

A **Professional Learning**  
Continuum for **School Leadership**  
in the Irish Context



**Consultation Paper**

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# An Introduction

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners increasingly recognise the role of leadership at all levels in developing high-performing schools. There is growing recognition also that sustained improvement in the educational outcomes for students will depend on the quality of leadership at a number of levels in schools.

For the purposes of this paper, the definition of school leader refers to both those who occupy formal leadership roles in schools as well as those who have undertaken roles related to school priorities. It also recognises the fact that all teachers play a leadership role in their school.

Good leadership is a moral enterprise, committed to mutual respect, democratic practices, respect for diversity, and the dignity of all human beings. It promotes the articulation of those values and beliefs, and works with the school community to create a vision for the future. Good school leaders draw on their personal values and beliefs to guide that vision, which is inspired by the characteristic spirit of the school.

Like in many other jurisdictions, there has been growing attention on the pivotal role of school leaders in improving the quality of education in Ireland. The formation of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) in 2015 was a recognition of the central role of leadership in addressing the task of developing schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students.

One of the many challenges in Irish education today is to define the increasing complexity of the various leadership roles in Irish schools. The increased emphasis on whole-school improvement and the focus on quality teaching and learning in the school have become key functions of leadership. As a result, the changing school environment will, of necessity, require an ever-increasing breadth and depth of leadership talent within the school community.

Therefore, there is a requirement from all the partners involved in providing leadership development and learning programmes to collaborate and review provision in order to best support both aspiring leaders and those already in leadership roles in schools.

## Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is:

- ▲ To present, for consideration by the partners in education, a proposal for a continuum of professional learning for school leaders appropriate to the Irish context.
- ▲ To outline the background and context for these proposals, including the role and functions of CSL.
- ▲ To begin a consultation process with relevant stakeholders including those involved in the delivery of professional learning for both aspiring and existing school leaders.
- ▲ To invite stakeholders to:
  - (a) Consider the impact of a professional learning continuum for Irish school leaders
  - (b) Provide advice on the development and embedding of the continuum in Irish education
  - (c) Consider current approaches to the provision of induction supports for newly appointed principals
  - (d) Explore the possibilities for collaboration in relation to the continuum

## Overview

The work of the Centre for School Leadership is informed and guided by the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD).<sup>1</sup> Among the roles and functions identified for CSL during its pilot phase (2015–18) are the following:

- ▲ Lead, support and advise on a strategic framework for a continuum of leadership development for schools
- ▲ Support, lead and coordinate professional leadership programmes for primary and post-primary schools
- ▲ Support the design, development and delivery of quality continuous professional development (CPD) for leaders, using innovative approaches with a proven record of success
- ▲ Foster a culture of engagement with CPD among school leaders
- ▲ Ensure cohesion and consistency across programmes
- ▲ Ensure adherence with the DES standards for school leadership and the Teaching Council CPD Framework, when available and if appropriate.

In light of these roles and functions, and on the recommendation of the Steering Committee, the CSL team has looked at what a professional learning continuum for school leaders would look like in the Irish context.

## Background

In the short time frame provided, the CSL team has carried out an environmental scan of leadership professional learning opportunities in a number of jurisdictions. This review has been mainly a desk review, but the team has had ongoing interaction with colleagues in the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL).

An ongoing challenge for the team in carrying out this review is the fact that most other systems have fundamental differences in policy areas that make it difficult to compare them with Ireland's system. Among these differences are the following:

- ▲ Most systems have quite rigorous identification and selection of participants for aspiring principalship programmes. Applicants must demonstrate readiness for the role.
- ▲ A preparation qualification for principalship is usually a mandatory requirement.
- ▲ In most systems, the induction programmes for principalship merely build on previous learning accumulated in other areas of the continuum.
- ▲ The absence of such a continuum in Ireland means that induction has to continue to be more extensive than is evident in other systems, at least for the immediate future.

This paper looks at teachers' professional leadership learning journey in a number of other jurisdictions. It identifies the current gaps in leadership professional learning in the Irish context, and it proposes for consideration a professional learning continuum for Irish school leadership. Part 4 of this paper focuses on a specific area of the continuum: induction for newly appointed principals.

