

## **Base-line data on teachers' opinions, beliefs and attitudes – survey and interview data**

In order to establish what teachers are thinking and doing, a survey instrument was designed by working groups that included representatives of the Catholic Education offices in Queensland. It was sent to 6832 teachers in Queensland Catholic schools in March 2014. 2287 surveys were completed (33.5%) by January 2015 and the data was processed using SPSS. The respondents are representative of the population of Catholic schools in Queensland by gender and school type.

### ***Frequencies***

Respondents generally rated their own **knowledge** of Catholic teaching, Catholic social and moral teaching as good or very good.

The vast majority felt that Catholic schools are different and saw the **identity** of their school as important/very important.

While most teachers subscribed to holistic rather than instrumental **educational aims** and favoured collaborative over individual learning, they were unsure about the relative merits of expository and inquiry-based teaching and mixed-ability grouping vs streaming.

The most popular **reason for working in Catholic schools** was 'the environment of Catholic schools' (56%), followed by 'commitment to the Catholic faith' (27%), with the remainder choosing job-related reasons.

In response to a question about the **main purposes of Catholic schools**, 'provide a safe and nurturing environment' was also the most popular choice, followed by 'an authentic experience of a Catholic community' and 'education in the Catholic faith and tradition' (Table 14). Some 75% of respondents were positive or very positive about the effectiveness of their schools in achieving these given purposes.

Slightly over half the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the **planned integration of a Catholic perspective** across the whole curriculum should be a key feature of the Catholic school and said they always or often do this. They also expressed high levels of confidence and willingness in relation to such integration.

When asked to rate and rank fifteen given **characteristics of Catholic schools** (see Q17, Appendix) the six most important characteristics were: caring community; the school is a community of faith; prayer is integral to the school's daily life for staff and students; the school engages in outreach and social justice programmes; Religious Education programmes present the teachings of the Catholic Church; the school community celebrates school liturgies frequently. The planned **integration of a Catholic perspective** was rated and ranked 11th (Tables 26-27).

**Univariate analysis** was conducted using the following independent variables: gender; age and years' experience working in Catholic education; religion; religiosity; school type (primary/secondary); level of professional responsibility and subjects taught. Some very **consistent, interesting and statistically significant differences** emerged from this analysis (see pages 3-7). In summary, teachers who were

older, had longer experience of teaching in Catholic schools, were Catholic, said that religion is important/very important to how they live their lives, worked in the primary sector, had experience of teaching Religion, and held positions with added responsibility were more likely to select positive/Catholic responses to questions about knowledge, reasons for working in Catholic schools, main purposes of Catholic education, school identity, integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum and the characteristics of Catholic schools .

Using **multivariate regression analysis** to refine these findings, it is emerging that:

- Length of experience of working in Catholic education explains away the effect of age, while the effect of being a primary teacher lessens
- Respondents giving faith commitment as their **main reason for choosing a Catholic school** were more likely to be primary teachers, teachers of Religion, Catholic and those with longer service in Catholic schools, higher levels of responsibility and high levels of religiosity.
- Those who gave school environment as their **main reason for choosing a Catholic school** were more likely to be Catholic and to have longer service in Catholic schools and high levels of religiosity.
- Those who saw the **purpose of Catholic schools** in explicitly faith-based terms (commitment, environment) were more likely to be Catholic, have longer service in Catholic schools and higher levels of responsibility.
- Levels of teachers' knowledge were strongly associated with higher levels of responsibility, teaching Religion, length of service in Catholic schools, religiosity and being Catholic
- Believing in the importance of, and implementing the **planned integration of a Catholic perspective** across the whole curriculum were strongly associated with levels of responsibility, teaching Religion, length of service in Catholic schools and religiosity.
- Willingness to integrate a Catholic perspective was strongly associated with levels of responsibility and teaching Religion.

In summary then, the independent variable that had the most influence on teachers' responses were levels of responsibility, teaching Religion, religiosity, length of service in Catholic schools, and being Catholic.