



Regional Research Conference 2017

Teachers as Researchers



Saturday 21st October 2017

Keynote Speaker: *Dr. Anne Looney,
Dean, DCU Institute of Education*

Venue: DCU St Patrick's Campus, Drumcondra Road, Dublin 9

DCU St Patrick's Campus



E Block -
Rooms
E201, E205,
E206, E223
and E214

Pedestrian
entrance from
Dublin Bus stops
7602 and 7603

Main entrance to
Campus

CAR PARKING
facilities available in
Drumcondra
Education Centre and
also in the yard of St
Patrick's BNS next
door to Centre

Foreword

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

The title of the regional conference “Teachers as Researchers” was purposefully chosen to enable and encourage all teachers who have engaged in research to have this conference to showcase their work. We believe that teachers make a difference in the lives of their children and that teachers who have engaged in research will improve not only their teaching but the quality of the learning that results. By sharing their, research others will be inspired by the findings and will be encouraged to improve their own practice.

This year, the selection committee were delighted that so many applications were received and that they are of a very high standard. Abstracts from both primary and post primary sectors were submitted and some of the presentations are cross sectoral. The topics covered are wide and varied and reflect the integrative nature of teaching.

We are delighted that this annual event has gained momentum and recognition within the education community and that the number of presentations has doubled this year.

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

Many thanks for your support for this very worthwhile event. We hope that it will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Yours faithfully

Catherine Shanahan

Catherine Shanahan



TIMETABLE

09:30 hrs	Registration - Tea & Coffee (Foyer of E Block)			
09:45 hrs	Welcome and Official Opening (Room E214)			
10:00 hrs	Keynote Speaker: Dr. Anne Looney, Dean, DCU Institute of Education (Room E214)			
Rooms	E205	E206	E214	E223
Concurrent Sessions 1 10:30 hrs	(CS) Art Therapy, A Sensory Approach Working with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Aisling Brennan	(P) The development of children's computational thinking skills, through the use of Lego We Do 2.0 materials, in a constructionist inquiry based science learning environment. Francis Tormey	(PP) "Promoting the use of feedback strategies in the Business Studies classroom to enhance student learning experiences for Junior Cycle". Sharon Kiely	(CS) Supporting School Re-entry for students following Traumatic Brain Injury-An Irish Perspective Avril Carey
11:00 hrs	(CS) Collaborative Instruction: Exploring the impact of co-teaching practices on the academic progress, opinions and self-perceptions of children with and without Additional Support Needs (ASNs) Paula Lehane	(PP) A Restorative Trail: Restorative Practice - opening up new capacities of hearts and minds in school communities Michelle Stowe	(P) Introducing the use of ePortfolios to Support Assessment through Action Research Cliona Galvin	(P) The ways in which Irish Primary School Teachers Support Reading Engagement in The Digital Age Andy Whelan
11:30 hrs	(CS) Motivation of Teachers in Special Schools: An Analysis of Motivation and Influencing Factors Patrick J Murphy	(CS) Working against the grain; engaging young people in conversations about sexuality and gender through drama. Dave Flynn	(P) An Intervention Study Exploring How Children Develop the Concept of Multiplication Sorcha Browne	(P) A Personal Reflection on Education Fearghal Ryan
12:00 hrs	(P) The Provision of Special Education in Irish Primary Schools. Celia Walsh	(P) How process drama and co-operative learning can enhance co-operation and communication skills in Primary School pupils Catriona Mulrooney	(PP) Developing Models of Cooperative Learning to Promote Literacy and Numeracy across the Curriculum Dara Fitzpatrick	(P) The process of school self-evaluation in our primary schools and the practices that are evident in its implementation Clíodhna Devlin

TIMETABLE (Continued)

12:30-13:30 hrs	Lunch - Restaurant, DCU St Patrick's Campus			
Rooms	E205	E206	E214	E223
Concurrent Sessions 2 13:30 hrs	(P) Action, Change, and Co-teaching: Professional Relationships and Professional Learning during the Induction of Newly Qualified Teachers Ciara Uí Chonduibh	(FE) Supporting teacher researchers - an action researcher's experience Annelie Carslake	(P) As easy as 1,2,3....how schools can support parents to create a meaningful home numeracy environment for their children Lize Vaughan	(PP) Responding to Challenges and complexity in Europe - Exploring Practices of Culturally Responsive Assessment in Irish Schools (An Assessment strategy whose time has come) Martin Brown
14:00 hrs	(P) Droichead: The Currents Beneath Barbara Mulvihill	(PP) Transition Year: An example of leadership for learning? Michelle Bradley	(CS) Teacher Research - The road less travelled Carmel Lillis	(CS) Parental Involvement: Rhetoric or Reality. A comparative study of parental involvement in Irish primary schools. Susan Gibney
14:30 hrs	(P) Exploring pupils' motivation and creativity to engage with the composing strand through the implementation of a compositional programme using Irish traditional music. Aoife Greene	(P) The challenge of perpetual motion - the willingness and desire of the Irish primary school principals to juggle everything Dr. Martin Stynes	(PP) An examination of post primary teachers' voluntary participation in Continuous Professional Development outside of school hours Phil Fox	(CS) Belonging: Development of a teacher educator identity Karen Buckley

