

Research Newsletter



St Mary's
University College
Belfast
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FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECT ON USING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE EARLY YEARS FOR READING

Following the submission of a research proposal for funding to the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS), Dr Geraldine Magennis and Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney (Dublin City University) received notification of its success in May 2020. The research, which is due to begin in September 2020, is titled "An Exploration of the Use of Children's Literature in Early Reading Within a Balanced Literacy Framework in the North and South of Ireland" and it will relate to the presence of children's literature within educational policy in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In particular, it will focus on the place, profile and prevalence given to children's literature as a key component in the teaching of reading in the early years (children 0-8 years old). It will explore also the potential of rich and varied children's literature to promote deep and meaningful literacy learning. Plans will include the interrogation of the extent to which Irish teachers are encouraged to use children's literature in the teaching of early reading. Potentially, outcomes from the research will help identify aspects of policy that might be developed more fulsomely and thus lead to bespoke, future professional development for those teaching reading in the early years across the island of Ireland.

Essentially, the research project will seek to explore the following research questions: What is the place and prominence of children's literature in policy relating to the teaching of early reading within a balanced literacy frame in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland? How does

literacy policy north and south compare to research-based best practice in the use of children's literature in teaching early reading? What improvements could be made to policy and practice in this area?



Dr Geraldine Magennis & Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney



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ACADEMIC MEMBER OF STAFF BECOMES CO-EDITOR OF NEW ONLINE JOURNAL

A new online journal that focuses on teachers' professional learning, titled "WeLearn", was launched earlier this year and issue one featured an article by the co-editor, Dr Matthew Martin, which was published in March 2020.

Matthew's article was titled "Perfect Data Above All Else?': The Purpose of Student Research in Initial Teacher Education" and focused on the idea that all teachers should be researchers too, with this idea relating also to students studying initial teacher education.

The journal is specifically designed for teachers as both readers and contributors, with opportunities for publication also given to those who work within higher education institutions and other education bodies, as evidenced by the articles featured in the first issue of the journal.



"The journal is specifically designed for teachers as both readers and contributors..."

USING HEANEY'S WORK TO TEACH POETRY AND CREATIVE WRITING

As a regular contributor to the academic journal "Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education", Dr Brian Hanratty gained success recently in securing another of his research articles in this particular journal. Brian's paper, titled "Between the Contingent and the Transcendent: Heaney's 'Poetics' and their Implications for Teaching Poetry and Creative Writing in the Upper Post-Primary School", was published in the hard copy of the journal, which was published during April 2020.



In evaluating some of Heaney's prose writings about the art of poetry, which Brian referred to as 'poetics', the paper explored how those ideas could enhance the teaching of poetry in upper post-primary schools. The paper was divided into four closely interconnected sections. The first section evaluated Heaney's thoughts about the potential centrality of poetry in the English curriculum. In the second section, Heaney's thoughts about the conflict between "poetry's self-delighting inventiveness" and "the pressures of reality" were considered, with some complementary attention to a few of Heaney's own Troubles poems. The third section, in evaluating Heaney's critiques of some individual poets, registered some of his valuable specific, as well as more general, pedagogical insights. Finally, his prose thoughts about the wellsprings of poetic creativity were examined, together with a brief critique of his poem "The Play Way", which focuses on teaching creative writing in a post-primary classroom.

REFLECTING ON RECENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

A research article, jointly written by Dr Martin Hagan and Dr Patricia Eaton (Stranmillis University College Belfast), was published in a recent issue of the academic journal, “Teacher Development: An International Journal of Teachers’ Professional Development”, during April 2020. The title of Martin’s co-authored paper was “Teacher Education in Northern Ireland: Reasons to be Cheerful or a ‘Wicked Problem?’” and it provided a critical reflection on teacher education and professional development in Northern Ireland between 2003 - 2018.