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum of Understanding, August 2015.

# 1. Professional Learning Continuum for School Leadership in Other Jurisdictions

The CSL team has carried out an environmental scan of leadership professional learning opportunities in a number of jurisdictions, and presents the salient points of some of this research below. For the purposes of this paper, the details are limited to three jurisdictions: Scotland, Singapore, and Ontario, Canada. To facilitate comparison, the descriptions of professional learning are limited to the following information:

- ▲ Which school leaders make up the target group for the various programmes on the continuum
- ▲ A very brief description of what the programme does
- ▲ The duration of the programme
- ▲ How participants are recruited to the programme.

The research is summarised in tabular form to facilitate comparison.

## (a) Professional Learning Continuum for School Leadership in Scotland

The Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL),<sup>2</sup> established in 2014, aims to support teachers and early year's practitioners to make a difference to the outcomes for children and young people through access to innovative and quality leadership programmes and services. SCEL was set up following recommendations in *Teaching Scotland's Future*.<sup>3</sup>

Since its establishment, SCEL has developed a framework for educational leadership. This is an online platform which provides a set of self-directed learning activities at all levels and in core aspects of educational leadership. The college has also developed an endorsement process which officially recognises quality professional learning and development in courses and events delivered to leaders in Scottish education. SCEL acts as a co-ordinating body for leadership professional development in Scotland. It also ensures the quality of all elements of this provision through its endorsement process.

Target Group	What the programme does	Duration	Recruitment
<b>Teacher Leadership</b>	Supports and challenges teachers to lead classroom practice in their own context. Provides opportunities for teachers with prior leadership experience to support participants as critical friends or programme tutors	1 Year	Self-Selection
<b>Middle Leadership</b>	A number of programmes, some at post-graduate level, accredited by universities. Provides professional learning activities for those who wish to be effective middle leaders, and acts as prior learning for "Into Headship." Involves online learning and twilight face-to-face sessions	1 Year	Self - Selection
<b>Aspiring Senior Leadership (Into Headship)</b>	Awards the Standard for Headship (compulsory for appointment to Headship from 2020) Provides professional learning opportunities that build upon that undertaken previously. Aims to prepare leaders for their role as Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher Accredited by universities and can be part of a Masters pathway	12 - 18 months	Recommendation and interview
<b>Induction for Senior Leadership (In Headship)</b>	Aimed at supporting head teachers during their first year in the role Builds on learning acquired in the "Into Headship" programme	1 Year	Self - Selection
<b>Established Leaders</b>	A suite of leadership learning events that head teachers can access to create a personalised programme	1 Year	Self - Selection
<b>System Leaders (Fellowship Programme)</b>	Provides a unique and tailored set of learning experiences that draws upon the knowledge and expertise of educational thinkers both nationally and internationally Creates a sense of fellowship among participants	1 Year	Recommendation and interview

<sup>2</sup> [www.scelscotland.org.uk](http://www.scelscotland.org.uk).

<sup>3</sup> Donaldson (2011), *Teaching Scotland's Future*. Scottish Government.

## (b) Professional Learning Continuum for School Leadership in Singapore

The preparation of school leaders in Singapore is a conjoint effort involving the National Institute for Education (NIE) and the Ministry of Education. NIE designs programmes to develop leaders such as the heads of departments, vice principals, principals, and cluster superintendents. In Singapore, it is the Ministry that selects, recruits, and trains future leaders.

