuse has been given. It will have to be tackled – perhaps all such requests will have to be made through me."

"Two pupils are becoming more difficult. One is getting violent and is taking a lot of everybody's time. I am in a supportive role as he quietens down when I'm called in, but I'm unsure for how long this can continue. We have sought outside help but we are told that the child has been assessed and that that is why he has an SNA".

"Teaching and learning again – I always enjoy working in the classroom. I was working with staff and this included a Croke Park meeting. Later on in the evening (we had) an invited Guest on cyber bullying. Both were very positive.

"Dealing with pupils: while I feel this is taking a lot of time, the staff feel we are making progress, but it is slow."

"Administration: it always very positive to be ticking off items in the diary and clearing the desk (though it's still a mess). I also had a Board of Management meeting."

"I've just got a new secretary as the previous person has retired. The "new broom" effect is definitely at play, as everything seems faster and more efficient."

"On middle management – I feel any initiative needs to come from me. Our meetings and agendas for these meetings come from me. When I ask is there anything that others feel should be discussed, there is no response. I tried to encourage leadership but I feel teachers are tired and even fed up and low in morale."

Principal 7.

"Today I had a lot of administration to do. I dealt with the staff more than on an average day because of our Croke Park hours."

"Two hours of today's time (one during school and one after) was spend on unplanned, and what could be deemed as "non-essential" – (yet very important!!) stuff. The Chairperson called in unannounced. One of our teachers was upset about a matter outside of school and wanted to talk about it."

"Some of my time today could have been spent on other activities had I foreseen and managed an issue earlier (a staff issue). It was successfully resolved however, but it took some time."

"Today was a crazy day! I feel like I managed very little today and chased my tail a lot."

"Today was another day of firefighting. There were unexpected and unannounced visitors to the school. A Croke Park issue and a First Communion meeting ate into my day."

"Admin – there is just too much. When is enough enough?"

"I am more of a manager than a Principal. Seldom do I get to spend time on teaching and children. This should be a priority. There is always something else –the building, SSE, planning, Board of Management, PA, NCSE,… The list goes on."

Principal 8.

"I was nonplussed when the learning support and resource teacher came in regarding a pupil with the new OT report and where to fit her in. I hadn't read the new circular so I delegated that to the Deputy Principal, who is also in learning support. Came back within 10 min with a synopsis of our hours etc. for next year."

265

"I loved being back in the classroom for the morning. Luckily the janitor was on site already for other work, so he sorted a water drought. I managed everything very well. At lunchtime detention, I was talking to children about the behaviour and the reasons for them being in detention. I got slightly annoyed with the social worker and with what he wanted us to do – it was passing the buck. I got annoyed about the report yesterday from the OT, wanting the resource teacher to instigate a program with a child, which to my mind is an OT program and not an educational one. I manage well but found myself getting irritated with outside agencies."

"It was interesting talking to the inspector about three diploma students. She was very clear and concise with her instructions to the teachers. Usually other inspectors have been very wishy-washy in the feedback."

"I welcomed the discussion again with the inspector regarding the problem and the school. I had a discussion with the learning support teacher regarding a pupil and about checking for dyslexia. I think I managed all of these activities well. Spring must be in the air this weather. I'm very positive!"

"After the inspector's diploma visit yesterday and our very clear recommendations regarding short-term planning, I asked both diploma students for their notes to compare them and to learn. The comparison was insightful. It will go into my recommendations for the staff and from their fortnightly schemes. The clearness and conciseness of the inspector yesterday has clarified in my mind about fortnightly schemes. I managed these interaction and activities well."

"Again, I managed all the situations fine. But again, it bothers me the amount of time spent on admin work. I like the unpredictability of the principal's job. No day is ever the same. I like the interaction with other parents, teachers etc. (only outside state agencies annoy me)."

"In all the courses – Misneach and Forbairt - lots of things were about leadership. I think the practical activities and missing to a certain extent. What sections are in the DES? Where do I go for a problem with school enrolment for example? How does one do a stock take in school? To keep track of where materials go to like books and resources etc? After 4 years here I come to the conclusion that you can be an okay administrator if you have a cool, calm and collected secretary. But you must be a people person to manage a school and all the people one meets throughout the day."

"We are not a DEIS school and outside agencies expect a school to do too much. Social workers expect us to call down to pupils houses to see are they home alone. The OT wants the school to implement programs which are not educational and I will not even go near how I feel about there, in effect, being no goalposts for Principals – never mind the goalposts moving!!"

Principal 9.

"The day went well. I got the jobs done and I was able to attend to things like thanking the staff for their help in hosting a quiz the day before and talking to our three quiz teams. I got to talk to parents on the phone, to arrange meetings and to seek permission for participation in showering and in headlice programs."

"It was an exciting day. I went with students to see … maneuvers. It was a very positive experience and a a shared experience with staff and students. There was no management, just as sheer joy of participating in something together."

"I assuaged the fears of two teachers who were worried about potential conflict with parents. What helped me to do that was the fact that I did not fear them. I was able to reassure and to reaffirm because I was not afraid myself. I unsuccessfully spent over an hour negotiating the whereabouts of a stolen phone. It yielded nothing."

"There was a tricky encounter with parents regarding the medical needs of their daughter and a school sanction in line with the code of behaviour. The meeting was positive. The teacher was involved also and everyone went away happy. I facilitated it well due to preparation beforehand. Everybody was satisfied."

"It was a busy day. There were many pots on the boil and all to be kept simmering: HSE vaccinations. My 89-year-old mother was visiting about a project to answer questions on "the emergency". There was morning coffee with the class teams, with students and my mother. There were expected visits from parents and unexpected visits from parents. There was staff crying at break time and staff Zumba at 3:00 pm."

"Administration is straightforward. It's an easy part of the job. It only requires you to do it. It involves no skills other than menial school management, maintenance etc. In my case that involves follow-up. I have to personally see every job through."

"I am fortunate in so far as the Trustees of the school employ a maintenance team, but I have to keep negotiating to see projects through. Management in terms of management teams; my management team numbers three, including myself. Fortunately the Deputy Principal is in situ and the Principal and the other special duty post work well together but we do not have monthly meetings. Management also consists of a sounding board for ideas, solutions, etc. I am lucky I work with two great sounding boards.

Principal 10.

"Mondays I always arrive early to plan the weekly "what's on" chart and to update the noticeboard. So, a lot of admin work today. We celebrated a child's birthday in the canteen, which is always a pleasure. (There was) quite a lot of admin today upon reflection. I have a secretary who works 3 hours a day."

"We had one hour of Croke Park planning which was interactive, participatory and positive. The Speech and Language Therapist returned to work in our school today so we had a meeting to plan our sessions."

"Today is a great day to meet parents as it is swimming day for 25 children and their parents: 19 parents, 11 of whom were Dads, went swimming. I attended a local network meeting. This is a great opportunity for following up on children and their issues."

"I was at a workshop in (a College) from 1:30 until 3:30 pm which was very participatory and informative - dealing with the topic of transitions. It was a very administrative day today, dealing with reports and accounts work."

"The caretaker was off work today so I opened and locked up (being the only male in the school). There was a meeting with parents in relation to pupils leaving next year and where to go."

"A lot of admin work gets covered in the week and there is a lot to be done with additional requests from the DES and also due to the fact that our schools secretary works part-time."

"As I am ICT friendly, it is easier for me to work on admin/reports rather than writing and passing them on to secretary for typing. It also means that she can deal with parent/office queries."

Principal 11.

"There is a dispute with builders over our new roof leaking. They are unwilling to co-operate. I had to hire an arbitrator to mediate. We had a meeting to try to resolve it and there was lots of time spent with the secretary searching past correspondence and snag lists."

"With the 5th class girls, there is bullying spilling into the school from the road. It is frustrating trying to solve. Some things are impossible to resolve: "she was looking at me!", "She gave me a dirty eye!", "She was standing with her hands on her hips!", "My ma told me not to talk to her!". Though it was sorted out after 30 min talking to them and then 20 min talking to the class, it started again in the afternoon – another 40 min."

"I was dealing with poor attenders – the 10 worst. I was setting up monitoring to contact the parents when absent. I met with the parents and the NEWB, explaining the need to send them to school and consequences if they were not sent. These parents will be rung each morning of pupils' non-attendance and the reason will be recorded."

"One parent did not want her boy to attend the resource teachers' class any more. I was pointing out to her the benefits and the reasons. She is willing to give it another chance. I met the parents of an autistic boy who has behaviour problems and who loves school. She told me he was very bold at home yesterday and that the threat she uses to make her behave is "if you don't behave, I will not allow you to go to school tomorrow!"

"A pupil in 5th class attempted to attack a teacher and to stab her with a pen. The pupil was suspended and brought home and I met the guardian. I had to console the teacher and to reassure all other teachers. I had to contact the Chairperson and to arrange a Board of Management meeting."

"To consider in management: dealing with agencies/outsiders/salespersons, maintenance issues and post-holders."

Principal 12.

"Today was a busy day. I found myself with my head in the spin a few times as a lot of different issues came at me. We are working on improving punctuality at the moment and some parents are finding this difficult. I faced a few difficult issues with a staff member today. While it was a bit upsetting and stressful for her, I think it was well managed by me and I hope we are now on a positive footing."

"Today was quite a stressful day as there were a number of parents from one class looking for appointments. They were unhappy with an issue involving a temporary/substitute teacher. I was reasonably happy with how I handled the situation and I think that I succeeded in calming the situation. The teacher was upset. I spend a lot of time with her after-school, framing the issue and helping her to move forward positively. I managed to stay calm and rational in the face of high emotion."

"I enjoyed today. I spent most of the day in classrooms and always enjoy time spent with the students. We are working on positive mental health and I had some really good moments in class. I managed to clear my desk before leaving for the weekend. I love that feeling!"

"I had a meeting with the SNA's today. I went into the meeting with the intention of listening to them but don't really think I succeeded in doing that! I got irritated as we went back over everything that had already been discussed two weeks ago. There were a lot of small behavioural issues to be dealt with today. I also dealt with a number of parents regarding enrolment. As we are oversubscribed, I spent some time dealing with parents who are disappointed, as they haven't been offered places. This is time-consuming."

"Most of the morning was spent bringing visitors around the school (management and guests). I spent the morning explaining to the visitors about (the ethos of the schools). (I was) happy with the visit. I was delighted to finally get to the bottom of lots of paperwork this afternoon. (We made changes to the enrolment policy for the ASD class as advised by the Board of Management. I worked on the GAM cluster, phoned a number of other schools, distributed cuntas miosuil folders and examined MIST results). I had a teaching slot with first-class, (building bridges of understanding). They are a lovely group to work with. I dealt with the bullying issue in first-class. This is an ongoing issue and I am not happy with it. I feel that it remains unresolved. I'm trying to get to the bottom of it but I am left with the feeling that it is not sorted. I have sent for the parents again".

"Managing a school with almost 500 pupils can be very challenging and sometimes management plus administration dominates. These tasks can take you away from the role of instructional leader. Mundane managerial and administrative tasks can impede work on teaching/learning focused leadership."

"One of the issues that frustrates me is how often I have to deviate from the plan I set myself. I often find myself responding to and acting on other people's agendas. It takes self-discipline to ensure that you are not just in firefighting mode and that you take a few moments to assess what's important and urgent."

"I have been shocked by the times I'm leaving school at in the evening. I aim to leave by 4:00 pm but this is rarely happening."

"I have to write down checklists in order to keep focused. The task of ringing other schools to find cluster groups for GAM hours is very time-consuming. The new demands on Boards of Management to comply with Legislation

regarding Relevant Contracts Tax has proven to be difficult and has brought in a new burden of responsibility on schools."

Principal 13.

"I spent an hour talking to the inspector of students from (the training college). I spend an hour with a rep from Allianz trying to get our school insurance premium reduced. I spend a lot of my day working on school self-evaluation. Also, a teacher forgot she was on yard duty so I had to fill in. I ate my lunch while listening to children read their familiar book during Literacy Lift-off."

"I was under pressure to get the 5th and 6th classes was ready for their choir competition. I spend a lot of time doing choral work with the 5th and 6th classes."

"I spend a lot of time today preparing for the Croke Park hour. It went well and was very positive. The teachers were very positive about school self-evaluation."

"We went to the city today as part of the choir competition. It was a very long day for the children but it was very beneficial."

Principal 14.

"Administration work with fitted in where possible between different meetings with various personnel – the straightforward activity involving catching up with leabhar tinnrimh and writing up the minutes of the Board of Management meeting among other things. Teaching and learning work with staff/meeting parents merged together as a classroom support plan was drawn up. (There was) an alleged bullying issue to be dealt with but Board of Management issues and school maintenance dominated the day."

"There was a teacher absent so I arranged for the pupils in the class to be split. Teaching/learning involved releasing 2 teachers for oral language planning and they made excellent progress. Administration involved revisiting filed away dormant account details at the request of the DES. Long tedious work ensued. This in turn was frequently disrupted by ongoing school maintenance issues: collapsing wall, cracked floor, a school visit by an engineer to assess the damage, a visit by the Board of Management rep. - All of these people had to be met and talked to. It was all manageable but chaotic at times."

"There were 2 teachers absent. I attended to the pupils' needs. The day was largely taken up with admin work, mainly to do with studying, analysing and amending the cleaners' contracts. This involved seeking advice and clarification around employment law. I got input from the CPSMA and the Board of Management treasurer. There were brief meetings with builders, BOM rep., and the Parents Association. I paid the bills, did the OLCS and had a meeting with the SNA staff."

"There were behavioural issues in the senior class and the follow up parental meetings took a lot of time. However it was time well spent with a positive outcome. The planning with the SEN teachers for the rest of the term and year was worked through. The ancillary staff contracts took up way too much time. I met with some of the in-school management team with regards to planned activities. All in all it was a good day's work."

"Today went reasonably smoothly with no one thing demanding my attention too much. I was able to get a considerable amount of paperwork done without interruption."

Principal 15.

"It was a difficult week to finish this off. I am very disheartened about Croke Park 2. There is no mention of the word "Principal" on the INTO website in relation to the negotiations. This says a lot about their value of school leaders. I hope I haven't been too negative because for some inexplicable reason, I love my job – even though I feel it is becoming increasingly more difficult to complete to the standard I want to achieve."

"Mondays here are generally great days for getting through the "ordinary teaching", if that makes sense. The policy in the school is to keep events, assemblies… etc towards the end of the week. I did the OLCS, I contacted NEPS regarding an upcoming assessment, I spoke to the junior infants' teacher about meeting with parents next week and all went smoothly."

"Today generally went well. Admin days go so quickly and there are not nearly a quarter as much as there should be. I got about three quarters the way through the list, which is better than normal. I got most of the planned work done. The meeting with the SNA's was a very productive and a good opportunity to touch base with them and give them time for a chat."

"The teaching went well. There were 4 children absent and a chorus of coughs in the classroom, including my own. It's hard going when you don't feel 100%! I was trying to get the paperwork in order for an application to the SENO for resource hours. It was hard to get the OT on the phone. I'm leaving lots of messages on machines! I'm spending a lot of time at break times trying to get people on the phone and this can be frustrating."

"I had a difficult meeting with a parent who thinks her child is being bullied. I can categorically state that this is not the case. I have the ring the parents of the alleged "bully" as the parent had rung them making allegations and was causing huge upset. I will have to have follow-up meetings and closely monitor the situation. This is very draining."

"The day generally went well but administrative activities are building up. I have a busy weekend ahead. It is very difficult to fit everything into the school day. As a teaching Principal, this term is one where I try to get most of the curriculum covered, so I try to keep the focus on class preparation, planning and corrections ... etc."

"As a teaching Principal, I am blessed to have the support of a good efficient secretary and a Deputy Principal who is in learning support. They would step into my class when necessary, but this happens too frequently. I feel guilty because I should be completing both roles – teaching and school leader – to a better standard."

"Overload! I have 22 admin days this year. This is an increase of 4 from last year due to class teachers going up to 6. This is totally inadequate to get around to the number of tasks that need to be done. I feel there are a number of tasks I do that should be done by others, like BOM members. In reality it falls onto my shoulders–maintenance work, finance reports… etc."

"There is so little time. The day is filled with tasks that may be described as urgent but they are not really important and yet they have to be done. When I was appointed here there were 96 pupils, 4 class teachers and no SNA's. This has now doubled and I feel under more pressure with the increasing workload. However, I still love my job and I wouldn't swap it for anything. This doesn't really make sense."

Principal 16.

"It was quite a busy day as a lot of things had to be organised for upcoming events: indoor hurling, Confirmation night, preparation for the Croke Park hour on Monday, a water conservation project, a building project and enrolment. I was fairly tired by home time but it was a fruitful day."

"It was another busy day. Aren't they all? I met with parents about a difficult situation at home, that is impacting on school There were parents helping out with the redesign of the school website, lots of phone calls that proved very productive and a very positive meeting with the Deputy Principal. These are usually very good and supportive. I organised the psychologist and the learning support team for upcoming testing of an individual and a class."

"I could start with the same opening line everyday... Another very busy day!! What's new? I was reviewing the enrolments and the enrolment policy. We are oversubscribed for the first time in the history of the school and it is a problem!! I was working with the support staff regarding testing and attending a Green flag meeting. I was dealing with a pupil with challenging behaviour and the parents were unsupportive. This was unpleasant. I was helping out with the camogie team, had a meeting with the design team and did work on school self-evaluation."

"I had an opportunity to teach 4th class for two hours today and I really enjoyed it. I had a long meeting with the SEN team about new pupils and pupils transferring to second level. It was very worthwhile and satisfying to see the efforts put in on behalf of these pupils. There was little admin work to frustrate me today."

"Lots of things to organise today: a photographer for Wednesday, Confirmation practice, a clothes collection, the upcoming food day for Trocaire, enrolment applications and an upcoming Comenius trip to Spain – Yippee!! All in all, though it was a hectic day I managed to organise things pretty well. I did feel a bit pressured, as there seemed to be something else waiting to be dealt with."

"It's often those who you feel should be more supportive that put most pressure on you – like the DES in relation to deadlines! I think it is very important not just to delegate but to share responsibilities because I often feel that the Principal's role can be a lonely place because we feel other staff don't

realise the pressure we are under. But do they know or have we shared it with them?"

"You can't get it right all the time – at least I hope not or I'm making a right mess of it. Seriously though, you can only do the best you can…"

Principal 17.

"I did my best. Was it an ideal week? Of course it wasn't. Would next week be better? Of course it wouldn't. I used to want to know the future, now I just take it as it comes and I pray that I will be able to manage."

"A sizeable percentage (at least 40%) was spent on tasks that could broadly be described as administration. This type of work is time-consuming but absolutely vital to the smooth and efficient running of the school; organising timetables, parent teacher meetings and the building project. The fact that I didn't get to the staffroom at either a break time or a lunchtime, is indicative of the pressure of work. I think one is better to be there if one can at all."

"I was at a very long meeting with staff (teachers and SNA's) and a visiting occupational therapist concerning a pupil. This OT had visited the child's class last week and have observed. Today's meeting was to give feedback and information and to suggest recommendations. It was very necessary and in my view worthwhile. Even to organise for this meeting was time-consuming."

"We are having a 2nd set of parent teacher meetings next week. (To) organise and schedule and send appointments to parents is something I take full responsibility for. It is my view that to make these meetings worthwhile and to justify the amount of time and effort everyone puts into them, they need to be highly organised. Generally, my experience is that they are much appreciated and very worthwhile but I am very busy this week."

"Today I spent quite a bit of time visiting classrooms. I do this regularly and in my estimation it is very important. I put time and effort into motivating the children and setting out my/the school's expectations in relation to both behaviour and work rate."

"I was extremely busy today. A few things have happened and new things are happening all the time: A teacher who hasn't a teaching contract is the proposed candidate to job share in our school. A teacher who was supposed to return to school after maternity leave is not in a position to return. I am in the middle of trying to figure out the guidelines for small works."

"The administrative workload is extremely heavy in itself but the nature of school life – its unpredictability – makes it even more demanding. For example, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday there was no secretary in my school until 12:30 pm. The lady who does the mornings phoned in sick a day at a time. Now, you can imagine

what that was like with nobody in the secretary's office to answer a phone or the doorbell, not to mind attending to secretarial duties?"

"As I'm writing this, Croke Park 2 is being negotiated with no substitution for the first day of certified sick leave, the first day of bereavement, etc, etc. The implications for Principal teachers will be wrecking. With all the goodwill in the world and with an acceptance of the difficulties that the country faces, it will quite frankly make the job almost impossible."
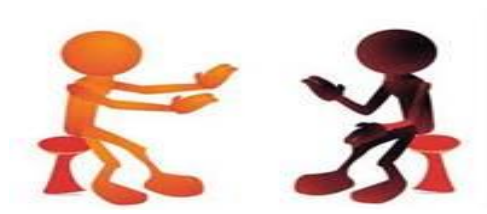
Principal 18.

