

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the perceptions of primary school Teachers and Principals of the role of primary school Principal Teacher. A Principal's job has seen much evolution in recent decades and is now different to the first major Department of Education and Skills (DES) directive governing this post in 1973.

A mixed methods study using both a questionnaire and an interview sought the views of Teachers and Principals on, the working relationship between Teacher and Principal, applying for and preparing for a position as a Primary School Principal and lastly the role of a Principal. A review of the literature relating to this area is presented, in addition to the empirical data. The context of the study was questionnaires with twenty-six Teachers from three primary schools in Counties Cork and Kerry in the Republic of Ireland and interviews with the Principals from the same schools, which varied in size and location.

There is clear agreement that effective leadership is the main driving force in effective schools, though it appears that Principals and Teachers are somewhat divided on what this means. The motivations and inhibitions in applying for Principal positions were explored. "Making a difference" and "career development" are some of the motivators and "salary not being commensurate with responsibilities", "changes and initiatives" and working as a Teaching Principal are seen as inhibitions to applying for the post of Principal.

The role of the Principal has some rewards such as witnessing the development of children and many challenges, such as "being responsible for everything", particularly

for Teaching Principals. The role is accepted by Teachers who would like “to make a difference” in the lives of children.

Some recommendations for possible changes to the position of Principal and opportunities for further research in this area were made.