

Harrington, Patricia, 2006, *The Role of the Special School Principal with Particular Reference to the organisation and management of a Multidisciplinary Team.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Since 1998, legislation designed to influence change in education has greatly affected the workload of primary school principals including principals in special schools. Collaboration between education and health professionals has always been a feature of special education in Ireland and this practice will be mandatory with the enactment of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 and the Disability Act 2005.

This study set out to examine special school principals' perceptions of their role in the organisation and management of multidisciplinary teams. In doing so, the study focused on the composition of multidisciplinary teams and explored how these teams work. The study found unanimous support for collaborative working practices. Principals reported that multidisciplinary teams were very useful, especially when information is shared between disciplines, with professionals working together in developing holistic programmes for individual children. The main obstacles to useful meetings identified by principals were the lack of formal training for team members, a shortage of good practice guidelines, poor relationships between professionals and the structure and management of meetings.

There was consensus among principals that more time was needed for meetings and that some measures had to be implemented in order to allow teachers more time for individual education planning and meetings with professionals from other disciplines.