"It was a long day. Parent-teacher meetings were on. A teacher asked me to be present for one particular parent, as a teacher needed protection due to previous negative comments from this parent. I enjoyed the teaching and learning, which (today) was all about healthy eating/health issues/obesity. I was introducing the Food Dudes program. I didn't enjoy dealing with misbehaviour issues. The time spent took me away from ringing other Principals to arrange general allocation and resource teaching hours. Meeting with parents and families was lovely as there was a great buzz around due to the parent-teacher meetings. Regarding the admin, I got a bit of tidying open of the files done. I did the agenda for the BOM meeting and I sent the previous minutes to all BOM members."

"The time I spend dealing with pupils was worthwhile though not enjoyable. The first two hours was a meeting with members of the PTA and the Chairperson. It was a good airing of views and was beneficial. Although I felt I couldn't afford to devote two hours to it, I had to do so. Admin was talking to the SENO and putting an ad for a SNA on a website and in a local paper. Writing a weekly newsletter took up my time also. Teaching and learning was worthwhile and I'd love to have spent more time at that. I did my daily jog with 28 pupils at yard time. That was great."

"It was a terrible day. I was teaching senior infants as their teacher was on an EPV day. I love to go back into classes to teach. However, we had no electricity when I arrived in school and our usual electrician was uncontactable. After a few fruitless calls to others we resorted to the golden pages. Eventually an electrician arrived. He was about an hour in the school. We had power again before 11:00 am. A pupil with behavioural issues (ASD) is restricted to a school day of 1.5 hours. He refused to sit in the taxi with his escort (provided by the DES) and he proceeded to thrash the taxi, to kick, bite and spit at the two SNA's and myself, who were trying to keep him safe. I eventually got back to the class. A resource teacher had to fill in for me while all of the above was going on. The staff concerned are traumatised by this almost daily occurrence. A SNA told me today that she wasn't happy about being bitten. I have got help from NEPS, the SENO and the HSE for this pupil. We have now got sanctioned for a SNA for him. Up to now, he has been one of 6 boys in the ASD unit with a teacher and 2 SNA's. However, I got a letter from the HSE telling us that the pupils in the ASD unit would in future and not be getting support in the form of speech and language therapy, occupational therapy etc."

"Student teachers are in the school from today for 3 weeks. One of them didn't turn up. I had to ring the college. A pregnant teacher has to go for two urgent scans tomorrow. I arranged a substitute for that. The secretary wants to take next Friday off and suggested working a day in July for it. I had to contact the Board of Management on that as the school won't be open in July. Official sanction came through today from the SENO regarding an urgent SNA for the pupil. I had to re-advertise the ad, as I mustn't have pressed the upload button! I rang the psychologist who will assess twins before June 2013. Seachtain na Gaeilge started today. I started going around the classes with a little quiz in Irish. It's going very well. The child in the ASD unit is being collected by his father every day this week even though the Department are paying for a taxi and an escort. There were no issues regarding that today. The food dudes program is going well. Safe cycling classes started for 6th class today, funded by Dublin City Council. A meeting was arranged with a parent for today. She didn't show up and there was no phone call."

"I enjoyed today. I did a small quiz in every class in Irish. I met with the Chairperson of the BOM regarding correspondence and issues coming up at the meeting tomorrow night. We had no issues with the pupil in the ASD unit. His father is collecting him now every morning at 10:30 AM and if this week goes well, we will extend his day incrementally. Hopefully, he will be back eventually to a full day. The student council wants to collect for the children's Hospice and dress up in pyjamas someday!"

"Psychological assessments arrived, granting 5 hours resource teaching and forms were sent home to parents to be signed. I send off all signed documents to the NCSE to see if the hours will be sanctioned. If they are sanctioned before June 2013, it will mean employing a part-time teacher as we are sharing a resource teacher already with 3 other schools, even though all we have the 25 hours."

"Being secretary to the BOM involves preparation of minutes of previous meetings, setting out agendas, dealing with correspondence – some of which may be dealt with without liaising with the BOM and indeed by the time the BOM meeting comes around, the issues may sort themselves. Indeed, what inevitably happens is that I solve them with the help of the Chairperson of the BOM and they need never take up time on the BOM. This all depends on the issue of course. I phoned a single parent to tell him that his twin daughters will be assessed some time before June. He had been requesting that the Board of Management fund these assessments, as he couldn't afford them. This was one issue I succeeded in preventing coming to the BOM as I rang the psychologist and she agreed to see that twins were assessed before the end of the year."

"A teacher on maternity leave has requested a career break next year. She sent in a form on the last day of applications, but it was the wrong form. It mentioned "the Board of Governors". She said she got was from the INTO website and I figure she must have been on the Northern Ireland website! Maybe I'm wrong, but I sent her the proper career break form and I just hope she sends it back in before next week's BOM meeting."

Principal 19.

"There is a huge amount of time spent working out how to mediate SSE and smooth the road for information/evidence gathering and analysis in advance of a staff session tomorrow. The Deputy Principal and I are the only two post holders left in a school of 19 teachers, so this makes things very tough in terms of planning and teamwork."

"There was an overwhelming sense of being a bit of a "headless chicken" today: I was trying to manage the school self-evaluation process, resource teaching hours, union issues with an ancillary staff member, plumbing problems, band practice, preparation for First Holy Communion, etc, to name but a few issues. It left me feeling as if I did lots but achieved very little today. Overall, I am feeling very tired, which is worrying after a week off."

"The Diocesan advisor (on religious education) was in school today so I had a discussion with her. I went around supporting and thanking staff and pupils also. The parish priest arrived. He was hugely supportive as always. He was checking in to see how we were all doing. I held a fire drill, which went very well. Overall, it was a busy and varied day. There was a good buzz around the school. We gave homework off."

"Although a meeting with other Principals and Deputy Principals was very supportive and enjoyable, the content of the session was not very useful. A

second session was much better and dealt with school culture, etc. Our active learning groups session was very powerful too. I was feeling a bit frustrated for some of the day. I tried to contribute as much as possible though and that was great."

"Due to a serious illness of a family member I spent a late night in the ICU until 2:00 am, so I was tired today. But all that considered, the day was energising and enjoyable. There were issues about the minutes of the last Parents' Association meeting causing concern. So, that needed careful handling with staff. It was alleged that a mobile phone had been used in class!! Administration, having no post holders, is a big part of each day – too big."

"The current situation with no post holders is not sustainable with all of the initiatives coming at us. I really need to limit the interruptions."

"It is important that I meet the Deputy Principal more regularly. The time for consultation with staff and for staff to meet is very hard to come by as regularly as it is needed now. Why can't the Department opt for online (roll book information) etc? Lots of shiny books from the Department arrived today about book rental and finally the SSE documents arrived. The cost of photocopying – aaaah and lots of toner used!"

"Croke Park 2 has really caused me to look at retirement. It is cost neutral but I feel it is important to remember that my life, family, dreams, etc must be honoured to. The trick is to figure out how to mind my physical and mental health too."

Principal 20.

"In dealing with pupils regarding behaviour/conduct or meeting them regarding their achievements, it's a pleasant experience for the most part. The rules are there, the boundaries are clear and the actions are appropriate. Once it's dealt with, it's done and (we) move on. Parents alike. In meeting with staff, it appears that management is the arm of the Minister! Everything must be requested and justified rather than looking at the bigger question. Disgruntled and unhappy teachers are making lots of noise. The part-time and substitute teachers cannot do enough!"

"Parents were somewhat annoyed when they came in but we resolved the situation and they left very positive and the teacher is satisfied also. Most of the day (when left alone) was taken up with SSE and DEIS planning, following on from yesterday's team meetings. We had our 1.5 Croke Park hours after school today. It was very positive and all of the staff engaged in good constructive dialogue."

'I had hoped to get more planning laid out, however meeting about a boy being relocated here from Dublin took up a huge chunk of the day. The HSE are extremely pushy to get this child off their books and into school. Extracting the relevant information and a commitment for educational and psychological assessment is very difficult. Rule 29 is over-used and the heavy-handed approach by the HSE is not in any way promoting good relationships between organisations that should work hand in hand."

"To restart my positive batteries I spend time visiting each of the classes today. Many classes are very busy with activities for St Patrick's Day parade and other projects. Taking an interest and supportive role from both staff and pupils is proving very positive for all concerned. With renewed vigour, I continued with school planning and I revisited our child protection policy as there is training tonight in this for the BOM and I want it both right and clarified."

"Staff and pupils are happy in their work. They all feel, especially my management team, that school is working well. There is an enthusiasm with our new school and the thought of getting out of the 1930s and refurbishing the closed 1980s school shortly, is a huge bonus for morale. Policy formation, planning and facilitating the education of the pupils is my priority (happily). There is much talk about Croke Park. However, at this time we all just want to work for the pupils."

"Staff morale is very low from media reports. The Principal must get the staff to see the purpose in being in the job while still giving the staff the credit they so much deserve even if the Minister cannot."

"External agencies appear to be under extreme pressure to clear their own files irrespective of the outcome to their clients. Schools are an ideal haven to "off load" their cases. The case this week was presented to us first of all last September, when we requested educational and psychological assessments. These were promised but when the HSE got the boy into another school, they stopped their pursuit. Now, six months later, (there is) still nothing done for him and they advise us that they're six months applying to our school. Partnership, and respect, between the civil service is necessary and then we might get a positive result for ourselves collectively."

Principal 21.

"I had a lot of admin work as a result of the building project. I'm not too good at delegating but I did get to secretary to do some of it. I'm worryingly hugely about it. I had a meeting with the Treasurer to co-sign cheques. He has taken

on all of the new tax guidelines and is working it. Brilliant! I am wondering if I give too much time sometimes and I don't think things out in advance. I hardly met the kids today except to say hello and goodbye. It was a very busy (more than usual) admin day. I had very long sessions with parents and the secretary was out so I had extra admin work to do."

"It was a busy day with visitors. I felt I was chasing my tail and other agendas. The SENO is reviewing our SNA location and there were 2 inspectors in from the College of Education. The senior teachers were mad at Croke Park deal and the pay cut. There was trouble in 6th class and there was a match after school. Not a whole lot to show for the day – I think I need a "what I've done today" list. I am waiting for feedback from the architect on the building project".

"I spend a good part of the day consoling a very difficult parent (long history!). I met a teacher who'd had a run-in with parents over a difficult 6th class. I found myself stepping back a little, but in reporting back to the teacher she wasn't happy either. Can't please everyone, I suppose. I spent some time reading the SSE guidelines and trying to contextualise them. I was catching up on work from yesterday, when I attended in-service."

"I am trying to set up a book rental scheme in the school with the parents Association. They are very helpful and organised and they are a great support. I spent some time working on evaluation criteria for textbooks before we finalise the lists. We have a teachers' meeting tomorrow to discuss this. I took the 6th class for gym. The teacher was on a course day and there were students in from the college. (It was) an interesting session. Things took longer than I wanted them to. I found I was putting things on the long finger!! I spent some time with the Treasurer of the Board of Management. This was valuable but she didn't make an appointment, so it ate into the day a bit."

"I was dealing with rogue builders. We have an ongoing saga with the builders (not the current ones). It has now progressed to legal action, so I was in

contact with the solicitor today. I'm relieved they have left my orbit and have moved into the solicitor's!! I spent some time doing station teaching in the infant classes. I loved it. I miss teaching and this might be a chance to go back to it. I often feel admin work takes so much time that I'm losing touch with classwork."

"We are in the early stages of a building job which has gone badly wrong. I'm dealing with an architect who is not doing his job properly and the fallout from this is very stressful."

"I find I learn new things about admin everyday. The issue of RCT and VAT has come up for the BOM as we have construction work under way. It is finally starting to make sense. Until today, I thought RCT and VAT were the same thing! Ouch! It's interesting that I found I was spending less time on admin than I thought. I have started noticing that actually a lot of my time goes on staff and pupils."

Principal 22.

"Today was what I call a "scrappy" day. I was constantly on the go but I got very little of what I consider to be of value done. From the minute I arrived in, I had a run of teachers and parents to the door and a lot of the admin work was related to contacting people that I had been trying to catch before mid-term. It was a typical "first day back". However, I did not have any negative experiences, which was good."

"I knew I would have to spend a lot of time on admin today. I had two important letters to write: One regarding issues with our prefab building (it's three years old) and one with services for our autism unit. I also had to get a report sent about a special needs child. Much of this work is frustrating, particularly dealing with buildings and builders. I managed the other areas well. I had a potentially difficult meeting with the SNA's but this went well."

"Today was an unusual day. I had no secretary, had parent-teacher meetings and First Penance. I didn't get home at all until after 8:30 pm. I was very much stuck to the office, which was fine as I had meetings. However, I also had to deal with issues that the secretary would normally do. It was a relatively positive, stress-free day, though extremely busy."

"I had a number of unscheduled meetings with parents today. I had one (difficult) couple who just "dropped" in as the fire alarm had been triggered by burning toast and the 330 pupils began evacuating! Such is life. I was pleased how I handled the meeting. The issue is far from resolved however. I had lots of short meetings with staff and a lot of admin around new admissions. At least the secretary is back."

"I had some very positive experiences today. As it was world book Day, I visited two junior infant classes to read them a story. I love doing this but unfortunately I don't get to do it very often. I also had to meet parents today regarding a complaint about a teacher. The complaint was regarding the handling of an issue. I did as I had been trained to do – to listen first. The meeting went well and I believe the issue will be resolved. It has raised other issues about the teacher however, which will need careful handling."

"For three reasons the amount of admin this month would probably be a lot more than normal: the secretary was out for five days. The admissions for September are way up on previous years – we had 127 applications for 87 places. There were more applications to the NCSE and therefore, more chasing up of reports."

"The area that I least like is dealing with a "sick" building – whether it is running taps, a leaking roof, faulty heating system or IT that doesn't work!"

Principal 23.

"All went well at work today. I didn't have any interruptions from visitors, etc. I sorted my GAM hours with two other schools for 2013–2014. All in all, it was a good day's work. I am heading to the county network IPPN meeting this evening. The implications of Croke Park 2 will be discussed plus the burning issue for the National Executive Committee next Saturday."

"I tried to sort out a behaviour problem in 5th class and was met with a wall of silence. I'm trying to break in this culture, which is present only in this class. I contacted each parent and everybody was very supportive of me and of the school. We had Croke Park hours after school and we finished off our anti-bullying policy."

"All went grand today. I prepared applications for SNA supported for a boy in 1st class. I liaised with the class teacher and the SNA who is currently helping the child (even though not assigned). Overall, I'm happy that I have documentation in order. Teaching went fine. Staff relations are okay."

"Teaching went well. I was disappointed with 2 boys for their behaviour in the yard, but was pleased when they co-operated and more honest with me. I phoned the parents of each. Both parents will have a chat with the boys. I filled in and tallied the roll book and the daily attendance book for February – another job done."

"I'm deflated and angry today. One parent, who was so supportive last Friday and begged to me for help with her son's behaviour has turned the tables completely. Now "I am bullying her son"– she admits that his behaviour and language are unacceptable and doesn't condone such behaviour but WANTS HER CHILD TO BE HAPPY!! (As we all do but with a bit of manners!)."

"As you can see, no two days are the same here with feelings of elation being flattened to disappointment very often. It's swings and roundabouts. But keep driving on."
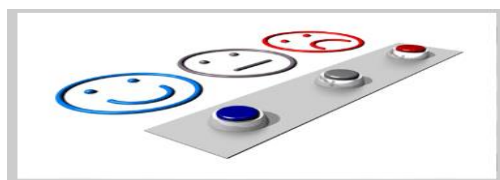
Principal 24.

"We have a very unruly pupil in 4th class, with constant problems and parents who don't want to know. The child has problems, probably ADHD, and has had problems for years. The parents are unwilling to see this and they blame the teachers always. It is very stressful and the teacher is finding it difficult. We are trying to "manage" without looking to the home for support and the other kids are acting up as a result. I came back after mid-term expecting to have another parent knocking on the door over an incident before the break. Again, this was very stressful for the teacher and for the Principal. There is a lot of time spent trying to make sure we did everything correctly. Nothing has happened. I am "waiting for the hand grenades to come in over the wall!" I heard the GAM hours were out, so I tried to re-organise the cluster since our hours have changed. I think I might have it sorted. It is a big relief to save the job."

"We have a Croke Park meeting after school and I have to get stuff ready for that. It's always a pressure day when this is the case. I got a call from a teacher on long-term

secondment looking for info from old BOM minutes! What a pain it is chasing old stuff like that. This is a person who will pick over every single angle and will trip me up if I can't deliver!"

"I am still trying to "manage" the unruly pupil in 4th class. I spent a lot of time encouraging and talking to him. I spent a while looking for a sub for 1st class this morning. It usually isn't as hard to get a sub. This students are in on teaching practice at the moment and I spent a while talking to some of them and to some supervisors. We had a group of Danish students visiting. I gave them a talk about the workings of the school. The staff were good to accommodate them. I got a letter in yesterday from an unhappy parent about something that occurred before mid-term. I'm not sure how to respond yet. This has been playing on my mind for weeks. I have to devise a reply – carefully! I will spend hours on this over something that was a small deal to begin with but blew up."

"I had to give a talk to the teaching practice students and also I couldn't get a sub, so I had to split the class. I spoke to a colleague who is out on long-term sick leave and who was worried about her leave and if she would run out of days. I can't talk to anyone else about her condition and it's not widely known. It is difficult to keep these things inside! I cleaned the floor of the 4th class toilets. Somebody is making a mess. I think it's the unruly pupil but I can be sure–yet!"

"I spent most of the day between the unruly child and the SENO. We are hoping to hold onto as many of our six SNA's as possible. We have another child with Down Syndrome coming in September, so we will get an assistant for him but I am hoping we don't lose any others. You worry about people's jobs. Trying to get ready for a Board of Management meeting on Monday involves pressure to have stuff done that was discussed at the last board meeting. We have a new Chair and while he's very nice I don't really know him that well and I can't slip up."

"The RCT/VRT issue is very annoying. It's a complicated business and would need good training seminars for people to master it. It is infuriating that we have been left to our own devices begin to deal with this. It is wrong. We need proper training."

"We have three bus escorts. Why the Department can't pay them directly is beyond me. However, we are the employer and are responsible for them. I have a software package that does the wages but it is time-consuming and you need to be very careful with someone's pay. "The Board" is supposed to be responsible but the bottom line is – we are usually in the front line and it's easier to do it yourself in the long run. This sort of thing applies all over in our job. You're better doing it yourself if you want to keep a handle on what's going on because in the end the buck stops with you."

"We had a visit from two quartets from the College of Music and they were terrific. It really went down well with the senior classes and gave us a lift!"

Principal 25.

"Every interaction with someone is important, especially as I am new to the school and as people are unsure of me and need affirmation. I am keen not to

rattle cages by deeds are words and the less I say the better. Two children hurt themselves today and will need checking up on again. I'm trying not to be too compliant or too keen either, trying to get it right."

"I met with the NEPS psychologist for the first time. She showed me the new community response to suicide booklet. I brought the SEN teachers in too and while all were studying it, I invited them to sit down and I thought it was more welcoming that way. I met with the school's secretary and the caretaker separately for a briefing. I talked to children before school. Ideas abound. I'm afraid to commit on anything really in case I stir up something. I'm conscious of first impressions being positive and not causing unrest. I find it hard not to share my thoughts. Maybe I'm a natural commentator!!"

"People are really testing as to what way I want things to run. I'm trying not to start insisting or pointing to anything except for my office. However, all is good. (I did) the online claims today and the NCSE applications and a few things to stay on top of."

"Am finding it hard to give percentages to the above. Yesterday I gave more than 60% with parents dealing with a special needs issue. The wagons were circling. Today, I'm making more progress in settling in. I'm setting up structures to suit me ... I mean all of us. Sometimes I feel it's like being on an airplane, I need the oxygen mask first or I'm no good. I need to be cool, calm and realise everything makes a difference. I am part of the setup, an active participant and not a passive observer."

"I met with 2 parents regarding an application for resources. I included a senior teacher to help me and for her to see how I liked things to run. The parents were originally unhappy about the lack of information being shared but very happy later on with how they were listened to. I was happy that I was calm and supportive without hanging anyone out to dry."

"Stuff was calm but it builds up very quickly, very quickly. It's difficult to commit to much. Mostly, to get it done quickly, I set up the template to copy and paste from. Then I delegate and I distributed it out. I can't believe how busy the day gets. I wrote the last line 2 days ago. I'm drip-feeding change. I'm trying to just observe, yet I'm used to not being quiet about things."

Principal 26.

"It was a good day. I was delighted to get release for two teachers instead of one for Food Dudes training. I had been told only one could go. I feel if people offer to take on extra duties, they should be given all the support they can get. I was delighted to have wangled a SSE presentation. I went after it because the staff could do with it. I grabbed an offer of having all of the yellow and white lines painted by a road-marking truck who needed to sell their paint off cheaply as they were about to paint with red. I got all of the lines in the school freshly painted at half the cost with paint that will last 8–10 years!"

"I spent most of today organising support for fundraising and an anniversary dinner dance: texts, begging letters, Facebook invitations, collecting photos of past Principlals and classes for the printing of a souvenir booklet. I wanted to spend a larger amount of time in preparation for SENO resource hours applications. I am trying to organise reports to support an incoming infant. I liaised with a visiting teacher for the visually impaired."

