



Spiritan Education Trust

Board of Directors' Meeting

Monday 17th June 2019

Presentation by BOD Ethos Subcommittee

Discussion 1

Ethos: Characteristic Spirit of an organisation/Culture. what is it? What role does it play?

What does Characteristic Spirit mean?

- Flavour – character – essence – climate – disposition – tendency – tenor./Animating Principle of an Organisation/ Dominating characteristic – motivating Force – rationale – code – morality – moral values - attitudes – belief – principles – standards.
- The word Ethos has its roots in both Latin and Greek: Nature – disposition – customs
- Ethos: What really counts? Should Influence the choices/decisions that we make. We work under the banner of Catholic School ethos.
What is our Spiritan Ethos? Recognising that Ireland is now a 'Mission Country'/ Evangelisation and re-evangelisation/ Option for the poor/Mission dimension/ The poor and most abandoned

Who are the Stakeholders in SPIRITAN EDUCATION?

- **Primary Stakeholders** (Directly impacted Relationships)
- Students/Teachers Parents/families
- SET (Governance)/PLT (Owners)/Boards of Management/Department of Education
- Archdiocese/Church
- Auxiliary Staff/Employees
- (Relationships are reciprocal)

Secondary Stakeholders Indirectly impacted relationships

- Past Students Suppliers/providers
- Charities/Future generations
- Local community/ Spiritan Communities attached to schools.
- IRFU/Sporting Organisations
- Catechetical Council & the Catholic school Partnership

Discussion 2

The Professed expression of Spiritan Ethos includes

- Focus on the poor and marginalised was quite pronounced in the discussion on The Professed.
- How do we define 'poor'? - c.f. the (psychological?) 'poverty' of the 4 young men from St Mary's who have killed themselves in recent years.
- Holistic Development of the Students
- Called to Mission...Mission is broader than schools
- Called to Care for the Poor...compassion
- There was also focus on high education standards/Education excellence

However, there is a tension between the professed and the lived

The Reality v the Professed

- Nobody in the room felt that the reality matched the professed/ There certainly was a gap between what we profess and what our reality really is/There was a considerable gap identified between reality and professed/ Members (PLT) openly stated that they were uncomfortable with the gap./ The gap between what we profess, and our reality is visible for all (members and board) to see, in many ways, e.g. Involvement in Church, involvement in Mission, Involvement in social exclusivity
- There is a considerable amount of "ethos" work going on in the schools that we should identify, name and celebrate./ We must acknowledge that a lot of good work is being done in the schools that is not publicised and that could come under the banner of ethos We must celebrate what we the schools do well, more than academic excellence./Needs to be an understanding of what happens in school as positive
- There is a tension between "helping the poor" but "not in my back yard" or not even the neighbouring/local marginalised/ Engagement with the 'local' is important not just the overseas?/Where are the local marginalized in our school communities?
- There was a comparison with past pupils of Jesuits schools who publicly declare that they gained and operate on a 'Sense of Justice' that they received from the Jesuits. We are not so sure that Spiritan past pupils claim some similar gift they garnered in their education.
- Some think there is really nothing we can do about the situation./ We are where we are. There are things that we cannot change with our schools. We work with what we have/'We are where we are'. We work with what we have.
- The 'nuclear' option – divest ourselves from the schools altogether/Others think that we should consider the radical option of divesting of those schools that are no longer consistent with the Spiritan mission (cf Spiritan Guide for Education, p.20) /Divestment of schools is an option/Divestment can be managed for the benefit of all. Are Spiritan schools bastions for the privileged? This is clearly a concern for many people in the room.
- There was acknowledgement that this gap needs to be closed./What can we do to reach out to less well off schools – we have the resources. How can we do this?/The 'Bawnogue Project' is a step in the right direction/ Others suggest that we are on a "long road" – a lot done, a lot more to do/ The 'Bawnogue Project' should be the 'new normal'/SET can do more as a Trust not just down to the schools

- Bawnogue and Spirasi sit far more comfortably with the Spiritan Ethos than vast amounts of money being spent on school campus development plans.

Concluding remarks

Sense of meeting/moving forward

- At times, I noted that the group dynamic during this time seemed to move from 'enthusiasm for change' followed by a 'cautious step' forward. So, naming the target will be a challenge.
- To help this process, the 'celebration' of important ethos programmes within the school community 'as they are' could be key to unlock new energy for people to travel on this road.
- People recognise the gap and are uncomfortable
- All would like to see some form of change
- It is clear that the status quo isn't an option for SET so as a sub-committee we certainly have an opportunity now to help shape the future direction of SET
- SET has come a long way from where it began in 1999. A lot of positive change has taken place especially in recent years, but SET requires a new direction and this was welcomed in the room.
- Suggestions/proposals in this area from the Ethos Subcommittee would be welcome
- The ball is in our court.
- The Ethos Sub Committee was given a mandate to take what was said at the workshop/meeting and get back to the BOD/PLT in the autumn with suggestions etc for moving forward.