

**NORTH/SOUTH RESEARCH PROJECTS ON  
TEACHER EDUCATION ISSUES  
SUPPORTED BY SCOTENS, 2003-2004**

## **Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland**

**2003**

Hugh Kearns (Stranmillis University College) and Michael Shevlin (Trinity College Dublin)

The research seeks to provide a general account of contemporary policy and practice in the preparation of pre-service teachers for teaching pupils with special educational needs in Ireland. The research will be based upon a two one-day focussed conferences for teacher educators discussing the following:

- Comparisons of SEN trends in policy and provision, North and South;
- Expectations of newly qualified teachers, North and South;
- Training provision, resources and partnerships for those working in the fields of SEN and ITE;
- Ways ahead for SEN and ITE, North and South.

This research report will be aimed at teacher educators and students and an additional bonus will be the creation of an all-island network of educators in the fields of SEN and ITE.

See conference report at:

<http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/education/scte/conference/index.html>

Conference one held in TCD 23-23 March 2004

# **A Preliminary Evaluation of a Teaching Package for Children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)**

**2003-2004**

Dr Jean Ware (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra) and Dr Collette Gray  
(Stranmillis College)

This project seeks to investigate how a software teaching package, designed for children with PMLD, can be rolled out for widespread use, North and South.

The project has been funded to support the refinements to the package in line with a trial school in the South and then to introduce this to teachers in the North, who work in the area of SEN. This will be done through a short inservice training course. The evaluation of the teaching software package and the support services offered will then be completed to assess how teachers, North and South, can use the techniques in an independent and practical manner.

## **North/South Conference on Education for Diversity and Citizenship**

**2003-2004**

Una O'Connor (UNESCO Centre, University of Ulster) and Gerry Jeffers (NUI Maynooth)

This project has the aim of holding a conference to share approaches in the area of Education for Diversity and Citizenship. There are four areas that the conference will address:

- Schools and school practice;
- Initial teacher education;
- Continuing personal development; and
- Research and evaluation.

For further details on the conference (held 30 September – 1 October 2004) see:

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/faculty/shse/unesco/scotens/conference.html>

**Universities and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD)  
of Teachers, North and South:  
Policy, Provisions, Processes and Possibilities**

**2003-2004**

Dr Paul Conway (University College, Cork), Dr Hugh Kearns (Stranmillis College), Dr Mary McAteer (University of Ulster) and Ms Regina Murphy (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra)

This research project will devise a collaborative discussion document looking at the relationships between higher education and the CPD of teachers. The document will review and evaluate current university policies and participation in CPD for teachers, North and South. It will also identify challenges to university participation in this area and identify future directions for advancing the role of the universities to the CPD of teachers.

The project emerged from the October 2003 SCoTENS conference and aims to submit the discussion document to a one-day consultative conference. Subsequent to this the document will be revised and then communicated to a wide audience.

Contract still to be completed.

**Irish Association for Social, Scientific and Environmental Education  
(IASSEE) Annual Conference, 2004**

**2004**

Dr Janet Varley (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra)

The third annual IASSEE conference was held in June 2004 in St Patrick's College with members of the Association, postgraduate education students and invited speakers. IASSEE is an inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary and cross border initiative which promotes writing and research in relation to the teaching of social, scientific and environmental education.

Papers to the conference focussed on children's ideas about Irishness, history and citizenship education in Northern Ireland, team planet, a Northern Ireland project to teach geography and science in Primary School, innovations in primary science, environmental education, technology, and early childhood education. The conference was also told about a research initiative in ITE to start later in 2004 (see **An all-Ireland Survey of Student Perceptions of History, Geography and Science**).

# **IASSEE - An all-Ireland Survey of Student Perceptions of History, Geography and Science**

**2004 - 2005**

Dr Colette Murphy (Queen's University, Belfast) and Ms Fionnuala Waldron  
(St Patrick's College, Drumcondra)

The research project is a survey of student teachers and their perceptions of history, geography and science in relation to their experiences of being taught these subjects at primary and secondary school. The initial phase of the project is based upon a questionnaire for all first year BEd students, North and South. This will explore students' attitudes about these subjects and will record their qualifications, opinions on 'good teaching' and their experiences at school.

The objectives are:

1. To produce a baseline of student predispositions to different subject areas; and
2. To adapt learning and teaching strategies in ITE to ensure students leave with enthusiasm about teaching all primary subjects.

Project to take approximately 1 year.

## **School Leadership in Ireland**

**2004 - 2005**

Dr Jim Gleeson (University of Limerick)

This research project will take the form of editing a book recounting the experiences of 16 school leaders, at primary and secondary level, North and South. The book intended to be an inspirational addition to the resources supporting current and potential school leaders as well as policy makers in the education field.

The book will provide short biographies, perspectives on managing and leading, styles of leadership and much more information. There will also be two chapters by the editors. One will introduce the topic of school leadership while the other will reflect on the experiences and recommend some proposals for future North/South collaboration in this area.

**Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI)  
and British Education Research Association (BERA)  
Joint Conference on Research**

**2004 - 2005**

Dr Denis Bates (ESAI) and Dr John Gardner (BERA)

The proposed conference in the Winter of 2004/05 will have the theme of developing educational research capacity. This is being done to give some coherence to the informal community of researchers working in this area. The conference will be presented with a review of the present provision and practice of educational research, North and South, and should help to establish a forum for the exchange of ideas and practice. One potential outcome of the conference will be the development of future working partnerships among educational researcher North and South.

## **Together Towards Inclusion: A Toolkit for Trainers**

**2004 - 2005**

Ms Mary Yarr (Southern Education & Library Board), Dr Barbara Simpson (Trinity College Dublin) and Professor David Little (Trinity College)

The aim of this research project is to develop a toolkit for training trainers working in the area of linguistic and intercultural education. The project will begin by exploring the needs of primary school pupils, North and South, for whom English is a second language at home. The next phase will be explore the training needs of teachers working with these pupils.

The project's outcome – the training toolkit – will be informed by the participation of a group of teachers from both North and South as well as the collaboration of researchers from the SELB and TCD.

Project to take approximately one year to complete.