

Research Newsletter



St Mary's
University College
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CONFERENCE PAPER CONTRIBUTES TO DEBATE ON RECONSTRUCTING EDUCATION

The annual *Educational Studies Association of Ireland Conference* took place during April 2022. It saw a gathering of scholars, practitioners, policymakers, emerging researchers and interested others from Ireland and beyond who reflected upon, debated and discussed possibilities in education. One of the papers delivered at the conference was by Dr Martin Hagan and Dr Claire Connolly and it was titled **Student teachers' engagement with and in education research to enhance professional practice**.

As limited data exists in the Irish context to evidence students' understanding of what is meant by a research-based profession or of how students apply their research during professional practice, Martin and Claire's research aimed to address this evidence gap. This was conducted by generating data from students of initial teacher education that investigated their understanding of and application of research in practice. The conference presentation offered findings from the first round of data collection with student teachers in two institutes in the north and south of Ireland.

A mixed-methods approach was used to provide a holistic account of student engagement in and with research. The purpose was to identify a pattern and then to explain the pattern, using in-depth data drawn from a subset of participants. They administered surveys with final year students, the first of which followed their capstone project, which provided a contextual backdrop. The second survey explored students' practical engagement with research during their professional practice. Likert scales and open-ended questions were used to measure attitudes and opinions and the corresponding data went through various types of statistical analysis. Key findings addressed students' subject and pedagogical knowledge, research literacy and their application of research to practical experience within the professional context.



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Educational Studies Association of Ireland
Cumann Léann Oideachais na hÉireann

Educational Studies Association of Ireland Conference 2022

7 - 9 April 2022 in Dublin, Ireland

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FEATURES RESEARCH ON MASTER'S LEVEL EDUCATION

A joint research project, involving Dr Martin Hagan in partnership with Dr Rose Dolan from Maynooth University, gave rise to a presentation at the *International Conference on Education and New Developments* in June 2022.

The paper, titled **Why do a master's? Understanding the motivations of master's students in Ireland, north and south**, considered the role of master's study in the continuing professional development of teachers across Ireland. Their research aimed to generate a profile of teachers studying for degrees at master's level in education across the island of Ireland. It also aimed to clarify issues around motivation and the influence that having a degree at

master's level might have on a participant's professional identity and practice. Working within a qualitative, interpretative design and using a mixed-methods approach to employ survey and focus groups, primary survey data were collected from cohorts of students studying for a degree at master's level in education in all universities across Ireland in the years 2017-2022. The corresponding findings were presented at the conference, where the researchers argued that their research may help inform programme design and also have the potential to influence policymakers in terms of developing coherency around the professional development of teachers, beyond the initial stage.



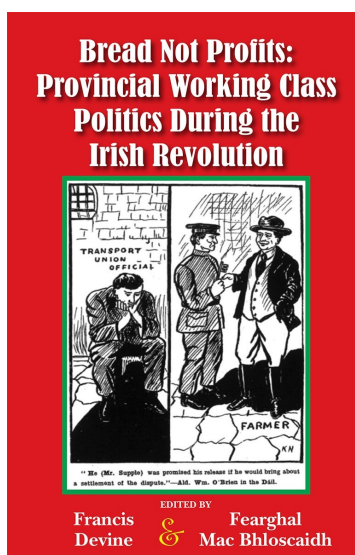
“Working within a qualitative, interpretative design and using a mixed-methods approach to employ survey and focus groups, primary survey data were collected...”

NEW BOOK WITH CO-EDITOR FROM ST MARY'S

The publishing house Umiskin Press produced a collection in May 2022, which features Dr Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh as a co-editor, along with Francis Devine, and a contributor of two main chapters. The title of the book is *Bread Not Profits: Provincial Working-Class Politics During the Irish Revolution* and it is notable for carrying the story of Irish working-class

mobilisation beyond the metropolitan centres and into the regions of Ireland during the revolutionary period of the early twentieth-century.