Conference Abstracts

1. **Art Therapy, A Sensory Approach Working with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Aisling Brennan

Sector: Cross sectoral

This paper is an examination of the current literature exploring the interplay of sensory experience for children with ASD and Art Therapy sessions. It examines how bridges can be built within the Art Therapy session between the child, the art and the therapist by optimising trust, engagement, attunement, interaction and a child lead approach to the session.

The paper addresses what ASD is and how sensory processing manifests as behaviour for children with ASD, how sensory processing and behaviour impact the child's Art Therapy session, the impact of Art Therapy on the sensory system and behaviour, as well as the overall well-being for the child with ASD.

This paper collates relevant subject material available and includes first-hand knowledge from the authors many years of experience as a teacher with ASD and as an Art Therapist trainee.

2. **The development of children's computational thinking skills, through the use of Lego We Do 2.0 materials, in a constructionist inquiry based science learning environment.**

Francis Tormey

Sector: Primary

For my thesis I designed a constructionist inquiry based science learning environment where the children used the Lego We Do 2.0 computational materials as objects to think with to explore a range of problems. Through engagement with the cyclical, scaffolded, thematic learning activities, the children designed models and algorithms as they explored solutions to the problems posed.

My findings demonstrated a progressive improvement in the children's computational thinking skills and independent problem-solving capabilities (debugging, remixing, decomposition and making connections) across the cycles of the research project. The children developed their collaborative skills, working only in pairs in cycle one to working in complex groups of four in cycle three. There was a significant improvement in the children's capability to record and reflect on their work, resulting in a deeper understanding of the learning process among the children. The inquiry based nature of this project fostered a natural curiosity among the children and encouraged them to solve problems and find solutions independently.

3. **Promoting the use of feedback strategies in the Business Studies classroom to enhance student learning experiences for Junior Cycle.**

Sharon Kiely

Sector: Post Primary

Conducted in 2016-2017, the research builds on earlier work on peer and self-assessment which noted a correlation between learning advances and feedback.

Central research questions probed to what extent feedback could enhance teaching and learning opportunities; provide for advances in student learning and achievement whilst allowing teachers build capacity as reflective practitioners. Secondly, to what extent feedback could promote more self-regulated learning and improve engagement. A range of targeted feedback methodologies were trialled and critiqued which were shared with the wider school community.

The methodology employed action research, conducted over two phases using a triangulated mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative data collection.

Improvements in students' disposition to their learning and academic achievement were among the findings and contributed to school-wide initiatives for SSE. The findings raise questions about the effectiveness of some forms of feedback and challenges for school management and external agencies providing teacher training and CPD.

4. **Supporting School Re-entry for students following Traumatic Brain Injury-An Irish Perspective**

Avril Carey

Sector: Cross Sectoral

Background: *The effects of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in childhood are varied and complex, impacting on areas such as cognitive functioning, behaviour, learning, memory and personality. Children re-entering the academic and social environment following a brain injury are likely to experience adjustment difficulties and long-term outcomes following TBI are difficult to predict.*

Objective: *The focus of this study is to examine, in the context of the Irish educational system, the experiences, competence, confidence and training needs of teachers in Ireland in supporting children with Traumatic Brain Injury, including an exploration of parents' perceptions of school re-entry success following discharge from rehabilitation.*

Design: *This study uses mixed methods survey instruments to examine teacher and parent perception of school re-entry supports provided to a sample of Irish children who have returned to school following TBI. It will examine the general knowledge of teachers from across the Irish educational system in relation to TBI.*

Results: *This study was based on 125 teacher participants and 7 parent participants. Examination of the quantitative and qualitative results revealed that many misconceptions and misperceptions of TBI related issues exist among these teachers. Themes emerged which relate to successful school re-entry including; consequences of TBI, identity, communication and teacher training needs.*

