Identity and Ethos in Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in Ireland, Exploring the Attitudes and Behaviours of Stakeholders

GRACE (Ireland)

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This mixed methods research study is entitled *'Identity and Ethos in Catholic Primary & Secondary Schools in Ireland: Exploring the Attitudes and Behaviours of Stakeholders'*. Its aim is to establish a clear baseline and a set of signposts for the advancement of value-led Catholic education in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). In order to achieve this aim, the study incorporates two core objectives:

- to classify the practices and perceptions, pertaining to identity and ethos, of members of boards of management and the employees (principals, deputy principals, teachers and other school staff) of Catholic schools in ROI.

- to establish these stakeholders' capacity to progress and further Catholic education.

Using cross-sectional online survey questionnaires, phase one of the research involved the gathering of quantitative data from the aforementioned stakeholders in Catholic schools in ROI at secondary and primary levels. Following data analysis, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was utilised with participants drawn from each of the board of management and school employee cohorts.

This chapter details the specifics of the methodology employed and describes the research design, sampling strategies and instruments of data gathering and analysis. It explains the safeguards utilised to protect validity, trustworthiness and quality control and begins by discussing theoretical underpinnings and the paradigm of pragmatism within which the study is situated. It considers the ontological and epistemological debates this worldview has provoked and refers to the conceptual framework which has been explicated in detail in X (*Introduction to the report*).

3.1 Pragmatism: a bridge-maker between paradigms

Pragmatism is a paradigm offering an approach to research which accommodates multiple worldviews and rejects "the forced choice between positivism (including post-positivism) and constructivism with regard to methods, logic, and epistemology" (Tashakkori, and Teddlie 1998, pp.22-23). It is often adopted by mixed methods researchers who see value in the integration of realist and nominalist ontological and epistemological understandings and methods when addressing complex issues with multiple cohorts such as those represented in the current study.

Thomas Kuhn, in his work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) saw all science as operating within defined paradigms, each with "a concrete exemplar that functions as a guide to future research" (Wray 2010, p.380). A paradigm can be understood as "a disciplinary matrix" which influences how inquirers "should conduct scientific investigations, including theories and their applications, the method of observation…which instruments to use and how to apply them" (Devlin and Bokulich 2015, p.2). In broad terms, it may be seen as "a philosophical position about the world or the nature of reality and how we approach it to understand it" (Maxwell, 2005 in Dawadi and Shrestha 2021, p.25).

Although a range of paradigms exist, the majority emanate from the two overarching worldviews of positivism and constructivism, each with their own ontological (relating to the nature of being and reality) and epistemological (relating to how we come to know what is real) understandings.

At its most basic, the ontological perspective of positivism is that reality is fixed, ordered and predictable and open to objective description, regardless of one's beliefs, perceptions or views. The positivist views the world through the lens of realism whereby

> the social world exists independently of an individual's appreciation of it. The individual is seen as being born into and living within a social world which has a reality of its own. It is not something which the individual creates - it exists 'out there'; ontologically it is prior to the existence and consciousness of any single human being. (Burrell and Morgan 2005, p.4)

Constructivism sees this position as lacking particularity and complexity. It rejects the notion of a single objective truth which exists independent of individuals and groups and adopts a more nominalist standpoint which holds that "the social world, external to individual cognition, is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality".

(Burrell and Morgan 2005, p.4). For the constructivist, what is true or real admits to multiple and subjective realities which individuals construct out of reflection on lived experience.

The epistemological assumptions supporting these paradigms proceed from their ontological stances. A positivist epistemology assumes that

> what we can know about it is observable and can be explored objectively with the researcher maintaining neutrality and standing apart from the research. It has traditionally employed quantitative research as a method to investigate large populations with the aim of producing explicable hard data and enhancing result generalisations (Guba and Lincoln Guba, 1994, p. 105). Emphasising measurement, correlation and causation, it aims to be "value-free, logical, reductionistic, and deterministic, based on a priori theories" (Yilmaz 2013, p.312 in Doherty 2020 p. 68).

Constructivists, however, take the view that "theories are themselves value statements" (Guba and Lincoln 1994, p.107) and question the contention that knowledge flows only from the neutral measurement or investigation of phenomena which exist "out there" (Burrell and Morgan 2005, p.4) and independent of the investigator. Believing that knowledge is mediated through context, culture and subjective experience, they understand it as "a process of meaning-making" (Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner 2007, p. 297) which

> starts with the experience and asks how members construct it. To the best of their ability, constructivists enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views of it, and locate it in its web of connections and constraints. Constructivists acknowledge that their interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction. (Charmaz 2006, p.187)

With this emphasis on subjective experience, constructivism is largely associated with qualitative inquiry which can be described as

> an emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal…. the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world. (Yilmaz 2013, p.312)

It views the relationship between the knower and the known as inextricably connected (Yilmaz 2013, p.312) and rejects the possibility of researcher neutrality through the contention that "the researcher is the means through which the study is conducted" (Rossman and Rallis 2003, p.5).

Situated at opposite ends of the research continuum (Creswell, 2003), both paradigms can be viewed as possessing mutually exclusive ontological and epistemological perspectives which

result in incommensurable methodological approaches. (McChesney & Aldridge 2019, Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p.6). Pragmatism rejects this division and in consciously occupying a middle-ground in "the paradigm wars" (Evans et al, 2011, p.2; Tashakkori, and Teddlie 1998, p.5), it critiques the view that researchers must occupy one or other philosophical or methodological camp. It instead favours a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' with regard to paradigm and methods (Tashakkori, and Teddlie 1998, Tashakkori, Johnson & Teddlie 2020) and its advocates address the ontological and epistemological arguments by accepting that objective truth and reality can exist independent of opinion or experience, but also that such "reality is grounded in the environment and can only be encountered through human experience". (Kaushik and Walsh 2019, p. 3). Creswell pithily illustrates this by noting that "there is an "objective" reality (e.g., the classroom). But under close inspection there is also a "subjective" reality (e.g., we see different things as we look at a classroom, 2012, p.537). As such, the methods traditionally appropriated by each paradigm, should not be corralled, but can justifiably be employed and integrated. Echoing Howe (1988) and Trow (1957), who emphasised "attacking our problems with the widest array of conceptual and methodological tools that we possess" (Trow 1957 in Tashakkori, and Teddlie 1998, p.21), Creswell observes that "some methods are more closely associated with one worldview than the other, but to categorize them as "belonging" to one worldview more than another creates an unrealistic situation" (2012, p.537).

Such a perspective allows the pragmatist to utilise the instruments and procedures traditionally associated with each worldview in a mixed methods approach wherein abductive reasoning facilitates a dialogue between deduction and induction and allows a more comprehensive treatment of that which is under investigation. Rather than side-stepping what can be perceived as a philosophical chasm, pragmatists attempt to bridge the epistemological gap by pointing out that since it is impossible for reality or "Truth" to be "determined once and for all" (Teddlie and Tashakkori 1998, p.28), the research question, rather than paradigmatical constraints, should be paramount (Biesta 2010). In preferencing the empirical over the philosophical, pragmatism and mixed methods research focus on the "consequences of research, and seeing what works in real-world practice" (Creswell 2022, p. 138; Creswell & Plano Clark 2011, p. 41), and argue that pluralist methods are not only permissible but compatible and necessary. In short, for pragmatists, being constrained by paradigmatical rigidity creates a redundant "false dichotomy" (Reichardt & Cook, 1979 in Creswell 2012, p.537) between worldviews and methods and obscures the combined strength of the quantitative and qualitative approaches

which underpin this research. Integrating these approaches permits the harvesting of information which could not be garnered using one method alone, allows triangulation to take place which can be defined as "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals" (Creswell 2012, p.629) and allows a more complete understanding of the areas under investigation (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003; Greene 2007; Creamer 2018 in McChesney & Adridge 2019, p.226).
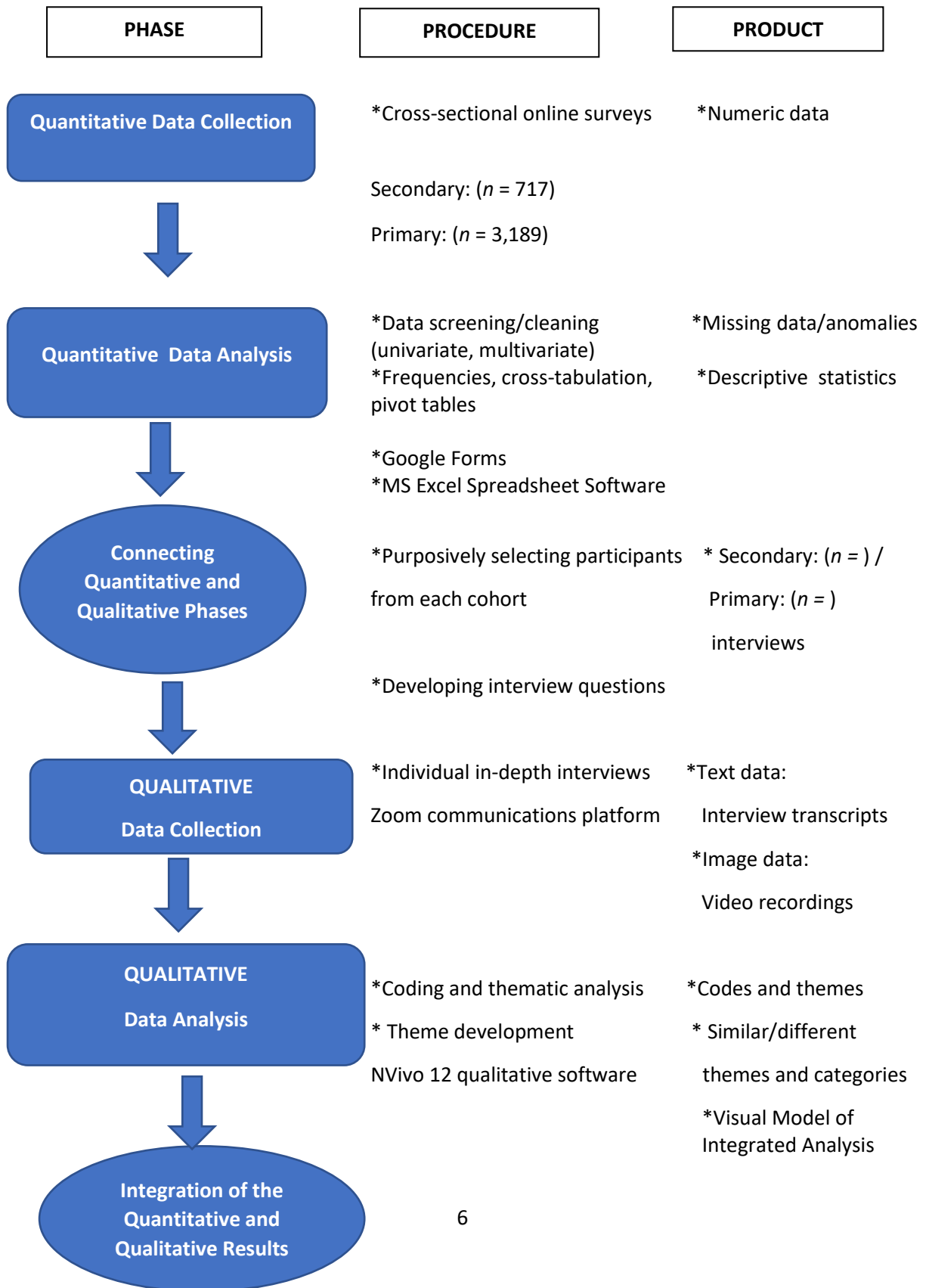
3.2 Mixed Methods Research in the Current Study

3.2.1 The Explanatory Sequential Design

It is the aforementioned strengths and the opportunity for the "breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007, p.123) that they afford which informed the decision to adopt a mixed methods approach in the current study. While a number of research designs are open to mixed methods researchers (Creswell, 2012, pp. 540-547; Creswell 2022, pp.6-8; 58-59), this research employs an explanatory sequential design whereby two distinct phases of data collection were employed with priority given to the collection and analysis of a large body of quantitative data in the first instance. In such a design, the quantitative phase is dominant with "more weight …placed on the quantitative phase". (McKim 2017, p.204). This was followed by a smaller qualitative strand of semi-structured interviews designed to amplify, explain and elaborate on the quantitative results (Ivankova, Creswell & Slick 2007, p.5; Creswell 2012, p.543; 2022, p.42; Shorten & Smith 2017). Connection and integration of the databases occurs when the quantitative data informs the questions to be explored during the qualitative strand (Creswell, 2022, p.54) and integration is further enhanced when qualitative analysis uncovers how the qualitative findings help explain the quantitative results in more depth. (Creswell 2022, p.42).

Table 3.1 below provides a visual illustration of the design procedures associated with this research design which were implemented in this study. These will be elaborated on throughout this chapter.

Table 3.1 Visual Model for Mixed Methods Explanatory Sequential Design Procedures

PHASE	PROCEDURE	PRODUCT
Quantitative Data Collection	*Cross-sectional online surveys Secondary: (*n* = 717) Primary: (*n* = 3,189)	*Numeric data
Quantitative Data Analysis	*Data screening/cleaning (univariate, multivariate) *Frequencies, cross-tabulation, pivot tables *Google Forms *MS Excel Spreadsheet Software	*Missing data/anomalies *Descriptive statistics
Connecting Quantitative and Qualitative Phases	*Purposively selecting participants from each cohort *Developing interview questions	* Secondary: (*n* =) / Primary: (*n* =) interviews
QUALITATIVE Data Collection	*Individual in-depth interviews Zoom communications platform	*Text data: Interview transcripts *Image data: Video recordings
QUALITATIVE Data Analysis	*Coding and thematic analysis * Theme development NVivo 12 qualitative software	*Codes and themes * Similar/different themes and categories *Visual Model of Integrated Analysis
Integration of the Quantitative and Qualitative Results		

	*Interpretation and explanation	*Discussion
	of the quantitative and qualitative	*Implications
	results	*Future Research

Source: Adapted from Ivankova, Creswell and Stick 2006, p 16)

3.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is informed by the philosophy and theology of Vatican II and by post conciliar documents on Catholic Education from *Gravissimum Educationis (*1964*)* to *The Identity of Catholic Schools for a Culture of Dialogue* (2022).

