

**Horgan, Catrina, 1995, *The Professional Development of Primary Teachers in Ireland***

### **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

Opportunities for the professional development of primary teachers in Ireland are plagued with lack of co-ordination, funding and incentives. I will report on recent surveys that emphasise the level of dissatisfaction of teachers with it. An examination of factors that have militated against professional development reveal obstacles that must be overcome, if the situation is to improve. I will describe the latest exciting initiative being introduced by the teacher union, the INTO Professional Development and Training Programme, which involves teachers themselves in the design and delivery of in-service courses.

Exploration of opportunities for professional development in other countries only shows up the inadequacies of the Irish situation. I will examine features of the UK in-service system, which may be adopted in Ireland e.g. professional development days, and INSET co-ordinators. However, it is also of benefit to examine the less desirable features, which must be avoided e.g. disruption to pupils' learning.

Each individual teacher has specific needs or aspirations, which must be satisfied if s/he is to be fulfilled in his/her teaching career. Strategies for professional development may involve widening the knowledge bases and reflecting on present practice. This may require further study or attending courses and will vary, depending on each teacher's career and commitment to improving performance in the classroom .

Teachers have as much to learn from each other as they have from outside agencies. The everyday life of the school is a major source of learning for teachers and the principal has a vital role to play in fostering a positive climate conducive to professional development. I will discuss the importance of a school professional development plan in which staff can identify their needs and organise activities to satisfy them. It is vital that staff members get opportunities to pool resources and work together towards school improvement.

I will conclude by putting forward proposals that will help to overcome the difficulties that exist in the Irish situation in relation to attitude, funding, time and organisation. Development is a positive and vital educative process and lies at the heart of the purpose of schools. Investment in professional development activities for teachers must result in improvement of pupil learning and lead to greater job satisfaction and career development for teachers.