

O'Neill, Donal, 1998, *The Catholic School in Ireland: An investigation of the ethos of Irish Catholic Schools and Pluralism in the context of modern Irish culture.*

This dissertation arises out of a sense that Catholic education in Ireland faces a period of challenge and opportunity. In this age, it must engage in an act of self-definition and find a sense of purpose and vision, faithful to the Church and relevant to the society that it seeks to serve. Ireland is, like many cultures, experiencing tremendous change and upheaval.

Chapter One traces some of the strands of this upheaval, particularly in relation to the perception of the Church. Government policy is also at a transition time. Catholic schools are challenged to define their role, their identity and their mission. Chapter Two seeks out the core principles of Catholic education. Moral formation is a key strength of the Catholic school, along with the distinctiveness of Catholicism. In Chapter Four, the survey finds that Irish teachers share the goals of Catholic education as articulated in Church documents. Teachers have a keen sense of their mission as enabling the development of the whole person, but they sense they are not achieving this goal. Academic and vocational goals are dominating school life.

In the concluding Chapter, the results of the questionnaire are analysed in the light of the whole study. Ireland is in a distinctive situation for many historical reasons. Both distinctiveness and openness need to be embraced to remain faithful to the alms of Catholic education, and enrich Irish society. Irish Catholic schools need to rekindle their sense of purpose, to become transforming agents for evangelisation and the common good.