Target Group	What the programme does	Duration	Recruitment
<b>Teacher Leadership</b>	Supports classroom teachers by offering short courses	Varied	Self-Selection
<b>Middle Leadership</b>	Guides middle leaders to take on leadership across school departments Collaboration between schools	Full-time for 17 weeks	Nominated by the school and selected by the Ministry
<b>Aspiring Senior Leadership</b>	Involves the following: Internship, Reflective journals, International visits and Creative action projects	6 months	Selected by the Ministry
<b>Induction</b>	Mentoring only	1 Year	Via the LEP Programme
<b>Established Leaders</b>	Explore key leadership issues with an international dimension	2 weeks full-time	Selected by the Ministry
<b>System Leaders</b>	Keynote speeches, "fire-side chats", group discussions and experiential learning in local schools	1 week full-time in summer	Self - Selection

## (c) Professional Learning Continuum for School Leadership in Ontario, Canada

The government of Ontario developed a coherent leadership strategy, contextual support frameworks and actions to include key actors, such as school boards, teachers' unions, academics and practitioners, in the reform process. The leadership strategy focuses on attracting good candidates, preparing them for their tasks and supporting them as they work to improve the quality of instruction.

School boards overtly plan for succession. Mentoring is available during the first two years of practice for both principals and vice principals. The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) and its subsidiary, International School Leadership (ISL), provide a suite of leadership learning opportunities for teachers, school leaders and system leaders.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.principals.ca/documents/OPC\\_Catalogue\\_2016\\_2017.pdf](http://www.principals.ca/documents/OPC_Catalogue_2016_2017.pdf).

Target Group	What the programme does	Duration	Recruitment
<b>Teacher Leadership / Middle Leadership</b>	A wide-ranging suite of programmes for teachers and middle leaders linked to the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) Includes: Challenging conversations, Mentoring/Coaching, Leadership in Inclusion, Effective Communication, Emotional Intelligence	Online and onsite courses of varying lengths	Self-Selection
<b>Aspiring Senior Leadership (ASLP and PQP)</b>	<b>ASLP= Aspiring Leaders:</b> Development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and practices required for School Leadership <b>PQP= Principal Qualification Programme:</b> Accredited Foundation programme for principal/vice principal role	ASLP: Online/Onsite modules PQP: 12 modules (18 days spread over a year) delivered by experienced principals plus 60-hour leadership inquiry practicum	ASLP: Self-selection PQP: 5 years' teaching/masters experience
<b>Induction for Senior Leadership</b>	Includes mentoring and coaching Full or half day in-service, consultation with practising principals/deputies. Job-embedded learning. Opportunities to share promising practice and models of distributed leadership.	Full or half-day support with a formal blended mentoring/coaching service	Mandatory
<b>Established Leaders (PDC)</b>	PDC = Principal Development Course This is an accredited programme. There is also a suite of leadership programmes on offer to school leaders, including qualifications in Mentoring and Education Law	The PDC offers 9 modules. Participants choose 5 modules (25 hours per module) to receive certification	2 years' experience as a principal/vice principal, certified by supervisor
<b>System Leaders (Global Principal Partnerships)</b>	One-week exchange programme to job-shadow. International School Leadership Certificate. International study visits. Courses including a pathway to a Masters. Conferences.	Varies according to the activity	Selection based on evidence of quality practice and input to the system

## 2. Current Professional Learning for School Leaders in Ireland

The CSL team is very conscious of the historically complex tapestry of Irish education. Many of the systems studied have simpler governance and management structures, with most jurisdictions operating within local-authority structures which have responsibility for education (among other public services) in an area. The number of small primary schools in Ireland bears some similarity to our neighbours in Scotland, but their management structures have evolved to accommodate this challenge. Any proposal regarding a professional learning continuum must consider the many contextual differences in the Irish education landscape. While acknowledging that a number of organisations and bodies provide high-quality professional learning, this provision presents some issues for consideration, including:

- ▲ Co-ordination between various providers or across stages of career development
- ▲ The creation of collaborative sustainable clusters or professional learning communities
- ▲ Inevitable duplication of provision, given the variety of contexts in our system
- ▲ The challenge of continuous, collaborative, and on-the-job learning to address common issues and crucial challenges
- ▲ Significant variety of levels of engagement by school leaders in professional learning
- ▲ The challenge of striking the balance between leadership learning and leadership training for operational needs
- ▲ The role of professional learning in the development of leadership capacity at all levels in the system.

# 3. A proposed Professional Learning Continuum for Irish School Leaders

## Rationale

The importance of leadership for good learning outcomes for students, and the need to develop leadership qualities and skills from the outset of a career, have emerged as common themes underpinning our research in other jurisdictions.

