

Research Newsletter



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

ANNUAL RESEARCH EVENT 2018

The Research Office organised the second *Annual Research Event For Academic Staff*, which took place in the College during September 2018. The aim of this annual event was to provide an opportunity for academic staff to share the outcomes of their research with colleagues, thus generating a culture of research development that is inclusive, transparent and celebratory. Following a welcome and introduction from the Research Officer and Principal, the programme focused on six in-depth presentations, with members of academic staff presenting a more detailed account of their research. Among other things, they concentrated specifically on the findings, outcomes and conclusions of



their research. They referred also to any impact their research had on, for example, teaching in higher education, the practice of teachers in schools, the work of professional associations, and the policies of statutory agencies.

The six presentations included:

- ♦ ***Irish-Medium Pupils On Their Linguistic Journey: A Snapshot At Key Stage 3*** Dr Seán Mac Corraidh and Dr Eibhlín Mhic Aoidh (Irish-Medium Education Research Group)
- ♦ ***Interreligious Education And The Contemporary Post-Primary School*** Dr Niall Coll (Catholic Education Research Group)
- ♦ ***Global Justice Research*** Dr Gerard McCann (International Studies & Global Justice Research Group)
- ♦ ***STEM In Northern Ireland Primary Schools*** Dr Kieran McGeown (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group)
- ♦ ***Unity In Diversity: European Perspectives On Borders And Memories*** Dr Tracey McKay (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group)
- ♦ ***Teachers' Pedagogical Work And Well-Being*** Paddy Tally (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group)

The research event generated much discussion, through questions and comments, from those in attendance who contributed to a lively academic debate, thus providing feedback to presenters who valued their opinions.



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CONNECTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING TO PERSONAL INTERESTS

As a regular contributor to the professional periodical *Literacy News*, published by the Literacy Association of Ireland, Catherine Gilliland (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group) drew upon her experience as a teacher educator specialising in literacy to write a research-related article titled “Don’t Give Up Yer Auld Stories!”

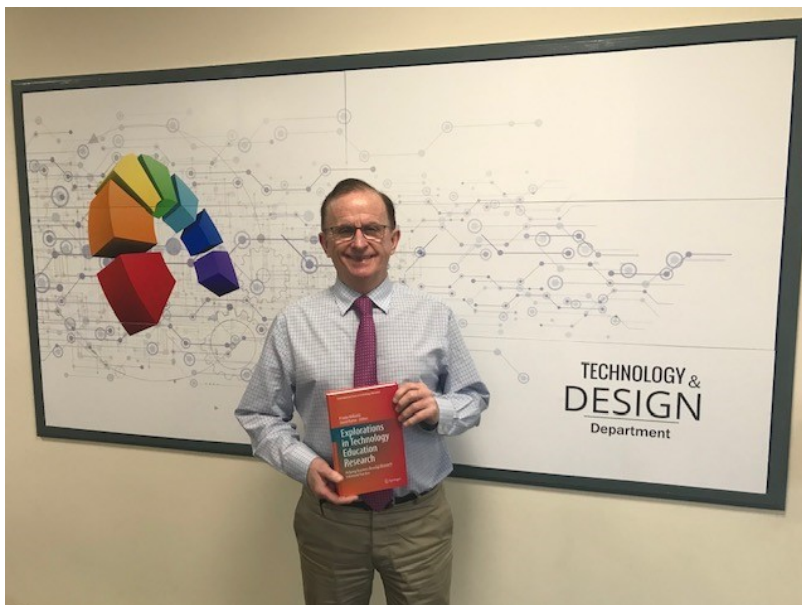
The article was published in the Autumn 2018 edition of this professional periodical and in her introduction, Catherine argued that children learn better when it connects to their personal interests and suggested ways in which this can be done by referring to stories, academic literature and relevant children’s authors.



“... children learn better when it connects to their personal interests ...”

