

# ESAI Newsletter November 2000

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## President's Letter

With the new academic year "up and running," it is time to look back at what ESAI has achieved in the last few months, and also to look forward to what we hope to achieve in the near future.

The Annual Conference in Maynooth last April was most enjoyable. Our thanks are due to two groups of people: those who participated in the academic work of the conference (submitting and reading papers, chairing sessions, attending and contributing to discussion, and so forth) and those who saw to the practicalities (working behind the scenes or at the registration desk to make all the academic activity possible). When so many were involved, naming names is somewhat invidious. However, one name stands out: that of Sheelagh Drudy. The conference was Sheelagh's swansong as President of ESAI, and she contributed greatly both at the academic and at the practical level. She has now gone on to higher things as Professor of Education at UCD, and we wish her the very best of luck. Now I am trying to fill the shoes which - metaphorically - feel rather big for me! However, we have an excellent team to carry on the good work.

The new team played its first match, so to speak, when educators from the North and the South gathered at the conference held in Belfast in May. Margaret Reynolds and I, in our roles a Vice-President and President, used the opportunity to market the Association. We were helped by the fact that Aine Hyland, who was one of the two keynote speakers, made frequent references in her paper to the Proceedings of our 1999 theme conference on Teacher Education. Our previous theme conference-on Action Research-also bore fruit during the summer; the proceedings are now encapsulated in a book which was launched at another Action Research conference, held at DCU in

June. I was invited to speak on behalf of ESAI at the opening of the conference, and had great pleasure in congratulating Jean McNiff, Gerry McNamara and Diarmuid Leonard on the handsome volume which they had produced.

We hope that our forthcoming theme conference, advertised elsewhere in the Newsletter, will be as productive as its predecessors. In particular, we see it leading into the Annual Conference, which is being hosted by Mary Immaculate College next April. Both, in different ways, will address issues of needs and rights. The theme has an obvious importance, which we hope will draw appropriately large crowds to Drumcondra in December and to Limerick in April.

Reference to large crowds leads me on to mention membership. One of the first pieces of advice I received, on taking over as President, was that it might be timely to start another membership drive; and the drive is now under way. (Thank you, John Coolahan!) Inevitably the Newsletter preaches to the converted, but perhaps readers would persuade their colleagues that they too have much to give to ESAI and (hopefully) much to get from it. We shall do our best to provide a good service.

Among the developments envisaged is the improvement of our website (thanks, this time, to Aidan Mulkeen). In particular, we hope eventually to upgrade the Register of Theses to facilitate appropriate searching. We also aim to put up research summaries, in collaboration with ARC (Applying Research in the Classroom) in Northern Ireland. Other ideas which might improve our site will be welcomed!

With best wishes

Elizabeth Oldham President, ESAI

## **Editorial**

Many thanks, as always, to all contributors to this edition.

It must appear to some contributors that the Newsletter Editor moves location on an annual basis primarily to confuse them. The editor can now be found in the Education Department, NUI Maynooth; revised contact details are listed below. For those who want to submit material to the newsletter, post to:

Anne Lodge  
Education Dept.,  
NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare  
Email: Anne.Lodge@may.ie  
phone: (01) 708 3742

Please note also that an electronic copy of the newsletter can be accessed via the ESAI website: [homepage.eircom.net/~esai](http://homepage.eircom.net/~esai)

The closing date for receipt of material for the Spring 2001 Newsletter will be Friday 16th February 2001. So expect the intimidating emails and threatening phone calls from me demanding newsletter material to commence around about the same date!!

Anne Lodge, ESAI Newsletter Editor

## **The Exploring Masculinities debate**

In recent weeks, there have been a number of controversial media articles regarding the Exploring Masculinities programme. Many of these have expressed negative views on the programme, and some have been outright derogatory. One journalist went so far as to label the programme a "doss-class" and call for its immediate withdrawal. The debate around Exploring Masculinities attacks more than the notion that boys in single-sex schools should have the opportunity to critically examine the ways in which masculine identity is experienced and expressed.

