

# ESAI Newsletter

## Spring 2001

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### President's Letter

The time of the Annual Conference is approaching, and information about the 2001 conference to be held at Mary Immaculate College — from 5<sup>th</sup> April to 7<sup>th</sup> April — is included in this Newsletter. With a record number of submissions received and accepted, the academic and local organisers have had to find creative solutions to problems of scheduling papers. A few changes in style have resulted. First, the conference continues into Saturday afternoon. As well as accommodating extra speakers, we hope that this will cater more appropriately for people who are unable to attend the daytime sessions on the Friday. Secondly, some papers have been grouped together into symposia, each symposium addressing a theme that arose naturally from the submissions or was suggested by intending speakers. Hopefully this will facilitate communication among people with common interests — thus achieving one of the major goals of running the conference. A third change is that the conference “banquet” has been replaced by a less formal (and, crucially, less expensive) meal which we hope will attract a large attendance. While the goal this time is social rather than academic, it is again an important aspect of the conference! Altogether, therefore, we are looking forward to a very exciting occasion.

It is particularly important that we have a good conference because in another respect we have encountered what is probably the biggest problem faced by ESAI in its quarter-century of life. Members have been paying us — in particular, paying by standing order, as we requested — and then hearing nothing from ESAI. Most unfortunately, while the money from some of those standing orders was reaching us, the names of corresponding subscribers were not. Some very long-standing members told us that they had not received last year's journal or newsletters; it transpired that we had not received their subscriptions in identifiable form, and had been treating them as “lapsed.” We can only apologise profusely and vow to do better next time. I must emphasise that our treasurers and membership secretary were not at fault, and indeed have been working very hard to try to make sense of what was happening (or, rather, not happening); the problem was a

banking one. The literature enclosed with this newsletter explains in more detail why we have decided to move away from the use of standing orders. We are sending the newsletter to all the recent and not-so-recent members in our lists, in the hope that we reconnect with as many people as possible who *ought* to have been hearing from us over the last year or so. These things are sent to try us ... and they succeed!

With particular feeling, therefore, I wish everyone a happy and trouble-free year in 2001.

With best wishes —

Elizabeth Oldham  
President, ESAI

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## **Editorial**

I am delighted to announce that the incoming ESAI Newsletter editor who will take over the reins from Autumn 2001 is Brian Donovan. Brian is currently completing a Masters in Education in TCD.

He can be contacted either by email: donovanb@tcd.ie  
or by post through the ESAI Hon. Secretary, Marie Flynn, St. Helen's Education Office,  
Clonkeen Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

The deadline for receipt of information for the Autumn 2001 Newsletter is **Friday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001.**

As always I am most grateful to those who have contributed to this edition of the Newsletter and to all those who have assisted in any way in its production and dispatch. As this is my final edition, I would like to extend those wishes not only to the people who helped on this occasion, but also to include everyone who has been helpful and supportive over the last two years. My sincere thanks to you all.

*Anne Lodge, outgoing ESAI Newsletter Editor*

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## **Book Reviews**

Mike Cole, Dave Hill & Glenn Rikowski in discussion with Peter McLaren (2001) *Red Chalk: On Schooling, Capitalism & Politics*, Brighton: The Institute for Education Policy Studies.

In an age of social partnership and consensus, this slim volume seeks to re-introduce Marxist political economy into the debate of education and society. This book is a dialogue over time and distance between three British leftist educationalists with

Canadian/American critical pedagogue, Peter McLaren. However, partnership and consensus is thrown aside from the outset. As McLaren states in the Preface, “I should warn the reader...that what follows is not a full-dress defence of Marxism against its many detractors inside the education establishment... but rather is meant to be a full-on, frontal opposition to capital’s white reign.” [p. 3-4] The immediate question to pose is how many Irish educators are both willing and able to engage with opposition?