CHILDREN'S TECHNOLOGY & DESIGN PRACTICE IN SCHOOL AND INDUSTRY

Having completed his doctoral study in 2016, Dr Kieran McGeown (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group) drew upon his research dissertation to write a chapter for the book *Explorations In Technology Education Research: Helping Teachers Develop Research Informed Practice* edited by John Williams and David Barlex, which was published by Springer in January 2019. The book brought together significant international research in technology education by focusing on contemporary postgraduate research. It elaborated on the findings of this research with the aim of making the content relevant to researchers and teachers. The book shared with readers what the research means for classroom teachers through understanding different motivations for teaching technology in schools and observing the model of learning supported by the research.



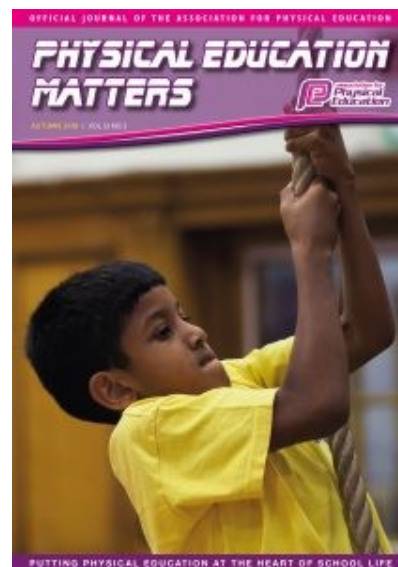
Kieran’s chapter, titled “Secondary Pupils’ Perceptions Of Their Experiences Of Practical Work In Technology And Design”, investigated the perceptions held by pupils, across four Northern Ireland secondary schools, towards routine school-based practical work activities and project work in Technology & Design and also that which had been contextualised within an industrial setting. The views of the Heads of Departments of each school and four local industrialists were also probed in relation to their views on the benefits or otherwise of both types of practical work.

Dr Kieran McGeown’s chapter featured in a recent book on exploring technology education research

LINKING CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL FITNESS WITH READING ABILITY

The professional periodical, *Physical Education Matters*, which is published by the Association for Physical Education, featured a research article written by Dr Elaine McLaughlin, Paddy Tally and Dr Matthew Martin (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group) in its Autumn 2018 issue. Their article, titled "Reading Levels And Fitness In Primary School Children", referred to a research study which they undertook that focused on possible linkages between physical fitness and children's reading ability levels, as measured relative to their age.

Their research findings suggested that the relationship between physical fitness and reading scores is almost universally a positive one. However, they acknowledged that while reading scores in their research study tended to dip as the participants' physical fitness scores dipped, they found that this relationship underwent a slight reversal when physical fitness scores approached the bottom of the participants' range, at which point reading scores ceased to decline and began to improve. The authors concluded their article by suggesting that initiatives in increasing levels of physical activity will be more likely to result in some improvements in academic achievement, along with some improvements in related factors such as self-esteem, behaviour, etc., while furthering an understanding of the exact relationship which physical activity has to the broader school experience.



USING ARTS-BASED RESEARCH METHODS WITH TRAVELLER CHILDREN

Collaboration between Dr Geraldine Magennis (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group) and Damian Knipe from the College's Research Office resulted in an article published in the journal *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal* that became available online in September 2018. The article, titled "Arts-Based Approaches To Studying Traveller Children's Educational Experiences", presented ideas on how arts-based methods can be applied to conducting research with a minority ethnic group (i.e., Traveller children) and offered ways to analyse data.



Reference was made to the culture of Traveller children, statistics on their educational performance and recent research in Northern Ireland on their disengagement from compulsory post-primary (11-16 years old) education. A brief summary of the principles of arts-based research was offered, outlining the theoretical underpinnings of supporters who argue for its use in educational research settings. Three arts-based research methods were elaborated upon as options in the design of conducting research with Traveller children and advice was offered on associated ethical issues. In exploring methods of analysis, reference was made to the types of data and suggestions were given on a content and thematic analytical approach to interpret the data. In conclusion, the authors reiterated the importance of offering these culturally responsive means to engage with this minority ethnic group.



TEACHING POETRY TO CHILDREN IN KEY STAGE TWO

The annual conference of the Literacy Association of Ireland was held in November 2018 and it was attended by Dr Brian Hanratty (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group) who presented a paper on his research titled “Re-Focusing The Teaching Of Poetry At Key Stage 2 In Northern Ireland: Some Literary-Critical And Pedagogical Observations”. The theme of the conference was *Literacy Without Borders* and it was held at Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, Ireland. Brian’s paper was underpinned by a central argument that there is scope for considerable change and improvement in the way poetry is taught at Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland. In making this case for significant change, the paper had three closely interconnected parts.