In Ireland, the introduction and embedding of the Quality Framework for Schools (Leadership and Management)<sup>5</sup> has given the educational system – and, in particular, leadership development initiatives – a very strong and coherent foundation upon which professional leadership learning can be based.

Building on this, it is opportune for stakeholders to engage in developing a coherent but flexible professional learning continuum for school leadership as a matter of urgency.

The Irish system needs to develop leadership attributes in all staff as well as systematically identifying and supporting its future senior leaders. The type of extended professionalism advocated by the Teaching Council as part of its Cosán<sup>6</sup> initiative for all teachers may provide a more extensive pool of potential leaders.

Furthermore, embedding the leading of learning as central at every stage of the leadership continuum will have a significant impact not only on learning outcomes for the school community, but also on the perception of the school leader's role at every level. In particular, the central role of the principal as both a lead learner and a key agent for leading learning will be strengthened.

Therefore, our proposed continuum therefore looks directly at how leadership can be developed. The international examples cited in this paper suggest that good education systems identify effective leaders for today, and that high-performing systems develop tomorrow's leaders in a planned and progressive way. The Scottish government recognised this as an essential action:

“A clear, progressive educational leadership pathway should be developed, which embodies the responsibility of all leaders to build the professional capacity of staff and ensure a positive impact on young people's learning. Account should be taken of the relationship between theory and practical preparation, including deployment to developmental roles.”<sup>7</sup>

Our proposed continuum aims to develop and foster the qualities and skills which characterise effective leaders. The people recruited into teaching, their experience during their early years as teachers, and the ways in which we identify and develop talent across their careers will all contribute to extending the size and quality of the leadership pool.

<sup>5</sup>[www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf);  
[www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf).

<sup>6</sup>Cosán: Framework for Teachers' Learning, March 2016: [www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Cosan-Framework-for-Teachers-Learning.pdf](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Cosan-Framework-for-Teachers-Learning.pdf).

<sup>7</sup>Donaldson (2011), Teaching Scotland's Future.

There is a pressing need to bring more coherence and clarity to the provision of a continuum from teacher leadership through middle leadership to senior leadership – both on the ground at school level and by providing a coherent but flexible learning pathway. This continuum could include opportunities for mentoring, job-shadowing, short-term secondments or job exchanges, regular professional review, and an agreed programme of further development.

### **The Potential for a Collective/Collaborative Approach**

Our research has identified that a far greater range of a high-quality opportunities is being provided for those aspiring to middle or senior leadership in the jurisdictions where collaboration between providers exists. Section 4 of this paper includes a proposal to develop a collective/collaborative approach to induction for senior school leaders and is predicated upon this finding. The combined resources arising from this approach could be used to identify and develop potential and aspiring senior leaders in the expectation that future leaders will emerge from this pool to fill many of the vacancies which will arise.

At the opposite end of the continuum, many of our most experienced, high-performing senior leaders have the potential to contribute to system leadership in Ireland. We should continue to develop this pool of national leaders in education.

The following two tables outline a proposed professional learning continuum for Irish school leadership.

# Continuum of School Leadership

<p><b>Teachers</b></p> <p>Short, focused courses to support and challenge teachers to lead classroom practice in their own context</p>	<p><b>Middle Leaders</b></p> <p>Short, focused courses, e.g. curriculum and pastoral leadership, subject and programme co-ordination</p>	<p><b>Middle Leaders aspiring to Principalship and Deputy Principalship</b></p> <p>Aspiring Senior Leaders' Programme focusing on the Quality Framework for Schools (Leadership and Management)</p>	<p><b>Newly Appointed Senior Leaders (Principal and Deputy Principal)</b></p> <p>Induction Programme building on previous learning and supporting principals and deputies in the first two years of their role</p>	<p><b>Established Senior Leaders (Principal and Deputy Principal)</b></p> <p><b>Established Senior Leaders</b></p> <p>Co-ordinated menu of professional learning for established leaders</p> <p><b>System Leaders</b></p> <p>Identification and development of system leaders</p>
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← **Mentoring and Coaching** →