The book is in interview format, clearly labelling who is ‘speaking’ and with sections marked off to distinguish what would otherwise be a fairly, free-flowing conversation. While there is solid, give-and-take during the dialogue, McLaren appears to be the driving force here, as he grounds the exchanges with provocative questions which all socially and politically active educators must consider. For instance, “Why is social class so important in your analysis of education and society?” [p. 19], “What do you think Marxist educators should do, with whom, how?” [p. 27], and, “...it looks like this Third Way (in British politics) is important for UK politics, but how does it all relate with education?” [p. 45]

While these questions focus the discussion, it is the answers provided by Cole, Hill and Rikowski that make this book worthy of reading, engagement and passing on to others. For instance, early in the book, Rikowski makes the point that, “New Labour doesn’t think that poverty or social class can be adequate ‘excuses’ for low educational attainment. They are pretty good *explanations* or predictors of it thought!” [p. 29] It is language such as this which typifies the book.

In one section, a trenchant critique of postmodernism, Cole states, “When you ask postmodernists what they have to offer people in dire poverty, they’ve not got much to say.” [p. 32] For any postmodernists, addressing more contentious social issues such as poverty and social exclusion is something seemingly low on the agenda.

There are other sections discussing globalisation and what goes on in schools, the educational left in the UK today, structuralist neo-Marxism and political agency, and Education Action Zones (EAZs) in the UK. While these are stimulating conversations, one might be left feeling that these are only beginnings. The book is too short at just over 80 pages to describe anything in detail. As well, the language of Marxist critique can be off-putting to those unused to reading it. But a question to pose is whether it is the language which puts a potential reader off, or the full-frontal opposition referred to by McLaren above? Is it the language which is challenging, or the ideas the language represents?

Critique is not easy to take. Strong critique goes to the root level of human interaction and society. This book is a strong critique of many things educators and academics might take for granted which deserve, if not demand, questioning. The small amount of pages and the overtly Marxist language should not detract from a book that should be read by all Irish academics who feel that questioning and critique are part of the functional role of being an academic.

In addition to serving as a discussion document for the upcoming ESAI Annual Conference on Educational Disadvantage and Social Exclusion, the format is such that it fits comfortably into the front hip pocket of nearly anyone's trendy combats.

*Brian Donovan is currently completing a Masters in Education in Trinity College Dublin. He is incoming ESAI Newsletter Editor and a member of the ESAI Executive.*

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Kenny, M.; McNeela, E.; Shevlin, M. and Daly, T. (2000) *Hidden Voices: Young People with Disabilities Speak about their Second Level Schooling* Ballincollig: South West Regional Health Authority

This book emphasizes that, in the case of schools and teachers, disability awareness is not just, or even primarily, a state of mind. Rather, it is a preparedness at all levels of the education system to ensure that people with disabilities “get into, get around and get on (academically and socially) in any education institution – that they can access their normal entitlements”. If this is to become a reality rather than a mere aspiration, there must be a comprehensive policy and commitment of material and personnel resources to translate awareness of disability into appropriate, consistent practices.

It was the experience of the students in this study that the majority of their teachers, like society in general, were “well-meaning but forgetful or unthinking, underestimating the depth of isolation and struggle that saturated so much of students’ school experience.” It was also found that the impact of teachers on students was highly significant. Teachers “could inspire or defeat a student in relation to far more than their own subject area”.

Participants told of how they had to struggle, how they had to constantly remind teachers of what they needed, though often the reminders went unnoticed. They also spoke of the isolation they experienced, and how their abilities had been underestimated. It may be that the schools or teachers had acted out of kindness and consideration for their disability. However, it was often experienced by the student as “an under-estimation, even a dismissal of their person”.

This book provides valuable insights for teachers in schools that include students who have disabilities. It may also challenge teachers in other schools to question why students who have disabilities are not part of their learning communities.

*Mercedes Egan recently completed a PhD in the Education Department, NUI Maynooth on the experiences of students with Downs Syndrome of their school placements and educational supports*

## **Conference Review**

### Educational Studies Association of Ireland

#### *Theme Conference*

“The Legal Framework of Education: Rights, Responsibilities and Citizenship”

The E.S.A.I. Theme Conference was a timely and courageous attempt to highlight the negligible legal framework for education in Ireland. In particular, the focus was on the ongoing struggle of minority and marginalised groupings within Irish society to secure their educational entitlements. Professor Gerard Quinn's (N.U.I., Galway) keynote address entitled "Disability and Invisible Citizenship - How Stands the Pledge to Cherish All the Children of the Nation Equally?" set the scene for a broad ranging and visionary conference. Professor Quinn refocused this educational debate within the context of the European Union. He anticipated that the anti-discrimination directives emanating from Europe would begin to challenge and revolutionise the existing flawed system of ensuring access to education for marginalised groupings within Irish society.