"Today was <u>intensely busy</u>. I tried instinctively to avoid going to the church rehearsal because there was too much going on. But I resisted temptation and I prioritised the Confirmation rehearsal. I'm very glad I did. I spend time with a 6th class boy trying to give him strategies to handle panic attacks. I was very aware of running between meetings because so many people needed my time at the same time."

"I dropped everything to deal with two children who had been fighting. One boy was very upset indeed. I spent time soothing and sorting. I liaised with the teacher and with parents. I grabbed the opportunity for a fire drill as maintenance was being done on the alarm and on the lighting equipment. I cancelled my booking to attend "facing up to the problems of bullying in school" with the VP. She attended. I was too busy here with preparations for the dinner dance."

"Despite everything, the Croke Park hours are so easily eaten up with the curricular and admin policy reviews and with staff meetings. How do we fit it all in? Still, not enough time in the day from management and administration."

"When contacting NEPS for support for a child with behavioural concerns and anger issues, it's most frustrating to hear that preparation and the date agreed for assessment for another child will have to be postponed until maybe next year!! We had <u>no</u> NEPS psychologist allocated until the end of January. I argued that the original child, that we had planned and prepared for, could and should be done in terms 3! Especially, when teachers and parents had put in time and effort into

preparing for the same. I kept arguing for it to be done this year in terms 3 but I don't think I will succeed!"

"It's very frustrating ringing around the different mental health services to find which one accepts a certain postal address! My experience of this service to date is of having to fight and nag and hassle to get support for a child. Huge time is wasted."

Principal 27.

"All is fine, but there is nothing out of the ordinary today. I'm teaching a 5th/6th class so I'm generally happy if I can get through my class plans. Everything else during the day comes second."

"Class teaching was overall productive. Working with staff issues was positive and negative. There are good ideas but not enough money. We need to find a middle ground. Admin was brilliant. I finally got rid of a backlog of paperwork."

"Not every objective was met in class. A couple of boys thought it would be funny to stick with paper to the ceiling - I suppose it was funny. I had to ring parents about consequence sheets going home to the boys in question. This is not serious challenging behaviour, like in my previous school, but it still needs to be dealt with."

"The teaching was fine. The usual issues facing the class teacher arise every day: teaching/learning, contribution from pupils, demonstration, special needs etc. We had a staff meeting after school. The topic of mobile phones came up. Staff were all in favour of my suggestion of making sure that mobiles are not out in class or on the yard."

"I brought the boys' football team to a FAI competition. It was great to be out, receiving no calls about school and seeing my pupils being a credit to our school. Cheques needed to be signed and a money application was filled in for a new roof. I'm happy I send the form in, even though I know there will be no chance."

"This is my second year as a Principal. I feel more confident in myself as a Principal. I have also realised very quickly that the more you know, the more you don't know."

"I have judged the Principals in my previous two schools, but there is nothing like sitting in the chair to see how much they actually do."

Principal 28.

"I generally had positive feelings about managing today. I love to problem solve and to get the job done. I was at a conference on Friday so because I wasn't in, I had to "retrieve" a few things. I started a lot of admin work but I didn't get it done – special educational forms, etc take a lot of time and there are lots of loose ends still to be tied up. Enrolment queries take a lot of time at this time of year and I have to be careful how I reply in writing as a lot of the parents would have a legal background and we are oversubscribed. I spent half an hour on PAYE and tax but I didn't get that finished. I forgot to go down and to congratulate the winners of the handwriting competition and I had very little contact with the children. Monday is usually a good day."

"I didn't get activities finished. Enrolments are ongoing and I am fielding difficult phone calls. The caretaker's job needs to be sorted. I'm talking to a lot of people about the position and I'm trying to work out how much funding we will have. I want to set up the new caretaker as an employee."

"I dealt with parents well. I lost my temper with a former colleague who was probably taking advantage of the school. I had to restore relationships with the Parents' Association. The breakdown was not due to the school or the staff but was an outside issue".

"I got the special education work done and I sent a staff member into town in a taxi to deliver it. I got the PAYE done and I asked the secretary to take home the wages slips and review them. I overpaid her €40 I think but that's not too bad."

"I did well on the céilí - making it up as I went along - and I tried to do a nice speech for the caretaker. Not great at interviewing the new caretaker but I brought him around showing him practical things and I got a good enough feeling about him. I will meet him next Tuesday at 8:00am again to open up. The admin just went away from me. The table is covered with stuff and everything is only half done. It's enrolment-closing day and I got some cancellations and I offered more places. There are two section 29's in!! This was a big issue for me last year but I'm not worried this year as I'm more prepared."

"School management and administration is absolutely ridiculous. There are too many jobs for one person. With the OLCS for example, I have no time to read that stuff on the side. I have no time for surveys and it's my responsibility to disseminate and interpret the information in circulars? There's the RCT, Education Centre stuff and with teaching practice students, the colleges are dictating to us. There's timetabling for learning support and GAM jobs, I'm waiting on hold to get through to any Education Department, I'm dealing with HSE people - very difficult, I'm answering letters and having to proof read them 100 times. I'm asking the Parents' Association for money, I'm sharing a building was another school, I have a shared caretaker, I have a shared school hall and I have to be involved in everything. The whole concept of a BoM… Who is running the school? I would love if the staff could have an insight into the job of the Principal."

Principal 29.

"I feel this entry is coloured by the fact that I am carrying the flu. I feel that my energy levels are extremely low but I cannot take time off. I feel at this point that I am barely going through the motions of leadership. Whilst prior to this point there are aspects of the job I have felt very enthused about, this particular week has definitely been coloured by the fact that my health is much compromised."

"Again, my health is a very bad as I was suffering from a chest infection. I did not take time off, as I do not feel I have the luxury to do that. I visited the doctor for antibiotics. I feel today that I am again only managing to get through the day and I feel overwhelmed by the challenges the job presents on a day to day basis."

"As I am feeling better, I feel I managed these tasks well. I would like to spend more time on administration issues linked to the building but I was conscious of touching base with other areas."

"I would have managed these activities with confidence two-day. I decided to go on breaks to ensure that I was touching base with staff on a social setting."

"These activities were well-managed today. I did not feel particularly stressed by any issue."

"I feel the role of the Principal has become more demanding and complex with each passing year. The job requires balancing a range of appeasing and managing so many diverse groups. It requires you to sacrifice a great deal of family life which is necessitated by having to put the school first on a lot of occasions."

Principal 30.

"The post has just arrived, but I'm munching happily –in fact it's my lunch –knock at the door – trying to hide – will they go away – louder knock – it's a teacher needing support regarding a bullying issue which she was unaware of – 7 min later – sorted – back to the chocolate – actually, have to go to the senior school to take choir – I will be back and by the way, this is the nicest chocolate yet (Lindt extra creamy)."

"The last 2 weeks were mental, so I have decided to log yesterday as the fifth day. It started at 7:50 am and it ended at 10:10 pm with a 50 minute break. I'm just back from choir and the "bullying" issue continues. Just got back to this letter and it's 4:00 pm. Anyway, it's worked. The bar of chocolate got you to the top of the "important/urgent" pile – excellent psychology! What do you send men?"

"I forgot to add that those last two weeks have been overall very negative ones for me as (A) Croke Park and all of that… I never felt this demeaned and low, profession-wise, EVER (but I'm back laughing again – but it has had a huge effect on my sense of the self-value. I never did the job for the money (you wouldn't want to) but this was a bridge too far but WORSE. (B) I got a letter this week that after 13 years, our ASD unit is to LOOSE its clinical support. It's a long story but I can't explain my concerns and devastation for our children - current and future - at this news."

"What a mental five weeks! I spent seven hours on Thursday and Friday on a bullying issue which isn't over yet. I left work at 6:00 pm on Thursday and at 3:00 pm yesterday, even though we closed at 12:00. I don't know why I'm telling you this except it's very hard to find space in this job to be a leader. I believe the "leading" is strongly connected to the "teaching and learning" aspects and I am finding it impossible to get there. In yesterday's post I got a section 29, I'm in the middle of an Equality Tribunal and I reckon two sets of parents are looking for a public flogging. (Jesus, I could sell tickets for it and fundraise at the same time!) –Specifically, my public flogging post-Easter. But, I have great kids and a super staff – but this just isn't sustainable long-term. Outcomes will suffer if I can't find time to address the leadership role."

"I've gained massive weight since taking this job on, largely due to not eating during school time because I find it very hard to find the time to take a break and then I eat crap on the way home."

"We had a staff meeting today at which we worked on SSE – I felt I managed and led this session well."

"There was a negative administration related to a copy of a long submission from a claimant that arrived in the post from the equality Tribunal, unexpectedly. It swallowed a lot of negative time today. I regret letting it do so but it took time to go through it and to come back to "perspection". I regret giving it the time it got today as I had decided not to attend a ASD Principals' support meeting this morning because of workload. I now ended up spending that time on this codswallop! A bad decision from me!!"

"I am delighted with the outcome of a long and final meeting. There were three previously, some very difficult, between parents, psychologist, special needs class teachers and myself. I believe I interjected to add practical clarity and hence lead them all happily and to plan for the future that we had hoped for – ie. agreement for further clinical assessment. I was very happy with this meeting of the special needs support team and the plan to move forward."

"All fairly well – different approaches were used as needed with different "bodies" from the electrician to the… However, I tried very hard but couldn't bring the Chairperson on board with particular issues – issues where I'm trying to protect "The Board" down the line. Other Board members are on-board -excuse the pun! I am unhappy with my inability to help him to see that we are an "employer" with responsibilities."

"Management is a hugely demanding area with a huge need for diverse managerial strategies, as you are dealing with so many differing scenarios to manage – from the "irate" Chairman or SNA or teacher ... to a development project throughout the school."

"Administration gets more complex annually. The amount of time wasted in order to carry out GAM, EAL, resource clusters is unreal. It is a waste of valuable time as a result of no longer being able to combine them. Special educational needs administration use huge!!!"

Principal 31.

"Today was tough! I was absent on Tuesday/Wednesday of this week and we had two big events in the school on Wednesday/Thursday. This meant that today was a catch up. People were tired, edgy and looking forward to the weekend. Relationships with the support staff were strained. Difficult family issues upset me."

"Today was wonderful! We attended (a schools' debating competition) and the girls were amazing. The staff members with me were helpful, proactive and supportive. We got a wonderful reception on arriving back at school. Everyone is proud of the team and a real "feel good" factor prevails."

"We had a mini staff meeting this morning. I remain positive even though people seemed loath to assist at a (school) event planned for the weekend. There was an excellent discussion on learning support issues. I enjoyed the enthusiasm of the contributors and the formulation of a very definite plan for the summer term."

"Today was an administration catch up! Amazingly, I managed it. This only happens sometimes and often on the few days just before holidays when things have quietened a bit. Today I noticed how personal issues are affecting staff more and more, but I was also aware of the support of colleagues."

"Nice day. A long-term sub is leaving so we have the usual cakes, flowers, presents and a few tears! There is a lovely atmosphere here today, positive, looking forward to the holidays, a great sense of achievement to get this far. I would so love to bottle it and to spread it around on some "challenging" day after Easter."

"With all the best intentions, school management descends into firefighting on a constant basis."

"With a good secretary, administration is not a problem. I personally attach as little time as possible to it. I am involved in (professional organisations outside school). Although these extras make my life very busy, I enjoy the distraction away from the pressures of school. As I enter my late 40s, I find myself growing tired of managing the school. I love my school but would gladly hand over and do something different for a while."

Dear Diary,
Day not off to a good start ...
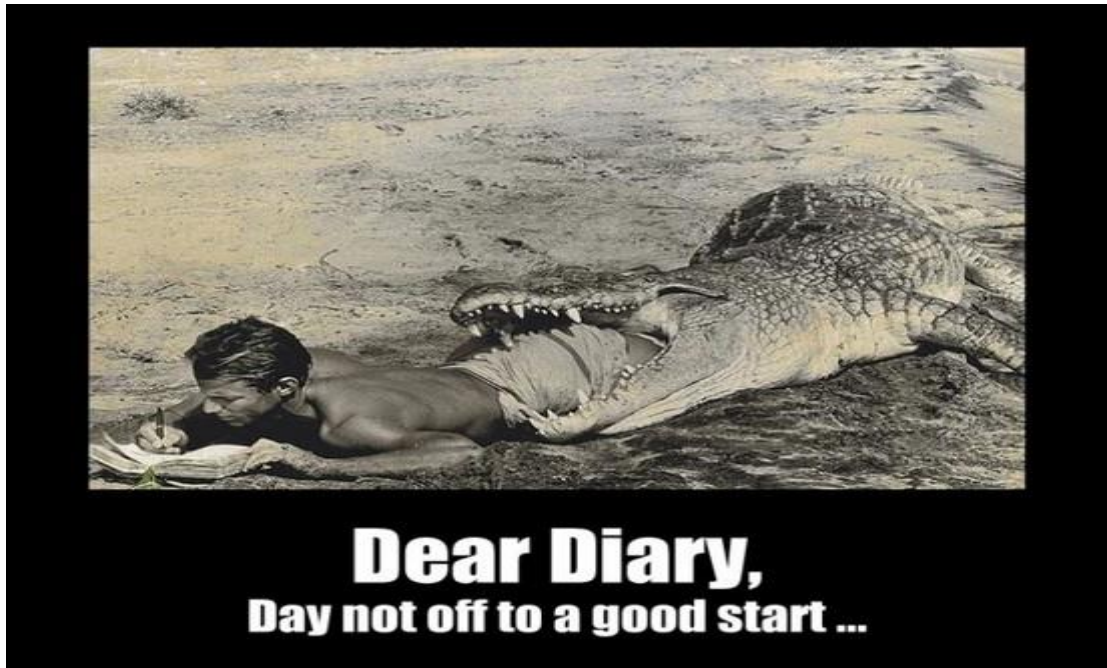
Leadership Responses.

Were you conscious of leading? Were you called upon to lead? Could you share a story or give an opinion about leading in a school as the Principal? Here is what 31 Principals said. Again, the "Who's who?" is included as a reference to set the comments in context.

<mark>Principal 1.</mark>

"Three classes had attended an enrolment ceremony for Confirmation in the church on Sunday. I called into the three classes to give feedback. It was very positive. I dealt with parents regarding a suspension and I felt I had done all of this usual chat before... Is it of any use?? A parent was looking for a reference from when she attended the school. She is 30 years of age?? There were some boring areas of admin today that just had to be done."

"I was planning work with staff and working together. It went well. Parents came in to cook pancakes for children and it was a very pleasant experience. Others, like the work experience pupils, were a good asset. They took direction well."

"I was conscious of my role dealing with the pupils and doing the RSE program. I feel the children enjoyed the fact that the Principles can be human at times?? It was one of those days when, at three different stages, different teachers felt they needed to chat to me about their personal lives. I had to make several phone calls and to fill forms to change our gas supplier from Energia to Airtricity."

"I dealt with a few issues and classes and it was very pleasant. My role as Principal today, involved dealing with disruptive children and their parents. As Principal today I was dealing with admin situations that, as another situation or time, would or could have been delegated to post holders."

"I was conscious of my role dealing with the 6th class children and answering their worries about second level schools and entrance tests. Working with other teachers, having visited the special school, allowed me to be in a position afterwards to ask the awkward questions about how we deal with special class children's needs."

"As I was saying on the page about school management and administration, about the amount of time given to the unknown and unexpected, I would prefer if a lot more time could be given to the role of school leadership. I find it very worthwhile at staff meetings, team meetings, etc that you can actually get a group of people to work with you in a way that is of benefit to all. Also, with children – either working with them in the class or outside - that you can lead them into doing what you want to do and they think the they came up with the idea in the first place."

Principal 2.

"Socialising with parents is really important, so I did feel that this was essential. Meeting with staff about books was valuable."

"Absolutely! I'm finally getting a handle on school self-evaluation."

"Motivation of staff and increasing their morale is very important. The staff breakfast works very well in this regard. There was good attendance at the parents' meeting. They are a very appreciative bunch! I met a rep. selling books today. I couldn't get rid of her!! Not able to say 'no' – not a sign of a great leader is it?!"

"No time to be a leader today!"

"Not really – there was some discussion on a possible mix of two classes. I will have to make a decision and stick to it. Teachers want it, parents don't!"

"Sometimes I feel that my role as a leader simply means "the person who will take the blame for everything" but usually I feel positive and see myself as someone who can share the credit for a job well done."

Principal 3.

"There was one incident in the afternoon when a young teacher needed help with a 6th class boy who enjoys throwing temper tantrums, again and again. My experience as a teacher and authority as a Principal combined to solve the problem. He returned later - the teacher that is - for a chat. We spoke as colleagues. We genuinely shared the difficulties and it was all quite positive."

"A very pleasant experience happened today. A travelling Theatre Company called in and the members commented upon the good atmosphere in the school and on its bright appearance – the artwork, etc. I was quite pleased. Some of this at least is due to me."

"I take choir every Wednesday. This started with an idea that I could model some teaching behaviours to a very young staff some years ago but now it's just for fun. It's the best part of my week, singing with over 120 pupils."

"This little guy with an EBD and no dad at home needed minding for half an hour while his teacher and SNA took lunch. We had some "guy's time" and a laugh – with me doing my OLCS in the office and him doing the word search."

"Another project for improving the school: Today, I organised a teacher, a parent and a local landscaper to meet to help me plan a new school garden. They are all volunteers and are very enthusiastic. It's not our first such project and I'm learning to lead from just slightly behind them rather than being out front."

"As I was collecting mugs, milk, teabags and snacks at 3.10 pm in an empty school, I was thinking about the diary and leadership. Nobody knows I stay back on Fridays to organise tea and snacks for the guys who come on Saturdays from the probation service. They are painting the outside of the school bit by bit. I needn't bother, but I do it nonetheless. I think that it was good management to organise the project. Maybe it's good leadership to keep it going like this. The school is looking better each week."

"Strangely, at the end of it all, I do think I am a leader. Well, one of the leaders in the school and possibly the main one – for now."

Principal 4.

"I took a class for 10 minutes while the teacher met a parent. I enjoyed the opportunity. I met a person who organizes IT classes in school kids. There will be opposition from parents but it is an excellent opportunity for senior classes. I promoted a numeracy in-service course as Croke Park hours next month."

"I spoke to children in one class about getting on well together. I went with teachers to a course on numeracy in another school. It was very worthwhile. It was good for staff morale too – teambuilding and relaxing together."

"I contacted other schools regarding an ICT course for children. The feedback was all positive. I spoke to the Chairperson of the Parent Association about it. I spoke to the 6th class teacher about the RSE module and I wrote letters to parents about it."

"I was speaking to the children about safe practices in the yard. We are trying out new ideas. I spoke to the pupils in 4th class who are doing creative writing projects for Writers' Week. I negotiated with parents and with others who use the school hall."

"I had a number of phone calls and visits today parents of children who had been refused places in nearby schools in the city suburbs. I had to make a judgement call. Do I take the children and risk the disapproval of staff with large classes or do I refuse them and have problems with class allocation next year?"

"I met the Chairperson of Parents' Association to discuss a donation to fund the purchase of science equipment. So much of the Principal's time is taken up in responding to events or in preparing for events. It is hard to lead."

"Dealing with ancillary staff can be time-consuming and frustrating. If such problems are solved, a Principal may lead."

"I find that administrative tasks take up much of my time. It is up to the teacher in the class to lead learning. I can encourage and show appreciation. I endeavour to be positive and open to new ideas. If staff feel that this response is forthcoming, they are likely to be proactive."

"I find that collaborative leadership works best. Trust your colleagues. Encourage them. Appreciate them. Be positive. Choosing the right staff is crucial."

Principal 5.

"We had assembly. I was trying to teach metacognition and how to respond to questions, how to think and how to question yourself. We had a teachers' meeting from 2:30 until 4:30 pm. I am hoping to introduce a new testing program. I will test one student and then I will mentor and assist each teachers to test others."

"I spent over an hour teaching a class so that the teacher could speak to the behaviour specialist."

"At assembly this morning I felt I was probing and encouraging the children to think "what is Lent?" WHY? WHAT FOR? I was amazed how hard they found it. Persuading others to help the school by sharing the vision. My main

involvement today was with families in crisis –listening, referring and supporting."

"I waited for the accountant until 6:30 pm. We are trying to negotiate with his organisation for a write off. (I'm) not leading and caring for myself! I forgot a physio appointment but I still had to pay the €50."

"I chaired two different IEP meetings and I was very pleased with the outcome. I got a €4000 write-off and now all our oil debts are paid. The school is in the black for the first time in years. Yippee."

"I helped resolve difficult situations for staff and students in three classes today. At all meetings with parents today I was aware that I was leading. Yes, at least three teachers came and sent for me to ask advice on how to intervene with a situation. I spoke to one staff member who is being bullied."

Principal 6.

"Very much so – I said "if I'm making the wrong decisions, I will take responsibility"."

"Yes, very much so. I decided to change around the SNA's who were dealing with disruptive pupils. I also made some phone calls regarding the possible purchase of land adjoining the school. It may never happen, but you have to dream and have a vision."