Labeling an educational programme such as this as a "doss" calls into question the value of educational programmes for personal and social development. The Transition Year programme (within which Exploring Masculinities operates) is unequivocal and unapologetic in emphasising students' personal development and social development as key educational aims. The formal timetabling of classes to address issues such as masculinity is one concrete manifestation of the Transition Year programme in action. Despite being mainstreamed in 1994, there is still considerable misunderstanding about Transition Year programmes. The freedom given to individual schools to select and adapt curriculum content is such a radical departure from traditional practice, that some people are understandably uncomfortable with that level of autonomy.

Gerry Jeffers, Education Department, NUI Maynooth. Gerry was Head of the Transition Year Support Team until August of this year.

## **Book Review**

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

In *Equality in Education* Kathleen Lynch and her colleagues have written an encyclopedic treatment of educational equality and inequality in Ireland.

This valuable book is diverse in its methods and substantive concerns, though insistently cohesive in its normative commitments. It opens with a synthetic survey and analysis of the various research and normative approaches to inequality, from empirical sociology to feminist and post-modern approaches, and from minimal liberalism to radical egalitarianism. This clear-eyed review of the literature informs every subsequent chapter, with Lynch and her colleagues setting demanding standards for education research, policy and practice. They challenge the equal opportunity liberalism that dominates much of educational inquiry and policy, arguing that giving individuals opportunity for mobility within an increasingly stratified society fails to confront the injustice of stratification itself, and thus betrays our avowed commitments to equality in education.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the book is its success in weaving together theoretical sophistication, normative commitment, and fully developed empirical descriptions of the educational experiences of real people in Ireland. Chapter after chapter presents and analyzes the experiences and observations of younger and older children, third level students, women in their communities, mature students seeking educational access and training, and disadvantaged people across the spectrum of Irish life. Lynch and her colleagues have worked hard to treat these people as collaborators in their research, and to let them speak in their own voices. They leave no doubt that children, for example, recognize and understand inequality among and within schools. Our

own understanding is in turn enriched by hearing students themselves say things like 'I think all students should be treated equally by teachers. If you're not very clever, the teachers shouldn't embarrass you in front of your classmates; they should help you with your problems and not make you feel stupid in class.' [p. 227]

Lynch and her colleagues also work hard to reach beyond description and analysis into concrete policy. They recognize that movement toward even basic equality requires substantial and difficult educational and social change, but argue that everyone shares a responsibility to advocate explicit and concrete reform proposals. For example, they show how childcare costs bar many low-income mothers from higher education, and press for policies to remove the barrier. This is no ivory tower book.

In short, this ambitious and excellent work deserves readership far beyond Ireland, and from readers in all disciplines.

David Menefee-Libey is Associate Professor of Politics, Pomona College Claremont, California USA. He was visiting Fulbright Professor, Department of Government and Society University of Limerick 1999 - 2000

## **Conference Reviews**

### ***"Education for the 21st Century: Prospect and Retrospect"* *Educational Studies Association of Ireland Annual Conference***

NUI Maynooth, April 13th - 15th, 2000

As a first time attendee at this year's Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) conference, the approach of this reviewer was one of heightened anticipation. The title of the conference, 'Education for the 21st Century: Prospect and Retrospect', was enough to invite all participants to look simultaneously backward and forward. But was it sufficient to also welcome all participants to look inward as well as outward?

Opening the conference, outgoing ESAI President, Sheelagh Drudy commented that the goal of education was the fostering of 'reflective, analytical and critical' individuals. Is it possible that these three words might have been guidelines or signposts for the conference? A question posed at the session was 'how prepared and capable are schools of education in Ireland today in regards to helping make such teachers' as can prepare students to be 'reflective, analytical and critical'? This is a question all educators must be willing and able to ask and answer with respect to their own practise as well as to any theory and research.

There were stimulating sessions (limited only by the characteristic human weakness of not possessing bi-locationality) Friday and Saturday and some comments follow on those attended by this participant.

Donal Mulcahy presented a paper on Friday morning on the writings of American educationalist, Jane Roland Martin. Highlighting the relevance of her theories as we enter the new century, Mulcahy organised his paper around Martin's advocacy of the 3Cs: care, concern and connection. His goal in this paper was to introduce into educational dialogue the ideas of someone who, in Mulcahy's view, was, 'strangely muted'. One wonders of other alternative voices which may be 'muted' within both schools of education as well as public debate on education.

