

Title of Research Project: An Examination of the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme: Origin, Policy and Practice - A Contextual, Relational, Discursive and Spatial Analysis Employing a Critical Theory Approach.

Researchers: Dr. Annmarie Curneen



Contact Details: annmariecurneen07@gmail.com

Relevant key words: Leaving Certificate Applied; Policy enactment; Inclusion; Space as discourse of power; Schools as emotional landscapes; Student teacher relationships; Student voice; Critical, relational and affective pedagogy; Pedagogy as affect; Critical theory

The purpose of this study was to examine the Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) programme as it is lived out and experienced today and to investigate whether or not these experiences continue to marry with the original aims of the programme. The study did the following:

- a) Developed a deep understanding of how the LCA programme is lived out in practice by listening to the voices of those who embody the programme, namely students and teachers.
- b) Bridged the gap between policy and practice by listening to the voice of policy makers and then bringing these voices into conversation with students, teachers, and school leaders.
- c) Examined the complexity of policy enactment and the often-unintended consequences of this enactment when it comes to being lived out in the contextualised setting of schools.
- d) Explored the concept that policies are embodied, and this embodiment is lived out through relational encounters in contextualised settings and to recognise that these encounters are emotional and as such effect an examination of spaces with schools as emotional landscapes.
- e) Explored through the lens of the LCA programme issues of inclusion such as value, recognition of difference and the emotional aspects of these.

Findings:

This study offered a spatial, discursive, and relational analysis of feelings of inclusion and inclusive/exclusive practices within schools from the perspectives of LCA students. This study found that these practices are emotional and as such inclusion itself needs to be understood as an emotional endeavour. The findings of this study highlight the importance of spatial discourse and the emotions involved in the materiality and contextualised nature of policy implementation and the resultant feelings of inclusion or exclusion. In a Deleuzian vein, this study valued different voices

precisely because they are different. Students have taught us that inclusion is about participation but also about recognition.

Published: September 2022