

“School Leadership in an Era of Retrenchment and Restructuring”

Address by Prof. John Coolahan
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The Retrenchment Context

- Irish Society Under Pressure
- Weaknesses of Agencies:-
 - Politicians → Tribunals
 - Churches → Inquiries
 - Police → Inquiries on Misbehaviour
 - Bankers → “Bankrupt”
 - Developers → Irresponsible
 - Regulators → Inadequate
- National and International Recession
- TROIKA Bailout.
 - Consequences.

Education Cutbacks

- Salaries
- Ps.O.R
- Promotions
- PTRs
- Guidance
- Special Needs
- School Transport
- Allowances (?)
- Support Resources
- Attacks on Public Service, Misrepresentation by Commentariat.

Importance of School Leadership – International Perspective

“School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling.”

OECD, Improving School Leadership (2008).

5 Sections – School Leadership Matters; Defining School Leadership Responsibilities; Distributing School Leadership; Developing Skills; Making S.L. an Attractive Profession.

Challenges facing S.L. across Europe

- Heavy workload;
- Salary disproportionate to workload;
- Responsibility *vaguely* defined and delimited;
- Lack of continuous professional development (CPD) of school leaders;
- Ageing school leaders, nearing retirement;
- Loss of professional leadership experience due to low gradual transition;
- Gender imbalance of school leaders
- Unclear, and highly varying, recruitment procedures;
- Low attractiveness of the school leader profession; and
- Decreasing number of qualified candidates.

ETUCE, School Leadership Survey, 2011

ETUCE Policy – 30 Recommendations.

European Policy Network on School Leadership (2011/13), financed by European Commission arising from Commission's view –

“School leaders have great impact on the quality of teaching and on the overall learning environment, including staff motivation, morale and performance, teaching practices, and the attitudes and aspirations of pupils and parents alike ... school leaders should have sufficient opportunities to develop and maintain effective leadership skills”

(2006/C 298/03).

EU Ministers of Ed. ---

“Equally important is ensuring that school leaders are not overburdened with administration tasks and concentrate on essential matters, such as the quality of learning, the curriculum, pedagogical issues, and staff performance, motivation and development” (2009/C 302/04).

A Historical Era of Societal Transition

- How to Respond? How to Cope?
- Dangers of “Presentism”, and Pessimism
- Need to Establish Broader Perspectives, Based on Realism.
- Schools Have Not Failed the Young or Society
- 90% Complete P.P.; 68% → Further, Higher Ed.
- Public Regard for Teachers –
 - 70% “Very Well” or “Well”; 87% “A Complex Job”;
 - 70% “Very Trusted or Trusted”.
 - 2nd in long list of Occupations (Nov. 2009 Research)

Some Omens for a Better Future / Ireland in International Perspective

- IMD, World Competitiveness Yearbook, 2012 / Ranks Ireland 1st in World Skill Labour.
- IBM, Global Location Trends Report, 2011 / Ireland First in World for Inward Investment.
- PWC, 2012, CEO Pulse Survey / 93% of Multinationals rate Investment in Ireland a Success.
- Global Innovation Index, 2012 / Ireland in Top 10 out of 141 Economies for its Business Environment.

Education as Part of a Social Re- Building Process

- 2012 Legatum Institute placed Ireland as 10th most prosperous country out of 142, on 8 key criteria.
- Benefit from Lessons Learned
- Resilience of the Irish
- Education at the Core of Our Future
Well-being – Culturally, Economically, Socially
- Have the Vision and Policies.

Education as Part of a Social Re-Building Process – Contd.

- Have the Infrastructural Base
- Considerable Consensus, based on Consultation
- High Quality Teaching Force
- High Quality Teacher Education
- Public Regard for and Interest in Ed.
- Evolving School Leadership Tradition.

School as a Bulwark for the Well-Being of Young

- Role was never more Crucial
- School as an Evolving Social Construct –
Restructuring
- The School as a Learning Community
- School Planning
- Whole School Evaluation
- School Self Evaluation
- Reform of Curricular and Assessment
- Teacher Education as a Continuum – Schools as Partners
- Restructuring VECs → ETBs → Impact
- A Culture Change.

