National University of Ireland, Maynooth

"Two 'Heads' Are Better Than One"

An Examination and Analysis of the Role of the Deputy Principal in Irish Primary Schools.

By

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree in this or any other university.

Signed: *Terence Allen*

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Date: 11th May 2004

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May she rest in peace.

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Abstract

This study examines and analyses the role of the deputy principal in Irish Primary Schools in the building of professional learning communities in the school. It focuses on what functions or tasks have been "assigned" to or negotiated with the deputy principal to improve teacher efficacy and student learning. It examines the extent to which the deputy principal and the principal are mutually supportive of each other and other colleagues in the sustainability of the school as a learning organisation.

Twelve deputy principals from different types and size of primary school took part in a series of individual semi structured interviews with the researcher. The evidence from this was further corroborated by two focus groups of principals.

As the subtitle suggests a key finding is that in coping with the management of complex change in schools today, too much responsibility cannot be left in the one 'head', the principal. By sharing leadership responsibility with the other 'head', the deputy principal this will facilitate sustainability and continuity thereby contributing to overall school effectiveness. Thus the leadership role for the deputy with the principal is similar and shared rather than separate. The overall rationale simply being that "two 'heads' are better than one".

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

One of the conclusions of The Hay Report (2003) into principalship in the primary

school was that

> -Further study should be undertaken of the role of Middle Management
> within schools, particularly of the role of Deputy Principal, with a view
> to positioning it as a more challenging and developmental role. That
> review should also take into account recruitment and appointment
> procedures and guidelines.- (p.35)

Shortly after this was published, The Minister for Education and Science also referred

to the "need to look afresh at the relative roles of principal teachers, deputy principals,

assistant principals and special duties teachers with a view to strengthening a team

approach to school leadership" (Dempsey 2003 p.2). Among the challenges which the

Minister outlined facing schools was the need to develop more ambitious concepts of

school leadership and in-school management in order to harness fully the wealth of

talent available within schools (Ibid p.2).

Circular 16/73 (DES 1973) identifies three aspects of the deputy principal's role when it

states that

> -The vice principal is required to assist the principal teacher in the day to
> day organisation and supervision of the school. In addition to his/her
> teaching duties, the vice principal should be assigned special duties by
> the manager. Before assigning such duties to the vice principal, the
> manager should discuss the matter with the principal teacher.-

In the three subsequent decades these guidelines however have not been meaningfully

updated, developed or amended to give a distinctive identity to the role of the deputy

principal. The role has evolved without little or any external guidance or influence.

There has been no professional guidance coming to the shape of the role other than a couple of sentences that have been at the end of a couple of reports over the years. Successive policy documents as will be shown have positioned the role either in 'Middle Management' or 'Senior Management' but have not profiled the role in terms of management accountabilities or leadership competencies.

Because the role has evolved in this undirected way it has panned out to be as effective or ineffective as the people who were central to the actual shaping of it within the school, chiefly the principal and the deputy.

Dean (1995) refers to the "ill defined" nature of the deputy's role which she also believes "depends upon the management style of the head teacher and what the individual in post has to offer" (p. 155).

In the absence of any clearly defined duties the post has in some cases come to be regarded as reward for seniority and long service (Diggins 1990).

A survey of 361 teachers (I.N.T.O 1994) found that 86% thought that the role of vice principal was undeveloped. The considerable enhancement of the Principal's role in recent times has further undermined the development of any significant role for the deputy. Too much emphasis and too much responsibility are vested in one person. The Hay Report (2003) acknowledges this.

> -A strong statement of the role of the principal is not meant to diminish other roles. It should serve to highlight what each practicing member of the teaching profession is aware of – the fact that the "buck" stops with his or her principal.- (p.35)

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But as one head teacher remarks: "Although the buck stops here, it doesn't mean I have to confuse the arrival of the buck with carrying it all the time" (Brighouse and Wood 1999 p.57). This also might explain why "these post holders generally play a more limited role in terms of school management and administration than might be desirable" (Hay Report 2003 p.35).

However "given the significant cost of the allowance for such posts, this raised the question of the value for money which is being obtained from this layer of management within the system" (Ibid p.35). Dempsey (2003) concurs stating that "we need to ensure that those being paid for extra work actually do it and are part of a management team" (p.2).

Course of the study

This study proposes to examine and analyse the role of the deputy principal in Irish Primary Schools in the building of professional learning communities in the school. It will focus on what functions or tasks have been "assigned" to or negotiated with the deputy principal to improve Teacher efficacy and student learning. To what extent are the deputy principal and principal mutually supportive of each other and other colleagues in the sustainability of the school as a learning organisation?

The challenge in seeking to effect and sustain the school as a learning organisation is quite a formidable and daunting one. This requirement however has come about as a result of recent initiatives such as the Revised Primary Curriculum and School Development Planning. In Organisations seeking to learn together this means that

"school leaders give away power, distribute leadership and encourage others to be successful." (Harris et al 2003 p.100)

Critically this is about delegation. Principals as well as others in senior management can suffer from an inability to delegate. This can be due to incompetence, fear or unwillingness (Paisey and Paisey, 1987). It's about a failure to develop trust and trustworthiness which can empower individuals to share leadership (Covey 1991). Inability to delegate results in a management pyramid which is too sharp on top and where too much is going to the top. Deputy principals themselves may often be reluctant to take on extra responsibilities. There can be resentment among other members of the school's management team about either how little responsibility has been effectively delegated to them or how in proportion to the principal and deputy principal, they are seen to be doing all the work.

How some sort of balance, accountability and proportionality can be effected when the biggest problem facing schools is "fragmentation and overload" (Fullan 1999 p.39) only adds to the challenge.

Feelings of "addonitis" and "projectitits" (Fullan 1993) often reflect the feelings of both teachers and school leadership.

Sergiovanni's (2000 p.35) concept of the self-managing school implies that leading as a skilled and complicated undertaking would be learned and practised by every member of the school community in a supportive context.

In what sense then really are schools any different to normal organisations where leadership roles are also seen to have a critical role in implementing and effecting change?

Unlike the business world, the problem is that "the cellular organisations of schools means that teachers struggle with their problems and anxieties privately spending most of their time physically apart from their colleagues." (Fullan 2001 p.118).

Effecting the school as a learning organisation means changing the conditions and practices under which all teachers work. However a legacy of traditions, history and culture in the unique context of any particular school can radically alter the degree to which these conditions and practices can be altered.

Collegiality has been identified by Little (1982 p.335) and Clement and Vandenberghe (2001 p.45) as a workplace condition and practice that gets teachers working together and "learning on the job."

Collegiality is the presence of four specific behaviours:

- Adults talk about practice.

- Adults in schools observe each other engaged in the practice of teaching and administration.

- Adults engage in work on curriculum by planning, designing, researching and evaluating curriculum.

- Finally, adults in schools teach each other what they know about teaching, learning and leading. (Little quoted in Barth 1990 p.31)

There may well be a role for deputy principals in creating and sustaining this "array of specific interactions by which teachers discuss, plan for, design, conduct, analyse, evaluate and experiment with the burden of teaching." (Little 1982 p.338).

In the learning organisation "it is essential to develop a teaching culture where talking frankly and knowledgeably about teaching is acceptable and enlightening."(Brighouse & Woods 1999 p. 87).

Little's second behaviour of observing each other engaged in the practice of teaching and learning continues to remain a remote concept.

Following recent initiatives in School Planning and Curriculum Support, Little's third and fourth collegial behaviours mentioned above are possibly now becoming major forces for change in Irish Primary Schools. This may be because "consultation, communication and collaboration are critical elements in the process". (Flynn in IPPN 2003).

The role and responsibilities of school leadership in facilitating this "process of consistent curriculum and organisational planning" is now seen by the Department of Education and Science, to require "the delegation of relevant responsibilities, to deputy principals, assistant principals and special duties teachers" (Primary School Curriculum 1999 p.19).

The key to effecting such work places is in the building of professional learning communities which emphasise three key components:

- Collaborative work and discussion among the schools' professionals.

- A strong and consistent focus on teaching and learning.

- Gathering assessment and other data to inquire into and evaluate problems over time.

(Fullan 2001)

A job description for the future role of the Deputy Principal and other members of the school's management team might be usefully developed around this threefold structure. Day et al (2000) refer in particular to a concept of leadership that is "diffuse rather than hierarchical". (p.170). The present model of principal, deputy principal, assistant principal, special duties teachers and other teachers may promote division rather than cohesion. Day's (2000) study of leadership roles in 12 schools found that there was "a strong emphasis upon teamwork and participation in decision making (though heads reserved the right to be autocratic)" (p.162)

Research elsewhere has shown that team involvement in educational institutions is limited by the fact that the leader takes (or ratifies) the final decision in the interests of the organisation as a whole, thereby actively inhibiting organisational well being. (Webb and Vulliamy 1996 in Law and Glover 2000).

A team building approach could be one way of developing the problem solving skills and leadership capacity of the school's middle and senior management team. In suggesting a restructuring of the role of the deputy principal, these concepts of teamwork, flatter hierarchies and distributed leadership might well be the essential ingredients. These features have become acknowledged cornerstones in business practice; they could be expanded as key levers for enhancing the role of the deputy principal.

For Woodcock (1979) teams provide unique opportunities to "make things happen which would not happen if the team did not exist." (p.7)

For Belbin (1993 p.107) "team leadership is the only form of leadership acceptable in a society where power is shared and so many people are near equals." Yet this concept of near equality or in the context of the managerial role of the principal as "primus inter pares" often creates on-going tensions and dilemmas, the successful handling of which are often seen as the hallmarks of an effective leader. (Fullan 2001, 2003, Day 2000). In relation to the principal of the school is one seeking to define a parallel, supportive, supplementary or complementary role for the deputy principal?

Adair (1986) however acknowledges the complexity of the dilemma in "achieving a balance between the interests and self expression of each individual on the one hand and of the group on the other is one of the most challenging tasks of leaders" (p.59).

In the primary school this task may be further complicated by the size of the school and whether the principal is either a teaching or administrative principal. Secondly in all primary schools regardless of principal organisation, the deputy principal is always teaching without any formal provision being made within the structure of the school day for the exercise of their role as deputy principal.

The existing reality also for many schools is a culture that tolerates individualism and balkanisation. (Stoll & Fink1995 p.88). These cultures fragment relationships making it difficult for teachers to build on one another's experience, and engage in any form of team building or teamwork exercise.

By all means "Let us rejoice in our individuality but let us be sure that we develop it for the benefit of others" (Adair 1986 p.59)

This is about school leadership creating and sustaining collaborative cultures among teachers and others to reverse the dynamics of individualism and balkanisation which means providing "a climate of trust in which teachers can pool resources, take risks, deal with complex and unanticipated problems, support each other......." (Hargreaves 1997 p.112)

This also means accommodating differences of opinion, interpretation and approach. Like minded innovators only tell us what we want to hear. Going "deep" means "taking resisters more seriously" (Fullan 2001 p.99)

This also means valuing mid-career classroom teachers who might feel comfortable with modest change as well as valuing young teachers who might like to move at a faster rate. There might be a moderating, facilitating or accommodating role here for the deputy principal.

School leadership must also appreciate the "phenomenology of change" how people experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended. (Fullan 2001 p.8) Evans (1996) refers to the "double duality" of change, the gap between what change means to its authors and what it means to its targets. For Evans this "needs to be seen as part of the solution not just part of the problem. It demands the attention and respect of all who seek innovation." (p.38)

In this context then Sergiovanni (2000), might well have outlined the ideal solution or a charter of what might be the essential job requirement for the future role of the deputy principal.

- Leadership for meaning, Leadership for problem solving, Leadership as shared responsibility, Leadership that serves school purpose, Leadership that is tough enough to demand a great deal from everyone and Leadership that is tender enough to encourage the heart. These are the images of leadership we need for schools as communities. (pp184-185)

Further interest in this study of the role of the deputy principal has been fostered by this Researcher's nineteen years experience as a principal.

In 1991 an OECD report commented that "Vice Principals do not generally become principals which seems to be a waste of their experience." (p.108). This may well be because "the role of deputy principal may be significantly more attractive in terms of pay and responsibilities" (Sugrue 2003 p.28).

The allowance payable to the deputy of a seventeen to nineteen teacher school (€9666) is almost as much as that paid to the principal of an eight to eleven teacher school (€10,338) (INTO (2003 p.7).

Many would argue anecdotally or otherwise, that the deputy principal's allowance is the best paid role within the school in which context the researcher has also heard the term "cushy little number".

The lack of research on the role of the deputy along side the inconclusive nature of the research and the dominant focus on the role of the principal have led to many contrasting views of the role of the deputy principal .

The objectives of this study therefore are:

1. To ascertain and categorise the nature of the assistance given by deputy principals to Principals in the day to day organisation and running of the school.

2. To examine if the extent of this assistance is purely administrative and or organisational.

3. In the light of what Sugrue (2003) has called "a whole plethora of emerging mandates, curricular and others" (pp 8-9) to assess the extent of any instructional leader or teacher leader focus in the deputy's role.

4. In the absence of any such focus to recommend practical ways in which the role of the deputy might be enhanced to accommodate this role.

5. To investigate policies and practices with regard to recruitment and training of deputy principals and to make recommendations for the recruitment and training of deputies in the future.

6. If the mark of a skilled deputy is the one who successfully integrates teaching with other duties to examine how this has been achieved among existing practitioners with a view to making best practice recommendations to help deputies cope with the pace of change which has accelerated to an alarming rate. (Sugrue 2003 p.9)

7. To test if school size and type are issues in shaping the role of the deputy principal and to what extent its future development is linked to the leadership style of the principal.

Qualitative research will be used to inform the study by way of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Twelve deputy principals and six principals and a leading authority figure have been interviewed to provide the necessary data. The role of the deputy will be explored and duties and responsibilities involved in the role will be examined. Critically, one of the purposes of the research is to provide an opportunity for deputies to reflect on their role and from this to formulate their own perspective. The focus groups will allow principals identify ways in which they can work with the deputy in order to allow for the role of the deputy principal to be redefined and redeveloped.

Obviously, even though purposive sampling has been used, a small qualitative research like the one outlined here cannot claim to be representative of the viewpoints of all deputies or principals.

For this study the various titles 'Deputy', 'Deputy Head', 'Vice Principal', and 'Deputy Principal' are interchanged but refer to the person who is second in command in the Primary School. In Ireland following the terms of Circular 6/97, the title "Vice Principal" has been replaced with "Deputy Principal". West (1992) however argues that the second in command in the Primary School should be called

Assistant Principal as this "recognises that all Vice Principals have careers though not all are promoted and that some do not seek preferment". (INTO 1998 p.40).

Following negotiations between the Teacher Unions and the Irish Government under the auspices of the Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW 1996), the concept of deputy principal was retained while the title of A-Post Holder was changed to that of assistant principal. (Ibid p.40)

Arguably these In-School Management structures of which the deputy principal is part are working well in some schools, working somewhat in others and not at all in other schools. Most of the issues identified by the Education Partners in the "The Working Group Report" (DES 1999), five years on are still to be addressed. The Hay Report (2003) commented on the "significant variance in the degree to which deputy principals/other post holders are providing the ideal level of support to principals." (p.18)

The research is presented in four chapters. In Chapter Two, a review of the literature is presented in which the current perspective on the role of the deputy principal in Irish Primary Schools is outlined, in addition to some international perspectives on the role. Chapter Three details the research methods and the process of selection of participants and the procedures adopted.

