

EDUCATIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND (ESAI)

NEWSLETTER: JANUARY 2012



Call for contributions!

ESAI members wishing to contribute articles to the Research Corner or any other section of the newsletter should contact one of the following Executive members:

Joe O'Hara

(joe.ohara@dcu.ie)

Majella McSharry

(majella.mcsharry@dcu.ie)

Mella Cusack

(mella.cusack@cdu.cdvec.ie)

Contents

...Letter from the ESAI President

...Irish Educational Studies

...Horizon 2020 Report

...Research Corner:

Elaine Keane (NUIG) on 'Widening Participation and Traditional-Entry Students and the Student Experience in Higher Education'

Andrew O'Shea & Maeve O'Brien (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra) on their recent publication *Pedagogy, Oppression and Transformation in a 'Post-Critical' Climate: The Return of Freirean Thinking*
Dympna Devine on her book *Immigration and Schooling in the Republic of Ireland*

...ESAI Annual Conference 2012—Call for Papers

...ESAI Executive Committee 2011/12

LETTER FROM THE ESAI PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

It is that time of year again – time to prepare for the annual conference and to visit our PayPal site to renew your membership!

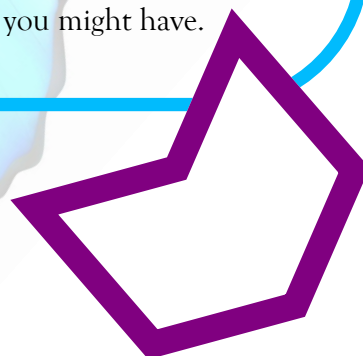
This has been a challenging year for all of us but it has also been a year of great achievement for the ESAI. We ran a highly successful 36th Annual Conference in The Church of Ireland College of Education and were delighted to be able to help CICE mark their bicentenary. In addition, despite the enormous financial and time pressures being experienced by our profession we have managed to keep our membership numbers at the same level as last year and to actually grow our membership in both the associate and corporate categories. This bodes well for the future of the Association and I feel it is a tribute to the service offered to members that we continue to prosper.



37th Annual Conference 2012 – University College Cork / River Lee Hotel, Cork

The 37th Annual Conference of the Association will take place from March 29th-31st in UCC / River Lee Hotel, Cork. The theme of this year's conference is ***Educational Research in a Time of Transformation: Insights, Influences and Impacts***. We hope that this theme will encourage practitioners and researchers to reflect on and discuss the role played by educational research in this period of significant societal and systemic transformation. The full call for papers will be included later in the Newsletter or can be downloaded from www.esai.ie/conference2012. We would encourage members of the Association to distribute it as widely as possible in the coming days.

As part of our attempts to streamline the large administrative load associated with running ESAI, we have introduced an online conference system to manage all paper submissions and registration. You can register at the site to create your own account, and this can be used on all later visits to submit your paper, register for the conference, and receive updates from the ESAI. Full details are available at www.esai.ie/conference2012 or you can log on directly at <http://ocs.sfu.ca/esai/index.php/esai/2012>. There is also a full explanatory guide available on both of these sites to help you through the process. We plan to evaluate the suitability of this system at the Annual Conference and would value any and all feedback that you might have.



Irish Educational Studies Special Issue: Transitions into and out of Higher Education

On behalf of the Association, I would like to congratulate the Editorial Board of *Irish Educational Studies* on the publication of the journal's third special issue. The theme of the special issue is 'Transitions into and out of Higher Education'. In particular, I would like to thank Prof. Rolf van der Velden and Prof. Emer Smyth (Guest Editors), and Dr. Dympna Devine (General Editor) for their work in bringing together this timely set of high quality articles.

The Journal has maintained its excellent reputation as one of the premier education journals available in Europe and it continues to provide Irish researchers with an opportunity to present their work to a wide international audience. As importantly its increasing visibility within the broader community of educational researchers has resulted in a number of high profile international contributions to recent issues. Sincere thanks to Editorial team, led by Dr. Dympna Devine and including Dr. Paul Conway, Dr. Aisling Leavy, Prof. Emer Smyth and Dr. Maeve O'Brien, for their continued hard work on all of our behalves.