The parallel sessions explored topics as diverse as disabled access, promoting childrens' rights as citizens and the challenge of responding to interculturalism. This conference undoubtedly aroused passionate argument and debate as the seemingly intractable nature of many of the issues raised became apparent. Equally apparent was the determination of participants to create a more just and equitable society. These common threads were conveyed by Eamonn O Murchu (overall rapporteur) when he observed that this conference marked the beginning of an ongoing struggle to create the type of society where diversity is valued and each citizen is cherished in his/her own right.

Although the debate around these issues is beginning to reach a mainstream audience this reviewer wonders whether the ideas and reflections conveyed through this conference will influence the policy makers within education or whether these issues will remain on the margins of educational debate alongside the young people within these marginalised groups.

*Kathleen O' Leary is a teacher in Maynooth Post Primary School*

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## College Noticeboard

### News from TCD

At the beginning of the academic year, the School of Education lost two long-standing members through retirement. Susan Parkes had been with us since 1966; Lachlan Cameron came in 1969. A party celebrating their many years of service is scheduled for early March.

The Association for Drama in Education in Ireland recently ran a one-day conference in Trinity, organised by Carmel O'Sullivan. The main guest speaker, Professor David Best, offered a critique of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; Professor Aine Hyland spoke in particular on the work of the Multiple Intelligences Curriculum and Assessment Project in UCC; and Ann FitzGibbon and Anne Fleischmann led a session on using multiple intelligences for reflection. The plenary session at the end of the conference yielded very lively discussion.

At the time of writing, the Anti-Bullying Centre is about to publish its Summary Report on the National Survey of Workplace Bullying.

CRITE, the Centre for Research in IT in Education - run jointly by the School of Education and the Department of Computer Science - has undertaken several new contracts recently. Activities include research with MediaLab Europe (investigations linking music and technology in education), participation in the "Wired for Learning" project (involving community and school communications software developed by IBM), and work on the Kilkenny Information Age Town initiative.

The School of Education is working with St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, and the Educational Research Centre on a project for the Department of Education and Science, monitoring students' mathematical performance in relevant areas over the period of introduction of calculators into the Junior Certificate Mathematics syllabus and examinations.

*Elizabeth Oldham is a member of the Education Department, TCD. She is President of ESAI*

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### News from Education Department, National University of Ireland Cork

#### **NEW STAFF**

Three new members of staff were appointed to the Education Department this year.

**Brian Murphy** has been a primary teacher for ten years. He teaches courses in French Methodology and Early Childhood Studies. His research interests are early childhood education and care, child development, and early childhood curriculum development.

**Dr. Paul Conway** is a graduate of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra (B. Ed.), Boston College (M. Ed., Life-span human development), and Michigan State University (Ph. D., Educational Psychology). His research interests are teacher learning and the evaluation of teaching, language and literacy, ICT policy, and socio-cultural psychology. Prior to starting at UCC, he was Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology and Human Development at Cleveland State University.

**Jacinta McKeon's** experience includes language teaching at secondary level schools, working with the Department of Education and Science as a teacher educator and as a Project Leader for the Pilot Project Modern Languages in the Primary School. She has also worked with the NCCA as a member of the German Senior Cycle Course Committee and is co-author of a series of workbooks to accompany a German course, Lernpunkt Deutsch. Her research interests include: Second Language Acquisition and Pedagogy, Language Learning Materials' Design and Evaluation and Teaching Modern Languages at Primary Level.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### ***The Idealist Illusion and Other Essays* by Maurice Blondel. Translation and Introduction by Fiachra Long**

Kluwer Academic Publishers, October 2000, 176pp.  
ISBN: 0-7923-6654-9

This book presents three of Blondel's most important articles *Idealist Illusion* (1898), *The Elementary Principle of a Logic of the Moral Life* (1903), and *The Starting Point of Philosophy* (1906). The articles, translated by Fiachra Long, appear for the first time in English. The book will be of interest to students of philosophy and theology who want to explore the theme of concrete experience.