Chapter Four contains a detailed report on the findings with particular reference to the issues and themes identified by the participants. In Chapter Five, further exploration and discussion of these issues will establish the extent of the current

status of the role of the deputy principal and outline specific recommendations and issues for consideration followed by some concluding statements.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature relating to the role of the deputy principal. Firstly some historical and current perspectives on the role of the deputy principal in Ireland will be explored. Secondly, there will be an examination of what the literature has to say about the school as a learning organisation and how school culture and in-career development and other factors might impact on the role of the deputy principal. Thirdly, leadership partnership, teamwork and networking approaches will be examined with a view to how these may enhance the role of the deputy principal.

Historical and Current Perspectives on the Role of the Deputy Principal in Ireland.

A new position of vice principal was first established in primary schools in Ireland in 1920 because so few promotional opportunities were open to assistant teachers. Indeed in larger schools more than one vice principal was often appointed, a situation which by and large continued until the publication of the Ryan Tribunal Report (1968). Prior to this the vice principal is mentioned in the Rules for National Schools (Department of Education 1965, Rules 75, 76, 123).

- Rule 123 requires that "the Principal (or in his absence, the Vice Principal, assistant, or junior assistant mistress as the case may be) must carefully carry

out the instructions in Roll Book, Report Book and Register as to the keeping and care of school records". (pp 71-72).

The implication being that the vice principal acts for the principal in his/her absence and carries out the duties of the principal.

The publication of the Ryan Tribunal Report (1968) recommended graded personal allowances for principals and graded posts of responsibility on the basis of seniority instead of multiple vice principalships.

Prior to 1970, the vast majority of principal teachers were full time teachers and their bureaucratic functions as outlined in Rule 123 above existed mainly to satisfy the demand of the Department of Education. Following the introduction of the Primary School Curriculum in 1972, the role of the principal teacher changed significantly, particularly in the section dealing with "Organisation". Specifically mentioned were conferences of staff members, a school plan of work and coordination of the work of the school among others. (Department of Education 1971 p.21).

These responsibilities therefore initiated a dual role of administrative and day to day responsibilities for the principal and vice principal in the absence of the principal.

Circular 16/73 quoted earlier identified three aspects to the role of the deputy principal namely assisting the principal in the day today organisation and supervision of the school, teaching duties, and assignment of specific duties by the principal. These guidelines however have not been developed to give a distinctive identity to the role of the deputy. No attempt is made in Circular 16/73 to elaborate on the requirement of the deputy principal to assist the principal in the day to day organisation and supervision of

the school. However in stating that "the Vice Principal is required to assist the principal in the day to day running and organisation of the school" Circular 16/73 (Section D) would place the deputy principal in a senior management role.

Another opportunity was missed with the publication of the Green Paper on Education: Education for a Changing World (Government of Ireland 1992), which merely proposed that the principal be supported by the vice principal and holders of posts of responsibility. Critically however, and in what was seen as a radical departure at the time, The Green Paper (1992) recommended that appointments to posts of vice principal should be based on competition and merit rather than seniority as before. Affirming this shift of emphasis, an INTO (1994) survey found that "73% of respondents favoured merit related appointment with younger teachers being more in favour than older teachers" (INTO 1998 p.45). Like the Green Paper (1992) the Report on the National Education Convention (Coolahan 1994) also proposed that qualifications and track record of candidates rather than seniority would be the main criteria for appointments to posts as vice principal.

The Convention Report (Coolahan 1994) did note that "while the role of the principal is relatively well defined, that of the Vice Principal is rather vague" (p.46).

And in one telling proposal for the re-organisation of the middle management system it conceded that "the position of vice principal may also need to be re-defined" (p.52). This is what The White Paper on Education: Charting our Education Future (Government of Ireland 1995) sought to do in recommending the provision of opportunities for vice principals to assume responsibility for instructional leadership,

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curriculum development, the management and development of staff and the academic and pastoral work of the school in order to reduce the considerable workload of the principal. The White Paper 1995 referred to the principal and vice principal working as a "cohesive management unit" (p.154).

Three subsequent initiatives by the Department of Education sought to copper fasten the functions and duties spelled out in The White Paper (Government of Ireland 1995). Implementing the Agenda for Change (Government of Ireland 1996) in proposing a re-structuring of in-school management and re-grading of the post structures argued that duties assigned should ensure that the pastoral curricular and administrative needs of schools were met. Circular 6/97 (Department of Education 1997) was the result of The Agreement of Pay and Conditions of Teachers in the Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW) 1996. This circular outlined an increase in the number of posts of responsibility in almost every school and the creation of an in-school management structure that would include Deputy Principal (formerly Vice Principal), Assistant Principals (formerly A-Post Holders), and Special Duties Teachers (formerly B-Post Holders). Under the terms of Circular 6/97, the selection of the successful candidate for deputy principal and post holder was to be based on three criteria of capability and willingness to undertake the duties attaching to the post, length of service or experience in the school and interest in a particular area within the list of duties. Research by O'Shaughnessy (2001) however showed that a majority of the principals interviewed was of the opinion that Circular 6/97 had made no difference to the work of the deputy and was more likely to have been a response to the pay agreement than an attempt to

meet the needs of schools. In the same survey however deputy principals differed, arguing that as the appointment to the position of deputy principal was no longer based on seniority, there was a feeling that this would allow talent for leadership to come to the fore. By way of further affirmation a report from The Irish Primary Principals' Network In-School Management (IPPN 2003) concluded that while there was potential for in-school management to influence the quality of learning and teaching in the proposals outlined in Circular 6/97 this potential "has not been realised". (p.36). This is partly because Circular 6/97 did not differentiate between the role of deputy principal, assistant principal, or special duties teachers in its attempts to implement reviewed in-school management and in a somewhat regressive move from the terms of Circular 16/73 placed the deputy principal back in the role of middle management. It would take another six years before another attempt was made to re-focus the role once again.

Neither is the potential fully realised in The Education Act (Government of Ireland 1998) while clearly setting out the statutory responsibilities of the Principal in Sections 22-24, nonetheless fails to set out any defined role for the deputy principal. The Primary School Curriculum (1999) does refer to the role of the deputy principal amongst others in curriculum and planning.

> - the process of curriculum development requires the development of
> procedures and structures within the school that will facilitate a process
> of consistent curriculum and organisational planning, this should include
> the delegation of relevant responsibilities to Deputy Principals, Assistant
> Principals and Special Duties Teachers. - (p.19)

For the first time a meaningful leadership role for the deputy principal in the area of curriculum and planning is signalled, thus managing to draw an interesting parallel with

the original aspirations of The White Paper (1995) but which were amazingly not alluded to subsequently in the Education Act (1998).

The Working Group Report (Department of Education 1999) set out the role of the deputy principal in a much broader context. Specifically it referred to

- The important role of the deputy principal in supporting the principal in his/her management role.

- Particular attention being given to the evolving role of the deputy principal.

    (p.60)

The provision of revised in-school management structure was again addressed by the issuing of Circular 07/03 (DES, A) which superseded all previous circulars. While this comprehensive Circular dealt with a large number of issues including outlining a schedule of duties for posts of responsibility, procedures for filling these posts and an appeals mechanism, it also contains a number of implications for deputies which were not clear in Circular 6/97 that this Circular is most interesting.

Circular 7/03 (Section 8 (c) (d) and 14) refer to teachers working in shared ex-quota posts, job sharing and Home School Community Liaison who are eligible to be appointed to the post of deputy principal but will be required once appointed to relinquish the deputy principalship temporarily while working in such posts. These conditions of Circular 7/03 do not apply to assistant principals and special duties teachers. Neither does the imposition of a possible embargo which the Department may impose if a deputy principal is appointed to a special needs post. As the deputy principal may be required to act for a principal, consequently "the appointment of a deputy

principal to a special education post, which consequently erodes tuition time, may result in the Department insisting on the re-allocation of a special education post". (Section 14 (c)). Is it a case then that the Department wants to keep the deputy principal in mainstream classes only, thereby depriving them of opportunities for further professional development and the possible loss of future promotion? Circular 7/03 (Sections 7-10) refer also to the fact that if no suitable applicant applies for a long-term post of acting principal, then the deputy principal must act for the principal or in so refusing to do, risk losing the deputy principal Allowance for the duration of the acting post. Clearly there is a disincentive here to a deputy who might wish to sample the role of the principal but may purely for financial reasons be unwilling to act up, only to receive perhaps a smaller allowance than he/she has currently as deputy principal. At least however in Circular 7/03, there is acknowledgement of the status of the deputy principal as a member once again of the senior management team in contrast to Circular 6/97 and re-affirming the status accorded the role almost thirty years previously in Circular 16/73.

In Fifty School Reports: What Inspectors Say (DES, B 2003) "the work of deputy principals, assistant principals and holders of special duties posts is commented on just under half the reports." (p.7).

In Looking At Our Schools – An Aid to Self Evaluation in Primary Schools (DES, C 2003) reference is only made to "post holders", "staff", "in-school management". (p.8).

The Hay Group Report (2003) complained of an unwillingness by post holders to change duties and lack of accountability by post holders for the discharge of these duties. (pp 5-18)

Reports from the workshops held at the First ever National Seminar for deputy principals organised by the Irish Primary Principals' Network in Galway 2002 indicated that

- The responsibilities of deputy principals presented were as varied as the number of schools represented.

- Acting Principal, deputising for the principal in his/her absence was viewed as the deputy principal's chief role.

- The role of the deputy should be understood and defined by staff.

The School as a Learning Organisation

The focus and concept of lifelong learning is about the empowerment of teachers in collaborative cultures, which can sustain good collegial relations. Little found that the prevalence of collegiality in a school relates to specific behaviours of the principal, three of which were

1. States expectations explicitly for cooperation among teachers.

2. Models collegiality that is expects it by joining with teachers and other principals working collaboratively to improve conditions in the school.

3. Rewards collegiality by granting release time, recognition, space materials or funds to teachers who work as colleagues.

(Little in Barth 1990 p.33)

The White Paper (1995) was in no doubt that "the ability of the principal to delegate effectively to vice principals and post holders and to promote a strong sense of collegiality among other teachers is crucial to the school's success" (p.154). For Senge (1990) and others this means managing and leading from "a human rather than an organisational perspective, involving everyone in the system in expressing their aspirations, building their awareness and developing their capabilities." (Fullan 2001).

Hargreaves (1997) also refers to this emotional side of school leadership whereby leaders create "workplaces for teachers that promote positive even passionate emotional relationships to teaching regardless of improvement." (p.110).

Daniel Goleman (2002) is convinced that "great leadership works through the emotions." (p.3).

Leadership for Goleman therefore is no longer about leading by virtue of the power of position but instead by "excelling in the art of relationship" where leadership is redefined in "interpersonal terms". (Ibid p.248).

For Goleman (2002) emotionally intelligent leaders are:

> -.... more values driven, more flexible and informal, and more open and frank than leaders of old. They are more connected to people and networks. - (Ibid p.248)

Much of the literature refers to the need for leaders who can build good morale, motivate, promote learning, inquiry and problem solving, value people for their efforts

and give critical feedback in constructive ways. (Hargreaves 1997 & 2003, Day et al 2000, Sergiovanni 2000, Clement and Vanderberghe 2001).

Michael Fullan speaking at an IPPN Principals' Workshop in Dublin in May 2003 and attended by this researcher dismissed the concept of "charismatic leadership" in favour of "sharing leadership" and "growing layers" of leadership at all levels throughout an organisation.

> -...the main mark of an effective leader is how many effective leaders they cultivate and leave behind who can go even deeper than they did.- (Fullan b 2003 p.144).

Partnership, team-building, team-leading and capacity building, are the building blocks of this distributed leadership.

Educational leaders will need to learn to influence and coordinate complex change processes but they cannot do it on their own. (Fullan 1993 pp73-75)

This will require a willingness on the part of principals to share power with deputy principals.

Teacher leadership at all levels can only be achieved as part of a democratic process where individual ideas and actions can be freely expressed (Harris 2003). As Sergiovanni (2000) sees it "for leadership to work, leaders and followers need to be tied together by a consensual understanding that mediates this pattern of reciprocal influence." (p.37).

This collective action and dialogue will require trust, support and collegial relationships. Effecting the school as a learning organisation will mean the erosion of cultures of individualism and balkanisation and opting instead for a process of "re-culturing" which

is "the process of creating and fostering of purposeful learning communities." (Fullan 2001 p.130)

School Culture

Deal and Kennedy define it as "the way we do things around here" (Stoll and Fink 1995 p.81).

Words like values, beliefs, rituals, continuity, taken-for granted all underscore the power and influence of school cultures (Schein 1985, Whitaker 1997, Segriovanni 2000). Sometimes the role and function of school culture can be "to preserve continuity and oppose change." (Evans 1995 p.50). Or as Deal and Kennedy confirm "when culture works against you it's really impossible to get anything done." (Stoll and Fink 1998 p.80)

This is because culture is created by all the participants in the organisation and creates the paradox of culture for "it inevitably changes as participants change". (Stoll & Fink 1995 p.83).

The traditional cultural responses of the past are no longer appropriate in the present climate of rapid and increasingly complex change. Understanding culture is understanding what people are about. It is people who change, not systems. (Fullan 1993). This brings us back to the critical area of interpersonal relations and emotionally intelligent leadership referred to earlier by Goleman (2002).

In his analysis of culture Whitaker (1997) writes of the existence of "cultural toxins" and "cultural nutrients" in organisations.

Goleman (2002) also warned about "the power of toxic leadership to poison the emotional climate of the workplace" (p.x). In contrast, cultural nutrients "arouse positive and pleasurable emotions such as joy, delight, happiness and affection in people." (Whitaker 1997 p.76). Where cultural nutrients abound there is an experience of "being valued, being encouraged, being noticed, being listened to, being respected." (Ibid p.76).

It is the abundance of cultural nutrients that are most effective in fostering positive relationships. The quality of these relationships are determined by the extent to which they are characterised by "mutual respect, openness and concern." (Department of Education and Science B 2003 p.4).

Both the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) and the Catholic Primary School Managers Association (CPSMA) have also identified a number of key practices that promote positive working relations, the presence or absence of which can determine the school climate and culture and the dynamics of working relations among staff. (Veritas, 2000 pp107-108)

The on-going creation and sustenance of cultural nutrients have to be promoted if everyone in the school community is to remain energised and committed to task and if the dynamics of individuality, balkanisation, and growth of cultural toxins are to be reversed.

In terms of where deputy principals or others in In-School Management posts are coming from it is about realising how the nature of teachers work is deeply embedded in

their lives, in their pasts, in their geographies, in the cultures of traditions of teaching to which they have become committed. (Hubermann 1998).

For Hargreaves (1997) this simply means that "we work well with the colleagues we have got rather than hoping for early retirements or infusions of new blood in their stead." (p.112).

Professional Development

Barth (1990) is in no doubt about the importance of teachers' professional development arguing that "probably nothing in a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self confidence or classroom behaviour than the personal and professional growth of teachers." (p.49). It should build upon the pre-service training which as the Working Group Report (DES 1999) states "generally focuses on the skill needs of classroom teachers rather than the skill needs of principals." (p.88).