5. **Collaborative Instruction: Exploring the impact of co-teaching practices on the academic progress, opinions and self-perceptions of children with and without Additional Support Needs (ASNs)**

Paula Lehane

Sector: Cross Sectoral

Collaborative teaching arrangements are one of the many approaches used to facilitate the inclusion of children with Additional Support Needs (ASNs) in mainstream settings (Friend and Cook, 2010). The current study conducted observations of single teacher and co-taught numeracy lessons in two Irish primary classrooms containing 45 students (n=45) with a wide variety of ASNs. The student-teacher interactions and instructional arrangements of single teacher and co-taught classrooms were compared for each classroom. Key differences in teaching practices between both conditions were observed. Teachers (n=3) participating in this research also completed the Colorado Assessment of Co-teaching (CO-ACT) (Adams et al., 1993) on two occasions to provide a better insight into the efficacy of the co-teaching partnership being observed. This instrument indicated that these co-teaching partnerships were highly effective. Students (n=42) involved in these two classes completed a standardised numeracy test (SIGMA-T; MIC, 2007) after participating in co-taught numeracy classes for seven months. These scores were compared to the students' scores on this test from the previous year when they did not participate in co-teaching. A significant increase in students' overall standardised test scores was noted ($p=.03$). Scores for students with ASNs in relation to numeracy (n=12) also experienced a significant increase ($p=.032$). A researcher-designed questionnaire revealed that the students (n=45) involved in this study responded favourably to co-teaching as an instructional approach citing increased support and greater enjoyment as their reasons for this perspective. Furthermore, a high percentage of students, including those with ASNs, claimed that they had better numeracy skills after participating in co-taught numeracy lessons.

6. A Restorative Trail: Restorative Practice - opening up new capacities of hearts and minds in school communities

Michelle Stowe

Sector: Post Primary

The intention of this action project was to set up a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in a school with teachers who were interested in inculcating the practices and principles of Restorative Practice (RP) in their classrooms.

My intention in forming such a PLC was to establish, explore, evaluate and maximise the use of RP in participants' classrooms. I wanted to investigate its impact of such engagement on relationships, teaching practices and approaches, and how it could offer a stimulus for whole school change.

Our investigation found that the implementation of RP did improve relationships. It promoted empathy and encouraged teachers and students to work together. It developed emotional literacy skills among the participants. Participants gained a sense of ownership over behaviour. There was a change in approach to misbehaviour that had a positive effect on learning and on teachers' feeling of well-being. The evidence shows that improved relationships often had a positive impact on the work ethic within the classroom. The evidence also showed that the implementation and positive impact of RP is process. It is something that requires repeated, structured and reflective engagement, such as that offered by our PLC.

7. Introducing the use of ePortfolios to Support Assessment through Action Research

Cliona Galvin

Sector: Primary

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Report (2009) references the need to integrate student formative assessment, teacher assessment and standardised assessment in order to evaluate students' progress and educational needs most effectively.

In our school, I had noticed a growing over reliance on data from standardised tests to evaluate students' progress and inform planning. I believed a broader and deeper perspective on students' learning, afforded by ePortfolio use, would greatly enhance the learning process.

I worked through a process of action research, involving the school community as co-researchers in order to facilitate change in the way we used technology in our school and embed its use in our teaching, assessing and planning of the curriculum.

My research sought to establish assessment as a reflective and shared process, rather than an end product where students would become collaborators in their own assessment and formulation of their learning goals.

8. The ways in which Irish Primary School Teachers Support Reading Engagement in The Digital Age

Andy Whelan

Sector: Primary

With the advent of multimodal media forms, the engaged reader, one who reads frequently and finds satisfaction in reading, may have diversified their reading to include digital texts (Baker et al., 2012, p.192, Kucirkova et al., 2015). In this study, constructing reading engagement as a multidimensional construct forms the theoretical perspective of 'the engaged reader' (Baker et al., 2012, p.192).

Becoming literate in the digital age means that learners read and 'make meaning' through multiple modes of meaning, including the 'spoken, printed, visual and digital' (Marsh and Hallet, 2008, p.123).

The focus of this research is on teachers, and how they can support learners engage in reading in the digital age. Teachers need to access their professional knowledge base in a number of domains including pedagogical knowledge, technological knowledge and their knowledge of children's texts.

9. Motivation of Teachers in Special Schools: An Analysis of Motivation and Influencing Factors

Patrick J Murphy

Sector: Cross Sectoral

This study investigated to what extent Irish special school teachers (ISSTs) are motivated towards work tasks. Profiles of motivational dimensions from self-determination theory were explored in a sample of 66. The study investigated teachers' demographic and background factors and links between motivation and career intentions and job-satisfaction.