The importance of the book's chapters derives from its scope and depth, as well as the wealth of local historical sourcing underpinning it. Being comprised of fourteen regional chapters and three thematic ones, the narrative is driven through people, biography, localities, economic grouping and institutions. The mood of the book is one of both celebration and regret, but is a vital collection, deserving a wide readership and further expansion. The title of Fearghal's first main chapter is **Living and dying a fenian: Working-class republican activism in East Tyrone, 1896-1916** and it is featured in the Ulster section, along with his second chapter, titled **Red triangle: Working-class militancy in Mid-Ulster, 1917-1920**.



ARTICLE FEATURED IN ONLINE JOURNAL DRAWS UPON AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

The online journal *Léann Teanga: An Reiviú* featured an article by Dr Seán Mac Corraidh in April 2022. The article, titled **Noirm na Gaeilge a aibhsiú, teanga shóisialta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt agus áit an Bhéarla sa ghaelscolaíocht a bheachtú**, is the result of an autoethnographic research study of Seán's work, life and research as a regional adviser for Irish-medium education and of the teaching of Irish in the primary phase from 2003 to 2011 with the then, five education and library boards.



Seán's research involves self-observation, self-enquiry, memory recall and autobiographical writing. His aim, in using this creative approach of autoethnography, is to attempt to make sense of his actions and decisions in the educational, linguistic, social and operational circumstances in which he works. Seán suggests that it is generally recognised in immersion education programmes that pupils acquire a high level in receptive skills of the immersion, target language but fall behind in terms of accurate use of the same language. In the article, he proposes a more analytical approach to pupils' production of Irish in immersion pedagogy in order to narrow the gap between the interlanguage, which pupils produce, and the norms of the Irish language, as witnessed in the speech of native and other competent speakers.

RESEARCHERS AND EDUCATORS GATHER TO DEBATE AND EXAMINE MATTERS RELATING TO LITERACY

Collaboration on a research project between Dr Geraldine Magennis-Clarke and Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney from Dublin City University resulted in a paper presented at the *European Conference on Literacy* in July 2022. This joint presentation was titled **An exploration of the use of children's literature in the teaching of early reading** and stemmed from a SCOTENS funded project.

Their paper focused on the collaborative project that related to the presence of children's literature within educational policy in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In particular, it focused on the place, profile and prevalence given to children's literature as a key component in the teaching of reading in the early years. It also explored the potential of rich and varied children's literature to promote deep and meaningful literacy learning. Geraldine's project began with some desk research that focused on curricular policy and recent research related to the use of children's literature in the teaching of early reading within a balanced literacy framework in both the north and south of Ireland. The aim of this desk research was to identify gaps in current policy and practice, with a view to developing a teacher education conference that sought to address these concerns. The teacher education conference, which was held in September 2021, was followed up with a survey that was completed by attendees. It invited them to share their experiences of using children's literature in the teaching of early reading and also the new learnings that they gleaned from participation at the conference.

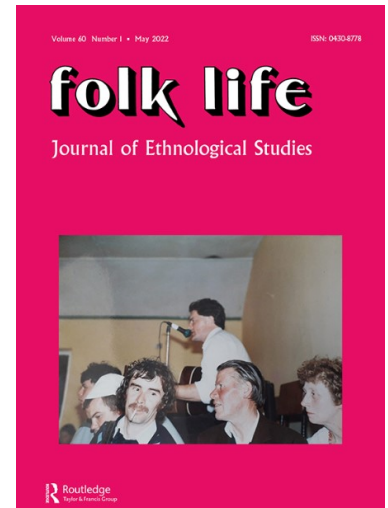


AUTOETHNOGRAPHY SHOWS WAY FOR ACADEMIC TO WRITE ABOUT MEMORIES

Success was achieved by Dr Seán Mac Corraidh when he had his paper, titled “**Nachte an rud an Ghaeilge?/Isn’t Irish a warm thing?**” **Learning Irish language and song: An autoethnographic self-reflection**, published online in the academic journal *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies* in March 2022.