## Details of the Proposed Continuum of Professional Learning Opportunities for Irish School Leaders

Who is it for?	Teacher Leadership	Middle Leadership	Aspiring Senior Leadership	Induction for Senior Leadership (Described in more detail later in this document)	Established Leadership Support	System Leadership Development
		Teachers	Aspiring or existing middle leaders	Those for whom deputy principalship or principalship is the next step and who can show evidence of significant collaborative leadership practice outside of their classroom	Principals or deputy principals in their first two years in the role	Experienced principals or deputy principals
What should it do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and challenge teachers to lead classroom practice in their context</li> <li>Support teachers to explore school leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide middle leaders in clusters of schools with the opportunity to explore their leadership capacity</li> <li>Collaboration between universities and practitioners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide accredited professional learning that builds on previous leadership learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support principals and deputy principals in their first two years in the role</li> <li>Build on previous leadership learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a suite of bespoke leadership learning activities that principals and deputy principals can access to create their own learning programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the system leadership capacity of principals</li> </ul>
What might it look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of short, face-to-face sessions</li> <li>Online collaborative learning</li> <li>Shared Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of face-to-face sessions</li> <li>Online collaborative learning</li> <li>Shared Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of short sessions</li> <li>Summer School</li> <li>Online collaborative learning</li> <li>Internship opportunities</li> <li>Post Graduate Qualification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of residential sessions</li> <li>Online collaborative learning</li> <li>Local cluster collaboration</li> <li>Work shadowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of residential sessions</li> <li>Online collaborative learning</li> <li>Local cluster collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A combination of plenary inputs and workshops</li> <li>Draws upon the knowledge and expertise of educational thinkers both national and international</li> <li>Participants lead strategic initiatives in school clusters</li> </ul>

**All programmes and activities above to be quality-assured by CSL  
Mentoring/Coaching is understood to be an integral part of all programmes**

## Gaps in Current Professional Learning for School Leadership in the Irish Context

Given the increasing awareness of the role of leadership as a key factor in influencing the quality of learning outcomes for students, it is timely for all stakeholders to examine how we can together develop a coherent leadership strategy to ensure optimum outcomes for students in our schools. The growing emphasis on distributed leadership and the recent increased allocation of deputy principals to post-primary schools, combined with the expected publication of a circular on middle leadership positions for all schools, makes this a task of great importance. CSL has looked at specific leadership areas along the continuum and is highlighting some of the issues and gaps for consideration that are relevant to the Irish context. The observations that follow are included as areas for consideration by stakeholders when looking at a possible professional learning continuum for school leadership in the Irish context.

### Teacher Leadership

Professional learning is already provided for teachers in subject areas, in classroom practice, and in leading specific curriculum initiatives. However, teachers need opportunities to reflect on their role as a leader, on the challenges of this role, and in particular on their leadership of other adults in the school community.

For teachers aspiring to future leadership roles, consideration should be given to providing “Introduction to School Leadership”-type programmes. Such programmes could help them explore how ready they are to engage in more senior leadership roles outside of their own classroom. The foregoing area is very underdeveloped in our system. It requires significant support to change the culture where leadership is seen and accepted as an individual and collective practice, and to move away from a leader-centric viewpoint.

### Middle Leadership

There is a need for a co-ordinated approach to providing professional learning opportunities, both face-to-face and online, for teachers who wish to lead, or are currently leading, initiatives or projects outside of their classroom. This provision should address the variety of understandings of middle leadership, as it is commonly believed that middle leadership is primarily task-oriented and does not involve management or leadership of colleagues. Again, this cultural attitude requires change over time.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on what constitutes a middle leadership role, from both task and leadership points of view. This is particularly critical now due to current proposals to increase the number of appointments to middle leadership positions in our primary and post-primary schools.

### Aspiring Senior Leadership

Most jurisdictions place high emphasis on aspiring senior leadership programmes. Whether there should be a mandatory qualification for applicants for such positions (e.g. principalship) is a question that needs careful consideration by stakeholders.

