

Moore-O'Donoghue, Roisin, 2009, *Teaching SPHE at Second Level. The Perceptions of Teachers*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The purpose of this study is to determine the prevailing perceptions of second level teachers towards Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), a relatively new subject in the Junior Certificate programme. This dissertation explores teachers' responses to the place of SPHE within the school curriculum and attempts to discern what role, if any, teachers see for themselves in the delivery of the syllabus. The study also critiques the level of pre-service and in-service training provided to teachers and seeks to ascertain the factors which effect teacher participation in SPHE facilitation.

A total of 81 teachers from three school types completed a questionnaire: a female single sex secondary school, a male single sex secondary school and a co-educational community college. An experienced SPHE teacher from each of the schools participated in a semi-structured interview and data from both research methods was analysed.

The results of the study indicate that 79% of teachers acknowledge SPHE as an integral aspect of the pastoral system within schools and believe it to be the responsibility of all staff.

Just 27% of respondents agreed that teachers have the skills necessary to meet the needs of individual students in the SPHE classroom. Further research into teacher preparedness identifies inadequacies in teacher training.

Some 22% of those currently teaching the subject would prefer not to be doing so. Factors identified as effecting teacher participation in the subject include lack of preparation time, lack of training, lack of commitment on the part of school management, and the assigned classroom not being suited to the necessary teaching methodologies. Despite the apparent difficulties with the subject, 70% of teachers currently involved enjoy teaching it and 71% do so because they believe it is integral to their pastoral responsibility.