Education and Training Inspectorate

Preparing School Principals to be Effective Leaders

A review of existing leadership programmes including the professional qualification in headship PQH (NI)

The Education and Training Inspectorate - Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	**REMIT, METHOD AND CONTEXT**	**1**
1.1	REMIT AND SCOPE	1
1.2	METHOD AND EVIDENCE	1
1.3	CONTEXT	2
2.	**KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**	**5**
2.1	KEY FINDINGS	5
2.2	RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE REVIEW	7
3.	**REVIEW FINDINGS IN DETAIL**	**8**
3.1	EVIDENCE FROM THE ETI SCHOOLS' INSPECTION PROGRAMME	8
3.2	THE PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION FOR HEADSHIP (PQH NI) PROGRAMME	10
3.3	PARTICIPANT AND STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON THE MASTERS PROGRAMMES	17
4.	**CONCLUSION**	**18**

APPENDIX 1 ETI REPORT ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: A BASELINE EVALUATION (2006-2007 – 2008-2009) DECEMBER 2009

APPENDIX 2 STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED AND SCHOOLS VISITED

APPENDIX 3 ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE REGIONAL TRAINING UNIT IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

APPENDIX 4 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. REMIT, METHOD AND CONTEXT

1.1 REMIT AND SCOPE

The remit for the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) review of leadership development programmes stems directly from the Department of Education's (DE) policy *Every School A Good School: A Policy for School Improvement (ESaGS).* Recognising and supporting the importance of the central role of the principal in school improvement, DE stated that it intended to:

> conduct a formal review of existing leadership programmes including, in particular, the professional qualification in headship PQH NI; [1].

The ETI review evaluates leadership development programmes for school principals in Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on the professional qualification for headship (PQH NI), and makes recommendations with a view to promoting discussion, and a wider consideration of the policy options.

Since 1999, DE has funded practitioners to undertake PQH NI as preparation to become a school principal. The programme is provided by the Regional Training Unit (RTU),[2] the 'lead and awarding' body, under license from the National College for School Leadership. The Northern Ireland version of the programme is derived from the National Standards for Headteachers, set out by the National College for School Leadership as a basis for the National Professional Qualification for Headship in England. The PQH NI programme has been modified since 1999, when it was first offered. From that time, some 1,780 practitioners in total have engaged in PQH NI. In the last two years, for which figures were provided by RTU, 427 practitioners took part, at an estimated cost to DE of just under £1.8 million. Based on RTU's figures and averaged over the lifetime of the programme, the total cost of PQH NI is approaching at least £7.5 million.

The review also takes account of the views of the providers and graduates of the Masters (M) level higher degree programmes in school management and leadership provided by the five local higher education institutions (HEIs). M level programmes, and the candidates who enrol on M level leadership programmes, do not receive government funding.

Unlike the provision for initial teacher education programmes[3], leadership development programmes (PQH NI or M level) are not subject to a DE Circular setting out the requirements with which programmes must comply in order to be inspected and accredited for the purpose of approval.

1.2 METHOD AND EVIDENCE

In order to set a baseline for the review, ETI first published a report in December 2009[4] based on an analysis of inspection evidence from September 2006 to October 2009 which indicated that in 30% of the 322 schools inspected in that period[5], the quality of school leadership was evaluated as not good enough. The effectiveness of the work of the principal was identified as inadequate or unsatisfactory in over one-tenth of all the schools inspected in that period. In those schools, leadership and governance was not effective enough to break a sustained cycle of low and under-achievement and to improve ineffective schools.

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[1] Page 20, Every School A Good School. A Policy For School Improvement, DE..

[2] See Appendix 3 for a summary of the role of the RTU in leadership development

[3] DE Circular 2010/03 Initial Teacher Education: approval of programmes

[4] Education and Training Inspectorate Report on School Leadership: A Baseline Evaluation (2006/7 – 2008/9) And see Appendix 1 for a summary of the report

[5] 234 primary schools; 71 post-primary schools and 17 special schools

Following the baseline report, ETI conducted the current review between October 2009 and June 2012 by collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data. During the period ETI analysed inspection data from the ETI inspection programmes: a sample of 433 schools, comprising 327 primary schools, 91 post-primary schools and 15 special schools (which represents 39% of primary schools, 43% of post-primary schools and 67% of special schools).

In order to gather further first-hand evidence, ETI visited primary, post-primary and special schools to meet PQH NI participants, PQH NI and M level graduates and school principals, including the principals of participants and the principals of PQH NI placement schools. Meetings were also held with the directors of the M level programmes, the RTU staff of the PQH NI programme, and with officers from DE, the General Teaching Council (GTCNI), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and one of the teacher associations. A range of assessment sessions, events and seminars provided by the RTU as part of the PQH NI programme were observed and evaluated and a focus group of serving school principals was convened[6].

Interviews were conducted to gather evidence of the experiences, expectations and views of all of the stakeholders. Those who were participants on the current PQH NI programme were interviewed several times during the course of the review. Evidence from the interviews was collated and validated in the context of ETI's inspection findings.

Furthermore, in an attempt to identify any relevant pattern, ETI compared the database of principals holding the PQH NI qualification, which was provided to ETI by RTU for this purpose, with the evaluation of leadership effectiveness made by ETI on inspections. Based on 699 standard, focused and short inspections undertaken from September 2006 to June 2012, (comprising 530 primary, 131 post-primary and 38 special schools) a correlation was sought between schools whose principals hold a PQH NI qualification and the Together Towards Improvement (TTI)[7] quality indicator of the ***quality of leadership and management*** at the time when the PQH NI graduate was principal of the school inspected. In the case of post-primary schools, a further comparison was made using the TTI quality indicator of ***strategic leadership*.** The latter TTI quality indicator is that most closely aligned with the intended outcome of any leadership development programme for principals: effective school leadership. A short selection of the analyses is included in section 3.2.1.

When seeking evidence of value-added (an advantage), based on inspection evidence, for schools whose leaders hold a PQH NI qualification, there are other factors to be taken into account, including the recruitment process for school principals, which is referred to further in section 1.3.

1.3 CONTEXT

POLICY CONTEXT

In ESaGS, DE sets out its school improvement agenda in relation to school leadership which is to ensure that DE's wider vision of 'every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development' is achieved.

ESaGS sets out a vision for all schools as 'vibrant, self-improving, well governed and effectively led communities of good practice, focusing not on institutions but on meeting the needs and aspirations of all pupils through high quality learning, recognising the centrality of the teacher'.

[6] A list of stakeholders, sessions and schools visited and meetings held is provided in Appendix 2
[7] Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation. ETI, 2010

The vision is supported by DE's two overarching goals:

- raising standards for all; and
- closing the performance gap, increasing access and equity;

and three enabling goals;

- developing the education workforce;
- improving the learning environment; and
- transforming the governance and management of education.

The relevant goals in relation to leadership stated in ESaGS are:

- "to make school governance an attractive and rewarding experience and an opportunity for the community to play its part in helping all young people achieve their full potential; and
- to make school principalship an attractive career option and support aspiring leaders and existing leaders to fulfil the role effectively."

In pursuit of its goals, ESaGS policy states that DE intends to:

- "conduct a formal review of existing leadership programmes including, in particular, the professional qualification in headship PQH NI;
- ensure that new leadership programmes have a particular focus on getting the best out of people;
- develop leadership and management training for persons other than principals;
- introduce coaching and mentoring arrangements for all newly appointed principals; and
- enable effective principals to contribute to improved performance across the wider system[8]."

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

In undertaking this review of leadership programmes for school principals, ETI recognises that school leadership has never before been so demanding. Leadership capacity needs to reflect the higher expectations arising from the changing demands on education in the 21st century, in the local environment of school improvement, local area-based planning and financial sustainability of schools. Schools have to respond effectively to the combined

[8] Page 20, Every School A Good School. A Policy For School Improvement, DE.

demands for economic regeneration and for social reconciliation. In this context, leadership development programmes require a design that maps out a clear pathway from the earliest stages of teacher professional development through to preparation to become a school principal. School leaders need systematic development both of their personal and their professional skills, over the long term.