Most international evidence suggests that recruitment and selection of participants for aspiring leaders’ programmes is vital.

*Recruitment and selection are central to program design, not incidental activities.*<sup>8</sup>

Other jurisdictions place more emphasis on developing teacher leadership and middle leadership, then selecting and training those middle leaders most suitable for senior leadership roles. In the Irish context, consideration should be given to the need for such a selection process for aspiring senior leaders’ programmes. Such a process would identify those who have developed strong personal values and beliefs. It would also require potential leaders to show evidence of significant and collaborative leadership practice outside of their classroom. International research suggests that internship, work shadowing, and collaborative learning should also be considered as integral parts of aspiring senior leaders’ programmes.

<sup>8</sup>Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs. Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, 2007.

## Induction

Most jurisdictions have an induction programme for senior leadership less extensive than Ireland's. They place much more emphasis on aspiring leaders' programmes which incorporate a robust selection process. A collective/collaborative approach to developing an induction programme is discussed in section 4 of this paper. The experience gained from developing such a programme, involving all stakeholder groups, would be a very important initial step towards agreeing what constitutes a professional learning continuum for school leaders in the Irish context.

## Established Leadership

This section of the continuum is populated by a number of organisations offering provision in this area. Lack of coordination could lead to duplication in the system. There is a need for more focus on the instructional leadership role of the principal in this section of the continuum. There is also potential to further develop moderated and supported online learning communities involving school leaders in cluster groups.

## System Leadership

System leaders lead in their own schools and can share their expertise and work with leaders from other schools to improve outcomes for students. They care about, and work for, the success of other schools as well as their own. They work closely with colleagues and other system leaders to examine the impact of their practice. System leaders are aware of, and can analyse, key interventions which might bring about desired improvements in learner outcomes, contextual factors which might influence improvement strategies, and processes for ensuring sustained improvement.

The Scottish College of Educational Leadership has recognised the importance of nurturing system leadership. Experienced school leaders apply to SCEL to participate in their Fellowship Programme.<sup>9</sup> This supports engagement with, and understanding of, system leadership and "aims to provide advanced and stretching development opportunities for experienced Head Teachers in schools and Heads in Early Learning and Childcare Centres to support their capacity to contribute to system level leadership".

Involvement in the programme brings advantages for the individual, their local authority, and the system as a whole. There is no monetary reward for this involvement. Upon successful completion of the programme, participants become SCEL Fellows supporting system developments. Achieving the award confirms their successful participation in the programme, and Fellowship status recognises their achievements as experienced, highly credible school leaders who can contribute to Scotland's education system.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.scelscotland.org.uk](http://www.scelscotland.org.uk) > News > Fellowship Programme.

# 4. Induction for Newly Appointed Principals

## Introduction

As we have seen, there is more emphasis in other countries on developing teacher leadership and middle leadership, and then selecting and training middle leaders who can show readiness for senior leadership. Any proposed collective/collaborative approach to induction may need to consider current selection processes for aspiring senior leaders' programmes.

The following sections briefly outline some research into the needs of newly appointed Irish principals, and induction in other jurisdictions and in Ireland. Finally, we outline a rationale for considering a collective/collaborative approach to developing an induction programme for newly appointed principals in Ireland.

## The Needs of Newly Appointed Irish Principals

A report by Hay Group, "Defining the Role of the Primary Principal in Ireland", highlighted the key challenges of the role.<sup>10</sup> Although these pertain to the broader audience of primary principals, the following are congruent with the needs articulated by all newly appointed principals:

- ▲ Lack of clarity
- ▲ The dual role of the teaching principal
- ▲ The need for support in assuming the role of the "lead professional".

Sugrue (2005)<sup>11</sup> in his work with newly appointed principals indicated that they have had little time to adjust to the role and responsibilities involved. A literature review by the Professional Development Service for Principals (PDST) (2014)<sup>12</sup> found that three striking recurring themes exist:

- a) The sheer volume of unexpected workload
- b) The gravity of the role, or more specifically the realisation by new principals that they have ultimate responsibility for the school
- c) Isolation from peers and the school community generally.