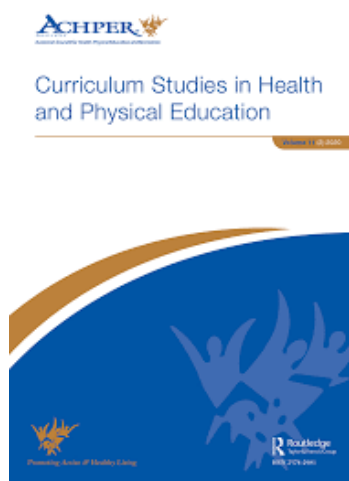


The article argued that whilst there is much about teacher education in Northern Ireland that is to be commended, the unique socio-historical, political and cultural context within which it operates may be considered as a ‘wicked problem’ which currently mitigates the potential to develop the teaching profession to best effect. Two key issues which highlight the ‘wicked problem’ were addressed: the extended process of teacher education review; and a focus on the infrastructure of the system. The paper concluded by suggesting that future policy priorities need to value and promote existing strengths and cohere around the new approach to “Shared Education” and the “Learning Leaders Strategy” in order to build a mature system of teacher education to meet the challenges of a changing Northern Ireland.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS A METHOD OF REFLECTING ON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Funding from the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS) for a research project has resulted in a research article included in the journal “Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education” published during April 2020. The article was co-authored by Ciaran Walsh, in collaboration with Dr Melissa Parker (University of Limerick), Dr Déirdre Ní Chróinín (Mary Immaculate College Limerick), Dr Maura Coulter (Dublin City University) and Paul McFlynn (Ulster University), and is titled “Finding the Image’: Using Photos to Give Voice to Teacher Educator Professional Learning”.

The paper explored the role of photocue reflection in the professional learning of physical education teacher educators. Five physical education teacher educators participated in a six-month professional learning experience focused on communication. Individual diaries, including both photos and writing prompts (photocue reflective diaries), were used as both a learning tool and data source within a self-study of teacher education practices. Two themes represented the use of photocue reflection: the multidimensional nature of the professional development experience; and the use of photocue reflection to enhance reflective processes by supporting reflection on reflection-in-action. Photocue reflection supported identification and analysis of meaningful events related to communication. The processes helped participants to appreciate the significance of communication, clarifying understandings, and making connections to their teacher education practices. Throughout the paper, insights were shared on the merits of photocue reflection in scaffolding professional learning experiences and in combining both a learner and teacher role within professional development activities.



USING DANCE TO CROSS BOUNDARIES IN SCHOOLS

An article was written by three members of academic staff in the College, Dr Elaine McLaughlin, Dr Matthew Martin and Paddy Tally, in collaboration with Dr Christine Burnett (Saphara) and was published in the Spring 2020 edition of the official journal of the Association for Physical Education referred to as “Physical Education Matters”.

The title of the research paper was “Dancing Across Cultural and Educational Boundaries: From Northern Ireland to India” and it was based on a visit to India by student teachers from Northern Ireland as part of a project. The coordinators at Saphara, which is an educational charity focusing on transformational encounters in this cross-cultural setting, created the opportunity for Protestant and Catholic student teachers from Northern Ireland to visit India to explore the teaching of dance as a component of the

Physical Education curriculum, which has the potential for overcoming cultural boundaries.

A key question for this project related to the role Northern Ireland’s Physical Education practices, with their range of culturally determined sports as practiced within culturally divided schools, play within the curriculum when it comes to reinforcing or overcoming social divisions.



“...the role Northern Ireland’s Physical Education practices, with their range of culturally determined sports as practiced within culturally divided schools, play within the curriculum...”

RESEARCH INTO TRANSLATING CHILDREN’S LITERATURE



The latest edition of the online journal “Léann Teanga: An Reiviú”, published by the National University of Ireland Galway, featured an article written by Padaí de Bléine, which is titled “Aistriúchán ar úrscéal do pháistí: an cur chuige, céimeanna an aistriúcháin agus an toradh”. The research article was published in April 2020 and was based on a presentation Padaí gave at the College’s research seminar series that focused on the theory and practice of translating children’s literature from English to Irish.