As for principals there is the same lack of formal in-career development for deputy principals. The White Paper (1995) outlined proposals concerning in-service and gave a specific commitment in the case of principals. No such commitment was given for deputy principals.

However, a more recent development in the provision of professional development has been Leadership Development for Schools (LDS 2003). Its first programme *Misneach* was for newly appointed first time principals which commenced in 2003. Interestingly LDS recognises that "the deputy principal in partnership with the principal assumes a wide range of responsibilities in the school context.- (p.8).

In response however to the recognition of the leadership role of the deputy principal, the LDS programme proposes to include school principals and deputy principals in an Established Leaders Programme. This however has yet to happen with no indication given current budgetary constraints as to when it will occur.

Teamwork

The White Paper (1995) maintained that "effective delegation is an integral and essential part of the process of organising and running a school". (p.154). The Working Group Report (1999) claimed that it is "central to the effective functioning of the school and to providing the necessary support for principals in carrying out their role". In particular it argued that "the principal's role as instructional leader may provide for the development of curriculum leaders or co-ordinators in particular areas of the curriculum" (p.99).

A change of culture is clearly required by many schools to effect such complex change and "in this context the development of a team management approach is often the most suitable way forward." (Working Group Report 1999 p.100). Mortimore et al (1988) concluded "that a certain amount of delegation by the Head Teacher, and the sharing of responsibilities promoted effectiveness." (p.12). In Mortimore's study involvement of the Deputy Head was the second of twelve key factors for effective junior schools.

Circular 7/03 (DES, A 2003) emphasised consultation and a greater emphasis on a team and collaborative approach to In-School Management. It refers to an "agreed schedule

of duties" which will "address the central needs of the school" after "consultation with staff" by the principal. The "determination of duties" hopefully will be "achieved by consensus" and will cover "curriculum, academic, administrative and pastoral matters". (Section 4 p.2).

Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) maintain that this approach "improves communication, reduces misunderstanding, enhances motivation, generates a sense of collective achievement and supports teamwork."(p.137). The Primary School Curriculum (DES 1999) further endorses this spirit of consultation and teamwork by referring to a process of curriculum development involving "the principal together with the staff". (p.19).

Much of the literature in this regard also is in no doubt that teamwork leads to better decisions and speedier completion of work through the pooling of expertise and the sharing of tasks. (Blase et al 2000, Bell 1997).

Teamwork has been described as "playing from the same sheet of music" (Bell 1997 p.120) where "the Head's role may be compared to that of the conductor of an orchestra drawing from each group and player, the highest possible quality of performance". (Everard et al 1996 p.156). This of course implies that teamwork has to be managed if it is to be effective (Bell 1997). This requires an understanding of the individuals in the team, an awareness of what is going on in the group, the skills to act upon this knowledge and the recognition that different activities might be appropriate in different circumstances (Belbin 1981).

For Goleman (2002), the essence of teamwork and collaboration is defined by leaders who are able team players and who are themselves models of respect, helpfulness and

cooperation. Such leaders draw others into active, enthusiastic commitment to the collective effort and build spirit and identity. They spend time forging and cementing close relationships beyond mere work obligations. (p.256).

How much of this is rhetoric or reality for many of our in-school management teams in our schools to-day? To what extent is there a role for the deputy principal in facilitating such an approach to in-school management where the onus or spotlight is taken off the person of the principal and distributed more evenly across the school? Would principals and deputy principals view themselves as members of the team and be "willing to share responsibility for dealing the cards and be willing to play the cards that are dealt"? (Blase et al 2000p.56).

Adair (1986) contends that "the power of a team to accomplish its mission is directly related to how well the leader selects and develops its members" (p.143). Building and managing staff teams is the prime responsibility of the head teacher and senior staff. The Leadership function however can only be carried out to its maximum effect if the staff team is consciously built and effectively managed. (Bell 1997 pp119-120).

Belbin (1981) maintains that the mix of personal characteristics in members of a team is a major determinant of the team's success.

One of the problems of course in a hierarchical organisation is that it is not always easy to bring the most suitable people into teams. The manner of appointing the deputy principal and other post holders can have a huge bearing on this. Teamwork inevitably has to be based on good, professional working relationships which may not be the same as good social relationships. Everard and Morris (1996) maintain that "it is of ten better

to set up project or study teams of a mixed composition of people at different levels in the hierarchy". (p.161).

In the context of the Primary Curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999), and the Education Act (Government of Ireland 1998), these could deal with such areas as policy development, curriculum coordination, project management and specialist area development.

Would this set up work in small schools of just two, three, or four teachers? Teams can fail where there is

- Too little emphasis on processes
- Too much time 'responding' and focusing on reactive behaviour
  (based on West -Burnham 1992 in Law and Glover 2000 p.85)

Yet this for many schools can be the reality for management trying to cope with all the demands made on them on a daily basis. In much of the literature on management which by and large is rooted in a business and commercial culture, the industrial parallels drawn are not necessarily readily identifiable with the more complex areas and issues usually found in education. Moreover, teachers are heavily reliant on their own individual skills and knowledge which in many circumstances may actually contradict or even undermine notions of team work. Does the fact that teachers are tied to their classrooms because pupils cannot be left on their own perhaps imply that teams are less important in schools than in industry? As Law and Glover (2000) maintain "if teamwork is to be beneficial...it must provide clear benefits for all those involved". (p.85). This will involve an approach to management based on involvement, cooperation, participation, delegation and effective two way communication. The reality

is that in the professional learning community of the school as opposed to industry these approaches can be hard to create.

However Johnston and Pickersgil (1992) believe that "where the difficulties have been accommodated and/or overcome for the greater good, both the head and other staff have been willing and able to cope with and adjust to the plethora of changes arising from educational reform". (p.239)

Arising form the growth of management teams in UK primary schools over the years, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT 2001), makes it clear that deputies must

- Understand the nature of shared leadership and all aspects of school management.
- Be able to act both internally and externally for the Head Teacher. (p.2)

This last distinction between the deputy and other layers of middle management is given statutory recognition in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (2000), which stipulates that the deputy head teacher shares the conditions of employment of the head teacher and not the working time arrangements of other teachers.

The enormous curriculum, societal and legislative changes in recent years, have all created huge workloads for principals in particular and added to that, the challenges to implement an effective In-School Management structure in schools. Under Circular 6/97 (DES 1997) more posts were created, allowances were increased, resulting in more than 50% of teachers at primary level being promoted. Detailed procedures were set out regarding schedules, duties and appointments to the posts. (Circulars 6/97, 7/03 DES).

The Working Group Report (DES 1999) "expressed the view that the structures may not yet have reached their full potential, with the result that an undue burden of school management and administration fall on the principal in these cases." (p.59).

In the Report of the Public Service Benchmarking Body (Government of Ireland 2002), the principal was seen as holding "prime responsibility" (p.200) for the successful running of the school. The deputy principal was observed to "share responsibility" with the principal. Assistant principals were "required to contribute to the setting of school targets and standards". (p.126). While special duties teachers were "part of a larger team which includes the principal, assistant and deputy principals, special needs teachers, board of management and other colleagues." (p.262).

The Hay Group Report (2003) concluded that "this layer needs specific analysis, development and support as a matter of some urgency". (p.48).

Partnership and Networking

The White Paper (1995) stated that the principal and deputy should be seen as a "cohesive unit" (p.154).

Nias (1987) highlighted four areas of interaction between principal and deputy principal,

- Sensitive flexibility in role definition involving instrumental and expressive activities.

- A partnership based on tolerance on the part of both participants.

- Communication based on listening, sharing, negotiating, formally and informally, in and out of school.

- Interdependence: a successful partnership increasing the strength and resilience of each other.

"Like finger and thumb, similar but different, capable of independent operation but adapted to coordination, functional when alone but additionally powerful when acting together". (p.51).

For Nias therefore the role of the deputy principal is not an unimportant shadow of the principal but rather one where with both playing dual roles heightens the need for effective communication which The Working Group Report (DES 1999) argues can establish "trust, openness, honesty, integrity and empathy" (p.66).

Penelope Bell (1992) reflecting on her year as a temporary deputy head working with a newly appointed head teacher concluded that "difference may be as important to the process of collaboration as similarity".

West (1992) also supports the idea of a partnership role with the principal where the deputy principal is viewed as working as the assistant principal instead of either the deputy as the principal's deputy or the deputy as prospective principal. West sees the principal and deputy as having to work closely together, which leads to the growth of a professional partnership rather than a differentiation of roles as advocated elsewhere by Burnham (1968), Coulson (1976) and Alexander (1992). This professional partnership can succeed "through and with other staff in moving their schools in the direction of

collegial structures and processes and to practice that is grounded in co-operative team work". (Johnston and Pickersgill 1992 p.239).

Similar sentiments resonate elsewhere in the literature of Paisey and Paisey (1987) Purvis and Dennison (1993) Southworth (1994).

For the National Association of Head Teachers (UK), the deputy head is seen as the head teacher's partner in the management of the school. Arguing that "the burden of management in schools is so great that it must be shared by heads and deputies", and that the deputy head is "central to successful planning and management development". (NAHT 1991 p.4).

Of course to allow a healthy collegial relationship to develop, principals must accept "that their power as well as their responsibilities will be shared" and "deputies who play a vital role in their schools must know how to stop short of usurpation". (Nias 1987 p.52). Crucially however Dean (1995) contends that "if deputy head teachers are to make a real contribution it is important that they have some well defined responsibilities" which are "clear to every one" (p.83). Research by Regan (1992) found that because of the nature of the tasks delegated to them that only a small percentage of Irish deputy principals were taking part in the management of their schools and as such their role made little contribution to school effectiveness. Research by Moody (1996) involving six deputies identified a strong sense of frustration among deputies as many of the duties delegated to them by the principal were insignificant. This dispersal of leadership which connotes initiative and responsibility will only occur when the principal actively involves the deputy in responsible delegation. (Block 1996). This

involves the interaction of personality, experience, values, dispositions, attitudes and coping strategies. (Johnston and Pickersgill 1992).

Networks which "provide teachers with the motivation to challenge existing practices and to grow professionally" are one such coping strategy. (Lieberman and McLoughlin 1992 in Law and Glover 2000 pp244-245).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will deal with the methodology chosen to conduct the study and give an account of how participants were selected in addition to their career profiles and details of the interview procedures adopted. A description will be given of the techniques used in the data analysis, as well as addressing issues of validity and reliability. The aim at all times was "to obtain as representative a range of responses as possible....to fulfil the objectives of the study and to provide answers to key questions". (Bell 1999 pp104-105). Qualitative research is the research method chosen for this study and the main research instrument is a semi-structured interview schedule.

Qualitative Research

Schostack (2002) contends that qualitative research 'adds' something to statistical research "may be the meanings, the feelings, the sense of the lived that cannot be measured and thus drawn into statistical manipulations". (p.80). He characterises it as 'depth' in contrast to the 'breadth' or the 'coverage' that a quantitative project delivers. For Eisner (1998)

-...qualitative thought is ubiquitous in human affairs. It is not some exotic form of doing or making, but a persuasive aspect of daily life. For that reason and for others it is useful. - (p.5)

Denscombe (1998) cites one of the advantages of qualitative research as being "grounded in reality".

For these reasons then it was felt that this method of research could deal better with the vagaries of the deputy principal's role than a quantitative project would. Given the time frame and limited scope of the study, it was decided that the research method would be best accommodated by collecting substantial information from a relatively small number of participants; twelve deputy principals, in a series of twelve semi-structured interviews, and subsequently six principals in a series of two focus groups.

Access to participants was either through identification by this researcher or through identification by "gatekeepers". Gatekeepers are those "who can help the researcher in the vital business of gaining access to the necessary field work settings." (Denscombe 1998 p.77).

Semi-Structured Interview

For Eisner (1998), one of the main advantages of the interview is that it is "a powerful resource for learning how people perceive the situations in which they work". (pp81-82). Specifically Wragg (1984) maintains that a semi-structured interview schedule "allows respondents to express themselves at some length but offers enough shape to prevent aimless

rambling" (p.184). Denscombe (1998) concurs that it allows the interviewee develop ideas and "speak more widely on issues raised by the researcher". (p.113).

To further facilitate this process, the areas for discussion were sent by post in advance of the interview to each of the twelve deputy principal participants. This was done for two reasons, firstly to reduce any fears or anxieties people might have about what is going to be discussed and secondly, as a way of providing people with an opportunity for reflecting in advance on the areas, given that their job analysis and role is something they would not necessarily stop and think about everyday. It was hoped therefore that both would lead to an interview session of approximately one hour per participant that would generate a climate of support and an informed climate for discussing the research topics. This turned out to be the case for most of the participants in the study.

Selection of Participants

Purposive Sampling where "the sample is handpicked for the research" (Denscombe 1998 p.15) was the process used to select both the twelve deputy principals and the six principals. Purposive Sampling argue Maykut and Morehouse (1994) "increases the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon will be represented in the data". (p.45).

In a reflection perhaps of the gender imbalance in Primary Teaching today only one of the twelve deputy principals interviewed was male. All the schools were mainstream co-educational and had a vertical structure from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. Table 3.1

gives details of the type, setting, and other details of the twelve schools where the deputy principal worked.

Table 3.1 – School Details.

Roman Catholic Ethos.	8
Designated Disadvantaged – Roman Catholic Ethos.	1
Gaelscoil – Roman Catholic Ethos.	1
Educate Together – Multi Denominational Ethos.	1
Church of Ireland Ethos.	1

Urban Setting		Rural Setting	
6		6	
With Teaching Principal.	With Administrative Principal.	With Teaching Principal.	With Administrative Principal.
3	3	2	4
Enrolments		Enrolments	
5-80	1	5-80	0
81-180	3	81-180	2
181-400	2	181-400	4
400+	0	400+	0

The number of class based teachers ranged from three in the smallest to eleven in the largest while non-class resource provision ranged from half (shared with another

school) to seven and a half. Only two schools had no special needs assistants and half of the schools had no secretary or caretaker. Of the twelve schools only three had one assistant principal Post in each with the number of special duties posts ranging from none in the smallest three teacher school and from one to six in the others, depending on size. Nine schools reported numbers as staying relatively static with three describing themselves as a developing school.