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<sup>10</sup>Hay Group (2007). "Defining the Role of the Primary Principal in Ireland". Hay Group Management Consultants, cited by O'Donnell, C. and Treacy, M. (2014) The Newly Appointed Primary School Principal, Needs and Challenges, Literature Review, PDST.

<sup>11</sup>Sugrue, C. (2005), cited by O'Donnell, C. and Treacy, M. (2014) The Newly Appointed Primary School Principal, Needs and Challenges, Literature Review, PDST.

<sup>12</sup>O'Donnell, C. and Treacy, M. (2014). The Newly Appointed Primary School Principal, Needs and Challenges, Literature Review, PDST.

In summary, it appears that many newly appointed principals in Ireland arrive at the role inadequately prepared for the many challenges they encounter

## Features and Elements of an Induction Programme

Research by the National College for School Leadership in England in 2004 identified the following priorities, listed here in summary, as essential elements of an induction programme for newly appointed school leaders:

- ▲ A focus on school culture and context
- ▲ The school leader as a leader of change, and the importance of transformational leadership
- ▲ The school leader as the leader of learning
- ▲ The use of action planning, group problem solving, study groups and networking
- ▲ The essential nature of e-learning and a dedicated website
- ▲ The incorporation of mentoring and networking into the programme
- ▲ The importance of research and effective formative and summative evaluation by an independent agency.<sup>13</sup>

## Induction in other Jurisdictions

Most countries provide a continuum of professional learning opportunities for school leaders, from teacher leadership right up to system leadership. The induction process is part of this continuum and builds upon previous learning.

In Ontario,<sup>14</sup> potential candidates are placed on a Principal Qualification Programme (PQP) before they are appointed to positions. As a result, they do not have an extensive induction programme, but mentoring is offered to school leaders in the first two years of their role. They are expected to maintain an annual professional leadership growth plan. Likewise in Singapore, the LEP programme mentioned earlier in this paper prepares future principals for their role, and they are offered mentoring when they take up their position.

In Scotland and New Zealand, however, there are induction programmes, which are described here.

## Scotland

*In Headship*<sup>15</sup> is a post-graduate programme for new head teachers which supports them to develop and continue to build the knowledge, skills and understandings required of head teachers.



*In Headship* is the third and final component of the Specialist Qualification for Headship. Participants normally enter the programme within two years of becoming head teacher. The programme builds on, enhances, and advances academic and professional learning, gained through the successful completion of the post-graduate qualification *Into Headship*.

<sup>13</sup> Weindling, D. (2004). Innovation in Head Teacher Induction. National College of School Leadership, Create Consultants, London: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5082/2/D5082New.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> OECD (2010). Improving Schools: Strategies for Action in Mexico. OECD Publishing.

<sup>15</sup> [www.scelscotland.org.uk](http://www.scelscotland.org.uk).

## Some Features of the Programme

- ▲ The programme is delivered in partnership with the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL), local authorities, and four universities.
- ▲ There are three main strands to the programme:
  1. Shaping professional identity and practice: critical reflection in the transition to headship
  2. Pursuing equity and excellence
  3. Building capacity in self and others.
- ▲ Participants are offered an opportunity to engage in online pre-course provision.
- ▲ It is assessed through a range of formative and summative assessments.
- ▲ Participants are expected to identify an experienced head teacher who can act as a critical colleague to support them in their professional learning throughout the programme.
- ▲ The programme begins with an induction day in June and a residential event in September. There are five taught days throughout the year, facilitated by the universities.
- ▲ *In Headship* is currently fully funded by the Scottish government, and there is no cost to participants.

## New Zealand

### First-Time Principals' Programme (FTPP) <sup>16</sup>

The First-Time Principals' Programme (FTPP) takes place in the first year of a principal's appointment to a school. It is scheduled for nine days over the course of the school holidays. There is also an online element which participants avail of between seminars. Online modules and short videos on key messages and resources for leading teaching and learning are also provided. Technology is used to cut down on cost and to survey participants to determine the main professional issues that are concerning them. New Zealand's principals are expected to learn on the job, and the FTPP delivery mechanisms are designed to meet the needs of new principals as they come to grips with their role.