The conclusions from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) School Leadership Project[9] and, in the local context, the PwC *School Leadership Matters* report[10], point to the need for the professional development arrangements for school leaders to be reviewed and appropriate action taken to address the challenges of attracting, developing and sustaining leaders for our schools.

The OECD research revealed that improvement is required to professionalise school leadership, to support current school leaders and to make school leadership a more attractive career for future leaders.

The OECD report states that, to meet the needs of society and the economy in the 21st century, a school needs to re-energise and transform its relationship with the community which it serves. To do so, schools need leaders with the necessary negotiation and leadership skills. In this context, the OECD report proposes that there is a need to:

- re-define school leadership responsibilities;
- distribute school leadership;
- develop the skills for effective school leadership, and
- make school leadership an attractive profession.

The changes proposed would involve leaders building much closer relationships with professionals, in fields related to education, in order to develop a genuinely collaborative and integrated approach. Leadership, in the context of reform, therefore requires of school principals a much broader base of multi-disciplinary skills and professional knowledge than before, and, consequently, the system needs leadership development programmes which are capable of providing leaders suited to 21st century schools.

The PwC report on the recruitment and retention of school principals makes recommendations about improving communication, succession planning, the selection process, reward, leadership development, support, career paths and new leadership models. ETI's review does not attempt to duplicate the work done by PwC on recruitment and retention. However, the extent to which successful leadership development depends upon an effective recruitment and appointments procedure needs to be recognised, especially in the local context where there is no formal or mandatory qualification in leadership required for candidates for the post of principal.

In 2009, as a contributing partner to the OECD and other national and international research, RTU revised PQH NI. It had become evident that many PQH NI graduates preferred to remain in senior or middle management roles, rather than apply for the post of principal. One purpose of the changes made was to ensure that, through an 'assessment centre'

[9] 'Improving School Leadership' Vol 1.Policy and Practice. B Pont, D Nusche, H Moorman. OCED 2009
[10] School Leadership Matters: an empirical assessment of the attractiveness of principalship in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2009. (A report commissioned jointly by RTU and the Leadership Development Service in the south of Ireland and produced by PwC).

method, the selection process reduced the size of the intake and improved the proportion of PQH NI graduates in 'touching distance' (within 12 to 18 months) of taking on the role of principal. A further significant feature of the revised model was the adoption of a competency-based approach to professional and personal learning designed to build capacity for effective leadership across the Northern Ireland school system as a whole.

It is important to note that the RTU does not provide PQH NI in isolation from leadership development programmes for those in other senior and middle management school positions[11]. The RTU recognises the wider systemic need for leadership development. From 2009 to 2012, in pursuit of the ESaGS goals, the RTU responded by establishing a comprehensive framework, comprising some 18 distinctive, but interlinked, initiatives addressing the needs of middle-managers, "aspirant, emerging, early and experienced heads", as well as system leaders. From 2009 to 2013, some 8,243 teachers were enrolled on 30 different RTU leadership programmes, ranging from one day to six to seven days in duration over a number of months. A further 5,468 educators enrolled on a series of leadership seminars and DE partner events. In total, a very significant number of teachers and leaders enrolled on courses related to leadership. The quality, effectiveness and impact of the wider RTU leadership development work were not intended to be part of the ESaGS review.

2. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS[12]

2.1 KEY FINDINGS

2.1.1 ETI's inspection evidence of the quality and effectiveness of strategic leadership in schools.

i. There has been no improvement in the overall percentages relating to the quality of leadership and management in schools since ETI's 2009 baseline report. In 433 schools inspected from October 2009 to June 2012, the quality of leadership and management in 47% of the schools was evaluated by ETI as outstanding or very good. When examined by sector (see Section 3.1), there are improvements in the primary and special education sectors and a decrease in the measure of effectiveness in the post-primary sector. *(Supports R1 and R2)*

ii. As evaluated through inspections, the evidence indicates that the proportion of 'very good' or 'outstanding' school leaders of post-primary schools is low. Therefore, the pool of current, high quality, practitioners is too small to support the development of leadership capacity at system level. *(Supports R3)*

2.1.2 Evaluation of the impact of school leadership development programmes on improvement.

There have been no evaluations undertaken by any of the providers, considered in this review, of the impact of their school leadership development programmes on school leadership and management, school effectiveness and school improvement. *(Supports R1 and R2)*

[11] See Appendix 3 for a summary of the role of the RTU in leadership development
[12] The key findings are cross referenced to the subsequent three recommendations and are itemised in italics as R1, R2 and R3

2.1.3 Developments in the revised PHQ NI.

There have been some significant changes in the revised PQH NI model in the context of the OECD research, and the emerging RTU leadership development framework which is described in the last paragraph of Section 1.3.

i. The role and model of coach as developed in the revised PQH NI is highly regarded by both PQH NI participants and by the coaches themselves for developing the participants' capacity for problem-solving on leadership issues. *(Supports R3)*

ii. Participants welcomed the school placement as an innovation in the revised model. ETI evidence, and an RTU quality assurance review of placements, indicated that not all participants, particularly in the post-primary sector, engaged in tasks which were at a sufficiently strategic level in the context of school development planning for improvement and in aspects of managing the financial sustainability of the school. *(Supports R2)*

iii. Poor communications and inter-personal skills are commonly reported by ETI as features of senior leadership in schools which have been evaluated as less than satisfactory. Participants reported to ETI that they had insufficient opportunities to apply and develop their inter-personal and people skills in leadership contexts during the programme. RTU reported that, in response, they had offered relevant face-to-face training in these skills. (*Supports R1 and R2)*

iv. Among the PQH NI participants tracked and interviewed, there has been no significant increase in the number of graduates of the revised PQH NI expressing an interest in progressing into principal posts compared with the intention of graduates of the original PQH programme. *(Supports R2)*

2.1.4 Correlation of PQH NI graduates with ETI's inspection measures of school effectiveness and strategic leadership.

The school system has increasing numbers of leadership and management graduates in leadership positions. When the database of PQH graduates is compared with inspection measures of effective school leadership and management and strategic leadership, there is no significant overall increase in the quality of leadership evident through standard, focused and short inspections when examined over either the past six years or over the past three years. (See section 3.3.1)

2.1.5 The development of the competences required for school leadership.

i. There is a lack of continuity and progression from initial teacher education and through teachers' continuing professional development stages to the leadership development stage. *(Supports R1)*

ii. To become a school principal, a combination of practical skills, professional competencies, conceptual understanding of organisational (school) design and the ability to lead improvement are required. Increasingly, candidates and those appointed to the post of principal seek to obtain the PQH NI and in addition, invest in their own career development by undertaking an M level degree in school leadership in order to help them achieve all of the skills and competences which they believe they need. *(Supports R2)*

2.1.6 Preparation for the post of principal as a continuing process.

Once appointed, it is essential that the leadership capabilities of the principal should be reviewed and refreshed regularly. *(Supports R3)*

2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE REVIEW

Based upon the findings in section 2.1 and supported by all aspects of the review evidence, ETI makes three recommendations (R1, R2 and R3) for the attention and action of DE in providing a lead for the appropriate stakeholders such as the Education and Skills Authority, the School Development Service, RTU, Schools' Employers, GTCNI, and HEI providers to work together in a partnership.

R1. There is a need for a single competency and quality improvement framework.

A single, coherent overarching competency and quality improvement framework is needed to span the life career of a teacher, the development of school leaders and the institutional improvement of schools as inter-related processes. At any individual point, whether as a student-teacher, a teacher or as a school leader, performance is assessed by one of a range of different, yet broadly similar, competency statements, sets of standards, career appraisal measures or teaching performance indicators. Furthermore, the organisational and policy context in which the teachers' work – that of school improvement - is also evaluated through different, but broadly similar, sets of quality indicators, characteristics of effectiveness or success criteria. Each measurement rubric has a different and perfectly legitimate purpose, created individually by organisations with distinctive remits: yet all are focused on improvement and raising standards.

