



# STER

Student-teacher  
Educational  
Research



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MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE  
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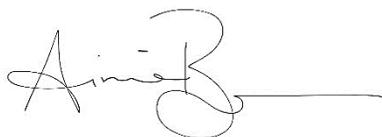


Vol.1 2018

Embracing a teacher-researcher identity is an integral part of initial teacher education in Ireland. Each year, students conduct research into themes relevant to education using a variety of methodological approaches. The STER conference and on-line journal have been established to give student-teachers an opportunity to learn about dissemination methods and to share their research findings with peers, teachers and teacher educators, in a collegial and supportive environment.

STER is committed to promoting a collaborative, student-led approach to research and dissemination. Student articles have gone through a double-blind peer review process and a student advisory committee supported the organisation of the conference. I would like to thank the students listed below for their participation, without their involvement STER would not have come to fruition.

In this first edition of the STER on-line journal, we are pleased to present two articles on the themes of 'Translanguaging' and 'Intercultural Education' in primary education. These articles, prepared by final year students in Mary Immaculate College, provide an overview of the authors' dissertation research. I would like to commend the students on their preparation of these insightful articles and on their engagement with the dissemination process.



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# STER

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Research Journal*

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# Foreword

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Professor Teresa O'Doherty

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This inaugural Student-Teacher Educational Research (STER) conference, and the publication of the associated journal, marks a significant departure in the development and maturation of teacher education at Mary Immaculate College (MIC). Building on more than one century of teacher education, the Professional Master of Education programme is premised on teaching as a profession, where teachers are active researchers, who engage in conducting and disseminating research themselves, who interrogate the literature, and whose work in schools is research informed and research-led. Reflecting the work of Lee Shulman, our teacher education programmes are posited on 'taking teaching seriously':

...if we are to take learning seriously, we must profess teaching, and take our profession as teachers seriously. At the heart of the concept of a profession is a public and moral commitment to learning from pedagogical experience and exchanging that learning in acts of scholarship that contribute to the wisdom of practice across the profession.

(Shulman 1999, p.17)

Taking a long lens view of education, we are aware that society is undergoing significant and rapid social, political, and economic change, and that the pace of change is accelerating. The future is uncertain, and there is a realisation that traditional approaches, structures, norms and methods that have their roots in our past, are giving way to new and different realities. The work of the teacher is not fixed; rather it must grow, change, and be open to new interpretations and new knowledge. The professional teacher must be an active agent in negotiating the complexity of the classroom and have the critical skills to navigate her/his way through changing curricula of the future, but also to invent and re-invent new pedagogies. In addition, the teacher must be enabled to challenge existing constructions of reality in order to accommodate social and cultural diversity and change into the future. Teachers are not just entitled to be researchers, as part of their commitment to maintain their professional knowledge (Teaching Council 2016, p. 8) they are required to be researchers. To provide the best possible education for the future generations of children in our nation, it is essential that the concept of teacher-as-researcher is no longer

an optional element in the education of teachers, but is a shared value among all teachers. Research, which is increasingly collaborative and focused on the emerging needs of classrooms, is now part of the identity of the new cadre of teachers emerging from MIC.

In this context, the STER seminar and associated on-line journal are evidence of the changing culture and tradition of teaching. The research undertaken has been thought-provoking, relevant, and practice driven, reflecting the complexity of teaching in modern Ireland. The papers presented by student-teachers in these final weeks of their programme illustrate the competence and capacity of our students, and the professional approach they are taking to their chosen career. Today's seminar highlights the importance of sharing and debating research with peers, and challenges student-teachers to develop creative and innovative presentation strategies to make educational research accessible to others.

The selection and publication of articles by peers has been a most striking aspect of this new journal – student-teachers are the authors, peer reviewers, and editors. This level of teamwork, of engagement with quality assurance processes involved in the dissemination of research, and of managing ethical considerations involved throughout, is impressive. In particular, I wish to commend those involved in the blind-review and editorial aspects of this journal. These students have learned how to evaluate and engage with articles, to critically appraise the work of others and developed their capacity to give constructive, non-judgemental feedback to peers. These transferrable skills will be of significant assistance to them in their future professional lives. This process has provided student-teachers with an in-depth understanding of what is involved, not only in undertaking research, but in presenting that research within an academic environment, and ensuring that it is available to others, through an on-line publication.

I wish to congratulate the students on their magnificent achievement. They are at the beginning of their professional careers, and have, under the direction of their supervisors, completed their first significant piece of educational research. I wish to thank the supervisors for their on-going support to the students throughout their research, and also for their investment in their own research lives. I also wish to express my appreciation to the teachers and schools who facilitated the student-teachers' research projects.

Finally, I wish to thank Dr Aimie Brennan, the lecturer who had the vision to engage the students in this type of process, and who had the capacity to support the vast array of research designs and methodologies chosen by the students, for her commitment to seeing this process through to a most successful conclusion. Through her leadership of this demanding process, she has brought the students to a stage in their professional lives where they are not just research literate, but highly articulate and capable, research oriented and competent professionals.

In conclusion, the positioning of teachers-as-researchers changes the concept of teaching in Ireland and opens up schools as sites of inquiry, where teachers collaboratively investigate their work through observation, data collection, reflection, and discussion (Ryan *et al.* 2017). They engage in policy debate and analysis, and through their research-informed positions, are capable of leading their schools through the shifting and ever complex landscape of education. While our future is uncertain, we know that our teachers are fit for the challenge, and our future is in excellent hands.

*Teresa O'Doherty*

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## Exploring Student-Teacher Attitudes to Interculturalism

**Eva Kelleher**

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*



Eva Kelleher is a final year student in the Professional Master of Education programme in Mary Immaculate College. Having completed an undergraduate degree in Applied Languages in the University of Limerick, Eva spent time teaching in South America. Her interest in the field of interculturalism and cultural diversity has emerged from both her educational and professional experience.