RESEARCH ARTICLE ON IRISH REVISIONISM OFFERS AN ANALYSIS OF THREE KEY AREAS

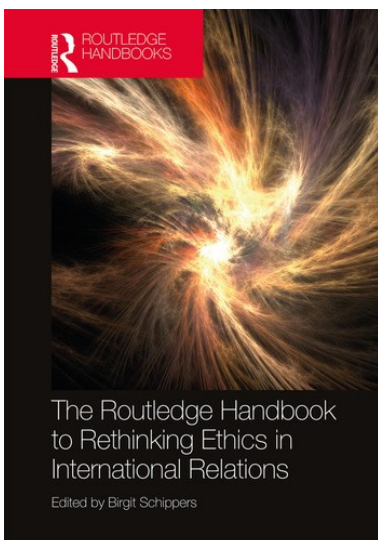
Dr Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh gained success recently by having his research paper, titled “Objective Historians, Irrational Fenians and the Bewildered Herd: Revisionist Myth and the Irish Revolution”, accepted for publication in the academic journal “Irish Studies Review”, which was published during April 2020.

In summarising the paper, Fearghal proposed that while many commentators have highlighted the limitations of Irish revisionist historiography, his article offered the first comprehensive and explicitly anti-imperialist critique, locating revisionism within a wider liberal attack on revolution and popular agency. An analysis of Irish revisionism across three key areas followed. The argument first challenged revisionist claims to write value-free history, before charting its evolution in the specific social and political context of Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s, finding in the new turn an idiosyncratic Irish manifestation of a wider liberal defence of power. Finally, the article challenged revisionism on its own empirical terrain, working methodically through the revisionist canon to illustrate persistent and deeply problematic bias. It concluded that revisionism represents an ideological project, which provided an elite counter narrative of Irish history. This produced an overtly ideological reading of Irish history, founded on a refusal to acknowledge the colonial nature of the island’s past – a hegemonic position with potentially adverse consequences for the island’s future as well.



NEW BOOK OFFERS FRESH PERSPECTIVES INTO THE QUANDARIES OF ETHICS

Drawing upon her wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as the connections with many of her peers, Dr Birgit Schippers worked diligently on her editing skills to produce what one reviewer referred to as “...a precious contribution to thinking anew...”. The book, titled “The Routledge Handbook to Rethinking Ethics in International Relations”, was published by Routledge in June 2020 and by discussing cutting-edge debates in the field of international ethics, it built on existing work in the normative study of international relations. As well as writing the introduction, Birgit contributed also to the book by writing a chapter, which was titled “Autonomous Weapons Systems and Ethics in International Relations”. Another chapter, “The Ethics of Global Development”, written by Dr Gerard McCann appeared in the book.

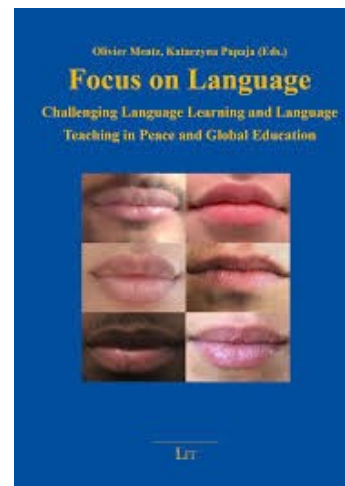


The book responded to a substantial appetite for scholarship that challenges established approaches and examined new perspectives on international ethics that appraises the ethical implications of problems occupying students and scholars of international relations in the twenty-first century. The contributions, which were written by a team of international scholars, provided authoritative surveys and interventions into the field of international ethics. By focusing on new and emerging ethical challenges to international relations and by approaching existing challenges through the lens of new theoretical and methodological frameworks, the book’s structure had five themes: new directions in international ethics; ethical actors and practices in international relations; the ethics of climate change, globalization, and health; technology and ethics in international relations; and the ethics of global security.

RECENT CHAPTER PUBLISHED ON TEACHING FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Dr Angela Vaupel contributed a chapter to a book, titled “Focus on Language: Challenging Language Learning and Language Teaching in Peace and Global Education”, which was edited by her international academic colleagues, Professor Olivier Mentz (Franco-German University) and Professor Katarzyna Papaja (University of Silesia). The book was published by LIT Verlag in early 2020 and Angela’s chapter was titled “Teaching for Mutual Understanding: Language, Film and Global Education”.

in 2018 on the theme of language teaching and learning in peace and global education, all of whom represented a diverse range of countries, cultures and languages. The collection of chapters embraced original contributions in different areas of foreign/second language practice.