Such philosophy and theology, is synthesised in the Irish ecclesial documents *The Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools 'Vision '08'* (ICBC 2008); *Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (ICE 2010*); Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School: A Process Centred on Conversations* (CSP 2016) and *Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School: A Process Centred on Conversations* (CSP 2019) whose content shaped the survey questionnaires utilised in the first phase of the research. The key themes of these documents provide a conceptual scaffold for the research and a benchmark by which to discuss and interpret its findings.

3.4 Phase One: Quantitative Data Gathering

3.4.1 The Research Instruments

To address the aims of the study, two analogous but non-identical, self-developed and pilot-tested web-based survey questionnaires (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick 2006, p.6) were designed for distribution to four cohorts of secondary and primary stakeholders respectively.

Their construction followed the checklist of quality criteria identified by Creswell (2012, p.405) which can be summarised as follows:

> A good survey study includes the identification of the population and the sample, contains an adequate-sized sample systematically derived, employs a cross-sectional or longitudinal design, specifies the instruments (and included sample questions), determines whether scores from them will be reliable and valid, uses appropriate data analysis procedures to answer the questions or hypothesis, and is written acknowledging ethical issues and using a standard structure. (Creswell 2012, p. 406)

In order to facilitate cross-reference and comparison where possible, the primary questionnaire mirrored the template of the secondary questionnaire which was designed and distributed first.

However, to take account of the operational and personnel distinctions which necessarily pertain in the primary and secondary contexts, the primary survey also incorporated a number of additional or differently worded questions specific to this environment.

There are a number of online survey tools available to researchers. In this study, Google Forms was chosen for its capacity to collect and store data easily and efficiently as well as for its ease of access for respondents using either a computer or mobile device. Among its advantages is the ability to prevent multiple submissions from the same respondent. Others include

> charting the results or exporting them for analysis to a spreadsheet. It provides for various questions formats from text boxes, paragraph texts, multiple choice, checkboxes, scale, grid etc. It permits custom logic to navigate through questions based on answers. Inbuilt data validation rules ensure that people get the right questions based on the previous answers. (Nayak, M. Siva Durga Prasad & Narayan. K.A., 2019, p. 33)

Each survey was open to four individual cohorts. At primary level, the four cohorts included members of boards of management (BoM), principals (including deputy principals), teachers and other school staff (including ancillary, support, and administrative staff). In the secondary context, these included BoM members, principals (including deputy principals), teachers of religious education and all teaching staff.

Questions Employed in the Survey Questionnaires

The structure of both questionnaires, and the number and phrasing of survey questions, was influenced by the data required to address the two research questions/aims. As indicated, the aims of the study are to classify the practices and perceptions, pertaining to identity and ethos, of key stakeholders in Irish Catholic schools and to establish these stakeholders' capacity to progress and further Catholic education.

In light of these aims, the framing of questions posed was informed by the content of the ecclesial documents referenced in 3.3 above. As a collective, in seeking to provide a philosophical, theological, educational and operational set of norms for good governance, leadership, education and religious education in Catholic schools in Ireland, these documents offered an important foundation for the specifics that were important to probe in the questionnaires. Through embedding the survey questions in the visions and expectations laid out within these documents, it was possible to elicit respondents' attitudes to, and experiences of, these visions and expectations. This served both research objectives through creating a

dialogue between what is envisaged by school patrons and their representative bodies, and what is understood, experienced and adopted, or otherwise, at school level.

Both questionnaires were divided into seven main sections as shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2

Section 1	Selection of Respondent Role (directed at all respondents).
Section 2	About Your School: county/diocese or trust (directed at all respondents).
Section 3	The Role of the Board of Management (role-specific).
Section 4	The Role of the Principal (role-specific).
Section 5	The Role of the Teacher: Primary (role-specific). The Role of the RE Teacher: Secondary (role-specific).
Section 6	General Questions: Primary (directed at principals, teachers and other school staff). General Questions Secondary (directed at BoM members, principals, teachers and all teaching and ancillary staff).
Section 7	About Yourself (directed at all respondents).

To facilitate a rounded picture of respondents, it was necessary to ask a number of geographic, biographic and demographic questions. These relate to the county and diocese or trust of respondents' schools and to the personal attributes of respondents such as role, age cohort, gender, length-of-service, belief/non-belief in God, attendance at religious services and religious affiliation, if applicable. These questions were augmented by a further series of questions, some tailored to individual cohorts, and some directed at all cohorts, designed to probe role training, understanding and knowledge of the aforementioned documents relating to Catholic education, practices surrounding prayer and liturgical celebration, faith development and the teaching of religious education, amongst others. At periodic intervals, the questionnaires invited participants to elaborate on their answers, if so desired. As the roles and responsibilities of the eight cohorts of respondents (four at primary and four at secondary) vary considerably, the questionnaires were constructed to recognise this and necessarily contain common, cohort-specific and primary or secondary-specific questions. Content validity of both questionnaires was safeguarded through consulting a panel of experts in primary and secondary

Catholic education (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick 2006) and by piloting the questionnaires amongst BoM members and principals and staff in six schools, three at each school level. Valuable recommendations to remove typographical errors, improve occasional phrasing ambiguity or to enhance the clarity of the questionnaire were offered and incorporated.

At the close of each questionnaire, respondents were invited to self-select for follow-up interviews by inserting their email address. All were assured that this information would be decoupled from their survey responses to protect anonymity.

Complete questionnaire templates are available in Appendix A (secondary) and Appendix B (primary).

3.4.2 Identification of the Population

Primary-Level

In order to access the largest samples available (Creswell 2012, p.141), the survey questionnaire was open to all members of the boards of management, principals, deputy principals, teachers and other school staff of the 2,851 primary schools in ROI with a Catholic ethos.

Second-Level

Large-scale, multi-level eligibility to participate also applied at second level. In this instance, all members of the boards of management, principals, deputy principals, RE teachers, other subject teachers and ancillary staff of the 342 secondary schools in ROI with a Catholic ethos were eligible to complete the survey questionnaire.

While the survey was open to all in the above-mentioned cohorts, since it was conducted on the basis of self-selection, convenience sampling was employed, a non-probability technique selected for the practical considerations of availability and willingness to participate. (Creswell 2012, p. 619).

Table 3.3 below gives a breakdown of the number of respondents at both levels.

Cohort	Primary	Secondary	Total
Member of the Board of Management	1,162	95	1,257
Principal or Deputy Principal	1,111	117	1,228
Teacher - Classroom or Subject	794	302	1,096
RE Teacher		129	129
Other Staff	122	74	196
Total	**3,189**	**717**	**3,906**

3.4.3 Exclusions

It should be noted that the cohorts identified for participation in both phases of the research are those with direct, on-the-ground responsibility for the delivery of Catholic education in Ireland and are, thus, key stakeholders. This noted, other crucial stakeholders also exist and these include pupils and their parents/caregivers/guardians at both school levels. Central stakeholders also include the patrons, trusts and representative bodies who were identified at the preliminary stage of the research planning through a comprehensive scoping and stakeholder mapping exercise which is elaborated upon in X (*Introduction to the report*) . It is also recognised that the research excludes the large Catholic education sector in Northern Ireland. The exclusion of each of these stakeholders from both phases of the study was influenced by the research aims which focus on the practices, perceptions and capacities of school staff and management in ROI. It was also influenced by the need to place parameters around the research, by the limited resources available in terms of time, personnel and finance, and by the separate educational jurisdiction which applies in Northern Ireland.

3.5 Phase One: Quantitative Research Execution

3.5.1 Dissemination of Questionnaires: Second-Level

The narrative below follows the order in which the surveys were conducted and analysed. The second-level questionnaire was disseminated in January 2022 with distribution of the primary questionnaire following in March of the same year. Both surveys closed in early July 2022.

Although social media platforms are popular mechanisms often used to promote online surveys and to recruit research participants, it was considered prudent to forego this recruitment vehicle in order to mitigate the potential for non-eligible respondents completing the survey. Consequently, to maximise access and impose measures to protect against result contamination, both questionnaires were disseminated via representative bodies for Catholic

education. In the case of the second-level survey, support was given by the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) who secured the assistance of the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS). The latter made each patron and trust body aware of the survey via a covering letter containing the survey link (Appendix C) and obtained patron/trust support in forwarding it to their respective schools. In follow-up, a reminder email, containing similar correspondence was sent by the research team to the principal of each secondary school with a Catholic ethos. These email addresses are publicly available on school websites and in DES literature. This reminder email requested principals' support in distributing the questionnaire among their boards of management and teaching staff. An Irish language translation of the questionnaire was also sent to principals (Appendix D i) and BoM chairpersons (Appendix E ii) in Irish speaking secondary schools with a Catholic ethos

In line with privacy rights, since the email addresses of board members or school staff are not publicly available, this necessary reliance on principals to forward the link to other potential respondents proved a limitation to the research. While there is a 34%[1] response rate from principals at second level, as shown in Figure 3.2 below, response rates were lower amongst the cohorts who were depending on the link to be forwarded to them.

3.5.2 Dissemination of Questionnaires: Primary-Level

Due to the large volume of primary schools, dissemination of the primary survey followed a similar but adapted pattern. In this instance, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) distributed a covering letter including the survey link (Appendix F) to the principals in their membership. Principals were asked to distribute it to their staff and to members of their board of management (Appendix G). The CPSMA supplemented this initial contact with a follow-up reminder after two weeks. They also distributed an Irish language version of the questionnaire to principals (Appendix H) and chairpersons of boards of management (Appendix I) in their 100 member schools in Gaeltacht areas. At the CPSMA annual general meeting (AGM) held in May 2022, invitations to participate were again distributed to all attendees (Appendix J).

In order to make contact with those primary schools with a Catholic ethos who are not members of the CPSMA, between March and June 2022, the research team contacted diocesan education secretaries and diocesan advisors in ROI initially by phone, and subsequently via email on two

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[1] This assumes that the 17 DPs who replied did so on behalf of their schools (therefore exempting the principal from responding.

follow-up occasions. Contact details were accessed by consulting *the Irish Catholic Directory,* (2022). Education secretaries and diocesan advisors were invited to distribute the relevant survey information to chairs of boards of management (Appendix K) and principals (Appendix L) in their dioceses, asking the latter to participate and to distribute the survey to colleagues. Reminders were sent to these cohorts by education secretaries and/or diocesan advisors after a period of weeks.

While making contact with all individual member of the potential survey population was precluded by the sheer volume of the latter, as well as by the aforementioned email privacy constraints, this method of cohort access carried with it a heavy reliance on a number of third-parties to disseminate the survey link and this is also recognised as a limitation to the study. Further limitations are discussed in 3.13 below.

3.6 Phase One Quantitative Data Analysis

During the data collection phase, the research team prepared frequency tables as responses were coming in. These tables allowed the team to monitor the distribution of responses, by geography and trust / patron body, thereby alerting them to any deficits and enabling them to follow-up with particular patron bodies, diocesan secretaries or other channels through which the survey link had been circulated, in order to maximise the survey sample's representativeness of Catholic schools in Ireland.

Once the data collectors were closed and the entire dataset was available, the team generated a set of frequency tables and graphs (mainly bar graphs) for each variable. These outputs provided a useful summary of the main findings, and they served to inform the selection and prioritisation of independent variables that could be used to undertake bivariate and tri-variate analysis. The main independent variables were those listed in Table 3.2 in respect of respondents' demographics (e.g. role/function, age cohort, gender, tenure), and they also included trust/patron body. The frequency tables and associated crosstabulations were organised thematically, and their presentation served to inform the formulation of questions for the interviewees. The data analysis phase also involved examining the questions and themes that were common to both the primary and secondary school cohorts, so that comparative analysis could be undertaken, where appropriate.

The data analysis phase confirmed that the volume and scope of the data that had been collected enabled the team to answer each of the research questions. Moreover, it revealed that other questions and issues had been addressed that exceeded the original targets (in terms of

objectives), and in response, the team decided to prepare a set of thematic reports, rather than a monograph, that respond to the study's research questions and which provide additional explorations of issues and findings that emerged from the data collection, especially the stakeholder interviews. These reports present a mix of qualitative (descriptive statistics) and qualitative data. While the reports are comprehensive and they provide valuable, robust and reliable data in respect of practices and perspectives, statistical inferences are limited due to the diverse nature of schools (limited numbers of cases in some independent variable *categories) and our survey instruments' exploratory, rather than evaluative approach.*

Due to the variety of participant roles, in order to elicit the required data and allow for role-specific nuance, as indicated in 3.4.1 above, the surveys were constructed so that questions were included which were common to all cohorts and there were those which were exclusive to one, two or three of the cohorts. Such a mix of questions had the advantage of capturing a large volume of data pertinent to one or more roles, and also a significant amount which was germane to the total cohorts at both levels with analysis allowing the identification of inter-cohort and intra-cohort variance and/or consistency. Following data cleaning and analysis, it required that descriptive findings for each individual cohort be collated separately before an integration of the quantitative findings was completed. This process was especially necessary for the reporting of the primary findings, given the significantly larger number of respondents involved. Though lengthy, it carried the benefits of "immersion in the message pool" (Neuendorf 2010, p.12) and facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the micro (role specific) and macro (multiple or whole cohort) findings while enabling a classification of results which required further interrogation or cross-cohort comparison through the use of cross-tabulations and pivot tables.