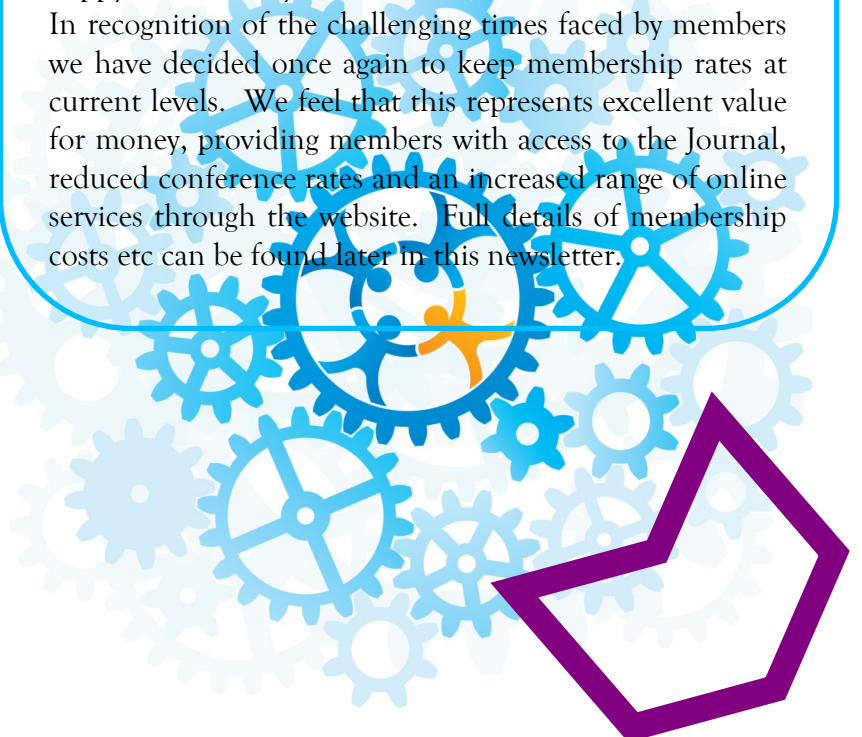
Horizon 2020

Over recent months the ESAI has been involved with partner organisations in EERA in the lobbying of the European Commission in relation to future funding of Educational Research in Europe through the Horizon 2020 initiative. To date this has involved the submission of a formal response to the decision of the Commission to effectively downgrade Educational and Social Science research in the new funding round. In addition we helped coordinate a Europe wide e-petition which resulted in 22,000 social science researchers requesting that Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn reconsider her position on the funding of this sector. The Association will continue to lobby on your behalf in this area recognizing the increasing importance of external research funding at such a challenging

Membership

As with all voluntary organisations of our type, ESAI relies on a strong membership base to keep going. Individuals wishing to take out or renew membership can continue to do so electronically at www.esai.ie. There is no need to fill out any additional forms and renewal / application should only take a few moments. For those of you who wish to continue using the cheque payment method, we have kept the forms on the site and we would be only too happy to facilitate you in this manner.

In recognition of the challenging times faced by members we have decided once again to keep membership rates at current levels. We feel that this represents excellent value for money, providing members with access to the Journal, reduced conference rates and an increased range of online services through the website. Full details of membership costs etc can be found later in this newsletter.



ESAI Executive

I would like to finish this short note by paying a particular tribute to my colleagues on the ESAI executive. In common with all other voluntary organisations, ESAI relies on the commitment and dedication of a range of individuals who freely give of their time in order to maintain and enhance the Association. This year has seen a number of new members join Executive bringing a range of new insights and experiences to our discussions. We welcome these new members while at the same time acknowledging the contribution of those who have recently stepped down. In particular I would like to thank Dr. Aidan Seery for his hard work over many years as Membership Secretary – a difficult but essential job.

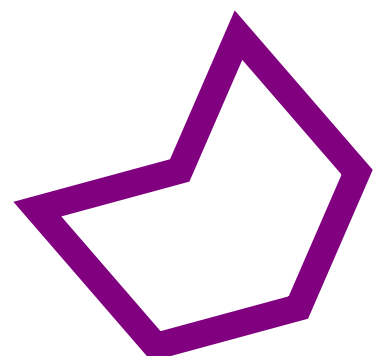
I look forward to working with you in planning and preparing for ESAI's 37th Annual Conference.