"On a traveller issue – pupils are losing out on time in class and I have to take a stand. Yes definitely – both staff and pupils are seeking for me to come up with the answers."

"I was very conscious - of leadership - at the staff meeting and at the Board of Management meeting. I find that this year is very busy. You are just getting everyone settled and you have to start planning for the next year. It is hard to be focused on "leadership" as everything you do is "leadership"."

"I'm always very grateful for the opportunity to go to the IPPN conference and the like, to get an overview of how I am/we are doing."

Principal 7.

"Yes – I led the Croke Park training on SSE. Also, as we have a WSE coming up, the staff are looking to me. I feel it's my role to set a relaxed tone and to lead by example."

"Yes – all classes were visited and all pupils were spoken to and given reminders about discipline, toilet visits, handwriting, etc. I spoke with half of the staff individually about their concerns about the WSE."

"Teachers – managing an issue to resolution stage. I was leading at the Croke Park hour but otherwise I was tail-chasing."

"Yes – I led the meeting between our local schools on Communion. I led in my own role as DLP. I led the remaining meetings that took place."

"The erosion of posts of responsibility have left Principals relying on a lot of goodwill from staff who take on the responsibility of leadership roles without remuneration."

Principal 8.

"I was in a 5th class until the first break as 4 teachers were absent. I had some discussions with the resource teachers and learning support teacher about the new circular 13/2013. The council turned off the water last week and never informed us, so this morning the janitor was trying to find out why we had no water. I was catching up on messages left on the phone from social workers. For the Croke Park hours we had a link teacher telling us about literacy and numeracy. I worked with the secretary on enrolments."

"I was in detention. Yes, talking to children about detention. I talked to teachers are both pupils, to the janitor about the lack of water, to the secretary about enrolments,

to the social worker about a family with problems and to a teacher about continuing on in another maternity leave. The social worker was trying to get us to take on a workload that is not ours. I read a psychological report on a child for enrolment.”

“I was reading and making sense of the new GAM/EAL circular, discussing our allocation for next year with the Deputy Principal and was breaking up our GAM/EAL cluster with another Principal. I was talking to pupils at break times - which I enjoy doing - and giving out homeworker vouchers for the St. Brigid's Day quiz.”

“There was no heating in the hall so I rang the firm that put it in. I talked to the diploma students, parents, social worker, and discussed the teaching and learning role of the Principal with an older retired teacher who comes in for 7.6 resource hours a week. She pointed out something to me. I'm leading teaching and learning every time she hears me in communication with teachers - in the staff room, in the office…. I am leading…”

“Friday assembly: I talked with the Deputy principal about another new report for a child. I went into a 5th class to talk about a visit from another school and about our yellow flag. The afternoon was taken up with admin.”

“I have lots of lessons, observation forms and checklists which I downloaded from somewhere and I keep meaning to go in the classes to do this but I haven't yet got around to doing it. But, there is an older retired teacher in the school who five hours a week and I was explaining about this research to her and was saying I never get around to leadership. She pointed out to me that every time she saw me, I was leading – I was astonished. But, as she pointed out to me, whenever she saw me interacting with staff it was about school, lessons, teaching or children. With auxiliary staff also, it was about the school and the running of it. To lead, leadership was about going into classes observing lessons. I learned, through doing this that every interaction I have in the day is about leadership. Not the narrow teacher/class observation - cigire type - model I had in my head.”

Principal 9.

“I am always conscious of my role as Principal; not in an overt way but conscious of the fact that my face mirrors the timbre and ambiance of the school. I hosted a meeting at 7:30 pm for the parents of school leavers. They were worried about the children transitioning. I was able to listen and to support.”

Yes at a course I participated in, in the afternoon: Positive power and influence. I reflected on my role, on what I do well and what I find hard to do. I consider a Principal to be a leader.”

"Showing prospective parents around often heightens my own awareness of the school community I lead. Leading pupils – in trying to get the phone back. At a school leavers meeting I was advocating for the students that are leaving in June."

"Affirming and supporting teachers … My demeanour affects everybody. There was a teacher worried about the parents' meeting. My demeanour is not changed and this influences the teacher when we are working with parents regarding the behavioural expectations of the child. In showing a group of 2nd year social science students around, I affirm the ethos and values of the school for myself."

"Supporting a parent who has difficulty with her son's disability and who does not know how to support him socially. Giving positive feedback to two teachers who organised my mother to visit at my suggestion. Tending to a SNA who was injured by a ball."

"I have found it very interesting keeping this diary. It strikes me how different each day is, how the day flies by as how hard it is to account for every individual event or encounter one meets in the day."

"My school leadership is very dependent on my own perception of the situation. I have to keep reminding myself of my desired outcome from encounters/discussions with staff, student and parent bodies. "Solution focused" I think is the term. I strive always to be honest and true to myself and to be an advocate of the children in my care. I enjoy my job so I get better at it every year."

Principal 10.

"I was meeting with a new acting Deputy Principal about the role and supports. I met with a Speech and Language Therapist and discussed planning ahead. I was preparing for a good staff-planning day tomorrow."

"I facilitated a staff planning session on the AISTEAR curriculum, which was positive. I was supporting an ex-parent in dealing with her "issues" in her child existing school. I was working with a child who was disruptive in class and was trying to reason with him.

"I was reflecting on our work in school at a workshop on transitions, which is always good to get time off."

"I was in the class for most of the day –which is always positive."

"At times, I found it hard to separate the admin role with that of the leadership role. The lines can blur at times. As a school leader, liaising with other local services occurs regularly. So, this week I met with the Speech and Language Therapist and with other service workers in the early years sector. This is an important role for the Principal in the wider community. At times, it is hard to record this in a journal this."

Principal 11.

"I called to all classes to talk to pupils about cyber bullying and how it will not be tolerated. There were problems with Viber spilling into the school in the mornings from the evenings before."

"I was explaining tactics to a teacher to resolve the bullying issue. I was pointing out the social implications of bullying to pupils. I rang the parents of a bully and of those being bullied. We had to show staff, parents and pupils that this type of behaviour would not be tolerated. We had to restore the feeling that school a safe place to be."

"A meeting with the NEWB and with the parents of attenders went very well. The staff is very positive about the initiative. The NEWB is also positive."

"I met the resource teacher for a chat and advice. I gave her some pointers and tips. I offered advice to parents. I met with teachers about schools self-

evaluation. I had a chat with the post holders above formulating "the language of Math's" in a policy and a chart."

"Leadership can be more difficult – trying to motivate teachers and staff with all of the cuts they have taken and there are more to come with Croke Park 2. The Department is not helping by rolling out initiative after initiative and by not giving enough time for each. The school self-evaluation book has not come yet - since September – (this is) not a very professional approach."

"I don't think that Irish Principals are consciously thinking about separating managing and leadership. They just do what needs to be done."

Principal 12.

"A probationary teacher is really struggling with classroom behaviour management. She is resisting the support of the teacher mentor. I spoke to her at length to explain how we were trying to support her. We talked for over an hour this afternoon. I definitely felt like the school leader."

"We are facing a SNA review shortly. The SNA's are all feeling wobbly as their jobs are at stake. I met with them as a group to allay the fears."

"The punctuality drive is definitely being led by me."

"Yes –I spent much of the day listening to and reassuring parents. Everything that happens in the classroom has the potential to land on my door. I was aware that I was allaying fears, reassuring parents and calming the situation. I worked with a class teacher on seating arrangements and general classroom management. I felt I had improved the situation. I felt I was guiding and leading her. I worked with a group of teachers, analysing data from parents' questionnaires about numeracy."

"I visited every class in the school for a brief chat. I was conscious that I was leading children towards positive behaviour. I enjoyed looking at the children's self-assessment folders and encouraging the children to be proud of their work! I dealt with a disciplinary issue involving a 1st class student and I was conscious of my role in that situation. I have now sent for the parents."

"I was not really conscious of leading today. I think I just went through the motions today. I was frustrated because I intended to work on preparing for a Board of Management meeting but I didn't get to the tasks on my list."

"Yes, I was conscious that I was leading the school when meeting with visitors in the morning. I took the visitors for a tour of the school and we dropped into a few classes. Much of the day was spent on admin duties. I'm not conscious of much leadership when doing admin work. I felt I was leading children when dealing with bullying issue."

"Leadership is what attracted me to this job. I like this aspect of my work and I find it brings great satisfaction. Empowering others and delegating tasks is an extremely important part of my role. This year we have opened a class for children with autism and the teacher teaching the class is leading this work with the support of the Deputy Principal rather than my support. It is essential that we share the responsibility."

"Croke Park 2 has left me feeling very disillusioned. I don't believe the work of Principals is properly valued. I have a feeling that we are not fully or properly represented by the INTO. Cuts to pay and conditions leave me feeling demoralised. Sometimes it's hard to stay feeling positive and yet a positive attitude is the most important quality from me as a leader."

"Keeping the diary forced me to be a little more reflective about my work. I need to do more of this."

Principal 13.

"I spoke to two teachers regarding school self-evaluation. I had a long chat with a teacher who has just retired after six months sick leave. I spoke to a teacher regarding the best way to move hurling forward in the school."

"Yes, with the pupils, during Literacy Lift-off and at choir practice. I met a man from pest control and was asking him about vermin, etc. I spend a lot of time with the pupils."

"I was very much leading the teachers today, with an emphasis on schools self-evaluation and on Croke Park hour."

"All of my day was spent with the children."

Principal 14.

"I was very aware of my role as a leader when working with the young teacher in drawing up a classroom support plan; what to include, what not to include, help with use of language, developing a timeframe, etc. Bringing parents on board while encouraging them to actively participate in the process was very worthwhile."

"Today was a good day to be an instructional leader. I was happy to lead and explore various planning options with my staff who had a lot to contribute."

"There was no leading role today of any real significance. I had a meeting with the SNA staff to discuss future work from Croke Park hours."

"I became very aware of my lack of expertise in relation to contracts and employment law. This is in the area which we are responsible for but have no training."

Principal 15.

"Yes. Before school I updated the whiteboard in the staff room regarding the review of current science policy and I gave directions to all class teachers. I met with a new curate in the parish and I welcomed him officially. I gave him a broad outline of the pupils and staff and we set dates for the First Confession meeting with parents. I was conscious of the many hats I wear and the key skill of communication as being central to the job. I was also conscious of the Principal's role in keeping momentum going in the school regarding following up on decisions taken at Croke Park meetings."

"Engaging with SNA's and giving them time for a chat and praise. Supporting a family with the transfer of their son to secondary school. Assembly – reinforcing points raised by staff in relation to yard behaviour. Self-management of my time – prioritising and setting targets for myself."

"Helping my class with co-ordination of activities and from the rest of the school, working on the topic of "time" for Math's week. I was listening to the concerns of teachers about a psychological assessment yesterday and their feelings about the initial feedback of the psychologist. I explained the process of application for resource hours to two sets of parents. I was looking at the implications of school self-evaluation guidelines on planning for the staff."

"I was conscious of the need to advise and reassure younger teachers on handling difficult situations with parents. I was conscious of the need for communication skills in the role of Principal. I was conscious of the need to have good policies, particularly in relation to bullying and the code of behaviour."

"I spoke with priests and the 2nd class teacher in relation to the "Do this in Memory" Mass this Sunday. I will be attending. I shared the limited information I have on the redeployment panel coming in for SNA's."

"I had to lead some Shetland ponies. I had to run them off the pitch and back into the field!!"

"The Croke Park hours have led to more opportunities for communication with and between staff: The sharing of a long-term vision, the setting of goals, etc. I feel Principals have to lead by example. Having the professional competencies and abilities to do the job properly is a very important aspect of the role."

"Leadership for me is keeping focused on what's best for pupils and on how to achieve this: giving staff opportunities to develop their own leadership skills, the need for good communication skills, to be levelheaded and keep focused on long-term goals and not get caught up in the endless amount of tasks and "distractions" that occur."

"Would I recommend this job to others? This is hard to answer after the Croke Park 2 announcements."

Principal 16.

"We are involved in the Trócaire Lenten Campaign and the Better World Award. I spoke to classes on these issues. I encourage teachers to get involved in the campaign. I met with the learning support team about testing. I got the caretaker involved in water conservation project with the 5th class teacher. I organise the cluster arrangement with another school and I supported teachers who were undertaking clothes recycling, indoor hurling and swimming gala."

I encouraged pupils on the green schools committee, the junior infants in the Trócaire campaign, helped a senior pupil with a serious foot injury, encouraged and SNA in her involvement in the literacy Project, I helped teachers in various activities and encouraged a parent to take control of her situation.''

"It felt invigorating to be involved with the children today. It was great to have the space and time to discuss with the SEN team. I felt I learned and updated myself on SEN issues. I was certainly conscious of the fact that others were depending on me to make decisions and also depending on me to lead or support initiatives. I felt teachers were happy with the input, as were parents I met regarding upgrading our school website."

"I used to think that leadership was a word used by the IPPN, etc to justify their existence but the more I am in this job, the more I realise it's actually very important. Everyone looks to the Principal for leadership whether they agree which you or not. Sometimes good leadership can come in the form of supporting a teacher or a staff member in an initiative rather than being the one at the top all the time. People should be made to feel valued, wanted and appreciated. A happy staff is a very supportive staff."

"Humour is vital. In the end, it's only work. It's so much more enjoyable when everyone is enjoying the experience. In the words of song "Don't worry – be happy!""

Principal 17.

"I spoke to pupils about managing themselves and their behaviour. I engaged with staff around a challenging situation that is on-going in one class. I spoke with an architect and an engineer about the proposed building project. We walked the site and I made them aware of the standard of work and requirements of the Board of Management."

"Yes I was – a formal meeting with the occupational therapist was at my instigation. I asked a SNA to stay late to attend. In all, there were 10 people present. A parent I spoke with, is in the middle of trying to establish good practice in relation to parenting and her child's behaviour is very difficult. I consciously affirmed her but also I was frank in telling her that the boy's behaviour at school was intolerable and that change needed to happen."

"Today I had several meetings: one with the SCP coordinator about the Friends for Life programme, one with the HSCL coordinator and the SCP coordinator about attendance of the one I mentioned above. I think these were all attempts at leading. They were arranged as my instigation. They relate to issues that are core to the school and to the well being of pupils."

"I had to speak to some referees today about a teacher who is applying for a position in our school. There is nothing that I rate more important than recruitment, particularly in relation to teaching. It is a very time-consuming and wearing but is extremely important. Yes, I am conscious that I need to get this building project off the ground as successfully as possible. It has to work for the school. I spoke to a number of parents about the importance of attendance and what needed to be done. I had a meeting about the school self-evaluation process. We're getting started".

"It is very difficult to get the headspace to be an effective leader when one has too many practical issues to face on the ground: Issues with staff, issues with finance and the pressure of diminishing resources, issues about special needs, issues about poor morale, issues about numbers, issues responding to external factors like the media, the DES and society. Leadership is vitally important. A school needs people in charge who have clear vision regarding the core aspects of its life: The children, the teaching and learning innovation, the needs of the time and of the future."

"Overall, my experience is that I have to be true to what I believe to be important. I believe in the children who go to my school. I employ the best teachers and other staff I can find. I insist on the bar being set high, so that these children and their families will respect themselves and feel respected. They have their whole lives ahead of them. They can be anything they believe they can be and it our duty to enable them."

Principal 18.

"I was explaining to a pupil how important doing homework is and how difficult it will be when she is in secondary school with so many different teachers. She was advised by me to prepare for secondary school by setting it as a goal for herself for the next four months and to do all of her homework every night. The teacher and the SNA's in the unit for children with ASD are under severe pressure everyday from emotional and physical outbursts from one pupil and they need to talk to someone after the episodes. I felt I empathised with them today and the feedback I got was that they appreciated my concern."

"I was leading pupils through correcting homework and was jogging with pupils from 3rd to 6th class. I liaised with several class teachers regarding behavioural issues and injuries in the yard. I met with parents about complaints of a bullying nature and I also met with PTA in a leading role. I love to get time for a daily jog. Today I did it and that was great."

"Today I was leading the pupils in senior infants. It was very enjoyable and I was able to see where the children were in the development and learning. I was supporting teachers regarding misbehaviour. I also supported two very upset SNA's in the staff room at a debriefing after a trauma. I supported the young family of the pupil concerned. They had to drive over from the (other side of the city) to collect him. This occurs almost daily as he refuses to get into or to even sit in the taxi most days. They had a new baby girl only three days ago. The mother was being counseled by me today! I enjoyed the teaching today but I didn't enjoy the traumatic events."

"I had a relaxing bath when I came home. There was nobody in at all and I was glad as I had nothing left to give anyone. I sat down in the chair exhausted and I fell asleep. When I awoke I have the bath. Then, I felt human again."

"Today I was teaching a 2ⁿᵈ class for a half an hour while the teacher had to go early for a funeral. The Irish quiz was also enjoyable. I took 34 pupils at yard time. Today I was supporting a bereaved teacher, the teacher in the ASD class, as well as the teacher of the pupil whose parent didn't turn up for the meeting. Then there was the pregnant teacher who had to have two scans. I was also supporting the secretary in her request for a day off for family reasons. I had to support the escort who was wondering about her job, not travelling with the child in the ASD unit, since his dad was picking him up. I requested items for an agenda for a staff meeting and I contacted other Principals about sharing resources hour allocations."

"Again, I had great interaction with pupils in the quiz. I was even teaching and I had a discussion with the student council about fundraising for the Children's Hospice. I spoke with the Chairperson of the Board of Management and we discussed the implications of pupils with ASD no longer being supported by therapists or psychologists. I didn't feel like a jog with the pupils today even though it was a lovely day and I would have liked to have done so. I was kind to myself and didn't go."

"Yes (I was) leading teaching and learning. I reflect on this and I know that I don't do enough of it. Yet, there is nothing I love better than interacting with the pupils. I tried to get into all classes at least once a week and have a little Irish conversation

with them. I do that every day with all pupils and adults at the gate in the morning and I greeted them in Irish mostly (if it's appropriate). Generally the visits to classes are for information, rules, news, changes and issues their parents should know about, etc."

"This week I encouraged teachers to apply for positions as Principlals in new schools of the same ethos. They were 100% not interested: "I don't think I'd be a good manager", " I love teaching too much to give it up", "I see what you put yourself through and I don't want that in my life", "I don't want wrinkles too early", "it's not worth it" were some of the repeatable responses I got."

"Our in-school management meetings are held every month after school and are arranged in advance for the year. The date we had arranged for this month clashed with a parent-teacher meeting. As two of our post-holders are job sharing I am still trying to agree to rearrange a date for the meeting. I have requested training for our newly appointed acting Deputy Principal. It seems that won't be forthcoming from months. The Deputy and I have weekly meetings, every Wednesday morning, early before school."

"I supervise in the yard as all teachers do on rota basis. I also relieve teachers who have been supervising the yard and are having their lunch. These are further visits to classes that enable one to keep in touch with what's going on. I also try to take classes on EPV days as much as possible."

Principal 19.

"I was modeling for pupils the behaviour I expect from them. I was supporting and guiding parents through very difficult court/access issues. There were issues with the FHC. I was linking in with teachers by encouraging and affirming their work. I met with the Parents' Association Chairperson. I visited the infant classrooms and was affirming and supporting. I met was a parent who needed advice on returning to work, possibly in a school setting. I was setting tasks for the caretaker and I met with the SNA regarding duties."

"Just a thought! I am noticing that the "yourself" box is not being ticked but I'm not sure of how I should be leading "myself". I presume it refers to self-care and management. Today was, I suppose, a day for leadership of self in that I got some up-skilling and CPD which helped me in some ways personally to carry out my role more effectively. I suppose I was conscious in general of the key role I play daily in setting the atmosphere or climate here. What I send out in terms of positivity returns to me tenfold from staff, parents and pupils :-)"

"I get a great buzz from this aspect of the role of Principal. Being able to glide and motivate as well as smooth the path through "change" is so rewarding even though it is also very challenging. I was working recently, again delivering in-service and again I found this very energising and I see that I have definite skills in this area. It is vital to be able to take in vast amounts of information before staff meetings and also to distil it down into tiny achievable tickable targets (TATT's) that are not totally draining. There is a need to keep hope alive!"

"I am struck by the privilege it is to be in a school leadership role. How many lives can we or do we impact upon, and for the better hopefully? I am so glad I did the Postgraduate studies I did. I couldn't have managed at all without that, especially in the last four years. The M.Ed. was and continues to be a key resource but the Postgrad in Guidance and Counselling was even more vital and I use its skills daily for myself and others. CPD cannot be under estimated – it is essential (obviously tailored to the needs)."

Principal 20.

"Ensuring pupils are clear on the parameters of the code of behaviour. Working with pupils to achieve greater attainment and helping them to see their own potential. Trying to "oil" the wheels of progress in encouraging and guiding teachers in their work. Focusing on what we can do for the pupils as a team by supporting each other. I dealt with a small amount of my own duties, but after 3:00 pm I got much more done."