Using autoethnographic approaches, Seán’s article provides a personal language biography. It relates significant and critical incidents from his memories of the academic, personal and professional pathways followed in learning Irish as a second language and his access to and appreciation of the unaccompanied style of singing called *sean-nós*. Self-observation, self-exploration, self-reflection, autobiography and memorization

guide his research and writing of the article. Seán also employs autoethnographic theory to provide the means for a greater critical understanding of social and cultural contexts tied to institutions, places and people. Documentation that he uses, come in the form of photographs, video and audio recordings, personal letters and his own autobiographic writing.



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RESEARCH TO SUPPORT THE USE OF A NOVEL BY DAPHNE DU MAURIER AT A-LEVEL

As a regular contributor to the academic journal *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, Dr Brian Hanratty chose again to send his most recent article, titled **Reading Rebecca in the sixth-form classroom: Some literary-critical and pedagogical explorations**, to the journal for consideration. He was successful in having it accepted and it was published in May 2022.

While Brian realises that the novel in question, *Rebecca*, is not currently a set text for A-level English Literature, he argues that the novel’s multi-faceted richness would justify its inclusion in any list of recommended texts. Divided into four interconnected parts, Brian’s paper offers, firstly, some approaches to the reading and teaching of fiction, generally. In the second part, he presents some framing contexts for illuminating many of *Rebecca*’s preoccupations. These include: ideas about the gothic tradition and the presentation of fatal women in some romantic literature; some considerations about patriarchy, misogyny, gender and identity; and the intersection between dream and reality in *Rebecca*, as well as the idea of obsession and the double self in two other works by du Maurier. In the third part, Brian gives more detailed attention to the presentation of character in the novel, and in the fourth part, he explores some pedagogical approaches to the novel in the sixth-form classroom.



SELECTION OF RESEARCH PROJECTS PRESENTED BY ACADEMIC STAFF TO THEIR PEERS

Towards the end of June 2022, academic staff gathered in the college for the *Annual Staff Research Event*. It featured an introduction from the Research Officer, who provided those in attendance with a brief trip down memory lane regarding the previous events, now that it had entered its fifth year, and a summary of some of the current success stories by academic staff regarding publications, conference presentations and research project funding.

The event had the pleasure of facilitating six members of academic staff who shared their current or most recent research projects with their peers. They spoke about the aims of their research, as well as the plans they had devised for their research. Some shared details of the methods they employed in gathering data and the findings that the data produced, as well as how their findings would impact on education in schools and on other policy-related practices.

The first session opened with a presentation by Dr Donna Hazzard and it was titled **Deficit ideologies and shaky assumptions: Why critical literacy is an educational imperative**. This was followed by Dr Seán Mac Corraidh, whose presentation was titled



“Nach te an rud an Ghaeilge?/Isn’t Irish a warm thing?” Learning Irish language and song: An autoethnographic self-reflection. Then, at the end of the morning session, the floor was taken by Dr Gerard McCann who spoke on the topic of **COVID-19 in the global south: Scoping research**.

Following a much-needed break, which offered the audience a chance to discuss the presentations over tea and coffee, the second session began with Ciaran Walsh and his presentation was titled **Value orientations of teacher educators in physical education – a collaborative self-study of educators in pre-service programmes**. The presenter who followed and took the event into the afternoon hours was Geraldine Parks, who talked to the attendees about her current doctoral study on **Maths anxiety amongst future teachers – overcoming the barriers**. Then, the end of the second session was drawn to a close by Jonathan Worley who outlined plans for his upcoming research project titled **Is student literacy declining? An examination of student writing at St Mary’s 2002-2022**.

The event concluded with the Research Officer thanking those presenters who took the time and effort to discuss their research and informing the academic staff about some research initiatives planned for the new academic year.

ONLINE JOURNAL PAPER ANALYSES TRANSLATION PROCESS OF A FOLKTALE INTO IRISH

A journal produced in association with the University of Galway, known as *Léann Teanga: An Reiviú*, had a paper written by Padaí de Bléine in its April 2022 edition. The title of Padaí's paper is **Aistear aistriúcháin agus anailíse ar scéal béaloidis** and it is a translation of a folktale from English to Irish, with an accompanying analysis of the process.