Dr. Joe O'Hara, ESAI President
joe.ohara@dcu.ie



IRISH EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

The journal is continuing to receive a high number of submissions which augurs well for future publication and planning. With the support of on-line access through Routledge/Taylor and Francis, the journal has witnessed a phenomenal increase in downloads, with over 9,500 for the year 2011 alone. Top countries downloading include Ireland, United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Australia and Canada. This highlights the growing profile of the journal both nationally and internationally, and its importance in showcasing quality educational research in Ireland. To accommodate the increasing demand for publication, the journal has moved to four issues per volume beginning from the next volume (31). This allows greater flexibility in terms of spread of general issues and more specialist issues and also more timely publication. To consolidate the development of the journal, we would ask you to encourage your students and colleagues to refer to IES, and to cite papers published in it across other journal publications. This all helps to extend its international reach and profile.



Papers which are now ready for publication are being published directly on-line before going through to hard copy publication. This means that authors will not have to wait as long to be able to cite and circulate their paper for publication. Nonetheless it creates an additional burden on editors in terms of always having papers to move through the system as timely as possible, rather than clustered in publication points during the year. Given that the work of editors and reviewers is voluntary, delays in feedback and final decisions are sometimes unavoidable. Between searching for reviewers, getting feedback and processing reviews we are trying to get this to under six months, sometimes more successfully than others. Your patience and co-operation as both reviewers and authors is appreciated!

A new journal administrator has been appointed (Deirdre McGillicuddy) and the transition from the previous administrator has been very smooth. The new address for the administrator is iesjournal@gmail.com. We are also working with Taylor and Francis to streamline the administration of papers by moving to manuscript central which should take place early in 2012. This will add to the professionalism of the journal and bring it in line with other journals of international standing.

We are always looking for reviewers so please provide suggestions, including colleagues from abroad, in networks etc and send to iesjournal@gmail.com, so we can add them to our lists. Please also continue to encourage colleagues both in Ireland and elsewhere to submit their papers for consideration for publication.

Special Issues

Congratulations to Professor Emer Smyth, in collaboration with Professor Rolf Van der Velden, in bringing together the latest special issue on *Transitions into and out of Higher Education*. This has a great array and spread of papers drawn from leading scholars in the area and is an important contribution to the field.

Current special issues well under way for publication in the next volume are:

Research in Education Related to Teacher Accountability

Co-editors: Professor Anthony Kelly George Mason University and Dr Aisling Leavy, Mary Immaculate College of Education

The State and Status of Physical Education (special issue to coincide with Olympics year)

Guest Co-Editors: Professor Mary O'Sullivan, University of Limerick and Professor Judy Oslin, Kent State University, USA

In light of the increasing interest in submitting special issues to the journal and in order to ensure/maintain standards and consistency, guidelines for submitting proposals have now been developed and are available on the website. I would encourage colleagues to have a look at these and make submissions for consideration. We are especially interested in joint submissions between Irish and international colleagues on topical issues in the field of educational research..



Finally I would like to thank the core-editorial team: Paul Conway, Emer Smyth, Aisling Leavy and Maeve O'Brien (reviews editor) for their persistence and hard work in ensuring the continued development of the journal.

Dr Dymphna Devine,
General Editor
dymphna.devine@ucd.ie

HORIZON 2020

European Research Area Framework

Also in November ISE forwarded a response to the Commissioner's proposal for the European Research Area Framework (ERA) which is the proposal for a general frame and regulation for research and researchers in EU for the next period of time (2014 - 2020). I am happy with the content of this and especially with the emphasis on curiosity-drive and bottom-up research and the need for social science and humanities (see: <http://www.initiative-science-europe.org/pdf/ISE-Response-Consultation-ERA-Framework-final.pdf>).