**KEYWORDS:** Diversity, Intercultural Education, Primary Education

### INTRODUCTION

Ireland has become a more culturally diverse, heterogeneous society. The term 'Irishness' has been redefined, encompassing many more than just 'White Middle-class Catholics' (Parker-Jenkins and Masterson 2013). According to the most recent census, the Irish demographic comprises of 535,475 non-Irish nationals, and more than 104,784 citizens with dual-nationalities (CSO 2017). With this increasingly diversity, one must consider how the Irish primary school system is responding, particularly when its fundamental aim outlines the need 'to celebrate the uniqueness of the child' and 'the development of the full potential of *every child*' (NCCA 1999, pp.16-18).

The need to ensure adequate inclusive methodologies to accommodate for the increasingly diverse Irish classrooms, requires reflection. This research project wishes to determine the outlooks, attitudes, and confidence of student-teachers towards promoting interculturalism in their future classrooms. Given that student-teachers are exposed to the most contemporary research in the field of education as a result of their on-going studies, the outlook of this cohort may be of interest to educators

in the field of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). In exploring their engagement with interculturalism, it is hoped that areas which may require reconsideration will be highlighted to ensure that future teachers have the tools and supports they need to address interculturalism.

## CONTEXT

Interculturalism has recently dominated the discourse of many different domains; judicial, societal, and educational. Due to the demographical changes experienced on both national and international levels, countries have been forced to reconsider statutory regulations to ensure compliance with basic human rights, and that each person, regardless of race, ethnicity, or demographic, is afforded the same basic civil liberties as the host populates. Interculturalism in the context of education is the notion that “all ethnicities be valued and respected, and require students to develop contact with, and knowledge of, communities who are different from themselves” (Antonsich 2015, p.478).

Since the beginning of the Celtic Tiger era, the demographic in Ireland has become heterogenous and culturally diverse (CSO 2017). Consequently, additional resources were put in place by the government to support the integration and inclusion of children from different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds in Irish primary classrooms. EAL teachers and support plans were introduced to schools to address the rising classroom diversity (Department of Education and Skills 2012). Furthermore, guidelines published by various bodies, such as the INTO *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Teachers* (NCCA, 2005) and *Towards a Framework for Intercultural Education in Irish Classrooms* (Heran and Tormey 2002) which aimed to provide guidance and support to teachers in promoting intercultural education. After the economic downturn in 2009, reduced funding resulted in a significant reduction of support teachers and the sole responsibility of catering for additional needs returned to the classroom teacher (Department of Education and Skills 2012).

Findings from a PISA Report (2009) revealed that the academic success of migrant children in the areas literacy and numeracy, as determined by standardised testing, was below average. Research indicated that recognition of and response to intercultural education was inadequate in the Irish educational context (Devine 2009a; Devine 2009b; Smyth et al 2009). Research focused on the effect of classroom teachers on the implementation of intercultural education with some authors highlighting the need for classroom teachers to be cognisant of inexplicit exclusionary methods; those which can be manifested in teaching strategies, curricular material and a teacher’s lack of self-awareness (Ryan 2003).

Devine (2009) highlighted the need to create culturally aware learning spaces in which cultural stereotypes are not perpetuated, and sensitivity is developed for classroom diversity, to ensure the establishment of inclusive classrooms, “built upon an appreciation and respect for the established social and cultural values of unique societies” (Rose 2010, p.3).

Some studies have given consideration for student-teachers’ conceptions of their role and have investigated the influence of dispositional factors, (openness to diversity and self-awareness), and expositional factors (intercultural experiences), on the creation of intercultural classroom environments (Garmon 2004). In this sense, ITE can play a crucial role in developing reflective and self-aware teachers. The literature refers to the influence education can have on enabling student-teachers “to gather information, think critically, reflect, converse, and assess before making ideological decisions” (Middleton 2002, p.356) and to become critically aware of cultural dominance, power relations and inexplicit exclusionary methods in classroom environments.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Data for this research project was qualitative in nature and gathered by means of semi-structured interviews of a duration of approximately 20-30minutes. Purposive sampling was used to recruit nine participants. All participants were enrolled in an initial teacher education programme at the time of interview. Due to the nature of their educational programme, participants presented with many differing demographical traits, in terms of age, county of origins, previous employments and life experience. Six participants identified as ‘female’ and three as ‘male’. Participants were from varying locations around Ireland. By focusing on this particular sample, it was hoped that a more accurate and encompassing overview would be achieved. Interestingly, while all participants had completed at least three formal school placements, some had not yet experienced classrooms with children from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Interview data was analysed using thematic analysis whereby transcripts were decoded and encoded to identify the prominent thematic findings. A mixture of in vivo codes and descriptive codes were used for this purpose. The process of data analysis was guided by the approach advocated by Creswell et al. (2007) and influenced by the instructional process of Saldana (2009). Having gathered the relevant data, five main themes were identified as being the most significant factors impacting the outlook of student-teachers towards intercultural education.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As outlined by Smith (2000), a teacher's own personal experience with interculturalism and diversity, can have a significant impact on how they approach culturally diverse classrooms. One participant claimed that because of having interacted with multicultural settings in their own personal lives, entering a classroom with children from a diversity of cultural backgrounds did not incur any concern and enabled them to become more aware of promoting an inclusive environment. They said;

Through soccer I would have had a lot of experience of it [cultural diversity] aright...because of that when I walked into a classroom that was very diverse, it was nothing new to me, so I was able to just get on with it (student-teacher).

Other participants indicated that their personal experiences enabled them to empathise with "the other" which they believed benefited the creation of an intercultural classroom. However, the data also indicated that certain participants who had little or no personal experiences with diversity, still had an awareness of the impact of the dominant culture, and how to ensure that all children were included regardless of ethnicity.