At a later presentation on Friday morning, first Rose Malone, and then Áine Cregan and Anne Lodge explored education and poverty from different perspectives. Malone offered her experiences of time spent with the CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit, introducing poverty-related issues into the secondary curriculum. This was followed up by Cregan and Lodge presenting overviews of policy provision in Ireland in the area of poverty at the primary level. As Lodge has started post-doctoral work at the Limerick-based Centre for Educational Disadvantage Research (CEDR) it was illuminating that the audience was informed of 316 (primary) schools in Ireland are labelled 'disadvantaged' which totals 10% of all schools and 16% of all students. Perhaps it is time to re-state the current economic 'boom' and the so-called, 'Celtic Tiger' in more appropriate terms to take those 16% of students into more direct account.

On Friday afternoon, there was a lively symposium titled, 'Education for a New Ireland'. With contributions from Áine Hyland, Joanna McMinn and Donal Mulcahy opening the symposium, there followed active dialogue and critique among and between members of the audience and the panel. One was only left with the hope that future conferences might allow more time for that dialogue and critique to be fleshed out.

Friday evening was occasion for a banquet, but this 'starving student' had insufficient funds to attend...hopefully next year will see his financial status change.

Saturday continued the presentations. Saturday morning saw, for this reviewer, one of the most interesting of sessions. Margaret Reynolds spoke of the challenge of establishing 'values education' within Northern Ireland. The obvious question of 'whose values?' were only the starting point of a fascinating exchange of questions and dialogue which followed: introduced were practical problems of introducing values and ethics, along with theorists such as Jürgen Habermas and Richard Kearney. This is only reflection the high standard of the discourse at all other conferences sessions.

Finally, Joan Hanafin presented her study of academic development as practised in Western Australia, and offered suggestions for further work which might be pursued in an Irish context. There are efforts being made in this vital area of promoting future academics, and this should be encouraged throughout Ireland.

As this review is brief, it necessarily omits reference to many other valuable sessions attended by this reviewer, and others which could not be attended. The feeling however was one of satisfaction at the participation of those attending, and the level of discussion.

Two issues which remain prominent for this reviewer are: 1) how might others involved in education, those practising educators at all levels as well as those studying education at varying levels, become more engaged with the ESAI?, and 2) is there real space and scope within the ESAI for critique of Irish education such that seeks to make the connection between educational studies (or theory) and educational work (practise) stronger and more explicit?

Those two issues can only be answered by future conferences, future engagement within the EASI, and by encouraging other, non- or under-represented educators to participate. Maybe this would help us all towards becoming 'reflective, analytical and critical': personally and socially.

Brian Donovan is completing a Masters in Education in Trinity College, Dublin.

**"Crocodiles and Crockery: red beans and rice"**  
**American Educational Research Association conference,**  
New Orleans, 22nd - 29th April 2000

Not the official title of this year's AERA conference, but when in New Orleans, as the natives say: "laissez les bon temps rouler!!" and roll they did! Nearly 12,000 educational researchers, practitioners, policy-analysts and academics from all parts of the globe descended on this charming French-speaking city for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

The conference included more than 1,000 papers and symposium sessions, training activities, invited presentations, graduate student seminars, dialogues, poster sessions, round table discussions, school visits and receptions. All of these opportunities for discussion and debate were featured as part of the meeting theme "Creating Knowledge in the 21st century: insights from multiple perspectives". AERA's annual meetings have the potential to spawn inter-disciplinary thinking and collaboration, and are the major event in which people from a diverse array of educational arenas come together to share current work. The last meeting in New Orleans was no exception.

Ireland was well represented with an ESAI symposium entitled: "Power, politics and policies: continuity and change in Irish educational reform". Ciaran Sugrue's examined the theme with particular reference to primary education. Jim Gleeson examined the theme from a second-level perspective with an emphasis on educational reforms and post-primary curriculum. Jim's paper was drawn from his PhD research. Also drawing from PhD research findings, Marie Flynn's paper - looking at primary and second level - addressed the themes of power, politics and policies in the context of intelligence and inequality. Kathleen Lynch's paper explored the theme from a third level perspective. Her paper examined the role of the academy in realising equality and social justice. The symposium was followed with a stimulating discussion from the floor, chaired by Bob Stake, University of Illinois, and critiqued by Ivor Goodson, University of East Anglia. Other presentations from Ireland included an examination of school effectiveness with particular reference to academic outcomes among pupils. This round-table discussion was led by Emer Smyth. Also in a round table discussion, Maureen Killeavey's paper considered the relevance of the curriculum to second-level students. Anne Rath discussed her experiences of fostering reflective practice in a third level context.