"For pupils, it was assuring that they were doing well and reinforcing yesterday's "devils" that we were seeing a marked improvement already. With staff, it's really keeping them positive and having a sense of value. I, the pupils, the parents and the community value them in what they do. TD's are their own breed! I worked on our school planning. We have lost posts the responsibility. I don't just lead the team; I'm the most active member bringing the team forward. Explore opportunities, allowed teachers to try and encourage support from the other members of staff."

"It was very much a challenge today trying to get across the difficulties posed by the admission of a child where every written report clearly states his difficulties in the previous school, with Gardaí and in residential care. Yet, there is no report that

would warrant an application for assistance for the child either a medical, educational or psychological."

"Today the pupils and staff gave me the courage and strength to pick myself up after yesterday. They don't know that but I do and that's the only side you can expose to the school community."

"In giving feedback regarding child protection policy training and sourcing information from the staff, the staff can be confident that on-going work is being done behind-the-scenes for them and that strong, comprehensive templates or plans will be put before them to be worked on and not just dumped on them"

"If we didn't have the pupils and staff that give us encouragement and positivity, the job would drown me. I find on occasion that the staff and pupils "carry me to a better place so that I can face the challenge. I don't tell them that because they need a leader not a crutched follower. The bugger must not give pain to the teacher's ears, but rather a spark to get up and tear into it once more."

"If there was ever a need for staff to feel supported, it is now. Principals need them more than they need Principals. They can all teach, work and love the children. I just keep them "in the boat" and not drifting away. Staffs need minding and encouraging and not just driving."

Principal 21.

"I was advising a teacher who was asking me about the situation in a class – birthday invitations. With the BOM, I was advising the Chairperson and the Treasurer and was keeping the best side out regarding a difficult building project. I was wishing staff well for the mid-term break. I had to follow up with a parent whose child received a nasty note and who is majorly pissed off about lots of things."

"I was supporting a teacher with a difficult 6th class. I was making a case for the children, staff and dealing with possible cuts to SNA staffing. I was keeping a face on in light of demoralised senior staff being worried about pay cuts."

"Yes, I had to be very straight with a parent, telling her that her child was telling lies and knowing at the same time that she had been out gossiping with

other parents; (the grapevine!). Sometimes it is hard to be strong. I was dealing with builders about the construction job and organising delivery times, etc."

"Out in the yard before school, I was making sure that the kids got in okay. There was an oil spill in the yard and only one door of the three was safe to use. The kids were great though. I met with parents who had recently arrived at school and had no secondary placement organised for their daughter. They were very anxious to secure a place at a good secondary school that will lead on to a good college and to a good profession. I sent them to a few other schools that they didn't know of in order to fill out enrolment applications."

"I was meeting with 5th/6th class teachers to look at the English books for next year and I talked to the post holder for English about reviewing the post. It was a difficult day. One teacher who was pregnant had a sudden scare and we had to get her to the hospital. Not good news, the poor girl is having a terrible year. Then I had to talk to the College's of Education inspectors about the students. They are grads mostly and a fantastic committed bunch."

"I attended a CPD day in leadership this month and I came away wondering how and where I was supposed to find the time to do and to be all things they wanted me to do. There are time constraints. Some of the school community will never be happy with what you do. They'll only see a small part of the picture. I like that you get to see the whole picture in this job."

"The diary has helped me realise I lead more than I thought I did. It is interesting to see what I was doing each day when the text came. I often forget what I do as the day goes on because so many of the decisions are small ones and you hardly notice you are making them. A fair bit of the time is taken up with dealing with staff and parents. Keeping the diary has made me noticed little things that I'd never put into my day-to-day diary because I don't plan for them: Dealing with parents, blocked sewers, post holders jobs if they are out sick, etc."

"I find the personal end of the role difficult. By nature, I'm more introverted than extrovert and I find the public nature of the job difficult. I find I bury my feelings about it quite a bit or I wouldn't be able to do it at all. I'm interested in what this project has brought up for me."

Principal 22.

"With pupils, I was dividing and collecting a class as the teacher was on an EPV day. This wasn't exactly leading but nonetheless, the children are aware of my role. I was certainly leading with teachers, others and parents. I was approached by various people in my role as leader, for example, parents of a child with Down Syndrome who wished to meet me about their son attending our school from next September. Yes, I was conscious of my role when dealing with discipline issues. I spoke to a prospective parent and was conscious of my role there. In running the meeting with the SNA's, I was extremely conscious that a decision had to be made; one which wouldn't be popular. But I feel I approached it well and I got the desired outcome."

"Yes, I called to the 2nd classes to speak to them briefly about Penance. I had to deal with one discipline issue with a first-class boy. I had meetings with the Principal of a special school, a visiting teacher for the visually impaired and an inspector from St Pat's. They were all very interesting and positive and they reaffirmed my role as leader. I had to speak to teachers about issues such as Story Time, reading and parent-teacher meetings where diplomacy and leadership skills were required. With parents - both current and prospective - I had to be conscious of my role."

"When doing Story Time with junior infants I felt myself more teacher than leader – which is not necessarily a bad thing. When dealing with a parent I actually had to call on my resources and was conscious of my leadership role and my years of experience. I like my job. I am happy to be a leader of learning and teaching but a lot of all other issues can get in the way. I like to variety the job brings but I am hugely conscious of the fact that I am a leader of teaching and learning. I also believe that I should be more involved with the pupils. I will make a conscious effort next term to spend time in the 1st and 2nd classes in particular."

Principal 23.

"I had a good day at work today. I feel that I made progress with the children. The incident, which I was investigating, had a good outcome, in that it was solved, all parties were content and all are prepared to make an effort to move on. I'm hopeful! Staff relations were good today."

"Most definitely – I felt that this matter needed to be dealt with and finished: children and parents saw me as the leader. There was learning involved – for the children. I was conscious of my responsibility to apply for resources for a child, so that he will reach its potential and reduce his disruption to other children - the overall smooth running of the school."

"Yes, I was very conscious of my role as leader when dealing with both boys. Parents were supportive. Yes, but I felt - and told the parent - the following: the behaviour that I corrected the child for probably goes on in plenty of schools and is often ignored! This is because teachers don't want to raise their blood pressure by getting eaten from parents!! And they are probably right!"

"We had our WSE just 13 months ago, so we've taken our foot off the gas on subject areas and policies which we should be reviewing. I find that staff have enough on their plate, they are cheesed off with Croke Park hours. Volunteerism is going, if it's not gone, and who would blame anybody for thinking like this."

Principal 24.

"No, I didn't think so. One of the teachers had bereavement in the family during mid-term and there was a bit of tension with some of the staff because I didn't contact everyone. The person who was bereaved had said not to tell when I had asked if I should spread the word. Some people thought I should have done it anyway. You can't win. You were damned if you do and damned if you don't!"

"Actually I felt okay about the after-school meeting in the end. Staff were very good and receptive. I was anxious to have people buying into the "comprehension strategies" –the Building Bridges program, that I heard was very good. I was

318

worried that all would not be on board but they all came through and I was happy with the outcome. This is going towards our school development plan for the SSE."

"I spent over an hour talking to and attending to Danish student visitors. We get a lot of visitors and I usually don't mind but they always want to visit classrooms and sometimes teachers and not too happy if I come looking for them to receive visitors. In the end, a few teachers took them to their rooms and it turned out to be very good. The Croke Park deal is on people's minds. It is reasonably well received by the majority because it doesn't affect them too much."

"No, not really. I often think I'm just the one who picks up the pieces. There is fallout from different things and I am the "safety net". I do anything that needs doing – that nobody else has thought of. No, not really. The impending meeting with the parents on the unruly child worries me. They have ignored and resisted attempts to get them to see that the child needs assessment. I'm trying to support the teacher as best I can. The other teacher in next door is sticking her oar in and is making suggestions that are not always helpful. It is difficult for all."

"I find the 'new initiatives' SSE numeracy and literacy to be very daunting. There is a constant demand for more. Why can't we stand still for a while? We have a good school. It works well. Why do we need to keep changing? The SENO - who I like very much and is very good to us - brought another "evaluation" folder for us to beat ourselves up with! Comply comply comply! We are knee deep in "initiatives" and they are cutting our pay as well. I'm usually very placid but I feel swamped and peed off! Demoralised!"

Principal 25.

"I am extremely conscious that I haven't met staff as a body yet. They are buzzed about literacy and numeracy and they expect it all from a 'DEIS' Principal. I'm keen to be positive. I got a cranky over-loaded laptop to work a bit better today and got some furniture sorted."

"As I knew, I'm thinking it's better to be thought a fool than to open my mouth and remove all doubt. All is going well I'm just extremely conscious of affirming good work. I haven't had a staff meeting yet or sorted any way to properly communicate with anyone yet."

"I'm trying not to be too nice or take on anything I might regret later. I got caught taking blue tac off the wall!! FFS wrecking the new walls with blue tac!"

"I'm trying to meet a class level each day yet get caught up with admin and meetings and e-mails. I'm aware of issues around the corner."

"Absolutely. It was staff meeting number one. There were no matters arising from the previous minutes. The agenda was done out and the meeting was calm. My info lasted a few minutes. I chose my words carefully. I shared that I would disappoint them all at some stage. I had notions of sharing loads but I said as little as I could. Already, different ways of thinking are apparent. Looking towards best practice is just the easiest way of doing stuff but not always the best way."

Principal 26.

"I was leading "friendship fortnight". I'm encouraging staff and children to give it a positive go and hopefully they will. I am making a serious effort to affect my dealings with two particular kids. I aim to find reasons to praise and lift."

No.

"The best approach to guiding parents discussed. The continuum of support is an essential part in preparation. I spoke with (a TV celebrity) about the school and the community. I went through the running order and the plans for the table draw – and the best time and efficient way to run it. When rehearsing in charge for Confirmation, I talked about respect and the meaning of receiving the sacrament. I was helping a boy with panic attacks and how to deal with the immediate and the bigger picture."

"Yes, I'm trying to guide health and safety for all! I'm very concerned about a little boy who has anger issues and who lashes out. It is difficult to motivate staff and to be energised about taking on SSE. So many of them give our way beyond the 9:00 to 2:35 pm, especially when the new Croke Park deal talks of more hours to be given! How do you motivate the ones who need motivation to stir in their veins, and how do you not turn off the wonderful staff who give so much already?"

"As Principal, it is impossible to plan any given day–regardless of how important those issues (are that) one had prioritised. Always, the first casualty is administration. From the moment I arrive at school, I am at the behest of staff, parents and pupils. These matters, when there is an issue, tend to be urgent and consuming. In dealing with these issues, I find that I have all the responsibility to deal with whatever is in hand, but effectively I have no power or control. The government has given staff and parents and pupils many entitlements and expectations that cannot be filled with dwindling resources and the manpower with which I am resourced. This leads to frustration, exhaustion and stress. Unlike the diary of the particular dates chosen for this paperwork, were fundraising brought the school community together – which

sometimes I love dearly and is the most wonderful part of the job – most days and with me tired and frustrated."

"The parents: The small minority who demand an inordinate amount of time and to take out their frustration on staff, it's never their child's fault. The majority of parents are incredibly supportive in every way."

"The children: I love the children – I adored teaching and I love to see them grow and develop. They are my favourite part of the job. You can have the odd frustration with them but they are the reason for it all. However, there is no real sanction for very disruptive and dangerous children."

"Staff: most of the staff are incredible. They are so supportive and willing to take on new ideas, to present new ideas and to come to them with energy. They give incredible hours of energy and fun! I find dealing with the few who abuse the sick days leave and who leave telling you that they will be out till the last minute, and to delay needlessly the opportunity for giving a substitute a job, those leaving kids un-supported, or those won't pull their weight or follow instructions–there are no real sanctions. If you take it on, you are in for an expensive and time-consuming long drawn-out tedious procedure. You ask yourself is it worth it?"

"DES: when push comes to show, it's all the Principal's responsibility and most times you do not get assistance, never mind advice. I quote - when querying all the sick leave used up by a teacher - "when it gets tricky, we don't get involved. You need to get legal advice" Their attitude is that you have all the responsibility as a Printapal, (they) have the power, but we will not assist you – in most cases."

"Board of Management: We are very fortunate to have a supportive Board of Management. However, again I have full responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school but yet I have to seek permission from the Board on many issues. Again, I have a great Board. How difficult it is for Principals with unsupportive boards."

"Administration: the Government sees fit to continually withdraw resources – in-school management posts, resource hours, SNA's, etc but they expect more and more time-consuming paperwork. We haven't got near our e-plan yet and it's three years down the line!!"

"Employment restrictions: The panel system does not allow schools to choose somebody best suited to the school – the culture and ethos of the school. If only one person remains on the panel, the school, according to the rules, must offer a permanent post to that teacher regardless of suitability ... (section omitted)." "Again you have all the responsibility and no power and you are responsible for seeking the best educational outcomes for children in your school. So, the panel means not only are you not allowed to employ who you feel best suits the school, but you are not allowed to sack inefficient or incompetent staff who are actually damaging the children – as you can, in the business world!!"

"Benefit of the job: I get to sit in the front row at Communion and Confirmation! I don't have to send a sick note to the boss! :-)"

Principal 27.

"I'm not sure. Does a normal day for a teaching Principal, with 80% teaching and 20% school business, count as leading? I'm happy with the day. I was making teachers aware that it is okay to ask for money for resources and ideas. Saying 'no' is a real part of Principal's job."

"Explaining to the 5th/6th pupils what they do and how they act, affects all the children in the school. The parents have to know what the standards are in the school."

"I was happy with the outcome and the opinions of the staff concerning mobile phones. It's "lead by example"."

"Leading a school community is a privilege. Yes, GAM, resource hours, CP2, parents, staff and pupils make it more difficult than it need be sometimes. However, if you take the time to stop, listen and view outside the classroom, from the infants right up to 6th class, within 10 seconds you can see learning happening. Happy children and fantastic teachers are making a huge difference. I wouldn't hand the keys back. It's the best professional decision I ever made!"

Principal 28.

"I led a teacher. She suggested a method for SSE and having discussed this with me, agreed to go on an alternative route first and then graduate on to her method. I led the head of the Parents' Association in regards to pricing something and in how to handle a difficult situation on the committee. I lead another Principal on an admin issue."

"I had to guide a member of staff caught in the middle of an issue outside of school mostly. With the PA, I had to decide on an issue relating to outside business who was bullying the Association. I also had to advise on a present for the caretaker–an issue that is building up. I spoke to the Principal of another school and had to inform her about an issue and guide her – if she takes the advice. I lead the teachers and I had a good pre-SSE meeting with the staff where we all outlined only positive things. I was verbally abused by a former colleague while in the yard and I "let fly". I had to walk away. With the parents, I convinced the PA chairperson to deal with an issue in a certain way. In fairness, she seems sound."

*"I led the pupils – I spend a lot of time teaching an Irish song to the girls to sing for the caretaker. With the teachers, I organised the programme for the céilí.
With the pupils, I lead songs/homes/dances for Seachtain na Gaeilge. I led teachers up to dance! I gave the caretaker a good send off and I made the priest and the PA give good speeches about him. I interviewed a new caretaker and I brought around him the school."*

"I never split the job up before into management and leadership so my answers are probably blurred. I don't think I lead as much as I manipulate. Sometimes I feel like a goalie and I know that one is only as good as their last save. 99.9% of the children look up to me as the leader, probably because I am a fairly good teacher but also because most staff inculcate that respect for me in the children. One to two children in a particular class don't have respect for me. I dealt with this class on a child protection issue last year. They were in junior infants. I have a lot of toing and froing with parents and a small - very small, minority - were not happy. I think this has seeped into the class. A leader walks on eggshells, like an actress on a stage and your reputation suffers any time you are losing face. We have a new Chairperson on the BOM this year who has no education background and his only experience it when he was at school and that was not good. So, I have had to change approaches to teaching and try to lead him too. He is a nice man but it is weird trying to lead your boss!"

"I would prefer to be leading on curricular issues. I would like to be able to take teacher's great ideas and have time to put them all into practice. By the way, I love my job but I think the whole school is too dependent on me doing the right thing and making the right decisions. It's too based on me personally, however I know well – if I was gone in the morning, I'd be forgotten about fairly quickly."

Principal 29.

"Yes, preparing for the visit of the Inspector in relation to self evaluation later in the week. I felt pressure to ensure the staff was on target on the area of self-evaluation and were up to date in relation to the whole self-evaluation process. I spent time leading the staff in preparation for the impending visit."

"I was conscious of assisting staff members in relation to class duties. Three other staff members were in attendance at a cross country running championship, including the school's secretary. This meant I was working in a teaching capacity, organising staff cover for the absent members, running the school office and trying to prepare for an enrolment evening, NCSE applications for the March deadline, none of which were accompanied by the promised NEPS psychological reports and all of which had to be followed up on with the relevant agencies. The school assembly for Seachtain na Gaeilge

had also to be prepared for, as well as ensuring that staff members who were not on task were aware they were being observed. The Board minutes had to be circulated and the enrolment evening had to be prepared for."

"Yes, at all levels indicated: pupils in relation to discipline and organisation, staff in relation to future events, parents in relation to add advice on discipline and on learning issues such as literacy and numeracy. I was preparing a submission to the DES for and an 8 classroom extension. As part of this process, I had to liaise with the design team, the Board Chairman and the local VEC. Having made a call in relation to the CAT test – a standardised IQ test, having purchased our hand written version, I then had to make a call that it was unsuitable and investigate the digital version for clarity of administration and correction."

"Initially I loved the job and was extremely challenged in leadership. As the years have progressed I am now starting to feel very overwhelmed by the constant competing demands of the position. I feel a reduction in funding to schools, through the capitation grant and in particular the minor works, has led to a constant need for fundraising with the Principal leading this process. Over the last 8 years I have been involved in fundraising for a soccer field, dressing rooms, Jubilee and literacy resources and IT in the region of €300,000. In all, this can be extremely demanding in addition to the normal job. The constant battle with the Department in relation to building can also be energy draining. The school has been campaigning for 8 years for a new building/extension and has only recently been granted and 8 classroom extension through a devolved grant process. The funding devolved for this project has been deemed insufficient by the design team and there is no funding to meet the needs of the school in relation to GP facilities and also in relation to learning support/resource facilities. This constant battle for the next section of the building is energy draining in itself, especially when having to liaise with the board, local VEC, department and public representatives and the PA to ensure that all are moving forward together."

"Taking on all the literacy, numeracy and the SSE process and the erosion of the staff morale through a lack of promotional prospects and wages cutbacks is also hugely challenging in recent years. I do believe that there should be an option for Principals to give an excellent 7 to 10 years service and then to stand aside to give younger/older members of their colleagues the opportunity to lead. I feel this cyclical form of leadership would be far more beneficial to the profession since it is difficult to keep moving at such a demanding pace for over 10 years without suffering some form of burn out. The fear of ending up on the panel or without a job is the only deterrent to this for many Principals. I feel as we go forward, particularly with Croke Park on the table, the position of Principal will become even more intensely demanding from a fundraising and staff management respective."

Principal 30.

"At SSE work I put structure/framework out there and then all the (teachers) went (to work). I was very conscious of leadership at this session. With teachers, in how I handled the situation with a pupil who had seriously misbehaved in the yard - an ongoing problem - and how I linked in with teachers' approach/follow up, having led the parent – definitely led a parent - in a meeting by bringing the parent towards a referral to the early intervention team. As a liaison officer, if you like, between visiting teachers' input and class teachers' and in moving this forward and guiding teachers regarding where to next."

"Very much so, regarding: advising the parent of a child in preschool about placement in another school that can meet this child's needs. There is no "body", HSE, DES, NCSE that supports and advises parents through the nightmare of placement for a child with special needs. I am always very conscious of leading the parents through this mess and advising on how to get the best option for the child."

"Parents - at the PA - regarding the design from the school garden. Parents - regarding the future path for a child with a disability and who requires an assessment update, so we can access LITH perhaps next October. The BOARD - leading the Board in so many areas, including a current legal situation with the equality Tribunal – I gave an update on developments and legal advice. Also leading the Board through a potential minefield on a second issue relating to our duty as an employer."

"School leadership is demanding but rewarding and is perhaps one of the most demanding parts of the job, both personally and professionally. It is most rewarding, I feel, because it tends to relate directly to pupil teaching and learning and the support of same. However, it is definitely something which gets less and less of my

time as a Principal, as my role changes and evolves more and more into a management/admin job.''

Principal 31.

"In larger staffs, it is impossible to get a sense of when people are unhappy or annoyed. I find attending to everyone's needs exhausting."

"Today I had the wonderful opportunity to lead in positivity and pride, to share this with students, staff and parents and to be proud of my own work in the school. I was conscious of leading in a facilitative manner during the staff meeting and the in-school management meeting. My staff has really learned the art of collaborative discussion and I am so proud of them."

"I had the opportunity to build bridges with the support staff and was very happy about this! I led by concentrating on admin tasks and becoming more organised. I led the staff in appreciation of the sub, I led her class in appreciation of her, I led everyone in appreciation of all that has been achieved since Christmas, I led myself into exhaustion but a happy and well earned one!"

"Leadership is more challenging than ever. Remaining positive in these difficult times has me exhausted."