Having requested participants to outline their experience in intercultural classrooms, all but one identified as having encountered and taught in classrooms with culturally diverse students. The findings indicate that initial exposure to such settings resulted in student-teachers feeling unprepared, lacking in confidence and uncertain of how best to provide for the needs of their class. Interestingly, although all candidates had completed at least one full semester of college (in some cases three) prior to this experience, none felt they had a thorough understanding of multiculturalism or interculturalism prior to these placements. Some participants indicated that they did not feel adequately prepared to address intercultural issues should they arise on placement. Some of the participants recall interculturalism being discussed in their programme, "*it was brought to our attention*", while one participant failed to remember the guidance given; "*I've had three semesters of training and I don't know if I've heard the word mentioned once*". Two participants indicated they had since acquired a more in-depth knowledge of the interculturalism as a result of independent research.

Lack of explicit guidance and instruction on providing for children in these classrooms were identified in the data as being the biggest concern for participants. Participants made various suggestions about how student-teachers could be supported for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. ITE programmes could offer compulsory modules, or subject-specific lectures pertaining to interculturalism. Some participants stated that the information provided in guidelines and policies is not enough, rather

strategies and resources for culturally diverse classrooms need to be explicitly explored. Participants suggested that subject-specific lectures and experts in the field could deliver formal training. One person said:

I believe there should be a specific module for intercultural education and intercultural diversity. I always think it's very easy to point out that there [are] intercultural guidelines and there is paper work and policy out there, but I feel there is nothing better than actually sitting down and discussing it (student-teacher).

Beyond ITE, participants highlighted the need for specific Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses in the area of intercultural education. These could provide the necessary information to practicing teachers, with one participant suggesting it be incorporated in the mandatory Croke Park hours that teachers are required to attend. Moreover, it was suggested that intercultural education be made available in the form of a booklet for quick reference, in the same manner as certain subjects are addressed with the boundaries of SPHE.

The findings of the research explored some of the attitudes and experiences of student-teachers prior to their entry into the professional field. While this research is limited in nature, the results are nevertheless relevant and demanding of our reflection. As the demographic of the Irish society becomes increasingly heterogeneous, it is imperative that teachers feel confident to address the needs of intercultural classrooms. Ensuring that children are accommodated for, regardless of ethnic diversity, is forefront to safeguarding curricular aims. As stated by Smyth, "supporting teachers towards more differentiated classroom methods as well as promoting a more positive school climate would enhance the academic and social development of newcomer and Irish students alike" (2009, p.204). The data from this project suggests that additional supports are necessary for teachers. Much of the data highlights the need for compulsory lectures and modules to provide practical strategies and knowledge of resources to student-teachers before they encounter culturally diverse classrooms.

While formal education is imperative, a teacher's disposition and experience can also affect their ability to provide an inclusive classroom environment. This research project finds that only some of the participants had experienced interactions with cultural diversity prior to their experience as teacher of such classrooms. There is little evidence in the data to suggest awareness of one's cultural privilege and dominant-culture upbringing, which is stated by Middleton (2002) as being the one of the biggest difficulties in preparing student-teachers for interculturalism. However, the data does suggest an on-going process of self-reflection practiced by many of the participants, referring to the need for reserving

their own cultural beliefs to ensure the creation of an open and accepting environment. Baldwin et al. (2007) outline that this is the most effective manner in which teachers can question their preconceptions and subliminal beliefs, enabling them to interrogate their methodologies and develop a consciousness for how best to ensure and implement intercultural education. Empathy for 'the other' and a willingness to provide as effectively as possible for children's needs was present amongst participants. Interestingly, one participant highlighted the danger of over emphasising 'the other', a belief that may serve to alienate certain students even further, enhancing the gap between 'them and us' (Parker-Jenkins et al. 2017).

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research project was to offer a current insight into the perceptions of student-teachers towards intercultural education. Having received the most current and topical information available, the research endeavoured to investigate this cohort's outlooks of teaching in diverse classrooms. Student-teachers reported highly positive experiences of teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, however they too highlighted shortcomings in their formal education on interculturalism. With limited resources offered to schools to address the growing diversity, classroom teachers are facing greater demands than ever before. Ensuring they have the proper and sufficient support to address these issues is crucial to ensure the equal access of all students to a quality primary school education. Further research in this area may consider extending the limitations of this project. It is hoped that the results of this project may contribute to the discourse on ITE and intercultural education and focus on providing student-teachers with CPD, education and resources to support them in their professional career.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor Dr Emmanuel O Grady for his guidance and support throughout the research process. I would like to thank Dr Aimie Brennan for offering such a wonderful opportunity to be published in this journal and I would like to thank all the participants who kindly took part in the research process. Finally, I will be forever grateful for the support of my family, boyfriend and friends, for their endless patience and cups of tea.

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# An é Trasteangú Athbheochán na Gaeilge?

**Sarah Burke**

*Máistir Garmiúil san Oideachas (Múinteoireacht Bunscoile)*



Is as cathair na Gaillimhe í Sarah Burke. Bhain sí céim chumarsáide amach in Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge i gConamara sular bhog sí ar aghaidh chun gairm a bheith aici sna meáin. Bhí sí ag obair sa rannóg scrípte i Ros na Rún ar feadh seal agus ansin mar chuntóir léirithe i Studio Solas i gConamara. D'oibrigh Sarah mar fhísiriseoir ar an suíomh Meon Eile leis an gcomhlacht léiriúchán *Below the Radar* i mBéal Feirste. Is le *Below the Radar* a bhfuair Sarah an deis a bheith ina láithreoir ar 'I Lár An Aonaigh' a bhí le feiceáil ar BBC2. Bhog Sarah go dtí na hAstráile ansin agus d'fhoghlaim sí go leor faoin tábhacht a bhaineann le hoideachas a fháil sna luabhlíonta agus í ag obair mar iriseoir leis an Roinn Oideachais i Melbourne. Shocraigh sí teacht abhaile agus céim a bhaint amach sa mhúinteoireacht agus tá sí ag stáidéar ar an gcúrsa Máistreacht Ghairmiúil san Oideachas i gColáiste Mhuire Gan Smál.