Short Statement on Grand Challenges

In November ISE (Initiative for Science in Europe) - of which EERA is a member, has forwarded a short statement on the state of social science and humanities in the Horizon 2020 Draft, to the Commissioner for Science and Innovation. The content is well known to EERA news readers as it is close to the previous EERA letters to the Commissioner (see: http://www.initiative-science-europe.org/pdf/ISE_statement_Grand_Challenges.pdf).

Petition

A group of stakeholders in social science and Humanities (SSH) launched an on-line petition on an Open Letter to the Commissioner. An overwhelmingly high number of colleagues: more than 22.000, have until now responded. Together with responses to the green paper, work-shops, letters and the meeting in London with the Commissioner in November, there has been a lively attempt to make her aware of the need to remember SSH (including of course educational research) when planning for research, science and innovation in Europe (see: <http://www.eash.eu/openletter2011/>).

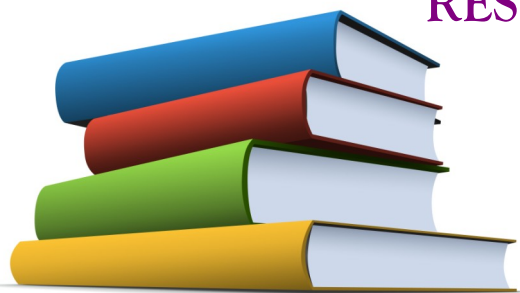
Horizon 2020

On the 6th December The European Commission released the proposal for the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation - Horizon 2020. This is the result of the work being done by the Commission with inspiration from a lot of stakeholders (EERA for one) to produce a new frame for research in Europe. A first look shows that the Commissioner has been listening to stakeholders' concerns in including a Challenge named 'Inclusive and innovative and secure societies', but maybe not closely enough. We will look closer and respond to Commission, Parliament etc (see: http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/pdf/proposals/com%282011%29_809_final.pdf).

Alliance

In late December a number of stakeholders of SSH are meeting in Amsterdam in order to form a kind of umbrella organization (an alliance) for our fields of research to be better heard and be more visible to politicians at the European and national levels.

Prof. Lejf Moos, President of EERA



Widening Participation and Traditional-Entry Students and the Student Experience in Higher Education

Elaine Keane, NUIG

Despite the ‘massification’ of higher education (hereafter, HE), social class and other disparities remain a feature of the socio-demographic profiling of who progresses to HE in Ireland. In a context where ‘traditional’ groups have achieved saturation, or near saturation, point in terms of their HE participation, progression towards the national commitment to a 72%+ participation rate will necessarily require more focus on those traditionally excluded from HE. Whilst significant research has been conducted on pre- and point-of-entry HE issues, there has been a lack of research on students’ post-entry HE experiences, particularly in a widening participation context. This is of particular concern in the content of a discourse which connotes apparently ‘falling standards’ in HE with widening participation.

A recent three-year study on the post-entry academic and socio-cultural experiences of 45 university undergraduates (both former school-leaver-aged access (SLA) and traditional-entry (TE) students) provides some interesting findings in this regard. Located within the interpretive paradigm, the methodological approach adopted was constructivist grounded theory, and data collection included background information

questionnaires, two rounds of in-depth semi-structured interviews, and email updates, over a three-year period.

The SLA and TEs’ experiences of school were very different in some respects. While the TEs commonly spoke of having loved school, having had supportive teachers and engrained assumptions about HE progression, the SLAs typically reported having hated school, having had negative experiences with teachers whom, they reported, held very low expectations of them, and they had little to no expectation about HE progression. Both groups, however, were very critical of what they termed the school ‘read, remember and regurgitate’ approach. They described school as a rote-learning and dependency-fostering system, where teaching and learning were solely directed towards the acquisition of points, to the exclusion of real learning, critical thinking, and wider social and personal development.

Once in HE, there were similarities and differences in both groups’ academic experiences. Both groups’ attendance was rather patchy in first year, and improved in second, and especially third, year. Both groups encountered academic difficulties, typically with academic writing, assessment load and with Mathematics-related areas within their subjects. However, there were no differences between the groups in terms of the level or extent of academic difficulties encountered. Further, their degree results were very similar, with the majority of both groups achieving 2.1s, and a small minority getting first class honours and 2.2s. The broadly similar results achieved by both groups suggests that not having achieved adequate points at Leaving Certificate level to enter HE through the ‘traditional’ route may *not* impact on an individual’s ability to achieve to at least a similar level in HE as students who have achieved adequate points.