While individually fit for purpose, they do not bring collective clarity to the continuous process of reflective practice and improvement of the individual and the organisation, which is central to effective educational provision. A single overarching framework would not replace all others, but would seek to accommodate the differing needs of the existing sets of criteria and bring coherence and clarity to the central purpose of education. It would also reinforce the importance of leadership behaviours being recognised, nurtured and developed explicitly from the initial stages of a teacher's career, regardless of the specific posts of responsibility of individuals at any one time.

R2. There is a need for a combined academic and vocational pathway together with extended placement opportunities for experiential learning which may provide a route for mandatory recognition for the post of principal.

Participants, serving principals and other stakeholders interviewed agreed that any one qualification, whether largely vocational or largely academic in its nature, is by itself insufficient as preparation to become a school principal. The development of the inherent capacity for leadership within the school workforce requires the development of broader leadership capabilities including a robust, 'no excuses' approach to self-evaluation for improvement.

There are a number of possible experiential pathways through which these capabilities could be developed over time. It would be valuable for aspiring principals to be able to record and reference their validated experience and professional learning collated in a career-long portfolio.

Any qualification which becomes mandatory should be fit for purpose, based on certain principles. Drawing on the range of evidence collated for this review, ETI has developed, as a starting point, a draft set of nine key principles[13] with which to shape a common framework and to regulate a combined academic/vocational/experiential pathway.

R3. The need to investigate the implications of introducing the principles of review and renewal of leadership.

Serving principals are clear that once appointed, their need for support while in post and their need for career development continue unabated. Once they are trained and appointed, while evidently satisfying the standards, they require continuous professional development, including the need for continued mentoring, coaching and counselling. There is also a need to extend their system-wide knowledge. This includes the need to:

- provide wider horizons for principals, beyond the locality they grew up in, and in which they may still be teaching;
- encourage greater mobility from one school leadership post to another;
- provide the school system with change-leaders, coaches and problem-solvers to tackle under-achieving schools working in difficult circumstances (and to take them through the formal intervention process if necessary); and
- to create opportunities for participants to run schools under supervision as part of an extended training programme and to meet succession planning needs.

All of the above point to the value of considering a much more flexible approach to the appointment of principals.[14] Considering, for example, options for secondments into other settings and contexts, including those outside education, and a formal opportunity to review, refresh and renew leadership skills and competences.

3. REVIEW FINDINGS IN DETAIL

3.1 EVIDENCE FROM THE ETI SCHOOLS' INSPECTION PROGRAMME

The TTI quality indicator for the ETI evaluation of the **quality of leadership and management** of any school includes a number of contributory elements, for example: the effectiveness of the principal and the other senior and middle managers to improve the provision made for learners and their achievements and standards; the arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review; the extent to which a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement exists at all levels within the school; the planning of the curriculum, including staff development and deployment to meet the needs of the children and young people; and, the management of resources, including the school's financial budget.

[13] Appendix 4 sets out nine key design principles informed by inspection evidence.
[14] Capturing the Leadership Premium. (McKinsey and Company, 2010)

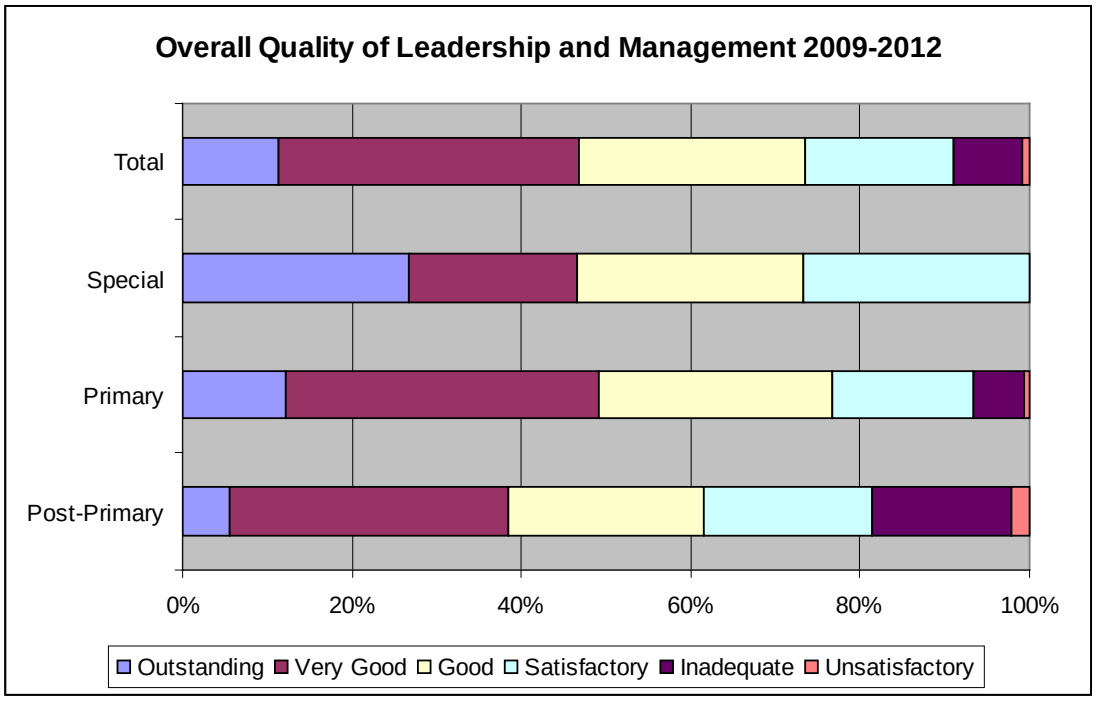

Figure 1

As summarised in Figure 1, the following are the key findings emerging from inspection evidence from 2009-12[15].

- **PRIMARY:** In 77% of the primary schools inspected during 2009-12, the overall quality of leadership and management was evaluated as good to outstanding. It was very good or outstanding in 49% of the schools. Overall, these figures present a consistent improvement in the primary school system since the 2009 baseline report.

- **POST-PRIMARY**: In 62% of the post-primary schools inspected during 2009-12, the overall quality of leadership and management was evaluated as good to outstanding. It was either very good or outstanding in 38% of the schools. These figures represent a decrease of 10 percentage points in post-primary schools, since 2006-2009, where leadership and management was evaluated as good to outstanding.

- **SPECIAL SCHOOLS:** In 73% of special schools inspected during 2009-12, the overall quality of leadership and management was evaluated as good to outstanding. It was very good or outstanding in 47% of the schools. Overall, these data figures represent an 11 percentage point improvement in the special schools system since 2006-2009.

In school inspections, where leadership and management was evaluated as good or better, the following strengths were most evident:

- principals with a clear vision for the future development of the school which was agreed and 'bought into' by all of the staff;

- a vision, supported by appropriate strategies in a School Development Plan (SDP), which is a working document contributed to by all, through a rigorous and regular review and self-evaluation process leading to improvement;

[15] Sample of inspections in the dataset as defined in Section 1.2

- distributed leadership being practised to maximise and develop the expertise of the staff, hence building capacity for development and improvement across the school;

- a relentless pursuit of high achievements and standards for all learners through highly effective learning and teaching; and

- robust, rigorous and well embedded processes and procedures for assessing and tracking the progress of all of the learners.

Inspections across 2009-12, indicated that in one in five primary schools and approximately two out of five post-primary schools, the effectiveness of leadership was satisfactory or below.