3.7 Phase Two: Qualitative Data Gathering

3.7.1 The Research Instruments

In keeping with the raison d'être of the explanatory sequential approach, the aim of the semi-structured interviews was to elaborate on and explain the quantitative results by "capturing and communicating participants' experiences in their own words" (Yilmaz 2013, p. 313), allowing the research team to "see through the eyes" of participants (Spencer et al, 2003, p.34), and generating the "thick description" necessary for robust qualitative inquiry (Geertz 1973). Together with serving the purpose of triangulation, in the qualitative interview, **"**what is emphasised is the examination of the context that influences people's actions or interactions

and the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences (Yilmaz 2013, p.313), thus illuminating the broader perspective afforded by the quantitative phase.

Questions Explored at Interview

Following phase one data analysis, results from both surveys indicated a number of common areas that merited further probing at interview with all cohorts and at both levels. These included:

- Understandings of Catholic identity/ethos.
- Practical supports for Catholic identity/ethos.
- Training opportunities.
- Attitudes to a potential non-denominational state patron in the future.
- Understandings of the role of the Diocesan Advisor.
- Recommendations for patrons and trust bodies.

Analysis also indicated specific areas for probing with one or more cohort at *either* primary or secondary level.

At primary level these included:

- How all interview participants' understanding of God influences their role.
- All participants' views surrounding leading prayer and obstacles to celebrating the liturgical seasons.
- With regard to pupils of faiths other than Christian, and those of humanist and secular beliefs, data analysis uncovered a disparity between the freedom to express and the freedom to practise their beliefs. Possible reasons for this disparity were explored at interview with all interview cohort participants.
- The experiences of BoM members, principals/deputy principals and teachers surrounding the allocation of teaching time to RE.
- BoM Members, teachers and other school staff views on the types of faith development available to pupils. Along with principals, these interview cohorts also gave their assessments of what might hinder the provision of opportunities for pupils to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ.
- Principals' estimation of priorities if new guidelines were developed for Catholic schools.

At second-level, data analysis also revealed the following additional areas for further exploration at interview:

- All interview participants' expectations for Catholic schools over the next five years.
- Principals and teacher's perceptions of staff faith development in their schools.
- BoM members' understanding of their role in leading and influencing the Catholic ethos of their school.
- BoM members' and principals' estimation of the priorities if new guidelines were developed for Catholic schools.

The pre-prepared interview questions can be found in Appendix M (primary) and Appendix N (secondary).

3.7.2 Identification of the Population

The phase one data gathering instruments provided a sampling frame for phase two through the provision of email addresses at the close of the questionnaires. Participants were chosen through purposive, homogenous sampling, based on their ability to provide the necessary information, (Etikan et al. 2016, p.2), membership of a specific cohort during the quantitative strand, and the willingness to participate which, as mentioned, had been indicated by the provision of email addresses (Creswell 2012, p.208, Patton 1990, p. 169). A total of 293 email addresses were provided at primary level with 94 made available at secondary level. Since respondents' contact emails were decoupled from completed surveys, it was not possible to sub-divide potential interview participants on of the basis of age, gender or geographical location. Role categorisation was possible only after potential participants were emailed and asked to confirm availability for interview and indicate their role in their school.

While it is recognised that conducting one-on-one interviews with all who had initially indicated willingness to participate would provide a further wealth of insight, the research team needed to balance this consideration with those of data management, time constraints and limited personnel. Therefore, in line with giving weight to the quantitative phase in an explanatory sequential design, and following Sandelowski's recommendation to obtain a representative sample size that is compact enough to manage and sizeable enough to provide "a new and richly textured understanding of experience" (1995, p.179), emphasis was placed on ensuring a sufficient probing of quantitative results while also limiting the amount of additional data for analysis. In total, 28 participants were invited for interview at primary and

24 at secondary levels. Table 3.4 below gives a breakdown by cohort of the number interviewed at each school level.

Table 3.4 Interview Cohorts by Number

PRIMARY		SECONDARY	
Board of Management	7	Board of Management	6
Principals/Deputy Principals	8	Principals/Deputy Principals	6
Teachers	12	RE Teachers	6
Other Staff	1	Teaching Staff	6

TOTAL	**28**		**24**

3.8 Phase Two Qualitative Research Execution

3.8.1 Conducting of Interviews

Interviews took place on the Zoom communications platform between April - July 2022 (secondary cohort) and January - May 2022 (primary cohort). Interviews were video and audio recorded with participants' consent. Requests for audio calls only were accommodated accordingly.

The choice of Zoom as a vehicle for the conducting of interviews was influenced by the key advantages enumerated by Gray et al 2020:

- It bridges the geographic distance between the research team and participants and allows a greater number of participants to be interviewed in a shorter timeframe.
- It is cost effective (Deakin & Wakefield 2013)
- It is easily accessible on a computer or mobile device and is convenient to use.
- It offers "enhanced personal interface to discuss personal topics" (Gray et al 2020: p. 1292) and facilitates the observation of non-verbal communication while supporting interviewee choice surrounding audio or audio/video recording.
- It can lessen disruption for the interviewee by being able to be interviewed in a location of their choice.

- It can safeguard against circumstances which might interfere with in-person interviewing such as weather, traffic (Sedgwick & Spiers 2009) or indeed, the constraints imposed during times of public health dangers such as the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It allows password protection to enhance confidentiality.
- It saves files in two ways: audio only and audio/video combined. This facilitates ease of transcription and also allows the researcher to review files through both means, allowing an enhanced immersion in the data (Gray et al 2020, pp.1292-1301).

Interview transcripts were produced using REV, a voice-to-text computer programme. Final typed transcripts, representing the entire interview content, were prepared without "tidying up" and with a clear emphasis on "what was said" rather than "how it was said" (Poland 2002, p.634).

3.9 Phase Two Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006). It involves the search for themes or patterns in the words of participants to elicit the deeper meaning in what is being said. This is achieved through a process of coding, re-coding and categorisation which involve the breaking down of data into "units of meaning" (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p.128) so facilitating the development of theories to explain what is being observed. In the current study, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model was utilised and analysis was carried out using the NVivo 12 software package. The analytical process was conducted in eight cycles over six phases.

Stage 1: Familiarisation with the Data.

Cycle 1: Importing and Familiarising involved importing the video files and interview transcripts into NVivo 12 to allow a review of the visual and audio recordings alongside a reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts. This enables the researcher to log initial impressions and become increasingly familiar with the data.

Stage 2: Generating initial codes

Cycle 2: Open Coding involved initial coding of the interviews into non-hierarchical general codes. There was no attempt made at this stage to develop patterns or hierarchies, however interesting features, relevant to the research objectives, were coded in a systematic manner

Stage 3: Searching for Themes

Cycle 3: Developing Categories involved grouping similar codes together and looking for overlap or redundant codes in order to develop patterns and themes.

Stage 4: Reviewing Themes

Cycle 4: *Drilling Down* involved breaking down the restructured categories into sub-categories to offer more in-depth understanding and clearer insight into the meanings embedded in the categories. This is a process of filtering and reviewing to check whether some themes become more central, whether some need to be discarded or whether some overlap.

Stage 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Cycle 5: Data Reduction involved consolidating codes from the preceding cycles into more literature-based themes to create a final framework of themes. This phase revealed the rich overarching themes and made sense of the data in addressing the research questions under their key aspects: participants' perceptions of their roles; their practices and experiences within their roles; and their capacities to develop and progress their roles in service of Catholic education.

Stage 6: Producing the Report – Cycles 6, 7, & 8.

Cycle 6: This involved *writing analytical memos* against the themes to summarise the content of each category, and its codes, and propose empirical findings against such categories. .

Cycle 7: Validation involved interrogation of the data, forcing the researcher to consider elements beyond the theme itself, drawing on relationships across and between themes. This phase resulted in evidence-based findings.

Cycle 8: Involved *synthesising analytical memos* into a coherent narrative that would form the basis of the qualitative results. As the process of data analysis progressed, five core themes were identified as central to the primary and four to the secondary contexts. These include:

Table 3.5

PRIMARY	
Theme 1	Commitment to the ethos of the school

Theme 2	Understanding of Catholic school identity
Theme 3	Influence of personal faith on the role
Theme 4	Religious Education at primary level
Theme 5	Future of Catholic primary schools

Table 3.6

SECONDARY	
Theme 1	Understanding of Catholic school
Theme 2	Commitment to Catholic school
Theme 3	Responsibility to Catholic school
Theme 4	Future of Catholic Secondary schools

Table 3.7 below charts the NVivo tasks conducted in alignment with the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework.

Table. 3.5 Analytical Hierarchy to Data Analysis

Analytical Process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Braun and Clarke Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative process throughout analysis
1.Familiarizing yourself with the data	**Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. Import data into the data management tool**	**Data Management** *(Open and hierarchal coding through NVIVO)*	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning
2.Generating initial codes:	**Stage 2 – Open Coding- Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collecting data relevant to each code**		Refining and distilling more abstract concepts
3. Searching for themes:	**Stage 3 – Categorisation of Codes – Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme**		

		Descriptive Accounts	
4.Reviewing themes:	**Stage 4 – Coding on - Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis**	*(Reordering, 'coding on' and annotating through NVIVO)*	Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning
5. Defining and naming themes:	**Stage 5 - Data Reduction - On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story [storylines] the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme**	**Explanatory Accounts** *(Extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVIVO)*	Assigning meaning
6. Producing the report	**Stage 6 – Generating Analytical Memos - Phase 7 – Testing and Validating, and Phase 8 - Synthesising Analytical Memos. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly account of the analysis.**		Generating themes and concepts

Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006 in McCormack, 2020

3.10 Achieving Integration Between Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Integration in this study occurs on a range of levels: through the integration of worldviews that finds accommodation in the pragmatic paradigm; through the research design adopted; through the methods employed: through the sampling frame generated in phase one and utilised in phase two of the research; and through the data analysis from phase one which informed the questions employed in phase two. It also occurs in the reporting of results when highlighting the occasions where added insight was gleaned which did not emerge from the analysis of one set of data alone (Fetters, Curry and Creswell 2013). Finally, it occurs during the interpretation and discussion of findings where the results of each phase are discussed (see *report Discussion*). While it is acknowledged that the majority of the findings derive from the quantitative data, which was the expectation of the mixed methods research design employed, as noted, there are significant occasions when the two sets of findings "talk to each other" (Bryman, 2014, p.127), examples of which are included in the joint display of key results which

provide "a cognitive framework for integration." (Guetterman, Fetters and Creswell 2015, p.555).

3.11 Ethical Considerations

3.11.1 Phase One Quantitative

Ethical approval to undertake this study was sought from Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) and approval was granted on the understanding that the research team would abide by the terms of a written submission that guarantees informed consent, a respect for privacy, and assurances against deception and any real or potential harm to participants (Bryman 2001).

Participation in the online surveys was both anonymous and voluntary. The use of a web-based instrument carried the advantage of protecting school site and respondent anonymity with participants free to withdraw at any time while completing the questionnaire. Though withdrawal was no longer possible after submission, the safeguard of anonymity remained up to, and following, the publication of findings. The purposes and boundaries of the research were succinctly explained in an information section on the first page of both questionnaires which respondents could read before accessing the survey itself. This served the purpose of gaining informed consent without direct contact with survey respondents. (Mahon 2013, Nayak, M. Siva Durga Prasad & Narayan. K.A. 2019). Additionally, in the event of concerns or queries, all respondents were provided with the contact emails of the principal investigator and the MIC Ethics Committee.

3.11.2 Phase Two Qualitative

Having confirmed willingness to participate, each member of the interview cohort from both school levels was sent a plain language statement (Appendix O) and an informed consent form (Appendix P) outlining the nature and parameters of the research. These documents delineated what participants would be asked to do and gave details of how privacy would be protected and how data would be used. The timeframe for data retention or disposal was also indicated. The cohort was promised confidentiality and therefore names do not appear in the final report. Participants were also assured that should they so wish, they would be free to withdraw consent for the use of their interview data at any time (Blaxter et al. 2006, cited in Bell 2014 p. 49).

3.12 Benefits of the Research

Benefits of the research to those who participated in one or both phases include being afforded an opportunity to consider and elucidate their own experiences of involvement with Catholic education and to contribute to knowledge while reflecting on their respective roles. It is of assistance to the patron and trust bodies who are responsible for the identity and ethos of their schools in identifying the congruence of life in their schools with the vision for Catholic schools as outlined in the key ecclesial documents against which this research project is benchmarked. The converse is also true. The research identifies challenges that face the patrons and trusts in realising that vision in their schools. It provides a comprehensive view of the understanding and practice of identity and ethos in Catholic schools among key stakeholders: members of Boards of Management, Principals and Staff.

3.13 Limitations of the Research

Alongside those noted in 3.5.2 above, further limitations of the research design include the lengthy timeframe which was required to plan and conduct the research and the range of resources and personnel required to gather and analyse both sets of data, involving multiple cohorts.

Another limitation is imposed by the challenge of quantifying exact figures for the eligible population in each cohort for the quantitative phase of the study. While it is possible to provide a reasonable estimation of the number of board of management members, principals, deputy principals, teachers and other staff employed in Catholic schools in ROI, no central database yet exists giving precise figures. To access and collate these would require a separate study which was beyond the scope of the current research.

A final limitation is imposed by members of the research teams' professional roles in Catholic education. At the qualitative phase, in particular, where direct contact was made with participants, it could be argued that this carries some of the risks of an insider research study which Kvale (1995) notes can be open to a lack of distance on the part of the researchers and also carries the risk of response bias on the part of those interviewed. The first of these risks, which could impact negatively on credibility and trustworthiness, has been mitigated by safeguards such as providing clarity surrounding the boundaries and intentions of the research and being transparent in relation to reflexivity and positionality (see X *Introduction to the report)* (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Patton 1999; Spencer et al. 2003, p. 32 and Creswell 2003, p.182). Trustworthiness is also enhanced by triangulation which, in the current study was

achieved in two ways: (i) methods triangulation or "checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods" and analyst triangulation meaning "using multiple analysts to review findings" (Patton 1999, p.1193). The risk of response bias was mitigated at phase one through employing an anonymous survey as the data collection instrument, offering no incentives or inducements to encourage participation and by making every attempt to pose non-leading questions. At phase two, participants were assured that there were no perceived correct or incorrect or desired answers. Further quality control measures for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods are discussed in more detail below.