One important difference in the experience of both groups was the extent to which the TEs experienced academic culture shock initially relative to the SLAs. The TEs spoke of feeling lost and overwhelmed, and not knowing how to go about learning in a system demanding an independent learn-

ing approach. Their reaction was to revert to the approach which had worked for them at school, that of 'regurgitating', and they required significant deconstruction from the dependent school approach before experimenting with the HE independent approach. The SLAs, in contrast, did not experience such adjustment difficulties and moved directly towards the experimental stage. For both groups, progress towards a more 'stable' enactment of the HE approach depended on the extent to which they were confident about understanding assessment requirements, and their perception of what would be rewarded in assessment.

Two key factors explained the similarities and differences in both groups' academic experiences: perceived preparedness for HE and academic self-confidence. The TEs reported being entirely unprepared for HE and they blamed the school system for this. While the SLAs agreed that school did not prepare students for HE, they themselves felt very prepared as a result of the pre-entry access programme. The SLAs were also advantaged, however, by having *not* been successful in the dependent school approach, thus requiring far less 'deconstruction' upon progression to HE. In contrast, the TEs, whilst successful in the school approach, required significant deconstruction, and their re-construction as independent learners required significant effort. In terms of academic self-confidence, the TEs were highly confident in their own abilities, having obtained "a good Leaving Cert". The SLAs, even in the face of very good academic results in HE, continued to underestimate their abilities, generally overworking, and constantly worrying that they were "not able for it". Only with repeated evidence in terms of results did they begin to become more confident academically.

There were also significant differences

between the groups in terms of their overall orientation to HE. The SLAs 'frontlined' the academic realm, and 'sidelined' the social realm, while the TEs equally emphasised (or 'equalined') both. The orientation adopted was influenced by the extent to which their progression to HE was volitional, i.e. consciously decided upon, and their subsequent level of valuing of the HE experience. While the SLAs had had no expectations about HE progression, they subsequently accorded it great value. This led them to 'sideline' the social realm and heavily focus on the academic realm. In contrast, the TEs assumed HE would happen as a matter of course, did not express appreciation about it, and subsequently equally emphasised the academic and social realms, with some prioritising the social, over the academic, realm initially. The origins of their expectation levels mostly lay in their different family histories of HE participation and their very different experiences of school.

Both groups also differed significantly in their behaviours *within* the social realm, and engaged in various forms of 'distancing' behaviours based on perceived relative social positioning. There was significant evidence of different social class groups 'clique-ing' together and away from student groups perceived as different, in socio-economic terms. The SLAs tended to 'stick to their own', and explained that they felt more comfortable with other access students. While friendly to other students, they reported that their real friendships were non-campus-based. They generally did not engage with extra-curricular activities on campus and, through various processes of compartmentalisation, treated HE "like a job". The motivation of such 'subservient distancing' was self-protection: there was significant evidence that they perceived themselves to be inferior in socio-economic and academic terms, having entered HE via the pre-entry access route. They worried that they would be "tagged as poor or stupid" and this led them to not disclose their entry route to other students initially. Both groups reported that "wealthy, snobby" students also tended to clique together and would not mix with other students. This is another example of distancing motivated by a desire to self-protect, but in this case, it was about status-maintaining, or even raising, rather than subservience. Both groups talked extensively about the "snobby" behaviours and attitudes of what they termed the "Abercrombie and Fitch

type of people” and the “Plastics”, the latter a reference to the US film ‘Mean Girls’. Both groups felt that these students perceived themselves as better, or having a higher status, than others, and tended to deliberately demonstrate this perceived higher status through their appearance. This ‘social peacocking’ behaviour - deliberately exhibiting one’s assets through one’s appearance and behaviour - is essentially a way of demonstrating social distance to those considered as inferior, and is a form, in Bourdieusian terms, of class-based distinction.

