

Professional Diploma in School Leadership

Course Structure

The Professional Diploma in School Leadership is a part-time, 18 months postgraduate course. The programme will consist of six taught modules and two leadership visits, over three semesters.

Year 1	Module Title
Autumn	
EN5211	Induction, University of Limerick (dates to be confirmed)
EN5221	Leading Learning and Teaching in the Irish Context Professional Growth Development
Spring	
EN5322	Leading School Transformation: Looking in Our Schools
EN5332	Mentoring and Coaching
Leadership Visit 1	This leadership visit, completed in the second semester aims to enable participants to shadow a senior leader in an organisation outside of the education sector to develop their insights with regard to leadership in contexts outside of the school setting (duration 5-10 hours).
Year 2	Module Title
Autumn	
EN5231	Leading School Development: Continuity, Change and Capacity Building
EN5241	Building Culture, Capacity and Teams
Leadership Visit 2	This leadership visit comprises of a visit to a school other than participants' own. Through the lenses acquired in previous semesters, the visit affords the opportunity to observe and analyse leadership in the school setting through a wide variety of perspectives.

Lectures

Lectures will be available online for students to view at their convenience prior to scheduled classes.

Tutorials

Tutorials will be held on a Wednesday evening. There will be 8 face-to-face sessions per module (1.5hrs in duration each) & 4 online tutorials. The Sraith Ghaeilge will be delivered predominantly online with some face to face meetings.

Learning Outcomes

- 1** Prepare aspiring school leaders for practice as leaders in Irish primary and post-primary school
- 2** Foster the knowledge, skills and dispositions consistent with initial leadership education in the context of the continuum of leadership education
- 3** Prepare participants on the programme for future leadership education both in terms of continuing professional education as well as accredited academic programmes at masters and doctoral levels
- 4** Foster active and critical engagement with the policy environment, professional practice and scholarly literature relevant to educational leadership
- 5** Create and foster sustainable educational leadership professional learning community for programme participants across PDSL cohorts
- 6** Develop participants' capacity in the use of key leadership practices across that programme specifically: self-awareness, decision-making, reflection on practice, collaborative action inquiry, reading, participation in leadership networks/professional learning community.

Modules

EN5211: Leading Learning and Teaching in the Irish Context

Recognising the learning and teaching are the foci of work in schools, this module will examine the dynamics of leading learning and teaching with a particular emphasis on building learning capacity through leadership. Participants will learn about the most influential perspectives on learning in the last one hundred years (behaviourist, cognitive & socio-cultural) and understand the implications of these for how teachers, students, schools and other education stakeholders foster learning in 21st century. The module will pay particular attention to how perspectives on learning have guided, or not, curriculum policy and practices in schools vis-à-vis teaching, learning and assessment over time at both primary and post-primary levels in Ireland. Among the themes to be addressed on the module will be: participants own stance on learning, understanding learning in the context of curriculum and assessment policies, leading learning in the school context (both locally & in via networks of schools), In addressing the key learning perspectives and concepts guiding contemporary pioneering perspectives and initiatives on learning the module will provide participants with a number of case studies centred on the dynamics of leading learning in order to address the structural, cultural and organisational dimensions of building learning capacity. The module will focus in particular on preferred perspectives on learning vis-à-vis 'schooling in the 21st century' and address the supports and constraints on schools and systems in advancing new ways of supporting learning. Drawing on case studies – both national and international – the participants will engage both individually and collaboratively in examining the implications of the chosen cases for their current and future work as leaders in schools. Among the concepts to addressed are the following: Given the increasingly central role being played by assessment at primary and post-primary levels – nationally and internationally – the module will pay particular attention to the interface between learning and assessment.

EN5221: Professional Growth Development

The module focuses on different dimensions of leadership for learning and the challenges and opportunities of this perspective for school leadership and management. There is a strong underlying imperative in the module that all elements will focus specifically on the need to target school leadership and management activities in order to enhance teaching and learning within the school. The module provides an opportunity for students to examine, understand and criticise the application of principles underpinning the different theories of school leadership with particular emphasis on modern theoretical developments in the area. The module questions what leaders do and what activities they might engage in that are most likely to be most productive in terms of leading learning for a quality school experience. The module also prepares participants for their collaborative action research project by introducing the action research methodology and providing guidance on commencing a collaborative cycle of inquiry in their schools. During this term participants also conduct reconnaissance into the issue they have chosen to investigate and report back on progress achieved as part of this ongoing project.