**FOCAIL EOCHAIR:** Múineadh na Gaeilge, Trasteangú, Tumoideachais.

## RÉAMHRÁ

*'Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam.'* Aontaím leis an méid a dúirt Pádraig Mac Piarais. Tá an mhionteanga in Éirinn fíor thábhachtach, is cuid dár gcultúr í agus is linne í. Bíonn díospóireachtaí ann i gcónaí faoin dteanga; daoine ag iarraidh í a chur chun cinn agus daoine eile nach bhfuil. Tá go leor modhanna múinteoireachta ann chun an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh; tumoideachais i nGaelscoileanna agus straitéisí eile i scoileanna Béarla. Tar éis ocht mbliana sa bhunscoil ní bhíonn formhór na ndaoine (i scoileanna Béarla) muiníneach go leor an Ghaeilge a labhairt. Tá mise ag iarraidh fiosrú an féidir le bunscoileanna aon mhodh eile a úsáid chun an Ghaeilge a fhorbairt. Beidh mé ag fiosrú trasteangú mar straitéis nua in Éirinn agus ag fáil amach an gceapann múinteoirí bunscoile an féidir le trasteangú oibriú

anseo i scoileanna príomhshrutha amháin chun an Ghaeilge a shaothrú. Ní chuirfidh mé múinteoirí i nGaelscoileanna faoi agallamh mar gheall go mbíonn tumoideachais ar bun i nGaelscoileanna agus cuireadh trasteangú isteach ar sin dar liom.

Is téarma réasúnta nua agus i mbéal forbartha é ‘trasteangú,’ cé gur d’fhobair fear d’arbh ainm Cen Williams an téarma i bhfad siar sna hochtaidí (Lewis *et al.* 2012, Cummins 2014, Nikula agus Moore 2016). D’úsáid Williams an téarma trasteangú chun tagairt a dhéanamh ar chleachtais oideolaíoch dátheangach ar leith a d’fhorbair sé chun úsáid a bhaint as chlár dátheangachas, le haghaidh Breatnaise agus Béarla sa Bhreatain Bheag. Is straitéis struchtúrtha í an trasteangú ina chuirtear béim ar an teanga is laige chun í a fhorbairt. Bhí Williams go mór i bhfabhar dhá theanga a úsáid agus a athrú sa phróiseas ionchur agus aschur in aon rang amháin, mar shampla; slíocht a thabhairt do na páistí i mBéarla le léamh agus ansin cur síos a dhéanamh ar an slíocht sin trí mheáin na Breatnaise. An aidhm a bhí ag Williams ná bhí sé ag iarraidh ar na páistí eolais a phróiseáil go domhain. Bhí an cur chuige seo ann chun tacaíocht a thabhairt do stádas na Breatnaise i scoileanna agus chun daltaí a spreagadh chun smaointe níos casta a fhorbairt ina dteanga níos laige (Ballinger *et al.* 2017). Seans gur féidir le seo dóchas a thabhairt don Ghaeilge in Éirinn freisin.

Léiríonn Cummins (2014) go gcuireann trasteangú réalaiócht an dátheangachas chun cinn i gcomhtéacsanna nádúrtha go rialta. Cosúil le Ballinger *et al.*, léiríonn Cummins, gur féidir le trasteangú an teanga is laige a fhorbairt. Bíonn na teangacha a mhalairt ó theanga amháin go teanga eile i mbun ceachta, seachas 100% lán-tumoideachais a chur chun cinn. Ní aontaíonn sé le dhá theanga a bheith scartha óna chéile, creideann sé go bhfuil sé tábhachtach aistriú idir dhá theanga agus daltaí ag foghlaim ar scoil. An argóint atá ag Cummins chun comhtháthú idir dhá theanga ar scoil, ná go bhfoghlaimíonn daltaí níos éifeachtaí nuair a tharraingíonn an múinteoir aird an dalta ar chosúlachtaí agus éagsúlachtaí sna dhá theanga. Dar le Cummins, is éard is brí leis an téarma ‘oideachas dátheangach’ ná nuair a úsáidtear níos mó ná teanga amháin chun teagaisc agus nuair a bhfuil na teangacha úsáidte chun ábhar a mhúineadh seachas an teanga féin a mhúineadh.

Ar an taobh eile, deir Ó Brolcháin (2017), agus Ballinger *et al.* (2017), nach é an trasteangú an bealach is éifeachtaí chun mionteanga a chur chun cinn. Cuirtear in iúl dá mbeadh an rogha ag páistí an Ghaeilge nó an Béarla a labhairt, roghnaíodh an Béarla, fiú iad siúd ina bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar theanga dúcháis acu. Is í an Ghaeilge príomh theanga na tíre de réir Bunreacht na hÉireann (Airteagail 8.1), ach,

fós fhéin is mionteanga í. Tá an staidéar seo tábhachtach, dar liom, mar tá gá le córas oideachais éifeachtach Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn i mbunscoileanna príomhshrutha na tíre seo.

An cheist atá faoi bhráid ná; *An é trasteangú athbheochan na Gaeilge?* Oibríonn trasteangú go maith sa Bhreatain Bheag (Lewis *et al.* 2012) agus is léir go bhfuil sé tar éis cur leis an mBreataine. Ceisteoidh mé an mbeadh trasteangú ábalta oibriú anseo in Éirinn ar an gcaoi céanna agus muna bhfuil, cén fáth.