In the context of increasing credentialism, it has been argued that middle class students are conscious that those traditionally excluded from HE may be ‘catching up’, and become anxious in the face of losing their advantaged position, thus developing strategies to try to prevent this from happening. If those traditionally excluded from HE are catching up academically, it may be that the ‘game’ of status-reckoning is shifting, or at least extending, from the academic to the socio-relational realm. By forming class-exclusive groups with tightly-knit boundaries, some are included and some are excluded. Previous research has suggested that we would, in the future, see socially-exclusive strategies assuming more importance in the social realm of HE. Further, recent research in the UK is clear about the importance of social integration and peer relationships for retention in HE, academic outcomes, and for future employment opportunities. In this context, the SLAs ‘sticking to their own’, and not mixing with others, however self-protective the motivation, may in fact constitute a form of self-sabotage, in that their behaviours may prevent them from forming the sort of social networks which would be of benefit to them in the future. The extent to which this behaviour, and indeed, the exclusionary behaviour of the “wealthy snobby” stu-

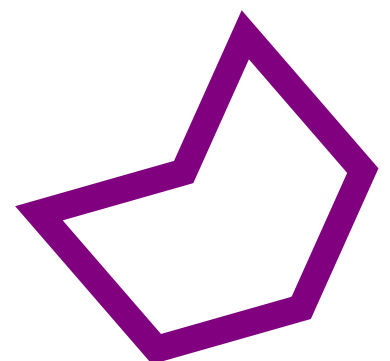
dents, is either conscious or deliberate is unclear, and requires further research.

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, and neo-Weberian scholars Collins and Parkin, the study provides evidence of class-differentiated HE engagement, and demonstrates how both disadvantage and privilege are enacted and performed at the post-entry HE stage. The findings of this study challenge deficit assumptions about widening participation and ‘falling standards’, and raise important questions about the connections between approaches to learning, pedagogy and assessment at (and between) school and HE levels, and about the role and importance of the socio-relational realm in HE. The study suggests evidence of habitus structuring and mediating students’ academic and social behaviours within a broader social closure theory framework. Recommendations include further attention to the socio-relational realm, transparency and explicitness in academic practice, and reform of the dependency-fostering post-primary system.

See:

Keane, E. (2011) Distancing to self-protect: The perpetuation of inequality in higher education through socio-relational dis/engagement, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 449-466.

Keane, E. (2011) Dependence-Deconstruction: Widening Participation and Traditional-Entry Students Transitioning from School to Higher Education in Ireland, *Teaching in Higher Education*, Vol. 16, No. 6, 707-718.



Pedagogy, Oppression and Transformation in a 'Post-Critical' Climate: The Return of Freirean Thinking

Andrew O'Shea & Maeve O'Brien, St Patrick's College Drumcondra

Pedagogy, Oppression and Transformation in a 'Post-Critical' Climate is an edited collection of essays which provides an urgent reflection on Freire's work, in particular his central principles of pedagogy and praxis, offering a variety of critical responses from philosophical, sociological and egalitarian perspectives. The editors explore whether Freire's revolutionary work has stood the test of time and its relevance to educational discourses today - discourses that frequently contest the ontological and historical aspects of human development.

While Freire's work emerged as a response to the problem of providing a transformative educational praxis for justice and equality within a specific cultural and economic milieu, *Pedagogy, Oppression and Transformation in a 'Post-Critical' Climate* seeks to explore the value and possibilities of transformative praxis in perpetually diverse educational settings and within an increasingly divided globalised world. By building on the earlier emancipatory approach of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it creates an international conversation between academics, educational practitioners and community activists for a new generation.

The collection of essays attempt to address the problem of possibilities for transformation in a post-critical context from a variety of perspectives which include feminist, 'post-colonial', emancipatory, 'revisited' liberal, post-structural and post-modern responses. While some perspectives may appear to be in conflict on the nature of praxis, or on

the emphasis on the subject rather than the object of transformation, what they have in common is that from within their own discourses and praxis, each of the authors seek to come to grips with how they as researchers and educators have engaged with Freire's challenge of humanising education, that requires engagement in a dialectic between the deeply personal, and the collective/linguistic and the structural. Part of the struggle today to articulate possibilities for an educational praxis that is directed towards social justice, lies in the tensions between critical pedagogy and ideological and discursive spaces within the academy itself, in which the historical reality of oppression as an objectively real phenomenon is often diminished. The narrative sickness that Freire diagnoses in terms of education here threatens to become a terminal illness.