The relative strengths of different motivations of SETs were found to be in-line with international studies: the majority being intrinsically motivated. Those reporting higher manifestations of job-satisfaction /achievement factors identify more with intrinsic motivation and identified regulation in teaching tasks. However, ISSTs with higher job satisfaction in the area of an intrinsic (co-worker) factor identify more with a motivation towards complementary tasks.

The study found that ISSTs with no SEN qualification or with a Masters in SEN tend to identify with a motivation more. Males were found to have higher manifestations of external regulation. A correlation was identified between longevity and motivation.

10. Working against the grain; engaging young people in conversations about sexuality and gender through drama.

Dave Flynn

Sector: Cross Sectoral

This paper seeks to make sense of the notion of 'queering the drama space' in practice and considers some of the ways in which drama might be used in schools to explore gender and sexuality. Using evidence from a Year 12 case study, this paper explores the concept of 'queering' in a secondary school drama space in Warwickshire, United Kingdom.

The data for this research was collected through a system of observation, questionnaires and interviews. The data was triangulated and later coded to identify the related themes that appeared to surface from the data.

The analysis identifies three key areas: queering, democratic pedagogy and play. It concludes that a pedagogical framework appeared to surface during the course of this case study. This framework suggests that these issues could be explored in a playful and democratic space, where space is provided for young people to discuss gender and sexuality issues.

11. An Intervention Study Exploring How Children Develop the Concept of Multiplication

Sorcha Browne

Sector: Primary

There are two alternative theories proposed as the origin of children's multiplicative reasoning, namely the repeated addition model and the theory that the concept of multiplication is grounded on an understanding of correspondence. The aim of this study was to assess the evidence for these theories and provide new relevant evidence which will help to discriminate between them.

Additionally, there is a multitude of conflicting advice available to teachers about best practice when teaching multiplication. In Ireland, where this study is based, the curriculum advocates the repeated addition model, although the evidence supporting this instructional practice is ambiguous. A new maths curriculum is currently under development, and it was hoped that this study would help inform any changes that may need to be made regarding best practice when teaching multiplication.

The study adopts a three-armed experimental intervention design. A total of 64 children from first class (year 2 equivalent) were randomly assigned to one of three groups: Repeated addition intervention (n=21), multiplicative reasoning intervention (n=22) and an active control group (n=21). The children completed a pre- and post-test examining their ability to solve multiplication problems. It was hypothesized that the children would benefit more from the intervention that focused on developing a conceptual understanding of multiplication through the schema of correspondence, than a procedural understanding based upon repeated addition.

The results indicated that the children who engaged in the multiplicative reasoning intervention improved significantly more in multiplicative reasoning problems, than those in the control group. The results supported the theory that the origin of children's understanding of the concept of multiplication is in their schema of correspondence. This study concludes that the teaching of multiplication should focus upon instruction which uses two quantities set in correspondence, rather than repeated addition.

12. A Personal Reflection on Education

Fearghal Ryan

Sector: Primary

The purpose of this article is to share with you my belief that education and communication are interwoven in contemporary society and literacy is paramount in achieving an education. Having recently completed my final School Placement under the Bachelor of Education course I was required to complete a reflective portfolio centred on our previous teaching experiences over the last four years. I reread my personal reflections and was amazed at how much progression I had made regarding my teaching and educational values in such a short space of time. Reflecting upon the previous placement I posed this question to myself, what is education and what can I do as an educator in order for my pupils to be educated?

13. The Provision of Special Education in Irish Primary Schools.

Celia Walsh

Sector: Primary

The significant policy and legislative changes in recent times in special education needs (SEN) education in the mainstream setting have created challenges for principals, resource and class teachers. The management and coordination of the inclusion of pupils with special needs is a complex issue. Some countries have directed each school to designate a teacher as a coordinator of special education provision. Although posts of SEN coordinators have not been formally created within the Irish education system, nonetheless, in some schools, special needs resource or learning support teachers have taken on such a role either in a voluntary capacity or as part of the duties attached to a post of responsibility. This paper examines the role of the SEN co-ordinator, the tasks they are responsible for, the duties they undertake and the level of effectiveness of their role in the overall coordination of SEN provision. The benefits of their work and the challenges they encounter are identified.

