

Research Newsletter



St Mary's
University College
Belfast
A College of Queen's University

RESEARCH ON THE REFERENDUM LEADING TO BREXIT



A research paper written by Dr Gerard McCann (Centre for Global Justice) and Dr Paul Hainsworth, who is a political researcher and consultant, was published online in the journal *Irish Political Studies* in October 2016 under the title, "Brexit and Northern Ireland: The 2016 Referendum on the United Kingdom's Membership of the European Union".

In the paper, Gerard and Paul referred to the recent referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union and how, in Northern Ireland, it took place in the familiar context of historic and political divides. They

outlined how perspectives on European integration, long-standing and evolving, were to the fore as political parties, lobby groups and various organisations campaigned around key issues such as the economic impact, migration, sovereignty, North–South relations, the reintroduction of a 'hard' border and the European Union budget.

The authors noted how the campaigners in Northern Ireland, who wished to retain membership of the European Union, were successful in winning the overall majority of votes cast but found themselves on the losing side of the overall result for the United Kingdom. Their research referred to how, even with a 62.69% turnout, the outcome in Northern Ireland saw 55.8% voting to remain and 44.2% voting for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. Their article drew on campaign literature, party activity, media coverage, as well as governmental and specialist reports to assess the run up to, the result and the aftermath of the vote in Northern Ireland.

COLLABORATION WITH QUB LEADS TO INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The College was represented by Dr Birgit Schippers (Centre for Global Justice) as part of an organising team that held a two-day international research conference at the Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland in November 2016 under the theme *Rights in Diverse Societies: Gender, Migration and Ethnopolitics in the EU*. The aim of the research conference was to explore the intersections of ethnopolitics, gender and ethnic identities, and to examine the differential access to the enjoyment of equal rights in diverse societies. Three specialist groups of the Political Studies Association hosted the research conference: Ethnopolitics; Women & Politics; and Global Justice & Human Rights, of which Birgit is a co-convenor. Delegates travelled from Ireland, Britain, Turkey, Hungary, Germany and Austria and the keynote speakers were Les Allamby (Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission) and Professor John Coakley (Queen's University Belfast).



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PANEL CONVENOR ORGANISES RESEARCH WORKSHOP

Dr Birgit Schippers (Centre for Global Justice) was a panel convenor for a research workshop sponsored by: the British International Studies Association's Poststructural Politics Working Group; the British International Studies Association's Contemporary Research in International Political Theory Working Group; the Cardiff School of Law and Politics; and the Georgia Institute of Technology's School of International Affairs.

The workshop took place at Cardiff University, Wales in October 2016 and the theme of the panel that Birgit

organised was *Performativity and Precarity*. This panel aimed to consider the tensions, insights and promises generated by the pairing of precarity and performativity.

Such a pairing invites particular attention to practices of political agency and collective politics; to formations of community that transcend the boundaries of identity politics; to modes of livability and ethics, broadly conceived; and to questions of ontology. The three-day workshop was attended by many international delegates from higher education institutions in the UK, Denmark, USA, Germany, Pakistan and Canada.



"This panel aimed to consider the tensions, insights and promises generated by the pairing of precarity and performativity."

CONFERENCE PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The TEESNet (Teacher Education for Equity and Sustainability Network) annual research conference took place in September 2016 at Liverpool Hope University, England, under the theme *Measuring What's Valuable or Valuing What's Measurable? Monitoring and Evaluation in Education for*

Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC). Dr Gerard McCann (Centre for Global Justice) attended this research conference and gave a presentation titled "Maintaining the Values: Brexit, ESDGC and the European Union's DEAR Strategy". Gerard's research provided an overview of ways in which issues pertinent to global development from a European context are studied. It also surveyed various European interpretations of Development Education, Global Citizenship and Education for Sustainable Development. Gerard highlighted the key markers within the European Union's policy framework for Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR), and he speculated on the future challenges for DEAR in a fracturing policy base.

With a range of relevant and stimulating research presentations and keynote speeches, the conference brought together academics, researchers, teachers and representatives from non-governmental organisations to explore opportunities and challenges in the monitoring and evaluation of education that supports people in leading fulfilling lives in a changing, globalised world. There were also opportunities to explore the values underpinning education policy and practice for ESDGC.