Role of Principal (Part of Ed. Act, 1998)

- Encourage and Foster Learning
- Evaluate Students on Report Thereon
- Promote Co-operation with Community
- Manage the School, including guidance and direction of Teachers and other Staff
- Provide Leadership to School Community
- Promote Learning Environment

Role of Principal (Part of Ed. Act, 1998)

Contd...

- With School Community, Set Objectives for the School and Monitor Achievements
- Involve Parents in Work of School
- Role can be Infinite – “It is important that the care responsibilities of school leaders be defined and delimited” (OECD, 2008, p.9).
- Not Superman / Superwoman.

PCW STUDY School Leadership Matters

(N.I. + Rep. of Irel.) (Unpublished)

(2009)

- R.O.I. – Job Satisfaction of Newly Appointed Principals
 - 37% - “Very Satisfied” } 86%
 - 49% - “Quite Satisfied” }
 - 1% - “Very Unsatisfied”
- Creating a school ethos; Improving Standards; Pupil Contact; Involvement in New Initiatives People Management.
- Significant Recommendations to Address Problems.

LDS, Leadership Development
Evaluation of the Misneach
Programme (2005)

“It is encouraging to note that the number of Principals who, despite their frustrations, indicated that they enjoy work, the degree of challenge, and the variety”, p.7.

Guidance from Research Literature

- Huge Literature Now on School Leadership
- Greater Availability of CPD Courses
- Increasing Availability of Irish-based Research
- Core Personal Qualities –
“The most exceptional feature noted was the enthusiasm and passion principals exhibited and their devotion to education” (ISSPP)
- Emotional Intelligence is a major determinant of leadership style, affecting 50-70% of the work culture. Contagious effect of “leader attitude”, “leader mood”
M. Gaffney – Research data.

Key Emphases for Exercise of S.L. (i)

- Significance of S.L. Role-Potential Impact
- Need for Vision, Incorporating Values, Beliefs
- A Challenge and A Privilege
- Motivation – “Why Do I want This Job?”
- Setting Priorities
- Building A Collaborative Culture
- Sharing Power and Responsibility
- Nurturing Leadership Capacity.

Key Emphases (2)

- Close to Teaching-Learning in the School
- Active Involvement in Curricular Issues
- Resolving Weakness in T. & L.
- Infusing Meaning in Activities
- Affirmation of Staff Expertise / Achievements
- Facilitating Staff Development / Enablement
- Staff Recruitment Linked to School Climate
- Cherishing ALL the Pupils – Multiple Intelligences.

Key Emphases (3)

- Constructive Links with B.o.Ms, ETBs
- Being Close to Community Needs and Interests
- Guarding the Important V the Urgent
- “Controlling” the Administrative Load
- Develop own CPD
- Time for Reflection / Planning-Reduce “Hands-On”
- Balance in Work/Life Commitment –
Protect Against “Burn-Out”
- “Work Smarter, not Harder”.

Supports For, Needs of School Leaders (1)

- Need for Public Recognition and Affirmation of changed Paradigm of S.L.
- Need for Nat. and International Trends to be Converted to S.L. Policy
- More Realism Required in Resourcing for the School Reform Objectives.
- Getting the “Pressure and Support” Balance Right.

Supports For, Needs of School Leaders (2)

- Sophisticated Timing for Reform Required
- Varied Forms of Training, Induction, CPD
- Scope for Forms of Sabbatical, Linked to Work
- More Attention to Leadership Succession.

Supports For, Needs of School Leaders

(3)

- Informed Support of Trustees, B.o.Ms
- Links with HEIs Support Teams, L.D.S. etc
- Links with Agencies NAPD, PDA, JMB etc
- Esprit de Corps, Practical Supports of Collaborative Groups
- Networking with NCCA, Special Ed etc.
- Safeguarding Morale for the Moral Purpose of the Enterprise of Schooling.