



Regional Research Conference 2016

*Research Improving Leadership,
Teaching and Learning*



Saturday 22nd October 2016

**VENUE: Drumcondra Education Centre,
Drumcondra, Dublin 9**

**To register please go to
http://research_conference.eventbrite.ie**

Foreword

The Management Committee of Drumcondra Education Centre are delighted to host the first Regional Research Conference in conjunction with Navan, Monaghan, Blackrock, Laois, Kildare and Dublin West Education Centres.

The title of the regional conference “Research Improving Leadership, Teaching and Learning” was purposefully chosen to reflect the broad range of areas which many teachers have researched. We believe that it is of paramount importance that the findings of these researchers should be presented to as wide an audience as possible.

The selection committee were delighted that so many applications were received and that they are of a very high standard. Fortunately, abstracts from both primary and post primary sectors were submitted. The topics covered are wide and varied and reflect the integrative nature of teaching in all aspects.

We are hopeful that this, the first Regional Conference, will become an annual event and that as it gains momentum and recognition within the education community we will be able to provide a valuable forum for those engaged in research to publish and present their work.

All of the Education Centres involved are committed to supporting their teachers and improving the quality of teaching and learning through acknowledging robust and quality research by providing the space and time for presenting this knowledge to a wider audience.

Many thanks for your support for this very worthwhile event. We hope that it will be the first of many.

Yours faithfully



Catherine Shanahan

TIMETABLE

09:30 hrs	Registration - Tea & Coffee	
10:00 hrs	Official Opening	
10:15 hrs	Keynote Speaker: Dr. Gerard McHugh - "Journeys in Research"	
Concurrent Sessions 1 11:00 hrs	(A) What Oracy Looks Like in Six First-Year English Post-Primary Classrooms Mary Gabrielle Byrne; Veronica Tandy; Amy McDowell.	(B) Leadership Preparation in the Republic of Ireland: Does it make a difference for the novice primary school principal? Verena Cunningham
11:30 hrs	An Investigation of Teacher Care Practice in the Classroom Máire Ní Láimhín	Making a successful transition from primary to secondary school: an investigation into the perceptions of teachers and parents of year 8 pupils Ciarán Johnston
12:00 hrs	Cross-curricular work to get your class moving Ciara Blennerhassett	The Role of Self-Determination in the Evaluation of an Inclusive Work Experience Programme Sean O'Leary
12:30-13:30 hrs	Lunch (will include short presentation by REX team)	
Concurrent Sessions 2 13:30 hrs	(A) Mind Maps as an aid to self-motivated learners: An evaluation study Séamus Ó Fionnagáin	(B) Can the implementation of a detailed motor skills screening and intervention programme enhance teaching approaches and improve outcomes for junior infant pupils in a rural Irish primary school? An action research study Breda Coleman
14:00 hrs	Improving Student Engagement with Homework through the use of Effective Homework Practices Paula Mulhall	Towards an Inventory of the Phoneme/Grapheme Units of Standard Irish English Eoin Shanahan
14:30 hrs	Emotional Intelligence Jackie Ahern	Action Research in Education: A Practitioner Enquiry in One Rural Post-Primary School in Northern Ireland, Examining the Management and Leadership of iPad Technology as an Aid to Improve Teaching and Learning Alannah Turner

Conference Abstracts

1. **What Oracy Looks Like in Six First-Year English Post-Primary Classrooms**

Mary Gabrielle Byrne; Veronica Tandy; Amy McDowell.

The research was directed at both students and teachers of First-Year post primary English classes. We sought to determine the extent to which students engage in oracy in their English classrooms and to elicit teachers' understanding of the term oracy. We wished to establish whether and how teachers plan for oracy and what they consider are the biggest obstacles to practising it. Methodologies used include student questionnaires, class observations, student focus-groups and teacher interviews. Research revealed that a large majority of students entered post-primary willing to speak and listen in class however, the environment needs to feel like a "safe space" and classroom relationships need to be well developed. Teachers reported that the biggest obstacles to practising oracy in their classrooms included a lack of time, a wide curriculum, large class numbers, a lack of technological supports to give quality feedback and student difficulties transitioning from primary to post-primary.

2. **Leadership Preparation in the Republic of Ireland: Does it make a difference for the novice primary school principal?**

Verena Cunningham

In the context of an impending global leadership recruitment crisis and the recognition of the critical impact of effective leadership on educational outcomes, leadership preparation has become the focus of educational reform worldwide. The design and delivery of pre-appointment programmes has become a global enterprise and in many countries, a leadership qualification is now mandatory for aspiring principals. In the Republic of Ireland however, where Tóraíocht, an accredited programme of preparation for school leadership was introduced in 2008, leadership preparation is a new phenomenon. The aim of this research study was to examine if leadership preparation makes a difference for the novice primary school principal in Ireland today. Adopting a qualitative methodological approach from a narrative perspective, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with twelve recently appointed principals and the chief findings deduced indicate favourable conclusions regarding the impact of the Tóraíocht Programme on graduates subsequently appointed to primary-level principalship positions.

