



In-School Management

IPPN Position Paper

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1 BACKGROUND

IPPN is the officially-recognised professional body for the leaders of Irish primary schools. It is an independent, not-for-profit voluntary association with a local, regional and national presence. Recognised by the Minister for Education as an official Education Partner, IPPN works with the DES, the National Parents' Council, management bodies, unions, education agencies, academic institutions and children's charities towards the advancement of primary education. IPPN articulates the collective knowledge and professional experience of over 6,600 Principals and Deputy Principals.

2 CONTEXT

The proposals for the implementation of In-School Management (ISM) structures in primary schools, which were adopted as part of the Programme for Competitiveness and Work, resulted in significant additional posts of responsibility in primary schools and in new procedures for making appointments to such posts. The proposals were aimed at significantly improving management capacity in primary schools and responding to teacher union claims for improved career structures and opportunities for teachers, and the creation of an ISM team within each school.

DES Circular 6/97 stated that the revised arrangements were designed to:

- match the responsibilities of the posts more closely to the central tasks of the school
- focus on the provision of opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff, and the academic and pastoral work of the school
- establish selection procedures for Deputy Principals and post-holders with the aim of ensuring that the most suitable people are appointed.

Since their introduction, there has been a significant reduction in the number of posts in primary schools due to the moratorium on promoted posts which has, over time, eroded the number of posts in most schools. Many of the senior personnel in schools have retired and their posts have remained unfilled.

3 THE ISSUE

The ongoing introduction of legislation affecting education has had an unparalleled impact on the work of the Principal. The following pieces of legislation are all adding to the workload of school leaders:

- Education Act 1998
- Employment Equality Act 1998
- Data Protection Acts 1998-2000
- Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Equal Status Act 2000
- The Teaching Council Act 2001
- Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act 2001
- The Ombudsman for Children Act 2002
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act, 2005
- Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003
- Equality Act 2004
- Children First.

Curricular initiatives since the introduction of the Revised Curriculum (1999) such as the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, School Self-Evaluation and new models of school inspection are making the role of school leader ever more complex.

In addition, there are ongoing initiatives such as the Anti-Bullying Strategy, revised enrolment policies, Child Protection policy and book rental schemes, which have now become mandatory.

Finally, the establishment of statutory bodies – the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE), The Teaching Council, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and Túsla, the Child and Family Agency – has expanded further the administrative duties of the Principal and Deputy Principal.

The delegation of duties and areas of responsibility to the Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and special duties teachers is central to the effective functioning of any school. It provides a very necessary support for Principals in carrying out their role. In this context, IPPN considers, in particular, that:

- the Principal's role as instructional leader may necessitate delegating particular areas of the curriculum to curriculum leaders / co-ordinators
- some of the day-to-day management and administration tasks of the school must be delegated to the middle management team
- the middle management structure should be tasked with relieving the Principal of substantial administration and communications responsibilities, as the post holders will be responsible for these aspects of their particular areas of responsibility.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

IPPN recommends that a new circular replacing Circulars P007/2003 and 28/2011 be published, including the following amendments:

1. A fixed-term contract for promoted posts. This ensures that post-holders have the capacity, energy and commitment necessary for the role on an ongoing basis. It allows for teachers to have an opportunity to step up to ISM and also to step back from ISM. A post holder should not be prohibited from applying for an extension to the fixed term contract if desired and merited. The length of the term can be determined by each Board of Management (BoM) to meet the needs of school, for example smaller schools may prefer a shorter term to make the promoted posts more attractive; some schools may prefer a longer term to see through a particular programme of work or project.
2. Role clarity for middle management posts. Deputy Principals and other post holders require a clear definition of roles and responsibilities. This would enable Principals to plan for the delegation of functions in a systematic way and ensure that all schools operate ISM in a similar way. It should be acknowledged that the work and time commitment is more than that of those without posts of responsibility. It should be further acknowledged that the duties assigned at the beginning of the post are initial duties and can be reviewed annually, based on the needs of the schools.
3. Removal of length of service as a criterion for selection for In-School Management. Presently there are three criteria under which post-holders may be selected, namely:
 - willingness to participate in the school's middle management structures by undertaking the additional responsibilities specified in the list of duties;
 - experience gained through length of service in the school and
 - knowledge of and capability to perform the duties attaching to the post.IPPN believes that the criterion “experience gained through length of service in the school” should be removed.
4. Regular review of the work of the ISM team. There is need for flexibility in the way in which Principals, with the approval of their Boards of Management, delegate duties to post-holders in light of changing priorities within a school. Duties assigned to posts should be subject to review and change annually in response to current school priorities. Priorities for Principal Teachers – in clear focus (IPPN, 2014) and the SSE process should be used by whole school staffs to decide the current priorities within the school.
5. Accountability to the Board of Management. ISM team members are appointed by their BoM. Part of their role should entail reporting on progress in their assigned area of responsibility and being accountable to the Board, through the Principal, for same.
6. Clarification re. the timing of ISM work. There is need for a clear understanding by post-holders that the duties for which they are being paid an allowance must normally be performed outside of teaching time. DES should clarify the level of outside class contact time expected.

7. Communication. There is need for regular meetings of the In-School Management team so as to help formulate and advance school plans, and these should normally take place outside of teaching time.
8. Specific training for ISM team members. IPPN recommends that professional development courses should be provided for all post holders, including the Deputy Principal, with a view to enabling schools to forge effective middle management structures. Principals should receive training in how best to utilise and manage promoted posts – i.e. what they can and cannot expect of ISM team members.
9. DES to review the anomaly in two-teacher schools whereby a teacher can resign from the promoted post without resigning their teaching position.

5 CONCLUSION

The changes introduced by the restructuring of ISM in 1997 were generally welcomed by teachers. Detailed procedures were set out regarding schedules, duties, and appointment to the posts. The moratorium on promoted posts currently in place has had a disastrous effect on distributed leadership in schools. There is an urgent need to lift this moratorium.

Post-holders with positions of curricular, administrative and pastoral responsibilities have a measurable influence on the quality of educational provision within a school. They add the dimension of distributed leadership throughout the school which creates the momentum to drive forward reform and improvement. The quality of teaching and learning benefits as a result.