

Hyde, Peter, 2001, *Catholic Education: A Comparison of Views of Lay Principals and Religious Principals of Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools in the Irish Republic.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation compares the views held by four lay principals and four religious principals of Catholic voluntary secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland on the topic of Catholic education. The views of these principals are compared to each other and are also compared to the literature treating of Catholic education.

The first chapter of the study outlines the historical and current context of voluntary secondary schooling. Because this study solicits and compares the views of school principals on Catholic education, chapter two proceeds to examine some of the literature pertaining to school leadership and to Catholic education. The literature on Catholic education divides into two sections; the literature from official Church documents and the literature from scholarly comment and research into Catholic education.

Chapter three details the methodology used in the course of the study. The study is qualitative in nature and interviews, based on a semi-structured interview schedule, occurred with all eight principals. Chapter three deals also with the topic that the author originally envisaged researching but which, due to various problems, mainly of an ethical nature, he was unable to pursue.

Chapter four presents the findings of the interviews with the eight principals. Similarities and differences emerge from the principals' views but a common finding is that Catholic education is a complex ideal. The final chapter of the dissertation draws some conclusions, foremost of which is the necessity for principals to be afforded the opportunity to reflect on Catholic education so as to enable them to be transformational in their positions. An afterword acknowledges that some of the problematic issues that arose during the research could have, in hindsight, been dealt with in a more satisfactory manner.