EN5322 : Leading School Transformation: Looking in Our Schools

There is growing recognition in the research literature that leadership of schools is crucial while most frequently indirect. Understanding schools as organizations becomes critical in terms of seeking to transform them in a desired direction. Against this general backdrop of what research indicates contributes to effective schools, and their effective leadership, various policy documents provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) will be interrogated and their import for leadership identified and described. Thereafter, the identification of strategies necessary to build a culture of school review and improvement will be described while planning and evaluation too will be integral to the thinking and practice, with a view to improving the capacity of the school community to make more evidence-informed decisions, while simultaneously cultivating a sense of professional responsibility.

EN5332: Mentoring and Coaching

Premised on the assumption that transformational leadership involves building capacity for teaching and leadership widely among teachers in a school, this module will focus on the ways in which mentoring and coaching are key leadership tools in fostering both the development of teaching and leadership. Participants will learn about the contemporary research on mentoring and coaching, analyse case studies and engage in role plays to develop the requisite knowledge, skills and dispositions vis-a-vis developing mentoring and coaching as part of the participants' leadership repertoire. The module will pay particular attention to how mentoring and coaching have potential for developing capacity of teachers across the professional continuum from induction to early career and continuing professional development (including mid and late career teachers). Consistent with the learning-centred assumptions underpinning the PDSL programme design, this module will extend key ideas on teachers' learning introduced in prior modules into the context of mentoring and coaching in support of teaching and leadership in schools. Among the themes to be addressed on the module will be: participants own experiences of mentoring and coaching both in school and non-school contexts, the implications of different perspectives on learning (i.e. cognitive V socio-cultural) for how mentoring and coaching are framed, enacted and evaluated, the question of developing individual mentors and/or a mentoring culture in schools, protocols and practices in mentoring and coaching, mentoring and school cultures, mentoring across the professional continuum, mentoring and coaching from the perspective of both mentor/coach and mentee/learner. The module will focus in particular on preferred perspectives on learning vis-à-vis schooling in the 21st century and address the supports and constraints on schools and systems in advancing new ways of supporting learning. Drawing on case studies (including video cases) the participants will engage in role play(s) in order to foster their knowledge, skills and awareness vis-a-vis mentoring and coaching as learning and development tools in schools. The main topics explored during the module include: (i) Perspectives on learning and their implications for mentoring and coaching, (ii) Differentiate coaching V mentoring in terms of focus, design, duration, processes...etc., (iii) School culture and mentoring/coaching, (iv) Mentoring and coaching for teaching and/or leadership development and (v) Protocols and practices.

EN5231: Leading School Development: Continuity Change and Capacity Building

Schools are fundamentally, people oriented organizations. Their primary task is the formation of minds, hearts and dispositions of the rising generation. Critical to this enterprise are: values, beliefs, knowledge and dispositions of the adults whose task it is through the curriculum, planned and unplanned, to make teaching, learning and leading a positive experience for both adults and learners, as well as for parents and the wider school community. As always in such circumstances, school leaders and their colleagues struggle to find an appropriate equilibrium between using 'bricolage' from the past as the raw material to build the future. The process of change therefore requires an appreciation of past, present and possible futures as a means of building continuity while institutionalizing change; no easy balancing act, particularly given the demands on teachers. At a minimum, an appreciation of the lives and work and career stages of teachers and principals; to understand that a positive working environment is the basis of daily interactions, and the quality of those interactions are critical to building trust, learning to collaborate while building capacity in a sustainable manner within the current structures and strictures on time, particularly time to meet, collaborate and plan together while seeking to avoid overload.

While module 3 takes a quite focused perspective on 'school improvement', this module takes a more ecological and holistic approach to and perspectives on schools as communities, in order to better understand their traditions, transitions and trajectories. Its point of departure is the assumption that taking leave of the past is painful and challenging, while recognizing that creating the future is a selective process, selecting what is considered the best of the past and to reconstruct anew with vitality and imagination as integral to the process of building the future.

EN5241: Building Culture Capacity and Teams

Leading and developing an organizational culture that facilitates a collaborative enquiry based approach to school development is a critical role for school leaders. Organizational culture is the glue that holds everything together (Stoll, 2006) and understanding the relationship between leadership, organizational culture and change is fundamental. This module will introduce participants to the concept of organizational culture in their school and will examine how culture is developed, changed and communicated using contemporary models of analysis. Participants will conduct a cultural analysis of their school and reflect on the values, assumptions and beliefs underpinning the school culture. A Whole School Approach to building a collaborative culture will be explored and participants will engage with their peers to interrogate how a distributed leadership model could facilitate cultural change. Teamwork and empowerment will be examined in a school setting and how the leader can develop structures and processes that support the espoused organizational culture of the school. The challenges of embedding values such as teamwork, transparency, openness and wellbeing for all will be debated with reference to case examples and contemporary literature.