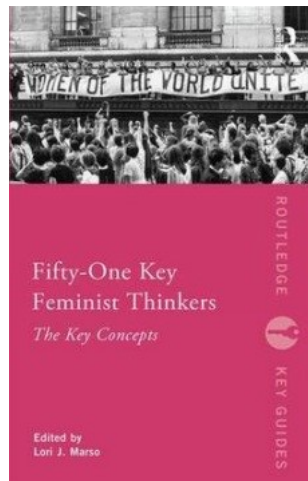


CHAPTER ON JUDITH BUTLER'S FEMINIST THOUGHT

A book published in the second half of 2016, titled "Fifty-One Key Feminist Thinkers" and edited by Lori Marso, featured a chapter by Dr Birgit Schippers (Centre for Global Justice). The article written by Birgit was based on research she carried out on Judith Butler and it engaged with her contribution to feminist thought and how it championed her status as a feminist thinker.

The book comprises 51 key thinkers and 51 authors, recognising that women make up 51% of the world's population. There are actually 102 thinkers collected in the pages of the book, as each author is also a feminist thinker. They include scholars, writers, poets, as well as activists, who speak the languages of, for example, literature, education, gender studies, global affairs, political theory, sociology and philosophy.

Each article is supported by a list of the thinker's major works, along with further reading suggestions. The book is an ideal resource for students and academics alike and will appeal to all those interested in the fields of gender studies, women's studies, as well as women's history and politics.



HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON CONFLICT IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND BETWEEN 1912-22

A joint research seminar, organised by the Federation for Ulster Local Studies and the Federation of Local History Societies, was attended by Dr Peter Collins (Centre for Global Justice) in November 2016. The theme of the research seminar was *Years of Endurance: Personalities and Events and their Impact on Irish Family Life 1912-1922* and it took place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dundalk, Ireland. The seminar explored the impact of war and revolution on the lives of ordinary people in Ireland, north and south, during the years 1912-1922. In particular, it examined the effects of two cataclysmic events that occurred in quick succession, the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme.

Peter presented his research paper, titled "The Impact of War and its Immediate Aftermath on the Working Class in the North of Ireland", in the afternoon of the joint research seminar and it was followed by a questions and answers session. Peter's paper focussed on the years of conflict between 1912 and 1922 that led to partition. It concentrated on how and why Labour in the north as a political movement was squeezed out between the two conflicting nationalisms and why it never attained the prominence and influence being won in those years by the British Labour Party and similar parties in Europe.



APPOINTMENT TO HIGH PROFILE RESEARCH COUNCILS

Dr Birgit Schippers (Centre for Global Justice) was appointed to the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) Peer Review College following a call for nominees in 2016. Birgit's appointment commenced in January 2017 and will end in December 2020. The AHRC's Peer Review College has members from higher education institutions and independent research organisations in the United Kingdom and overseas. Members provide expert reviews of research grant proposals across the range of the AHRC's research schemes within their areas of expertise. The reviews inform panels and, ultimately, the AHRC's decision-making processes.



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Birgit was also appointed as assessor to the Inner International Board of the Irish Research Council (IRC) in January 2017. The IRC was established to: fund excellent research within, and between, all disciplines; support the education and skills development of excellent individual early stage researchers; and enrich the pool of knowledge and expertise available for addressing Ireland's current and future challenges. It also provides policy advice on postgraduate education and on more general research matters to the Higher Education Authority as well as to other national and international bodies.



Both appointments offer Birgit an excellent opportunity to gain a real insight into the review processes of the AHRC as well as the IRC, and will ultimately benefit the College.

TEACHER EDUCATION GROUP DEVELOPS RESEARCH IDEAS

The College hosted a meeting of the Teacher Education Group in November 2016 and it was organised by one of its members, Dr Geraldine Magennis (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment). This research group is comprised of a number of authorities in teacher education from across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Members share an interest in comparative analyses of wide-ranging issues in teacher education across national and international borders. They had a book published in 2015 titled “Teacher Education in Times of Change”.

During the meeting, two members made presentations. The first presentation was by Dr Aileen Kennedy from the University of Edinburgh and was titled “Interrogating CPD Policy at a National Level”. The second speaker was Mr Trevor Mutton from Oxford University whose presentation was titled “Deconstructing the Carter Review: Competing Conceptions of Quality in England’s ‘School-Led’ System of Initial Teacher

Education”. This meeting provided members with the opportunity to work collaboratively on developing their research ideas and to plan joint research publications.



Ms G. Hindle, Professor L. Clarke, Professor M. Hulme, Mr T. Mutton, Dr G. Peiser, Dr A. Kennedy and Dr G. Magennis

“Members share an interest in comparative analyses of wide-ranging issues in teacher education across national and international borders.”