In the first, more theoretical part, there was the presentation of a range of critical ideas which highlighted the importance of poetry and its particular richness as a literary genre. In the second part, while emphasising the enjoyment of poetry as an end in itself,

the paper also highlighted a number of pedagogical strategies which could enhance that enjoyment.

The third part consisted of two sections. Firstly, there was a brief, comparative evaluation of the statutory requirements for teaching poetry at Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland and England. Secondly, the results of a questionnaire, which was distributed to a total of thirty-five literacy coordinators in primary schools across Northern Ireland, were evaluated.

While Brian admitted that the sample of teachers consulted was quite small, the results did indeed suggest that there was considerable scope for improvement in the teaching of poetry at Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland.

Literacy Association of Ireland
Cumann Litearthachta na hÉireann



42nd International Conference: Literacy Beyond Borders

“... underpinned by a central argument that there is scope for considerable change and improvement in the way poetry is taught at Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland.”

COLLABORATING WITH COLLEAGUES TO DEVELOP CPD COURSE

Four members of academic staff collaborated on writing a research-related article for the professional periodical *Literacy News*, which was produced by the Literacy Association of Ireland in the Autumn of 2018. The title of the article was “Four Heads Are Better Than Two At Delivering CPD” and the joint authors, including Teresa Cash, Dr Katrina Mulholland, Catherine Gilliland and Padaí de Bléine (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group), explored how collaborative work in planning a continuing professional development (CPD) session could be more beneficial for teachers who have a vision for better learning for children.

The article referred to the translations of books targeted mainly for children into the Irish language by Padaí and the concern from Katrina about the level of science education in Northern Ireland’s primary schools as a result of science being integrated into the single area of learning referred to as The World Around Us. It went on to outline the two sessions used with teachers as part of their CPD and concluded with the realisation that learning is social in nature.

Literacy News • Autumn 2018



FOUR HEADS ARE BETTER THAN TWO AT DELIVERING CPD

This article was collaboratively written by Catherine Gilliland, Teresa Cash, Dr Katrina Mulholland and Padaí Blaney, all Senior lecturers in St Mary's University College in Belfast.

The authors found collaboration to be a learned process and, if managed appropriately, they suggested it to be a powerful tool that enables educators to tap into new ideas and information. They believed it allows for challenge and differentiation, enhances confidence and self-esteem, and strengthens social skills.

ARTICLE ON SÉAMUS Ó GRIANNA FEATURED IN PUBLICATION

An event to launch an edition of *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* in November 2018 at Maynooth University, Kildare, Ireland was attended by Dr Seán Mac Corraidh (Irish-Medium Education Research Group) who had his article featured in this latest edition, which was published by An Sagart: Má Nuad.

Seán's article, titled “Daoine nach gcoinneochadh comhrádh chúig bhomaite leis an mháthair a d’oil mé’, scríbhneoir par excellence Gaeilge agus tráchtairé tintrí mioscaiseach: cáis casta Shéamuis Uí Ghrianna”, focused on the life and times of Séamus Ó Grianna.



LECTURE ON BREXIT TO ITALIAN SCHOLARS

The *Luigi De Rosa Lecture On Global History* was given by Dr Gerard McCann (International Studies & Global Justice Research Group) at the Scuderie di Palazzo Altieri, Rome, Italy in December 2018. The title of Gerard's lecture was “The United Kingdom And The European Integration Process: From Accession To Brexit” and it was organised by the Associazione Bancaria Italiana, The Journal of European Economic History, and ABIServizi. The annual *Luigi De Rosa Lecture On Global History* is a memorial lecture that was established in 2014 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the death of the founder of The Journal of European Economic History.



Gerard's lecture focused on the background to Brexit, the sources of the breakdown in the United Kingdom's position on European integration, and the impact that Brexit will have on the British Constitution and the United Kingdom's economic potential.