What concerns the contributors in this book within a post-critical context is not just the absence of value today but of discerning value within shifting and fragmenting identifications and discursive relations of power-where oppression can exist everywhere and yet nowhere. The positivism of modernity which created its own fixed categories and objects of oppression within education has required radical reinvention but some suggest that the post-modern turn at its extreme in careering towards a celebration of possibilities for discursive colonisation, play and invention, may cause educators and intellectuals to lose their way-forgetting or rejecting the on-going dialectic between the material and cultural realities in which feeling and breathing subjects are educated. Freire himself argued that we cannot articulate or develop pedagogical processes, as value free; education is never neutral nor merely discursive. Praxis, which articulates reflection and action, emerges from within particular sets of conceptual and philosophical structures that create the conditions for either further oppression or transformation of the self and its world. Education itself is inconclusive. It depends on human beings taking up the challenge of dialogue, of putting the personal back into the political. The work of this book is to challenge the new framing of education in a post-critical climate and those pedagogies and processes that pose as education but in reality are a domestication of the self, mere figures of speech masquerading as liberating, while potentially opening up fresh sites for colonisation.

The book has eight chapters. The theoretical un-

derpinnings of the first five chapters span liberal, critical, emancipatory and radical egalitarian perspectives. They are located within a modern view that maintains that transformation is possible, and that through education as a form of personal conscientization, collective action and solidarity, we can transform our world. Building on Freire's understandings of oppression, these chapters explore the personal call to transformation through the roles, identities and discursive spaces open to and occupied by the oppressed and oppressors within education today. They also continue to disturb and critique oppression 'out there', those now out-of-fashion structural inequalities associated with class, gender and cultural positionings, indicating ways that these can be challenged in pedagogical practice, in the structuring of curricula and in the power relations between taught and teacher, between self and other.

The second set of chapters (6-8) articulate and problematize a post-modern and post-critical theoretical perspective and explore post-modern and post-structural thinking in relation to Freire's understanding of pedagogy and oppression, the possibilities for a greater international consensus on post-modern education, and for any real re-birth and transformation within this discursive landscape. This is significant for a Freirean project and a return of his thinking, as Freire himself strongly rejects theory and discursive practices that do not lead to action or at least reflection that is ameliorative of the conditions for social justice and dialogue. In returning to Freire at this time, we enquire as to which strands of post-modern thinking can conceive of, or speak to a critical pedagogy that is concerned with humanization through education, albeit that there are real tensions between critical and post-critical views of the human. By confronting some of these challenges, the essays in this book help us to re-engage with

Freire's radical thinking and to appreciate the significance of his views on education for the pressing issues of our day.

See:

O'Shea, A. & O'Brien, M. (2011) *Pedagogy, Oppression and Transformation in a 'Post-Critical' Climate*. Continuum, London

Immigration and schooling in Ireland Making a difference?

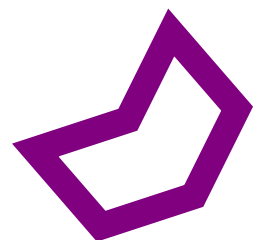
Dympna Devine, University College Dublin

Immigration and schooling in Ireland addresses the impact of recent rapid social and economic change on the education system. It provides detailed analysis and fascinating insights into the complex and varied responses of principals, teachers, parents and children to working in newly-multi ethnic schools. It highlights the central role played historically by education in shaping the 'Irish' nation and how this has governed responses to those who have come from the 'outside'. Devine offers a thought-provoking critique of current policies as Ireland's attempts to position itself as a leading-edge knowledge economy influences both the nature of immigration and responses to immigrants in the education system. The book illuminates how power is exercised by key stakeholders in education and the gradual pragmatic approach to change. It highlights how broader forces of transformation and preservation in Irish society intersect and influence decisions over policy and practice with children of migrant background in schools.