"I believe I have succeeded as a leader because my Deputy is capable of taking over from me in the morning! My staff is wonderful but they often ground me by the demands, expectations and problems. Perhaps this is a good thing. I never feel on top of everything, no chance of becoming too comfortable then! I wouldn't change my school or job... (Apart from a short while!) I am happy, challenged, exhausted, satisfied!"

Leaving work behind or taking it home?

This can often be an interesting topic of conversation among Principals. No one survey or diary snapshot will give the complete picture but it may serve to generate further conversation.

The responses were summarized into two sections to offer a comparison. Directly below, are the comments about leaving work behind and beneath that are the comments about taking work home.

Your comments and opinions on this section would be very valuable to the research, particularly in relation to the sentiments expressed on a very personal level by those involved. They may help us understand the reality of the work-life balance experienced in Principals' lives.

"I am leaving work behind today."

I'm leaving work behind ... I'm leaving work behind. ... I'm leaving work behind ...

I left work behind ... I am leaving work behind ... Behind!!! ... I'm leaving work behind!! Its mid-term!! ...

I am leaving it behind ... I'm leaving it behind ... No work home! ... I'm leaving work behind ...

I am leaving it behind! ... Leaving it behind! ... I am leaving work behind ... I'm leaving work behind ... I'm leaving work behind ...

I'm leaving work behind ... I'm leaving it behind midterm is here woo hoo! ... I'm leaving it behind ...

Absolutely not! ... I never bring work home at the weekend ...

I feel this day has been long enough. Anything that can be left isn't vital.

My office is in a state, as men were working on the security system all day. My head was also in the state as I was asked to visit a colleague in hospital and I am dreading what's ahead.

It can be dealt with again.
I am leaving work in school that may be done in the next few days.
The meeting was enough!
I'm leaving it all. It is mid-term!

Usually I do take work home, at least to some extent, but today by mother needed to see the GP so that's that.
This evening I'm leaving it all behind. I've worked hard, I've stayed an hour and a half extra and that's it. I only get paid for so much.
No, not tonight! I have things to do in the afternoon and I'm out to the pub later with friends.

The chairperson texted me at about 7 o'clock about an on-going BOM issue. Normally I would talk to him but I was off to see my mother, who is still sick. It will have to wait.

I stayed an hour late to organise the tea and snacks for the work party who come on Saturdays, but it's the weekend so I'm tuning totally out of school.

Still here doing this at 5:45 pm. I am not taking home work. I feel I achieved a lot today. It was a tough day – lots of worry and emotions and annoyance waiting for the accountant and no show. I was annoyed and I completely forgot my own appointment.

I wouldn't have time to do schoolwork with such a busy weekend organised. It is my policy to try to leave school work in the school.

None; out singing!

I'm leaving work behind as I have some voluntary outside work to do after school.

The day was long enough so that all could be covered at work.

I left work behind, as all on the "to do" list was covered during my time in school.

I am finishing everything in school before going home, by staying back for one and a half hours.

I do this all before school opened and after-school closed – 2 hours extra.

The school hours are 8:50 AM until 2:30 PM. I avoid bringing work home if possible. I try to do it early in the morning and late in the afternoon when the school is quiet.

I am bringing no work home. The day at work has been long enough! I'm feeling very very tired and drained.

It is too busy at home on Tuesday to bring work home.

I left it behind. I just brought this home to complete is this work? :-)

I am definitely leaving it at home this Friday.

I left it behind today.

It's Friday and always on a Friday I wanted to leave school behind me when the time comes to go home. That doesn't mean that there isn't work that I'd need to do and that I'd be hoping I'll have done for Monday but I never want to physically carry things home with me on a Friday.

After 16 years of Principalship I definitely have developed skills around getting "out of the role" and leaving work behind. As I start around 8 most days and finish between 3:30 and 4:00pm, I'd try to get as much done as possible in school but at weekends I would bring things all right or come into school.

I left it at work today due to a family situation but I needed to do that too. I felt positive about the day in spite of personal challenges.

I got on well at work today. Our education planning was tough and tensions were high about how much more we will do and suffer because of pay cuts. At 4:30 pm I left my work behind as I had a BOM meeting at 7:30 pm and I had cattle to fodder!

Work was very good. Teachers and staff are working very hard and are willing to help each other. I forgot your form and I took it home tonight, (so this is the work for tonight!)

The staff and pupils in this school come first. The primary education system was treated with total contempt today. I did my bit and left at 4 pm. Sod it today! I'm leaving it behind.

I'm leaving it behind.
I'm leaving it behind.
No work tonight as it is my birthday!.
We had First Penance – so that will be work enough!

I didn't bring problems home today.

I'm not bringing work on today. I'm going to a wedding tomorrow in Limerick. I will be away from the weekend! Slán leis an scoil.

I'm worried about this one – but in time is will fade away and will be taken over by more "urgent" problems. Remember what Angela McNamara used to say but maybe that was before your time!

I'm leaving it behind today. There are no major issues. Happy days.
I'm leaving it. I have 2 younger children at home. I made that mistake last year. "You live and learn".

Behind.

Behind.

Behind.

Behind.

I am leaving it behind today.

Turbulent relationships with support staff bothers me as I left school today I am blessed with the capacity to park these issues and to be able to enjoy the weekend.

Home on our high!

It's so nice to leave it all behind for Easter, to have met deadlines and actually completed some work. I really do feel that I can leave it all behind me now for 2 weeks, and God!

"I'm taking work home today."

I'm taking home work that I need to do my own computer. It will take about half an hour.

I brought one job home. It took an hour. But I left the rest.

I brought a lot of home today. I wanted to finish the questionnaire from once and for all.

Taking lots on today – how do teaching principals manage???

I will prepare work at home for Monday. I will cover for the junior infants teacher who is on an EPV day – there are 31 junior infants. It is not practical to divide them and to send them to other classes. I will also write a press release about the 6th class domination of a cheque to Bóthar, the Third World charity.

Staff are going to another school until 5 pm to do a course on numeracy. I was also participating.

I am reading up on a new circular about GAM and resource teaching. I will pop in the shops to get photos framed and pickup extension leads and other bits and pieces.
I will attend a Cumann na mBunscol meeting from 7:30 to 9:30 approximately.

I'm leaving but I will have to come in tomorrow to write some important letters. I have arranged to meet the Chairperson in the morning to sign them. I'm feeling tired.
I am leaving work behind. Although I write this I know I'll be checking the IPPN network for updates and general reading. I can spend up to an hour each evening doing this unless otherwise occupied.

I didn't leave work on till 9:15 pm! I always use the dictaphone for notes, coming and going from work – even at home. I will make a note on that.
I took a little home as a result of the Croke Park hours.
I'm taking it home!

I'm taking it home ☹.
I am taking home a new circular to read.

I'm leaving it behind but I know I will be on the Internet checking out educational sites etc.
I am bringing home some things I downloaded about literacy and numeracy – strategies for problem-solving in Math's. Also, the last Board of Management meeting has to be written up.

Just one very quick survey in preparation for in-service.
The only thing I took home was this survey.

It was the first day back, so all is good. The only work I brought home was some reading material and an inspection report on early years settings. Again, I'm leaving work behind and the day was long. I returned to school after the workshop to review and finish my admin work.

I took notes from builders, despite having to go through them at home for one and a half hours.

I did a lot of research at home, investigating expulsion and the steps to take. This took 2 .5 to 3 hours. There was also another hour or two with it "going around in my head".
I am leaving now to meet a fellow Principal teacher for tea and catch up. I'm not bringing work home but will probably share a few issues and concerns with her.

I went back to school at 7 pm until 8:30 pm doing school self-evaluation again. I have a staff meeting on Thursday so I want to prepare the staff meeting about school self-evaluation (boy, do I hate those words!!).

Chance would be a fine thing!! I will be corrected copies tonight, finishing January's cuntas miosuil (shame on me!), Preparing a letter to be sent out tomorrow about upcoming events, jotting down a few ideas for the next Math's week based on time (this is taking place in 2 weeks) and I checked over the agenda for tomorrow's Principals' support group meeting (4:00–5:30 pm).

I spent an hour to an hour and a half typing notes on meetings with SNA's in relation to care needs. I read through a speech therapy report given to me by a junior infant teacher and her notes from the meeting today with the therapist.

I flicked through the SSE guidelines that arrived today along with guidelines on book rental schemes. I typed up the BOM minutes from last nights meeting

and I drafted two letters as requested. I typed up a draft letter to the SENO for two applications for resource hours and I corrected 29 English copies.

Tonight I corrected 29 Math's copies and I looked up the Croke Park agreement in terms of changes to substitution.

I laughed at this section!! Maybe I just don't make effective use of time but I rarely have an evening off. Tonight I'm reviewing our literacy plan, which is still at the draft stage, and pricing IT equipment and correcting Irish copies.
I had to catch up on e-mails and also I was preparing for trucks arriving on site for a new extension work.

I'm taking home materials relating to special-needs applications and also information documents on Relevant Contracts Tax and VAT regulations. This has to be done tomorrow.
I was working on materials dealing with building project for the builder, the county council and the design team. This has to be done.

I took it home. We have parent/teacher meetings next week so I had to have letters regarding appointments ready for distribution on the following day – the midnight oil.
I took it home. I went to training for BOM members on legal issues. I got home about 10 pm and was very tired. My head was done in.

This evening I am with the Chairperson of the Board of Management and meeting a teacher who wants to job share in our school with another teacher. This meeting is at 8 pm. I know that others will go on in my mind until it happens. We also have to open tenders that have been received from consultants wishing to tender for the building job.

I have a lot on my mind, much of it I cannot resolve immediately, but I have to make decisions in conjunction with the Board of Management and my bottom

line is that the children and the good of the school must be put first. So I suppose I'm bringing it home.

I took home a printout of the INTO, a briefing on the Croke Park deal and the Labour Relations Commission proposals. I had to ring the Chairperson regarding and meeting tomorrow, the Chairperson of the PTA regarding a different meeting and a parent about a behavioural issue. I took a phone call from the NEWB regarding advice I had sought on pupils' behaviour. I sent an e-mail after the phone call and I rang (the patron body) to tell them about a temporary position that may come available in the school.

I have to think of and draft an article from the Principal for the termly newsletter. I rang the Department about a new building.

I took nothing home today! I did have to ring a teacher from home as she is on maternity leave and she wants to take a career break for next year. She sent in a form today but it was the wrong one! Today is the final day for application and this has to be approved by the Board of Management. (The patron body) had to be informed also because it has implication for jobs and the teachers' panel.

From home, I rang the INTO about substitutes and I rang the IPPN about uploading an advertisement. I phoned the Chairperson of the BOM about children being assessed, the secretary's day off, a disruptive pupil and another BOM matter. From home, I also arranged for a substitute for a pregnant teacher and I sent files, circulars, letters and correspondence to the BOM by e-mail in preparation for the newsletter article being prepared and also for the BOM meeting. I got ready for a staff meeting and I send a text to a job-sharing teacher about reorganized ISM meeting.

I had to ring (the patron body) about an enrolment issue regarding and Muslim family in the locality who want to get their children into the school. I

rang the DES about a new school. This is with the legal people, regarding the conveyancing of land.

I had more preparation to do for the Croke Park hour on Wednesday.

I definitely brought preparation home for (leadership CPD). I am finding this program more of a hindrance than a help at the moment.

I am taking it home. I logged onto a new online community for leadership development and for an action-learning group that I am part of it.

I have a meeting tonight for 2.5 hours.

There is football training from 3:15 until 4:15 pm. This is my playtime with the pupils.

All of my school files are in Dropbox, so they can be checked and worked on at home if necessary.

I'm taking it home.
I took it home but never got to it.
I'm taking it home – but it is now 9:15 pm and I don't think I have any energy left.

Yes, I have some work to do around student teachers. Also, I want to have a good look at the SSE guidelines that arrived at the school in recent days.

I'm taking work home. 1. I spent over an hour writing a report about a complaint from a parent. I also had to phone a teacher regarding a school-related issue as she had texted me about the issue which will arise tomorrow. I just got off the phone from the teacher about this issue after half an hour. So in total, over one and a half hours work this evening.

I'm inclined to take problems home with me. I mull over them. Often, after thought, solutions come to mind. I actually find it better for me to consider the matter overnight, rather than to act on impulse.

I thought about the problem and was happy that the parents were supportive.

I will be doing some e-mail work at home. I will also try to have a look at the new staffing schedule. I feel under pressure when there are unresolved conflicts, especially with parent/teacher relations and I am the "piggy in the middle". It stays with you day and night. I didn't enjoy today really.

I'm bringing a little home. I will do e-mails at home but not much today. I'm going to a rehearsal to night and am looking forward to that.

I am taking it home. There is an infant intake meeting tomorrow and I give a talk to the incoming parents. I need to pass on this job to one of the senior infant teachers since I won't last forever and they will need to learn how to do it themselves! I will be going over my PowerPoint tonight.

I got asked to do a pilot for the Health and Safety Authority on guidelines for health and safety statements. A parent of a past pupil asked could we do it and I said, 'if it didn't require too much work' (no, no not much they said!!) I should've known better! I have two large volumes to look through. I hate this. I find these things very difficult and yet I don't know how to say "no".

I'm spending a lot of time devising a reply to a very pointed letter from a parent regarding an incident between them and a teacher. I have to be very careful that I don't give too much away and yet be firm enough with the parent. It's a pain and is extremely time-consuming – "walking on eggs". I find this stuff very stressful. You can ever get is out of your mind.
I'm taking a few bits home out of interest and not necessity.

I'm not really taking it home but I'm still buzzed as I'm looking at ways to make life easier for everyone, especially myself. SEN and the SENO are featuring in my mindset.

I need to take it home with literacy and numeracy. I'm trying to meet a deadline for the SENO.

I'm taking it home. It's literacy and numeracy.

I am continuing the dinner dance fundraising from home.

I have to deliver tickets for a dinner dance and collect prizes.

I'm only taking home "thinking stuff" today. I have two phone calls to make regarding Irish drama in the school. I have think about the job spec for a part-time caretaker and I have think about the present for the old caretaker. I have to think about how to approach the meeting on Wednesday about SSE and about how to use more Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiuil. I phoned at 5:15 pm and I didn't finish dealing with this until 9:00 pm. I asked another colleague for advice and was told to "take charge" of the two issues and to deal with them first thing in the morning.

I had phone calls to make in a meeting to Chair at 8:00 pm that took until 10:00 pm.
Thinking time – mulling over issues for too long – sometimes all evening and into the night.

I have to draw up a contract for the new caretaker but that's not too onerous.

There was a lot of time spent after-school this week. This is not usually the norm but it seems to be getting more usual.

As with everyday, I took work home and after organising the family meal I spent two hours, which is a daily occurrence, dealing with the administrative tasks that I did not accomplish at work. I would continue to work much longer past 4:30 pm except I feel it is only fair to hold my young daughter at school after this point since she really resents the additional time spent there. Most weekends this workload would stretch to five additional hours just to keep on target.

Having brought work home for two hours as usual, I abandoned the work after one hour since I felt it was important, despite being sick, to represent the school at a Féile that evening. My daughter was competing at the event and I also felt it necessary to attend to represent the school.

As always, I will be taking work home and I will also be attending the First Confession ceremony at 7:30 pm.

I will be taking home work in relation to policies tonight. I also have to attend the INTO Croke Park meeting–approximately 3 hours in total.
I took work home as always. I had policies to review and I had to work on the final draft of the school newsletter.

I'm taking it home – mentally - and I need to get a sub for tomorrow. I had one sorted but I got the latest text to say not available. 13 calls later, I got was sub! I also have paperwork to set up Rainbows Centre in the school.

I left school at 10:10 pm but SO bringing it home mentally. I'm shattered, frustrated and exhausted. Oh yeah and CONCERNED for others ie. the Board. Next morning: I didn't sleep well. I'm also concerned about a HSE case conference in the morning.

I only took work because I attended the INTO Croke Park 2 information evening – woe is me! The challenge is to remain positive in the midst of cut backs, salary reductions and low morale. Challenging or what???

A fulfilling day. I worked at home tonight also but only in a bid to complete some loose ends before the holidays!

"Must you always bring you work home with you?"

Experience Sampling Responses.

In any diary, we all make selective responses. We write the things that we select at the end of a particular experience. What would happen however if we were asked to write down exactly what we were doing at a particular time, chosen by somebody else, during the day? I hope that you find the results below interesting. Your comments about the responses from the 'experience sampling' section would be much appreciated. A number of Principals did not receive the daily texts. This was entirely my fault and I apologise for that.

1.

"I was dealing with a pupil who was returning to school, having been suspended for two days. I was talking to him, to his mam, to his granny and to the home-school teacher."

"I was talking to the 6th class teachers and was planning our RSE lesson for tomorrow."

"I was dealing with two children and two teachers and was trying to investigate an alleged bullying case between the two children."

"I was finishing yard duty. Another teacher was out and I was on standby so I ended up on yard. Then I spent the next 15 mins later dealing with yard issues."

"I was dealing with a group of 6th class children, talking about their entrance tests, their worries and how to be prepared, etc."

2.
There were no texts received.

3.
"Just finishing yard duty. No lunch break today because I went straight to a meeting about finance and budgeting."

"I was on the phone to another Principal. Not a social call! I was sharing information and advices."

"I was meeting students from the teacher training college on the first day of observation and giving them a general introduction to the school."

"I forgot stuff again! I was supposed to confirm a tutor for Croke Park hours in-service. But I forgot. Now I have to cancel the session. Staff are delighted."

"Just going off to have lunch before going on the yard. It is Centra Friday, the day when we send to the local shop for filled rolls. Good old BLT!"

4.
"Meeting a teacher regarding her maternity leave which is due to start shortly."

"Preparing for a meeting with parents of an ASD child and their ABA therapist."

"Writing up a report of a visit from an angry parent."

"Meeting the Chairman of the Board to discuss issues regarding the use of school premises by outside groups and also a problem with a parent yesterday."

"I was distributing transport notes in advance of an indoor hurling tournament on Wednesday."

5.
"I was on duty in the lunch room."

"I was in a child protection meeting in school with HSE social worker, a parent and friend, a class teacher and play therapist."

"I was in a meeting with a psychologist who is leaving at the end of the week trying to prioritise the needs of the children."

"I was speaking to a volunteer who is helping us with an art and craft exhibition/sale and giving her scarves I got from a friend for sale."

"I was covering a class while the teacher spoke with staff from another school about a new student who may be transferring to us."

6.
"It was break time and we had a chap in from Comhar Linn to talk to the staff."

"I was dealing with disruptive pupil down in his classroom. He was refusing to cooperate with the class teacher. His SNA was in a meeting with me when I was sent for."

"I was writing cheques and doing the accounts with my secretary."

"I was replying to e-mails about teaching practice and work placements."

"I was covering PAT and station teaching in senior infant and first-class from 9:00 am until 10:00 am. I love this. It keeps my hand in and I get to know the classes better."

7.
"I was meeting a parent about recurring head lice issues with their son."

"I was meeting with resource and class teachers."

"I was on the phone with the Trustees about a building matter."

"I was in a First Communion meeting."

8.
"I was finishing off my lunch in the staff room."

"I was at a meeting with social worker regarding the family and the school for an hour."

"I was in the school office with a Romanian child (who doesn't do homework) doing /guiding him in last night –the teacher had sent down because wasn't done."

"I was talking with the technician about the photocopier and why it wasn't working."

9.
"I was going around the classrooms thanking staff individually for their support for the quiz."
"I was supervising students in the hall at break time. It was too cold for some students to go out."
"I was meeting with parents whose son was being difficult at home."

"Just off yard duty, checking detention to see how it was going."

"I was meeting a parent."

10.
"I was writing an application to the SENO and to the SEN unit of the DES requesting a grant for a special chair for a child with complex needs."

"I was preparing/finishing PowerPoint presentations for as staff planning meeting."

"A meet and greet of parents and children at the front door."

"I was making a SLT timetable for next week"

"I was in the class. I substituted for a staff member on sick leave."

11,
"I was in a meeting with the Principal of the junior school and with our shared home-school teacher."

"I was talking to the inspector on the phone. We have two diploma teachers in the school and he also wanted to arrange "Croke Park hours" to talk to staff about SSE."

"I was talking to a lady from GOAL who was in the school to talk to the 5th and 6th classes."

"I was checking the sick leave of a SNA on the OLCS website."

"I was trying to reassure a 5th class teacher and to console her."

12.
There were no texts received.

13.
"I was working on the school self-evaluation plan on my laptop on my own!"
"I was talking to a teacher and organising hurling coaching for tomorrow."

"I was practising with the 5th and 6th class choir."

"I was doing computer work preparing for the Croke Park hour."

"I was sitting in the church waiting for the choir to start."

14.

There were no texts received.

15.
"I was teaching Irish to my class – 5th and 6th."

"I was going through the post with my secretary."

"I was teaching English – persuasive writing – 5th and 6th."

"We have laptops in the classroom and the children were logging on to worldeducationgames.com."

"I was taking a call in the office from an OT who I've been leaving messages for in the past week and a half while the Deputy Principal covered my class."