3.14 Quality Control in Mixed Methods Inquiry

3.14.1 Phase One: Quantitative Research Standards

As illustrated in Table 3.8 below, quantitative research stresses four main criteria to ensure quality and trustworthiness. The first is internal validity, meaning "the explanations are really true or accurate and correctly capture what is actually happening" (Gibbs 2007, p.91). In this study, internal validity was safeguarded by the use of a systematic study design, by the piloting and refining the instruments of measurement prior to distribution, by using the in-built data validation offered by Google Forms, and by utilising the controls the latter provides to prevent contamination or double-completion. It was enhanced by thorough data cleaning, the creation of an audit trail, by the statistical analysis techniques which have been explicated above and, as noted, by data and analyst triangulation.

The second quality criterion is generalisability, or external validity, meaning that the results are "true for a wide range of circumstances" beyond a single research study (Gibbs 2007, p.104). As has been acknowledged, in view of the varying response rates across individual cohorts in both surveys, this research does not claim generalisability beyond the total cohort studied. However, since the research is an accurate reflection of the views and experiences of the largest population of stakeholders yet studied in Catholic education in Ireland, with the overall response rates reported above in Figure 3.2, it is contended that the results uncovered are capable of meeting the core objectives of the research.

Reliability, meaning "the results are consistent across repeated investigations in different circumstances with different investigators" (Gibbs 2007, p.91; Spencer et al, p.40) is the third criterion in quantitative research. In this study, reliability has been protected by utilising consistent, standardised systems of survey dissemination and data collection, and by designing clear and unambiguous questions which address the research objectives and constructs under investigation.

The final quality criterion is objectivity which requires the researcher to remain separate from the research so that researcher bias or influence is minimised. While mixed methods researchers recognise that much research operates on the continuum between value-free and value-laden, in this study, objectivity has been maintained by the researchers remaining in "the background" (Creswell 2012, p.280) of research administration during the quantitative phase with contact between the research team and participants limited to the direct emailing of principals at secondary level. Aside from the necessary written information provided in invitation correspondence or in the introduction to the questionnaires, no lengthy explanation of the research teams' understanding of the study were given so as to avoid contamination of the survey results. Objectivity has been further enhanced by the use of the appropriate instruments to measure variables, and by the use of relevant statistical procedures.

Table 3.8.: Lincoln and Guba's Key Quality Criteria

Aspect	Scientific term	Naturalistic term
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity or generalisability	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

Source: Cited by both Spencer et al (p.40) and Yilmaz (p.320) and adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985)

3.14.2 Phase Two: Qualitative Research Standards

Lincoln and Guba (1985) are associated with developing the "gold standard" (Spencer et al, 2003, p.41) for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. As Table 3.8 above demonstrates, for them, the concept of internal validity (how rigorously a study is conducted) corresponds to that of credibility (whether the participants agree with the findings). Credibility

is protected in phase two of this study by ensuring that individual interview cohort participants had the same access to audio/video recordings as the researcher/interviewer so that they could review their contributions and make any clarifications or amendments, if so desired. It has also been enhanced by presentations of interim findings (both quantitative and qualitative) to stakeholder representatives, research funders and academics involved in Catholic education. Each of these groups were facilitated in discussing and responding to the interim report.

At the qualitative phase, external validity (or generalisability) is replaced by transferability "which means that the findings may be applicable to other settings which can be adjudicated on by the provision of thick description regarding all aspects of the study" (Yilmaz, 2013 in Doherty 2020 p.72).

Objectivity is paralleled by confirmability when findings are plainly supported by the data so that conclusions drawn are rigorous, reasonable and clear. In this study, confirmability is served by method and analyst triangulation and by a clear justification of results.

Transferability may be adjudicated by stakeholders, and the academy, through the provision of thick description throughout the various phases of the study.

3.14.3 Mixed Methods Research Standards

Since it is still a relatively young field, researchers are divided on whether specific quality criteria are needed for mixed methods. Amongst those who agree on separate standards, there is heated debate about what these should and should not include (Creswell, 2022, pp. 121-133). Though cognisant of an array of suggested standards (Hirose and Creswell, 2023, Creswell, 2022, Heyvaert et al. 2013; Bryman, Becker and Sempik 2008; and O'Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl 2008), this research follows those advocated by Bryman (2014). He presents them as a series of six needs which are addressed below:

(1) *The need for the quantitative and qualitative components of a mixed methods project to be implemented in a technically competent manner.* In this chapter, the research process and its phases and elements have been systematically outlined in order to demonstrate the research teams' proficiency and the trustworthy nature of the research.

(2) *The need for transparency.* In this research, together with documenting the data gathering and analysis steps, the provision of an audit trail for both phases of the research has ensured transparency.

(3) The need for mixed methods to be linked to research questions. Byram proposes that a reason for explicitly providing a linkage to the research questions is that researchers must "consider whether they really need to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, in light of the additional burden for both researcher and participants alike." (2014, p.125). In this study, as noted, the research questions were interested in the practices, perceptions and capacities of the total cohorts. While the quantitative instruments were capable of answering the 'what' of these questions, the qualitative instruments allowed a deeper probing to enable some of the 'why' and 'how' to be revealed, thus providing a more thorough understanding of the research problem.

(4) The need to be explicit about the nature of mixed methods design employed. The use of an explanatory sequential design has been illuminated above.

(5) The need for a rationale for the use of mixed methods research. The rationale for employing a mixed methods approach has been detailed in point 4 above. Core strengths of the approach adopted lie in the "completeness" (Byram 2014, p. 128) it allows in terms of addressing the research aims and the phase two sampling frame it offers.

(6) The need for integration. While it is noted that not all mixed methods research integrates the results of the both phases of a mixed methods study (Bryman 2007; O'Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl 2008), and that it is possible to present quantitative and qualitative findings in parallel, Bryman highlights that "additional insights can be extracted from an exploration of the links between the two sets of data" (2014, p. 127).

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter has described the research paradigm and its embracing of contested ontological and epistemological assumptions in the service of "what works" in real-world situations. (Creswell 2022, p. 138). It has explored the explanatory sequential research design, means of

data collection, the analysis techniques and the means of verification which were employed to safeguard the trustworthiness of the research findings.

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Appendices

Appendix A Survey Questionnaire – Secondary

Exploring the attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders, in Catholic post-primary schools

Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (G.R.A.C.E.)

Information for survey participants

This research is being conducted by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. It sets out to explore understanding and commitment in respect of the identity and practices of a Catholic school.

The questionnaire should be completed by the members of the board of management (individually and confidentially), the principal, RE teachers and all other teaching staff (individually and confidentially).

Anonymity is assured. Participants are free to withdraw at any time while completing the questionnaire. However, once submitted, anonymous on-line questionnaires cannot be withdrawn.

If you have any queries / issues with regard to this study, please email

Dr Catherine McCormack
catherine.mccormack@mic.ul.ie

or contact the MIC Ethics Committee at: mirec@mic.ul.ie

You and your school

In what county is the school?

1. Antrim
2. Armagh
3. Carlow
4. Cavan
5. Clare
6. Cork
7. Derry/Londonderry
8. Donegal
9. Down
10. Dublin City
11. Dublin – Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
12. Dublin – Fingal
13. Dublin – South Dublin
14. Fermanagh
15. Galway
16. Kerry
17. Kildare
18. Kilkenny
19. Laois
20. Leitrim
21. Limerick
22. Longford
23. Louth
24. Mayo
25. Meath
26. Monaghan
27. Offaly
28. Roscommon
29. Sligo
30. Tipperary
31. Tyrone
32. Waterford
33. Westmeath
34. Wexford
35. Wicklow

If you know the diocese in which the school is located, please select it from the following drop-down menu:

1. Don't know / not sure
2. Achonry
3. Ardagh & Clonmacnois
4. Armagh
5. Cashel & Emly
6. Clogher
7. Clonfert
8. Cloyne
9. Cork and Ross
10. Derry
11. Down and Connor
12. Dromore
13. Dublin
14. Elphin
15. Ferns
16. Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
17. Kerry
18. Kildare and Leighlin
19. Killala
20. Killaloe
21. Kilmore
22. Limerick
23. Meath
24. Ossory
25. Raphoe
26. Tuam
27. Waterford and Lismore

Which of the following provides your school's patronage?

1. An Foras Pátrúnachta
2. Augustinians
3. Benedictines
4. CEIST
5. Cistercians
6. Diocese
7. ERST-N.I
8. ERST
9. Irish Sisters of Charity
10. Jesuits
11. Lay Trust
12. Le Chéile
13. Loreto
14. Marist Brothers
15. Presentation Brothers Schools Trust
16. Private
17. Redemptorists
18. Sacred Heart Trust
19. Salesian
20. Spiritans
21. Vincentian
22. Other
23. Don't Know / not sure

Which of the following best describes your role in the school?

o Member of the Board of Management
o Principal
o RE Teacher
o Subject Teacher

The role of the board of management (BoM)

For how many years have you been a member of the school's board of management?

- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5
- o 6+

As a member of the board of management, have you received training from your patron / trust to specifically prepare you to serve on the BoM of a Catholic school?

- o Yes
- o No

If you received training, which of the following best describes the delivery?

- o Ongoing (at least once a year)
- o Once-off or less often than yearly
- o Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

If you received training, to what extent was Catholic ethos covered in that training? Please tick one of the following options.

- o To a large extent - it was prominent.
- o To some extent
- o Not really or not at all
- o I don't remember. I am not sure.
- o Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

Have you heard of any of the following documents?

- o The Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools 'Vision '08'
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School published by Catholic Schools Partnership

If you have heard of any of the three documents listed above (in the previous question), to what extent are you familiar with their content? *Please tick one box in each row. [Scales provided for each of the following]*

- o Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools Vision '08
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School

The board's role in ensuring compliance with the Catholic ethos

The following set of questions relates to your board of management only. [Scales provided for each of the following]

- o The BoM ensures that the school in run in accordance with the religious and educational philosophy (the ethos) of the trustees.
- o As a BoM, we ensure that attention is given to faith formation in line with the characteristic spirit of the school.
- o As the BoM of a Catholic school, we report regularly to the patron/trust on the faith life of the school.
- o As the BoM, we ensure that the seasons of the Christian year are highlighted by ceremonies for the whole school community.
- o As the BoM, we ensure that Christian symbols (e.g. crucifix, religious art works etc.) are visible throughout the school.
- o As the BoM, we ensure that faith development is a central educational aim of this school.
- o Issues relating to the Catholic identity of the school appear frequently on the agenda for BoM meetings.

Does your school have a mission statement based on Gospel values?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
- Don't know/not sure

If yes, to what extent is policy development linked to the school's mission statement?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a limited extent
- Not really
- Not at all
- Don't know

To what extent does the following statement reflect the practice of your BoM? *Meetings of the board of management begin and / or end with a Christian prayer.*

- Yes. All meetings
- Yes. Most meetings (at least half)
- Yes. Some meetings
- Generally not
- None

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, in respect of your school's board of management. *[Scales provided for each of the following]*

- As the BoM, we ensure that our school works with parents to help them understand the underpinnings of a Catholic education.
- As the BoM, we ensure that RE receives a minimum of 2 hours per week for every year group in accordance with the bishops' guidelines.
- As the BoM, we ensure that all RE teachers in the school are qualified to teach RE.
- As the BoM, we ensure that all teachers employed in our school will uphold the ethos of the school.

The role of the school principal

The following fifteen (n=15) questions are for school principals only.

For how many years have you been a school principal? *Please include any years in an acting capacity, including in another school.*
- 0 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- Over 10 years

As a principal, have you received training from your patron / trust for your role as a faith leader?
- Yes
- No

If you received training, which of the following best describes the delivery?
- Ongoing (at least once a year)
- Once-off or less often than yearly
- Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

If you received training, to what extent was Catholic ethos covered in that training? Please tick one of the following options. If you did not receive training, you can skip this question.

- To a large extent - it was prominent.
- To some extent
- Not really or not at all
- I don't remember. I am not sure.
- Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

Have you heard of any of the following documents?

- The Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools 'Vision '08'
- Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School published by Catholic Schools Partnership

If you have heard of any of the three documents listed above (in the previous question), to what extent are you familiar with their content? *Please tick one box in each row. [Scales provided for each of the following]*

- o Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools Vision '08
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School

Commitment to / compliance with the Catholic ethos

The following set of questions relates to the principal's role in ensuring commitment / compliance.

To what extent do the following statements describe your approach, as a principal?
[Scales provided for each of the following]

- o As principal, I regard myself as personally responsible for the faith development of the students in this school
- o As principal, I am held accountable by my Trust/Patron for the implementation of the Catholic identity of this school
- o As principal, I try to develop and support the faith life of my staff in accordance with Catholic tradition.
- o As principal, I ensure that faith formation is included as a constituent element of all RE classes.

Religious Education in your school

How frequently do the following practices pertain in your school?
- o When timetabling RE, I allocate a minimum of 2 hours every week, without exception, to all Junior Cycle classes.

- o I ensure that all Senior Cycle classes without exception are given a minimum of 2 hours every week for RE.

Is RE offered as a short course?
- o Generally / Mostly yes
- o In some instances
- o Never

Please indicate if (yes or no) the following apply in your school:

- o We offer Religious Education at Junior Cycle as an exam subject.
- o We offer Religious Education at Senior Cycle as an exam subject.
- o The place of prayer/sacred space has been adversely affected due to Covid.

How qualified are the current RE teachers in your school?
- o All are qualified.
- o Most are qualified.
- o Some are qualified. Never.
- o None are qualified.