This book will appeal to those working and studying in the field of education, sociology, social policy and childhood studies. It will also be of interest to those with an interest in social theory and the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, among others.

hb 978-0-7190-8101-9 £60.00

pb 978-0-7190-8102-6 £14.99





ESAI ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Educational Research
in a Time of Transformation:
Insights, Influences and Impacts**

UCC & River Lee Hotel Cork

29th–31st March 2012

This year's ESAI conference theme invites practitioners and researchers to reflect on and discuss the role played by educational research in this period of significant societal and systemic transformation.

It is perhaps something of an understatement to acknowledge that we are currently living through a period of social, economic and political transformation. At all levels of our society we are being forced to consider changes in how we organise key services and supports at a time when the overriding imperative is one of economic consolidation. Taken individually these changes are significant, taken as a group they are transformational.

Arguably the education sector has faced more challenges than most in recent times. Shrinking resources have seen staff numbers fall and core services diminish. External comment has called into question the value of much of what takes place at all levels of our education system, which in turn has seen a range of, at times radical changes proposed to address perceived as well as actual flaws. In this context educational research would seem to have a key role to play.

The entire education sector – and education for the profession – has witnessed a series of developments and proposals for change which have a potentially profound impact on policy and practice, from local to systemic level. These diverse developments offer a range of opportunities and challenges for practitioners, researchers and policy makers. They further highlight the need for a sound evidence-based approach to educational change as well as critical enquiry into underpinning philosophy, influences and potential impact, transformative or otherwise.

As well as experiencing change as external force acting upon the education sector, education itself can be an active player in the transformation and creation of the future. Education as transformation takes a radical, critical and questioning approach to society and to individual consciousness. It is pivotally placed to engage in new and deep analysis and to apply analysis from other disciplines to real world problems. Educational research draws on a wide range of research traditions and approaches and can contribute significantly to evidence-based thinking and decision making. In so doing it can also extend our idea of what counts as evidence and move beyond short-term thinking and acceptance of the status quo as inevitable.

The Educational Studies Association of Ireland invites submissions that address, both nationally and/or internationally, the broad theme of educational research in a time of transformation. Presenters are asked to consider the extent to which the work they are engaged in has already or has the potential to influence the current series of debates and developments relating to educational provision policy and practice. In practical terms this might involve:

- ◆ An examination of the extent to which the current economic and political context is shaping education development, innovation and change
- ◆ An examination of how educational research is influencing discourse in the areas of policy and practice across the whole range of educational provision
- ◆ An examination of the impact of research at a local, regional, national and transnational level
- ◆ A critique of the national and international influences on educational provision
- ◆ An analysis of the role of researchers and practitioners as translators of educational research for the wider community
- ◆ Speculative thinking to address possible transformative roles for educational research



With its broad theme, we hope that the conference can bring together educational professionals from a range of sectors and roles (e.g. researchers, policymakers, teachers, leaders...etc.) from Ireland and beyond to discuss these important educational questions.

Please note this year we will be using an online conference system to manage all paper submissions and registration.

Papers can be submitted at:

<http://ocs.sfu.ca/esai>

or

<http://www.esai.ie/conference2012>



**The closing date for
conference submissions
has been extended to:**

**Friday, 27th January
2012**

ESAI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2011/12

Dr. Josephine Boland, NUI, Galway

Dr. Delma Byrne, NUI, Maynooth (Hon Treasurer)

Mella Cusack, Trócaire/CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit (Newsletter Editor)

Dr. Dympna Devine, UCD (General Editor, *Irish Educational Studies*)

Dr. Tom Farrelly, IT Tralee

Dr. Conor Galvin, UCD

Paula Kinnarney, NUI, Maynooth (Hon Secretary)

Dr. Andrew Loxley, Trinity College Dublin

Dr. Rose Malone, NUI, Maynooth

Dr. Claire McAvinia, NUI, Maynooth (Webmaster)

Dr. Alan McCully, UU

Dr. Majella McSharry, DCU (Academic Coordinator, Annual Conference)

Dr. Joe O'Hara, DCU (President)

Prof. Marie Parker-Jenkins, UL

Mairin Wilson, Church of Ireland College of Education