



Educational Studies Association of Ireland

Cumann Léann Oideachais na hÉireann

Autumn 2004 Newsletter

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President's Letter

ESAI: 3 Decades of Contributions to Irish Education

ESAI will celebrate its 30th anniversary at its annual conference in Cork in March 2005. From the beginning it was clear that ESAI would make its mark on the Irish educational scene. The programme of the inaugural conference held at Galway in 1976 shows representation from primary, second and third levels. It listed speakers from North and South of the border. It featured a full programme, complete with, current sessions, running from Thursday evening to the Saturday afternoon at 5.30. It was a conference to compare with the best of what would follow across three decades of annual (and theme) conferences. Annual conference 2005 will give us an opportunity to visit the achievements of those

early years and the progress of the association since then. A call for papers for the conference accompanies this newsletter.

The association has achieved much as 30 years. The Association's publication, Irish Educational Studies, which started as conference proceedings has grown into a prestigious journal. Annual conference has become both a landmark and milestone in the progress of the academic year. In recognition of this the theme chosen for the 2005 conference is, "Celebrating Irish Educational Research: Retrospect and Prospect", offering a timely opportunity to revisit achievements of the past three decades and anticipate those of decades to come.

ESAI, through the editorial board of IES, also published an annual register of theses. While this went out of print

some years ago it has now been revised and is being published in electronic form through our new website. As part of our anniversary year project we also plan to web-publish the tables of contents of all past issues of IES. By this means important archive resources will be returned to the service of the academic community in Ireland. A fuller account of the developing website is included elsewhere in this newsletter.

Partnership, starting in an early ESAI relationship between what was then University College Galway and the New University of Ulster, has continued and blossomed in recent joint conferences organised with the NCCA and the Equality Authority. In February 2005 ESAI will collaborate with BERA in a SCoTENS supported conference on research capacity to be held in Dublin. In September 2005 the European Conference on Education and Research (ECER) will take place at UCD, Belfield, organised by UCD and supported by ESAI. We have a full and busy year ahead of us.

More immediately, a matter of particular interest to ESAI members will be the proposal to enter into a contract with the publishing house Taylor and Francis for the production and distri-

bution of our journal IES. This is an important step in the development of the Association. The Executive has decided that a full consultation of the membership should take place. To this end members will shortly receive comprehensive information on the proposal along with details of the consultation process. You can read more of this proposal elsewhere in this newsletter.

Finally, the executive is conducting review of the ESAI constitution. The primary intention for the review is to regularise anomalies which have grown up over time. It is also intended to make provision for future developments within the association. The involvement of the membership is central to the success of ESAI. Your comments on present progress as well as suggestions for future developments are always welcome. We look forward to hearing from you.

Denis Bates
President ESAI

Editorial

Finally—a newsletter. Just when you thought you might never see one, and this one is filled with news and information about current and possible future activities within the Educational

Studies Association of Ireland. And these changes are coming at a time of much change within Irish education.

In addition to the OECD report on third-level education, the activation of the Teaching Council, and a new Minister of Education and Science (who is very welcome to the fray!), the changes occurring in the ESAI are important for a number of reasons. Some of these are detailed within.

Activities of *Irish Educational Studies* are detailed on page 4 by Ciaran Sugrue. Key in this section is the work involved in making *IES* an internationally significant journal, while keeping open the doors for publication of new researchers. This is, indeed, important work.

The ESAI website is moving in a very positive direction, and this is detailed by Josephine Boland on page 5. The work of Martin Ryan in shifting to an easy to remember site address (see bottom of page) means that visiting the site will not much easier for all ESAI members, and those outside of the ESAI (both in Ireland and internationally) to keep in touch.

Josephine stresses that your comments, suggestions and reports of problems are important, perhaps vital, to the ongoing development of the site—please do send these along!

Maeve O'Brien covers a recent symposium co-sponsored by the ESAI and the Equality Authority. Maeve's review captures the quality of the symposium, of the keynote speakers, of dialogue and the hope is that this symposium extends what is needed in defining a 'political imperative to educators to...help create a moral, equal and just society'. This sums up the feeling from the symposium quite well. This symposium was important, as well, as a continuation of work within the ESAI of working with other organisations and institutions. Contained herein are further links with EERA and BERA.

And, as Denis points out in the President's letter, the upcoming Annual Conference in Cork is an anniversary. Over the past 30 years, ESAI has been instrumental in helping define and imagine how education and schooling are seen in Ireland and from Ireland abroad. Where will ESAI be 30 years from now?

If you have futuristic ideas of how you would like to see ESAI evolve over the next 30 years, please send them for inclusion in the pre-conference newsletter. Think utopian!

Brian Donovan
donovanb@tcd.ie

Irish Educational Studies

As most members of the Association will know, there have been ongoing changes to the structure of the Editorial Board of Irish Educational Studies during the past number of years. In particular, three Co-editors have been appointed: Dr. Paul Conway (NUIC), Dr. Dympna Devine (UCD) and Dr. Emer Smyth (ESRI). This development was a precursor to providing three issues of the Journal per annum, whereby each Co-editor takes responsibility for the production of a particular issue of each volume. It is probably true to say that the extent of these new responsibilities were under-estimated by the team and its administrative support. However, the challenges have not diminished our commitment to making a success of these new departures. Yes, we are behind in terms of meeting our commitments to the membership, but plans are at an advanced stage to rectify this in the immediate future. You will receive an Issue of the Journal before the end of November 2004, and another issue will be available for distribution to members before Christmas. On behalf of the Editorial Board, I apologise for these unavoidable delays.