Other practices in your school

To what extent do the following practices pertain in your school? *[Scales provided for each of the following]*

- o Issues relating to the Catholic identity of the school appear on the agenda for board of management meetings.
- o Time is devoted to Christian prayer in the school community at specified times during the school day.
- o Meetings within the school begin with a Christian prayer.

The Diocesan Advisor
The following set of questions relates to your experiences with diocesan advisors.

Over the course of the past calendar year (January-Dec. 2021), how many times did the diocesan advisor visit your school, either in person or virtually?

- o Never
- o Once
- o Twice
- o Three times
- o More than three times.

Over the course of a pre-COVID school year, how often did the diocesan advisor visit your school (in-person)?

- o Never
- o Once
- o Twice
- o Three times
- o More than three times.
- o I don't know / can't remember.

Do you meet with the diocesan advisor during his / her visits?

- o Yes, if I am in school.
- o Yes, on most visits.
- o Generally not. Other members of staff meet him /her.
- o Never.

The following fourteen (n=14) questions are for RE teachers only. They refer to practices and experiences in this second-level school only.

For how many years have you been a teacher of religion in a second-level school? Please include any years in another school.
- o 0 to 5 years
- o 6 to 10 years
- o Over 10 years

Which of the following best describes you?
- o I am not formally qualified to teach RE.
- o I hold a certificate or equivalent to teach RE.
- o I hold a diploma or equivalent to teach RE.
- o I hold a degree or equivalent to teach RE.

As a RE teacher, have you received training from your patron / trust for your role?
- o Yes
- o No

If you received training, which of the following best describes the delivery?
- o Ongoing (at least once a year)
- o Once-off or less often than yearly
- o Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

Based on your in-school experience, how useful or otherwise was this training? Please rate on a score from 1 to 10, where 1 = not useful and 10 = very useful. *If you did not received training from your patron or trust please, skip this question.*

Not useful……………………………..Very useful

Do you attend in-service RE training?
- o Yes. Yearly
- o Yes. Approximately 2 to 3 years
- o Less often than every 3 years
- o Never

Based on your in-school experience, how useful or otherwise was this training? Please rate on a score from 1 to 10, where 1 = not useful and 10 = very useful. *If you did not attend in-service RE training, please skip this question.*

Not useful…………………………………..Very useful

Have you heard of any of the following documents?

- o The Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools 'Vision '08'
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School published by Catholic Schools Partnership

If you have heard of any of the three documents listed above (in the previous question), to what extent are you familiar with their content? *Please tick one box in each row*. *[Scales provided for each of the following]*

- o Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools Vision '08
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School

To what extent do the following statements describe your approach, as a RE teacher? *[Scales provided for each of the following]*

- o Faith development in line with our Catholic ethos is a central aim of my RE classes.
- o Moral development is promoted in my RE classes in accordance with Catholic principles.
- o I witness to the Catholic faith in my RE classes.
- o Students of a faith other than Christian have the freedom to express their beliefs in my RE classes.

Over the course of the past calendar year (January-Dec. 2021), how many times did the diocesan advisor visit your school, either in person or virtually?

- o Never
- o Once
- o Twice
- o Three times
- o More than three times.

Over the course of a pre-COVID school year, how often did the diocesan advisor visit your school (in-person)?
- o Never
- o Once
- o Twice
- o Three times
- o More than three times.
- o I don't know / can't remember.

Do you meet with the diocesan advisor during his / her visits?
- o Yes, if I am in school.
- o Yes, on most visits.
- o Generally not. Other members of staff meet him /her.
- o Never.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *[Scales provided for each of the following]*

- o The diocesan advisor is welcome to visit any RE class in our school.
- o The diocesan advisor is knowledgeable and fully informed about all aspects of RE and curriculum.
- o I believe it is the diocesan advisor's role to oversee standards in the RE.

Questions for subject teachers (other than RE teachers)

There are three (n=3) questions in this section.

To what extent do the following statements describe your approach, as a teacher, in this school?
- o As a member of staff, I respect the Catholic ethos of our school.
- o As a member of staff, I witness to the Catholic ethos of our school.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I am willing to attend all religious ceremonies and events held throughout the school year'.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly disagree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

Do you start or finish your classes with a Christian prayer?
- o At least 90% of the time
- o 50% to 90% of the time
- o Up to 50% of the time
- o No. Generally not

General questions for all respondents

The following questions relate to practices in this school only. There are four (n=4) questions in this section.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school.
[Scales provided for each of the following]

- o Opportunities for faith development are offered to staff.
- o Opportunities for faith development are offered to students.
- o Parents of incoming students are formally introduced to the school's Catholic ethos.
- o Moral development of students in the light of Catholic principles is promoted across the school.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school.
[Scales provided for each of the following]
- o My Christian faith helps me to promote the wellbeing of all students.
- o Providing opportunities for students to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ is a central educational aim of this school.
- o The school has a mission statement based on Catholic values.
- o I model a Christian way of life in my work in this school.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school.
[Scales provided for each of the following]
- o There is a place of prayer/sacred space within the school, which is available to all in the school community.
- o The seasons of the Christian year are formally marked with the whole school community.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school.
[Scales provided for each of the following]
- o Students of faiths other than Christian, and those of humanist and secular beliefs have the freedom to express their beliefs in this school.
- o Students of faiths other than Christian, and those of humanist and secular beliefs are welcomed to practise their beliefs in this school.
- o Caring for others, especially the poor, is a core value of this school.

Demographics

What is your gender?
- o Male
- o Female
- o Other / Prefer not to say

To which age cohort do you belong?
- o 18 to 29 years
- o 30 to 39 years
- o 40 to 49 years
- o 50 to 59 years
- o 60 to 69 years
- o 70+ years

What is your religion?

- o Roman Catholic
- o Church of Ireland
- o Other Protestant
- o Orthodox
- o Islam
- o Jewish
- o Other
- o None

If you have a religion, how often do you attend organised religious services, either online (during COVID) or in-person?

- o Weekly or more often
- o 2 - 3 times / month
- o Most months
- o A few times per year
- o Christmas and / or Easter
- o Less often
- o Only for special events, such as weddings, funerals and anniversaries
- o Never

Do you believe in God?
- o Yes
- o No
- o Don't know

If yes, how important is God in your life?
Please indicate, using the scale below:
Not important………………………..Very important

Which of the following best describes you?
- o Committed and practising Catholic
- o Committed to Christian values, but not a practising Catholic
- o Spiritual, but not religious
- o Non-believer or atheist
- o None of the above

Any other comments / observations

If you would be interested in participating in an interview or focus group, as part of this research, please provide an email address, below.
Otherwise, please leave this area blank.
This information will be decoupled from your responses, so that your anonymity is preserved.

Go raibh maith agat as ucht an ceistneoir a chomhlánú / Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Exploring the attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders in Catholic primary schools

Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (G.R.A.C.E.)

This research is being conducted by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. It sets out to explore understanding and commitment in respect of the identity and practices of a Catholic school.

The questionnaire should be completed by the members of the board of management, principal and staff (individually and confidentially).

Anonymity is assured. Participants are free to withdraw at any time while completing the questionnaire. However, once submitted, anonymous on-line questionnaires cannot be withdrawn.

If you have any queries / issues with regard to this study, please email

Dr Dan O'Connell: Daniel.OConnell@mic.ul.ie , or contact the MIC Ethics Committee at: mirec@mic.ul.ie

You and your school

Please provide the following information about your school and your role in the school community.
No school will be identified in the collation or analysis of the survey responses. This information is required in order to track the number of responses.

In what county is the school?

36. Antrim
37. Armagh
38. Carlow
39. Cavan
40. Clare
41. Cork
42. Derry/Londonderry
43. Donegal
44. Down
45. Dublin City
46. Dublin – Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
47. Dublin – Fingal
48. Dublin – South Dublin
49. Fermanagh
50. Galway
51. Kerry
52. Kildare
53. Kilkenny
54. Laois
55. Leitrim
56. Limerick
57. Longford
58. Louth
59. Mayo
60. Meath
61. Monaghan
62. Offaly
63. Roscommon
64. Sligo
65. Tipperary
66. Tyrone
67. Waterford
68. Westmeath
69. Wexford
70. Wicklow

If you know the diocese in which the school is located, please select it from the following drop-down menu:

28. Don't know / not sure
29. Achonry
30. Ardagh & Clonmacnois
31. Armagh
32. Cashel & Emly
33. Clogher
34. Clonfert
35. Cloyne
36. Cork and Ross
37. Derry
38. Down and Connor
39. Dromore
40. Dublin
41. Elphin
42. Ferns
43. Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora
44. Kerry
45. Kildare and Leighlin
46. Killala
47. Killaloe
48. Kilmore
49. Limerick
50. Meath
51. Ossory
52. Raphoe
53. Tuam
54. Waterford and Lismore

Which of the following best describes your role in the school?

- o Member of the Board of Management
- o Teaching Principal
- o Teacher

The role of the board of management (BoM)

The following twelve (n=12) questions are for members of the board of management only.

For how many years have you been a member of the school's board of management?
- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5
- o 6+

As a member of the board of management, have you received training from your patron / trust to specifically prepare you to serve on the BoM of a Catholic school?
- o Yes   No

If you received training, which of the following best describes the delivery?

- o Ongoing (at least once a year)
- o Once-off or less often than yearly
- o Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

If you received training, to what extent was Catholic ethos covered in that training? *Please tick one of the following options.*

- o To a large extent - it was prominent.
- o To some extent
- o Not really or not at all
- o I don't remember. I am not sure.
- o Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

Have you heard of any of the following documents?
- o The Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools 'Vision '08'
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School published by Catholic Schools Partnership

If you have heard of any of the three documents listed above (in the previous question), to what extent are you familiar with their content? *Please tick one box in each row.* [S*cales provided for each of the following*]

- o Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools Vision '08
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School

The board's role in ensuring compliance with the Catholic ethos

The following set of questions relates to your board of management only.

To what extent do the following statements describe your board of management's practices? [S*cales provided for each of the following*]

- o The BoM ensures that the school in run in accordance with the religious and educational philosophy (the ethos) of the trustees.
- o As a BoM, we ensure that attention is given to faith formation in line with the characteristic spirit of the school.
- o As the BoM of a Catholic school, we report regularly to the patron/trust on the faith life of the school.
- o As the BoM, we ensure that the seasons of the Christian year are highlighted by ceremonies for the whole school community.
- o As the BoM, we ensure that Christian symbols (e.g. crucifix, religious art works etc.) are visible throughout the school.
- o As the BoM, we ensure that faith development is a central educational aim of this school.
- o Issues relating to the Catholic identity of the school appear frequently on the agenda for BoM meetings.

As the BoM, do you report to the patron/trust on the faith life of the school? *Please tick all / any that apply.*

- o Yes. We submit an annual report.
- o Yes. We submit a report every very few years or so.
- o Yes. We report informally to the diocesan advisor.
- o We haven't been asked / It didn't come up.
- o No.
- o Don't know / Unsure

If you submit a report, do you receive feedback from your patron or trust? *Please tick all / any that apply.*

- o Yes. We receive a written report.
- o Yes. We have a feedback meeting.
- o Yes. The patron / trust gives feedback to their nominee(s).
- o No.
- o Don't know / Unsure

Does your school have a mission statement based on Gospel values?

- o Yes
- o Maybe
- o No
- o Don't know/not sure

If yes, to what extent is policy development linked to the school's mission statement?

- o To a large extent
- o To some extent
- o To a limited extent
- o Not really
- o Not at all
- o Don't know

To what extent does the following statement reflect the practice of your BoM? *Meetings of the board of management begin and / or end with a Christian prayer.*

- o Yes. All meetings
- o Yes. Most meetings (at least half)
- o Yes. Some meetings
- o Generally not
- o None

To what extent does your BoM carry out the following? *Please tick one option in each row.* [*Scale provided for each of the following*]

- o As the BoM, we ensure that our school works with parents to help them understand the school's Catholic ethos.
- o As the BoM, we ensure that all teachers employed in our school will uphold the ethos of the school.
- o As a BoM, we ensure that 'new teachers, as part of their induction to the school, will have an opportunity to focus on the Catholic character of the school.'
- o As a BoM, we ensure that religious education (RE) receives its allotted time for each year.
- o As a BoM, we ensure that the school follows the curriculum and textbooks approved by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference for RE.
- o As a BoM, we ensure that our school participates in Catholic Schools' Week.

The role of the school principal

The following twelve (n=12) questions are for school principals only.

For how many years have you been a school principal? Please include any years in an acting capacity, including in another school.

- o 0 to 5 years
- o 6 to 10 years
- o Over 10 years

As a principal, have you received any professional development from your patron/trust to 'encourage, develop and promote the ethos' of your school?

- o Yes
- o No

If you have had some professional development, which of the following best describes the delivery?

- o Ongoing (at least once a year)
- o Once-off or less often than yearly
- o Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

If you received some professional development, to what extent was your role to 'encourage, develop and promote the ethos' of your school covered in that professional development?

- o To a large extent - it was prominent.
- o To some extent
- o Not really or not at all
- o I don't remember. I am not sure.
- o Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

Have you heard of any of the following documents?

- o The Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools 'Vision '08'
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland

o   Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School: A Process Centred on Conversations

If you have heard of any of the three documents listed above (in the previous question), to what extent are you familiar with their content? *Please tick one box in each row*. [*Scales provided for each of the following*]

   o   Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools Vision '08
   o   Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
   o   Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School: A Process Centred on Conversations

Commitment to the Catholic ethos

The following set of questions relates to the principal's role in ensuring commitment.

To what extent do the following statements describe your approach, as a principal? [*Scales provided for each of the following*]

   o   As principal, I am held accountable by my Trust/Patron for the implementation of the Catholic identity of this school.
   o   As principal, I take seriously my responsibility for the faith formation of the Catholic pupils in this school.
   o   As principal, I ensure that my staff understand the Catholic ethos of this school.
   o   As principal, the decisions I make in the school are influenced by the person and vision of Jesus Christ.