14. How process drama and co-operative learning can enhance co-operation and communication skills in Primary School pupils

Catriona Mulrooney

Sector: Primary

The action research study was carried out to investigate if the implementation of a cross-curricular programme of process drama and a number of co-operative learning strategies could enhance the co-operation and communication skills of 18 Third Class pupils over a six week period. The children were actively involved in process drama in a social, geographical and historical context. The pupils worked together in pairs, groups and as members of the whole class, using a number of co-operative learning strategies to enhance their co-operation and communication skills. Field notes, teacher observation and checklists were used to collect data and pupils assessed their progress through the use of oral rounds, evaluation sheets and reflective journals. Following analysis of the data, it became evident that the children's awareness of and ability to co-operate and communicate had been enhanced to a certain extent, in addition to their capacity to manage conflict within their groups.

15. Developing Models of Cooperative Learning to Promote Literacy and Numeracy across the Curriculum

Dara Fitzpatrick

Sector: Post Primary

As a teacher in a DEIS Band One secondary school I have noted continuing problems arising from generally low levels of Literacy and Numeracy. Performance from standardised testing supported this assertion. This is contrary to national trends. How then, as curriculum teachers can we teach syllabi based on an assumed level of ability which is not evident in our professional context? This paper describes my attempts to address the issues of Literacy and Numeracy using methodologies which can be transferred across the curriculum. The limited research available at the beginning of the project suggested that cooperative learning was the most useful method to be employed. While the findings showed improvement in learning and engagement, it became evident that cooperative learning strategies promoted much more than Literacy and Numeracy. The research highlighted the educationally limiting dangers of differentiation when structuring mixed ability groupings.

16. The process of school self-evaluation in our primary schools and the practices that are evident in its implementation

Clíodhna Devlin

Sector: Primary

Education in Ireland has withstood many changes over the years. Experience and research, nationally and internationally, display for us that some of the most beneficial changes in schools occur when the stakeholders collaborate in a focussed fashion to improve how they teach and assess pupils' learning. By asking questions of themselves about how teaching takes place and listening to others regarding how well their pupils are learning, practitioners can identify the inherent strengths and highlight concerns, accomplishing better outcomes for their pupils.

This research addresses how the SSE structure is conducted and played-out in two urban, coeducational, primary schools. The emphases are multi-dimensional empowering each school to tell their own unique story.

My findings demonstrate that the role-modelling of leaders and their interactions throughout the organisation impact the SSE process. In addition, specific teaching methods have invigorated teachers' practice and proved professionally rewarding leading to improved learning capacity and outcomes for all.

17. Action, Change, and Co-teaching: Professional Relationships and Professional Learning during the Induction of Newly Qualified Teachers

Ciara Uí Chonduibh

Sector: Primary

The induction stage of teacher education in Ireland is currently at a major turning point. The Teaching Council have embarked upon a new model for induction, Droichead, which involves a group of experienced teachers who facilitate and support this phase of teacher education for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) at school or local level. A central focus of this research was an exploration of co-teaching as a pedagogy, used by mentors and other experienced teachers during this new model. Collaborative action research (CAR) engaged the participants in co-teaching lessons and professional development meetings. The research identified opportunities for professional learning and shared professional responsibility between NQTs and mentors. Collaborative practices were developed and fostered in school and across school settings which impacted on participants' professional learning. The implementation of CAR and co-teaching created a space for participants to reflect upon and build their professional relationships and in turn encouraged reflective practices.

18. Supporting teacher researchers - an action researcher's experience

Annelie Carslake

Sector: Further Education

During the school year of 2014/2015, I worked collaboratively with seven teachers of modern languages enquiring which support system is needed for teachers to carry out teacher research. The presentation will reflect on teachers' journeys regarding their individual enquiries that involved critical reflection, data gathering and analysis, research literature, but also group collaboration to share these experiences and issues from their classrooms. The presentation will also reflect on my own, the action researcher's journey. Strategies from narrative enquiry and grounded theory helped me to analyse data and led to findings that are based on scaffolding, storytelling, democratic collaboration and active listening. The presentation will discuss these categories and overall demonstrate that teacher research is an effective and valuable way for teacher professional learning.

19. As easy as 1,2,3....how schools can support parents to create a meaningful home numeracy environment for their children

Lize Vaughan

Sector: Primary

The aim of this research was to explore the ways that schools can support parents to create a meaningful home numeracy environment for their children. International literature has highlighted the long-lasting benefits and importance of early numeracy acquisition. A qualitative study was undertaken whereby the views of key stakeholders (parents, teachers and other professionals working in early childhood education) were sought through interviews. Observations of good practice in engaging parents in numeracy activities were also undertaken. Findings revealed potential barriers and facilitators to creating and establishing a meaningful home numeracy environment. Recommendations have been made for ways in which schools can support parents in creating a meaningful home numeracy environment.