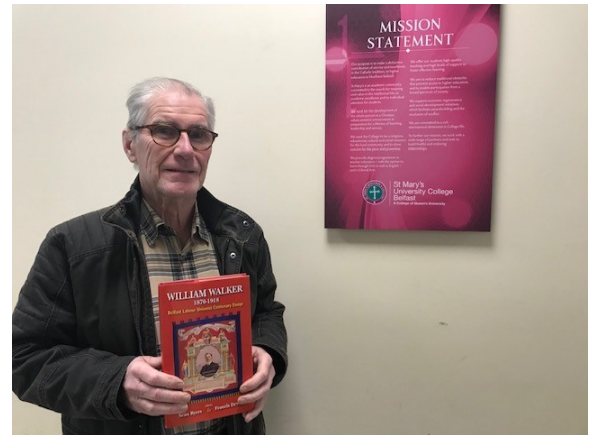
*Dr Gerard McCann and Professor Giovanni Farese from the
Università Europea di Roma*

CHAPTER ON TRADE UNIONIST WILLIAM WALKER

A book published in October 2018 by Umiskin Press featured a chapter titled “William Walker And Belfast Trades Council” by Dr Peter Collins (International Studies & Global Justice Research Group). The book *William Walker 1870 – 1918: Belfast Labour Unionist Centenary Essays* was edited by Séan Byers and Francis Devine and featured a series of articles to commemorate William Walker’s centenary.

Peter’s chapter aimed to chronicle the career of William Walker as a trade unionist principally through his involvement with Belfast Trades Council, which was established in 1881. Peter concluded his chapter by suggesting that the positive legacy of William Walker has been to allow Unionist minded trade unionists in the north to continue to participate in all-island Trade Union Congresses, without

compromising their political ideals or identity, leading to a strong and united trade union movement with the Belfast Trades Council still being part of that.



Dr Peter Collins' chapter featured in a new book on William Walker

“... the positive legacy of William Walker has been to allow Unionist minded trade unionists in the north to continue to participate in all-island Trade Union Congresses...”

EDITORIAL WORK FOR NEW BOOK ON RIGHTS, ETHICS AND GLOBAL JUSTICE

Dr Birgit Schippers (International Studies & Global Justice Research Group) has had her editorial work acknowledged through the release of a new book titled *Critical Perspectives On Human Rights* published by Rowman & Littlefield International in September 2018.



Dr Birgit Schippers who edited a recent book on human rights

As well as writing the introduction, Birgit also had a chapter titled “Towards A Posthumanist Conception Of Human Rights?” featured in the book. The book provided cutting-edge interventions into contemporary perspectives on rights, ethics and global justice. The chapters, written by leading scholars in the field, made a significant and timely contribution to critical human rights scholarship by interrogating the significance of human rights for critical theory and practice.

While the contributions engaged sensitively yet thoroughly with the regulatory, disciplinary, and exclusionary effects of human rights, they did so without giving up on the transformative potential of human rights. By thinking productively through the exclusions, paradoxes and aporias of human rights, the book will be a key reference text for students and scholars in this important area of inquiry.

CHAPTER FEATURED IN BOOK ON SHARED CITIES IN LITERATURE & FILM

A book published in 2018, which featured articles relating to walls, borders and zones included a chapter by Dr Angela Vaupel (International Studies & Global Justice Research Group), titled “Kindheit in *troubled* Belfast: Zur Darstellung von Raum und kindlichen Grenzerfahrungen in *Mickybo and Me*”.

The book, *Mauern, Grenzen, Zonen. Geteilte Städte in Literatur und Film*, was edited by Walburga Hülk and Stephanie Schwerter and published by Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag. It contained a series of case studies, which analysed images of shared cities in literature and film.



LOCAL TV STATION HIGHLIGHTS RESEARCH WORK OF COLLEGE ACADEMICS

Three members of academic staff achieved recent success during 2018 in terms of disseminating their research and raising their research profile on *NVTV* (*Northern Visions Television*), which is a local community TV station in Belfast. The first TV programme featured Dr Kieran McGeown (Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment Research Group) and was titled “Focal Point Extra: STEM Subjects In Schools”. It included a conversation on the importance of STEM subjects for future economic and employment opportunities.