The folktale, in question, is *The Three Spinners* from *Czech Fairytales* by Karel Jaromír Erben and Božena Němcová, which were translated from Czech to English. In the article, Padaí explores folktales and how important it is that he, as the translator, understands the genre and type of language in it, as detailed by Ó Duáin in 1968 and Riggs in 1974. Translation for the spoken word is emphasised in this instance, as the story is being translated to be recorded by a native speaker. The article draws on Ottinen's

research in 2000 and the importance of translation for the spoken word. Padaí refers to the translation process and theories developed by Nida in 1964, Ó Ruairc in 2007, Venuti in 2008 and Nord in 2014. He also makes reference to the way in which the names of characters in the folktale were translated. The Ulster Dialect is referred to, as well as its characteristics, of which the translator must be aware. Padaí explains how words, phrases and expressions from other folktales and sources were used to produce the translation. A recording of the story has been produced by Brídanna Ní Bhaoill from Rann na Feirste and Padaí considers it to be a great resource for teachers and learners of Irish.



“... explains how words, phrases and expressions from other folktales and sources were used to produce the translation.”

JOINT FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECT BETWEEN ST MARY'S AND MAYNOOTH

Collaboration between Dr Martin Hagan and Dr Rose Dolan from Maynooth University resulted in a paper, titled **Master's study and the professional identity of teachers**, which was presented at the *Association of Teacher Education in Europe Conference* in May 2022. Their research considered the role of the a degree at master's level in the professional identity formation of teachers across Ireland, north and south.



Funded by the International Professional Development Association, the preliminary findings of the research study aimed to consider the influence that having a degree at master's level might have on the participants' sense of professional identity. The research employed a qualitative, interpretative design using a mixed-methods

approach, including questionnaire and focus groups with students from institutions across Ireland. The preliminary data, which were presented at the conference, were collected from three cohorts of students, including those who commenced their studies in 2021, those in the process of completing their studies, and those who had previously graduated between 2017-2021. Through its consideration of the fundamental purpose of a degree at master's level in relation to professional identity, the research had relevance to the conference theme 'The End of Teacher Education?'. The researchers suggested that their study would support teachers in addressing the discourse-identity nexus and would help inform future programme design.

ACADEMICS AT CONFERENCE FOCUSING ON RESEARCH-INFORMED PRACTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher educators gathered online in May 2022 at the *Teacher Education Advancement Network Conference* to share practice and critically engage with advanced scholarship. Two of those present included Julie Hamilton and Geraldine Parks, who presented papers on their current research projects.

Julie's on-going research project is titled **SHARED: Student hopes - achievement, research, equity & diversity**, which is collaborative and funded by SCoTENS. It aims to explore how teacher educators can prepare and support student teachers to negotiate and engage with the challenges of educational underachievement, while on their school placement. The project adopts an interpretative paradigm and is underpinned with sociological theories to support student teachers with making sense of them and with recognising them in their everyday classroom practices.

During the presentation, Julie referred to the participants being a sample of eighty student teachers, drawn from undergraduate teacher education courses in St Mary's and Marino Institute of Education, who undertook periods of school placement. Strand one of the research asked them to develop their understanding of teacher agency, in relation to educational engagement, achievement and attainment, by participating in webinars that explored these themes, followed by a series of focus groups. Within the second strand of the research, the student teachers acted as researchers and explored the concepts within their practice. They initiated an intervention where they planned and taught with a focus on social justice. They used visual methodology as part of their pedagogy and asked pupils to create visual artefacts in response to prompts and teaching stimuli. Participants were asked to reflect on their planning and pedagogy, as well as to create their own visual artefacts of their teaching settings in order to further consider their contexts.



Geraldine's on-going research project is titled **Maths anxiety amongst future teachers – overcoming the barriers**, which forms part of her current doctoral study.

