
ESAI Newsletter

Autumn / Winter 1999

President's Letter

Dear Colleagues,

Our forthcoming Conference on Teacher Education 'Educating the Educators' will take place in the Church of Ireland College on Friday evening 26 November, and Saturday morning 27 November next.

The context for this theme conference is one of very rapid educational change, of curricular reviews and of reviews of teacher education. The Educational Studies Association of Ireland is contributing to the current debate on teacher education by setting the debate within a comparative international context, and by creating a forum wherein many of the key issues can be aired.

On Friday evening the keynote presentations will be by:

Professor Maureen Hallinan

Director of the Center for Educational Initiatives
University of Notre Dame

"New Developments in Teacher Education in the United States"

and

Professor John Coolahan
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

"Teacher Education in Ireland and Europe: a Comparative Analysis"

On Saturday morning four themes will be explored in nine Work Groups:

1. Models for Teacher Education
2. The Role of Schools in Teacher Education
3. Educating Teachers for Change –
 - (i) Knowledge and the Curriculum;
 - (ii) Pupil Diversity

4. Teacher Education for Life-long Learning –
 - (i) Professional Development of Teachers;
 - (ii) Adult and Community Education;
 - (iii) Pre-primary

Each Work Group will be led by two distinguished animateurs, who will each

open with a short presentation on the theme in question.

The animateurs are:

Mr John Anderson, DENI
Mr Sydney Blain, CICE
Dr Peter Conroy, TCD
Dr Francis Douglas, UCC

Dr Joseph Dunne, SPD
Ms Ann FitzGibbon, TCD

Prof. Tony Gallagher, QUB

Mr Finbar Geaney, Col. Dhulaigh

Mr John Hammond, NCCA

Ms Claire Healy, DIT
Mr Donald Herron, Dub. West Ed. Centre

Prof. Áine Hyland, UCC
Dr Máirín Kenny, Consultant

Mr Raymond King, IPPA

Prof. John Marshall, NUIG

Ms Mary McGlynn, NAPD

Dr Margaret Reynolds, Stranmillis

Dr Michael Shevlin, TCD

The aims of this conference are:

- To provide an international framework for the exploration of issues

- relating to teacher education in Ireland
- To provide a forum within which parties with an interest in teacher education may debate the issues
 - To open up the discussion of appropriate professional formation of educators in the "non-traditional" (in Ireland at least) sectors of education - i.e. pre-primary and adult and community, in order to widen the debate on teacher education
 - To encourage and facilitate debate and mutual understanding between the different sectors and groups

We look forward to seeing you at the Conference. Please book in advance as places are limited.

Yours sincerely,

Sheelagh Drudy
Education Dept., NUIM

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Editorial

I would like to open with an apology for not having been able to contact all of the colleges regarding news for the Bulletin Board this Autumn.

I have moved jobs, leaving Equality Studies in UCD and moving to take up a post-doctoral fellowship in U.L. and M.I.C. Setting up of new emails, telephones, etc. can be a slow process. To add to all of this confusion I also moved house and have been tripping over builders and debris for the last few months. So my sincerest apologies to any college who was not contacted for news and I promise to rectify the situation in the Spring issue!!

And in equal measure I would like to thank everyone who I have bullied and brow-beaten into contributing to this issue!!!

The new email contact for the Newsletter Editor is:
esainews@eircom.ie
and telephone contact is:
(087) 696 2293

Please direct any postal queries, information, etc. to:
Dr. Anne Lodge
Dept. of Government and Society,
University of Limerick

The deadline for receipt of news and other information

for the Spring issue of the Newsletter is **Friday 11th February**. This means that on Monday 14th February, you can all begin to expect valentine messages from the Newsletter Editor.....

Anne Lodge

Dept. Of Govt & Society,
U.L. / Education Dept.,
Mary Immaculate College
of Education

Book Review

Review of *Gender Equality in Classroom Interaction*

S. Drudy and M. Uí Chatháin (1999) Dept. of Education, NUI Maynooth

Gender Equality in Classroom Interaction written by Sheelagh Drudy and Máire Uí Chatháin is a very welcome addition to the literature on gender and classroom dynamics, particularly in the Irish context where empirical findings have been scarce. One of the most interesting aspects of this literature is how little the research findings have changed in the last twenty-five years. International findings during that time have shown quite consistently that female and male pupils in mixed-sex classrooms have significantly different experiences of classroom interaction, even in

classrooms where teachers are well-disposed to the question of equal opportunities.