In these cases, the school leaders, staff and governors need to:

- develop further the strategic leadership at all levels in approximately one in four schools; in particular, for the middle management level, such as key stage co-ordinators in primary schools and heads of departments in post-primary schools;

- improve the quality of evaluation to ensure it is rigorous and inclusive and leads to measurable and discernible improvements in learning and teaching; and

- improve the quality of the SDP in one in four primary schools and one in three post-primary schools.

In special and primary schools there is a good relationship between the quality of leadership and management overall and the action to effect improvement. In contrast, in the post-primary schools, there is a significant difference between the overall quality of leadership and management and the quality of the school development planning process to bring about significant school improvement. Considering all of the TTI quality indicators used by ETI on inspections, the quality indicator of 'planning and action for improvement', is the least effective measure, being not good enough in almost half of post-primary schools.

3.2 THE PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION FOR HEADSHIP (PQH NI) PROGRAMME

3.2.1 PQH NI graduates and inspection evidence

Leadership development providers (the RTU as the provider of PQH NI and the HEIs as providers of M level programmes in school management and leadership) are responsible for auditing, quality-assuring and evaluating internally their provision in order to maintain quality and standards and to make improvements. The RTU is required to ensure high standards of comparability and transportability with programmes for the preparation for headship in England and Wales, as PQH is licensed, subject to external scrutiny, by the National College for School Leadership, based on the National Professional Qualification for Headship criteria and standards. The HEI providers are required to meet academic standards for M level programmes and are subject to scrutiny and approval both from within and beyond the university.

All providers are able to identify the increasing numbers of graduates who progress to principals' posts. Furthermore, the evidence indicates that there is a significant proportion of PQH NI graduates in other senior and in middle management roles, such as vice-principals, heads of department and curriculum and key stage co-ordinators in primary, post–primary and special schools. However, there has been no evaluation undertaken by the providers of the impact of their provision in terms of the quality and effectiveness of the graduates in bringing about school improvement, improving learning and teaching, raising standards, (especially for low and under-achievers) and eliminating school failure. Given the investment in leadership development both by individuals and by government, there needs to be continuous tracking and evaluation of impact to demonstrate value for money in terms of DE's policies for school improvement. The analysis in this section begins, by drawing on relevant inspection evidence, to explore some aspects of the complex relationship between the professional development of school leaders and both teacher performance and pupil performance. This initial work points to the need for further analysis and evaluation of impact.

ETI cooperated with RTU to trace PQH NI graduates, based on a database provided by RTU, to see if any relationship between the evaluation of leadership in schools and principals holding the PQH NI qualification could be identified.

The findings indicate that there is no apparent value-added (advantage) demonstrated in the effectiveness of school leadership in the 699 schools inspected from September 2006 to June 2012 based on the extent to which principals of those schools were PQH NI graduates. The effectiveness of school leadership was evaluated as lower in post-primary schools than in primary and special schools. Each sector is considered in turn below.

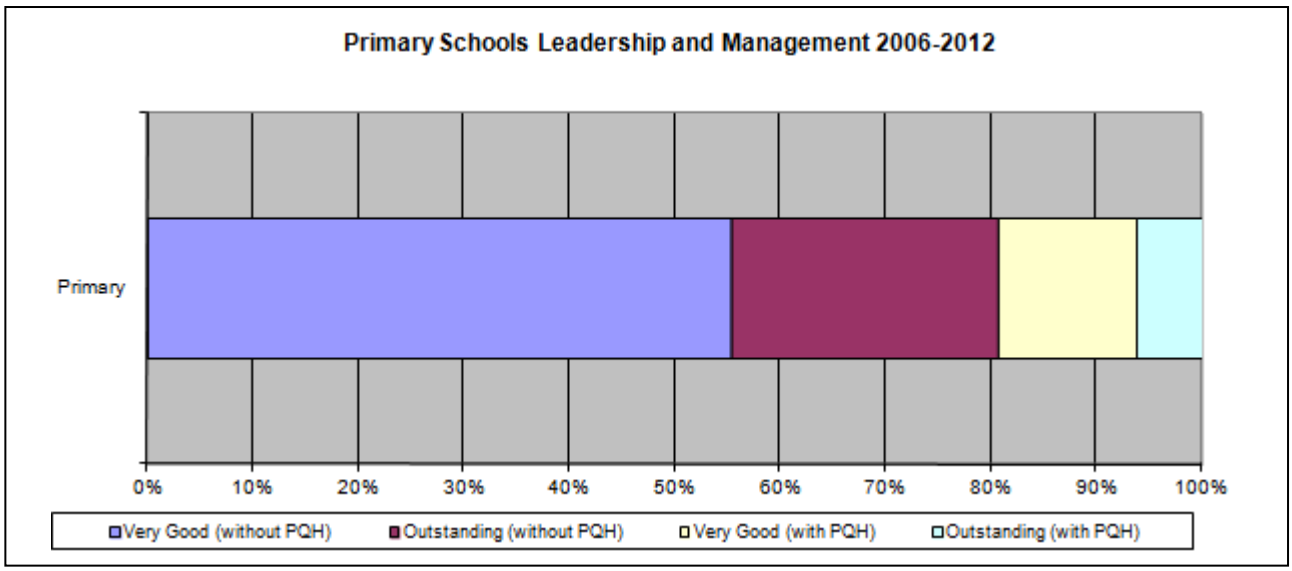

Figure 2

In 530 primary focused and short inspections, leadership and management were evaluated as very good or outstanding in 224 of the schools. In 70 of these schools, where the leadership and management were evaluated as outstanding, one-fifth (20%) of the principals held the qualification. Of the 154 primary schools evaluated as very good, less than one-fifth (19%) of the principals held the qualification.

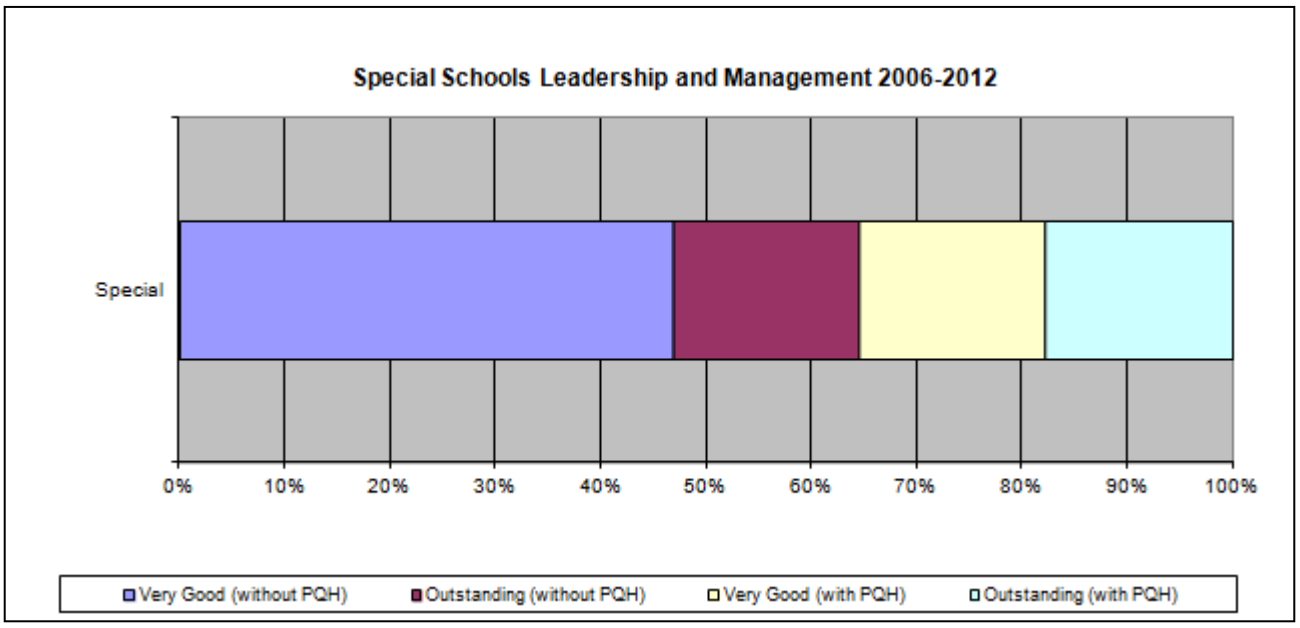

Figure 3

Over the same period, leadership and management were evaluated as very good or outstanding in 18 out of the 38 special schools inspected. In 7 of these schools, where leadership and management were evaluated as outstanding, three of the principals hold the PQH NI qualification. In those special schools evaluated as very good, over one-quarter (27%) of the principals held the PQH NI qualification.