16.
There were no texts received.

17.
"I was at a meeting about a child with two educational psychologists, the girl's class teacher and two resource teachers."
"I was organising a timetable."
"I was in the staffroom having lunch."

"I was on the phone, speaking to a Principal about a building project he had in his school and his experience of the design team and the building contractors."

18.
There were no texts received.

19.
"I was doing band practice with five school bands."

"I was in a meeting with the Deputy Principal regarding special needs pupils transferring to another school."

"I was preparing for CPD training tomorrow. I was going over what went on at the last meeting."

"I was filling an evaluation sheet on a CPD course."

"I was meeting a rep from the Food Dude program in which we are due to get involved."

345

20.

"I was in a new school design team meeting about tender report."

"DEIS and SSE plan formulation after yesterday's meeting."

"I was in a special education meeting with a HSE social worker."

"I was working on the child protection school policy."

"I was working on an application form for a teacher going on maternity leave."

21.

"I was filling in the Treasurer on the BOM about a meeting he had missed and I was explaining that the Chairperson is calling an emergency meeting."

"I was talking to a teacher about child who was very upset and who was bleeding (a child protection issue?) The parents were contacted."

"I was talking to a teacher."

"I was meeting with the Food Dudes rep who is anxious to roll out the scheme in the school."

"I was meeting a parent who is moving to England and was explaining transfer letters."

22.

There were no texts received.

23.

"I was doing "toe by toe" with the boy in second-class who is dyslexic, exempt from Irish – so I had him while Irish was being taught. Also, a spelling program."

"I was trying to sort out and investigate a complaint about two boys messing during a swimming lesson. This spiraled to a much bigger problem – shouting on the bus, sexual diagrams being drawn by the 5th class boys, etc etc."

"I was teaching Math's to 4th class. The class is split and I bring them together daily for Math's."

"I was doing Math's, problem-solving, with the 5th class. They were simple problems involving division and using a calculator!"

"I was getting an "earful" on the phone from the same lady when your text came in."

24.

"I was talking to another Principal about clustering. We were under pressure last week in relation to clustering but I managed to get lucky. I got another local school to find the hours we needed – Phew! We can relax."

"I was in 4th class settling a minor dispute with the unruly pupil and another one. Thankfully there was a positive outcome."

"I was talking to three other Principals about clustering hours. We have ours sorted. I was trying to help by passing on the numbers of others who might help."

"This might not be filled in on the correct day. It's now 5:45 pm and I'm getting ready to go. I need to get stuff ready for the BOM but I have family stuff tonight I need to go to!"

25.

"I was meeting with a SNA who was filling in some information for SENO forms. She also referred to an interaction I had was a pupil with SEN and was wondering if I'd prefer to be called by my first name or surname. Whatever the school does."

"I was meeting a psychologist and a special needs teacher."

"I was meeting an ICT guy about the website and how it can be managed. Good stuff."

"I was onto a solicitor! Enough said. My head is wrecked. A staff meeting then."

26.
"I was hanging signs for friendship fortnight, hanging hearts up around the school."

"I was meeting with a senior infant teacher discussing concerns about a senior infant."

"I was organising fundraising for dilapidated windows. There is no funding from the DES available. I have the responsibility, but with a lack of power and funds."

"I was editing video footage for display at a fundraising dinner dance."

"I was in the middle of a fire drill!! It was much slower than usual and we need to schedule another fire drill soon."

27.
"At 2:30 pm, I was picking up my class and making sure I had my "likely lads" close to me."

"I was teaching literacy."

"I was enjoying a hot cup of coffee."

28.
"I was doing 4 things the same time: Standing over the secretary's shoulder dictating a letter while taking a note from a teacher and gesturing to a child to put the spare bainne on the table and nodding to the caretaker to open the front door to a parent."

"I was working on PAYE and the big red book, redoing wages since 01/01/2013."

"I was in the office trying to retrieve a situation with the present and past PA Chairpersons."

"I was delivering a retirement speech for the caretaker in the school hall just before having a céilí."

29.
"I was preparing the self-evaluation report for review by the inspector."
"I was teaching junior infants."

"I was meeting with parents to discuss a discipline issue."

"I was visiting classrooms to ensure that the MIST testing was proceeding efficiently."

"I was making a final draft submission to the DoES for additional funding for a building extension."

30.
"I was going through the ropes with an SNA on work experience, giving introductions to everybody in the special needs unit and going through the confidentiality spiel."
"I was eating! I took a 15 min break before break time to ensure being free to "supervise" "my companion" outside the office for break times for the week!"

"I was eating chocolate! Only kidding, there was no text today."

31.
"You called! I was actually on two landlines at the same time!"

"Many, many texts and phone calls missed today due to being (out of school at a competition)."

Short Very Funny Joke - Dear Diary

by William W
(PJ, Selangor)

Short Very Funny Joke - Dear Diary

A Diary Entry of a True Heroine who saved 1600 lives... Four times in a single day!

DEAR DIARY ... DAY ONE
I am all packed and ready to get on the cruise ship. I've packed all my pretty dresses and make-up. I'm really excited.

DEAR DIARY ... DAY TWO
We spent the entire day at sea. It was beautiful and we saw some whales and dolphins. What a wonderful vacation this has started to be. I met the Captain today and he seems like a very nice man.

DEAR DIARY ... DAY THREE
I spent some time in the pool today. I also did some shuffle boarding and hit some golf balls off the deck. The Captain invited me to join him at his table for dinner. I felt honored and we had a wonderful time. He is a very attractive and attentive gentleman.

DEAR DIARY ... DAY FOUR
Went to the ship's casino, did OK, won about $80. The Captain invited me to have dinner with him in his state room. We had a luxurious meal complete with caviar and champagne. He asked me to stay the night but I declined. I told him there was no way I could be unfaithful to my husband.

DEAR DIARY ... DAY FIVE
Went back to the pool today and got a little sunburned. I decided to go to the piano bar and spend the rest of the day inside. The Captain saw me and bought me a couple of drinks. He really is a charming gentleman. He again asked me to visit him for the night and again I declined. He told me that if I didn't let him have his way with me he would sink the ship. I was appalled.

DEAR DIARY ... DAY SIX
I saved 1600 lives today . . . four times!!!!

Walk a mile in my shoes… Your feedback.

The final page of the diary asked for your input into how Principals' management and leadership could best be researched. Each of the 31 Principals are co-researchers in the design of the project and the responses below, provided by you, will help guide the direction of any follow-up interviews. Thanks for your help and advice.

1.
"I thought the page was brilliant in that firstly it made you look at your own time – what time I started and finished today and did I take time for breaks? Then, breaking the day into the 5 areas and making you look at your day and how you actually spent it, moving onto reflections on the day itself. It certainly made me think of the importance of trying to put some order on the day before you started it – maybe, prioritising areas".

"The second page was also brilliant – firstly with the txt at different times – what am I doing and why am I doing it at a certain time of the day? The next area was great where it makes you reflect on your role as a leader in different areas. This made me look at how effective I am or not. The next area is very important asking how much did I enjoy or not enjoy my work today. Again, it makes you think what you could do to improve it. Then, am I going to take home work or can it be planned better and done during the working day?"

2.
"I found dividing the day into percentages a little difficult. Time slots might have been easier."

"The definition of leadership may mean different things to different people. Perhaps you could add a page with a number of definitions of what researchers (including yourself) perceived leadership to be."

3.
No response.

4.
"The structure and layout of page 1 brought home to me that no two days are ever the same. The day is dictated by events: an angry parent, a match to be organised, a class to be covered if the teacher is gone to a match, a meeting with the special needs teachers, class teachers, or a discussion with the Chair of the Parents Association. Admin tasks such as RCT etc... can be time absorbing. Work with staff may be done by e-mail rather than face-to-face contact. Some areas such as teaching and learning and working with children merge into each other."

"There is very little opportunity for leading learning. Most leadership is leading people or leading the organisation. Morale among teachers is lowish. There is much negativity due to external factors like pay cuts, etc. Teachers may take a role in leading learning. SEN teachers organise peer tutoring etc. I organised a fire drill… Was that leadership? Was I leading teachers, children or staff?"

5.
No response.

6.
"Yes, this page worked as a summary of how the day went. It also allowed me to elaborate in the space provided. I was very conscious (like any survey questionnaire) that filling it in as you are at that moment–and this largely depends on what has gone before – on that day. If it's positive the survey is positive and vice versa."

I try to manage the school based on decisions made by the whole staff and not just me. I feel it least we make the decisions and we stand by them. If I were to lead by myself, no one may follow (I'd also have to take all the blame if a decision went wrong). Croke Park has offered an opportunity to be more organised in this area."

7.
"Yes, it might start with leading the school in assembly (easy and enjoyable) and followed to leading/chairing parents' meetings, behavioural review meetings, leading care teams, SEN, ISMT meetings, Croke Park hours, staff meetings or planning meetings."

8.
No response.

9.
"The percentage rate was difficult for me as I am not a Math's person. I am also not sure how accurately I responded! I found this page suitable though, as it did not demand a vast amount of written information."

"The leadership activities page was very good too. Again, not a blank page and divided up. I kept track of what I was doing on receipt of the text message for 2 weeks. That in itself was very interesting. It made me think, which is always good."

10.
"In general, this was a clear page but I would have liked the section on liaison/working in the wider community (for example meeting local agencies etc.) Being an administrative Principal probably means more admin work will be carried out in comparison to a teaching principal. That would be an interesting comparison."

"My difficulty (and perhaps an area for improvement for myself) is distinguishing the leadership role from that of the admin/management role.

352

I'm not sure if giving definitions or suggested examples might colour Principal's responses if such a page was included in the journal."

11.
"It was very clear, easy to follow and to complete. It was colourful and cheerie."

"I don't think Irish Principals are consciously thinking about leadership and are separating management and leadership. They just do what needs to be done!"

12.
"I would add the category "other" to the table as sometimes the tasks that take time don't fall into any one of the 5 categories listed (for example, broken glass on the green where the children are playing, community representatives looking to talk to me or a dog on the grounds ...etc.)"

"I found this page difficult to complete. It's hard to ascertain whether you're leading and managing. It's also difficult to define who you are leading. I'm not sure whether this is because of the page or because of my own lack of awareness of leadership".

13.
"Should leadership be included here? So that you could write a percentage of what time you spend on leadership?"

"This is fine. Very impressive! I love the colour and a variety/layout. It was quick to complete."

14.
No response.

15.
"It is very important to distinguish management from leadership and yet, both are linked strongly. If you are not on top of management issues, I don't think effective leadership can happen."

""Leadership" as a concept can be quite difficult to describe in terms of "oneself". Do I feel like a leader? Sometimes. Do I have the personality traits, values and strength? I think so. Sometimes, I feel I'm firefighting, reacting to

what occurs rather than having the time for reflection etc. I enjoyed having to reflect for this diary but is it all nonsense??"

16.
No response.

17.
"I can't say I found it easy to calculate the percentage of today I spent at different things and in the different inter-actions. But like everything one does, it's thought-provoking. I started to fudge the use of time."

"Again, I found the realities I noticed interesting. I don't think I understood the last picture in the list on the right ... How I was conscious of leading in my role as Principal today… myself. Maybe it could be clarified for me."

18.
"The page is very suitable and easy to fill out and colourful and easily explained by you. It is not onerous or a challenge. I'm wondering about what you called the most important part "how you felt about what you had to do!" For example, it is draining to deal with pupil issues that are mostly negative. However, it is part of the job and comes with the territory and there is a positive spin on dealing with negative pupil issues, as the outcome you want and aspire to is a positive one and a change in behaviour in children, which is the solution to the problem. How can you say you don't like dealing with pupils when by your dealing with them you can actually sometimes achieve a positive result? How can you not like that?"

"I like this page very much is clear and easy to fill out, colourful and positive. I have no issues at all with this page. Maybe though, put numbers on 1 pupils, 2 teachers, 3 other staff, 4 parents/family, 5 others and 6 yourself, so that the answers can be numbered also."

19.
""Dealing with pupils" – for me, it didn't resonate as much as "interacting" would. "Working with staff" – I could have given you more useful info if you had given a section of types of engagement perhaps. The same for teaching and learning. These are only meant to be constructive :-)."

"I found this a very good exercise in that it focused the mind on the key, yet often overlooked, aspects of the role. As I noted earlier – self leadership had and has me puzzled. I know I would love to hear other reviews on this."

20.

"Due to the fact that I'm an administrative Principal, my contact with the students is very much behaviour and extra-curricular. (It's) sometimes investigative as to their learning, but rarely in teaching. To me, this is the downside. However, administrative Principals are expected to be "on top" for everyone and everything. Perhaps an indicator category for the number of "surprise" interruptions that occur on any given day. A timetable and plan is prepared by me but rarely (do) I get to stick to it. It's a lot easier to keep interruptions away from the teachers."

"Perhaps a scale of how interactions between the Principal and the staff/parents/external agencies work and a couple of lines for the Principal to clarify how it went and why it went that way – either good or bad – and perhaps how the Principal worked on from it."

21.
"It's difficult to quantify work into percentages. However, it was a useful exercise to do for myself. A lot of the interactions with teachers and pupils are very short – a quick word of advice, enquiring how somebody is, getting feedback, etc. I found myself comforting a child who was late this morning. She has a big family and was totally stressed out because she arrived late. I was sorry I haven't noticed her stress levels before."

"This job calls for personal resources – forbearance, patience, tolerance, fairness. You develop these as a teacher anyway but it's often in the context of dealing with children. Sometimes I get tired of trying to be in a "positive place" all of the time. Often, when I get home there is nothing left emotionally and I'm worn out. Nobody's family wants or deserves to have to listen to the woes of my day, so I try to only tell the good bits (of which there are quite a few too). I have enjoyed keeping this diary. It's helped me look at my work in my context differently. There aren't too many books on leadership that give you a view on leadership in your own context. So thanks for that."

22.
"I like the layout of the page. However, I did sometimes have a problem of how to gauge to percentage of time spent in various activities. Also, some admin deals with teaching and learning and/or pupils, so there is an overlap. Perhaps there should be an area for other professionals such as visiting teachers, psychologists… I think out-of-school meetings might also be taken into account."

"Yes, I think it is interesting to reflect on whether leadership skills are required for many activities. Other than admin work (and even sometimes with this work), I do feel one's role as a leader permeates the whole day."

23.

"The skills of juggling, flexibility, quick thinking, willingness, commonsense, energy are all badly needed in a Principal's personality."

"Leadership is required at all times in front of children, parents and staff. In fairness, I must admit that all these parties are appreciative of leadership here in this school. There is always the odd few who upset the applecart on certain days!"

24.
No response.

25.
"It can vary so widely which category (if they merge) that I'm doing and can enter. It's not always easy to answer questions and the categories of activities."

"Of course it is all subjective and I feel I'm repeating myself all the time but everything said and done and all interactions are painting a picture. I might have 200 interactions with people/pupils in a day but each person has only one with the Principal and that matters."

26.
No response.

27.
No response.

28.

"I found trying to quantify into percentages hard as the school day is not necessarily the Principal's day and I don't really understand what leading yourself means."

29.
No response.

30.
"I felt both pages were well-designed given the complex nature of the job. They give some reasonable methods for gathering data on a complex and diverse position. The overlapping of the 5 outlined management elements needed to be acknowledged somehow."
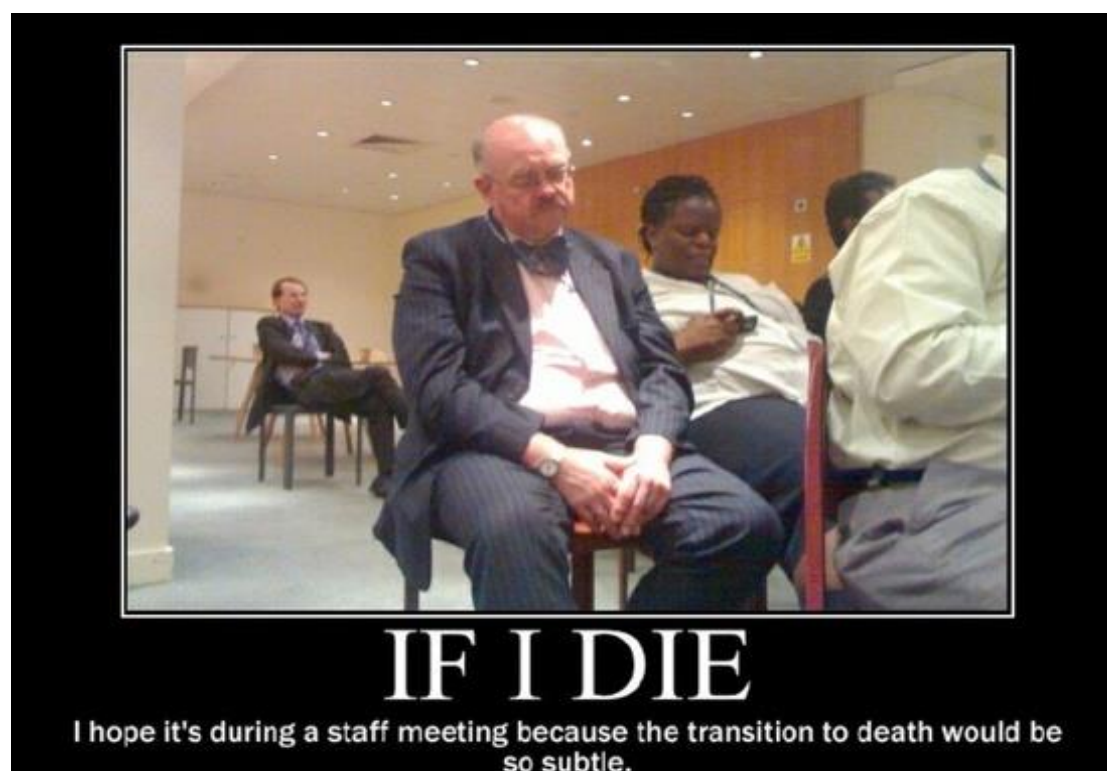
31.

"It reflects each part of the day and each area of the Principal's job appropriately. It was interesting to divide the areas into percentages so that I could clearly see how my time is spent. I enjoyed the reflection opportunities. I would like a section on the effects of the day on my personal life."

"I am consistently called upon each day to demonstrate leadership in a myriad of situations. I love the opportunities this presents but sometimes find myself exhausted from the emotion of it all. I believe this exhaustion and emotion build barriers in my personal life. The current climate has pushed leadership to its limits."

Again. Many thanks for your help and support and a reminder that this is research "with" Principals and not "on" Principals. I look forward to hearing what you have to say. There are a number of questions on the following page that we might disuss.

Finally, I hope you find this funny. I did.

IF I DIE

I hope it's during a staff meeting because the transition to death would be so subtle.

I returned a photocopy of the diary that you kept for the research. You may like to refer to it when considering the following questions for a semi-structured research telephone interview in the coming weeks.

Questions about keeping your own diary:

1. When you read back over the quantitative data in your own diary – the times you worked each day, your score for job satisfaction, etc. what are your impressions of your own findings?

2. When you read back over your diary entries and the qualitative data in your long hand accounts and notes, what are your impressions of your own responses now?

3. How typical is this information of your average week as Principal?

4. Would you like to add anything more about how you manage in your school, day to day?

5. Would you like to add anything more about how you lead in your school, day to day?

6. Would you like to add anything about school leadership or about Principals' awareness of school leadership from this study or from your own experience?

Questions about the diary feedback booklet (if you find time to read it).

1. What are your impressions of the quantitative findings from the 31 Principals – length of day, positive/negative experiences, etc?

2. What are your impressions of the qualitative data from the 31 Principals – their stories, anecdotes and accounts?

3. Would you like to add anything else about the "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" booklet and its contents?

Hopefully you will have found the diary project interesting to do and hopefully you will have found the anonymous diary entries of other Principals interesting to read. To finish the fieldwork for the research I hope that you will find the time some day in the coming three to four weeks to phone me. This can be during school time or later in the day. If I am available to take your call I will do so in a private place, put the iPhone on speaker and record it on a separate Dictaphone (with your permission). Like your diary, your interview will be transcribed for data analysis and total confidentiality will be assured.. If you don't phone me, I hope you don't mind me phoning you. Even 10-15 minutes of your time would be highly valuable. Thanks again. I really appreciate your help.

Appendix D

Qualitative Interview Transcripts

Sample interview transcripts were provided to examiners for the Viva Voce examination in August 2014. Significant personal detail and the elaboration of issues such as staff bullying and litigation gave rise to concerns about their inclusion in their final Thesis document. It was decided, in agreement with the

359

researcher, to fully protect the anonymity of participants by removing the interview transcripts from this volume.

Appendix E

Themes in the Data Analysis

Managing and Leading in the Internal Environment.

The following diagrams derive from an analysis of the NVivo coding in the qualitative data. They are provided in the Appendices in support of chapter 6.

