

Lyons, Colm, 2009, *Teachers' Perceptions of the Nature of the Catholic Primary School: Changing Social Conditions and Expectations.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

This research project is an exploration of over one-hundred teachers' perceptions of the nature of the contemporary Catholic school. It has its origins in the conviction that teachers are the principal custodians of the beliefs, assumptions and values of the Catholic school. The study ascertained teachers' views and opinions on the reality of the Catholic primary school as they perceived it. The research not only describes the position which exists in the Catholic primary school, it also signposts some necessary actions to be taken if the Catholic primary school is serious about preserving its Catholic identity.

The research shows that teachers rank the actual religious goals of their schools lower than either the academic, social or personal professed goals of the school and that a considerable challenge exists for Catholic primary schools to bring actual values in line with the ideals. The study describes some of the challenges to the ethos of Catholic primary schools. The latter will either be strengthened or diminished, depending on the extent to which the challenges, which it faces, are successfully met by the teaching community.

Using questionnaires and interviews the writer analysed and extracted the core ideas with the aim of providing a clear picture as to the core make-up of an authentic Catholic school, the role which teachers believe they play in this and the challenges which will have to be faced in the near and distant future. As a result, both specific and generic recommendations were made in regard to embracing and directing change within the Catholic primary school community. Based on the findings, in-service for teachers and greater partnership between parents, parish and school are some of the recommendations outlined in the dissertation.