Understandings of these different experiences have been situated within various theoretical frameworks and are well known but, apart from sporadic intervention projects aimed at achieving greater balance in classroom interaction, little enough appears to have changed. In the Irish situation, this apparent stasis has occurred within a context of substantial change in participation rates, curricular provision and choice, attainment levels, school restructuring, and an increase in the number of mixed-sex schools.

This latest publication provides further and compelling evidence that “by comparison with boys, girls have a relatively unequal experience in the classroom in terms both of the quantity, and of the quality, of their interactions” (p39). Findings are presented from student teachers’ analyses of gender differences in their classroom interaction, using a modified form of the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System (FIAC). The number of classrooms included in this study was very high by international standards and a total of 32,883 interactions were

analysed. The research framework was also enhanced by the wide range of subject areas taught by the student teachers, in contrast with many international studies which have tended to focus on maths/ science classrooms.

Observations were broken down into eight categories: praise/ reinforcement; acceptance of pupil response/ ideas; questions (higher and lower order cognitive); criticisms; answers (higher and lower order cognitive); and pupil initiations. Mean interactions for each of the categories were significantly higher for male than for female pupils. In short, girls were involved consistently less often in classroom interactions than were boys. The difference was particularly marked for the category “criticism” (although the level of criticisms in the student-teachers’ classrooms was very low), thus supporting research undertaken elsewhere.

Student-teachers’ rationalisations for findings of gender-differentiated interaction patterns in their classrooms ranged through explanations which focused on the behaviour of boys (45%), the behaviour of teachers (24%), the behaviour of girls (14%) and gender

imbalance in the class (9%). Personal feelings reported about the patterns observed were largely a reaction to the observation of male dominance in the classroom. These feelings were expressed in such terms as “amazed”, “completely unaware”, “shocked”, and “appalled”. Although explanations offered tended to focus on male pupils’ behaviour in the classroom, the majority of remediation strategies identified focused on teacher behaviour such as addressing the “gender imbalance” and “more praise”.

There is much else of note in this study and it merits wide dissemination, not just in initial teacher education pro-grammes but also in ongoing professional development pro-grammes for teachers and among policy-makers and educators generally. In my own teaching on the Higher Diploma in Education programme, I have found this study to be of great interest and immediacy to student-teachers as well as a most effective means of stimulating inquiry into their own classroom interaction practices.

The study highlights the opportunities offered by action research for understanding and improving practice and indicates that change is

possible with awareness and action. It also highlights the extent to which action research can support reflection on practice among student-teachers.

Much research remains to be done in Ireland in the area of gender and classroom dynamics. The mediating effects of social class, pupils' prior achievement levels, teacher experience, school type etc. need consideration. In addition, many other features of classroom dynamics such as teacher awareness and expectation, teaching style, visual patterns, negative referencing, differentiated assessment, pupil-pupil interaction, bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) are worthy of consideration in this research context. The skewing effects of "target students" (a small group of students who dominate interactions with the teacher) are likely to be important in understanding overall patterns. Finally, findings on patterns of classroom dynamics in single-sex schools and groupings are also necessary in mapping this terrain.

Findings from *Gender Equality in Classroom Interaction* should be read in the light of other findings on mixed and single-sex schooling, particularly the findings

on attainment. Girls' overall attainment levels at the end of second-level schooling are greater than those of boys, a fact which raises interesting questions about boys' experiences of schooling as well as about the effects (if any) of demonstrated gender differences in classroom interaction on attainment. Most recently the ESRI study *Co-education and Gender Equality* presented evidence yet again of the relative underachievement in Maths of girls in mixed-sex schools compared with those in single-sex schools. More significantly perhaps, the implications of gender differences in classroom interaction in mixed-sex schools for non-attainment related areas, particularly areas of self-esteem and educational and occupational aspiration and expectation remain an area of concern.

Resistance to criticisms of mixed-sex schooling has generally been strong and, while this may derive from restructuring and rationalisation policies which have favoured mixed-sex schooling as well as from strongly-held beliefs about good education and socialisation practices, the findings on gender differences in classroom interaction have been too consistent and have gone

on too long to be ignored yet again. *Gender Equality in Classroom Interaction* underlines the need to problematise gender relations in mixed-sex schooling, to understand differentiated patterns of classroom interaction, to investigate the role of teachers and pupils in supporting these patterns, to consider and implement ways of creating greater balance in classroom interaction, and ultimately to find routes to shaping mixed-sex into more truly co-educational schools.

Joan Hanafin is Visiting Fellow at the Graduate School of Education, University of Western Australia. She is on sabbatical leave from University College Cork until January 2000.

The Revised Primary Curriculum: History

The revised primary curriculum sees history as encompassing two broad aspects, our interpretation of past events and the process by which this interpretation is constructed. Based on the idea of the child as historian, it promotes a methodological approach which is interactive and

child centred, providing opportunities for children to engage in a purposeful and critical way with a wide range of primary and secondary sources.