TEACHER EDUCATION SEMINAR SERIES

“Voluntary Service Learning and the Reflective Practitioner”. Rev Dr Eddie Magee

“Playful Approaches to the Teaching of Literacy”. Catherine Gilliland

“Opening Spaces: Teaching Heaney’s Troubles Poems”. Dr Brian Hanratty

“What’s the Point? Planning your Research and Publication Strategy”. Dr Birgit Schippers

“Autobiographical Writing in Irish by Donegal Gaeltacht Authors and The Case of Míic Mac Gabhann’s Rotha Mór an tSaoil or The Hard Road to Klondike”. Dr Seán Mac Corraídh

“The Importance of Patrick Pearse for Irish-Medium Education: A Discussion of Participants’ Contributions”. Séamas Ó Donnghaile

REPORT PUBLISHED TO PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING IN LITERACY LESSONS

Donna Hazzard (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment), in association with The Irish News and the Confederation of British Industry, recently created a report that included various resources, resulting from her research and teaching in the area of critical literacy. This report was launched at a professional development event held in January 2017 and run in partnership with the United Kingdom Literacy Association. The report, titled “The Irish News Critical Literacy Project”, provides teachers with relevant information, guidelines and learning resources to enable them to use The Irish News newspaper as part of their critical literacy lessons in school.

According to the report, the aim is to develop pupils to think critically and to ask questions about the information and opinions that appear in the media. The report also aims to help teachers develop their pupils’ skills to think deeply about what they read and to be logical in drawing up their own reasonable conclusions. The learning to be gained by the pupils relates to reading, writing, speaking and listening across the entire curriculum. Donna envisages that research on the use of the report could be conducted to evaluate the impact of the project in three phases. These include the impact it has: on pupils; on teachers’ awareness, understanding and confidence in teaching critical literacy; and on reading in the home.



Professor Peter Finn, Angela McGowan (Director of CBI), Donna Hazzard and Noel Doran (Editor of The Irish News)

THE WORLDS OF LITERACY AND HISTORY INTEGRATE AT RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Literacy Association of Ireland
Cumann Litearthachta na hÉireann

The annual research conference of the Literacy Association of Ireland had its theme as *Exploring the Literacy Landscape: Celebrating 40 Years of Research and Practice* and it was attended by Catherine

Gilliland (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) in September 2016. It was held at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, Ireland and Catherine's presentation, titled "History is Literacy", was based on work she carried out with her colleague Teresa Cash.

In summarising their research work, Catherine and Teresa believe that there is a great variety of written sources available from the past for children to work with including diary, newspapers and personal testimony, to name but a few. They would argue that this could present a challenge for some children and therefore feel there is a need to integrate the worlds of history and literacy so that educators can facilitate children's engagement in story and authentic historical sources in an imaginative way. The presentation looked at how the world of 'faction', in the form of picture books, could power historical non-fiction through imagination. They suggest that when children are born they find themselves in the middle of a story as one of the characters, therefore there is a natural fascination to find out what happened before and this is how history came into being.

Their work referred to Paul Fleischman's story, titled "The Matchbox Diary", which tells a breath-taking immigration tale with appeal across generations. They outlined that in this 'factional' story, children are taken on a historical journey from Italy to America - the land of hope and opportunity. They referred to the story told through a series of memories in the form of matchboxes containing objects that chronicle the lives of an immigrant family and the opportunities and challenges they face along the way.

During the presentation, delegates explored the importance of pre-, during and post-reading graphic organisers that develop children's higher order thinking skills. Delegates examined how an historical picture book could provide a framework for enhancing historical skills, knowledge and understanding in the process, with an emphasis on empathy, personal development and mutual understanding, as well as cross-curricular skills.

COLLEGE RESEARCHER FACILITATES FUNDING WORKSHOP

The 2016 annual SCoTENS conference took place at the City Hotel, Armagh, Northern Ireland in October 2016 under the theme *Communities of Practice: Learning Together to Teach Together*. Its intention was to facilitate an open and engaging exploration of the value of collaborative learning to support teachers' professional practice. The conference drew upon the expertise of the key learning theorist Etienne Wenger whose scholarship on learning, and particularly his concepts of 'communities of practice' and 'boundary', have enriched educators' understanding of how to learn and how to teach. The conference offered a chance for delegates to reflect on the important communities of practice of which they are a part and how they can continue to collaborate to extend and enrich their professional practices.

