

Healy, Kevin, 2000, *Student perception and school choice: An investigation into changing enrolment trends in both a vocational school and a secondary school in a west Cork town, 1997-1999.*

ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the development of post-primary education in Ireland. In so doing, it examines the different types of post-primary school, the type of education each traditionally offered and how these schools have since developed. This dissertation also examines school enrolment and refers to literature and surveys on school choice and enrolment in England and Wales, the United States and Australia.

As this dissertation was written after a dramatic change in enrolment patterns between both schools, it seeks to determine why students choose one school rather than another. For the purpose of the survey, all first year students of both schools, over a three year period, were given a questionnaire which enquired as to why they chose their present school. This questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first comprised several statements to which respondents were asked to evaluate their responses using a Likert scale. Respondents were also asked to list the reasons why they chose their current schools and why they did not enroll in the other school in the town. The results of that survey illustrated the crucial factors that influence student choice, the perceived strengths of each school and also illustrated how each school had extended beyond its traditional image and the type of education traditionally associated with that school type.

As this dissertation was being completed, the Department of Education and Science initiated a process that may result in the amalgamation of both schools. In the aftermath of the student survey, the dissertation assesses the likely outcome of this process and, significantly, the future of post-primary education in the town.