20. **Responding to Challenges and complexity in Europe - Exploring Practices of Culturally Responsive Assessment in Irish Schools (An Assessment strategy whose time has come)**

Dr. Martin Brown, Professors Gerry McNamara, Joe O'Hara and Dr. Denise Burnes

Sector: Post Primary

This paper reports on an Erasmus + Project titled "Aiding Culturally Responsive Assessment in Schools (ACRAS)" which is seeking to prioritise the inclusive education of students with a migration background in four European countries: Ireland, Norway, Austria and Turkey".

Across Europe immigration has dramatically increased and the challenge of successfully addressing the demands of a diverse multicultural classroom is taxing educators at all levels of the educational spectrum (e.g. Ireland: see Lyons & Little, 2009; Smyth, Darmody, McGinnity & Byrne, 2009) as well as across Europe (e.g. European Commission, 2013) and internationally (e.g. OECD, 2015).

One way of coping with this situation is to make assessment practices more culturally responsive. This is the goal of the ACRAS project which seeks to provide an opportunity to identify commonalities and differences relating to educational assessment in schools. ACRAS wants to develop methods of culturally responsive assessment which allow for differentiation and the contextualisation of learning in a culturally appropriate manner.

Strategies which have previously been proposed for creating culturally responsive assessment include using locally validated formative assessments (Tichá & Abery, 2016), the addition of creativity assessments (see Kim & Zabelina, 2015) or utilising multiple methods of assessment to provide additional opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Qualls, 1998). Hood (1998) suggests that performance-based assessments can be culturally responsive if both the learning objectives and assessment tasks are created with an awareness of students' cultural context. ACRAS is therefore seeking to improve the quality and equity of educational assessment for students with a migration background in Europe by providing culturally responsive assessment strategies to educational professionals.

Expected Outcomes

This paper will present a summary of the results of year 1 of the ACRAS project that consisted of (using surveys and interviews with principals), a concurrent mixed methods analysis of culturally responsive assessment practices in Ireland. Summary analysis of year 1 of the project suggest that, in a globalised world, assessment practices will need to be changed, not only in Ireland but throughout Europe. It is also suggested that changes to teachers practice could come about from increased systemic awareness of the key issues and the development of the ability to create a variety of culturally responsive and appropriate assessment tools across education systems.

21. **Droichead: The Currents Beneath**

Barbara Mulvihill

Sector: Primary

Since 2013 the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) has maintained that teaching principals do not have the time or capacity to deal with the Droichead induction programme. Smyth et al (2016) indicated teaching principals were significantly less satisfied with Droichead than administrative principals. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact Droichead has on school culture and staff relations in schools with teaching principals in six diverse schools. A purposive sampling was used. The participants were teaching principals and members of the Professional Support Team (PST). A mixed-methods approach was adopted. Quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews. The findings indicate Droichead had a positive impact on school culture and staff relations. However, the institutional variables of school size, staff size and resources in a school posed significant challenges. Recommendations on the future model of teacher induction in Ireland have been formulated.

22. **Transition Year: An example of leadership for learning?**

Michelle Bradley

Sector: Post Primary

This research, in the form of a case study, focuses on purposive enquiry. It examines the Transition Year programme through the lens of leadership for learning to determine if it has the potential to create an environment where learning is shared, mutually beneficial and inclusive of all stakeholders. It reveals the factors that motivate students to choose Transition Year and the strengths and weaknesses observed by students, teachers and a school leader. Literature suggests that the key challenge to developing leadership for learning within a school appears to be creating the appropriate conditions and this study has determined that the Transition Year programme offers a means of establishing these conditions. The findings highlight the potential of the TY programme for developing sustainable leadership within school communities, where students are positioned at the centre of the learning process and where there is a unified approach to teaching and learning by all members of the school community.

23. **Teacher Research - The road less travelled**

Carmel Lillis

Sector: Cross Sectoral

Purpose: For the past eight years about nine hundred teachers studying for the Post Graduate Diploma in Education Leadership (PGDEL) have undertaken action research projects in their schools. They each led a group of their school colleagues through a systematic plan of work in order to improve an aspect of education provision in their schools. I have acted as tutor to many such teachers. I have observed the challenges they faced in leading and managing their projects and the difficulties they faced in having purposeful, professional conversations in their staff-rooms, a critical element in action research. Conversations in tutorial groups, comprising teachers from primary, post-primary and further education colleges, yielded rich cross-sectoral learning. Participants were also challenged by the obligation to write about their research. It is my experience as a teacher, principal and now as tutor, that teachers are not enthusiastic writers and that a writing culture does not prevail within the primary or post-primary sectors. This means that valuable knowledge is not transmitted and the area of practical knowing is neglected. Yet action researchers are obliged to publish or share their research so that it can influence the work of others. The anomaly presented here concerns me as a committed action researcher.