The teaching experience and qualifications of the deputies are listed in Tables 3.2 and 3.3

Table 3.2 – Deputy Principals
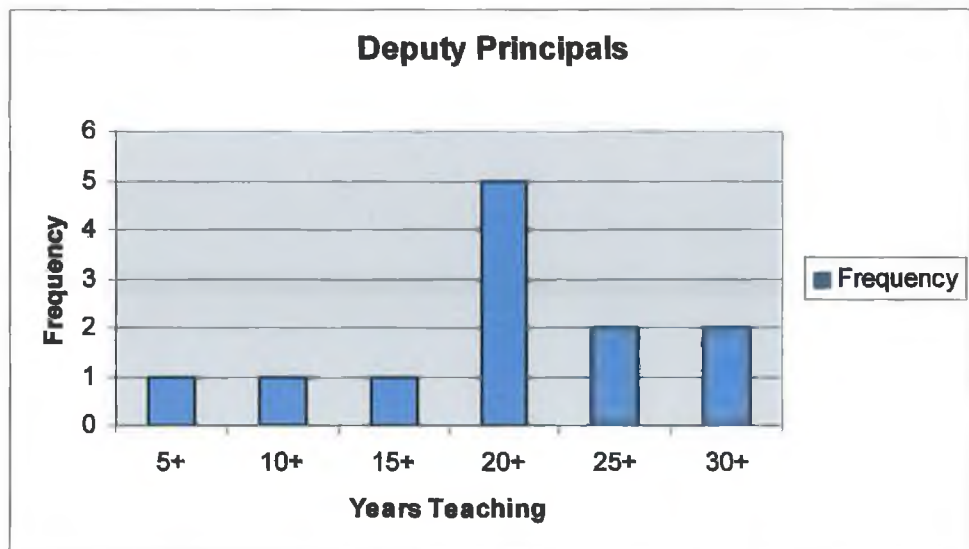
Table 3.3 - Qualifications

Bachelor of Education	7
N.T. Diploma	3
Postgraduate Course	2
Master's Degree	3
Additional Qualifications	3

All of the deputy principals taught for the most of their teaching career in their present school prior to appointment as deputy; two for twenty years and one for twenty one years. The longest serving deputy in the survey has been deputy principal in their present school for almost sixteen years while three have just been deputy principal in their present school for just one year. Two were only one year in their present school before being appointed deputy principal. Ten of the twelve deputies were mainstream class teachers while two were resource teachers for special needs.

Prior to their appointment as deputies, seven were special duties teachers. One applied through open competition but on the recommendation of the principal, one was automatically appointed on seniority over sixteen years ago and the remaining three secured the post following internal advertisement and subsequent interview. Of the twelve appointed three had not been the most senior member of staff at the time. Each

of the twelve deputies had served under the same principal but three had been appointed in recent years around the same time as a new principal was appointed.

The group represented a typical group of teachers of different ages and experience from a cross section of schools.

Interview Arrangements

Of the interviews with the twelve deputies, eight were held in their own school, one in the researcher's school with a deputy from another school who lived nearby, one in the deputy's own house and two in the Education Centre. The principals' two Focus Group meetings with their agreement were held in the local Education Centre.

Bell (1999) cautions that "ethical research involves getting that informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe or take materials from". (p.39). This researcher firstly checked by telephone with the Principals of the schools of the deputies involved if it would be all right to speak with them about the Interview Proposal. All agreed and following a subsequent telephone call in which the deputy's approval was sought and obtained an explanatory letter was sent out in the post to each deputy. The letter and questionnaire are in the appendix.

Each interview lasted, as promised between forty five minutes and one hour being very conscious of not "disenchanting respondents with the whole notion of research participation". (Johnson 1984 pp14-15).

The Questionnaire (as Table 3.4 shows) was in four sections which roughly detailed the course of the interview itself.

Table 3.4

Section 1 – Your Present School.
Section 2 – Yourself.
Section 3 – Job Analysis.
Section 4 – Role Analysis.

As the questions in one and two were largely of the tick box variety, taping did not commence until the start of Section three which gave time for settling down and rapport to be established. The tape recordings were also supplemented by written field notes which detailed the impressions this researcher had which the tape could not capture.

Following each interview there was an initial analysis of data contained both on the respondent's questionnaire and coded tape with a view to determining an interview schedule for the two focus groups of principals at a later stage and which might hopefully corroborate what the deputies had been saying. Each tape and script was coded DP1, DP2, etc, to preserve anonymity in the case of the deputy principals and for the principals, a coding of PA, PB, PC, etc. was used. All twelve interviews with the deputies were completed before the two focus group sessions were held with the principals.

If knowledge is to become "social" the listening and recording "must be transformed into saying". (Eisner 1998 p.82). First, the data of what has been listened to and recorded must be analysed.

Data Analysis

The data had to be broken down into units having read the respondents questionnaires, the researcher's field notes and listened to the coded tapes. This was done in an attempt to identify "patterns and processes, commonalities and differences" (Miles and Hubermann 1994), using the constant comparative method of analysing qualitative date (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This is very much a process of refinement and juggling with categories to see what patterns, relationships or themes emerge in the hope that they will provide the research with "a reasonable reconstruction of the data he or she had collected". (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.347).

Later as provisional categories were determined the "look/feel like" criteria advocated by (Guba and Lincoln 1985) placed the data in the most appropriate categories which were further refined using "rules of inclusion which serve as a basis for including or excluding data in these categories". (Maykut and Morehouse 1994).

Once the relationship between the categories had been finally established, all that remained was the subsequent integration of the data as analysed and the writing up of the research. Before that can proceed however Eisner (1998) cautions that "one of the persistent sources of difficulty for those using qualitative methods of research and evaluation pertains to question about the validity of their work". (p.107).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability is about the extent confidence can be placed in the outcomes of a study or if someone else did the same research would the same results be obtained and the same conclusions reached. (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, Denscombe 1998).

Bell (1999) defines reliability as "the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions". (p.103). In contrast for Schostak (2002)

> - There is no verifiable event. Rather its truth depends on the assent of each individual who recognises that the words fit a particular feeling. – (p.347).

This researcher has kept all the questionnaires, field notes, and tapes that describe these feelings.

Validity is an altogether more complex concept. For Bell (1999) "it tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe". (p.104). Critically Eisner (1998) believes that this is about seeking "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations and conclusions". (p.110). To achieve this he cites three sources of evidence, namely, structural collaboration, consensual validation and referential adequacy.

For Eisner, structural collaboration is "like the process of triangulation... a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs". (p.110).

This occurred in the two focus groups for principals where they were given an opportunity to corroborate the findings of the deputy principal. What focus groups do best is produce an opportunity to collect data from groups discussing topics of interest to the researcher. (Morgan 1997). For this research the focus groups served "as a source

of follow-up data to assist the primary method". (Ibid p.3). This was about looking for "recurrent behaviours or actions, those theme-like features of a situation that inspire confidence that the events interpreted and appraised are not aberrant or exceptional but rather characteristic of the situation". (Eisner 1998 p.110).

The second piece of evidence "consensual validation" is defined by Eisner (1998) as "agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation and thematics of an educational situation are right" (p.112).

For this research, the "competent others" were deemed to be the Director of the Irish Primary Principals' Network and Deputy Principals as delegates attending the second National Conference of Deputy Principals in Portlaoise in April 2004 to whom this researcher had access.

Thirdly Eisner (1998) believes that the referential adequacy of one's work "is tested not in abstractions removed from qualities but in the perception and interpretation of the qualities themselves". (p.114).

Consequently, there is always the danger of bias creeping into interviews because, qualitative research interpretation is bound up with the self of the researcher. (Denscombe 1998, Rosenthal 1966).

Bell (1999) maintains that "it is easier to acknowledge the fact that bias can creep in than to eliminate it altogether" (p.139). Denscombe (1998) contends that "the researcher's own identity, background and beliefs have a role in the creation of data and analysis of data" (p.198). Consequently "it is even easier to 'lead' in an interview than it is in a questionnaire" (Bell 1999 p.140). Even degrees of acquaintanceship between interviewer and participant have

been shown to affect the response of the participant. (Rosenthal 1996). For this researcher in the interviews with the deputy principals, there were no significant levels of acquaintanceship. In the two Principals' Focus Groups there were some significant levels of acquaintanceship with some of them in addition to some situational factors which may have affected their responses. Therefore to minimise participant bias in this particular context the two focus groups were conducted on neutral ground in the Education Centre with two groups of three principals chosen at random by the researcher from the twelve schools where the participant deputies worked.

However it is this researcher's opinion that the issues that emerge here are the ones most likely to have emerged, had a different group of people doing the same job being selected

In conclusion, some heed should be given to this cautionary advice about the pains and pleasure of research

> - To look for perfection results in either killing the research, or the researcher. In writing up, one begins to inhabit one's text, exploring its corners, removing its cul de sacs and unwanted implications. – Schostack (2002) p.231.

With that in mind let the onward journey continue.

CHAPTER FOUR

REPORT ON THE FINDINGS

The data gathered in the interviews will be reported on under the following five

headings:

1. Role.
2. Workload.
3. Relationships.
4. The Leadership Dimension.
5. Specific issues e.g. best practice, future recruitment, training, development and priorities.

A brief reaction from the Focus Groups to some of the key issues identified will follow

at the end of each section. Further analysis and interpretations are reserved for the

discussion chapter.

(1) Role

Four aspects will be examined. Firstly, the most significant aspects of the role.

Secondly, the impact of school size, type and the leadership style of the principal.

Thirdly, how the role of the deputy principal is combined with the teaching role.

Fourthly, how different the role is in relation to other in-school management posts and

other colleagues' perceptions of the role.

Most significant aspects of the role

The most significant aspects of the deputy principal's role as identified by the

participants were

- Supporting, assisting and deputising for the principal.

- Consulting and liaising with the principal on the day to day running of the school.

- Co-operating with the principal and other staff.

> -...For me the very term deputy principal means that you work with the
> principal as a sort of 'extension', looking out for the general welfare of
> the school, and caring for it in union with the principal.- (DP 2)

This means "letting the Principal know they can depend on you. Not that you'll be a yes man (sic) or whatever" (DP 6).

There is a need to be "flexible in a supporting role yet sensitive enough not to undermine" (DP 3).

"I think it is important to support the principal even if I don't always agree with what he has decided on" (DP 1).

Another significant aspect of the deputy's role is "deputising for the principal in his/her absence" (DP 8). Combined with teaching duties, this aspect of the role for many is not always appealing. It can be quite different, demanding, responsible and very un-predictable

> -When deputising I would be more conscious of attention to practical
>
> matters.- (DP 8).

This leadership function of the deputy principal's role was alluded to by all respondents. For one it involved "liaising with the principal informally on short term problem solving which takes up most of the time and working as part of a management team planning for long term objectives" (DP 4). Another described her leadership role in terms of "implementing and reviewing changes" (DP 3). One significant aspect of another

50

deputy's role was responsibility "for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the plean scoile" (DP 5). Others mentioned the importance of leading by doing and example. (DP's 1, 7)

One deputy referred to what was termed the "unique" circumstances in his/her school

> - ...In my six years the whole staff (9 teachers) has changed except the principal. That also coincided with the introduction of the revised primary curriculum, the restructuring and concept of the role of middle management. Previous to this there was no real tradition of middle management within the school. - (DP 5).

Consequently "my deputy principal's role now is majorly different from my predecessor's". Two years into the job "things are evolving here, everybody's post is evolving and we're all very much in a learning process". The role has been shaped by the fact that "the whole staff has had in-put into the job specification ...so everybody is very much aware and were very much involved in the process of suggestions of the needs of the school that could be covered by the post". Consequently "I feel I'm still only growing into it at this stage", echoed by another recently appointed deputy who also found "that I am still finding my way in the job and learning from it" (DP 2).

School size, type and the leadership style of the principal

School size impacted a lot on the role of deputy because:

- Larger pupil and staff numbers, wider variety of teaching and ancillary roles lead to bigger management workload. (DP 4)

- More day to day issues with larger staff. (DP 7)

For another "the role of deputy is pretty much the same no matter what the size of the school" (DP 2). Equally another deputy saw it impact differently on both the big and the small school.

> - I think that the role of deputy principal may be more difficult/challenging in a larger school. Deputising for a teaching principal in a smaller school could be challenging also. (DP 8)

One deputy of a small three teacher school however believed that "a small school has much more contact with staff than a large school" (DP 12).

School Type

In a designated disadvantaged school some deputies felt that "social problems" (DP 10) and "behaviour problems" (DP 11) resulting in "greater involvement with outside agencies" (DP 6) could impact significantly on the role of the deputy.

> -I would feel that the issues in either disadvantaged schools or special schools might differ somewhat from those in a mainstream school - (DP 8).

> -The responsibilities of the deputy would be different and would make more demands on the deputy principal - (DP 2).

One deputy felt that each type of school can create its own demands. "Urban versus rural, advantaged versus disadvantaged all bring their own rewards and difficulties which impact on the role" (DP 4).

Leadership style of the principal

"As the job exists with no clear role or job definition, it is dependent on a good working relationship as it can be an impossible situation to manage if the relationship is strained"

(DP 3).

For one deputy the leadership style of the principal "determines the difficulty of the role of the deputy principal" (DP 9)

-Well it's difficult to support the principal if his/her style isn't positive.- (DP 11)

-The deputy principal's job is much easier when the leadership style of the principal is open and consultative, not dictatorial and demanding of staff.- (DP 7)

Therefore the ability of the principal to delegate is crucial because "whether the principal is good at delegation will make a big difference" (DP 1).

-Can she delegate? Does she want to? Is there true engagement when discussing problems? How willing is the principal to listen and take advice? Is the deputy principal viewed as another member of the management team or just someone to delegate jobs to?- (DP 4)

Consequently "the principal and deputy principal need to get on well and have similar outlooks and priorities as they may need to work together a lot" (DP 5). In some schools both posts of deputy and principal were created either around the same time or within a year or two of each other which made it easier to form a good working relationship as both were more or less "starting from scratch" (DP's 2, 4, 5, 6).

Role Combination

In all schools the deputy principal has a teaching position and is still expected to fulfil the role of deputy principal. Combining both roles was "the tricky part" (DP 5) and was done "with great difficulty" (DP 3) before, during and after school hours. There was no doubt as to what gets priority.

> -Class work gets priority from 9.20-3.00.- (DP 6)

The justification for this was simply that "I don't want my role as deputy principal really to end up as a situation where the children are losing out on direct teaching time because I'm busy doing something else". (DP 4)

> -I usually fulfil my DP duties after school unless it's something that
> needs to be done with the children present.- (DP 2)

In some schools however with an administrative principal the deputy was given some in-school time for duties when the principal took over the deputy's class.

> -Because there are some things you have to do when the teachers are
> around you and you can talk or organise at that stage. Some of the things
> you cannot do outside school time for that reason.- (DP 4)

Other difficulties arose for deputies either when deputising for the principal or when the principal sometimes comes into the classroom to consult about matters that unexpectedly arise. (DP's 1, 2, 4, 10)

"I try to limit interruptions as much as possible" admitted one deputy (DP 4) but while deputising "I often leave to receive phone calls which tends to interrupt teaching time" (DP 7).

For a minority of deputies interviewed, role combination was "not too demanding" (DP 11) and in the case of two small schools in particular the duties were such that they could be carried out "just in the normal day to day running of the school" (DP 12). Another deputy given the nature of her teaching position felt that she could quite adequately fulfil her duties as deputy during school time because "as a resource teacher I occasionally have a child absent and could use that time if necessary" (DP 9).

The findings reveal difficulties and challenges for deputies in combining both roles.

Role differences and perceptions

These centre around role difference in relation to principal, post holders, and other colleagues' perceptions.

The Principal

First there was the predictable:

>-The buck stops with the principal.- (DP 2, 9)
>-He (sic) makes the final decision.- (DP 1)

From these it progressed to levels or degrees of responsibility:

>-The principal has more responsibilities.- (DP 12)
>-The principal is ultimately responsible.- (DP 2)

For another deputy her role it was "more of a supporting role than one of responsibility as the authority of the deputy can be a delicate balance" (DP 3). This weighed more heavily on the principal because

>-The principal is at 'frontline' in dealing with parents, outside agencies, staff relations. Final responsibility ultimately rests with her.- (DP 4)

<u>Other post holders</u>

Three schools had one Assistant Principal in each. Overall the perception lies in degrees of responsibility coupled with the seniority of the post.