New Orleans was an exceptional location for the conference. It is a city of great diversity, with its Old World charm, urban excitement, and rural tranquility. Following the hectic conference schedule, delegates could stroll through the non-stop carnival of Jackson Square, explore the contrasts of busy shops and restaurants, cool patios, and iron-laced balconies. The 92-square-block French quarter was a walking tour paradise. More than a few beignets, café au lait, muffuletta's, po-boy sandwiches, Dixie beers, sazerac cocktails, and crawfish etouffees were sampled. Such were the flavours, not even the glasses and plates survived! Leisure pursuits also included trips down the bayou, cuddling friendly crocs, and spell-binding narratives of plantation life. Others settled for red beans and rice, all to the beat of local-grown zydeco and jazz. So, for art, academia and antiques, music and cuisine and "a real good time by all", AERA 2000 in New Orleans was an unforgettable experience. Viens vite "Nawleans" 2002!

Marie Flynn is Assistant Director of St. Helen's Education Office, Clonkeen Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, and secretary of ESAI.

## ***European Conference on Educational Research Annual Conference Edinburgh, 20th - 23rd September, 2000***

The European Educational Research Association was founded in 1994, in order to encourage collaboration and communication amongst educational researchers and international governmental organisations in Europe. It held its annual conference in the University of Edinburgh this Autumn. Fifty-four countries were represented at this conference by 1,000 delegates and 800 presentations were offered.

The EERA Networks form the basis of the Annual Conference and almost all of the sessions belonged to one or other network. The range of networks in the organisation is impressive, twenty two in total, including: Vocational Education and Training, European Curriculum Research, Inclusive Education, Children and Youth at Risk, Cultural Diversity, Democracy, Social Justice and Intercultural Education, Teacher Education Research, Research Partnerships in Education, and ICT in Education and Training.

Presentations given by delegates from the Republic of Ireland included Dr Mona O Moore Education Department Trinity College Dublin who presented a joint paper entitled 'The Lives of Student Teachers', in the Teacher Education Research Session with Dr. Maureen Killeavy, Education Department, UCD. Dr Killeavy also presented a paper with two colleagues Professor Joan Stephenson, De Montfort University, England and Professor Vivienne Collinson, Michigan State University, USA, entitled 'Exemplary Teachers and their Ethic of Care; Origins and Outcomes: pointers for teacher education?' based on their research in this area in the US, UK and Republic of Ireland. Dr Marie Clarke, Education Department UCD/NUI Dublin presented a paper to the VETNET Network entitled 'New contexts for Vocational Education in the Republic of Ireland'.

The University of Edinburgh provided an excellent location for the conference proceedings and its proximity to the Scottish Heritage Whisky Society greatly enhanced participation!!!

## **College News**

### ***Education Department, NUI Galway***

This year has seen major changes in personnel in the Education Department. John Marshall has become Dean of Arts, and so keeps a benevolent eye on the Department from his new perch. Maureen Langan-Egan has taken over as Acting Head of Department for the Year. As well as losing John, Gerry Beggan also retired after long service to the Department. We welcome David Tuohy and Josephine Boland as permanent members of staff, and Pat Farren as a TTA. We have a full complement of H.Dip.Ed students in both the English and Irish courses. This year, we are also running the H.Dip. in Remedial Ed. and our M.Ed. programme.

David Tuohy

## ***School of Education, QUB***

The big news here is that a group of academics, led by myself and Alan Smith, published a series of research papers on the selective system of grammar and secondary schools in Northern Ireland. The papers are available in three formats: an 8 page Briefing Paper, a 40 page Main Report, and two volumes containing 23 separate research papers (750 pages in total) with detailed evidence and analysis - these include three papers on comparative evidence which consider the consequences of a range of alternative forms of school organisation. All the papers can be downloaded free from the Department of Education website ([www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)). Following the publication of the research papers the Minister of Education, Martin McGuinness, announced the formation of a Review Group to bring forward recommendations on the future organisation of the post-primary education system in Northern Ireland. The Review Group is due to report in May, 2001. Alongside the Review Group there will be an Education Consultancy Forum and an Academic Advisory Group.