Central to this approach is the belief that children at primary level can begin to develop a critical understanding of the past, questioning how we know about past events, appreciating different perspectives and recognising how past events and their interpretation can influence the present. History is also seen as having an important role to play in developing attitudes of tolerance and respect for diversity, in promoting the understanding and appreciation of different cultures and traditions and in the development of positive attitudes towards heritage and environment.

Together with Geography and Science, history is taught as part of Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) an area of the curriculum which provides children with opportunities to investigate and explore all aspects of their environment. The history programme begins with a focus on personal and family history in the infant classes (a significant innovation in itself); children gradually expand their historical enquiry to include their

local, national and international communities.

The revised curriculum renews the emphasis on local studies which was a central (if neglected) aspect of the 1971 history curriculum. It promotes a holistic approach to the study of the local environment and the integration of geographical, historical and scientific perspectives. If realised in practice, Irish primary classrooms should become centres of historical investigation, debate and active reconstruction of the past, laying the foundations for an informed and critical citizenry of the future, a citizenry which respects difference, cherishes its heritage and questions received truths. Even more importantly, children will have fun doing it!

Fionnula Waldron lectures in SESE in St. Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra. She is one of the authors of *Time Traveller*.

Report Summary *Archaeological Features at Risk*

In the last thirty years, the Irish landscape has undergone substantial change. Much of this change has impacted on

the preservation of archaeological monuments. The first report to look into the extent of archaeological monument destruction in recent years - The Archaeological Features at Risk Project - was commissioned by the Heritage Council in co-operation with the Department of Archaeology, U.C.D. The report will be published by the Heritage Council before the end of the year.

Part of the project involved a study of rural people's attitudes towards, and knowledge of, archaeological monuments. With the help of many primary schools and local historical societies, a specially constructed questionnaire was distributed. Just under 1,000 completed questionnaires were returned.

Among other things respondents were asked how they would treat an archaeological monument on their land. They were asked to choose from a list of options ranging from removal of the monument to no interference of any kind. In addition they were also asked whether they had ever attended any courses or talks on an archaeological or historical theme.

Attendance at these historical / archaeological courses or talks appears to have had an impact on attitudes in two ways. Firstly, twice as many of those who reported having attended a talk/ course on an historical or archaeological theme, compared with those who had not, stated that they would have an archaeological monument on their land excavated by an archaeologist. Secondly, again almost twice as many stated that they would investigate the monument them-selves using a metal detector, an illegal activity. The question that appears to arise from these findings is whether the nature of this historical and archaeological 'education' being presented to people at present is contributing to the ongoing damage and destruction of monuments?

Archaeology (and to a lesser extent history) have most commonly been presented to the public for educational and other purposes through a focus on a limited number of iconographic objects such as round towers, high crosses and stone forts, and prestigious objects such as the Ardagh chalice and gold jewellery. As a consequence of this type of presentation, people can develop an awareness of archaeological monuments, but only on their

potential to house valuable objects, with little regard for the actual monuments themselves.

Legislation alone cannot, and has not, prevented the ongoing destruction of archaeological monuments in Ireland. Clearly there is a need to develop a greater sense of ownership and awareness of the past and a pride in the co-existence of an archaeological landscape within the modern one. Education needs to play a part in the fight against this ongoing damage and destruction. However, great care in how this is brought about is clearly of utmost importance.

David O'Connor,
Archaeology Dept.,
U.C.D.

“The Archaeological Features at Risk Part 2” Report was co-authored by Dr. Muiris O’Sullivan, David O’Connor and Laurence Kennedy. It is due to be launched before the end of this year.

Conference Report

ILSA (Irish Learning Support Association) Conference 23-25th September 1999.

Theme: Learning
Support: Challenging Teachers
Venue: N.U.I. Maynooth

The 25th Annual Conference of the Irish Learning Support Association addressed the theme of Learning Support: Challenging Teachers.

The keynote address was given by Dr. Maeve Martin (N.U.I. Maynooth) on the very topical issue of literacy within the context of school and society. This challenging presentation emphasised the personal and societal cost of illiteracy, outlined current research on school approaches and recommended teaching strategies in relation to tackling literacy difficulties. The conference consisted of presentations designed to disseminate a combination of practical classroom interventions and current research in relation to learning difficulties experienced by a substantial number of pupils in mainstream education. The LEARN

journal produced annually by the Irish Learning Support Association provides a valuable resource for practising teachers and researchers involved in special education. The journal is available from ILSA, c/o Drumcondra Education Centre, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

Michael Shevlin
Education Dept., T.C.D.

