

Abstract

The current study seeks to investigate teachers' perceptions of the impact of the Catholic ethos on a primary school as a caring community. The research was conducted among teacher respondents in three urban DEIS Catholic primary schools in the Diocese of Cork and Ross.

Extensive available literature on the Catholic ethos is described as a comparison for the validity of the research findings. The survey was chosen as the research method and the research instruments deployed were the questionnaire along with the interview to triangulate findings. Data findings obtained were coded, presented and analysed.

There was universal agreement by respondents that their schools were caring communities. Research respondents perceived that there was very strong evidence in their schools of the Catholic ethos. However, there was a clear disparity between the recognition of the evidence of the Catholic school ethos and respondents' perception of the impact of the Catholic ethos in creating a caring school community. Overall, 33% of research participants perceived that the impact of the Catholic ethos itself was moderate or weak in creating a caring school community.

It is recommended in Catholic primary schools: (a) clear written goals for upholding the Catholic ethos become an established part of the School Plan and that these goals be reviewed and updated regularly (b) all school staff should be familiarised, by school management, with the *Schedule of a Catholic School* (CPSMA, 2016) as advocated by the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (c) ongoing in-career development be provided by the Catholic Church for teachers, to affirm them and empower them in their role as Catholic educators and in their understanding of Gospel values.