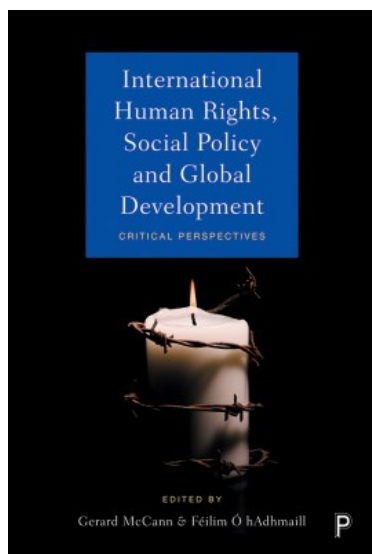


The book resulted from a selection of presentations offered by academic scholars and teachers, as well as representatives from education authorities, at a research conference

“... on the theme of language teaching and learning in peace and global education, all of whom represented a diverse range of countries, cultures and languages.”

NEW PUBLICATION HELPS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Adding to his extensive list of scholarly publications during his academic career, Dr Gerard McCann worked with Féilim Ó hAdhmaill (University College Cork) on editing what one reviewer cited as being “...an excellent compendium of works...”. The book, titled “International Human Rights, Social Policy and Global Development: Critical Perspectives”, was published by Policy Press in April 2020 and as well as contributing to the introduction, Gerard co-authored two other chapters, “The United Nations and the International Oversight of Human Rights” and “The European Union and Human Rights” and was the author of a further chapter titled “The European Union, Human Rights and International Development Policy”. Two other chapters, “Human Rights and the USA” and “Gender and Human Rights”, written by Dr Peter Collins and Dr Birgit Schippers respectively were featured in the book.



With international human rights under challenge, the book represented a comprehensive critique that added a social policy perspective to recent political and legalistic analysis. Expert contributors drew on local and global examples to review constructs of universal rights and their impact on social policy and human welfare. With thorough analysis of their strengths, weaknesses and enforcement, it set out their role in domestic and geopolitical affairs. Including a forward by Professor Albie Sachs (University of Pretoria), the book presented an honest appraisal of both the concepts of international human rights and their realities and should engage those with an interest in social policy, ethics, politics and international relations.

DISSEMINATING RESEARCH AND SHARING OPINIONS

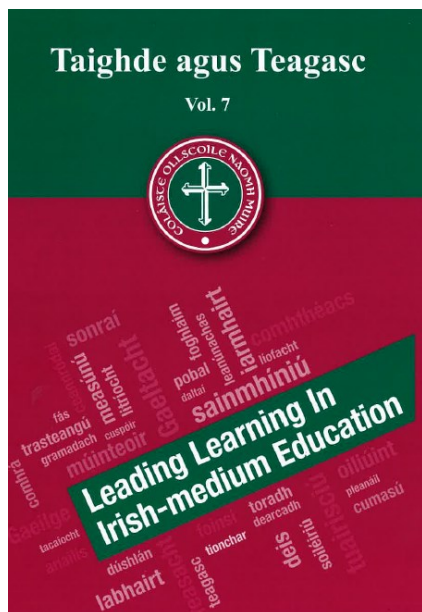
The dissemination of research is a key part of academic life, whether it's presenting a paper at a research conference or engaging in debate via other types of outlets. Recently, Dr Birgit Schippers has been sharing her research with others through various kinds of media, which has enhanced her research profile beyond the academic community. The first kind of media was online news, where Birgit wrote an opinion piece for *The Conversation*, titled "Coronavirus: Drones Used to Enforce Lockdown Pose a Real Threat to our Civil Liberties", another opinion piece for *The Irish Times* that was titled "Politics of North-South Contact-Tracing App Hides Real Problem" (both appearing online in May 2020), and a further opinion piece for *Eolas Magazine*, titled "Facial Recognition Technology: A Human Rights Perspective" that appeared online during June 2020.



Dr Birgit Schippers

The second kind of media was online television, where Birgit was interviewed by one of the journalists at Northern Visions Television (NVTV) in May 2020 as part of "The Round-Up" series, with a discussion ensuing on some of the issues raised by the efforts to create a contact tracing app to help tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. The third kind of media was an online community arts festival, where Birgit addressed a virtual audience as part of Féile during August 2020, to give a presentation titled "Artificial Intelligence and the Challenge to Human Rights", during which she discussed artificial intelligence's impact on human rights and examined responses to the challenges of artificial intelligence.