3. An Investigation of Teacher Care Practice in the Classroom

Máire Ní Láimhín

This research examines the theoretical and legislative position of 'care' and investigates the prevalence of caring relations in Irish mainstream primary classrooms through analysis of Care Triggering Incidents. Based on qualitative data analysis of reflective diaries from teachers, the paper outlines the practice of care by teachers in the classroom. A Care Triggering Incident is an incident when a teacher believes that a pupil is showing a sign/(s) of needing to be cared for. The main areas developed through this research were: (1) the prevalence of care practice in the classroom, (2) teacher awareness of care practice, (3) types of care practice in the classroom, and (4) the impact of care practice on the child and on whole class teaching. The thesis closes with a set of implications of this research that emphasises the need for care to be placed centre stage when considering policy formation and practice.

4. Making a successful transition from primary to secondary school: an investigation into the perceptions of teachers and parents of year 8 pupils

Ciarán Johnston

The transition from primary to secondary school is a time of significant adjustment in a pupil's life. This dissertation set out to discover what factors impact on pupils' transition and how schools could best facilitate this transition through the use of transition programmes. A mixed method approach was adopted throughout the study in order to obtain useful quantitative and qualitative research data. The perceptions of parents and teachers were sought through the use of questionnaires and a focus group interview. The dissertation concludes that transition is a complex time for pupils and requires them to adjust to new social, organisational and academic situations. Transition programmes are very important and if carefully planned and delivered can result in a more successful transition for pupils. It was also found that in order to promote pupil academic progression there is a need for increased collaboration between colleagues in the primary and secondary phases.

5. Cross-curricular work to get your class moving

Ciara Blennerhassett

Research question: Could using a cross-curricular approach promote the physical activity (PA) levels of children in a senior infant class? Methodology: The teacher researcher was a main focus of this study. I designed and implemented the unit of work using a cross-curricular approach based on the theme of physical activity and I evaluated it from the perspective of the teacher who designed and implemented it. I used an action research methodology. Key sources of data included a reflective journal, observations of children's PA levels and a record of PA levels measured using pedometers. Data were analysed using the constant comparative method. Core findings: The study provides an insight into integration and how using a cross-curricular approach can promote the PA levels of children in primary school. Children's physical activity levels increased overall, they enjoyed the lessons and they engaged better in their learning when they were physically active.

6. The Role of Self-Determination in the Evaluation of an Inclusive Work Experience Programme

Sean O'Leary

Youth with intellectual disabilities have been found to experience poor post-school outcomes compared to youth with other disabilities and youth in the general population. The purpose of this case study was to explore the effect of developing a year-long work experience programme for a young adult with intellectual disability attending a QQI Level 3 course in a local community workshop. The work experience programme utilised customised employment approaches, such as job carving. The impact of the work experience programme on the student was evaluated using the ARC Self-Determination Scale. Qualitative feedback was gathered from the student's parents and co-workers. Quantitative data was also gathered from an organisational perspective. Overall, a compelling picture emerged on the value of customised work experience programmes for students, families and work places.

7. Mind Maps as an aid to self-motivated learners: An evaluation study

Séamus Ó Fionnagáin

Many students are under enormous pressure to think, memorise, problem solve, analyse and study for exams. Students in the Junior Certificate cycle take an average of eleven subjects with some taking as many as fifteen. The researcher found a tendency to rush through the course because of time restraints and curriculum overload. This unfortunately left many students feeling pressurised and confused. The researcher began to use Mind Maps in class and became interested in the perceptions of the students regarding the use of Mind Maps. This led the researcher to question firstly his own teaching methods and secondly the quality of the student's learning. The researcher was interested in how and why students learn. Consequently, method for learning, motivation for learning and quality of teaching method became the focus of the researcher.

8. Can the implementation of a detailed motor skills screening and intervention programme enhance teaching approaches and improve outcomes for junior infant pupils in a rural Irish primary school? An action research study

Breda Coleman

Identifying pupils with coordination and movement difficulties such as Dyspraxia/ Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) can be challenging and complex for teachers. Dyspraxia/DCD hinders and inhibits educational and social progress since it involves all aspects of functioning which relate to "doing". The prevalence of dyspraxia/DCD is estimated at 6% of the population. This study aimed to determine the extent to which teachers, with guidance, can assist in the identification and assessment of children with motor coordination difficulties; whether appropriate intervention and enrichment programmes can be planned and implemented and whether children with motor coordination difficulties are helped by this approach. Fourteen pupils were selected to participate in a daily tailored intervention programme which ran for four weeks.