In her presentation, Geraldine referred to how maths anxiety has been a topic of interest for over sixty years and yet continues to cause debate and concern as to what causes it and how it can be alleviated or overcome. She referenced researchers who cite how the presence of maths anxiety in teachers can influence the development of maths anxiety in children. She also highlighted researchers who cite how the home environment plays an important role in the development of skills and the onset of maths anxiety. According to Geraldine, much research has been carried out regarding children, school, the home environment and maths anxiety, however, she suggested a deficit in the area of teacher training and effective instructional techniques to positively change attitudes towards maths.

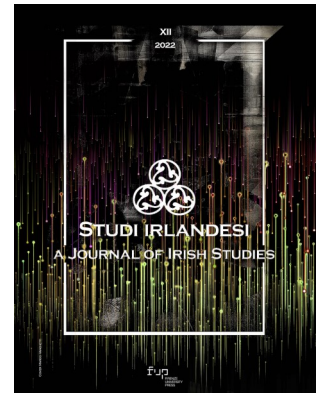
Geraldine's research set out to explore the presence of maths anxiety among student teachers preparing to teach in the primary school. The research outlined the levels of maths anxiety in a sample group of high achievers who experienced new pedagogies and strategies in teaching primary maths. She then went on to compare their developing attitudes to maths with a control group. Through a mixed-methods approach, the investigation considered if the interventions were effective, with the aim to foster positive engagement with mathematics, to encourage persistence and resilience and to mitigate the negative effect of maths anxiety for future students.

JOURNAL FOCUSING ON ASPECTS OF IRISH CULTURE FEATURES ACADEMIC'S RESEARCH

A research article, written by Dr Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh, was published in *Studi Irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies* during July 2022. The title of Fearghal's article is **The Belfast pogrom and the interminable Irish question** and it re-examines the British establishment's crucial role in partition, arguing that it rested on imperial considerations and, indeed, that the character of the resultant 'Orange State' punctures liberal assumptions about twentieth-century Britain.

The article goes on to counter much of the prevailing historiography on what nationalists call the Belfast pogrom, identifying it as the pivotal episode in the genesis of Northern

Ireland, during which the Ulster Unionist leadership, with near unconditional state support, effectively purged Belfast's labour market of Catholics and Protestant socialists to create an Orange economy that served as the material basis for a half-century of Unionist rule. The piece concludes that loyalist ideology represented a fusion of inherent colonial-settler identity and derived racist and imperialist concepts, then permeating metropolitan discourse and widely embraced across the post-war European Right.



“... it re-examines the British establishment's crucial role in partition, arguing that it rested on imperial considerations and ...”

CONFERENCE FEATURES RESEARCH PROJECT ON PE TEACHER EDUCATORS' VALUE ORIENTATIONS

June 2022 saw the *World Congress of the International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education* address contemporary agendas for health and physical education, physical activity and sport. This conference gathering of academics, practitioners and other interested stakeholders featured a paper presentation, involving Ciaran Walsh and Dr Elaine McLaughlin in collaboration with academic staff from the Institute of Education at Dublin City University, Marino Institute of Education, Stranmillis University College and Maynooth University.

The title of their presentation was **VOTE-PE (Value orientations of teacher educators in physical education)**, in which they referred to the professional practices and programmes of study in physical education being concerned with the values, beliefs and philosophies, or value orientations, held by teachers that impact upon their teaching approaches, the content they focus upon, and the ways in which they carry out assessment.

Their research study focused on primary physical education teacher educators and the value orientations displayed in their professional practice. Using collaborative self-study methodology, the researchers drew on examples from six physical education teacher educators teaching different primary pre-service programmes in the north and south of Ireland. Data consisted of: value orientations inventory, pre- and post- a physical education module; three reflective writing tasks, each over the course of the module with feedback provided by a critical friend; one meta-reflection each; and a final group discussion. All qualitative data were coded using the constant comparative method to identify themes. The analytical process was carefully designed to facilitate the voices of the researchers by building in a critical questioning of their own values throughout the research.

