

McCarthy, Leonard, MEd, 2012, *Catholic Ethos: A Comparative Study into Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristic Spirit of Four Catholic Primary Schools in the Cork Region*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The objective of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of the ethos or characteristic spirit of four Catholic Primary Schools in Co. Cork.

Chapter One outlines the purpose and the parameters of the project. Chapter Two examines the extensive literature on Catholic education, including official Church documents, Roman and Irish, and empirical studies, national and international. Chapter Three focuses on Research Methodology, with particular reference to the questionnaire and semi-structured interview, the instruments used in this study. Chapter Four presents the findings and analyses the results of the questionnaires and interviews. Chapter Five outlines the conclusions drawn from these findings and proposes recommendations.

Overall, respondents displayed a positive appreciation and recognition of the importance of their respective school's characteristic spirit. While a vast majority of respondents felt their school effectively reflected the spirit envisaged by the Catholic Church, some concerns were voiced. These concerns included: (i) The perceived lack of support from the church; (ii) Accommodating other religious beliefs, while carrying out Catholic religious teaching; (iii) The erosion of Catholic values; (iv) Apathy from home in regard to religion; (v) The unsuitability and time constraints in administering *Alive O* Religious Education Programme.

A greater partnership between parents, parish and school; more in-service for teachers and a review of the *Alive-O* Programme were some of the recommendations proposed.