Religious Education in your School

How frequently do the following practices pertain in your school? [*Scales provided for each of the following*]

o   As principal, I ensure that religious education receives its allotted time.
o   As principal, I ensure that the school follows the curriculum and textbooks approved by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference for religious education.
o   As principal, I ensure that faith formation is a constituent element of RE classes.
o   As principal, I ensure that significant resources, time and material, are given to Catholic Schools Week

Other practices in your school

To what extent do the following practices pertain in your school? [*Likert scales provided for each of the following*]

   o   Issues relating to the Catholic identity of the school appear on the agenda for board of management meetings.
   o   Time is devoted to Christian prayer in the school community at specified times during the school day.
   o   Meetings within the school begin with a Christian prayer.
   o   There is a policy statement on religious education which includes faith formation, prayer, sacramental experiences and awareness of the stewardship of God's creation.

The Diocesan Advisor

The following set of questions relates to your experiences with diocesan advisors.

Over the course of the past calendar year (January-Dec. 2021), how many times did the diocesan advisor visit your school, either in person or virtually?

   o   Never
   o   Once
   o   Twice
   o   Three times
   o   More than three times.
   o   I don't know / can't remember.

Over the course of a pre-COVID school year, how often did the diocesan advisor visit your school (in-person)?

- o   Never
- o   Once
- o   Twice
- o   Three times
- o   More than three times.
- o   I don't know / can't remember

Do you meet with the diocesan advisor during his / her visits?

- o   Yes, if I am in school.
- o   Yes, on most visits.
- o   Generally not. Other members of staff meet him /her.
- o   Never.
- o   Not Applicable. The DA has not visited the school over the past three years.

The role of the teacher

The following sixteen (n=16) questions are for teachers. They refer to practices and experiences in this school only.

For how many years have you been a teacher? Please include any years in another school.

- o   0 to 5 years
- o   6 to 10 years
- o   Over 10 years

Have you received any professional development from your school's patron/trust to assist you in your teaching of religious education?

- o   Yes
- o   No
- o   Unsure / Don't know

If you received some professional development, which of the following best describes the delivery?

- o   Ongoing (at least once a year)
- o   Once-off or less often than yearly
- o   Not Applicable. I did not receive training.

Based on your in-school experience, how useful or otherwise was this training? Please rate on a score from 1 to 10, where 1 = not useful and 10 = very useful. If you did not received training from your patron or trust please, skip this question.

Not useful………………………………..Very useful

Have you heard of any of the following documents?

- o   The Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools 'Vision '08'
- o   Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o   Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School, A Process Centred on Conversations

If you have heard of any of the three documents listed above (in the previous question), to what extent are you familiar with their content? *Please tick one box in each row. [Scales provided for each of the following]*

- o Bishops' Pastoral for Catholic Schools Vision '08
- o Share the Good News – the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland
- o Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School, A Process Centred on Conversations

Commitment to / compliance with the Catholic ethos

Do you pray with the children during the day?

- o Yes, a few times a day
- o Yes, once a day
- o Yes, a few times a week
- o Rarely
- o Never
- o When I am asked or when there are special occasions in the school

To what extent do each of the following statements reflect you and your role in the school? [Likert *scales provided for each of the following*]

- o As a member of staff, I understand the Catholic ethos of our school.
- o As a member of staff, I respect the Catholic ethos of our school.
- o As a member of staff, I witness to the Catholic ethos of our school.
- o In my class, I follow the curriculum and textbooks approved by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.
- o My RE class includes faith formation, prayer, sacramental experiences and awareness of the stewardship of God's creation.

To what extent are each of the following statements reflective of your school? [*Scales provided for each of the following*]

- o Pupils of a faith and worldview other than Christian have the freedom to express their beliefs in my RE classes.
- o Appropriate educational provision is made for pupils who are withdrawn from religious education.

9a. How many pupils are ordinarily in your classroom (at the time of this survey*)? Please insert a whole number.*

Of the pupils who are ordinarily in your classroom, how many are withdrawn from the RE class?

How frequently do you teach religious education (RE), during a typical school week?

- o 5 days / week
- o 4 days / week
- o 3 days / week
- o 2 days / week
- o 1 day / week
- o Less than weekly
- o Rarely
- o Never

Do pupils in your class(es) use the 'Grow in Love' homework book?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Not Applicable. I don't teach RE.

How often do you send the 'Grow in Love' homework book home with a specific task/request?

- o Weekly
- o 2 - 3 times a month
- o Monthly
- o Less often
- o Never
- o Not Applicable. I don't teach RE.

If you teach religious education, how do you feel about this? *Please tick a point on the following scale that best describes your feeling. If you do not teach RE, please skip this question.*

Reluctantly……………With personal conviction

The Diocesan Advisor

The following set of questions relates to your experiences with diocesan advisors.

Over the course of the past calendar year (January-Dec. 2021), how many times did the diocesan advisor visit your school, either in person or virtually?

- o   Never
- o   Once
- o   Twice
- o   Three times
- o   More than three times.
- o   Not Applicable / Don't Know

Over the course of a pre-COVID school year, how often did the diocesan advisor visit your school (in-person)?

- o   Never
- o   Once
- o   Twice
- o   Three times
- o   More than three times.
- o   I don't know / can't remember.
- o   Not Applicable

Do you meet with the diocesan advisor during his / her visits?

- o   Yes, if I am in school.
- o   Yes, on most visits.
- o   Generally not. Other members of staff meet him /her.
- o   Never.
- o   Not applicable; The DA has not visited our school over the past three years.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *[Likert scales provided for each of the following]*

- o   The diocesan advisor is welcome to visit my RE class.
- o   The diocesan advisor is knowledgeable and fully informed about all aspects of RE and curriculum.
- o   I believe it is the diocesan advisor's role to oversee standards in the RE classroom, which are not part of the State exam system.

General questions for all respondents

The following questions relate to practices in this school only. There are seven (n=7) questions in this section.
[*Likert scales provided for each of the following*]

- o   Opportunities for faith development are offered to staff.
- o   Opportunities for faith development are offered to Catholic pupils.
- o   Parents of incoming pupils are formally introduced to the school's Catholic ethos.
- o   Moral development of pupils in light of Catholic principles is promoted across the school.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school.
[*Likert scales provided for each of the following*]

- o   My Christian faith helps me to promote the wellbeing of all pupils.
- o   Providing opportunities for pupils to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ is a central educational aim of this school.
- o   The school has a mission statement based on Catholic values.
- o   I model a Christian way of life in my work in this school.

Is there is a place of prayer/sacred space within the school, which is available to all in the school community?

- o Yes
- o No

Are the seasons of the Christian year (liturgical calendar) are formally marked with the whole school community? *Please tick yes or no below:*

- o St Bridget's Day
- o Ash Wednesday / Lent
- o St Patrick's Day
- o Easter
- o Pentecost
- o Our Lady's Month (May)
- o Feast / Month of the Sacred Heart
- o All Saints' Day
- o Praying for our faithful departed (month of holy souls / November)
- o Advent
- o Christmas

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this school. [*Likert scales provided for each of the following*]

- o Pupils of faiths other than Christian, and those of humanist and secular beliefs have the freedom to express their beliefs in this school.
- o Pupils of faiths other than Christian, and those of humanist and secular beliefs are welcomed to practise their beliefs in this school.
- o Caring for others, especially the poor, is a core value of this school.
- o Caring for creation is a core value of this school.
- o The love of God, the person of Jesus Christ and his message is at the heart of the life of this school.

Is the Catholic ethos of your school a positive influence on your work?

- o Yes, definitely
- o Yes, partly
- o Not really
- o No
- o Don't know / No opinion

If you had a choice, would you prefer to work for a different patronage body or trust?

- o Yes, definitely; I would prefer to work for a DIFFERENT patron or trust.
- o Yes, maybe; I would prefer to work for a DIFFERENT patron or trust.
- o I don't think so.
- o No. I think I would prefer to work for a CATHOLIC patron or trust.
- o No. I definitely want to work for a CATHOLIC patron or trust.
- o I haven't thought about it.

About yourself
In this section we ask a few questions which will help to give us a profile of those involved in Catholic schools. This may help patrons to discern what type of support is appropriate for the school into the future. All information given on this questionnaire is confidential.

What is your gender?
- o Male
- o Female

What is your religion?
- o Roman Catholic
- o Church of Ireland
- o Other Protestant
- o Orthodox
- o Islam
- o Jewish
- o Other
- o None

If you have a religion, how often do you attend organised religious services, either online (during COVID) or in-person?

- Weekly or more often
- 2 - 3 times / month
- Most months
- A few times per year
- Christmas and / or Easter
- Less often
- Only for special events, such as weddings, funerals and anniversaries
- Never

Do you believe in God?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, how important is God in your life?
Please indicate, using the scale below:

- Not important
- Very important

Which of the following best describes you?

- Committed and practising Catholic
- Committed to Christian values, but not a practising Catholic
- Spiritual, but not religious
- Non-believer or atheist
- None of the above

Any other comments / observations

If you would be interested in participating in an interview or focus group, as part of this research, please provide an email address, below. Otherwise, please leave this area blank. This information will be decoupled from your responses, so that your anonymity is preserved.

Go raibh maith agat as ucht an ceistneoir a chomhlánú / Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix C   Letter of Invitation to Participate – Secondary Principals

(Initial distribution by APTCS. Repeated by the research team in follow-up).

Dear

Researchers in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick are currently working on a research project which aims to find out more about identity and practices of Catholic second level schools in Ireland.

We kindly request that adult members of your school community (board of management members, the principal, the RE teachers and general teaching/ancillary staff) participate in this important research at a pivotal time for Catholic schools. This involves each individual completing a survey questionnaire. Respondents will be directed to questions specific to their role. The questionnaire is accessible on google forms (the form can be filled in easily as the format is generally multiple choice. It can be completed on a laptop / desktop / tablet /phone (you will need to scroll across!) and should take no more than 10 minutes. It will provide the researchers with information about respondents' attitudes to their school's Catholic identity and in-school practices.

To access the questionnaire, please click here, or use the following link:

https://forms.gle/Nf5ByuSNRjUpsUsr5

There is a subsequent stage to the research also which involves focused interviews with those willing to participate. To this end, we encourage as many respondents as possible to indicate at the end of the questionnaire if they are willing to be interviewed (either individually or in small groups) as part of a follow-up.

Enquiries about the research can be directed to Prof. Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie) or Dr Catherine McCormack (catherine.mccormack@mic.ul.ie).

MIC MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL

Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education

Appendix D (i) Letters of Invitation to Schools in Gaeltacht areas -Secondary Principals

A Phríomhoide, a chara,

Tá Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach ag tabhairt faoi shuirbhé náisiúnta i measc na bpáirtithe leasmhara i scoileanna Caitliceacha in Éirinn. Tá an gaol idir pholasaí sonraithe na féiniúlachta Caitlicigh sna scoileanna seo agus an saol réadúil laistigh díobh á fhiosrú againn. Iarrfar ar phríomhoidí, ar bhaill foirne agus ar bhaill den mbord bainistíochta an suirbhé a líonadh isteach.

Tá go leor plé poiblí ar siúl faoi áit agus faoi ról na scoileanna Caitliceacha in Éirinn sa lá atá inniu ann; is fianaise starógach a fhormhór le fíorbheagán ó thaobh fianaise de. Tá súil againn go gcabhróidh an suirbhé náisiúnta seo le pictiúr cruinn a chruthú ar an tslí go gcuireann féiniúlacht/éiteas Caitlicigh eolas ar fáil do chleachtas agus do chultúr na scoileanna seo. Úsáidfear na sonraí a bhailítear chun beartas a chruthú maidir le dífheistiú, le cuimsiú, le forbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach agus le háit na scoileanna creideamh-bhunaithe i sochaí iolraíoch.

Tá bhur gcabhair uainn chun ceistneoirí an tsuirbhé a líonadh isteach. An líonfá isteach é, led' thoil, agus an nasc chuig an suirbhé a scaipeadh ar do fhoirne agus ar chomhaltaí eile an bhoird bhainistíochta? Cuirfear freagróirí i dtreo cheisteanna a bhaineann go sonrach lena ról féin.

Is é seo an chéad uair a rinneadh iarracht suirbhé náisiúnta dá leithéid a reáchtáil agus tá sé ríthábhachtach go nglacfaidh an oiread daoine agus a bhfuil tuairimí éagsúla acu páirt ann. Is féidir teacht ar an gceistneoir ar fhoirmeacha *Google* agus de gnáth baintear úsáid as formáid ilroghnach. Is féidir é a líonadh isteach ar ríomhaire glúine/deisce/tháibléad/ghuthán (beidh ort scrolláil trasna!) agus níor cheart go dtógfadh sé níos mó ná 10 nóiméad.

Chun rochtain a fháil ar an gceistneoir déan clic anseo, nó bain úsáid as an nasc seo leanas: https://forms.gle/WpzAKUfe9Hx1ZDGG8 (as Gaeilge)

nó https://forms.gle/rXvKR5fTAzWZKhKTA (as Béarla)

Tá céim eile sa taighde ina mbeifear ag reáchtáil agallaimh ghearra dírithe orthu siúd atá sásta páirt a ghlacadh iontu. Chuige sin, molaimid don oiread freagróirí agus is féidir a chur in iúl dúinn ag deireadh an cheistneora an bhfuil siad sásta agallamh a dhéanamh linn (ina n-aonar nó i ngrúpaí beaga) mar chuid de ghníomhaíocht leantach.

Má tá aon cheist agat faoin taighde, seol r-phost chuig an Dr Catherine McCormack (Catherine.McCormack@mic.ul.ie) nó go dtí an tOllamh Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie).

Go raibh míle maith agat,

Appendix E (ii) Letters of Invitation to Schools in Gaeltacht areas - Secondary BoM Chairpersons

A Chathaoirligh, a chara,

Tá súil agam go bhfuil gach rud go maith leat.

