

**Ni Rinn, Orla, 2009, *Multi-grade Classes in Large primary Schools in Cork City: An Exploration.***

## **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

This research arises from an issue in June 2008 where a number of parents were concerned that their children would be in a multigrade class for the following year. This researcher set about examining the perceptions held by principal teachers, teachers and parents in relation to multigrade classes in larger schools.

A questionnaire was distributed to all principal teachers in the Cork City area who had a pupil enrolment in excess of 200 pupils. The results of this questionnaire showed that principal teachers hold very mixed views in relation to multigrade classes. However most viewed a multigrade class as a deficit model of class allocation.

Interviews were conducted with three class teachers, three parents and a principal teacher to further explore the issue and triangulate the data generated. Teachers in this study were the most negative in relation to multigrade class. They cited additional pressures associated with planning, organisation and the necessity to cover different book schemes as challenges associated with multigrade class teaching. Parents were generally positive towards multigrade classes once their initial concerns were answered. Open communication between home and school lessens parental concern in this regard.

This study found that placement criteria are widely used when allocating pupils to multigrade classes. The most common criteria used, that of teacher recommendation and pupil independence, are subjective measures of pupil selection. This study calls for schools to formulate a concise plan in relation to the formation of multigrade classes. Some schools in this study reported placing all children in multigrade classes.

This negates placement criteria and cancels any positive weighting a multigrade class may have. This researcher does not support such a method of class allocation. Ultimately this study calls for support for teachers of multigrade classes in terms of training, available resources and reduced class size. It also highlights the deficit of research in this area and emphasizes issues that merit further attention.