Dr Geraldine Magennis (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) collaborated with Professor Kathy Hall, from University College Cork, in chairing one of the sessions provided to delegates. This session focused on the seed funding offered to researchers that has the aim of providing a supportive framework for collaborative research and professional activities in teacher education.



Professor Teresa O'Doherty, Dr Eugene Toolan, Dr Geraldine Magennis and Orla Nugent

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT TO INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

An all-Ireland team of academic scholars, which included Ciaran Walsh (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment), provided a conference presentation titled “Teacher Educator Professional Learning: Shaping the Conversation of Teacher Education?” at the 2016 Association Internationale des Écoles Supérieures d’Education Physique conference held at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, USA. This took the form of a poster that provided an account of a SCoTENS funded research project. It outlined its purpose, which was to examine the professional learning experiences of individual teacher educators, within a community of learners. Specifically, the conference poster focussed on how professional learning influenced teaching and experiences with the professional learning process.

Ciaran and his colleagues also presented a paper, based on this research, at the European Conference on Educational Research held at University College Dublin,

Ireland in the second half of 2016. Their research paper, titled “Using Photos to Give Voice to Teacher Educator Professional Learning Experiences”, focussed on the use of photographs as a method of gaining the opinions of teacher educators towards their professional learning experiences.

This all-Ireland team of researchers have demonstrated that although their project originated from a small amount of SCoTENS seed funding, they have been able to disseminate its findings to various international audiences.



“It outlined its purpose, which was to examine the professional learning experiences of individual teacher educators, within a community of learners.”

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND

The most recent British Educational Research Association (BERA) annual conference was held at the University of Leeds, England in September 2016 and one of the research symposiums involved Dr Geraldine Magennis (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) and her colleagues from the Teacher Education Group. This group conducts research on policy and practice in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The title of the research symposium was “The Big Squeeze: Pressures on Teacher Education Across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland” and had representation of researchers from Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Oxford, Liverpool John Moores University, University of Edinburgh, Cardiff Metropolitan University, University of Cardiff, Mary Immaculate College, Ulster University, and St Mary’s University College Belfast.

The symposium provided an opportunity to review the contents of the group’s recent publication on teacher education across the United Kingdom and Ireland, by members looking at each country and giving an update on their differing policy trajectories. The agreed focus for all of the symposium papers was to examine the ways in which teacher education in each jurisdiction has experienced a squeeze in recent times relating to work, with different causes and outcomes, creating tension and stress within the provision of teacher education. While an analysis of these reviews revealed distinct differences in terms of the policy recommendations for each nation, all were driven by the need for the reform of initial teacher education. Sources of pressure included: internal institutional pressures; political and ideological pressures; denominational and historical pressures; economic pressures (including teacher supply); as well as curricular pressures.

The papers that featured in the symposium adopted an historical and socio-cultural approach to the analysis of policy, drew on specific policy documents and used network analysis to analyse the changing dynamics of key players within communities of policy and practice. Taken together, the papers provided a deeper understanding of policy-making across the five nations and identified the ways in which the locus of power continues to shift, with profound implications not only for teacher educators but also for researchers in these countries.



PAPER PUBLISHED IN CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

The refereed proceedings of the recent Castle Conference 2016 included a paper by Ciaran Walsh (Centre for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment) and his colleagues who conducted research on the professional learning experiences of teacher educators. The conference is held every two years in the Queen's University International Study Centre at Herstmonceux Castle in East Sussex, England and in 2016 it had a corresponding conference proceedings published by the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices community.



Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England

The paper, titled “Snapshots: Teacher Educator Professional Learning Shaping Teacher Educator Practices”, outlined the purpose of the study to examine the individual teacher educators’ learning within a developing professional learning community. The learning focus was related to the pedagogical area of communication. The research was interested in how this professional learning might influence teacher educators’ individual pedagogical practices with pre-service teachers. The researchers believed that insight on both the aspects of professional learning that teacher educators implement in their teacher education practices and the influence of the professional learning process on individual approaches, can contribute to an understanding of features of effective professional learning for teacher educators. The researchers also suggested that understanding how teacher educators develop their practices to enhance student learning in physical education teacher education, could inform the design of future professional learning programmes for teacher educators. Specific research questions revolved around physical education teacher educators’ experiences of professional learning within a community focussed on communication as well as their perceptions of the influence of this professional learning on their pedagogical approaches with pre-service teachers.