This paper will present my reflections on my collaboration with participants, with PDST colleagues and with the staff of the education department in Maynooth University as we trialled ways of assisting participants of the PGDEL programme re-discover and sustain their skills as reflective practitioners and recorders of their work.

24. **Parental Involvement: Rhetoric or Reality. A comparative study of parental involvement in Irish primary schools.**

Susan Gibney

Sector: Cross Sectoral

The importance of involving parents in the education of their children, and of building educational partnerships, has been recognised by many initiatives, policies and legal documents internationally. Research, spanning decades, has established that parental involvement in partnerships between schools, family and community has a critical role to play in the educational development of children, with benefits extending to children, teachers, schools, parents themselves, and the community. Irish legislation has espoused the importance of parental involvement in their children's education, has assured Irish parents of their rights of involvement, and has named them as partners in the educational process. This study explores the reality of educational partnership by examining the involvement of parents in a sample of primary schools in Ireland. By studying, comparing and contrasting both parent and teacher perceptions of parental involvement and current practice, it identifies factors which promote and/or inhibit parental involvement in their children's schooling. In order to obtain a cross-section of ideas, opinions and perceptions, nine study schools were included, encompassing a range of school designations and types/patronage: mainstream/denominational English medium schools, Gaelscoileanna (Irish medium schools) and multid denominational schools (Educate Together schools). For cross comparison of schools from different areas and socioeconomic backgrounds, schools from each of the

above sectors that are designated disadvantaged (DEIS) and schools that are not designated disadvantaged (non-DEIS) were chosen. One small school (with a teaching principal and less than eight teachers) was also included. A mixed methodological approach was adopted consisting of semi-structured interviews and focus groups sessions, with parents, principals and teachers, combined with questionnaires to parents, principals and teachers across the study schools.

Adopting a predominantly psychosocial framework, factors influencing parental involvement were considered through the lens of an adapted theoretical framework, devised for the purposes of this study - our **Theoretical Model of Influences on Parental Involvement**. This combines Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) **Theoretical Model of the Parental Involvement Process** and Epstein's (1995, 1997, 2001) model of **Overlapping Spheres of Influence**. Factors specific to parents' involvement decisions which were found to be significant in our model include role construction, self-efficacy, knowledge, skills, time and energy, and life context variables. The importance of the influence of schools on the parental involvement process was further considered in detail with regard to the sociological perspectives of Bourdieu, (1977, 1990) and organisational theory, in particular that of bridging and buffering (Ogawa, 1998). The influence of school culture, habitus and practice on practices of parental involvement was also found to be significant when examined with reference to communication, the parent-teacher relationship, teacher factors of efficacy and fears, teacher education, leadership, and school policy, planning and programmes of involvement.

Findings suggest parental participation and engagement in their children's education in the schools in our study is varied and multidimensional, with much satisfaction expressed with current levels of, and opportunities afforded parents for, participation and engagement. A distinction is drawn between parenting practices in the home, parental participation in activities within the school, and engagement in activities directly benefitting the child's learning. Separate spheres of responsibility for children's 'informal' and 'formal' education are identified. Differences are apparent that are mediated by school types/patronage and social class designation. Time available to participate is the major inhibiting factor cited by both parents and teachers, with 'informal' communication and the use of first names in the parent-teacher relationship cited as major contributors.

The findings suggest that the models of Educate Together and the DEIS, Home School Community Liaison scheme, combine the most important elements necessary for the encouragement of parental involvement, and maximum parental participation and engagement in their children's schools. Partnership, policy, planning, and communication are all essential elements of school cultures in both types of school, which are conducive to optimal parental involvement. Lack of direction, and/or teacher fears and apprehensions inhibit planning for parental involvement in our other study schools. However, in all schools, the language of partnership and collaboration is permeated with language that is often confrontational and belies a lack of consensus on definitions of roles and responsibilities and a common understanding of the meaning of partnership. The "spirit of partnership" (Education Act, 1998) is indeed permeating the boundaries of our schools, but has not yet been absorbed into the fabric of our school cultures. Continuous professional development, dialogue, communication and collaboration are recommended in order to move from the rhetoric into reality, and openly embrace parental involvement in its diverse forms.