Other changes to the structure of the Editorial Board, all of which have been indicated in various issues of the Journal, include the addition of Associate editors, to lend a greater international perspective to the Journal. The names of these Associates have been listed at the beginning of the Journal, and include three categories of educators/researchers: from the Island of Ireland, members of the Irish Diaspora and scholars with an international reputation. It will be necessary at the AGM in 2005 to amend the ESAI constitution appropriately to take cognisance of these changes, all of which have been designed to enhance the quality, reputation and 'reach' of IES.

In the past few year also, Editorial Policy has been drafted (for the first time) and central to this policy is a commitment to nurturing new and emergent writers for the Journal. The Editorial Board and the Executive have been discussing various means by which this commitment can be given practical application, to the extent that, in future, annual conferences will make specific provision in this regard.

Over the past few years also, the Editorial Board and the Executive have dis-

cussed various possibilities regarding the publication and distribution of the Journal. The former was instructed at the 2004 AGM to pursue these possibilities further. Other developments are also under active consideration by the Executive. In the very near future, the Executive will be communicating with members directly regarding a future publishing partnership arrangement. The Editorial Board, as well as the Executive, has worked hard over the past 12 months in particular to bring this possibility to fruition. The Board and the Executive are excited by the possibilities it offers for the Journal, the Association and its members. We are convinced also that this partnership will enhance the Journal in several respects, while there is ongoing commitment also to maintaining its traditions and those of the Association.

Finally, on a practical note, papers for possible publication in the Journal are most welcome, and may be submitted at any time. Papers from different research traditions are encouraged, and your paper will be all the more welcome if you are new or relatively new to publishing, while papers from established authors are welcome also. They should be addressed to: Ms Siobhán Nolan (IES Administrator),

C/o Resource Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Notes for authors etc. can be accessed on the ESAI website. Information regarding publication is available also inside the back cover of each issue of the Journal. It will greatly expedite the review and publication process if authors adhere strictly to the specified requirements.

Ciaran Sugrue
(General Editor, IES).

Website developments

The Executive is pleased to announce a significant development plan for the ESAI website which aims to make it a valuable, user-friendly resource for members. For a range of reasons, the original ESAI website had rather fallen behind the times both in content and presentation and we are committed to bringing it up to date and presenting a professional public face for ESAI on the international stage of the www. The Executive, with help from our new Webmaster, Martin Ryan, has set about improving matters and results are beginning to come through.

Our new address

The ESAI website address till now, (<http://homepage.eircom.net/~esai/>)

seemed to lack a certain poetic ring – or at least wasn't easy to remember! A new, easy to remember domain name has been registered as www.esai.ie

Much remains to be done but some significant improvements have been made already:

- The Register of Theses, one of the most useful features of the site, has been revamped. A cumulative register is now available in addition to the year-by-year format. The site also provides searchable versions suitable for *Excel* and *Filemaker Pro* users. Other formats may be provided if demand exists. Work is proceeding to update the register itself from the records of all Irish higher education institutions.
- Up-dated information on forthcoming ESAI conferences will be posted as soon as it is available.
- Out-of-date material has been removed from the existing site – and safely archived where necessary.
- Facilities for feedback to the Webmaster have been provided.
- Contact information, links to sister organisations etc. have been updated.
- The site will soon be hosted on the National Centre for Technology in Education web server at Dublin City University. This will greatly improve the development potential for the site.

Plans in the pipeline include:

- A major revamp of the site appearance and general functionality.
- Getting the Register of Theses up-to-date. A comprehensive and up-to-date register is an essential resource for educational researchers. We depend on Education Departments for details on theses completed each year. The database can now be searched by institution name – you can see a full listing for your department. You might encourage whoever in your department has responsibility for this to forward an up-to date listing of theses to our President, Denis Bates.
- Provision of online search facilities for the Register of Theses
- Compilation of a database of Tables of Contents of Irish Education Studies.
- Incorporation of suggestions from members.

Your comments on the site as it evolves, suggestions for improvements and reports of problems encountered (particularly with unusual browser versions or settings) are all welcome by email to esaipost@eircom.net.

Add www.esai.ie to your *Favourites* list and visit regularly!

Josephine Boland, Oct 2004

ESAI and Equality Authority Joint Symposium

The joint symposium organised by ESAI and the Equality Authority last September in Herbert Park Hotel was a seminal and stimulating event for those involved in Irish education. The keynote speaker on the opening evening Professor Kathleen Lynch, Chair of Equality Studies at UCD, gave an in depth analysis of the contexts of in/equality which enable or constrain people in their capacity to participate and benefit from education as it is currently organised in our society. She focused on issues of resources and distribution, recognition of differences and identities, and politics and power in schools. She commented on the deeply authoritarian nature of Irish society and how that is played out in the field of education. The issue of emotional well being and relationships was a central consideration in pointing us on the road to equality.