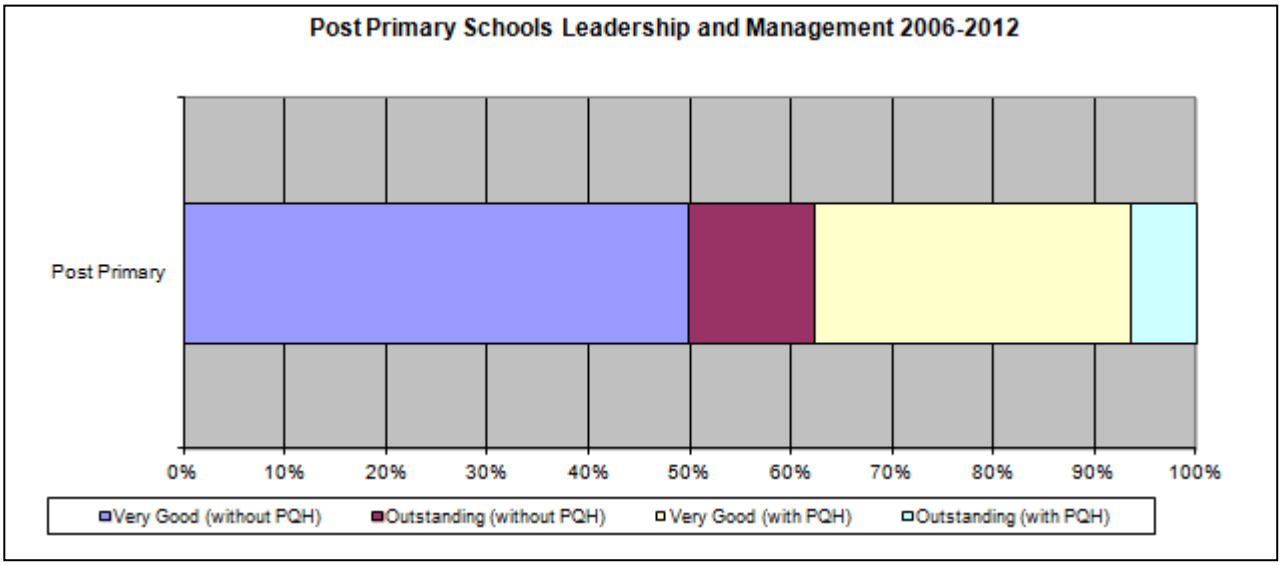

Figure 4

Since September 2006, there have been 131 standard inspections in post-primary schools. In 50 schools, leadership and management were evaluated as outstanding or very good overall; nearly two-fifths (38%) of the principals in the 41 very good schools held the PQH NI qualification, and three principals in the 9 schools evaluated as outstanding held PQH NI.

Schools in the DE formal intervention process from 2009

Since September 2009, 34 schools have been entered by DE into the formal intervention process[16]. At the time of the original inspections of the schools in formal intervention, approximately one third of the principals held a PQH qualification. Almost one quarter of the primary principals held a PQH NI qualification and almost half of the post-primary principals.

Post-primary schools inspected between 2009 – 2012

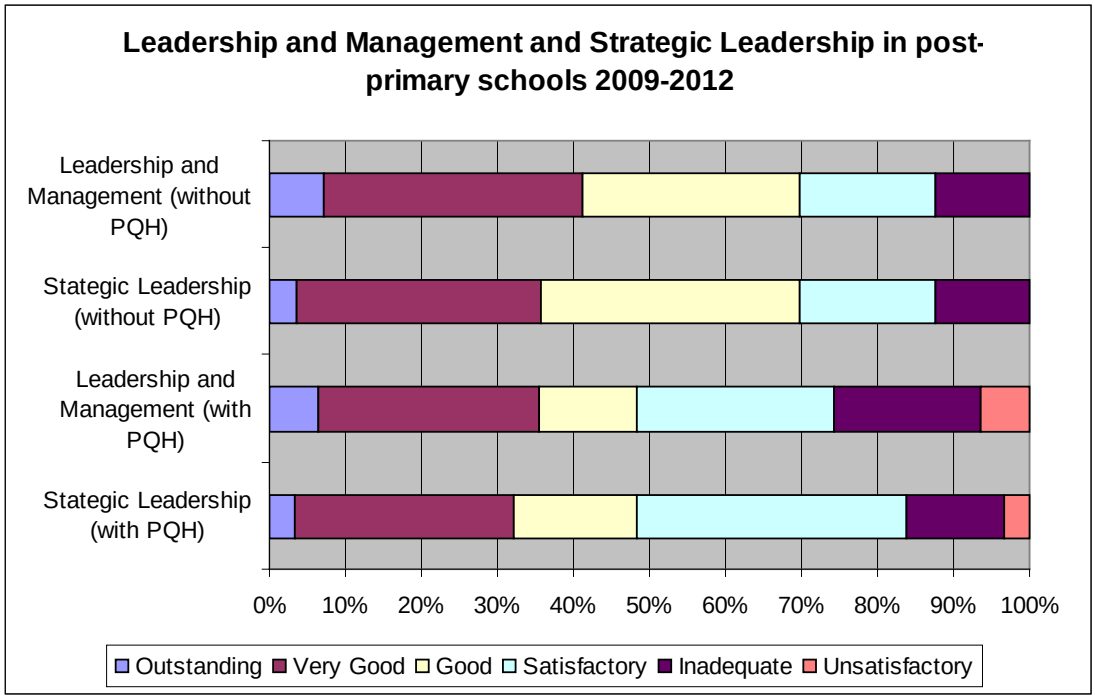

Figure 5

As shown in Figure 1, there is a higher proportion of schools in the post-primary sector inspected, where the quality of leadership and management was evaluated as satisfactory or below (when compared with the primary and special school sector). For this reason, the TTI indicator for *leadership and management* and the TTI indicator for *strategic leadership* for post-primary inspections conducted between 2009 and 2012 were compared for principals holding the PQH NI qualification and for those without PQH NI. Figure 5 indicates that, from a total of 85 schools, in those schools which were evaluated as satisfactory or below, there is a higher proportion of principals with PQH NI when compared with those principals without PQH NI, for both of the TTI indicators.

[16] Under the ESaGS policy, each school evaluated as less than satisfactory by ETI is placed by DE into formal intervention for the purpose of it receiving intensive support to assist it to improve.

