

Casey, James, 2009, *The Post of Primary School Principal in Contemporary Ireland: an Investigation into the Perceptions of Practising Teachers.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

This study seeks to examine how teachers in certain schools in the Republic of Ireland perceive the posts of Administrative and Teaching Principal and, in that context, considers perceived incentives and disincentives to teachers in applying for principalship, including any gender differences in this respect, and goes on to identify possible provisions by which the post of principal could be made more attractive to teachers.

With reference to the pertinent legislation and regulations and to the available research literature, this study describes the role of the principal and compares and contrasts the respective duties of the Administrative and Teaching Principal.

The research methodologies used for the purposes of the study included both the questionnaire and the interview. Questionnaires were distributed to sixty-seven teachers in six recognised primary schools in the south of Ireland. The schools in question included large and small schools, urban schools and rural, and constituted a representative sample of mainstream schools in the Republic in general. The school personnel involved in the research included teachers in schools with a Teaching Principal and teachers in schools with an Administrative Principal. Eight interviews were conducted involving four teachers in schools with a Teaching Principal and four teachers in schools with an Administrative Principal.

The research findings are presented, analysed and summarised using text, graphs and tables. These seem to support the contention in the literature that the post of primary school principal, in general and that of Teaching Principal in particular is so perceived that, if the issues arising are not addressed, school authorities are likely to find it more and more difficult to fill this key post in the future.

The study presents conclusions drawn from analysis of the evidence. On foot of these, it recommends a number of initiatives by which the largely negative perceptions of the role of principal might be addressed, including, especially, the introduction of time-limited contracts for the post and the introduction of an accredited course as a formal requirement for appointment as principal. The study also proposes areas for further study, including a study of the developments, both educational and social, which are said to have made the management of schools more onerous in recent years.