

O Dubhgain, Diarmuid, 1999, *The Catholic School as a Nurturing Environment for Religious Formation in the face of contemporary culture with particular reference to the Irish Context.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The purpose of this dissertation is to consider the role of the Catholic school in providing a nurturing environment for the religious formation of its students against a background of rapid cultural change. The method used is an examination of literature and school based research.

The dissertation outlines the importance, for the Catholic school, of having a clearly articulated philosophy of education, to meet the increasing challenges of a changing religious and cultural context. It illustrates how religious formation takes place in the face of the formative and covert structures shaping and influencing the wider social and cultural life. Understanding this wider social and cultural formation will lay the groundwork for a nurturing environment which will positively affect the religious formation of students.

The study examines the 'inner nature' of the Catholic school, the important implications of Catholic faith for Catholic education and the contribution of the Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents of Vatican II to a philosophy of Catholic education for the modern world. By critically appraising its own culture as well as contemporary culture, the Catholic school becomes a place where knowledge, life, faith and culture meet and integrate. As a Catholic school, *Coláiste Chríost Rí* is not immune to the modern complex problem of religious indifference which forms the background to the research in this study.

The research findings, therefore, are followed by discussion and analysis with regard to the four main aspects of the questionnaire, operative goals of *Coláiste Chríost Rí* as students experience them, the religious and nurturing environment of the school, influences on students' religious development, and the religious beliefs, values and practices of these students. The conclusions and implications of the study findings are presented with particular reference to the reasonably high level of religious conviction among Junior Certificate students in contrast to the high level of religious indifference among Leaving Certificate students