

Report to SCoTENS

Building Research Capacity North and South

A joint venture conference convened by ESAI & BERA supported by SCoTENS

This conference took place on Friday and Saturday February 18th & 19th at All Hallows College, Drumcondra, Dublin. It drew an attendance of 75 people and was well received.

The conference opened on Friday afternoon with a session setting the context for educational research on the island of Ireland and, more broadly, in the European context. John Gardner for BERA and Denis Bates for ESAI gave inputs. This was followed by a workshop session in which participants discussed their own views and experiences on the provision and practice of educational research in Ireland. A rapporteurs' reporting time was provided before the first keynote input, by Tom Schuller of the OECD. Schuller spoke on the European perspective on educational research and on the priorities which are likely to predominate in the near to medium term. John Furlong for BERA and Jim Gleeson for ESAI responded to the keynote and grounded the macro issues in the realities of contemporary Irish practice.

The Friday evening dinner was provided for all participants as part of the conference programme. It was well attended by the majority of the participants and offered a welcoming forum for discussion which continued into the evening.

Saturday morning started early with a summary of the previous day's work which prepared the way for the second keynote, delivered by Gareth Rees of the University of Cardiff. Following a workshop session, Conor Galvin for ESAI and John Gardner for BERA responded and summarised the general outcomes of the discussions. The conference then concluded with informal discussions over lunch.

The evaluation of the conference indicated a high level of satisfaction on the part of participants with the proceedings. A number of significant points emerged. Appreciation was expressed for the first joint ESAI & BERA event, especially as it focused on building research capacity and expertise on the island of Ireland. This was seen to be about networking and building key relationships which will be critical to the success of future ventures. The line up of speakers was also valued with representation from Europe the UK and Ireland. Most of all, though, participants appreciated the localisation of the major European issues and trends within the Irish national context both North and South. The hope expressed was that this conference would mark the start of a process of consolidation and exchange between North and South. This could take the form of a series of seminars focusing on specific research skills rather than that of a large conference.

ESAI & BERA are deeply grateful for the practical support and encouragement which has been received from SCoTENS. This has been essential to the success of the undertaking. We are encouraged by SCoTENS interest in renewing its support during the coming year and look forward to building on the foundations so successfully laid in the conference just completed.

A more detailed report with recommendations for future initiatives is being finalised by the organisers.