

**Sheehan, Pat, 2002, *School Ethos: Students' Perceptions – A Case Study.***

## **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of how post-primary students in a Catholic secondary school experience the quality of their school life. The quality of school life is that facet of the school's culture which impinges upon students at the personal, experiential level of their daily lives. The study was conducted among all the students of a post-primary school known, for reasons of confidentiality, in this dissertation as 'Castletown Secondary School'.

The Literature review set out to contextualise the research questions in a selection of theoretical and empirical studies relating to Catholic school ethos. As Catholic schools exist in both theoretical and practical contexts, this study set out to contextualise the whole question of school ethos in the theoretical context of Catholic education, and, then, the practical context of empirical research. The research design employed in the study firstly, used a questionnaire. This deals with how students perceive their school life and comprises seven distinct categories: satisfaction with school; alienation from school; relationships with teachers; students' sense of achievement; relevance of school; sense of identity; self-esteem and status. Secondly, focus groups were used to elucidate matters of meaning in relation to values not readily discernible from the data obtained by way of the questionnaire. Thirdly, the school's Mission Statement was examined. The findings of the study are then contextualised in the light of theoretical and empirical understandings of Catholic ethos, and in the wider cultural background set out in the literature review. By way of conclusion some observations, closing remarks and recommendations were made regarding the monitoring and affirming of accomplishments, whilst also identifying challenges facing the Catholic school.

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