> -More responsibility lies with the deputy principal. The assistant principal in our school is the overall curriculum co-ordinator.- (DP 1)

> -The Principal would consult more with me about day to day matters and problems.- (DP 6)

In relation to special duties teachers, duties of a mostly curricular rather than administrative nature were assigned and nothing more was expected. (DP's 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11).

The difference as observed by these two deputies was that "while the special duties teachers have specific duties (which do not need to be attended to on a daily basis – DP 4) mine are more general and onerous especially if the principal is absent" (DP 9).

Some deputies noted that special duties teachers had "clarity of workload" (DP 3) but that without the same clarity for deputies there were still expectations of "higher deliverance" (DP 3) for deputies given their "wider range role" (DP 11) with "extra jobs to do" (DP 12) resulting from their overall "higher duty of responsibility" (DP 3).

<u>Other colleagues' perceptions of the role of deputy</u>

These reflected the leadership dimension of the deputy principal's role.

"They see my role as being in charge when the principal is not available but they also accept my leadership role on curriculum development days" (DP 1).

"An extra set of eyes and ears! Somebody else to go to for advice or in case of emergency when the principal is not available". (DP 4)

> -She supports and advises the principal and takes over the duties of the principal when necessary. She meets with new staff and advises them of her duties, and supports other staff when they need support.- (DP 3)

However not all staff perceptions of the role of deputy are as clear.

> -I don't think they realise the amount of time and effort that goes into the role especially the amount of time spent outside school hours. They don't always see the work put in only the fruits of it.- (DP 4)

Overall "my role is mainly viewed in a positive light" (DP 8) and the deputy is seen as someone who is "co-operative and willing to help". (DP 12). Some deputies referred to colleagues seeing their role as a resource, a sounding board, a confidante, a counsellor: "Teachers would come to me with difficulties or problems seeking advice because I'm the deputy rather than go to the principal". (DP 1)

> -I would be an approachable kind of person. I would be willing to listen to people. My forte is in diffusing argument or knowing when not to go in and avoiding confrontation, or if there was confrontation to diffuse it nicely.- (DP 11)

This was taken to extremes however in the case of a deputy from another school who shortly after her appointment as deputy was constantly questioned by another member of staff about everything from where the toilet rolls were to not enough teabags (DP 2). Ignoring this for a while and then wishing to resolve the matter, the deputy spoke to the teacher in the following terms.

> -Yes I am the deputy principal but nowhere on my list of duties does it say anything about teabags for the staff room. Also being deputy principal does not mean that I'm a dog's body to deal with every Mickey Mouse thing that comes up.- (DP 2)

They both now enjoy a good working albeit different relationship.

>-It's a very subtle thing. But they do see you in a different light.- (DP 5)
>-You are now management as I'm constantly reminded.- (DP 9)
>-I miss being one of the Indians.- (DP 6)

Focus Groups Reaction

Several principals concurred that

>-Traditionally it wasn't a clearly defined role. It still isn't.- (PB)

>-But it was worse years ago.- (PA)

>-The duties are a throwback to an era that is rapidly disappearing.- (PE)

However there has been a "sea change of roles" (PD) in recent years and "we're still in a state of flux" (PF) in terms of "teasing out" (PG) future roles which will inevitable mean that "more responsibility will be delegated to deputies" (PA).

The general direction of comments was that the deputy's role is a continually evolving and varied one.

(2) Workload

Time constraints and covering for the principal are seen as two particular challenges.

>-When the principal is away and there is no sub in my class there are constant interruptions.- (DP 1)

>-I try not to let class time suffer but often felt that I haven't enough time to plan more 'enterprising' lessons as time outside class, morning and evening is taken up.- (DP 4)

While only one deputy commented that "because of an administrative principal and efficient secretary, I don't find the job difficult" (DP 9). However, half of the schools

where the participant deputies worked had neither secretary nor caretaker and comments about workload were voiced with equal vigour by deputies from both large and small schools.

Duties assigned to the deputy principal

The study examined particular administrative, professional and curricular duties that had been assigned to the deputies. Across the twelve schools these varied enormously both in depth and breadth of allocation. There was a very strong emphasis on administrative duties as Table 4.1 illustrates.

Table 4.1

Emphasis in duties allocated to Deputy Principals
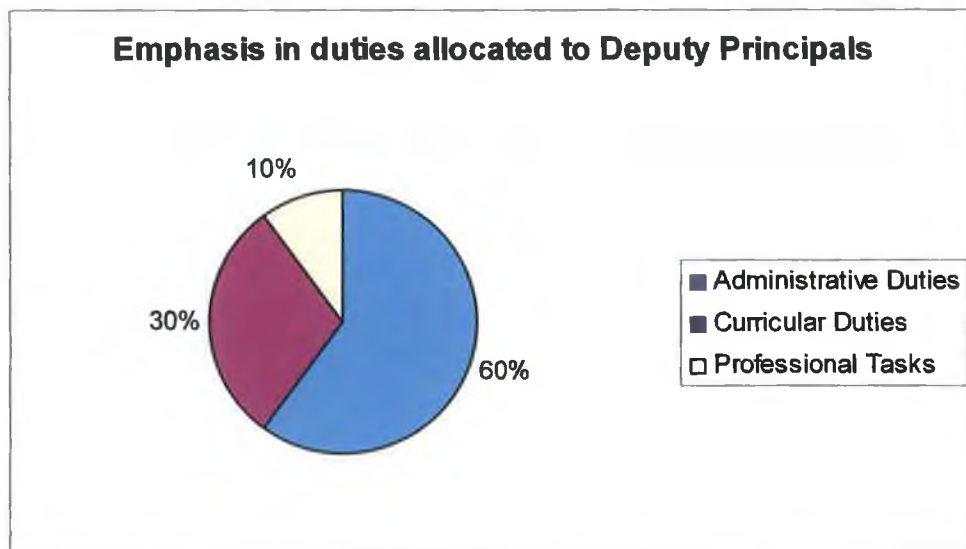
Many deputies had also been allocated additional curricular duties in line with the recommendations in The Primary Curriculum (1999). Significantly fewer however had

any professional duties and where such were allocated the nature of those duties was rather vague and ill-defined. The findings suggest quite considerable disparities in the range of duties allocated to deputy principals.

> -Some deputy principals have duties and then other deputies have very little and it doesn't make sense.- (DP 9)

> -...other deputy principals in schools with the same staff numbers seem to be doing sometimes a lot more or a lot less duties, so it seemed quite varied.- (DP 7)

The range of administrative duties that had been assigned to the deputy principals are listed in Table APP 1. Some deputies had quite a number of these administrative duties while others had very little. For one deputy it was a case of "nothing specific from day to day but I am available if needed" (DP 9). Another deputy with quite an exhaustive list of duties (produced to this researcher) undertook these duties "to assist the principal in whatever way possible" (DP 2).

For another it was a case of

> -...more than them actually being specified in my job description they have evolved. Not that I was actually given responsibility for them but by default they became my responsibility because nobody else wants to do them.- (DP 5).

The findings in respect of curriculum duties revealed that most deputies had some responsibility for at least one area of curriculum co-ordination as outlined in the Table APP 2. Only one deputy commented that she didn't have one as it was a "whole staff approach" (DP 8).

This reflects the recent emphasis given at In-Service Curriculum Days to the need for whole staff planning and co-ordination of policies. In her role as language co-ordinator

she did this by "talking with teachers and reminding and encouraging them" (DP 1).

Another deputy however referred to the sense of frustration experienced in trying to

motivate teachers to engage in planning and policy formation.

> -...Teachers hate it and don't really want to participate in it and yet it
> must be done at staff level. Teachers resist and even at times I feel resent
> having to go through the process of planning and this makes my job
> really frustrating as I put a lot of work into the preparation and staff can
> be unresponsive. They don't always see it as having an impact on
> classroom practice.- (DP 4)

Not withstanding this deputy's experience in attempting to facilitate collegiality another

deputy did concede that "our best work has always been done when we come together"

(DP 7).

The findings on professional tasks reveal considerable disparities and variations in

workload with one third of those interviewed having no job function in this area at all.

Induction of new teachers was most commonly mentioned and yet there was no specific

policy of mentoring in any of the schools concerned.

"We've often talked about it but we actually haven't got it in place" (DP 10).

Induction also meant going into class and "supporting teachers who qualified outside of

this jurisdiction in the learning and teaching of Irish" (DP 3).

Problem solving in the area of professional difficulties was mentioned by two deputies.

For one it was simply that "teachers come to me with problems and difficulties because

I am deputy principal" (DP 1). Another spoke of the difficulty of "finding ways of

dealing with difficult staff problems especially where a member of staff is not pulling

their weight or doing a particular aspect of their job" (DP 3).

Impact of recent changes on role of deputy

Changes in the Primary Curriculum for most deputies have had the most impact.

Consequently a number of deputies referred to the leadership dimension which "had not

began to impact when I was in the job five years ago" (DP 10).

The "more expansive" (DP 3) Primary Curriculum has meant "sweeping changes and

increased workload" (DP 8) with a particular emphasis on a "leadership role in

implementing and viewing changes" (DP 4).

> -Hugely as I am responsible for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the plean scoile. Now the extra emphasis on planning and paperwork takes up a huge amount of time in and out of school.- (DP 5)

For one deputy this has meant that "as part of a leadership team in the school it is

important to be positive in my attitude and to be innovative in my ideas and willing to

change teaching methods" (DP 1).

For almost half the deputies interviewed the introduction of recent legislation such as

the Education Act, the Education Welfare Act and the Equal Status Act had little or no

impact on their workload as deputy principal. These also admitted to not being "au fait"

(DP 7) or "a great follower" (DP 2) of recent legislative changes. Those who did

comment on impact referred to the "extra pressure, accountability, more responsibility"

(DP 9).

> -The emphasis is on paperwork. I make sure policies are in place that adhere to legislation making everyone aware that these must be done.-
> (DP 5)

One deputy emphasised the positive impact on her workload where the "welfare officer

has eased the burden of attendance problems" (DP 4)

Finally, changes in society meant deputies felt they had to be "more sensitive, more safety conscious and more alert to a range of different and increasing problems" (DP 9). "Children and parents were more demanding" (DP 11), with the result that deputies had to deal with "more parents under pressure who often turn on the school" (DP 3). Another deputy now had to deal with "some discipline problems that were not as relevant as before" (DP 2).

> -...this impacts hugely on my work as deputy principal especially in terms of the supportive role I'm expected to play.- (DP 8)

Consequently deputy's time was taken up dealing "more with outside agencies, more problems in school were often caused by difficulties at home or the wider community" (DP 6).

The workload of another deputy was added to when she had to ensure "that both parents get notes and invitations to parent teacher meetings when they do not share a house" (DP 1). In writing up policies another deputy was conscious of the central role now given to parents in the education of their children. For another deputy it was in trying to accommodate the requests from parents of children in her school for "the integration of children with special needs into mainstream" (DP 11).

Focus Groups Reaction

The Deputy's workload has increased because "principals are getting so much of an onerous load that they are now 'wising up' to 'shifting' some of it" (PA).

Consequently, many felt that more recently appointed deputies have more tasks "than one who has been there for the past ten to fifteen years" (PD).

Overall it was felt that complex changes in society had impacted significantly on the role of the deputy.

(3) Relationships

The findings reveal the importance of having a good relationship with the principal which should be healthy and respectful (DP's 2, 3, 4, 8). Table 4.2 reveals how the deputies interviewed described the nature of their relationship with the principal.

Table 4.2

Relationship with the Principal

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good

25%   25%

50%
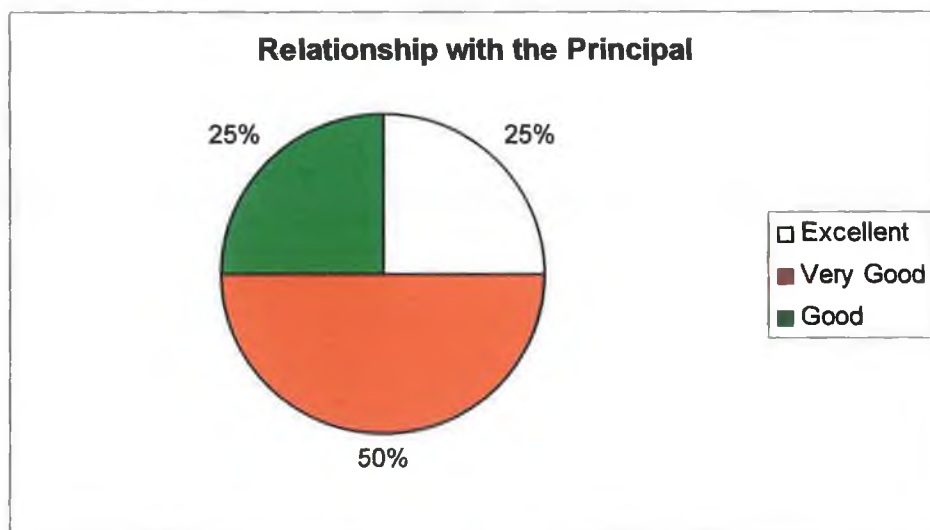
One deputy's relationship with the principal was excellent because "both of us are aware of highly developed interpersonal skills which results in honest, direct, respectful and open communication" (DP 3). For another deputy who initially hesitated to say excellent it was because "we get on well together" (DP 2) and "the main thing was that

the principal asked me to consider applying for it which made me feel that she felt I could do the job" (DP 3).

Excellence in the relationship meant there was "cohesion in things" (DP 3). For another honesty and openness characterised the excellence of the relationship: "I felt I could tell her the truth" (DP 10).

In using similar sentiments to describe the nature of their professional relationship with the principal as very good, this meant working well together, discussing major decisions, mutual respect and support.

> -We are respectful of each others ideas and beliefs yet free enough to disagree on occasion.- (DP 4)

> -He runs things by me before he acts. I also feel that I can make suggestions or comments to him on any matter to do with the school.- (DP 8)

Another deputy characterised her good professional relationship with her principal as "very open, very consultative" (DP 7).

The findings reveal that most deputies' duties were decided by "the principal in consultation with the staff" (DP 1).

In most cases it was "a joint effort" (DP 7) following "decisions taken at staff meetings" (DP 11). They were "negotiated" and have also "changed after review" (DP 4).

"As per Department regulations" (DP 10).

The findings also reflect the collegial relationship between principal and deputy in the meetings they had. Only two deputies out of twelve had a formal meeting outside of school hours with the principal each week which lasted about one hour.

> -Mainly to discuss discipline, curricular areas, items for assembly and if there were grievances on staff that were brought to my attention I would let him know.- (DP 1)

> -...to thrash out ideas basically...but sometimes there would be an agenda. Often times you come in and say listen we've got to talk about such a thing happening.- (DP 4)

Both deputies taught in large schools with an administrative principal. For other deputies interviewed such meetings, although they did occur, sometimes outside of school hours, were not as official and more informal. School size was a significant factor here. The frequency of these meetings ranged from daily "each break and lunch time" (DP 12) in the smallest school to

> -Informally each morning.- (DP 6)

> -No specified meeting times.- (DP 9)

The meeting would last for anything from five minutes up to thirty minutes depending on what was being discussed.