## COMHTHÉACS

Tá polasaithe faoi leith in Éirinn agus i dtíortha eile chun an mhionteanga a fhorbairt agus a chosaint. Foilsíodh an ‘Straitéis 20 bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030’ chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn in Éirinn. Léiríonn an straitéis seo go bhfuil an Rialtas ag déanamh iarrachtaí an Ghaeilge a choinneáil beo agus dátheangachas a fhorbairt. Caithfear daltaí scoile i mbunscoileanna agus meánscoileanna staidéar a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge agus ar an mBéarla in Éirinn (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna (g.d.)). Tá cosúlachtaí sa Bhreatain Bheag agus i gCeanada chomh maith mar go bhfoghlamaíonn daltaí scoile Béarla chomh maith le mionteangacha. Dé réir polasaí Rialtas na Breataine Bige, tá ar ghach dalta idir 3-16 bliana d’aois, staidéar a dhéanamh ar an mBreataine, mar an chéad nó mar an dara teanga (Jones 2016). Ar an gcuma chéanna, tá Fraincís, chomh maith le Béarla, mar theanga oifigiúil i gCeanada, agus tugann ‘Roinn 23 den Chairt um Chearta agus Saoirsí Bunreachtúil,’ ráthaíocht do chearta mhionteangacha. De réir an dlí, tá cearta acu siúd an Fhraincís agus an Béarla a fhoghlaim ar scoil ar fud na tíre (Stopps 2009) (Ollscoil Ottawa (g.d.)).

Cé go bhfuil polasaí ann in Éirinn chun an Ghaeilge a chosaint agus a chur chun cinn níl an córas ag oibriú. Tar éis dhá bhliain déag ag foghlaim na Gaeilge ar scoil ní bhíonn daoine ábalta í a labhairt nó í a úsáid (Kelleher 2017). Tá bearna ann agus caithfear í a líonadh má tháthar ag iarraidh go mbeadh daltaí scoile muiníneach an teanga a labhairt agus iad ar scoil agus tar éis na scoile chomh maith.

## MODHEOLAÍOCHTAÍ

Is í an aidham atá agam ná tacaíocht agus cabhair a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí bunscoile agus modhanna nó straitéisí éifeachtach a aimsiú chun an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh go héifeachtach. Shocraigh mé ar mhúinteoirí bunscoile amháin atá ag múineadh i scoileanna príomhshrutha a chur faoi agallamh

chun peirspictíochtaí faoi mhúineadh na Gaeilge a fháil. Rinne mé ceithre hagallamh leath-structúra agus scaip mé suirbhéanna ar líne; ar SurveyMonkey.

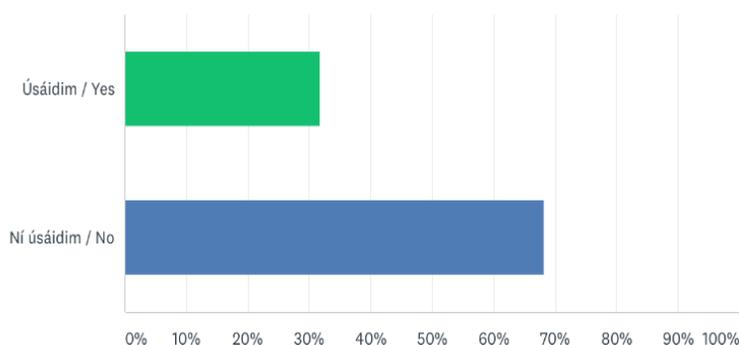
D'aimsigh mé na rannpháirtí seo tríd sampláil deonach a dhéanamh, tríd ríomhphoist a sheoladh chuig bunscoileanna i gContae na Gaillimhe agus i gContae Mhaigh Eo agus d'iarr mé ar mhúinteoirí bunscoile an suirbhé a fhreagairt. Ní raibh aithne agam ar na rannpháirtí ach bhí siad sásta páirt a ghlacadh. D'fhreagair 41 múinteoirí an suirbhé ar líne. Bhí teorainneacha ann, ní raibh mé ag iarraidh múinteoirí ó Ghaelscoileanna a bheith páirteach sa taighde mar gheall go mbíonn tumoideachais ar bhun acu den chuid is mó. Bhí mé ar an eolas faoi mo chlaontacht féin; go raibh mé ag iarraidh an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, agus rinne mé cinnte gan an chlaontacht seo a chur in iúl i gceisteanna na hagallaimh agus an suirbhé.

Shocraigh mé ar na modheolaíochta seo chun torthaí cruinn a fháil agus d'úsáid mé SurveyMonkey ionas go mbeadh mé ábalta an suirbhé a scaipeadh go héasca agus go forleathan agus go mbeadh torthaí an suirbhé le fheiceáil go soiléir i bhfoirm barrachairteacha.

*Féach thíos chun roinnt torthaí a fheiceáil:*

An úsáideann tú straitéisí éagsúla agus tú ag múineadh páistí dátheangacha? Do you use different teaching strategies when teaching a bilingual child?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0

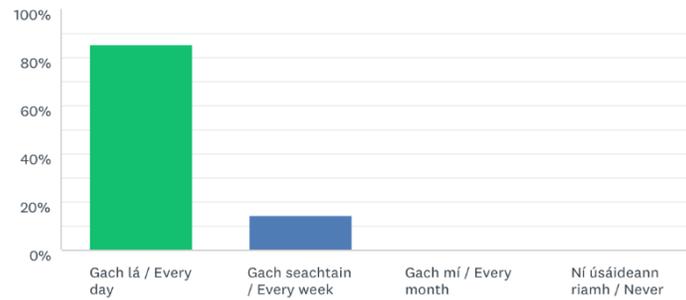


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Úsáidim / Yes	31.71% 13
▼ Ní úsáidim / No	68.29% 28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

Léaráid 1: Straitéisí

Cé chomh minic ina n-úsáideann tú Gaeilge (labhartha/scríofa) i ranganna eile? How often do you use Irish (written/spoken) in other classes?

