

O'Sullivan, Anna, 2002, *The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme: An Investigation into its Purpose, Suitability and Effectiveness.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The Department of Education set up the *Leaving Certificate Applied* (LCA) in 1995 as a practical, project-based alternative to the academically orientated established Leaving Certificate. Previous deviations from the established Leaving Certificate suffered greatly from perception problems. They were perceived as being of lower status. Participants could not claim to have completed "*the Leaving Certificate*". Poor communication of the aims and educational philosophy underpinning previous "alternatives" contributed greatly to the low take-up rate and ultimately to their demise.

To counter this perception problem, the Department decided that new alternatives would have to be initiated under the umbrella of the established Leaving Certificate. It introduced two new programmes, the *Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)* and the *Leaving Certificate Applied programmes* (LCA).

To assess the success of this initiative, this dissertation set out to investigate how the purpose, suitability and effectiveness of the LCA is perceived by participating students and their teachers in a range of schools in County Cork.

Chapter 1 looks at the rationale for introducing the course. It places the LCA in a historical context and examines the necessity for its introduction. Chapter 2 looks at the philosophy, the educational theory underpinning the LCA, its content, structure and delivery.

Chapter 3 discusses research methodology and the formulation of a questionnaire to investigate the purpose, suitability and effectiveness of the LCA from both student and teacher perspectives. I investigated whether this new alternative suffers from the perceived lower status problem, as did previous deviations from the established Leaving Certificate.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research. Finally, chapter 5 concludes on these results and makes recommendations.