

O’Roarke, John, 2005, *An Investigation of Teacher Perceptions of their Engagement in the Development of Community in an Irish Voluntary Secondary School.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

*Using a *gemeinschaft* model of community to focus on the aspect of social relations, this study is concerned with the development of community in schools, in a largely *geselshafi* society. Research aimed to map teachers’ perceptions of their engagement, both on the cognitive and behavioural levels, with the development of student-teacher relations, across aspects of the instrumental and organisational goal structure of one school, St. Anne’s.*

Research methods were quantitative in nature, comprising a questionnaire, the terms of which were based on four of the pattern variables, developed by Parsons and Sergiovanni: ascription, affectivity, particularism and diffuseness, as applied to the context of the school. The instrument was administered to all the teachers in the school. Findings from the Likert-type scale used, demonstrated that teachers’ perceived a fundamental disposition towards *gemeinschaft*, both in relation to their thinking and behaviour. Within this disposition, tensions along the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* axis surfaced under two of the variables: ascription and affectivity in relation to specific aspects of the school’s goal structure, most notably, discipline and academic achievement, where *gesellschaft* norms impact most acutely.

Findings provided a basis for recommendations, made in the context of School Development Planning with respect to developing a learning community in the school. It was recommended that task groups be established to explore the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* tensions in these areas, so as to promote the development of *gemeinschaft within gesellschaft*, as a strategy to balance the goals of *gemeinschaft* with the unavoidable pressures from *gesellschaft* society on life in the school.