The keynote from Dr. Mike Cole was concerned with strategies for promoting equality in our schools and educational institutions. It debated the kinds of understandings that teachers need to develop in order to do this equality work. Attitudes and prejudices of

teachers were identified as major barriers to understanding issues of equality and to promoting an egalitarian culture in educational institutions.

The workshop sessions following directly after the keynotes enabled those in attendance to respond to the material presented. There were lively debates in the workshops and the guiding questions for the groups gave participants an opportunity to reflect and share their own experiences of inequality. The questions also guided workshop participants to move towards outlining guiding principles for achieving equality in education.

The final plenary session was a lively question and answer session covering a wide range of issues that were raised by the keynotes and in the workshops; including pedagogic practice, teacher education, the impact of traditional forms of assessment and the relations of production between schooling and inequality.

The closing presentation delivered by Dr. Anne Lodge was an insightful, tight and challenging summation of the workshop discussions provided by the group rapporteurs. Her summation highlighted the key equality issues that arose in the small groups; the issue of difference and how this can be recognised and respected in education, the

problem of distribution of resources within the system, and the challenge to understand and tackle issues pertaining to inequalities in participation by socially disadvantaged and disempowered groups.

This symposium was a unique event for ESAI, it offered not just an academic forum for understanding current equality debates but also contained a political imperative to educators to engage more deeply with the educational processes that can help create a moral equal and just society.

Maeve O'Brien

EERA 2005

The annual conference of EERA, the ECER, will take place in Dublin at UCD Belfield from September 7th to 10th. The preconference for postgraduate education researchers will take place on September 5th & 6th, 2005

ESAI is pleased to be associated with UCD in hosting what is a major European education event. Attendances at the ECER are usually of the order of 1,000 participants with representation from across the entire European Union and beyond. The working language of the ECER is English. ESAI members will be entitled to discount rates for attendance as ESAI is now an affiliated member of EERA. Log on to the EERA website for more information at, www.eera.ac.uk The ESAI website, www.esai.ie, will also carry news and updates on this and other developments of interest.

Calendar of Events in Irish Education: 2005

February 2005:

10th-12th: UCD: **University and Society: From Newman to Market**
(see: http://www.ucd.ie/150/human_info.htm)
18th & 19th: ESAI/BERA: **Theme Conference** (see page 9)

March 2005:

10th-12th: ESAI **Annual Conference** (see Call for Papers on page 10)

September 2005:

5th & 6th: EERA/ **European Conference on Education and Research**
University College, Dublin.

EERA

ESAI has now formally affiliated to the European Education Research Association (EERA). EERA is a federation of European research associations rather than a collective of individual members. For ESAI members, affiliation with EERA means access to:

- a European network of education research associations
- a network of European wide education researchers
- the EERA online journal (available at www.triangle.co.uk/EERJ)
- discount rates for attendance at EERA events such as ECER (Dublin 2005)

The accession by further member states to the European union in May 2004 has greatly enlarged the community of European educators working within a common educational framework of influence. ESAI has affiliated to EERA at a significant moment in the development of European education. We look forward to making our own contribution to that development.

Joint ESAI & BERA conference

ESAI has been developing a closer working relationship with the British Education Research Association (BERA) over recent years. A practical expression of this cooperation is the organisation of a joint conference to take place in Dublin on Friday and Saturday February 18th & 19th 2005.

The conference theme is, "Building Research Capacity North and South". It will focus on issues of research capacity, initially in the North and South

of Ireland and then within the broader European context.

A major discussion is taking place across Europe especially amongst policy makers and key research funding agencies as to what constitutes 'good' research. This can be a fraught point as the ideological vies with the politically pragmatic for primacy. Local, national and international considerations also contest the available space for funded education research. These issues will form part of the broader framework of discussion and debate at this theme conference.

International keynote speakers will include:

- Professor Tom Schuller, head of the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation.
- Professor Gareth Rees, Cardiff School of Social Sciences

Other speakers will be announced on final confirmation of the conference programme.

This event is being generously supported by SCoTENS

Venue North Dublin
Dates Friday February 18th & Saturday February 19th 2005
Note that the conference will start late morning on Friday 18th.

ESAI Annual Conference 2005: Call for Papers

**Celebrating Educational Research in
Ireland:**

Retrospect and Prospect

University College Cork

10th – 12th March 2005

The ESAI annual conference will take place at University College Cork from Thursday March 10th to Saturday March 12th. The theme for this 30th anniversary conference is, “Celebrating Educational Research in Ireland: Retrospect and Prospect”. Occupying as it does such a significant moment in the history of the Association the conference will provide an opportunity for looking back on a time of considerable change in Irish education.

Contributors will be encouraged to explore the relevance of the theme to their chosen topics. We hope that it will be an especially memorable event and look forward to your participation in it.

Deadline for the submission of abstracts of papers, poster presentations and symposia is **17th December 2004**.

Application forms available on the website address: www.esai.ie