College Bulletin Board

**Education Dept.,
Maynooth**

Aidan Mulkeen

Research and
Publications:

Gender Equality in Classroom Interaction
A major study of the gender patterns in classroom interaction was completed by Dr Sheelagh Drudy and Dr Maire Ui Cathain. This is published as "*Gender Equality in Classroom Interaction*" Sheelagh Drudy and Maire Ui Cathain, Maynooth Department of Education 1999.

**Mary Immaculate
College of Education**

Aine Cregan

New Appointments:
New Acting Head of
Education: Jim Deegan

Reports / Publications:
Marty Holland (1999) *An Investigation of the School Experiences of Young People in North Tipperary who left School Early*
Thurles: Mol an Oige

Frank Flanagan *An Evaluation of the Moyross Intervention Pilot Project Executive Reports*

comprising:

"Evaluation of the Management of the Project" by Diarmaid O' Donnabhain, Shannon Curriculum Development Centre;

"Evaluation of Curriculum Change" by Dr. Francis Douglas and Ms. Mai Sammon, Education Dept, U.C.C.

"Analysis of Statistical Data" by Dr. John Breen, U.L.

"Introduction" by Project Chairman, Dr. Frank M. Flanagan, Education Dept., MIC.

The report will be launched at Corpus Christi National School on a date to be announced.

**Education Department,
QUB**

Tony Gallagher

All information regarding the School of Education, QUB is available on our new website at:

www.qub.ac.uk/edu/

**Equality Studies Centre,
U.C.D.**

Anne Lodge

Recent Publications:

Commission on the Points System Research Paper No. 4 *Points and Performance in Higher Education: A Study of the Predictive Validity of the Points System*

Kathleen Lynch, Teresa Brannick, Pat Clancy, Sheelagh Drudy, with assistance of Anne Carpenter & Mark Murphy (June 1999)

Dublin: Stationery Office

Non-Completion in Higher Education: A Study of 1st Year Students in Three Institutes of Technology
Margaret Healy, Anne Carpenter, Kathleen Lynch (1999)

I.T. Carlow; Dundalk I.T.; I.T. Tralee

Equality and Education
Kathleen Lynch (1999)
Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

**Education Department,
U.C.C.**

Pat Naughton

'Supporting Young People to Stay in School' - A Symposium took place in UCC on Saturday 6 November 1999. Speakers included Patricia Leon Agusti, who has been a leader in the provision of education to poor children in Bogota, Columbia, and has been a visiting scholar at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

**Education Dept.,
University of Limerick**

Jim Gleeson, Janet Moody

Recent Publications:

Book chapter Gleeson, J. (In press). A social partnership: The European Union and Irish vocational education and training. In D. R. Herschbach & C. P. Campbell (Eds.), Workforce preparation: An international perspective. Ann Arbor, MI: Prakken.

Evaluation Report Gleeson J, Conboy P, and Walshe, A, External Evaluation Report on 'Exploring Masculinities', submitted to Department of Education and Science.

Journal article Leonard D. and Gleeson J (1999), Context and coherence in initial teacher education in Ireland: the place of reflective inquiry, Journal of Teacher Development, Volume 3, Number 1.

New member of staff:

A key part of Janet Moody's work is related to the internet and she has developed some websites for University of Limerick students:

Classroom management web, an interactive web with four main sections: preparedness, preventive management, supportive management, pupil misbehaviour. Allows students the possibility to give their own opinions and to see the opinions of others.

<http://inset.ul.ie/cm>

Teacher Web: an introduction to the web, including sections on the web as a professional resource, the web in the classroom, the web in Irish schools

<http://inset.ul.ie/tw>

The Web - including Tips for beginners - learning to use the web efficiently designed for Year 1 students (also used with postgraduate students eg guidance counselling students)

<http://inset.ul.ie/en4002et>

**Dun Laoghaire Institute
of Art, Design and
Technology (DLIADT)**

Marion Palmer

Website address:
www.iadt-dl.ie

DLIADT Science Education

The programme of short courses for teachers in primary science and science at second level is up and running. Four courses have started. Margaret Horner has devised and is teaching one of the primary science courses for the Institute on a part-time basis. Margaret has been teaching science in a primary school for a number of years.

The Institute has collaborated with the STI Awareness Programme and the INTO to develop materials for Primary Science Day which takes place on Friday 12 November during Science Week. Five hundred schools are piloting the project which is on the theme of temperature. Each pilot school will receive appropriate thermometers and teaching materials and are asked to use them. This is a new initiative of the STI Awareness Programme and we look forward to the response of the schools and the evaluation of the project.