

Comment

The New Leaving Cert - *On the one hand, on the other hand...*



The Optimist

- ◆ There are many new and exciting Topics to choose from
- ◆ Handing up the Research Study before the final exam is great
- ◆ If students follow the structure of the Research Study - its all laid out for them - they should do very well - just like the Old Leaving Cert
- ◆ The Documents study is a change from all the content; the variety of questions in the exam will make it more interesting
- ◆ Some of the Topics are newsy so that will get good publicity for History - that's no harm!
- ◆ The Ordinary level exam is well-structured
- ◆ Ordinary level results should improve - Ordinary level students will really benefit from the compulsory Research Study - so the high failure rate should come down again (as it did in 2005)
- ◆ Higher level students have only 3 essays to do instead of 5 in the final exam - they won't come out of the exam with their hands falling off
- ◆ The Sample Exam papers are not as bad as we feared
- ◆ The Sample Exam questions gave students a reasonable choice - not like the Old Leaving Cert where they were lucky to get 1 question in each section.
- ◆ The marking scheme will surely cut the failure rate in Higher level (which went up in 2005)
- ◆ There's a lot of work to be done to get into the new course but once we're in its going to work out very well
- ◆ We are all going through a process of change and things always look bad when we are changing. But in another year we'll wonder what all the fuss was about.
- ◆ Changes in the syllabuses of other subjects are not to the liking of the teachers in those subjects - students will have to study much more now to cover the course; it won't be a case of doing the Leaving Cert in one year and getting an A or a B or revising the course in 4 weeks!
- ◆ The feedback from the teachers in the in-service is being listened to. With the publication of the pro-forma booklet and the sample papers things are improving all the time.
- ◆ These changes will increase the numbers doing Leaving Cert History
- ◆ But I'm still a bit worried!

The Pessimist



- ◆ The course is too long
- ◆ Trying to study the prescribed Case Studies in detail as well as the rest of the Topic on Movements for political and social reform is impossible
- ◆ The wording in some of those questions in the Sample Papers is like First Class Honours BA
- ◆ By the time 17 and 18 year olds have worked out what the questions mean the exam will be over
- ◆ Some of the questions were so narrow that they would not give students a chance
- ◆ There we are teaching students to write essays and we don't know how they will be marked
- ◆ How can you prepare students for an exam without knowing the marking principles?
- ◆ We were told a year ago in Dublin that there would be a changed marking scheme. Why don't we know now what it is?
- ◆ Apart from the essays, how is the contextualisation part of the Case Studies to be marked, as well as the Extended Essay?
- ◆ We have a lot more work to do with the Research Study
- ◆ There is so much uncertainty that students will be afraid to touch Leaving Cert History
- ◆ Many top class students think they will get better grades in other subjects with less work
- ◆ The borderline students are afraid they will fail so they opt for other subjects where they have a better chance of getting a C
- ◆ The last of the Old Leaving Cert papers got things badly wrong especially in Section C so that its hard to trust the exam setters.
- ◆ A big problem now is that all the Topics have to have a fair and equal choice of questions because students are doing a mixture of Topics. Some students could be very unlucky if the questions in their Topic/s were harder than in other Topics
- ◆ The Case Studies in some topics are boring - the impact of the EEC on fisheries, I ask you
- ◆ The State Exams Commission won't listen to you if they don't want to. Will they get it right?
- ◆ But we'll get there yet!

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Editor