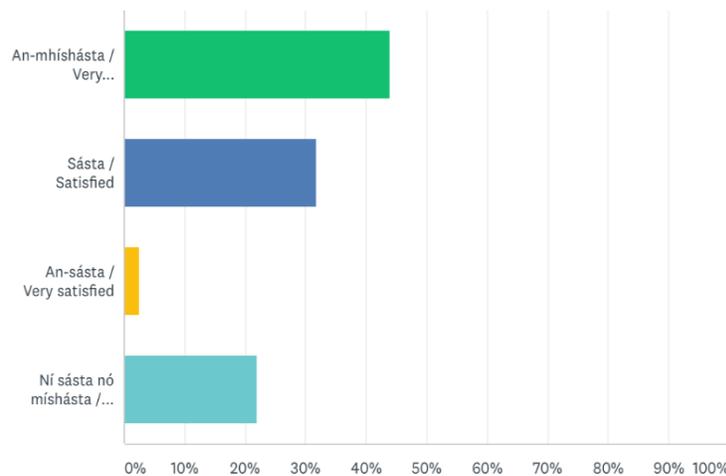
Answered: 41 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Gach lá / Every day	85.37% 35
▼ Gach seachtain / Every week	14.63% 6
▼ Gach mí / Every month	0.00% 0
▼ Ní úsáideann riamh / Never	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

Léaráid 2: Minicíocht

D'iarr mé ar na múinteoirí an raibh siad sásta nó míshásta le polasaí an stáit i dtaca le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge. Seo a leanas na torthaí:



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ An-mhíshásta / Very dissatisfied	43.90% 18
▼ Sásta / Satisfied	31.71% 13
▼ An-sásta / Very satisfied	2.44% 1
▼ Ní sásta nó míshásta / Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.95% 9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

Léaráid 3: Polasaí

## FIONNACHTANNA AGUS PLÉ

Léiríonn torthaí an tsuirbhé go bhfuil 43.9% de mhúinteoirí a ghlac páirt sa suirbhé an-mhíshásta le polasaí an stát i dtaca le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge, rud nach chuireann iontas orm. Ná tráchtanna is coitianta a tháinig anuas ná go raibh múinteoirí á rá nach bhfuil a ndótháin deiseanna ann chun an Ghaeilge a labhairt taobh amuigh den scoil agus de bharr sin, ní bhíonn fonn nó gá ar na daltaí an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim. Bhí múinteoirí á rá go bhfuil bearna sa chóras oideachais Gaeilge nuair nach mbíonn daoine ábalta an teanga a labhairt go muiníneach tar éis dóibh 14 bliain a chaitheamh ag foghlaim í ar scoil. Tá níos mó modhanna múinteoireachta nua agus traenáil go mór ag teastáil ó mhúinteoirí a ghlac páirt sa suirbhé.

Trácht eile a bhí luaite go minic ná nach mbíonn meas ag tuismitheoirí ar an nGaeilge agus go bhfaigheann na páistí an meon sin sa bhaile agus dá bharr, go mbíonn sé deacair iad a spreagadh i dtreo na Gaeilge. Dóibh siúd a bhí sásta le polasaí an stáit, dúirt siad go bhfuil an curaclam teanga nua mar chéim sa treo cheart. Lua roinnt múinteoirí go bhfuil siad an-sásta go bhfuil polasaí oideachais ar fáil sa Ghaeltacht anois.

Maidir le tumoideachais sna ranganna Gaeilge, deir formhór na rannpháirtí go n-oibríonn sé, gur an bealach is fearr é chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn do *formhór* na ndaltaí. Ach luaigh roinnt múinteoirí go mbíonn daltaí laige fágtha taobh thiar leis i gcónaí. Tugann na torthaí seo an smaoineamh dom go mb'fhéidir go mbeadh trasteangú in ann oibriú do *ghach* duine agus ansin nach mbeadh na daltaí laige ag fulaingt.

Maidir leis an gcur chuige atá ag múinteoirí chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn faoi láthair, níor luaigh aon mhúinteoir go n-úsáideann siad trasteangú. Bhí orm an téarma trasteangú a mhiniú do mhúinteoir amháin agus bhí an triúir eile ar an eolas faoi. É sin ráite, áfach, mhothaigh mé nár cheap siad go mbíonn struchtúr faoi leith ag baint le trasteangú agus de bharr seo, mothaím go bhfuil níos mó eolais ag teastáil ar trasteangú sa tír seo. Mhol na múinteoirí tumoideachais, cluichí teanga, físeanna, imeascadh, ranganna cainte agus obair beirte mar na straitéisí is éifeachaí atá in úsáid acu.

Dúirt 85.37% go n-úsáideann siad Gaeilge labhartha nó scríofa i ranganna eile gach lá agus dúirt 14.63% gu n-úsáideann siad Gaeilge i ranganna eile gach seachtain. Ní chuireann na torthaí seo iontas orm ach ardaítear an cheist; cén saghas Gaeilge atá á úsáid sna ranganna eile? An é an rud céanna atá ann i

gcónaí, mar shampla; *tógaigí amach bhur leabhair, bígí ciúin*, agus an gcabhraíonn úsáid na Gaeilge i ranganna eile í a fhorbairt?

D'iarr mé ar na rannpháirtí cén tuairim a bhí acu faoi chead a thabhairt do pháistí a theanga dúchais a úsáid sa rang agus iad i mbun oibre. Bhí meascán freagraí ar an gceist seo. Bhí múinteoirí go mór idir dhá chomhairle. Go bunúsach, bhí múinteoirí ag rá gur smaoineamh maith é i 'domhain idéalach' ach nach bhfuil sé practiciúil mar gheall ar líon na ndaltaí as tíortha éagsúla agus nach mbeadh sé cothrom ar na múinteoirí gan fhios a bheith acu céard atá á rá ag na daltaí eile sa rang. Dúirt go leor múinteoirí nach bhfuil an rogha sin acu mar gheall go n-iarann tuismitheoirí na bpáistí orthu gan cead a thabhairt dóibh a theanga dúchais a labhairt, mar tá siad ag iarraidh go mbeadh siad ag cur leis an mBéarla.