9. Improving Student Engagement with Homework through the use of Effective Homework Practices

Paula Mulhall

Many students in my school exhibit poor engagement and motivation, have literacy and numeracy difficulties and little support at home for learning. Within this context, efforts to obtain homework had been largely unsuccessful, leading to teacher disillusionment and ongoing negative student/teacher interactions. This action research outlines strategies taken to improve student engagement with homework. It stresses the importance of the student voice, the benefits of formative feedback and encourages teachers to engage in evidence based practice. Homework should be clear, well explained and doable and teacher involvement in its design and feedback is central to the successful engagement of students. Through meaningful student collaboration and the use of effective homework practices both the completion rates and quality of homework presented improved significantly. An unforeseen benefit was the improvement in student engagement in class also and the enhanced student/teacher relationships.

10. Towards an Inventory of the Phoneme/Grapheme Units of Standard Irish English

Eoin Shanahan

The development of phonological knowledge is a key element of effective instruction in Reading and Spelling. Phonological knowledge incorporates a number of critical sub-skills such as awareness of spoken words, syllables, rhyme, onset/rime and the ability to recognise and manipulate individual phonemes. This knowledge, in turn, facilitates the development of the ability to map phonemes to graphemes (encoding) and graphemes to phonemes (decoding). While the set of graphemes is clearly defined in English orthography, phonemic inventories differ across dialects and significant differences exist between Standard Irish English and Standard British English.

The absence of an agreed list of the phonemes of Standard Irish English means that there is no universally-agreed national standard that informs the teaching of phonemic awareness in Ireland. Many Irish schools, therefore, use instructional programmes that are populated by the phonemes of Standard British English. This paper identifies and discusses the phonemic contrasts of the two dialects and proposes an inventory of phoneme/grapheme units that addresses the needs of Irish schools.

11. Emotional Intelligence

Jackie Ahern

A group of University professors working in clinical psychology, neuroscience, child development, child conduct prevention disorders and child psychology disorders created a collaborative intervention for schools, in 1991, called the American Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies idea. Repackaged into a 10 year intervention called 'Fast Track' and copied worldwide it is the basis for all the new social emotional literacy programmes around the world. There are now Teaching Emotional Intelligence (social emotional literacy) policies in the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Slovakia, Lithuania, Malta, Finland, The Netherlands, Spain, Australia, the U.S, Canada and Germany. Chile and Colombia in South America, Greenland and Singapore have all recently developed Social Emotional Literacy programmes not to mention, Kurdistan in Iraq and Turkey. Australia, a leader in this area, developed a multi-faceted SEL programme for schools under an umbrella term called Kidzmatter in 2005. The objective of my study was to discover what Irish teacher's perceptions of teaching Emotional Intelligence within the Irish curriculum is. While none of the Irish respondents had heard of the term Emotional Intelligence they perceive themselves to teach the objectives of Yale's RULER Social Emotional Literacy programme through a variety of mediums. Interestingly, while the respondents showed a great interest in these areas none were aware of the full range of available

12. Action Research in Education: A Practitioner Enquiry in One Rural Post-Primary School in Northern Ireland, Examining the Management and Leadership of iPad Technology as an Aid to Improve Teaching and Learning

Alannah Turner

The aim of this dissertation is to overview Action Research in one rural, post-primary school in Northern Ireland and implement a practitioner enquiry, examining the management and leadership of ICTs as an aid to improve teaching and learning. A mixed-method approach was adopted based on an extensive study of relevant literature, practitioner questionnaires and interviews as well as the implementation of an eight week practitioner enquiry as researcher as practitioner. The research produced a number of key findings: the need for improvement in evaluating use of ICTs at a whole school level using Nacce's SRF (2015); 42+ year old practitioners are most incompetent, anxious and willing to involve themselves in the acquisition of iPad technology; SEN boys behaviour was affected most negatively in the classroom; girls were motivated to actively and independently manage their own learning in reading lessons, and; collaborative apps were most successful in promoting motivation and enthusiasm around reading.



The Research Expertise Exchange (REX)

The Research Expertise Exchange (REX) is an online social network for teacher researchers. Teachers are constantly engaged in research, whether its finding out about a new teaching methodology, evaluating that methodology, understanding the particular needs of a student, or determining the best policy for a school. Educational professionals are continually gathering information, analysing it, and drawing conclusions about what to do next.

Much of the best research is collaborative, where a team of people bring a range of expertise, share the workload, and join the dots to make a bigger picture. Despite this fact, many of us work on our own, without much access to other educational professionals.

This is where REX comes in. REX is an online community of educational researchers. It can help you find others with similar research interests, form collaborations to complete research projects, and make your findings available to your professional colleagues.

If you'd like support in developing or refining your research skills, REX will be able to help with that too.

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