New Book on School Leadership launched in Trinity College
Dublin

Full and honest appraisal of the challenges for school leadership for 21st Century Ireland now required, say authors.

Any critical examination of Irish education must include an honest appraisal of what is involved in leading and managing schools for the 21st century, according to a new book on the state of school leadership in Ireland. The central premise of the book, Leading and Managing Schools by Helen O'Sullivan and John West-Burnham, is that leadership and management in education can make a significant difference to the effectiveness of schools.

The editors of the book believe the Irish education system is today facing more critical scrutiny than ever before. While analysts caution against reading too much into recent reports showing Ireland falling significantly in its ratings in standards of literacy and mathematics, those involved in Irish education must heed the warnings. According to Helen O’Sullivan, one of the editors of the book:

“Our education system, like many education systems around the world, is being scrutinised as never before. There is a clear need for active leadership at all levels in the system if Ireland is to emerge from the current difficulties, economic and societal, with renewed values, renewed trust and a young population educated for a different future.”

Leading and Managing Schools edited by Helen O’Sullivan and John West-Burnham is published by Sage Publications. The book was launched on May 10 in Trinity College by Mr. Pat Cox, president of the European Movement International and former president of the European Parliament.

Based on the first study of its kind to relate the principles of effective leadership to the broad spectrum of school life in Ireland, this book serves as a key resource for school leaders in their personal and professional study. The editors bring together an array of renowned scholars to inform and stimulate the debate on the future of leadership development in Irish schools.

According to John West Burnham: “The contents of this book certainly provide food for thought for anyone in a leadership position in an Irish school. Each author explores different perspectives and sets a framework for rethinking school leadership and management and an agenda for future research. Focusing on national and international perspectives this book adds to the growing canon of international studies of school leadership. This book is an analysis and review of the current state of school leadership in Ireland. However, we firmly believe that the issues raised are international in their significance. The
recent criticisms of the Irish education system by US multinationals add to the urgency of a full and open examination of the system and an assessment of whether significant change is required."

Inspiring and informative in its style, the authors bring together a range of perspectives on every aspect of school leadership and management. Contributors include: Marty Linksy (Harvard), Michael Fullan (Ontario University), Niamh Brennan (UCD), Ciaran Sugrue (Cambridge), Paddy Flood (LDS), Tom Collins & Rose Malone (Maynooth), Paul Conway, Kathy Hall, Rose Murphy and Anne Rath (UCC), Helen O’Sullivan (TCD), Enda McGorman (Principal), Martin Wallace (Principal) and Michael Shevlin (TCD) and John West-Burnham (St. Mary’s College, Twickenham).

Each chapter in the book addresses an area of specific concern and raises questions and possible strategies in order to inform and extend the debate. The book is in three parts Part one presents a global stance from a generalised 'big picture' perspective on issues of change and governance. Part two focuses specifically on the Irish context while part three looks at the future of school leadership in Ireland taking into consideration global trends and the challenges facing Irish education.

Leading and Managing Schools by Helen O’Sullivan and John West-Burnham now available in all leading book shops nationwide

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Note to Editor:

Helen O’Sullivan is Lecturer in Educational Leadership and Management in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. Previously Helen worked as a teacher, school principal and member of Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) team.

John West-Burnham is Professor of Educational Leadership, St. Mary’s College, London and a consultant to Leadership Development for Schools, Ireland.