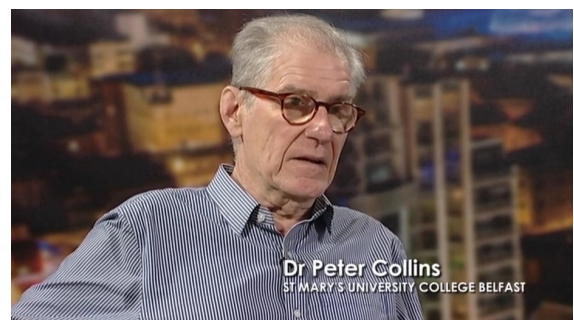
In conversation with NVTV host



Engaging in discussion with NVTV presenter

The second TV programme featured Dr Birgit Schippers (International Studies & Global Justice Research Group) and was titled “In Focus: Birgit Schippers”. It included a discussion about how advancement in technology may threaten human rights.

The third programme featured Dr Peter Collins (International Studies & Global Justice Research Group) and was titled “History Now: Remembering 1798”. It included the sharing of opinions on how the 1798 Rebellion has been remembered and forgotten.



Sharing opinions with NVTV commentator

RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES (RSS)

Eileen Regan **KESS: An Example Of Effective Academic And Legislative Engagement**

Dr Birgit Schippers **Predicting The Future: AI And The Threat To Human Rights**

Dr Gerard McCann **Development Education And Human Rights Education**

Dr Séamas Ó Donnghaile **Researching The Views Of Irish-Medium Primary School Children On Adults' Promotion Of Spoken Irish: Methods And Ethics**

Dr Seán Mac Corraídh and Pádraic de Bléine **Tús maith leath na hoibre (A Good Start Is Half Of The Work): The Significance Of The Opening Chapter Of Seosamh Mac Grianna's Mo Bhealach Féin (My Own Way) and An Druma Mór (The Big Drum)**

Dr Tracey McKay and Sharon Haughey **VERP: Video Enhanced Reflective Practice**

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A SWISS PERSPECTIVE ON IRISH FICTION

Professor Michael Prusse from *Zurich University of Teacher Education*, who is a Professor of English Language Teaching and English Literature, visited the College in November 2018 to give a presentation at the Research Seminar Series, which was attended by academic staff and students. The title of the seminar was "Irish Fiction From A Swiss Perspective: Registering Repetitions, Patterns, Colours In Bernard MacLaverty's 'Walking The Dog' And In John McGahern's Fiction".



Professor Michael Prusse with Dr Brian Hanratty and Dr Gerard McCann at the College's Research Seminar Series

STAFF PROFILE

Ciaran Walsh has been an academic member of staff in the College since 1999.



He is a Senior Lecturer in Physical Education and a member of the Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment Research Group. In 2015 he became part of an all-Ireland research team which gained research funding from the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) for the project *Teacher Educator Professional Learning: Shaping The Conversation Of Teacher Education*. Its aim was to examine the professional learning experiences of individual teacher educators, within a community of learners, related to the area of communication.

As an outcome of this particular research project, Ciaran and his colleagues had a paper included in the proceedings of the Castle Conference 2016 held in the Queen's University International Study Centre at Herstmonceux Castle in East Sussex, England. The paper was titled "Snapshots: Teacher Educator Professional Learning Shaping Teacher Educator Practices". In the same year, their research generated a poster titled "Teacher Educator Professional Learning: Shaping The Conversation Of Teacher Education?" which was presented at the Association Internationale des Écoles Supérieures d'Education Physique conference held at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, USA.

Ciaran and his colleagues also produced a paper for presentation at the European Conference on Educational Research 2016 held at University College Dublin, Ireland. Their research paper, titled "Using Photos To Give Voice To Teacher Educator Professional Learning Experiences", focused on the use of photographs as a method of gaining the opinions of teacher educators towards their professional learning experiences.

Following completion of the SCoTENS-funded research project in 2017, Ciaran co-authored the corresponding report that was launched at the annual SCoTENS conference held at the Crowne Plaza, Dundalk, Ireland. Members of the research team were interested in how this professional learning might influence their individual pedagogical practices with pre-service teachers.