PUPILS CONTRIBUTE TO RESEARCH ON STEM ACTIVITIES

Dr Kieran McGeown (STEAM Research Centre), in partnership with the Institution of Engineering and Technology as well as Dr Michael Ivers from Stranmillis University College, organised and delivered two educational programmes in February 2017 titled, “Strictly Come Dancing with Robots and Game of Drones” that are related to the STEM in primary schools research project. The programmes involved approximately 160 pupils from various primary schools who participated in a series of activities using robots and drones. The pupils faced various problem-solving challenges that involved programming the robots to dance. The challenges also required the pupils to master programming for the drones to perform aerial acrobatics. These were supervised by students of initial teacher education.



Dr Kieran McGeown, Dr Anne Heaslett, Eoin McGread (NI IET Committee), Dr Michael Ivers and Professor Peter Finn

These educational programmes related to recent research conducted as a joint venture between St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College. The aim of the research was to ascertain if engaging in practical activities could assist pupils to understand elements of mathematics, such as measurement and time, in a better way. The research team was also keen to establish if the practical approach that involved creative activity, better engaged learners who feel discouraged with theoretical activity.

While the two days were a fun learning experience for the pupils, a research element was included to focus upon particular measurements of the educational impact of STEM experiences. Pre- and post-test instruments were used to gather data from the pupils involved in the activities and a control group of pupils who were not involved in the activities. A learning preference survey was also administered during the two-day event.

PAPER ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE

An article, titled “Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion” by Rev Feidhlimidh Magennis (Research Group for Catholic Education), was published during the summer of 2016 in The Pastoral Review journal. It provided an account of an international conference on Catholic education to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Catholic Education.

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RESEARCH ON ROLE PARENTS PLAY IN THEIR CHILD’S EDUCATION AT IRISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

A research article, titled “Tuismitheoirí mar ghníomhairí in earnáil an Ghaeloideachais”, was co-authored by Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir (Irish-medium Research Centre) and based on original research funded by the North-South Standing Committee on Irish-medium Education. The paper, written in collaboration with Seán Ó Cathalláin and Pádraig Ó Duibhir, was published in the journal *COMHARTaighde* in October 2016. It analysed the role that parents play in the Irish-medium education of their children, in the context of changes in the profile of parents and pupils, as the school population grows. The authors discussed the impact of active involvement in the children’s school experience, barriers to that relationship with schools, as well as initiatives to overcome those barriers.

COMHARTaighde is an annual periodical that makes scholarly work in the Irish language available across the world in particular areas of modern Irish scholarship. In order to serve the widest readership, it is published as an open-access online journal. It is peer-reviewed for Irish language academics as well as researchers and the second issue, which featured Gabrielle’s research, was launched towards the end of 2016 at the National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland.

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STAFF PROFILE

Dr Seán Mac Corraidh (Irish-medium Research Centre) has been developing



Irish-medium education, Irish language and culture along with Irish studies in the College since 1998. In 2011, he was appointed coordinator of the Irish-medium post-primary PGCE as a shared project with colleagues in the Schools of Education at Ulster University and Queen’s University Belfast. In that particular role, he organises,

provides and enhances opportunities for students to develop their competence in the Irish language so they may more effectively teach their specialism through the medium of Irish at the post-primary phase.

Seán has been research active since 1998 and has delivered research papers on various occasions. These include at the *Taighde agus Teagasc* conferences and the *Teacher Education Seminar Series* that are held in the College, as well as at academic events such as *Éigse Loch Lao* held at Ulster University. Seán has also presented his research at national and international conferences and he was guest speaker in 2013 at *Tionól Teagaisc*, which is an annual conference for post-primary teachers of Irish, organised by the Professional Development Service for Teachers. Seán also shared his research at a conference on immersion education, *An Tumoideachas: Bua nó Dua*, held at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland in May 2015.

Seán has researched, written and translated books, chapters in books and peer-assessed articles on a wide range of subjects within both Irish and education studies. His areas of interest include immersion pedagogy, bilingualism, the Irish folklore and song tradition, literary translation, phonics and phonology. He has had two collections of short, traditional tales published that include “Seán Bán Mac Grianna: Scéalta agus Amhráin” (Coiscéim, 2010) and “Mar a chuala mise é” (CEA, 2012). Currently, he is part of a research team that is analysing the oral and written Irish of pupils in Year 8 and Year 10 in Irish-medium post-primary schools with the aim of informing the writing of Irish language textbooks for pupils.