25. Exploring pupils' motivation and creativity to engage with the composing strand through the implementation of a compositional programme using Irish traditional music.

Aoife Greene

Sector: Primary

The purpose of this study was to explore motivation and creativity in children to compose, through the implementation of an action research compositional programme using Irish traditional music at primary school level. International studies abound regarding motivation and creativity. However, the use of Irish traditional music as a pedagogical tool into the exploration of composition in music education at primary school level has not been previously researched. Therefore, this study explores both elements of motivation and creativity to engage with the compositional strand of the state curriculum through a compositional programme using Irish traditional music.

Employing a qualitative method approach towards exploring the research topic, data collected from focus group discussions, observations, research diaries and interviews were inductively coded for in-depth analysis. A six-week composition programme using Irish traditional music was developed. Weekly music classes were planned by both researcher and twenty-five fifth class primary school pupils (aged 11-12).

Results indicate firstly, that creativity and motivation is influenced by parents, peers and teachers. Secondly, the influences of parents, peers and teachers aid in self-development of the student's self-esteem, self-belief and employs life skills. Thirdly, the results express that technical ability on their instrument and educational ability can affect a student's motivation and creativity. Finally, the results suggest that the processes involved and acknowledgment of motivation and creativity has an impact on achievement.

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that a compositional programme using Irish traditional music provides an extensive educational opportunity to enable the development of children's motivation and creativity to engage with a state curriculum.

26. The challenge of perpetual motion - the willingness and desire of the Irish primary school principals to juggle everything

Dr. Martin Stynes

Sector: Primary

In Ireland, formalised leadership acculturation processes are as yet relatively unformed and school leadership at local level is arguably an embryonic concept. In most cases, Irish principals meet leadership challenges with limited or no formal preparation.

Against this backdrop, a diverse group of 31 primary school principals generated data from the self-observed minutiae of researcher-driven diaries and from a colourful spectrum of personal reflections in follow-up semi-structured qualitative interviews. Coding in NVivo and the querying of emergent themes through conceptual frameworks provided detailed evidence of a myriad of activities and perspectives.

This presentation offers an exploration, in narrative form and with supporting evidence, of principals' experiences of the perpetual motion of administration and school governance, interacting with the school community and dealing with the unexpected. Boundaries between principals' personal and professional lives blur significantly amid the realisation that life's journey, as a school principal, is demanding yet worthwhile.

27. An examination of post primary teachers' voluntary participation in Continuous Professional Development outside of school hours

Phil Fox

Sector: Post Primary

This study sought to explore the reasons why post primary teachers participate in voluntary Continuous Professional Development outside of school hours. In the course of this research, factors which motivated or prevented teachers from participating in Continuous Professional Development was explored. The research also focused on the impact of career stage on teachers' participation or lack thereof in voluntary Continuous Professional Development. This research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. 300 teachers in the Athlone Education Centre Region were surveyed and a 20% response rate was achieved. Two focus group interviews were conducted, participants comprised post primary teachers from a school in the midlands. Findings from the survey were analysed using Google Apps, Microsoft Excel and manual colour coding. These data combined with focus group data were collated and thematically discussed.

The findings of this research suggest that the majority of teachers value and participate in voluntary Continuous Professional Development with a view to improving teaching and learning, and meeting other teachers, but raised concerns regarding its design, delivery and provision. Teachers made several references to work commitments and time constraints, relevance to practice as well as promotion opportunities and accreditation for Continuous Professional Development. This study concludes that teachers welcome a change to the traditional models of Continuous Professional Development.

28. Belonging: Development of a teacher educator identity

Karen Buckley

Sector: Cross Sectoral

Research suggests that the development of a Belonging: Development of a teacher educator identity is a central process in becoming a teacher educator. Over the past 10 years, there has been an increase in research exploring teacher identity. However, teacher educator identity seems to be still under-researched. There are indications that teacher educators who become involved in professional development activities develop a feeling of "Belonging' as a teacher educator: their collective identity, that which binds them as a professional group, and the affinities they feel, or do not feel, with other professional communities." (Davey, 2013 p. 7.) It is this sense of belonging that I am drawn to explore using self-study action research approach.

NOTES

DCU St Patrick's Campus



CAR PARKING
Facilities available in Drumcondra Education Centre and also in the yard of St Patrick's BNS next door to Centre

Main entrance to Campus

E Block - Rooms E201, E205, E206, E223 and E214

Pedestrian entrance from Dublin Bus stops 7602 and 7603