Tá Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach ag tabhairt faoi shuirbhé náisiúnta i measc na bpáirtithe leasmhara i scoileanna Caitliceacha in Éirinn. Tá an gaol idir pholasaí sonraithe na féiniúlachta Caitlicigh sna scoileanna seo agus an saol réadúil laistigh díobh á fhiosrú againn. Iarrfar ar phríomhoidí, ar bhaill foirne agus ar bhaill den mbord bainistíochta an suirbhé a líonadh isteach.

Tá go leor plé poiblí ar siúl faoi áit agus faoi ról na scoileanna Caitliceacha in Éirinn sa lá atá inniu ann; is fianaise starógach a fhormhór le fíorbheagán ó thaobh fianaise de. Tá súil againn go gcabhróidh an suirbhé náisiúnta seo le pictiúr cruinn a chruthú ar an tslí go gcuireann féiniúlacht/éiteas Caitlicigh eolas ar fáil do chleachtas agus do chultúr na scoileanna seo. Úsáidfear na sonraí a bhailítear chun beartas a chruthú maidir le dífheistiú, le cuimsiú, le forbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach agus le háit na scoileanna creideamh-bhunaithe i sochaí iolraíoch.

Tá bhur gcabhair uainn chun ceistneoirí an tsuirbhé a líonadh isteach. An líonfá isteach é, led' thoil, agus an nasc chuig an suirbhé a scaipeadh ar chomhaltaí eile an bhoird bhainistíochta? Cuirfear freagróirí i dtreo cheisteanna a bhaineann go sonrach lena ról féin.

Is é seo an chéad uair a rinneadh iarracht suirbhé náisiúnta dá leithéid a reáchtáil agus tá sé ríthábhachtach go nglacfaidh an oiread daoine agus a bhfuil tuairimí éagsúla acu páirt ann. Is féidir teacht ar an gceistneoir ar fhoirmeacha *Google* agus de gnáth baintear úsáid as formáid ilroghnach. Is féidir é a líonadh isteach ar ríomhaire glúine/deisce/tháibléad/ghuthán (beidh ort scrolláil trasna!) agus níor cheart go dtógfadh sé níos mó ná 10 nóiméad.

Chun rochtain a fháil ar an gceistneoir déan clic anseo, nó bain úsáid as an nasc seo leanas: https://forms.gle/WpzAKUfe9Hx1ZDGG8 (as Gaeilge)

nó https://forms.gle/rXvKR5fTAzWZKhKTA (as Béarla)

Tá céim eile sa taighde ina mbeifear ag reáchtáil agallaimh ghearra dírithe orthu siúd atá sásta páirt a ghlacadh iontu. Chuige sin, molaimid don oiread freagróirí agus is féidir a chur in iúl dúinn ag deireadh an cheistneora an bhfuil siad sásta agallamh a dhéanamh linn (ina n-aonar nó i ngrúpaí beaga) mar chuid de ghníomhaíocht leantach.

Má tá aon cheist agat faoin taighde, seol r-phos chuig an Dr Catherine McCormack (Catherine.McCormack@mic.ul.ie) nó go dtí an tOllamh Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie).

Go raibh míle maith agat,

Appendix F Letter of Invitation to Participate – Primary Principals

(distributed by CPSMA)

Dear Principal,

I hope this reaches you well.

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick is conducting a national survey among the stakeholders in Catholic primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. We are exploring the relationship between the stated policy regarding the Catholic identity of these schools and the lived reality within them. The survey will include principals, staff and members of the board of management.

There is much public discussion about the place and role of Catholic schools in Ireland today; a great deal is anecdotal with very little evidence. We hope that this national survey will help develop an accurate picture of how Catholic identity/ethos informs the practice and culture of these schools. The data may be used to inform policy around issues of divestment, inclusion, continual professional development and the place of faith-based schools in a pluralistic society.

We need your help with completion of the survey questionnaires. Would you please both fill it in yourself and distribute the survey link to your members of staff and members of the board of management? Respondents will be directed to questions specific to their role.

This is the first time such a national survey has been attempted and it is vital that as many people, with a variety of points of view, answer it. The questionnaire is accessible on google forms and the format is generally multiple choice. It can be completed on a laptop / desktop / tablet /phone (you will need to scroll across!) and should take no more than 10 minutes.

To access the questionnaire, please click here, or use the following link:
https://forms.gle/NHVo5u7xhB4gL22JA. If for some reason, the link does not bring you to the questionnaire, please copy the link and paste it into your toolbar.

There is a subsequent stage to the research which involves short focused interviews with those willing to participate. To this end, we encourage as many respondents as possible to indicate at the end of the questionnaire if they are willing to be interviewed (either individually or in small groups) as part of a follow-up.

Enquiries about the research can be directed to Dr. Daniel O'Connell (Daniel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie) or Prof. Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie)

Many thanks,

Dan

Dr. Daniel O'Connell | Lecturer in Religious Education, Department of Learning, Society, and Religious Education | Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, South Circular Road, Limerick, Ireland.

☎   +353 61 604966

Occasionally I send emails outside of core working hours. It is not intended that the recipients of any e-mails sent outside of core working hours should either read or respond to this correspondence.

Appendix G Letter of Invitation to BoM Chairperson - Primary

(Distributed by CPSMA)

Dear Chair & Board of Management Members,

I hope this reaches you well.

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick is conducting a national survey among the stakeholders in Catholic primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland. We are exploring the relationship between the stated policy regarding the Catholic identity of these schools and the lived reality within them. The survey will include principals, staff and members of the board of management.

There is much public discussion about the place and role of Catholic schools in Ireland today; a great deal is anecdotal with very little evidence. We hope that this national survey will help develop an accurate picture of how Catholic identity/ethos informs the practice and culture of these schools. The data will be used to inform policy around issues of divestment, inclusion, continual professional development and the place of faith-based schools in a pluralistic society.

This is the first time such a national survey has been attempted and it is vital that as many people, with a variety of points of view, answer it. The questionnaire is accessible on google forms and the format is generally multiple choice. It can be completed on a laptop / desktop / tablet /phone (you will need to scroll across!) and should take no more than 10 minutes.

Primary Schools:
To access the questionnaire, please click here If for some reason the link does not bring you to the questionnaire, please copy the link and paste it into your toolbar:
https://forms.gle/NHVo5u7xhB4gL22JA .

There is a subsequent stage to the research which involves short focused interviews with those willing to participate. To this end, we encourage as many respondents as possible to indicate at the end of the questionnaire if they are willing to be interviewed (either individually or in small groups) as part of a follow-up.

Enquiries about the research can be directed to Dr. Daniel O'Connell (Daniel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie) or Prof. Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie)

Many thanks,

Dan

Appendix H Letter of Invitation to School Principals in Gaeltacht areas - Primary

A Phríomhoide, a chara,

Tá súil agam go bhfuil gach rud go maith leat.

Tá Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach ag tabhairt faoi shuirbhé náisiúnta i measc na bpáirtithe leasmhara i scoileanna náisiúnta Caitliceacha i bPoblacht na hÉireann. Tá an gaol idir pholasaí sonraithe na féiniúlachta Caitligh sna scoileanna seo agus an saol réadúil laistigh díobh á fhiosrú againn. Iarrfar ar phríomhoidí, ar bhaill foirne agus ar bhaill den mbord bainistíochta an suirbhé a líonadh isteach.

Tá go leor plé poiblí ar siúl faoi áit agus faoi ról na scoileanna Caitliceacha in Éirinn sa lá atá inniu ann; is fianaise starógach a fhormhór le fíorbheagán ó thaobh fianaise de. Tá súil againn go gcabhróidh an suirbhé náisiúnta seo le pictiúr cruinn a chruthú ar an tslí go gcuireann féiniúlacht/éiteas Caitligh eolas ar fáil do chleachtas agus do chultúr na scoileanna seo. Úsáidfear na sonraí a bhailítear chun beartas a chruthú maidir le dífheistiú, le cuimsiú, le forbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach agus le háit na scoileanna creideamh-bhunaithe i sochaí iolraíoch.

Tá bhur gcabhair uainn chun ceistneoirí an tsuirbhé a líonadh isteach. An líonfá isteach é, led' thoil, agus an nasc chuig an suirbhé a scaipeadh ar do fhoirne agus ar chomhaltaí eile an bhoird bhainistíochta? Cuirfear freagróirí i dtreo cheisteanna a bhaineann go sonrach lena ról féin.

Is é seo an chéad uair a rinneadh iarracht suirbhé náisiúnta dá leithéid a reáchtáil agus tá sé ríthábhachtach go nglacfaidh an oiread daoine agus a bhfuil tuairimí éagsúla acu páirt ann. Is féidir teacht ar an gceistneoir ar fhoirmeacha *Google* agus de gnáth baintear úsáid as formáid ilroghnach. Is féidir é a líonadh isteach ar ríomhaire glúine/deisce/tháibléad/ghuthán (beidh ort scrolláil trasna!) agus níor cheart go dtógfadh sé níos mó ná 10 nóiméad.

Chun rochtain a fháil ar an gceistneoir déan clic anseo, nó bain úsáid as an nasc seo leanas: https://forms.gle/3JSZGjYGVSPsfrCF9

Tá céim eile sa taighde ina mbeifear ag reáchtáil agallaimh ghearra dírithe orthu siúd atá sásta páirt a ghlacadh iontu. Chuige sin, molaimid don oiread freagróirí agus is féidir a chur in iúl dúinn ag deireadh an cheistneora an bhfuil siad sásta agallamh a dhéanamh linn (ina n-aonar nó i ngrúpaí beaga) mar chuid de ghníomhaíocht leantach.

Má tá aon cheist agat faoin taighde, seol ceist chuig an Dr. Daniel O'Connell (Daniel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie) nó go dtí an tOllamh Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie).

Go raibh míle maith agat,

Dan

Appendix I Letter to Chairpersons of Boards of Management in Gaeltacht areas - Primary

A Chathaoirligh, a chara,

Tá súil agam go bhfuil gach rud go maith leat.

Tá Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach ag tabhairt faoi shuirbhé náisiúnta i measc na bpáirtithe leasmhara i scoileanna náisiúnta Caitliceacha i bPoblacht na hÉireann. Tá an gaol idir pholasaí sonraithe na féiniúlachta Caitlicigh sna scoileanna seo agus an saol réadúil laistigh díobh á fhiosrú againn. Iarrfar ar phríomhoidí, ar bhaill foirne agus ar bhaill den mbord bainistíochta an suirbhé a líonadh isteach.

Tá go leor plé poiblí ar siúl faoi áit agus faoi ról na scoileanna Caitliceacha in Éirinn sa lá atá inniu ann; is fianaise starógach a fhormhór le fíorbheagán ó thaobh fianaise de. Tá súil againn go gcabhróidh an suirbhé náisiúnta seo le pictiúr cruinn a chruthú ar an tslí go gcuireann féiniúlacht/éiteas Caitlicigh eolas ar fáil do chleachtas agus do chultúr na scoileanna seo. Úsáidfear na sonraí a bhailítear chun beartas a chruthú maidir le dífheistiú, le cuimsiú, le forbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach agus le háit na scoileanna creideamh-bhunaithe i sochaí iolraíoch.

Tá bhur gcabhair uainn chun ceistneoirí an tsuirbhé a líonadh isteach. An líonfá isteach é, led' thoil, agus an nasc chuig an suirbhé a scaipeadh ar chomhaltaí eile an bhoird bhainistíochta? Cuirfear freagróirí i dtreo cheisteanna a bhaineann go sonrach lena ról féin.

Is é seo an chéad uair a rinneadh iarracht suirbhé náisiúnta dá leithéid a reáchtáil agus tá sé ríthábhachtach go nglacfaidh an oiread daoine agus a bhfuil tuairimí éagsúla acu páirt ann. Is féidir teacht ar an gceistneoir ar fhoirmeacha *Google* agus de gnáth baintear úsáid as formáid ilroghnach. Is féidir é a líonadh isteach ar ríomhaire glúine/deisce/tháibléad/ghuthán (beidh ort scrolláil trasna!) agus níor cheart go dtógfadh sé níos mó ná 10 nóiméad.

Chun teacht ar an gceistneoir, cliceáil anseo, led' thoil. Más rud é nach n-oibríonn an nasc duit, déan cóip an nasc agus greamaigh isteach i do bharra uirlisí é: https://forms.gle/NHVo5u7xhB4gL22JA

Tá céim eile sa taighde ina mbeifear ag reáchtáil agallaimh ghearra dírithe orthu siúd atá sásta páirt a ghlacadh iontu. Chuige sin, molaimid don oiread freagróirí agus is féidir a chur in iúl dúinn ag deireadh an cheistneora an bhfuil siad sásta agallamh a dhéanamh linn (ina n-aonar nó i ngrúpaí beaga) mar chuid de ghníomhaíocht leantach.

Má tá aon cheist agat faoin taighde, seol ceist chuig an Dr. Daniel O'Connell (Daniel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie) nó go dtí an tOllamh Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie).

Go raibh míle maith agat,

Dan

Appendix J Information distributed at AGM of the CPSMA in May 2022

Important Research

We need your help!

Can you please complete the questionnaire concerning the understanding and expression of Catholic ethos in your school.

You can either use this web address: https://forms.gle/NHVo5u7xhB4gL22JA

Or
Scan in the QR code:

Many thanks Contact: Daniel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie

Appendix K Letter for Education Secretaries and Diocesan Advisors - Primary

Dear -,

I hope this reaches you well.

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick is conducting a national survey among the stakeholders in Catholic primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. We are exploring the relationship between the stated policy regarding the Catholic identity of these schools and the lived reality within them. The survey will include principals, staff and members of the board of management.