Dóibh siúd a rinne na hagallaimh leath-struchtúra, cheap said uile go n-oibríonn an tumoideachais sna ranganna Gaeilge agus d'aontaigh siad leis an gcur chuige atá ann i nGaelscoileanna nuair nach ceadaítear Béarla ach amháin sna ranganna Béarla. Pointe amháin a sheas amach dom ná nuair a dúirt múinteoir amháin nár cheart foclóir éagsúil a fhoghlaim trí Ghaeilge, mar shampla sna ranganna mata agus sna hábhair oideachais sóisialta, imshaoil agus eolaíochta; *'Surely, it is better to learn new vocabulary such as photosynthesis in the English form, in a form that will be used later in life rather than fótaisintéis'* (Rannpháistí 2018). Cé gur chreid an múinteoir seo go n-oibríonn tumoideachas, ní raibh sé i bhfabhar tumoideachas go hiomláin. Má tá páistí ag foghlaim stór focal i mBéarla amháin sna hábhair a lua sé, cá stopann muid?

Maidir le trasteangú, bhí spéis ag múinteoirí ann. Dúirt na múinteoirí ar fad a chuaigh faoi agallamh, go n-úsáidfeadh siad trasteangú amach anseo agus go mbeadh suim acu triail a bhaint as sa seomra ranga. Chuir an toradh seo ionadh orm mar cé go bhfuil an suim ann, is léir nach bhfuil an trasteangú á chur chun cinn. Dúirt beirt go n-oibríoch sé chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn ach go mbeadh cur chuige an scoil uile ag teastáil. Dúirt duine eile go n-iompaíonn daltaí ar ais go dtí an teanga is fearr atá acu i gcónaí agus go bhfuil sí cinnte dá mbeadh rogha ag na páistí Gaeilge nó Béarla a labhairt, go roghnaíoch siad an Béarla i gcónaí. Dúirt múinteoir eile nach é trasteangú athbheochan na Gaeilge mar gheall go bhfuil sé ann le fada ach fósfhéin go mbeadh suim aige ann. Is léir go bhfuil níos mó eolais ag teastáil chun go mbeadh muinín ag na múinteoirí an trasteangú a chur i bhfeidhm. Dar leis an rannpháirtí seo, is iad modhanna múinteoireachta nua atá ag teastáil.

Ceapaim go bhfuil níos mó eolais agus níos mó fíricí ag teastáil faoi thrasteangú sa tír seo. Is léir go bhfuil tuairimí éagsúla ag daoine ach nach bhfuil gach duine ar aon tuairim amháin. Tar éis roinnt taighde, is léir domsa go bhfuil struchtúr faoi leith ag baint le trasteangú, ach, mar gheall nach bhfuil sé chomh coitianta anseo in Éirinn, tá múinteoirí ag ceapadh go bhfuil an rogha ann é a chur chun cinn go struchtúrtha nó neamhstruchtúrtha agus ní hea seo an cás.

## FOCAL SCOIR

Tá sé fíor shuimiúil go bhfuil bearna mhór idir trasteangú struchtúrtha agus neamhstruchtúrtha, agus cé go bhfuil an fhianaise ann go n-oibríonn an modh struchtúrtha sa Bhreatain Bheag ní dóigh liom go bhfuil an modh seo le feiceáil in Éirinn go fóill. Tá sé soiléir go bhfuil córas nua ag teastáil chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, ach ní dóigh liom go bhfuil trasteangú chun an fhadhb a réiteach mura bhfuil níos mó eolais ag oideoirí ar conas trasteangú struchtúrtha a chur chun cinn. Ba bhreá liom dá mbeadh trasteangú curtha i bhfeidhm anseo agus go mbeadh struchtúr faoi leith ag baint leis ionas go mbeadh múinteoirí agus daltaí scoile ar an eolas faoi agus nach mbeadh modhanna éagsúla in úsáid i scoileanna timpeall na tíre.

Léiríonn an taighde seo go mbeadh formhór na ndaltaí ag iarraidh iompú don Bhéarla dá má rud é go raibh an rogha acu an Ghaeilge nó an Béarla a labhairt, fiú iad siúd a bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar theanga dúcháis acu, rud a chuireann ionadh agus díoma orm, ach ceapaim dá mbeadh an trasteangú curtha i bhfeidhm go struchtúrtha go mbeadh deis níos fearr don Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. É sin ráite, afách, tá bealaí eile gur féidir linn an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn.

Tá modhanna múinteoireachta nua chun an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh ag teastáil go géar. Tá múinteoirí ag iarraidh níos mó béime ar an gcaint seachas ar an bhfilíocht. Tá meon na tuismitheoirí antábhachtach agus tá cabhair ag teastáil chun iad a spreagadh a bheith páirteach in obair Gaeilge na bpáistí. Is léir gurb é an tumoideachais an straitéis is éifeachtaí atá ann dar le múinteoirí agus go n-oibríonn sé i nGaelscoileanna. Mar atá ráite cheana agam, deir Cummins (2014), go bhfuil comhtháthú riachtanach chun teangacha a fhoghlaim agus go bhfoghlaimíonn daltaí níos éifeachtaí nuair a tharraingíonn an múinteoir aird an dalta ar chosúlachtaí agus éagsúlachtaí sna dhá theanga.

An chomhairle a bheadh agam ná múinteoirí bunscoile a chur ar an eolas faoi conas trasteangú struchtúrtha a chur i bhfeidhm go héifeachtach, ach go dtí go dtarlaíonn sé sin, ba cheart an tumoidachais a bheith in úsáid níos minicí, ní sna ranganna Gaeilge amháin, ach i ranganna eile ar nós

corpoideachais, ealaín agus creideamh. Tá cur chuige scoil uile ag teastáil chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn freisin agus is léir go bhfuil Gaeilge nádúrtha ag teastáil timpeall na scoile ionas go mbeidh ról lárnach aici i saol na ndaltaí. Is cinnte go bhfuil bealaí ann chun an Ghaeilge a fhorbairt agus le meon dearfach agus go leor oibre tá sé indéanta an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn.