The focus of the programme is on developing personal and professional skills and capabilities. It emphasises the role of the principal as lead teacher of learning and teaching in the school. The programme team believe in "walking the talk" and attempt to model inquiry teaching and effective leadership practices in their delivery of the programme.

One of the main challenges in New Zealand is diversity among participants and in their school contexts. In this programme, educational leadership is informed by the principal's own learning needs in their own school context. Mentoring is an essential element of the induction programme. Principals are matched with more experienced principals in schools similar to their own. Skype is used for mentoring, but the principals who are being mentored also meet regularly to discuss ideas and provide feedback.

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<sup>16</sup>[www.oecd.org/edu/school/44374889.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/44374889.pdf).

## Induction in Ireland

Department of Education funded Induction Programmes

Specific leadership support courses began in 2002 under the auspices of the newly formed Leadership Development for Schools (LDS). LDS became a part of the newly established Professional Development Service for Principals (PDST) in 2010. These courses receive systematic national support from the DES. They are facilitated by teams of experienced school leaders, some seconded full-time from their schools, and associate team members who commit up to twenty days to the service per academic year.

Misneach,<sup>17</sup> the induction course for principals, offers newly appointed principals the opportunity to attend five two-day residentials over a two-year period. The programme helps principals to “walk the tightrope” of the induction to principalship and gives them the opportunity to develop as a school leader in their own school. It is offered via a blend of residential modules, local support settings, mentoring, and online support. Numerous other organisations, such as management bodies, trust bodies, trade unions, and professional associations, provide induction programmes and supports for newly appointed principals at both primary and post-primary level.

### Why have a collective/collaborative approach to induction in Ireland?

The rationale for considering a collective/collaborative approach to induction has been referred to in the first section of this paper. Collaboration between stakeholders would bring a wide range of different perspectives and contexts to the table, thus enriching any future programme of induction. Other reasons for adopting such an approach to induction include:

- ▲ Bringing together the collective wisdom and expertise of stakeholders in Irish education in a collaborative endeavour.
- ▲ Co-ordinating the many activities on offer to newly appointed principals, thus developing coherence and avoiding duplication.
- ▲ Aligning the induction process with the standards and domains for school leadership (Looking at our Schools 2016).<sup>18</sup>
- ▲ The ultimate aim of such a programme is enhanced educational outcomes for students.

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<sup>17</sup> [www.pdst.ie/Misneach/Postprimary](http://www.pdst.ie/Misneach/Postprimary).

<sup>18</sup> DES (2016). Looking at our Schools.

# Questions for Consideration

## Q1. Observations on the Continuum

To what extent is the continuum, as illustrated, likely to meet the professional learning needs of aspiring, newly appointed and established school leaders?

- ▲ What are the strengths and gaps in current provision?
- ▲ What strengths and gaps are in the proposed continuum?

## Q2. Challenges for Providers of Professional Learning for School Leaders

Taking into account the quality assurance requirements in the document referenced below, to what extent is the illustrated continuum likely to meet challenges for individual organisations and the system as a whole?

[www.cslireland.ie](http://www.cslireland.ie) CSL Quality Assurance Pilot Process for Professional Learning in School Leadership  
– Handbook for Providers

# Consultation Process and a Way Forward

CSL is committed to ensuring effective stakeholder consultation. This paper has set out the learning from the research undertaken, and a possible continuum of professional learning for school leadership in the Irish context. It is in this spirit that the following steps are proposed:

- ▲ Stakeholders are invited to a Consultation Forum on 9th October 2017.
- ▲ Stakeholder organisations and groups are invited to submit responses to this consultation paper. A template for submissions will be available from the CSL website immediately after the consultation forum.
- ▲ Final date for written submissions is 10th November 2017.
- ▲ It is intended to launch a framework for a continuum of professional learning for school leadership in April 2018.



# The Tree of Leadership Learning