Project E.Y.E. An Irish Curriculum for the three to four year old child  
edited by Francis Douglas, Mary Horgan and Cora O'Brien.  
Published by The Early Years Unit, Education Department, University College, Cork

This new curriculum was launched before Christmas 2000 and was the result of four years work with the voluntary pre-school sector. It was made possible by an external grant of £100,000 and consists of nine volumes with a total of 750 pages. It is a child-centred non-prescriptive curriculum which is taught through play and contains a multitude of practical ideas under eight developmental headings. An Educator's Handbook is included.

It can be obtained from the Irish Pre-School Playgroups Association, Spade Enterprise Centre, North King Street, Dublin 7. Tel. 01-6719245/01-6714833, Fax 01-6711356. Price £25 (incl. P&P).

### **CD-rom on New English Leaving Certificate Programme.**

A CD-rom on the new programme was launched recently at a function in the Education Centre, PortLaoise. The CD-rom contains all relevant documentation on the new

programme, i.e., Syllabus, Teacher Guidelines, Language Resource Materials, Sample Papers, Marking Schemes, and advice to teachers and students on preparing for examinations. It is an excellent resource for all English teachers. The Department of Education Inspectors in English and the members of the English Training team involved deserve to be complimented on this excellent innovative production. Inquiries re availability to Portlaoise Education Centre.

### **RESEARCH PROJECT**

The Education Department of University College Cork has been successful in securing funding for a five year period to establish a demonstration project to increase the likelihood of pupils from disadvantaged areas remaining in school, thereby maximising their educational and life opportunities. The project, which is called the Bridging the Gap project, will be led by Áine Hyland ([ahyland@pres.ucc.ie](mailto:ahyland@pres.ucc.ie)).

### **NEW COURSE**

#### **MASTERS DEGREE IN SCIENCE EDUCATION – MEd(Sc)**

This new course was initiated in October 2000 to coincide with the introduction of the new Leaving Certificate syllabi in physics and chemistry. The MEd(Sc) course is offered by the Department of Education UCC in collaboration with the Department of Physics UCC and the Department of Chemistry UCC. The course has proved very popular and over 50 applications were received for 32 places. The aim of this course is to provide further professional development for science teachers to improve their capacity to teach physics and/or chemistry at second level. An information brochure and further details about the course are available from:

Declan Kennedy, Department of Education, University College Cork.  
E-mail: [d.kennedy@ucc.ie](mailto:d.kennedy@ucc.ie)

### **PUBLIC LECTURES**

Professor Keith Ward, Regis Professor of Divinity, Oxford will give a talk on *Atheism and Inquiry* on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2001 in the Boole Lecture Theatre, National University of Ireland, Cork. For further details, please contact Dr. Fiachra Long 021 490 2262.  
Email: [flong@education.ucc.ie](mailto:flong@education.ucc.ie)

Professor Howard Gardner, originator of the theory of Multiple Intelligences, and Professor at Harvard Graduate School of Education, will be conferred with an Honorary Doctorate by the National University of Ireland in University College Cork on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May. In conjunction with his visit to Cork, Gardner will give a public lecture, probably on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May. For further information contact Áine Hyland ([ahyland@pres.ucc.ie](mailto:ahyland@pres.ucc.ie)).

*Joan Hanafin is a member of the Education Department, UCC*

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## **Annual Conference Postponement**

“Educational Disadvantage and Social Exclusion: context, perspectives and voice”

The Annual Conference, due to take place in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2001, has been postponed until further notice due to the current situation regarding foot and mouth.

For information on revised dates will be posted to members. Updated news can also be accessed via the ESAI website:

[www.homepage.eircom.net/~esai/index.htm](http://www.homepage.eircom.net/~esai/index.htm)

please note that this website address is very sensitive and the full address must be used

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