Administration
- ✓ A key component
- ✓ A time-wasting distraction
- ✓ A boring aspect
- ✓ An oasis of tranquillity
- ✓ Ownership or delegation
- ✓ Policy work, timetables, tax...
- ✓ Admin relating to past, present and future events
- ✓ Correspondence
- ✓ Local DES staff clustering
- ✓ New initiatives
- ✓ "All of the responsibility and none of the power"

Crisis Management
- ✓ "Fire fighting"
- ✓ Unable to avail of breaks
- ✓ Unpredictable nature of the day
- ✓ Random and uncontrollable
- ✓ Staff support
- ✓ Family support
- ✓ No two days are the same
- ✓ Can be an appealing aspect of the work
- ✓ Principals are unsupported
- ✓ No template for success
- ✓ "God only knows what I'm facing today"

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│   Managing and Leading in the   │
│     Internal Environment.       │
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Interacting with Staff (1)
- ✓ Informative list of duties Advising, explaining, supporting
- ✓ Support of Deputy important
- ✓ Social aspects of break-times
- ✓ Approachability/Collegiality
- ✓ Trust and boundary management
- ✓ A work-related focus is rewarding
- ✓ Appreciation is important
- ✓ Staff enjoy a positive focus
- ✓ "Most of the staff are incredible"

Interacting with Staff (2)
- ✓ Some staff are unsupportive, whingers, incompetent, lazy, bullying...
- ✓ Recession and budget cuts
- ✓ Unpopular decisions fall to the Principal
- ✓ Ancillary staff cuts
- ✓ Staff members are under stress
- ✓ Some are ill or have personal problems
- ✓ Appeasing often appears impossible
- ✓ Solutions follow retirement

Managing and Leading in the External Environment.

Members of the external environment
- ✓ Priests, past pupils and those on work experience
- ✓ HSE – Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists
- ✓ HSE – Child protection social workers and vaccination teams
- ✓ DES – Admin workers and inspectorate
- ✓ Parents and Parents' Association Committee members
- ✓ Ancillary workers' Trade Union reps
- ✓ NCSE – SENOs ALN reviews and staff audits
- ✓ NEPS – psychological assessments and training programmes
- ✓ NEWB – attendance officers
- ✓ Student teachers and college inspectors
- ✓ Builders, architects and security companies
- ✓ Sales reps, international visitors and charity workers.

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      Managing and Leading       │
│   in the External Environment   │
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Parents
- ✓ Meet and Greet
- ✓ Parents' Association politics
- ✓ Problem resolution
- ✓ ALN meetings
- ✓ Family support and advice
- ✓ Discipline meetings
- ✓ Bullying allegations
- ✓ Supporting staff in problematic situations
- ✓ Importance of active and open communication from school
- ✓ Majority are supportive

Local Community
- ✓ High parental expectations
- ✓ Parents' Associations
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Assuming ownership
- ✓ Difficulties in low-income areas
- ✓ Role of principal
- ✓ Implications for staff

Public Service
- ✓ Pay/productivity deals
- ✓ Austerity and public perception of schools
- ✓ Impact on staff morale
- ✓ "Deplore the lack of resourcing"

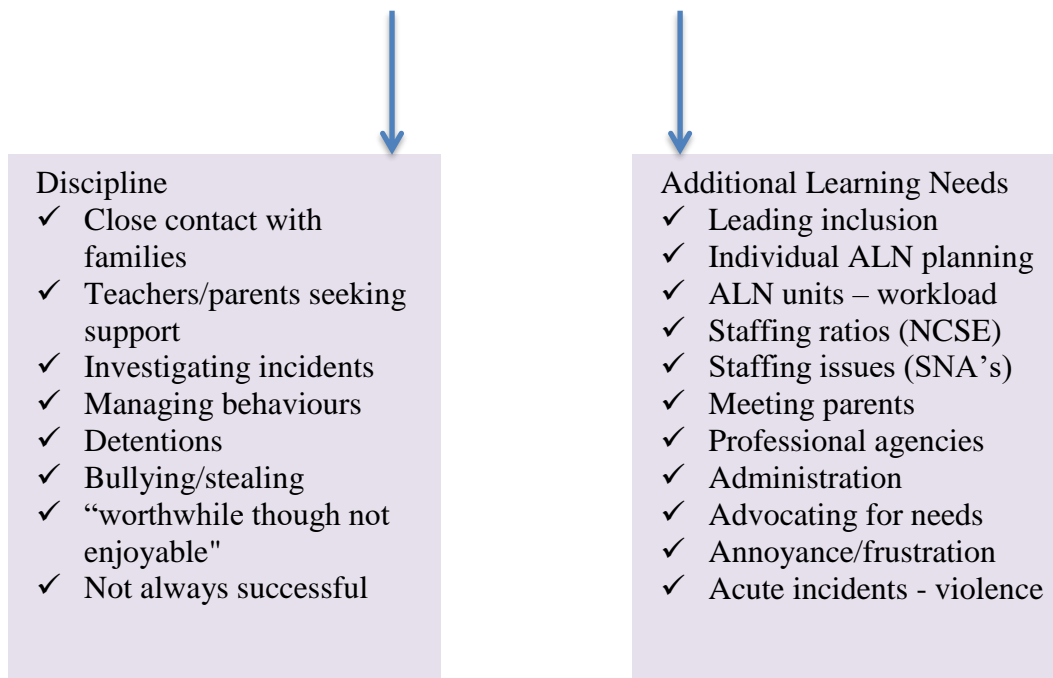**Managing and Leading Teaching and Learning**

Principals
- ✓ Direct engagement
- ✓ Knowing pupils' names
- ✓ Enrolment meetings
- ✓ Graduations ceremonies
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Friendship programmes
- ✓ Ethos – charities
- ✓ Yard supervision
- ✓ Assemblies
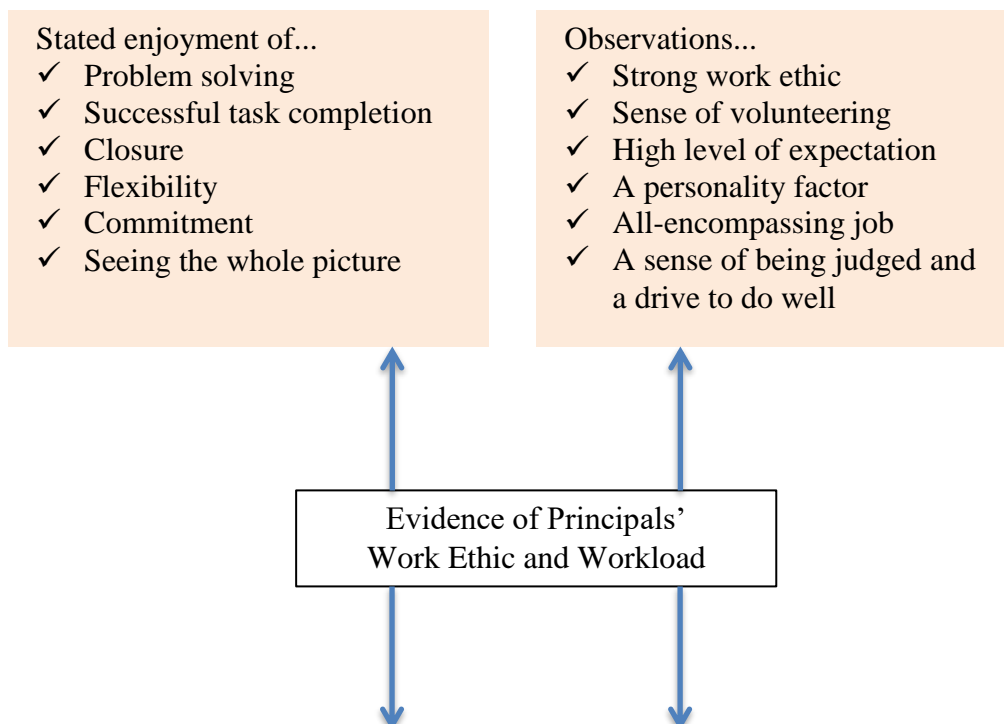- ✓ Visiting classrooms
- ✓ "Keeping in touch"

Pupils
- ✓ Direct engagement
- ✓ Enrolment ceremonies
- ✓ Graduation
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Friendship programmes
- ✓ Ethos – charities
- ✓ Assemblies
- ✓ Visiting classrooms
- ✓ Knowing all names
- ✓ "Keeping in touch"
- ✓ Responsibility of care

Managing and Leading Teaching and Learning

Discipline
- ✓ Close contact with families
- ✓ Teachers/parents seeking support
- ✓ Investigating incidents
- ✓ Managing behaviours
- ✓ Detentions
- ✓ Bullying/stealing
- ✓ "worthwhile though not enjoyable"
- ✓ Not always successful

Additional Learning Needs
- ✓ Leading inclusion
- ✓ Individual ALN planning
- ✓ ALN units – workload
- ✓ Staffing ratios (NCSE)
- ✓ Staffing issues (SNA's)
- ✓ Meeting parents
- ✓ Professional agencies
- ✓ Administration
- ✓ Advocating for needs
- ✓ Annoyance/frustration
- ✓ Acute incidents - violence

Evidence of Principals' Work Ethic and Workload

Stated enjoyment of...
- ✓ Problem solving
- ✓ Successful task completion
- ✓ Closure
- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Commitment
- ✓ Seeing the whole picture

Observations...
- ✓ Strong work ethic
- ✓ Sense of volunteering
- ✓ High level of expectation
- ✓ A personality factor
- ✓ All-encompassing job
- ✓ A sense of being judged and a drive to do well

Evidence of Principals'
Work Ethic and Workload

Described as...
- ✓ Ridiculous
- ✓ Shocking
- ✓ Wrecked
- ✓ Under pressure
- ✓ Hard-going
- ✓ Out-of-your-head
- ✓ Demoralised
- ✓ Worrying

Principals are...
- ✓ Working on maternity leave
- ✓ Attending evening events
- ✓ Fundraising for building maintenance
- ✓ Entrepreneurial
- ✓ Unsupported by a lack of middle management
- ✓ Possibly taking too much personal responsibility

Time- related Factors in the Work of the Principal Teacher.

During School
- ✓ On demand constantly
- ✓ Important/urgent activities
- ✓ Fire fighting and chaotic events
- ✓ No job specification
- ✓ Importance of secretarial cover
- ✓ SEN pupils (outbursts) prioritised
- ✓ Discipline supervision
- ✓ Working through tea/coffee breaks is common
- ✓ Enjoyment in spending time with pupils
- ✓ Frustration with time-wasters
- ✓ Contrasting practices in evidence

After School
- ✓ 3pm is a quiet time for admin and/or staff support
- ✓ 12-15 hour days is not uncommon
- ✓ Time given to religious and community events
- ✓ Time given to curricular CPD and to professional support organisation events
- ✓ Out-of-hours appointments are held
- ✓ Texts/calls to Chairperson
- ✓ Returning to school
- ✓ Contrasting practices in evidence.

Time- related Factors in the Work of the Principal Teacher.

Self-Management
- ✓ Recognition of long working days and evenings
- ✓ Perceived need for prioritisation
- ✓ Sense of shock among some participants
- ✓ Sense of lack of appreciation
- ✓ Unexpectedly time consuming job initially
- ✓ Influence of length of service and experience
- ✓ Initial enjoyment of commitment to the task
- ✓ Rarely an evening off
- ✓ Mental preoccupation
- ✓ Sense of over-work
- ✓ Establishing a work-life balance in later career

Principals and Boards of Management

Internal BoM Business
- ✓ Preparing 'ground work'
- ✓ Induction of Chairperson
- ✓ Preparing meetings
- ✓ Leading the Board
- ✓ Planning BoM calendar
- ✓ Planning BoM CPD
- ✓ Circulating agendas
- ✓ Circulating minutes
- ✓ Dealing with 'irate' Chairperson

Buildings and Maintenance
- ✓ Organising painting, landscaping, heating, electrical, CCTV, computer and blinds repairs
- ✓ Car park safety
- ✓ Out-of-hours key holding
- ✓ Security – opening and closing
- ✓ Deciding on energy contracts
- ✓ Negotiating office maintenance contracts
- ✓ Initiating new projects and preparing submissions
- ✓ Directing architects, engineers, consultants and builders on new work and renovations
- ✓ Handling all disputes with 'rogue builders' and unsatisfactory architects
- ✓ Dealing directly with staff on all fallout.

BoM Finances
- ✓ Organising debt write-off
- ✓ Advising the Treasurer
- ✓ Preparing the accounts
- ✓ Paying cheques
- ✓ Calculating RCT (tax)
- ✓ Calculating PAYE (tax)
- ✓ Negotiating insurance premium
- ✓ Payment of staff
- ✓ Organising fundraising events

BoM Policy Direction
- ✓ Reading employment law. Retaining staff, advising on entitlements and writing contracts.
- ✓ Reading other legal documents.
- ✓ Handling BoM equality tribunal problems.
- ✓ Employing casual staff.
- ✓ Organising enrolment information evenings Handling Section 29 (refusal) appeals
- ✓ Setting up, monitoring and staffing units for ALN pupils
- ✓ Point of contact for all external agencies
- ✓ Meeting Chairpersons and Treasurers (unannounced) during school hours.
- ✓ Being on call in the evenings.

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The Principal's Work Necessitates an Emotional Engagement.

Personal
- ✓ Putting on the 'magic cloak' of leadership
- ✓ Cannot expose emotions
- ✓ Cannot appear 'crutched'
- ✓ Transparent or keeping up appearances
- ✓ Difficult to be strong at times
- ✓ Risk of depression
- ✓ Helps to be outgoing or extroverted
- ✓ Leading by example when pay/conditions are cut back
- ✓ Reliance above all on own personal resources.

Positive
- ✓ Building on experience as a teacher
- ✓ Energised by pupils and staff
- ✓ Aversion to 'moaning'
- ✓ Need to be upbeat
- ✓ Need to be genuine
- ✓ Need to leave work in work
- ✓ "Love' of the job
- ✓ Reliance on good-will
- ✓ Enjoyment of completing a reflective diary

Negative
- ✓ Some staff are demoralized
- ✓ Bad press for teachers
- ✓ Successive pay cuts for educators
- ✓ Walking on eggshells
- ✓ Protecting their reputations
- ✓ Going home feeling 'guilty'
- ✓ 'Worn out"
- ✓ Reporting only the 'good bits'
- ✓ Feelings of manipulating

367

Being a Principal is Rewarding Work.

Professional
- ✓ A sense of respect and appreciation for the Office
- ✓ Occasional time out of the school
- ✓ Purposeful CPD
- ✓ Dedication - the opportunity to devote time to tasks
- ✓ Not financial – but pay-cuts matter

Emotional Intelligence
- ✓ Awareness of difficulties
- ✓ Willingness to accept problems
- ✓ Resilience to overcome
- ✓ Disposition towards the positive
- ✓ Positive inter-personal interactions
- ✓ Vocation – a personal bond with the school community
- ✓ Empathy
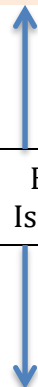
Being a Principal
Is Rewarding Work

Task Completion
- ✓ Accepting challenges
- ✓ School improvements projects
- ✓ Community events
- ✓ Successful team projects
- ✓ Diversification in the day
- ✓ Administration
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ School development
- ✓ Simply clearing the desk

School Based
- ✓ Feelings of being a teacher
- ✓ Pupils' academic achievement
- ✓ Active school communities
- ✓ Motivating teachers
- ✓ Pride in the fabric and appearance of the school
- ✓ Positive feedback from visitors
- ✓ Representing the school at events
- ✓ Feelings of 'making a difference'

Principals' Perspectives on Leadership.

Strengths
- ✓ Awareness of leadership
- ✓ Leading at meetings
- ✓ Leading at staff
- ✓ Leading practices: punctuality
- ✓ Leading instruction
- ✓ The attraction of leadership
- ✓ Focusing on tasks
- ✓ Active team membership
- ✓ Building self-resilience
- ✓ Building leadership aspirations in others
- ✓ Building leadership capacity in others
- ✓ Juggling, flexibility, quick thinking,
- ✓ Common sense and energy
- ✓ The role permeates the day
- ✓ Leadership is required at all times

Challenges
- ✓ Workload is reactive and not proactive
- ✓ Leading in the wider community
- ✓ Leading through school conflict situations
- ✓ Acting as a sounding board
- ✓ Taking the blame for everything
- ✓ Management/leadership dichotomy is difficult to assess
- ✓ Leading external initiatives
- ✓ Leading in a time of low morale
- ✓ The responsible face of the school
- ✓ Dealing with unsupportive staff
- ✓ Dealing with underperforming teachers
- ✓ Having difficult conversations

369

Principals' Perspectives
On Leadership

Teacher to Principal
✓ Principals 'love' teaching – can act in an advisory role
✓ Teachers' perceptions of the role is that it is demanding
✓ Promotion brings a change of perception in many regards
✓ Reasons for seeking/achieving promotion differ widely
✓ Anticipation is futile – preparation is non-existent
✓ Principals rely on adrenaline
✓ Administration is over-whelming

The Principal's Role can be Negative and Demanding.

Demands
✓ Responsible for all areas
✓ Everything thrown on your plate
✓ Scrappy on-demand days
✓ Staff de-motivated
✓ Affluence – testing pressures
✓ Dealing with staff divisions
✓ Staff with personal/family problems
✓ Gender specific demands
✓ "... so little reward ... no value put on you by Government or parents..."

Negative Experiences
✓ Dealing with problems
✓ Challenging pupils and unsupportive parents
✓ Problematic families
✓ Verbal abuse
✓ Fear of physical violence
✓ Unannounced and unprovoked vicious attacks
✓ Uncooperative staff
✓ Staff grievances
✓ Handling BoM legal issues
✓ Weight gain, sleep problems and health impact

The Principal's Role can be a Demanding and Negative Experience.

Human Involvement
- ✓ Support for serious illness and bereavement
- ✓ Support for pregnancy and miscarriage
- ✓ Mediating in relationship difficulties
- ✓ Handling pain and raw emotion
- ✓ Calm with out-of-control individuals
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Absence of ego
- ✓ "You can only do the best you can".

Family / Out-of-School Life
- ✓ Family support is important
- ✓ Spouse/friends
- ✓ Families create their own demands
- ✓ Dinners, children and evenings
- ✓ Taking physical work home
- ✓ Work in the mind
- ✓ Child protection or staff difficulties
- ✓ Sole responsibility
- ✓ Returning to school
- ✓ Interests are important

Principals' Comments on Career Progression.

Experience
- ✓ Problem solvers
- ✓ Headless chicken initially
- ✓ Conscious of years of experience
- ✓ Own perceptions important
- ✓ Diplomacy
- ✓ Listening and supportive
- ✓ Honest and solution focused
- ✓ Experience as a teacher
- ✓ Authority as a Principal
- ✓ Keeping everyone happy
- ✓ Unknown quality

Qualities
- ✓ Personal resilience
- ✓ Extremely professional
- ✓ Balance sole responsibility with teamwork and delegation
- ✓ Commitment to hard work
- ✓ Commitment to the school
- ✓ Energy and stamina in the face of wearing and wrecking demands
- ✓ Self-sustaining
- ✓ Children first

Principals' Comments on Career Progression

371
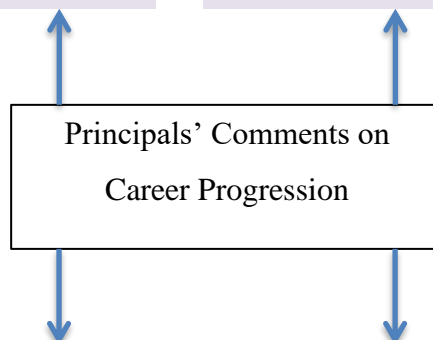
Success
- ✓ Parents on board
- ✓ The right staff
- ✓ Enthusiasm
- ✓ Vibrancy
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Bringing people forward
- ✓ Sharing responsibility and ownership
- ✓ Positive atmosphere
- ✓ Good discipline
- ✓ Appreciation and encouragement
- ✓ Commendation and recognition

Advice
- ✓ "Don't do things right, do the right thing"
- ✓ Personal conviction is important
- ✓ Maintain a professional, not a personal, reaction to adversity
- ✓ Pragmatic – give measured, appropriate and timely reactions
- ✓ Be forthcoming, welcoming and honest
- ✓ "Wading in the gutter"
- ✓ Children come first

Issues of Personal and Professional Sustainability.

Daily demands
- ✓ Multiple and competing
- ✓ Teachers, pupils, parents
- ✓ Building projects
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Middle management
- ✓ System too dependent on one person

The Affect
- ✓ Challenged to remain positive
- ✓ Do anything, do everything
- ✓ Overwhelmed
- ✓ Exhausting
- ✓ Energy draining
- ✓ All-consuming
- ✓ Full-on/taking its toll

Issues of Personal and Professional Sustainability

Long Term
- ✓ Person Interest
- ✓ Not a box-ticking exercise
- ✓ Enjoyment is crucial
- ✓ Emotional effects are brought home
- ✓ Building barriers
- ✓ Initial "love" of the work

Burnout
- ✓ Desire to step back or out
- ✓ Leadership succession
- ✓ Cyclical leadership
- ✓ Problems with employment status and payment.
- ✓ Locked in until retirement
- ✓ A welcome prospect