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT FUNDING AWARDED TO ST MARY'S

Two members of the academic community were successful in their research proposal being awarded funding in April 2022 to undertake a project titled **Research and development of Irish language framework for Irish-medium primary schools**. The co-leaders of the project are Dr Seán Mac Corraidh and Dr Thomas Rogan, who will carry out the project over the next three years, in collaboration with the Northern Ireland *Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment* (CCEA).



One aspect of the project involves research into local and international practices that aims to inform the development of a language framework for Irish-medium primary schools. This aspect acknowledges the wealth of relevant pedagogical expertise that exists in the Irish-medium educational community and the growing corpus of relevant research into immersion education globally. Essentially, it plans to employ a literature review and desk-based analysis of materials that focus on curriculum guidelines in comparable settings. Another aspect of the project captures teacher professionalism and expertise, by sharing both current practice in relation to the needs of the sector and professional judgement regarding children's current linguistic standards. Essentially, it plans to take a qualitative approach to gathering data through a survey, interviews and focus groups from relevant stakeholders in Irish-medium primary schools and units in Northern Ireland.

These aspects are to lead to the development of an Irish language framework based on an immersion model of education and pedagogy, as practiced in Irish-medium schools, aiming for additive bilingualism through interaction within meaningful, strongly contextualised, hands-on activities. As an integral part of the development process, a review of the workability of the framework is to be carried out and modifications, if needed, are to be made as a result of both the review and feedback from Irish-medium practitioners. Following the development of the framework, a series of regional seminars are to be planned in partnership with CCEA, to inform and update key stakeholders in Irish-medium primary schools and units.

SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS SHARE RESEARCH

An important gathering of international educational leaders from around the globe contributed to the *Leadership for Professional Learning Symposium* in June 2022. One of these was Dr Martin Hagan, who referred to the lens of learning leaders to give a

presentation titled **Teacher professional learning in Northern Ireland: Developing systemic leadership competence.**



PRESENTATION AT CENTENARY CONFERENCE

A celebration to mark a centenary and to acknowledge the anniversary of the death of a local clergyman, Canon James O'Neill, took place in May 2022. The event adopted the form of a conference that featured a presentation by Rev Dr Edward McGee, titled **Canon James Kearney O'Neill: Founder of the Knights of St Columbanus.**

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TEACHING PROFESSION PROJECT

As a continuation of the *Teaching Profession Project* at St Mary's, Professor Peter Finn chaired a seminar in May 2022 to discuss the important topic titled **Valuing teachers**. This was the fourth seminar of the academic year and he was joined by Marie O'Shea - Chairperson of the INTO Northern Committee, Paul Groogan - Trade Union Official in the Northern Office of INTO and Mrs Rachel Poland - INTO Intern for the 2021-2022 academic year.



STAFF PROFILE



Sharon Haughey is a Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies at the college and has participated in various research activities over recent years, having collaborated with colleagues from her own department and beyond. Sharon was a contributor to the book *Ireland*

and Vatican II, published by Columba Press in November 2015, which was described by Baroness Nuala O'Loan as a "seminal contribution to understanding the state of the Church in Ireland today and a hope for the future". Sharon's chapter was titled **Spirituality in school: Encouraging young faith** and in it, she examined some of the ways in which Catholic schools live out their vocation and ethos.

Sharon has also been a contributor to the college's *Research Seminar Series* and in February 2019, she gave a presentation on her collaborative research project titled **VERP: Video enhanced reflective practice**, which was also presented at the *EMERGENT Project Conference* in February 2021. Sharon has also presented at the *Annual Staff Research Event* in September 2019 on another research project, in which she collaborated with a colleague. The title of that presentation was **Faith, leadership and the Catholic school: A research case study**.

More recently, Sharon was a delegate at the *Teacher Education Advancement Network* conference held online in May 2021, when she co-presented her research reflections on the project titled **Reflecting on the use of walking and talking and identity box research methodologies within teacher education: Practice, potential and pitfalls**.