While the findings have revealed the importance of a good professional relationship between the deputy and the principal, a number of those interviewed were conscious that this should not develop at the risk of excluding other members of staff, thereby creating divisions. Consequently a number of deputies saw a leadership role for the deputy that would be much more "on going than once off or ad hoc" (DP 11) in the whole area of human resource management which would focus on inclusivity of all of all staff in having their views heard (DP's 2, 8, 10).

This would involve the deputy "looking out for younger teachers" and ensuring that "their ideas are listened to and that they are made to feel important and welcome when they come into the school" (DP 6).

> -...because I remember as a young teacher myself being afraid to even just mention my ideas – that kind of hierarchy I suppose which I think there is in some schools.- (DP 11)

Echoing these sentiments, even though describing her professional relationship with the principal as good another deputy observed that

> -To me there's this gap like say....that is with the IPPN for example trying to put principals 'up there' and now little by little putting a bit of the deputy up there as well, and making the gap wider. Whereas I would like to see us all as a team.- (DP 9)

She wasn't totally convinced that the current approaches and management structure were facilitating such collaboration while for other deputies this process could only be facilitated by treating everybody as equals "while being in a position of authority" (DP 7).

Focus Groups Reaction

All principals were conscious of good relationships especially between principal and deputy.

> -She's great at calming me down sometimes when there's a situation going awry.- (PE).

> -...She has saved my skin a couple of times.- (PA)

They confirmed the partnership and teamwork approach identified by the deputies.

-I'd be very open with her in relation to what's going on.- (PB)

-There's nothing I don't share with my deputy.- (PA)

-I see myself as a team member also.- (PF)

In general the comments centred around how dependent the role was on good relationships especially with the principal.

(4) The Leadership Dimension

The findings reveal a leadership dimension to the deputy's role, and the extent to which this leadership role is qualified by several factors. Firstly, there is the matter of accountability to the principal in terms of who has the last word. Secondly and consequently, the reservations deputies have about accepting total responsibility. Thirdly, problems already mentioned associated with time constraints and role combination.

Five of the twelve deputies had total responsibility for a range of administrative matters. Of these five only one had an additional total responsibility for a curricular area. There were two reasons for this. One was that "a whole staff approach is taken" (DP 8) but which was conditional on the more commonly expressed view that "everything goes through the principal" (DP 9).

> -Saying that, there are events or developments that I organise completely, but the principal would always be aware of what I am doing. Similarly staff would usually come to me on topics related to areas of responsibility.- (DP 4)

In this context deputies referred to "being part of the management team" where "I can make myself useful" and share in decision making which ultimately affects long term developments and see progress being achieved. (DP's 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 11).

Other ways in which deputies exercise their qualified leadership role most notably was on curriculum days and deputising for the principal.

> -They accept my leadership role on curriculum development days.- (DP 1)

> -Discipline and other matters are referred to me when the principal is absent.- (DP 6)

> -When the principal is away through illness or meetings they are co-operative and willing to help.- (DP 12)

> -In the event of the principal being absent I have the responsibility and trustworthiness to carry out the duties.- (DP 9)

A form of leadership exercised by half of the deputies interviewed was 'co-responsibility' with the principal for a particular aspect of school organisation. One deputy spoke of "co-responsibility with the principal on discipline" (DP 11) which for another meant that the "principal and I share all yard duty times each day" (DP 3).

For other deputies this leadership role of 'co-responsibility' with the principal was exercised in the coordination and conducting of assemblies (DP's 3, 5, 6, 7).

> -...because the way we feel about it here, the children shouldn't see the principal as the only person of authority in the school.-(DP 7).

Another deputy chaired all staff meetings to allow the principal be more of a participant, following a recommendation in the school's recent Tuairisc Scoile.

> -...so now, the principal and I draw up and circulate an agenda and people add whatever they want. I have to facilitate and make sure that everybody is heard.- (DP 5)

Seven of the twelve deputies interviewed had been a member of their present school's management team as a special duties teacher prior to their appointment as deputy principal. Of these seven, five have had a range of other managerial experience outside school, as Table APP 3 in the appendix illustrates.

The fact that they were entrusted with responsibility to plan programmes and oversee their implementation in addition to dealing more with adults as opposed to children were some of the ways the deputies felt this involvement had helped or is helping them in their role as deputy principal (DP's 1, 3, 12). For one deputy starting her job as a teacher new to the locality,

> -...it developed confidence at a time when you need confidence building...it helped to make contacts which I would still have to this day. I would also have gained experience on running a committee, making decisions, teamwork.- (DP 4)

Dealing effectively with people is also identified as the most important of one of seven key accountabilities for deputy principals by the twelve deputies who were interviewed for this research. Table APP 4 in the appendix shows the seven key areas of accountability which were set out in The Hay Report (2003) for the Irish Primary Principals' Network for which the role of principal has responsibility. Table APP 5 illustrates those same seven key areas in composite form but ranked in order of priority by the twelve deputy principals interviewed for this research and for which they thought the role of deputy principal should have responsibility.

The significance and implications of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

Focus Groups Reaction

For many of the principals the qualified leadership of the deputy confirmed the reality.

> -A lot of them don't want the ultimate responsibility. It's an easier position to be in.- (PB)

> -We're equal as part of a team but there are times when you have to step up to the plate.- (PD)

The general direction of comments was that the leadership role of the deputy was a qualified one.

(5) Specific Issues

These focus on best practice, future recruitment, training, priorities and development of the role.

Best Practice

A clear job description, good communication and interpersonal skills, staff relations and some provision for covered time out, were the main areas of best practice suggested by the participants.

A clear job description means that "a clear definition of specific duties is given to the deputy principal" (DP 5). These should also be communicated to all staff members who would have input before the duties are finally agreed (DP's 10, 5, 9, 7).

-If the staff has input they have ownership.- (DP11)

-You wouldn't have resentments. Well really I'm doing too much, she's not doing enough.- (DP 10)

Good communication and interpersonal skills were important in the facilitation and on-going promotion of staff relations, as Table 4.4 showed. The deputy would have a good working "social" relationship with all staff of the school and be willing to be open and discuss matters with all members of staff (DP's 12, 11, 7, 2).

-Be prepared to stop and listen to staff no matter how busy.- (DP 4)

-It is important to be a good listener, to be loyal, to be well-organised, to be decisive, to work well as part of a team, to be a good communicator.- (DP 1)

-I try to keep all my interactions as deputy principal as positive and as friendly as possible.- (DP 8)

-You have to be able to model and be a source of good leadership to staff.- (DP 4)

Further qualities identified are listed in Table APP 16.

Combination or sometimes even separation of duties does pose a dilemma for deputy principals.

-I want time out but I value the time I have with the children.- (DP 5)

-Be organised, try to keep class time as sacred as possible as it can be very disheartening to feel that children are not getting the attention they deserve.- (DP 4)

A partial resolution of this dilemma is suggested by having more covered release time from class for post work (DP's 7. 10, 4).

Deputies must still be prepared "to set aside a small amount of time each day before and after school for administration work" (DP 4).

<u>Future recruitment and training</u>

The more contentious finding in relation to recruitment dealt with the issue of seniority.

Younger and more recently appointed deputies favoured appointment on merit with

more senior and experienced deputies expressing doubts.

> -Let everybody who is eligible apply and whoever appears to be the best
> candidate who has shown by their work in the school already they have
> the school's interests at heart be appointed.- (DP 3)

> -I don't believe seniority should be an issue. I believe the best person for
> the job should be appointed.- (DP 7)

The position should be given to an existing member of staff, because "...usually there's

someone from the staff who can carry out the work, who would know how the school is

run, policies and so on...(DP 11).

When asked if it should be an existing member of staff based on seniority this

experienced deputy replied

> -No I don't think so. But I could see there would be huge problems with
> that if the person with the longer service doesn't get the job. I know that
> people feel badly and all of that but it shouldn't matter.- (DP 11)

> -It's very difficult to change that, certainly in a small school. You could
> destroy a school. It would need to be dealt with sensitively.- (DP 10)

One recently appointed deputy cautioned: "Be prepared for some difficulties if

colleagues are applying for the same job" (DP 4).

There is no professional training for deputy principals to cope with these and other

difficulties. Training is identified as an urgent priority for existing deputies as two thirds

of those interviewed for this research have no intentions of applying for a principalship

and want to remain as deputy in their own school. Of the four deputies who would

consider applying for a principalship it was more in the future than at present due to
lack of experience.

-I prefer actual teaching to administration.- (DP 11)

-I consider any form of principalship to be a difficult and stressful job.-

(DP 8)

Training should take the form of induction when appointed, on-going release days,
jointly with the principal when appropriate and summer courses. There was a need for
in-service especially in management issues, areas such as administration and personnel
(DP's 6, 3, 10).

> -Although I enjoy my managerial role, I have not received any training
> for the job and wonder how acceptable this would be in the corporate
> sector.- (DP 7)

Further areas for training as identified by the participants are listed in Table APP 7.

Future development and priorities

The main findings identified these key priorities.

- On-going training specific to the job for serving aspirant and new deputy
  principals in staff management, team building, working within a team.

- Specific guidelines on a better defined role with clear job analysis and specific
  areas of responsibility for the deputy principal.

- A short period of covered release time weekly, or over a term.

- Increased recognition of the leadership role, and an administrative deputy
  principal for certain size schools.

- Networking, meeting with other deputy principals.

Focus Groups Reaction

The Focus Group also identified best practice in good communications, regular meetings and covered release time. They saw merit in joint release time and joint training but felt that it in the current climate it was "highly aspirational" (PA) and a "bit utopian" (PF). There was unanimity on meritocratic recruitment despite the "horrendous difficulties" (PB) witnessed in some schools where it went on seniority.

The consensus was that the development of best practice will enhance the status of the deputy's role.

The next chapter will interpret and discuss these and other findings before attempting to draw conclusions and make some recommendations from the research evidence of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will discuss the key issues of the study and will interpret the findings in respect of the following four areas. Firstly, the leadership role of the deputy principal, which has emerged and evolved in the absence of any professional guidance, direction or definition. Secondly, how the expression of the leadership role in the absence of such guidance and clarification is dependent on good working relationships with all staff but especially with the principal. Thirdly, how recent legislative, curricular and societal changes are re-shaping the present role of the deputy principal. Fourthly, the significant impact of best practice, recruitment, training and networking on the future development of the role. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations will be made in the light of this discussion and interpretation of the findings.

A leadership role for the deputy

The research clearly identifies a leadership role for the deputy principal with the principal in the management of the school. It shows how this role has evolved or emerged in the absence of any professional guidance or direction since Circular 16/73 (DES 1973) was issued and which still defines the role of the deputy principal. In spite

of or because of this, deputies for this research were able to identify significant leadership aspects of their role in schools today which included

- Supporting, assisting and deputising for the principal.
- Consulting and liaising with the principal on the day to day running of the school.
- Co-operating with the principal and the staff.

There were significant variations in the extent to which this was undertaken in varying degrees in the different schools. The research identified a response by the participants in the study to the recommendations outlined both in The White Paper (Government of Ireland 1995) and The Working Group Report (DES 1999). This variation, in roles across the schools confirms the ill-defined and ad hoc nature of the role which referred to in much of the literature (Coolahan 1994, Dean 1995, INTO 1991, IPPN 2002, Moody 1996). The principals identified historical and traditional reasons for this,

-Traditionally, it wasn't a clearly defined role. It still isn't.- (PB).

-The duties are a throwback to an era that is rapidly disappearing.- (PC)

The absence of any professional guidance or direction has resulted in "a sea change of roles" (PD) which has left schools "in a state of flux" (PF) in terms of role clarification and definition. Some deputies produced lists of the range of duties they had, while others were hard pushed to expand on what precisely they did. For one deputy her role as she saw it was "to assist the principal in whatever way possible" (DP 2). For another it was "nothing specific from day to day but I am available if needed" (DP 9). Some principals argued that the role should not be too clearly defined by lists in the sense that

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> -A deputy could become really expert and good at ensuring registers are filled in and up to date. But what use is that to you if you're absent and she has to take over?- (PC)

This is crucial because all of the deputies identified one major function of their leadership role as covering for the principal in his/her absence, which is also supported in the literature (Dean 1987, Mortimore et al 1988). However if deputy principals believe they can deputise then they must be equal in functioning competency to the principal. A central component therefore to defining the role of the deputy has to be based on the notion that the two roles are synchronised, in terms of sharing workload and rotation of that sharing. The clear evidence from this research is that such is not the case. Only one principal commented

> -If my deputy had to take over tomorrow, she might not know where everything in the filing cabinet is but she would be up to speed on everything else.- (PA)

There are two clear implications here for deputies and principals. For principals, as was clear from the findings, delegating administrative duties of a routine and lower order nature will do nothing to enhance their leadership status and capability either in the principal's presence or absence. Secondly, some deputies as evidence from this study has shown see their role as a role in waiting that only comes into operation when the principal is not there.

> -When the principal is away through illness or meetings they are co-operative and willing to help.- (DP 12).

> -In the event of the principal being absent I have the responsibility and trustworthiness to carry out the duties.- (DP 9)

Corroborating this is a telling observation reported back from one of the groups at the recent National Seminar for Deputy Principals.- (IPPN Portlaoise 2004).

> -There is a lot of pressure on the deputy because you felt you had to be there all the time in case the principal was missing.-

This positioning of the role of deputy which only comes into play when the principal is absent can lead to a differentiation of role for the deputy from the principal which is identified elsewhere in the literature (Burham 1968, Coulson 1976, Alexander 1992). The manner in which a principal was introduced by a member of staff to his deputy as "her boss" illustrates the point.

> -...She said it in a kind of jovial way...and I said I'm her colleague. I don't see myself as 'her boss'. I see myself as a team member same as everybody else.- (PB)

Confirming this another principal in the focus group stated

> -I am not a boss. I am not a power seeker.- (PC)

Three significant issues in defining the role of the deputy arise here. Firstly, the notion of boss, vesting too much power in one person. Secondly, the impact legislation has had in shaping the role of the principal to the exclusion of the deputy principal. Thirdly, willingness of principals as echoed in the remarks above to share leadership which was also identified by the majority of deputies interviewed for this study. It is proposed to take each of these in turn.

The complex nature of school management today requires leadership to be shared between two or more people, rather than entrusted to one person (Fullan 2001). The reality, even in the schools where "a whole staff approach" (DP 8) is taken is that "everything goes through the principal" (DP 9). Corroborating this approach, one of the principals in the focus groups commented that...

-Well if my name is going on it, I'd like to see the staff.- (PB)

Most of the principals in the focus groups also agreed that a lot of deputies don't want the ultimate responsibility. One of them maintained that

-It's an easier position to be in.- (PG)

The literature however does not support this approach. Team involvement in educational institutions is limited by the fact that the leader takes (or ratifies) the final decision in the interests of the organisation as a whole, thereby actively inhibiting organisational well being (Webb and Vulliamy 1946 in Law and Glover).