Post-primary schools inspected between 2009-2012 with the principal appointed after 2001

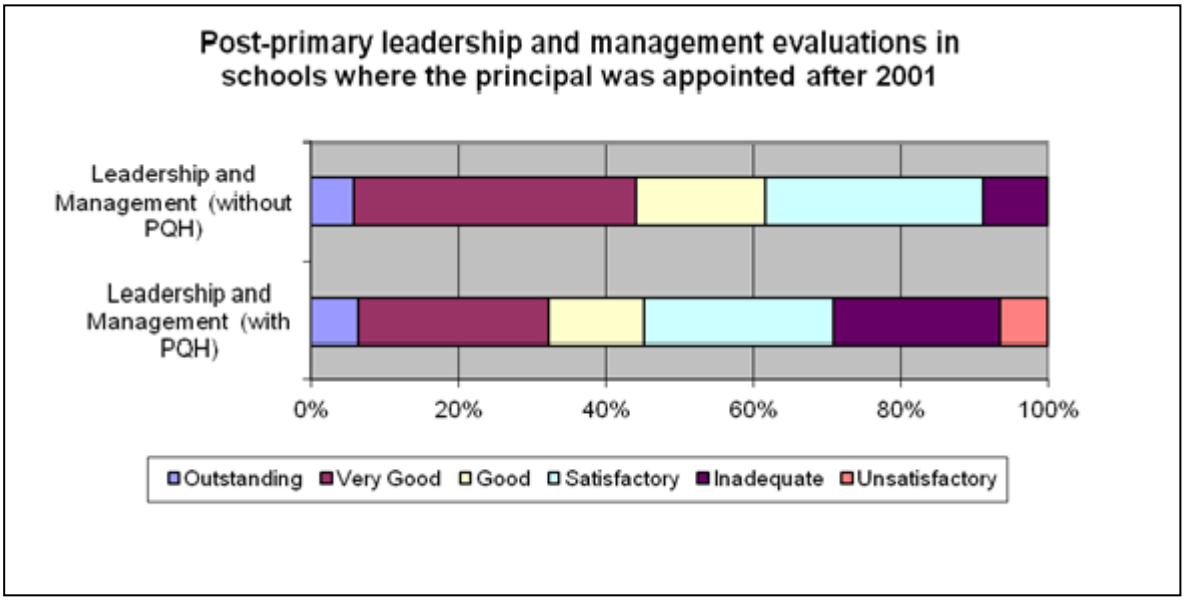

Figure 6

Looking in more detail, in Figure 6, at the post-primary sector, a further analysis of the 2009-2012 inspection data takes into account only those post-primary principals appointed after 2001 (the date on which the first cohort of PQH NI graduates could have been appointed as a principal). In this cohort, 30 principals held PQH NI and 34 do not. Figure 6 indicates that there is a smaller proportion of post-primary principals, who are PQH NI graduates, in schools where the leadership and management was evaluated as outstanding, very good or good. In contrast, there is a larger proportion of principals who are PQH NI graduates in schools where the leadership and management was evaluated as satisfactory or less than satisfactory .

Taking all the sectors together in summary, while the school system has increasing numbers of principals who hold PQH NI, there is no significant increase evident in the quality or effectiveness of the principal in leading school improvement from 2006-2012. However, in post-primary schools, inspected between 2009 and 2012, the data indicate both that only a minority of principals in the most effective schools hold the PQH NI qualification and, at the same time, a significant minority of principals of schools in formal intervention hold the PQH NI qualification.

3.2.2 The views of the PQH NI graduates

The ETI conducted interviews with 26 PQH NI graduates from the revised programme in primary, post-primary and special schools[17].

The teaching experience of the graduates ranged from 7 years to 32 years. A majority of the graduates had previous sustained teaching experience in other schools, before being appointed to their current position. The length of teaching experience of graduates in their current schools at the time of the review, ranged from 2 years to 30 years.

[17] The sample included all successful graduates from the early graduation board interviews held in June 2011, and a sample of 11 successful graduates from the November 2011 graduation board. Almost one-third of the graduates interviewed had been part of the ETI's initial sample of successful candidates from the beginning of the revised programme.

The graduates' leadership and management roles, within their respective schools, ranged from middle management positions to vice-principal level; almost one-third of graduates were vice-principals or had experience as a vice-principal or principal in an 'acting' capacity.

Almost one-half of the graduates had an M, or higher-level, post-graduate qualification; most of these qualifications were related to the study of topics involving aspects of educational management and all were obtained before starting the revised PQH NI.

The PQH NI application and 'assessment centre' stages were viewed very positively by nearly all of the graduates. They felt that there was both rigour and challenge in this part of the selection process; nearly all commented on a real sense of achievement in completing successfully the initial assessment stage.

Most of the graduates were very positive about the role of their coach; despite the fact that in some cases, the coach was from a different school phase to that of the graduate. The graduates concerned did not consider this a disadvantage in relation to the quality of the professional relationship and role.

Most of the graduates spoke favourably about the engagement and support from their school principals. They indicated that most of their principals had been proactive in identifying appropriate opportunities for them to gain leadership experience and professional development within their own schools and to support any development needs identified at the initial assessment stage of the revised PQH NI.

Most of the graduates viewed the peer-learning group as a positive learning forum. However, there was some variation reported about the frequency of meetings and how the different peer groups worked together. Concern was expressed by a minority about the membership of their peer groups, particularly in relation to those groups with members from more than one school phase. The feeling was that these groups worked less effectively than those groups with members from one phase. They felt that better advice should have been reflected in the guidance on how to form a group.

In the more effective practice, individual members took responsibility for leading and providing aspects of school development work to their peers. These sessions included pre-planned visits to members' schools where good developmental opportunities were provided for discussions with principals and senior management teams on aspects of school improvement and effective practice.

A majority of graduates expressed concern that there was little guidance on what was expected from the peer-learning sessions. These graduates reported that there were mixed messages about the purpose and the currency of the peer-group forum.

Nearly all of the graduates were very positive about their experience in their host schools. A few graduates, particularly those from the post-primary sector, reported they were concerned about the nature of the leadership tasks they were asked to do by the principal of the host school. Some of these tasks were perceived as being low-level and/or operational rather than developing the graduates' capacity to think and act strategically in the context of school development planning for improvement and in aspects of the financial sustainability of the school. Graduates reported that the most successful tasks involved shadowing the principal and being able to present to staff and governors on the outcomes of the work.

A majority of the graduates commented that the online aspects of the course could be improved. Concerns included: the mechanistic nature of the tasks; variations in the length and quality of respondents' written submissions; and daunting and time-consuming exercises which did not contribute positively to the respondents' developmental needs.

Most of the graduates reported that they were unaware of any forum or process by which the RTU would seek their opinion in order to contribute to evaluating the implementation of the revised model or to check its progress. At the time of the review, the graduates reported that their views had not been sought formally about their experiences and how processes could be improved. Subsequent to the completion of this review, however, the RTU conducted an evaluation of the nature of the projects carried out in the host schools and reported further that they had surveyed all members of one of the cohorts.

The graduates with M level qualifications (almost one half), spoke very positively of the benefits of having the higher-level qualification, before starting the PQH NI course, in supporting their work in school. Most reported that, in addition to the rigour of academic study, the M level programmes provided enhanced opportunities for discussion and greater conceptual understanding of different educational systems, leadership styles and educational vocabulary. They reported that their prior M level learning supported well the development of their own critical and reflective approach to contemporary education policy and its links to school improvement.

Over one half of the PQH NI graduates reported that they were not currently seeking a principal's position. The main reasons given included: family commitments and the view that they needed more time to acquire practical experience at a senior level. The proportion of graduates expressing these views is similar to that of graduates interviewed from the earlier version of the PQH NI programme. This is no improvement on the previous programme.

3.2.3 The views of principals

ETI held discussions with a focus group of 32 serving principals and interviewed a further 21 principals who were either a graduate's principal or the principal of a host school.

While recognising the role of the coach as a positive development in the revised PQH NI, a majority of the principals expressed the view that the coaches and assessors used to support candidates in PQH NI need to have current and relevant leadership experience relating directly to the Northern Ireland educational context. In addition, they stated that there needs to be a rigorous selection of serving principals to provide high quality development and support to aspiring school leaders.

The majority of the principals expressed a view that there needed to be a well-conceived, planned and coherent professional development route from initial teacher training to the post of principal which takes account not only of professional leadership qualifications but also appropriate professional experience gained within schools and/or other educational support organisations. In their view, there is a need to connect more effectively practical professional development with action-research and international research to develop the reflective leader.

Most of the principals identified the need for more or better middle management training opportunities, including relevant and sustained professional experience as a prerequisite for advancement to senior positions, including that of principal.