In addition, John Gardner and Pamela Cowan, Graduate School of Education, Queens University, published a research report which examined technical aspects of the tests used to select pupils. This report calls into question the reliability and validity of the tests. Copies of this can be downloaded from the Graduate School of Education website ([www.qub.ac.uk/edu](http://www.qub.ac.uk/edu)).

Tony Gallagher

## ***Education Department, UCD***

Welcome

The staff of the Education Department warmly welcome Sheelagh Drudy, the new Professor of Education.

Task Force on Autism.

Professor Sheelagh Drudy has been invited by the Minister for Education and Science to chair the Task Force on Autism. It will review current educational provision and support services for children with autism in Ireland and assess their adequacy. It will make appropriate recommendations for development or adjustment of existing policy, educational provision and support in order to ensure that an appropriate, effective education service is delivered to children with autism.

Invitations for submissions have been made in the national newspapers. Submissions should be submitted to the Secretary to the Task Force, Mr Micheal O Flanagan, at the Department of Education and Science, preferably by email <[mflan27@iol.ie](mailto:mflan27@iol.ie)> on or before 17 November 2000.

Pittsburgh Education Delegation Northern Ireland/Ireland.

The Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh visited the Education Department in UCD on the 6th October 2000 as part of a fact finding mission to investigate, identify, strengthen, promote and establish collaborative international education and economic partnerships between Northern Ireland, Ireland and North America.

Congratulations.

Comhgairdeachais do Sean P Ó Conchuir os ocht Teagasc na Gaeilge Gnéithe Cumarsáideacha.  
Sean was awarded a PhD in Education during the recent conferring ceremonies in UCD/NUI  
Dublin.

Marie Clarke

### ***Equality Studies Centre, UCD***

Equality Seminar  
Professor Harry Brighouse (University of Wisconsin)  
Educational Equality and the New Selective Schooling in Britain  
16th November 2000, 7.30 pm,  
Room B101, Arts Building, UCD

Kathleen Lynch

## **Conference Notification**

### ***ESAI Theme Conference:***

"The Legal Framework of Education : Rights, Responsibilities and Citizenship"

St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra  
Friday 1st December, 7.30pm

Keynote Address

Dr. Gerard Quinn (NUI, Galway)

'Disability and Invisible Citizenship - How Stands the Pledge to Cherish all the Children of the  
Nation Equally?'

Saturday 2 December

Parallel sessions

(1) Mainstreaming

(2) Citizenship

(3) Multiculturalism

Speakers include: Kathy Sinnott (parent)

Representative from Forum of People with Disabilities

Frank Flanagan MIC / UL

Ken Wylie Stranmillis

The plenary session at the conference's conclusion will allow ample time for discussion.

For further information, contact: Michael Shevlin, TCD (01) 6082623 / mshevlin@tcd.ie

Cost: £25 (members); £30 (non-members); £15 (student / associated members)

Booking form included with Newsletter.

## ***Equality Studies Tenth Anniversary Conference***

O'Reilly Hall, UCD  
Friday, December 15th 2000

Key note speakers:

Professor Andrew Sayer (Lancaster Univ.)  
"A Moral Economy: The Case for a New Paradigm"

Professor Anne Phillips (London School of Economics)  
"Inequality between Individuals, Injustice between Social Groups: Remaking the Connections"

Professor Christopher McCrudden (Lincoln College, Oxford)  
"Equality and Socio-Economic Rights in the Context of a Global Economy"

Mrs Mary Robinson will launch the Tenth Anniversary Report.

For information: 706 7104  
Cost: £45

## **ESAI Annual Conference: Call for Papers**

The ESAI Annual Conference will take place in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick from Thursday, 5th April - Saturday, 7th April, 2001. The working title of this year's conference is:

"Educational Disadvantage and Social Exclusion"

We are calling now for proposed papers from all interested members of the ESAI.

Included with your copy of the newsletter is the form to be completed if you wish to make a presentation at the Annual Conference. An electronic version of this form can be accessed via the ESAI website. You can use this form to email the details of your proposed presentation.

Your completed form should be returned to Dr. Michael Shevlin, Education Department, TCD, Dublin 1 or [mshevlin@tcd.ie](mailto:mshevlin@tcd.ie) no later than Friday 8th December, 2000