With only half the deputies interviewed having total responsibility for some senior administrative as opposed to curricular and professional takes, this approach can also inhibit effective and responsible delegation. This was corroborated by three principals in the focus groups who commented

-You can't totally say "over to you".- (PA)

-All post holders in the school report back to me.- (PG)

-I feel I am ultimately responsible.- (PF)

It is clear therefore from the findings that the nature of a leadership role for the deputy is qualified by the fact that ultimate responsibility rests with the principal.

Recent legislation such as the Education Act (Government of Ireland 1998) makes reference only to the principal. Equally successive Departmental Circulars name and are addressed only to the principal. The exclusion of any reference to the deputy principal does nothing to enhance the leadership or managerial status of the role. The two fold effect of this is that it can provide deputies with an excuse to opt out and principals with the feeling as expressed above that they have it all to do.

Notwithstanding this, there is evidence from this research to suggest that deputies see their leadership role as one of shared but qualified responsibility. There are considerable variations with some deputies having acquired responsibilities 'by default' while others spoke of continually 'evolving' responsibilities. Equally half of the deputies referred to a form of 'co-responsibility' with the principal for certain routine organisational as opposed to curricular or professional matters. The evidence from this research shows that in some of the schools the deputy is 'worn to a frazzle' (DP 5) with all they have to do, while in other schools the deputy is "available if needed" (DP 9) with no major tasks or responsibilities. These variations are the direct result of the deputy's role lacking clarification. The research shows therefore that the role will either be as effective or ineffective as those in the role choose to make it. Or as Dean (1995) puts it, the filling of the role is dependent on personality types. Further corroboration of this came from one of the principals in the focus groups...

> -...that's where it's left open...and it's down to the individual then as to how the responsibilities are carried out.- (PD)

Greater clarity about the role of deputy in terms of empowerment and accountability would offer greater protection to principals and deputies. In this context Sean Cottrell, Director of the Irish Primary Principal Network believes that

> -It's not roles that cause problems. It's personalities who choose to interpret those roles to their own advantage.-(Interview[1])

Research evidence from this study suggests that this can be alleviated when the staff have had input into the shaping of the role within their own schools. Reports from the two National Conferences for Deputy Principals (IPPN 2002, 2004) also concur that the role of the deputy should be understood and defined by the staff. That way, the responsibilities are clear to everyone and the deputy held accountable for work in the chosen areas. (Dean 1995).

Further evidence from this research in terms of the impact of school size and type on the role would support the concept of a more localised rather than global definition of the role of deputy. The reasons as corroborated by Murray (1994) are that "the wide variety of bureaucratic and subjective factors, alongside the great variety of needs schools have, go to make the statement of any rationale for deputy headship only of any use if it remains flexible and responsive to different types of schools" (p.18).

"Without doubt, flexibility to the needs of the school has to be the hallmark in defining the role of the deputy". (Cottrell Interview)

The research shows that in this regard the reality does not match the rhetoric of Circular 7/03 (DES, A). No flexibility has been shown by the Department of Education and Science to deputies in the exercising of their leadership role. There have been no

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[1] In an interview with the researcher on Saturday 1st May 2004.

concessions in terms of time consideration and class allocation. All deputies interviewed lamented the lack of time to fulfil their duties but as one commented: "class work gets priority from 9.20 – 3.00" (DP 6). Principals too lamented this fact

-I don't get to see my deputy because she's teaching all the time.- (PA)

Teaching Principals in the focus groups however pointed that this too is the reality for them arising from the conflicting demands of leadership duties and full time teaching. Unlike deputy principals however they do have covered release time. The bigger issue here is the whole salary structure of teachers, principals and deputies. While the post of principal and deputy is paid by an extra allowance as at present the role primarily is seen as being a role of teacher plus a post. The duties of the post therefore can be done after or around class contact hours, as this research shows. The research recommends that consideration be given, as in the United Kingdom (NAHT 2001) to putting principals and deputies on a separate salary scale. Cottrell contends that until this happens "we will never have these roles recognised as management roles in their own right" (Interview).

Contentious and aspirational as this may be the reality is that time constraints remain as yet another impediment to the role of the deputy being further developed. In some schools circumstances and creative use of resources have allowed this to happen. In smaller schools the circumstances and lack of resources prevent this happening. In two of the twelve schools the principals have ignored the directives of Circular 7/03 (DES, A) and have appointed their deputy as resource teacher for special needs as to have more flexible time arrangements.

All things being equal Cottrell sees some merit in this arrangement "because at certain times of the year they've greater flexibility in terms of how they can juggle the role of deputy as well as the role of teacher" (Interview).

A principal in the focus group commented that

> -...a lot would depend on the personality and capability of the teacher concerned to fill that role. It would have to be a staff decision.- (PC)

Just as the status of the teaching principal's role has been elevated in recent years by the provision of covered release time, this research recommends that a similar arrangement be effected for deputy principals. In line with comments expressed by some deputies and principals this research further recommends that consideration be give to having an administrative deputy principal in schools of a certain size. Finally, that some flexibility be given in the allocation of classes to deputies that would allow time for the exercising of their leadership role.

Critically the issue is about giving schools at local level flexibility both in terms of resource provision and role interpretation which as this research and research elsewhere has shown would enhance the status of the deputy in his/her own school. (Dean 1995, Mortimore et al 1988, NAHT 2001).

Finally, as this research has shown, many constraints conspire to frustrate the meaningful development of the deputy's role. Chief among these is the absence of any professional guidance, role clarification and definition. Consequently, the role is filled by the degree to which personalities in the role choose to interpret their leadership responsibility. Ultimately this means that the exercising of a leadership role for the

deputy is dependant on good working relationships with all members of staff but especially with the principal.

Relationships

Fortunately, as the evidence in the study has shown, the importance of good relationships has been recognised not just by the deputies themselves but also by principals. As Table 4.2 illustrates 75% of deputies were able to describe the nature of their relationship with the principal as very good or excellent.

The evidence as identified by the deputies centred round feelings of being listened to, being respected, and being valued in their role.

-...she felt I could do the job.- (DP 3)

-I felt I could tell her the truth.- (DP 10)

-I also feel I can make suggestions.- (DP 8)

These experiences confirm the presence of what Whitaker (1997) termed 'cultural nutrients', which are most effective in fostering positive relationships. Where such abound there is an experience of "being valued, being encouraged, being noticed, being listened to, being respected" (Reo) (Ibid p.76).

This research also identified the leadership of the principal as a key component in effecting these relationships. As one deputy commented – "well it's difficult to support the principal if his/her style isn't positive" (DP 11). However principals also identified pay back for them in the reciprocity of the relationship.

-I can honestly say that she has saved my skin a couple of times…- (PA)

-She's great at calming me down if there's a situation going awry.- (PE)

The findings suggest therefore that the ideal relationship between the deputy and principal is characterised by partnership and mutuality. Consequently the role of the deputy, as the evidence above suggests is not an unimportant shadow of the principal but rather one where with both playing dual roles, heighten the need for effective communication, in sharing out the leadership responsibilities. Here again the findings suggest a response by deputies and principals to the recommendations in The White Paper (Government of Ireland 1995) and The Working Group Report (DES 1999). As two principals commented

-There's nothing I don't share with my deputy principal.- (PA)

-I would involve the deputy from A to Z.- (PD)

In corroborating this finding, Cottrell maintains that

-All key decision making should be shared decisions between the principal and deputy. Notwithstanding when it comes to final decisions, the principal has to stand over it and take responsibility for it.-
(Interview)

The research evidence in this study where deputies reported either a good, very good or excellent working relationship with the principal will facilitate this practice. But what if the relationships are not so good? This again comes back to the consequences of having a poorly defined role which makes the filling of the role dependant on personality styles. One deputy acknowledges that "it can be an impossible situation to manage if the

relationship is strained" (DP 3). Some of the deputies and the principals commented that it wasn't about seeing 'eye to eye' all the time. Nias (1987) maintains that the relationship can be like 'finger and thumb' where difference may be as important to the process of collaboration as similarity (Bell 1992). The evidence from this research suggests that minor differences can be accommodated by agreeing to disagree and talking things out. Lack of evidence in this study precludes any recommendations in the event of major differences. Other than make the reader aware of the appeals and grievance procedures which do exist to try and resolve such difficulties. (Veritas 2000, Circular 7/03 DES, A). It does however highlight the gap between rhetoric and reality. In theory, the two roles should be possible to discuss, negotiate and work out independent of the personalities who occupy those roles. The reality as one principal commented is that while mechanisms are there the damage has already been done by the time things get that far. (PB). Covey (1991) argues that relationships have to be nurtured over time after the law of the farm. The quick fix law of the school he maintains will not work. There are implications here for pre-service and on-going training in the whole area of staff management as the evidence of this research suggests. This research identified collegial relationships of consultation, negotiation and team work as workplace practices that occurred in relation to assignment of duties, curriculum, co-ordination and on-going meetings between the principal and deputy. As Little (1990) and Clement and Vandenbergh (2001) testify elsewhere the value of these relationships is that they promote learning on the job and thus further enhance the status of the deputy's role in staff relations.

Staff relationships was mentioned as a role for the deputy by many of the participants interviewed for this study and subsequently identified by both the Focus Groups and some groups of delegates attending the National Seminar for Deputy Principals. These findings came to light especially in terms of how other colleagues perceive the role of deputy. Some of them saw the deputy as a resource, a sounding board, a confidante, a counsellor. This was especially the case where deputies themselves were seen to be approachable and willing to listen. Other deputies saw their talents being put to good use in diffusing argument and avoiding confrontation. Delegates at IPPN 2004 Conference corroborated this finding specifically in terms of Deputies

- Being caring persons
- Recognising skills and talents in other teachers
- Being effective listeners
- Playing a 'buffer role'
- Mentoring/Inducting

The reader is also referred to Table APP 4 in the Appendix. The literature also identifies this welfarist and socialisation role for the deputy. (Nias 1987, Bell 1992, Mortimore et al 1988). This role for the deputy is also corroborated by the findings in the focus groups.

> -I would have seen that happening here where you would have younger teachers joining the staff where my deputy would be very supportive of young teachers and they would go to her if they had a problem or difficulty.- (PB)

Another principal commented that

> -My deputy principal would be very approachable and if people see me as very busy at a particular task they do go to her but not exclusively.-

Those last three words are critical because in the development of a 'buffer' type role divisions can easily be sown and the model then becomes more 'trade union' rather than relationship driven.

> - ...if the wrong person was in that role it could become a manipulating or brokering role which is not healthy and could be contrary to good relationships in the school.- (Cottrell Interview).

The Focus Groups echoing this sentiment also felt that it comes down to the personality of the individual in the post.

There was no evidence in this research to suggest that deputies were or would like to be engaged in such exclusive practices. They were conscious of gaps or hierarchies that might ferment division.

> -It is important to be a good listener, to be loyal, to be well-organised, to be decisive, to work well as part of a team, to be a good communicator.- (DP 1)

> -I try to keep all my interactions as deputy principal as positive and as friendly as possible.- (DP 8)

The findings form this research therefore identify a concept of leadership for deputies with principals which is no longer about leading by virtue of the power of position but instead by "excelling in the art of relationship" where leadership is redefined in "interpersonal terms" (Goleman 2002).

This concept of leadership with a focus on cultivating good relationships was identified by the deputies in this study as the key area of responsibility for deputy principals as Table APP 4 and Table APP 5 in the appendix illustrate.

The implications from this research evidence suggests that the roles of deputy and principal are similar and shared rather than separate. The identification by deputies of

Human Resource Management as the key accountability suggests a role for the deputy with the principal in helping teachers cope with complex change. The table also reflects the impact curriculum and other changes have had on the deputy's role as identified elsewhere in the study. Some principals and deputies commented that five years ago, before the impact of the Revised Curriculum and other changes, this table would have looked very different.

The deputy's role in the cultivation of good relationships will assist the principal in the exercise of his/her leadership duties. This research suggests therefore that the deputy principal is crucial if the role of principal is to be effective.

Cottrell commenting on Human Resource Management in this table as the number one accountability stated.

> -I admire that identification because in my view it's the single biggest demand on school leadership, whether it be principal, or principal and deputy, managing all of the people in the school, even in small schools, it has become a huge issue as well.- (Interview)

Systems and Change

The introduction of the Primary Curriculum (1999) has been one of the biggest changes to impact on schools in recent years. This research shows how in line with the recommendations it has also impacted on the deputy's role.

The findings confirm a strong willingness on the part of principals to facilitate a process of curricular and organisational planning which included the delegation of relevant responsibilities as curriculum co-ordinators to deputies (Primary School Curriculum

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1999 p.9). There is some evidence to suggest that schools have engaged in a gradual process of "re culturing" (Fullan 2001" to accommodate these changes.

The evidence from this research shows that it is the deputies as curriculum co-ordinators who have exercised an instructional leadership role by creating "an array of specific interactions by which teachers discuss, plan for, design, conduct, analyse, evaluate and experiment with the burden of teaching" (Little 1982). This was done in the context of "a whole school approach" (DP 6) where partnership, team building, team leading were very much in evidence. (Harris et al 2003, Goleman 2002, Brighouse and Woods 1999, Day 2000).

Exercising their leadership role in this way has resulted in other benefits for the deputies. Their leadership role is accepted on curriculum days and at staff meetings.

There is evidence in this research to show that the huge impact of societal, legislative and other changes in the principals role are now also impacting on the deputy's role. One deputy confirmed this

> -Principals are now getting so much of an enormous load that they are 'wising up' to shifting some of it.- (PA)

This has resulted in deputies exercising leadership in writing up policies, accommodating requests, dealing with parents and children under pressure and dealing more with outside agencies. The burden of coping with complex change has in some schools resulted in sharing of real leadership responsibilities as the evidence above shows. This is the present reality but what of the future.

Future Development

The impact of change on workload practice will only increase. The Future development of the role to enable deputies cope with these changes centre around four issues, best practice, recruitment, training and networking.

Best Practice

This research has identified good communication and interpersonal skills where "everyone in the school is in the loop" (PB) and "the staff know what the deputy principal's role is" (PF). In this regard the research recommend an on-going role for the deputy in the facilitation and on-going promotion of staff relations involving a 'welfarist' approach.

> -Be prepared to stop and listen to staff no matter how busy.- (DP 4)

> -Respect for the principal's final decision making.- (PA)

Recruitment

Corroborating the views expressed earlier by the majority of deputies interviewed, the Focus Groups were adamant that across the board, everything should be on merit:

Like some of the deputies interviewed one principal was aware of "horrendous difficulties" in a school where it didn't go on seniority.

The consensus however was that it's very much a case of old habits dying hard but the provision is there in terms of equal weighting as outlined in Circular 7/03 and all were insistent that these should be followed no matter what.

Training

Two thirds of deputies interviewed for this research do not wish to apply for a principalship. These deputies have immediate training needs to cope with the complex changes which have impacted so much on their role. As one deputy pointed out it would not be tolerated in the corporate sector (DP 7). The Focus Groups pointed out that INTO and IPPN have started to initiate some small moves in this area. Deputies and focus groups saw merit in both principal and deputy attending joint training sessions.

This research recommends that training be provided for all deputies in the key areas of accountability of their role, as identified by this research. Table APP 7 reflects other suggestions given for Deputy Principal In-Service training.