Taken together with the relatively low mobility of school leaders from school to school, which is characteristic of leaders in post-primary schools in particular, there are limits for the opportunities for leaders to widen their horizon and to raise their expectations of leadership.

There should be a greater uptake of opportunities by all school leaders so that they have a much wider experience of leadership in a range of contexts, including outside the school sector. The lack of breadth of experience is exacerbated by the limited supply of school principals regarded as effective leaders of improvement and the perceived lack of a prevailing culture of collegiality.

A majority of principals expressed the view that the role of the principal should be significantly reviewed both regularly and externally (such as every five years) to ascertain developmental needs, including the provision of appropriate opportunities to refresh their skills and professional competences. In essence, each principal should have access to a bespoke programme of continuing professional development relating to the context of the school in which he or she leads.

Most of the principals view the five-day work placement for the participants as a positive development. A number of principals suggested that the placement experience could be extended to either a second five-day placement in another educational setting or the participants could experience a short career break, one month to six months, of work-shadowing, supporting or substituting for a principal in another school. It was suggested that the latter may well entail a partial evaluation of the practice by the ETI, as an external evaluator, relating directly to school improvement.

3.3 PARTICIPANT AND STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON THE MASTERS PROGRAMMES

The five local HEIs offer a total of six M level programmes in school management and/or school leadership. In order to set the evaluation of PQH NI into the wider context, ETI scrutinised the design of the M level programmes and interviewed the directors and 15 graduates from four of the five programmes.

The two University College programmes, which comprise specialist modules on school leadership in a wider Masters of Education (M.Ed.) programme, are both highly regarded by candidates and graduates interviewed from the M level programmes. At Stranmillis University College the specialist option leads to an award of an M. Ed. in School Leadership. Feedback to ETI on the quality of the Stranmillis University College teaching was exceptionally positive. The directors, candidates and graduates interviewed from the two University College programmes described the distinct differences, which are complementary in nature, with a strong emphasis on pastoral care in St Mary's University College and a strong emphasis on action research in Stranmillis University College.

During the period of this review, the University of Ulster re-established their M.Ed. Leadership and Management programme which had, for a number of years, been provided only in Monaghan with a cohort including students from Northern Ireland. The M.Ed. now has candidates in four campuses, on both sides of the border, in a blended online and face-to-face programme design, which reflects concepts for school leadership from the OECD report, and to which evidence from participants indicates a positive response.

The two original programmes offered at Queen's University Belfast (QUB), one a longer-running, more traditional M.Ed. school leadership and management programme and one a more recent collaborative school leadership programme which also reflects the concepts outlined in the OECD report, have now been merged. The collaborative school leadership Masters of Science (M.Sc.) was designed initially to support teachers and principals in schools participating in the QUB-based 'Sharing Education Programme'. Particular work

undertaken by the RTU on collaborative leadership through programmes which it supported also contributed influentially to the initial design thinking. Scrutiny of the M.Sc. programme, which has been developed over time, indicates a strong outward-looking dimension, well-informed by international research on leadership effectiveness. A plan for a joint RTU/QUB venture on the collaborative M.Sc. (sharing the appointment of a professor for school leadership) did not progress, and the director of the M.Sc. is a QUB appointment.

The RTU has negotiated with both local universities for the award of PQH NI to be accepted as the equivalent of 30 ECTS[18] points (60 CATS[19] points) which has been taken up by a small number of graduates. With the emergence of a single M.Sc. at QUB, the value of PQH NI has been reduced to 15 ECTS points (30 CATS points).

At the time of the review, RTU was not collaborating with either local university, although it has a record of working, in the past, with a university in England which offered a general Masters in Business Administration programme.

Over 50% of graduates interviewed undertake or have undertaken both PQH NI and M level pathways. They are clear about the benefits of both forms of professional learning, combined with extended placement opportunities to learn on-the-job as a preparation for the demands of today's school leadership, especially given that such a high premium is placed on self-evaluation leading to improvement and raising standards.

In discussions with M level candidates and graduates, nearly all of the interviewees saw the various M level courses as a self-financed investment in their future, particularly in relation to future career prospects.

While initial evidence suggests that there are distinctive characteristics in all five local M level programmes investigated, which could be highly complementary if they were brought together, there is, however, no indication of plans for a collaborative approach between or across the HEI providers.

There is an opportunity for DE and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to discuss some alternative options, which meet the needs of the school system. Using their funding and approval roles they may lever better collaboration, including through e-learning and online access to development and support, building on the existing strengths within the system.

4. CONCLUSION

The most recent Chief Inspector's Report (2010-12) highlighted that the quality of leadership and management is still not good enough in 39% of post-primary schools, 22% of primary schools and 30% of pre-school settings. It is also evident, based on ETI reports stretching back for at least ten years that shortcomings in leadership have been remarkably persistent in school inspection evidence.

The main issue explored by the current review is that Northern Ireland needs high-performing, transformative, school leaders, judged internationally, who can turn around under-performing schools. Tackling educational underachievement and raising standards, especially for lower achievers, is a key principle of the DE ESaGS policy. Given that school leaders have a key role in bringing about improvement for all learners, the goal of developing achievement-oriented school leadership needs to attract the highest, most urgent priority in the design and provision of any school teacher and leader development programme.

[18] ECTS: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
[19] CATS: Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme: 60 CATS points is worth one-third of a Masters degree

The lack of an overarching, coherent competence and quality improvement framework, the lack of evaluation of the impact of existing programmes, and the shortcomings in collaboration between providers here, does not serve well enough the needs of leadership development and school improvement.

Nevertheless, the strengths which ETI found in leadership development programmes during the review indicate that there is a clear potential for the sum of the parts to be much greater, and to provide a unique, world-class, contextualised and coherent, progressive model of teacher and leader education.

APPENDIX 1

Extract from: ETI REPORT ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: A BASELINE EVALUATION (2006-2007 – 2008-2009) DECEMBER 2009

Summary

5.1 The evidence collected during inspections in the school years 2006-07 to 2008-09 illustrates that while there is much good practice in leadership and management - more so in primary schools than in the other two sectors - there are key areas for improvement arising from the summary evaluations in section 3, most notably:

- *within all three sectors/phases*:
  - the arrangements for self-evaluation and the procedures for review, including the actions taken to promote improvement in the outcomes for learners;
- *within the primary school phase*:
  - the empowerment of staff with specific responsibilities to fulfil their roles and promote improvement in pedagogy and attainment;
- *within the post-primary school phase*:
  - the communication throughout the school, including how the objectives and targets for the school are set and shared;
- *within the special school phase*:
  - the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning.

5.2 In almost a third of primary, post-primary and special schools the overall quality of leadership and management needs to improve, furthermore, the effectiveness of the principal is identified as inadequate or unsatisfactory in over one-tenth of the schools across the school sectors inspected. These findings have considerable implications for ESA and for the providers of school leadership development programmes. The standard of school leadership needs to be improved and leaders better prepared to provide the transformative leadership necessary to create schools fit for the 21st century.

6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 Existing inspection evidence provides the Inspectorate with a number of issues to investigate:

1. the historic role of principal, conceived on the needs of the past, is no longer fit for purpose in the changing educational landscape; the leadership development programmes conceived on that basis need to be reviewed and revised;

2. potential candidates hesitate to apply for headship because of the perceptions about the burden of the work and inadequate reward and support; and

3. for more than 10 years, inspection findings have shown that there is, in an irreducible 30% of all schools inspected, a quality of school leadership which is judged not good enough.

6.2 The Inspectorate continues to monitor the quality of leadership in primary, post-primary and special schools and to evaluate how well school leaders are preparing to effect school improvement. Inspectors will explore, during the review and through inspection, the extent of the growth of distributed leadership within each school, especially in the context of reform, and in light of the rapidly growing need for collaborative leadership. The development of distributed and collaborative models of leadership will require a transformative leadership practice that builds collaborative cultures, cultivates productive relationships with parents and the community and connects the school to its wider environment.

