



## Editorial

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## Editorial

It is a great honour and privilege to take up my role as the new General Editor of Irish Educational Studies (IES), the flagship journal of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI). I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the ESAI Executive Committee – in particular ESAI President Dr. Céline Healy and Vice-President Dr. Máirín Glenn – for their advice, support, and encouragement since I took up the role. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to Professor Tony Hall, the outgoing General Editor of IES, for his unstinting support and kindness during the transition phase. I am extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to work with, and learn from, Tony over the past four years. His outstanding leadership has been pivotal to ensuring the continued and increasing success of the journal. IES has experienced exceptional growth in terms of its visibility, reach and impact in recent years. For example, almost 245,000 IES articles were downloaded in 2023, compared to approximately 65,000 downloads in 2020. While metrics provide a very limited understanding of a journal's success, these figures are reflective of a journal that has gone from strength to strength in recent years. Following a huge level of interest in our bumper Special Issue entitled *New Voices: Emerging Change Makers in Education*, dedicated entirely to the scholarship of Early Career Researchers (ECRs), IES is delighted to announce that a similar call for papers will be disseminated next month.

I am extremely proud to be working in tandem with an outstanding editorial team. Co-editors Dr. Delma Byrne, Professor Karl Kitching, and Professor Déirdre Ní Chróinín are joined by three new Co-editors, Dr. Maura Coulter, Dr. Tom Delahunty and Dr. Elaine Keane. I would like to thank the existing Co-editors for their excellent work and ongoing commitment to the journal and to congratulate and warmly welcome the new Co-editors. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Catriona O'Toole, the outgoing Book Reviews and Social Media Editor, for her extremely valuable contribution to IES. It goes without saying that the discernment and diligence of the Co-editors, the wider Editorial Board and Associate Editors are critical to the journal's success and I am extremely grateful for their continued dedication to IES.

IES is in the process of diversifying the types of articles we accept for publication. In a new departure for the journal, we are now inviting alternative article types in the form of data notes, methods papers and registered reports. This allows for shorter and medium length, peer-reviewed articles describing research data stored in a repository (in the case of data notes), and innovative applications of methodological approaches (in the case of methods papers). It also allows for registered reports i.e. empirical articles containing proposed methods and analyses published in advance of data collection. These new formats are designed to increase research discoverability and transparency, improve research design and accessibility, reward methodological innovation and enhance research replicability.

Volume 43 Issue (2) contains an impressive collection of articles addressing diverse topics ranging from relationships and sexuality education (RSE) to the lived experiences of teaching sisters or nuns. It also contains a book review by Professor Áine Hyland of Dr. Brian

Fleming's detailed and timely analysis of the operation of the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme, *The Lived Reality of Educational Disadvantage*.

Three of the articles featured in this issue focus on the issue of assessment. Ann-Marie Young, Ann MacPhail and Deborah Tannehill's article on *Teacher Educators' Engagement with School-based Assessments across Irish teacher Education Programmes* presents findings from a qualitative study highlighting the lived realities and challenges that teacher educators face in supporting pre-service teachers in the development of assessment literacy and practice. With classroom-based assessments now a feature of the Irish educational landscape, the authors make the case for the centrality of assessment within teacher education and highlight the importance of effective school-university partnerships in enhancing understanding of assessment amongst teacher educators and pre-service teachers alike.

Jim Gleeson's wide-ranging article, *Heads or Tails: The Relationship between Curriculum and Assessment in Irish Post-primary Education* analyses the incoherent and 'dysfunctional' relationship between curriculum and assessment that evolved during the twentieth century in Irish education. Noting a relative dearth of scholarly literature on assessment and state examinations, and highlighting the presence of competing 'curriculum cultures', Gleeson demonstrates the increasing importance of this complex relationship in a changing landscape characterised by growing emphasis on skills and learning outcomes and provision for externally examined, school-based assessment components in high stakes exams.

Vasiliki Pitsia, Zita Lysaght, Michael O'Leary and Gerry Shiel's article on *High Achievement in Mathematics and Science among Students in Ireland* presents an in-depth, longitudinal analysis of the mathematics and science achievement of Irish primary and post-primary students in international large-scale assessments (PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS). Demonstrating the limited impact of existing policy and programmatic initiatives designed to improve performance in these subjects, the authors make the case for alternative initiatives that would at once enable more students to become high-achievers while at the same time further enhance the performance of those already identified as such.

Anne Lodge, Mel Duffy and Maria Feeney's article on *Teacher Comfortability: Key to High-Quality Sexuality Education?* presents findings from a large-scale, qualitative study identifying a wide range of systemic, constraining factors impacting teachers' ability and willingness to teach RSE in an Irish context. At the heart of their analysis is the need for open and informed national-level dialogue to ensure a more conducive climate where the teaching of RSE is concerned.

Jason Power, Paul Conway, Ciarán Ó Gallchóir, Ann-Marie Young and Michaela Hayes' article on *Illusions of Online Readiness* assesses the validity of an Online Learner Readiness Scale in a student teacher population in Ireland and establishes its utility as an instrument for exploring the implications of mass digital learning. The study presents important evidence that digital learning readiness may follow a counter-intuitive learning trajectory whereby rapid immersion in online learning spaces can prompt a re-evaluation of self-perceived competence when confronted with advanced tasks across multiple platforms in an 'only digital' learning environment.

Ali Çağatay Kılınc, Mahmut Polatcan, Selçuk Turan and Nedim Özdemir's article on Principal job satisfaction and distributed leadership in the Turkish context adds to the growing body of knowledge of distributed leadership outside of mainstream Western contexts. Drawing on school and teacher-level data from the 2018 PISA and TALIS assessments, this article demonstrates the efficacy of distributed leadership in enhancing teacher-student relationships and student learning outcomes.

Maria Stewart, Barbara Skinner, Heng Hou and Ronan Kelly's article comprises a systematic literature review of home-school partnership for learners for whom English is an

additional language (EAL). Pointing to a lack of research on home-school interventions for EAL learners in the UK and Ireland, the authors underscore the importance of respectful dialogue and mutual learning if schools are to embody a truly inclusive ethos which supports the parents of EAL learners as active agents in their children's educational development.

Deirdre Raftery and Catriona Delaney's article, *Teaching Vocation or Religious Vocation: Examining the Changing Identity of Irish Teaching Sisters c.1940–1970* presents the findings of an oral history project with over 40 nuns or women religious. The study provides fascinating insights into the lives of a category of people rarely asked to talk about their experiences. Amongst the findings discussed are how teaching sisters navigated a 'bifurcated existence' – vowed nun and professional teacher – and how changes that followed the Second Vatican Council affected their lives.

We are hugely grateful to each of the authors and book reviewer for their contributions to this issue of IES; to the scholars who completed timely, critical and constructive peer-review of the manuscripts; and also to our editors who guided the papers expertly through the peer-review process to final publication.

I am very excited about the future of IES and am strongly committed to continuing its impressive journey. Working with the IES Editorial Board, the ESAI President and Executive, and the Irish and international educational research and teaching community, the new editorial team looks forward to further enhancing the journal's profile as a reputed international scholarly journal and the principal scholarly publication for educational research in Ireland.

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