## BUÍOCHAS

Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le na rannpháirtithe uile a ghlac páirt sa taighde seo, na múinteoirí a chuaigh faoi agallamh agus na múinteoirí a d'fhreagair na ceisteanna sa suirbhé. Thug na múinteoirí seo léargas dom faoin nGaeilge i mbunscoileanna na tíre seo agus chabhair an méid a bhí le rá acu go mór liom. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil leis an léachtóir Dr Aimie Brennan as ucht an chabhair ar fad a thug sí dom agus as ucht an deis chun an t-airteagal a scríobh a thabhairt dom. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le mo stiúrthóir Dr Conchúr Ó Brolcháin as ucht an chabhair ar fad a thug sé dom. Faoi dheireadh, ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le mo fhear céile agus mo mhuintir as ucht an tacaíocht ar fad a thug siad dom.

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# STER Conference Abstracts

Student-Teacher Educational Research



Lime Tree Theatre  
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April  
10:00 to 13:00



# Individual Presentations

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STER Conference 2018

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## Are the special learning needs of gifted learners being addressed in Irish primary schools?

Dearbhla Acheson

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*

This research focuses on exploring if the special learning needs of gifted learners are being addressed in Irish primary schools. It presents various definitions of giftedness in the Irish and international context, and considers if exceptionally able children would benefit from extra learning support, as is the case in a number of other countries. The study also looks at how primary school teachers identify gifted learners, and what strategies they use to teach them. It questions if current strategies are sufficient to enable gifted learners to reach their learning potential and explores some teaching approaches being used to advance the learning scope of these students in other countries.

Giftedness is an under-researched area in the Irish context, therefore, it is hoped that this research will raise interesting considerations for primary school teachers, and for those involved in teacher education. It will facilitate teachers in planning lessons to carefully reflect on differentiated content and approaches for gifted learners, just as much as other children in their classes. It also has the potential to create dialogue among teaching professionals in terms of the specific, yet varied, learning needs of gifted children.

## What supports are necessary to aid in the social integration of migrant children in Irish primary schools?

Roza Karim

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*

The 21st century has seen a considerable growth in migration internationally and nationally. In Ireland, the most recent census identified 78,569 non-nationals living in Ireland who were between the ages of 0-14 (CSO 2011). The Irish Government and the Department of Education have produced policy

documents and guidelines aimed at improving the integration of migrant children, however, most of the literature on multicultural education has been conducted around English language acquisition with little focus on the social aspect of the integration process.

The purpose of this paper is to examine what supports are currently available in Primary schools to aid the *social* integration of migrant children. In particular, I ask; what challenges do teachers face when supporting the social integration of migrant children and what training, materials and policies would be useful to aid migrant children's social integration? Data was collected by interviewing primary school teachers in the Munster region. All participants had specific experience teaching migrant children.

## Exploring well-being in the Irish primary school classroom

Grace McNulty

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*

The main aim of my research project is to discover how teachers in Irish primary schools are addressing well-being in the classroom and how they are addressing any potential difficulties arising from the pupils' well-being. The term 'well-being' is broad and varied in its understanding, often incorrectly understood as being solely about mental health. In my research project, I address common misconceptions associated with well-being in everyday Irish school life. I will discuss findings gathered from interviews with six teachers and principals. While I had initially planned to adopt a mixed-method approach to my research, a qualitative approach offered me a more in-depth account of teachers' perceptions and understandings of well-being. I hope that my results will offer recommendations that will positively influence future policies and curricula related to wellbeing.

## Student-teacher perceptions of psychologically assessed pupils

Roisin O'Keeffe

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*

This study was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of how the teachers perceive pupils with psychological assessments or diagnoses. Specifically, this research set out to investigate how a psychologically assessed child in a classroom is envisioned by their teacher. Teachers expectations of pupils behaviour and academic achievement is examined. The research aims to highlights how

expectations and attitudes surrounding psychologically assessed pupils may impact their understanding of the child. This has implications for how a child understands oneself in the classroom setting. I hope that the research will highlight the need for student-teachers to acknowledge their potential unconscious behaviours and attitudes towards psychologically assessed pupils.

## Exploring the conceptualisation of self-actualisation using a systematic literature review

Aileen O’Leary

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*

Having gained an in-depth knowledge of the various teaching methodologies, I believe the aim of an educator is to impart purpose and desire to the learners by using a holistic approach so that they can become self-directed useful human beings – to be the best that they can be. Teaching is viewed as the ability to empower children to be the best that they can be. Each school year foundations must be laid to enhance the child’s ability. I believe that to be an effective teacher, one must possess an in-depth understanding of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943) which can then be transposed to a classroom environment. The purpose of this study is to explore how self-actualisation is conceived by various educational disciplines within the Irish primary school curricula, and how each of the subject areas builds and scaffolds self-actualisation. In particular, this study set out to explore the following:

- What are the concepts of self-actualisation?
- What are the contested concepts of self-actualisation?
- How is self-actualisation conceived in the various educational disciplines within the Irish primary school curriculum.

## The impact of intercultural diversity on an urban school in Ireland

Richard O'Regan

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*

In last 15-20 years, Ireland has experienced significant population and demographic change (CSO, 2017). Ireland has become far more culturally diverse. This research project focuses on the impact growing cultural diversity on one particular urban school in Ireland. Using a case study approach, I interviewed retired and long-standing staff members of one school, to assess how the school has evolved and adapted to change from the late 1990s to the present day. In-depth, qualitative interviews focused on investigating the challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers as a result of growing intercultural diversity.

## A purpose-built music room in Irish primary schools

Fiona Conneely

*Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)*

This research focused on primary school teachers who teach music within the primary school setting, specifically teachers who teach singing and/or instruments. In line with academic literature, participants in this research expressed a lack of confidence in teaching music, and a lack of resources to help them engage with the music curriculum. Teachers suggest that there is a need for in-service training on the music curriculum in order to build their confidence. Furthermore, the data indicates that additional funding and a purpose-built music room would further enhance the implementation of the music curriculum in Irish primary schools.



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