COLLEGE LECTURERS' RESEARCH PUBLISHED IN JOURNAL ON RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN IME



Following the launch of the seventh edition of St Mary's University College's research journal "Taighde agus Teagasc" in early 2020, which was highlighted in the previous issue of this newsletter, it is not surprising that three of the research articles on Irish-medium Education (IME) were contributed by members of academic staff from the College. These included Dr Eibhlín Mhic Aoidh and her paper was titled "Na torthaí foghlama a bhfuil súil leo sa náiscolaíocht lán-Ghaeilge", as well as Dr Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh whose paper was titled "Cad é mar is fearr scileanna na bhfoinsí a chur chun cinn i seomra an tumoideachais?". A collaborative effort also resulted in another paper written by Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, Dr Seán Mac Corraidh, Dr Eibhlín Mhic Aoidh, Aileen Nic Íomhair (Bunscoil Eoin Báiste, Portadown) and Eibhlín Nic Gearailt (CCEA), which was titled "Deich mbliana ag fás: Anailís ar an Ghaeilge labhartha agus scríofa ag daltaí Bhliain 10".

ONLINE CONFERENCE FOR LITERACY SPECIALISTS

The World Literacy Summit held its biannual conference online during July 2020, with one of the speakers being Catherine Gilliland who submitted a video for inclusion at this virtual event. The title of Catherine's presentation was "Bibliotherapy as a Medium for Changing Lives" and it took delegates on a journey from how children learn to read and then using reading to learn. The conference brought together delegates, all with a single focus of advocating, championing and educating on the vital importance of improving literacy levels across the globe.

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RESEARCH INTO THE TECHNICAL TERMS OF TRANSLATING

The latest edition of the online journal "Léann Teanga: An Reiviú", published by the National University of Ireland Galway, featured an article written by Dr Seán Mac Corraidh, which is titled "Téarmaí gan Iomrá: Téarmaí a d'úsáid nó a chum Seosamh Mac Grianna agus é ag tiontú Béarla go Gaeilge idir na 1920idí agus na 1950idí agus nach raibh i gcúrsaíocht ina dhiaidh sin".

The research article was published in April 2020 and focused on a translator dealing with technical terms while translating from English to Irish in the mid-twentieth century.



STAFF PROFILE



Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir is a Senior Tutor (Development) and part of her role focuses on leading the College's strategic development of research. This involves implementing the Research Strategy and prioritising the connection between research and teaching. Gabrielle is Chairperson of the Research and Research Ethics

Committees and teaches on academic programmes relating to her specialism, Irish-medium Education (IME). Gabrielle's doctoral research had a sociolinguistic focus, yet her interests shifted to education through initiatives designed to produce resources or to shape emerging pedagogies. She has worked with Professor Marie Clay, researching early literacy and producing an assessment tool for early literacy achievement in Irish-medium primary schools.

One research project involving Gabrielle, funded by CCEA in 2016, produced a linguistic analysis of Key Stage 3 pupils' Irish in IME settings. Its findings provided a profile of pupils' oral and written Irish, had implications for immersion pedagogies and professional practices in IME schools, and led to recommendations to writers of Irish language textbooks. Gabrielle has presented papers on this work that have been published in a range of peer reviewed journals, including the 2020 edition of "Taighde agus Teagasc", of which she was a co-editor. Her other research explored the role of parents in their children's education in IME settings and one of her team's publications, "Tuismitheoirí ina nGníomhairí in Earnáil an Ghaeloidea chais", appeared in the online journal "COMHARTaighde" during 2016. Gabrielle has also conducted research with external colleagues on a project, funded by SCoTENS, which looked at the provision for special educational needs in multigrade classrooms.

Gabrielle advocates collaborative initiatives among colleagues and international partners, recognising the potential to learn in multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral contexts. She collaborates currently with colleagues to develop "Video Interactive Guidance" for lecturers' and students' reflective practice on teaching and professional practice.