There is much public discussion about the place and role of Catholic schools in Ireland today; a great deal is anecdotal with very little evidence. We hope that this national survey will help develop an accurate picture of how Catholic identity/ethos informs the practice and culture of these schools. The data will be used to inform policy around issues of divestment, inclusion, continual professional development and the place of faith-based schools in a pluralistic society.

We need your help with completion of the survey questionnaires. Would you please both fill it in yourself and distribute the survey link to the other members of the board of management? Respondents will be directed to questions specific to their role.

This is the first time such a national survey has been attempted and it is vital that as many people, with a variety of points of view, answer it. The questionnaire is accessible on google forms and the format is generally multiple choice. It can be completed on a laptop / desktop / tablet /phone (you will need to scroll across!) and should take no more than 10 minutes.

To access the questionnaire, please click here If for some reason the link does not bring you to the questionnaire, please copy the link and paste it into your toolbar:
https://forms.gle/NHVo5u7xhB4gL22JA .

There is a subsequent stage to the research which involves short focused interviews with those willing to participate. To this end, we encourage as many respondents as possible to indicate at the end of the questionnaire if they are willing to be interviewed (either individually or in small groups) as part of a follow-up.

Enquiries about the research can be directed to Dr. Daniel O'Connell (Daniel.oconnell@mic.ul.ie) or Prof. Eamonn Conway (Eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie)

Many thanks,

Dan

Appendix L Letter to Principals distributed by Education Secretaries and DAs – Primary

Dear Principal,

I hope this finds you well.

I write to you from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, regarding a research project we are conducting among all the Catholic primary schools in the Republic of Ireland on school identity.

If you have already completed this survey and distributed it to your staff and board of management, many thanks, it is much appreciated. If you have not yet had a chance to participate, we would be very grateful if you could take 10 minutes to complete it and please also distribute it to your colleagues at your earliest opportunity.

The questionnaire can be accessed here: https://forms.gle/NHVo5u7xhB4gL22JA

Empirical evidence of stakeholders' views is needed if policy on Catholic schools is to be focused into the future.

Please have your say and encourage ALL staff and your BoM members to participate – we want to hear all voices.

With many thanks,

Donna Doherty

Dr. Donna Doherty
Postdoctoral Researcher, G.R.A.C.E. Project,
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Mary Immaculate College,
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South Circular Road,
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V94 VN26

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Website: www.mic.ul.ie

Appendix M Interview Questions Phase Two - Primary

	PRINCIPALS	**TEACHERS**	**BoM**	**OTHER STAFF**
1	What do you understand by Catholic identity and ethos? What are the main influences on your understandings of these terms?	What do you understand by the Catholic identity and ethos of your school? What are the main influences on your understandings of these terms?	What do you understand by the Catholic identity and ethos of your school? What are the main influences on your understandings of these terms?	What do you understand by the Catholic identity and ethos of your school? What are the main influences on your understandings of these terms?
2	What do you think is needed most when it comes to training on Catholic identity and ethos? What gets in the way of this?	What do you think is needed most when it comes to training on Catholic identity and ethos? What can facilitate or hinder this?	What do you think is needed most when it comes to training on Catholic identity and ethos? What can facilitate or hinder this?	Would you welcome any additional training from your patron or trust that specifically focuses on Catholic identity and ethos? If so, what would help you most in this regard?
3	What main thing or things could your Patron, Board of Management and Staff do to enhance their support for the Catholic identity and ethos of your school? Please make at least one suggestion for each group.			
4	What do you think might facilitate or hinder primary principals from ensuring that their staff understand the Catholic ethos of their schools?	Focusing for a moment on the 26% of primary teachers for whom the Catholic ethos is not really or is not at all positive influence on their work – can you suggest reasons why this is so?	Can you tell me about what specific steps BoMs take to ensure that all teachers employed uphold the Catholic ethos of the school?	Focusing for a moment on the 28% of other staff for whom the Catholic ethos is not really or is not at all positive influence on their work – can you suggest reasons why this is so?
5	Can you talk about what you do, in practical terms, to support your school's Catholic identity and ethos? What do you find works well or not so well?	Can you talk about what you do, in practical terms, to support your school's Catholic identity and ethos? What do you find works well or not so well?	Can you talk about what you and your BoM do, in practical terms, to support your school's Catholic identity and ethos? What do you find works well or not so well?	Can you talk about what you do, in practical terms, to support your school's Catholic identity and ethos? What do you find works well or not so well?
6	What is your experience of allocating teaching time for RE?	Can you talk about what factors make it easy or difficult to teach RE regularly?	As a BoM member, can you tell me about your own experience of ensuring that RE receives its allotted time for each year?	
7		In relation to the teaching of RE, what		

		continual professional development, if any, would you like to see your patron or trust put in place?		
8	Why do you think there is a difference between the experiences of principals and teachers regarding the amount of time given to RE?			
9	How does your view of God influence your role as principal? Please give reasons for your answer.	Staying with these specific categories of belief in a personal God, understanding God as a spirit or life force, being unsure what to think or not really believing in God– can you tell me how your own view of God influences your role as teacher? Please give reasons for your answer.	Staying with these specific categories of belief in a personal God, understanding God as a spirit or life force, being unsure what to think or not really believing in God – can you tell me how your own view of God influences your role as a board of management member? Please give reasons for your answer.	Staying with these specific categories of belief in a personal God, understanding God as a spirit or life force, being unsure what to think or not really believing in God – can you tell me how your own view of God influences your role in your school? Please give reasons for your answer.
10		Can you tell me about the types of faith development opportunities that exist for pupils in your school and give me your view of them?	Can you tell me about the types of faith development opportunities that exist for pupils in your school and give me your view of them?	Can you tell me about the types of faith development opportunities that exist for pupils in your school and give me your view of them?
11	Can you give your opinion on what might cause more than a quarter of primary principals to remain either neutral or to disagree that providing opportunities for pupils to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ is a central educational aim of their schools?	What do you think might limit or hinder primary schools in providing opportunities for pupils to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ?	What do you think might limit or hinder primary schools in providing opportunities for pupils to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ?	What do you think might limit or hinder primary schools in providing opportunities for pupils to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ?
12	Can you comment on what you think might underly this finding? What, if anything, do you think needs to be done to address it?	Can you comment on what might underly this finding? What, if anything, do you think needs to be done to address it?	Can you comment on what might underly this finding? What, if anything, do you think needs to be done to address it?	Can you comment on what you think might underly this finding? What, if anything, do you think needs to be done to address it?

13	In your experience, are there any obstacles to prayer, or to celebrating the liturgical seasons in your school? Please give reasons for your answer.	In your experience, are there any obstacles to prayer, or to celebrating the liturgical seasons, in your school? Please comment on both parts of this question, giving reasons for your answer.	In your experience, are there any obstacles to prayer, or to celebrating the liturgical seasons, in your school? Please comment on both parts of this question, giving reasons for your answer.	In your experience, are there any obstacles to prayer, or to celebrating the liturgical seasons, in your school? Please comment on both parts of this question, giving reasons for your answer.
14	How do you feel about leading prayer with your Board of Management, Staff and Pupils? Please comment on each of the three situations, giving reasons for your answer?	Have you ever been asked to lead prayer in your school? How would feel if you were asked?	Have you ever been asked to lead prayer at your Board meeting? How would feel if you were asked?	Have you ever been asked to lead prayer in your school? How would feel if you were asked?
15	Can you shed light on why this difference between freedom to practise and welcome to practise might occur?	Can you shed light on why this difference between freedom to express their beliefs versus freedom to practise them might occur?	Can you shed light on why this difference between freedom to express their beliefs versus freedom to practise them might occur?	Can you shed light on why this difference between freedom to express their beliefs versus freedom to practise them might occur?
16	What do you understand about the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a Catholic school? Is the role of the Diocesan Advisor really working in your school? if not, why not? What might work in your school? This question was not on the principal's list	What do you understand about the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a Catholic school? Is the role of the Diocesan Advisor really working in your school? if not, why not? What might work in your school?	What do you understand about the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a Catholic school? Is the role of the Diocesan Advisor really working in your school? if not, why not? What might work in your school?	What do you understand about the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a Catholic school? Is the role of the Diocesan Advisor really working in your school? if not, why not? What might work in your school?
17	If a non-denominational state entity, were to take over your school, how would you feel about that? What might you miss most?	If a non-denominational state entity were to take over your school, how would you feel about that? What might you miss most?	If a non-denominational state entity were to take over your school, how would you feel about that? What might you miss most?	If a non-denominational state entity were to take over your school, how would you feel about that? What might you miss most?
18	If you could speak frankly to your Patron/Trust what would you like to say?	If you could speak frankly to your Patron/Trust what would you like to say?	If you could speak frankly to your Patron/Trust what would you like to say?	If you could speak frankly to your Patron/Trust what would you like to say?
19	If guidelines for Catholic schools were to be re-written, what are three things they need to get right?			
TOTAL	17	15	15	14

Appendix N Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews – Phase Two Secondary

Principals:

1. **Training:** Have you any comment about the nature and quality of the training you received for your role in this Catholic school?
2. **Catholic Identity**: When we talk about 'Catholic identity', what do you understand by this? How have you contributed to the Christian mission (ethos) of this school? What works really well, in terms of the school's Catholic ethos, that makes you proud of your school as a Catholic school?
3. **Support:** Is the Catholic identity of your school supported by Senior Management? Parents? by the Board of Management? by Staff? Students? Tell me a little more about the faith development of staff in your school? What supports are available to you to grow the faith of the staff? What additional supports would you like to be available to you?
4. **Take over:** If a non-denominational state entity, took over your school, how would you feel about that? What would you miss most?
5. **Future:** How do you see Catholic schools in five years' time? If you could speak frankly to your Patron/Trust what would you like to say? If guidelines for Catholic schools were to be re-written, what are three things they need to get right?

Board of Management members:

1. **Training:** Tell me about the nature and quality of the training you received for your role in this Catholic school?
2. **Catholic Identity:** When we talk about 'Catholic identity' what do you understand by this? Where do you see your role in leading or influencing Catholic ethos at school policy level? Are policies in place? If so, are they implemented? How do you know?
3. **Support:** How is the Catholic identity of your school supported by the Patron/Trust?
4. **Take over:** If a non-denominational state entity, took over your school, how would you feel about that? What would you miss most?
5. **Future:** How do you see Catholic schools in five years' time? If you could speak frankly to the Patron/Trust what would you like to say? If guidelines for Catholic schools were to be re-written, what are three things they need to get right?

Staff members:

1. **Training:** Tell me about the nature and quality of the training you received for your role in this Catholic school?
2. **Catholic identity:** When we talk about 'Catholic identity' what do you understand by this?
3. **Support:** Is the Catholic identity of your school supported by staff /students /parents /management? How have you contributed to the Christian mission (ethos) of this school? Tell me a little more about the faith development of staff in your school? What works really well, regarding Catholic ethos, in your school? Do you see it as being a whole school responsibility or up to Management and/or RE team?
4. **Take over:** If a non-denominational state entity, took over your school, how would you feel about that?
5. **Future:** How do you see Catholic schools in five years' time? If you could speak frankly to your Patron/Trust what would you like to say?

Exploring the attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders in Catholic post-primary schools regarding the identity of the Catholic school

What is the project about?

This research sets out to explore stakeholder understanding of, commitment to, and behaviour towards Catholic schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Who is undertaking it?

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. The principal Investigator is Dr Catherine McCormack, postdoctoral researcher at Mary Immaculate College.

Why is it being undertaken?

The objective of the study is to explore quantitatively how Catholic stakeholders understand and commit to the Catholic identity of their school and will try to ascertain how their behaviour in school is affected by those views. In the first phase (online questionnaire) it will seek to understand how Catholic schools currently understand and uphold their Catholic identity. The second phase will qualitatively explore the findings from Phase One and identify the implications for the stakeholders of Catholic schools into the future.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research has the potential to make a significant contribution to Catholic stakeholders' understanding of their remit for the protection of ethos and governance in Catholic post primary schools in a pluralistic landscape.

Right to withdraw

Anonymity is assured. Participants are free to withdraw from the research without giving a reason and without consequence. Interviews will be recorded with the participants knowledge and permission but only transcripts will be used for analysis.

How will the information be used / disseminated?

The data from the on-line survey will be analysed and data will be utilized for the drawing up of the quantitative phase. Individual participant or institutional data will not be shown. The researcher intends to present the findings at national and international conferences and possibly to publish results in peer reviewed journals.

How will confidentiality be kept?

All information gathered will be anonymised. No individual or school will be identifiable from this research.

What will happen to the data after research has been completed?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule all participant data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years at which time it will be destroyed. Anonymised research data may be held indefinitely or as required by the Researcher.

Contact details: If at any time you have any queries / issues regarding this study, the Principal Investigator's contact details are as follows: catherine.mccormack@mic.ul.ie

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact: Mary Collins, MIREC Administrator, Research and Graduate School, Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick. Telephone: 061-204980 / E-mail: mirec@mic.ul.ie

Appendix P Informed Consent Form

Exploring the attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders in Catholic post-primary schools regarding the identity of the Catholic school

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

As outlined in the participant information letter, this research will investigate stakeholder understanding of, commitment to, and behaviour towards Catholic schools in the Republic of Ireland.

The focus for this study is to ascertain how attitudes toward Catholic school vision and mission affect behaviour and practice in schools in the living out of this vision. This important research aims to provide information to support the Catholic identity of Catholic post primary schools into the future.

The participant information letter and instruction sheets should be read fully and carefully before consenting to take part in the research. Your anonymity is assured, and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. All information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party. In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule, all participant data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years, at which time it will be destroyed. Anonymised research data may be held indefinitely or as required by the Researcher.

Please read the following statements before signing the consent form.

- I have read and understood the participant information letter.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of all the procedures involving myself, and of any risks and benefits associated with the study.
- I agree to my interview being recorded.
- I will have a choice to turn camera on or off.
- I can request a copy of my transcript after the interview.
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am aware that my results will be kept confidential.

Name Printed _____

Name Signature _____ Date: _____