6.3 This evaluation work commenced in autumn 2009 through interviews with some of the main stakeholders, including the DE, the RTU, several of the M-Level providers and a random sample of graduates of the programme. A range of lines of enquiry for further investigation have emerged from this work, which will be taken forward in discussion with further stakeholders over the coming months.

These lines of enquiry include:

1. The need for school leadership development "for today" which is responsive to the weaknesses identified by the Inspectorate;

2. The need for school leadership development "for tomorrow" which takes account of the challenges raised by new government policies and reflected in the OECD and the PwC studies;

3. The extent to which the existing provisions might be better designed and brigaded, and their quality assured, to provide a more holistic and comprehensive provision for the development of school leadership.

6.4 Three further issues have also emerged from our initial discussions:

1. An analysis of the OECD study and our initial discussions both indicate that distributed, collaborative and transformative leadership are not well understood generally, with different interpretations of these concepts[20]. Distributed leadership is more, for example, than developing a senior management team; it extends to the role of all teachers as leaders. It is argued by some that, as schools become more complex, this will place demands on more and more teachers taking on leadership roles, both formal and informal and not only at the top of a hierarchy. In this context, successful teachers will need to learn a broad range of leadership and research skills[21].

[20] "This lack of precision is not simply an academic quibble, but is tied into the challenges that each of these different leadership styles present when trying to put them into action… this ambiguity is a major stumbling block to logical discussion as well as application." London, T., School Leadership Policy and Practice: North and South: an Academic Perspective from Belfast. October 2009, Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South.

[21] "In distributed and collaborative models of leadership, the assumption is that teachers should take on leadership roles….(this)…must be accompanied by a significant change to the way in which they are trained, to include aspects of leadership" London, T. (ibid)

2. In turn, this has implications for smaller schools, where fewer teachers have to take on an increasingly wide range of distinctly defined leadership responsibilities.

3. Both these points have implications for the design and conduct of this evaluation itself. School headship, and the preparation of candidates, may be a useful starting point, but if we are to appraise the need for school leadership in the round and make comprehensive recommendations, an investigation of headship can only serve as a basis for a broader investigation into leadership across and beyond the institution as a whole. Nor can a broader evaluation ignore the development of the qualities necessary to lead learning, starting from initial teacher education programmes and progressing through early and continuing professional development.

6.5 The Inspectorate's evaluation will set out to investigate the extent to which these challenges are being addressed effectively in current school leadership development programmes and the extent of the changes necessary to ensure that leadership itself improves dramatically in order to ensure enhanced outcomes for learners.

APPENDIX 2

STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED AND SCHOOLS VISITED

The ETI wish to express their gratitude to all who contributed to this review between 2009 and 2012 for their professional engagement at all levels.

- interviews with 26 revised PQH NI graduates; 29 existing PQH graduates; eight PQH NI coaches; 10 principals of the PQH NI 'trainee heads' and with nine principals of PQH NI placement schools;
- attendance at six RTU leadership seminars;
- discussions with a focus group of 32 post-primary principals;
- attendance at six PQH NI Assessment and Development Events (ADE) and moderation process meetings;
- eight interviews with the Regional Training Unit (RTU) leadership course personnel;
- interviews with four of the five HEI providers regarding their M level school leadership and management programmes delivered by:
  - University of Ulster;
  - Queen's University Belfast (two M level programmes);
  - St Mary's University College; and
  - Stranmillis University College;
- interviews with 15 M level candidates/graduates enrolled on M level school leadership and management programmes;
- attendance at three RTU leadership conferences/seminars (Fullan, Hargreaves, Barber);
- various discussions and meetings with personnel from RTU, DE's Teacher Education Branch, GTCNI, CCMS; and
- interviews with staff of one of the teachers' associations.

Primary Schools visited

Armstrong Primary School, Armagh
Ballymacward Primary School, Lisburn
Ballynahinch Primary School
Dunmurry Primary School
Edendork Primary School, Dungannon
Fairview Primary School, Ballyclare
Gaelscoil na gCrann, Omagh
Gilnahirk Primary School
Grange Primary School, Bangor
Kilmaine Primary School, Bangor
McKinney Primary School, Lisburn
St Jarlath's Primary School, Blackwater
St Malachy's Primary School, Bangor
St Patrick's Primary School, Crossmaglen

Post-Primary Schools visited

Antrim Grammar School
Ashfield Girls' High School
Coleraine Academical Institution
Dalriada School, Ballymoney
De La Salle College, Belfast
Down High School, Downpatrick
Glengormley High School
Holy Cross College, Strabane
Holy Trinity College, Cookstown
Knockbreda High School
Little Flower Girls' High School
New Bridge Integrated College
Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry
Parkhall Integrated College
Portora Royal School, Enniskillen
Sperrin Integrated College, Magherafelt
St Dominic's High School, Belfast
St Columba's High School, Portaferry
St Joseph's College, Enniskillen
St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore
St Louis' Grammar School, Ballymena
St Michael's Grammar School, Enniskillen
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook
St Peter's High School, Derry
Tandragee Junior High School

Special Education Schools visited

Beechlawn Special School, Hillsborough
Ceara Special School, Lurgan
Knockavoe Special School, Strabane
Park Education Resource Centre, Belfast
St Gerard's Education Resource Centre, Belfast

APPENDIX 3

ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE REGIONAL TRAINING UNIT IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

(Extracted, unedited on 14.11.12 from www.rtuni.org)

"The Regional Training Unit (is) *the education service's Leadership and Staff College in Northern Ireland.*
(The) *Leadership College supports the professional development of leaders and senior managers in all schools in Northern Ireland. This includes the emergent and aspirant leader as well as serving heads and managers. With over 900 candidates on its preparation for headship programme and over 90 studying for the MBA in educational leadership - the first of its kind in the U.K. - the RTU is responsible for the largest ever investment by any sector in leadership development. Our strength, is in our staff and the partners with whom we work. Experienced leadership trainers, serving headteachers and recently retired heads and senior educationists combine with colleagues in Education and Library Boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained schools, the Grammar, Integrated and Irish Medium sectors, the Universities and teacher associations to provide education sector leaders in Northern Ireland with an impressive range of development opportunities. Whether it is a single day programme on practical issues or more extended accredited programmes on key seminal issues the RTU has something valuable to offer education leaders at every stage of their professional careers.*

APPENDIX 4

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Recommendations R1 and R2 call for a set of design principles as the basis for a common competency and quality improvement framework and for the design of combined academic/vocational/experiential pathways.

The draft set of nine key principles which follow are informed by ETI inspection findings and are a starting point for this work. They acknowledge international standards of educational leadership, thereby ensuring parity, while also responding effectively to the specific economic, social and educational needs of Northern Ireland.

Based upon the NI Assembly's Programme for Government and DE's priorities for education for Northern Ireland, the key needs of effective leadership for schools (as marshalled under the policy umbrella of *Every School a Good School* as well as the quality indicators for effective leadership in *Together Towards Improvement*[22i]) includes the capability of the school leader:

- to build the organisation's capacity for school improvement; and
- to negotiate with the school's stakeholders and partners to develop support for a cooperative, community-based system.

[22] Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation. ETI. 2010

The nine key principles for the design of school leadership development programmes:

- Multiple pathways, recognised and amenable to quality assurance
- Highest standards, in international terms, amongst candidates and providers
- Learning-centred, reflecting the child-centred approach of ESaGS
- Based upon a portfolio of evidence against a rationalised competency model
- Lifelong: continuous and coherent throughout a career, with significant refresh
- Collegial; exemplifying peer assessment and mentorship
- A balance of research and professional skills applied in practice (praxis)
- Develops leadership behaviours and attitudes throughout a career
- Exemplifies membership of and support for a cooperative system of education (communitarian)

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