Networking

Following the seminars on Primary Curriculum and School Development Planning many of deputies are aware of how their role is exercised in the respective schools as one deputy alluded to earlier in the study (DP 7). Within the last two years the Irish Primary Principals' Network has extended its membership to include the Principal and the Deputy Principal. All correspondence from IPPN to affiliated schools goes to both the Principal and the deputy. Evidence also of a growing desire for deputies to network was seen at the two National Conferences for Deputies in 2002 and 2004. One education centre in Wexford now facilitates a support group for deputy principals. A cyber community of deputies has also been created on the IPPN website. This

interpretation of the findings has reflected the emerging and evolving nature of the deputy's role in an era of complex change.

The last section on future developments indicates how deputies are willing to take ownership of their role and enhance its status and development. In the light of these and other interpretations some conclusions and recommendations can now be made.

Conclusions

1. There is an emerging and evolving leadership role in the nature of the assistance (mainly administrative) given by deputies to principals.

2. This role has evolved without any professional guidance, direction and clarification.

3. Consequently the interpretation of the role is dependent on good relationships and the leadership style of the principal resulting in huge variations between schools.

4. Principals and deputies were mutually supportive of each other.

5. However many constraints conspire to frustrate the meaningful development of the deputy's role. Most critically these are time, role combination, class allocations, and the lack of in-service provision.

6. The leadership role of the deputy is qualified by the fact that it is expressed in the form of a shared but not ultimate responsibility.

7. The complexity of legislative, curricular, societal, organisational, other changes have impacted on the emergence and evolution of this leadership role.

8. The introduction of the Primary Curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999) has introduced an instructional or teacher leader focus to the deputy's role.

9. School size and type with differing needs and issue require a more localised and flexible rather than global definition and interpretation of the deputy's role.

10. Most deputies are willing to take ownership of their role and view it in terms of accountability.

11. The roles of deputy and principal are similar and shared rather that separate.

12. Human Resource Management is a key area of shared leadership responsibility for deputy principals.

Recommendations

1. The role needs professional guidance, in terms of role clarification which should focus on the deputy working with the principal in all areas of the school in a similar and shared rather than separate capacity.

2. Collegial relationships which emphasise partnership, teamwork and networking offer the best hope for the enhancement of the role of the deputy. However these can be complex procedures, achievable only overtime and with foresight and skill which are not always evident.

3. The provision of joint in-service training to enable principals and deputies acquire these vital human resource management skills.

4. The provision of covered release time for deputy principals, similar to that for teaching principals, without which as Coulson (1976) noted the deputy's job on a day to day basis rarely differs from that of other teachers.

5. Departmental Circulars and other directives to go to both principal and deputy principal. This could be done electronically as all schools now have e-mail.

6. Meritocratic appointment, a more detailed job, advertisement and subsequent interview follow through just as for principals will further enhance the status of the deputy principal's role.

7. Provision of an administrative deputy principal for certain size schools just as in the secondary system.

This study has examined the role of the deputy in an era of significant change, challenges and developments. Clearly the limitation of the study represents a snapshot of views and opinions that were gathered in particular places at certain times and under particular circumstances. Limited generalisation therefore is warranted. It is for some future study to look at aspects of the deputy's role that were not featured in this research.

However what has emerged is a picture of most deputies attempting to take ownership of their role and share qualified leadership with the principal for the management of the school. This process has been reciprocated by principals who now realise due to legislative, societal, curricular and other changes the danger of keeping all that's known about the school in the head of one person. By sharing all that's known about the school

with the deputy, there is a far better chance of a continuous level of effectiveness and performance in a school.

No stronger case can be made for a principal and deputy working together. Arising from this scenario then, very definitely, a case of two 'heads' being better than one.

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Appendix

Table APP 1

What particular administrative duties have been assigned to you as deputy principal

Registers	Assessment policy
Enrolments	Health and Safety
Getting substitute teachers	NEPS co-ordination
Collecting school monies	Organising staff room
Ordering and purchasing school requisites	Rotas
Holiday arrangements	Letters to parer s
Yard supervision	Notice boar s
Lunch time club	Competit ons
School tours	Savings scheme
Splitting up classes	Photocopier a d paper supplies
Organising work for unplanned absences	Supervision, A sembly and Dismissal
Behaviour policy	Standardis d tests co-ordination
Pupil Records	Book fairs

Table APP 2

What aspects of Curricular Development have been assigned to you as deputy principal?

Nature of Post	Number of Deputies
Language & Literacy Co-ordination	2
SPHE & Sports Co-ordination	2
Gaelige	2
ICT Co-ordination	2
Visual Arts	1
Local History	1
Co-ordination of overall curriculum policy	1

Table APP 3

Managerial experience outside of school.

Organisation	Management Role
I.N.T.O	Branch Officer
Cumann na mBunscoil	Provincial Secretary
Choir	Director
Youth Club	Co-ordinator
Holiday Sports Camp	Instructor
Theatre Group	Production Assistant
Church Committee	Secretary
Sports Club	Captain/President

Table APP 4

Key areas of accountability for

Principals. (IPPN)

1	Leadership
2	Teaching and Learning
3	Resource Management
4	Human Resource Management
5	Administration
6	Policy Formation
7	External Relationships

Table APP 5

Key areas of accountability for

Deputy Principals.

1	Human Resource Management
2	Leadership
3	Teaching and Learning
4	Policy Formation
5	Resource Management
6	Administration
7	External Relationships

Table APP 6

<u>In your opinion, what personal characteristics and qualities are necessary to enable you to perform you role as deputy principal fully and effectively?</u>

Understanding	Approachable
Patience	Co-operative
Initiative	Positive
Open-Mindedness	Responsible
Level headedness	Efficient
Diplomacy	Discrete
Flexibility	Good Social Manner
Enthusiasm	Organised
Respect for other staff as equals	

Table APP 7

<u>Suggestions for In-Service training of deputy principals.</u>

Staff Relations
Self Esteem
Practical Organisation
Team Work
Group Dynamics and Personality Types
Updating Legislation and Legal Requirements
Dealing with Stress (self and others)
Handling Difficult Situations

Dear

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in my research on the **Role of the Deputy Principal in Irish Primary Schools**. This forms part of my Dissertation for the **Master of Education (School Leadership) Degree** which I have been studying for the past 1 ½ years at N.U.I Maynooth and which now with your co-operation I hopefully will be able to complete by the end of this school year.

As promised I enclose the questions which will form the major part of our interview. Please feel free to write notes or comments on the spaces provided on the back of the pages if there is insufficient space on the front. You are to feel restricted in what you have to say in answer to any of the questions by the number of lines following each question. **The purpose of the interview is to allow you the opportunity to expand your thoughts on the Role of the Deputy Principal based on your experience and perceptions to date.**

The Interviews will be tape recorded with an assurance that absolute anonymity and total confidentiality are an integral part of the process. All of the interviews will be on a one to one basis to further facilitate this process.

If I haven't already done so I will be in touch with you shortly to arrange a date and time and location outside of school hours that will fit in with your already demanding schedule.

Once again I really appreciate the favour you are doing me by allowing me to talk to you about your role as Deputy Principal.

I look forward to meeting you and at a later stage sharing the fruits of my research which hopefully might make some little contribution to the development of the role of the Deputy Principal.

Míle buíochas arís.

Yours sincerely,

Section 1 – Your Present School

1. What type of school are you in?

(A) Scoil Lán Ghaelach. ☐

(B) Designated Disadvantaged. ☐

(C) Special School ☐

(D) Mainstream School. ☐

2. In what setting is your school?

(A) Urban. ☐
(B) Rural. ☐

3. What is the predominant ethos of your school?

(A) Roman Catholic. ☐

(B) Church of Ireland. ☐

(C) Multi denominational. ☐

(D) Non denominational. ☐

4. What category of Principal operates in your school?

(A) Teaching Principal ☐
(B) Administrative Principal. ☐

5. What are the approximate number of pupils enrolled?

(A) 5-80. ☐

(B) 81-180. ☐

(C) 181-400. ☐

(D) 401+. ☐

6. Is your school

(A) Vertical (Infants to 6th) □

(B) Junior (Infants to 2nd) □

(C) Senior (3rd to 6th) □

(D) Other. □ Please elaborate

_____

_____

_____

7. Is your school

(A) Co-educational □

(B) Boys only □

(C) Girls only □

(D) Other. Please elaborate

_____

_____

_____

8. What are the staffing levels for

(A) Number of class based
teachers?_____

(B) Number of non-class based teachers (Learning Support, Resource Teachers
etc.)?_____

(C) Number of Special Needs Assistants/Care
Workers?_____

(D) Number of Ancillary/Support
staff?_____

9. What is the current composition of the In-School Management team apart from the Principal and Deputy Principal?

(A) Number of Assistant Principals (formerly A Post
Holders)_____

(B)Number of Special Duties Teachers (formerly B Post
Holders)_____

10. In so far as you are aware from current trends is your school

(A)A developing School □

(B)Numbers staying relatively static   ☐

(C)Declining Numbers   ☐

11. In addition to the Principal, which member of the staff is the present teachers' representative on the Board of Management?

(A) Teacher who is a member of the In-School Management Team.   ☐
(B) Teacher who is not a member of the In-School Management Team   ☐
(C) Other.   ☐   Please
     elaborate_____

_____

_____

12. Does your school have a Parents Association?

(A)Yes   ☐
(B)No.   ☐

Section 2 –Yourself

1. Are you Male   ☐
         Female?

2. Can you list in the table below your professional qualifications to date. These may include Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Post graduate qualifications.

Professional Qualifications	Date Awarded

3. How many years have you been teaching in total?_____

4. How long have you been deputy principal in your present school?_____

5. Did you teach in your present school before being appointed deputy principal?
Yes ☐

No ☐

6. If yes, for how many years?_____

7. If no, please elaborate_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Were you a member of your present school's management team prior to your appointment as deputy principal? Yes ☐   No ☐

9. If yes, what management position did you hold?

   (A) Assistant Principal (Formerly A Post)   ☐

   (B) Special Duties Teacher (Formerly B Post)   ☐

10. If you did not hold either of the posts referred to in question 9, how then were you appointed deputy principal?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Apart from experience in school, have you ever had or do you have any other managerial experience? (e.g. Sports Club Involvement, Charitable Organisation, Community Affairs etc.)
   (A) Yes ☐

   (B) No ☐

If yes, please elaborate

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. If you answered yes to question 11, can you comment on how you think this might have helped, or is helping you in your role as deputy principal in your school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Did you ever take a career break?

   (A) Yes ▭

   (B) No ▭

14. If yes, what did you do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. If no, would you consider taking a career break in the future?

   (A) Yes. ▭
   (B) No. ▭
   (C) Maybe ▭
   Please elaborate

_____

_____

_____

Section 3-Job Analysis

1. What is the nature of your teaching position in your school?

(A) Mainstream Class Teacher   ☐

(B) Learning Support Teacher   ☐

(C) Resource Teacher for Special Needs   ☐

(D) Resource Teacher for Travellers   ☐

(E) Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator.   ☐

(F) Other (please   ☐
    elaborate)_____

_____

_____

_____

2. How do you combine your role as Deputy Principal with this teaching position?

3. What particular administrative duties have been assigned to you as deputy principal?

4. What particular professional tasks e.g. staff development, induction of new teachers etc. have been assigned to you as deputy principal?

5. What aspects of curricular development have been assigned to you as deputy principal?

6. What other additional responsibilities have been assigned to you as deputy principal?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. How and by whom, were the responsibilities referred to in (3), (4), (5), (6) decided?

_____

_____

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_____

8. What do you do on a day to day basis as Deputy Principal?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. How often do you meet with the Principal?

(A) Once a week   ☐

(B) Twice a week   ☐

(C) Once a term   ☐

(D) Other (Please elaborate)

_____

10. How long would such a meeting last?_____

11. What is the main purpose of such meeting?

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Is there any aspect of school management, curricular, administrative that you have <u>total</u> responsibility for?

(A) Yes ☐
(B) No ☐

13. If "yes", please elaborate

_____
_____
_____
_____

14. If "no", please elaborate

_____
_____
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_____

15. What do you like most about the job you do as deputy principal?

_____
_____
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_____

16. What do you like least about the job you do as deputy principal?

_____
_____
_____
_____

17. What five things would make your job as deputy principal easier?

(1)_____

(2)_____

(3)_____

(4)_____

(5)_____

18. What are the most difficult problems you face as a deputy principal?

_____

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<u>Section 4 – Role Analysis</u>

1. What are the most significant aspects of the deputy principal's role?

_____

_____

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_____

2. How have changes in the Revised Primary Curriculum impacted on your role as deputy principal?

_____

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3. How has the introduction of recent legislation e.g. the Education Act, the Education Welfare Act, the Equal Status Act, impacted on your role as deputy principal?

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4. How have changes in society impacted on your role as deputy principal?

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5. How is your role as deputy principal different to that of an Assistant Principal (formerly A post holder) if such exists in your school?

_____

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6. How is your role as Deputy Principal different to that of a Special Duties Teacher (formerly B post holder)?

_____

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7. How do you think your colleagues on staff view your role as deputy principal?

_____

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8. How is your role as deputy principal different to that of the principal?

_____

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9. How would you describe the nature of your professional relationship with the principal?

_____

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_____

10. In the light of your experience to date as deputy principal, would you consider applying for a principalship, either in your own school or outside if a vacancy arose?

(A) Yes ⬜

(B) No ⬜

Why?_____

_____

_____

_____

11. If you were asked to counsel someone thinking of applying for a deputy principalship, what would you say to that person?

_____

_____

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_____

12. From your experience to date, what would you recommend as examples of best practice for deputy principals?

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13. In your opinion, what personal characteristics/qualities are necessary to enable you to perform your role as deputy principal fully and effectively?

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14. What do you think should be done about the future development of the role of the deputy principal in the Irish primary school?

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15. To what extent do you think each of the following impacts on the role of the deputy principal?

(A) School Size. A lot. ☐ Somewhat. ☐ None at all. ☐

    Please Elaborate

_____

_____

_____

_____

(B) School Type. A lot. ☐ Somewhat. ☐ None at all. ☐

    Please Elaborate

_____

_____

_____

_____

(C) Leadership Style of the Principal.

       A lot.   ☐   Somewhat.   ☐   None at all.   ☐

    Please Elaborate

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. What recommendations would you make around the following issues:

(A) Future recruitment of deputy principals

_____

_____

_____

(B) Future training of deputy principals

_____

_____

_____

17. The Hay Report "Defining the Role of the Primary Principal in Ireland" set out seven key areas of accountability for which the role of principal has responsibility. These were

1. Leadership
2. Teaching and Learning
3. Resource Management
4. Human Resource Management
5. Administration
6. Policy Formation
7. External Relationships.

Which seven key areas of accountability in order of priority, should the role of deputy principal have responsibility for in the light of your experience to date. Feel free to use some or none of the above listed.

1._____(most important)

2._____(second most important)

3._____(third most important)

4._____(fourth most important)

5._____(fifth most important)

6._____(sixth most important)

7._____(seventh most important)

18. In formulating National Policy, what would your priorities be for deputy principals?

_____

_____

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_____

19. Do you have any other comments to make on your role as deputy principal in your particular school?

_____

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20. Finally, please comment here on any other information or issues relating to your role as deputy principal, which are not already captured by the questions put here.

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Thank you very much for participation in this research project.

Appendix