



Reflections on professional education and practice across sectors

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EDITORIAL

Reflections on professional education and practice across sectors

The papers in this issue are focused on the theme of professional education and practice, and encompass the following foci: the development of e-hooks in science education within an inquiry approach to pedagogical practice, early childhood education as a vocation or a career, an in-service education intervention in the nineteenth century, the role of broadband access as a context for technology-enhanced pedagogy and learning at post-primary level, and, finally, the continuities and discontinuities of teacher educators' identities in changing times. Collectively the five papers in this issue raise important questions and provide a range of insights as well as suggesting directions for future studies vis-à-vis professional education and practice.

The first paper by McCauley, Davison and Byrne, 'Collaborative lesson hook design in science teacher education: advancing professional practice', documents the process of collaboratively developing lesson hook e-resources for science teachers to establish a community of inquiry and to strengthen the pedagogy of science teaching. The authors aim to illustrate how the development and application of strategic hooks can bridge situational interest and personal interest so that lessons may become more meaningful and enduring. Qualitative data from both teacher educators and pre-service teachers involved in the design process, participant research journals, and data from six focus group sessions, illustrate the systematic reflection involved in producing effective and transformative hooks to support teachers and promote deeper student engagement and learning. Their authors' findings reveal a pedagogical model of hook design, the complex elemental make-up of a science hook, the value that this teaching tool adds to the science classroom, and finally, the beneficial outcomes of collaborative resource design between student and staff in pre-service teacher education programmes. These hook resources aim to move beyond simply capturing student attention towards voluntary self-engagement, and have significant potential to serve as a pedagogical tool for teacher educators, as well as pre-service, newly qualified, in service, out-of-field, and experienced science teachers, to increase student academic performance, third-level science enrolments, and science careers.

The second paper by Mary Moloney, titled 'A vocation or a career: the perspectives of BA ECEC graduates about accessing employment and working in the early years sector in Ireland', interrogates the perceptions of graduates about seeking employment and working in the sector, drawing upon two annual BA ECEC Graduate Occupational Profile Surveys undertaken in 2013 and 2014. Their findings indicate that the graduates perceived themselves as: professionals who were confident about their practice; held valuable knowledge of the practice frameworks: *Síolta* and *Aistear*, and were excited about opportunities for professional autonomy. Crucially, however, the author notes that while graduates working in the sector were buoyed by their 'love of children' and described the work as 'rewarding' they were critical of the pay

and working conditions. Moloney discusses the finding in terms of a pervasive tension between the potential of ECEC to be a rewarding and satisfying career, and the reality of employment conditions within the sector.

Most studies of teachers' professional development focus on contemporary interventions. By contrast, Herron and Harford's paper 'An early in-service intervention in Irish mid-nineteenth century elementary education' addresses a lacuna in the educational scholarship in nineteenth century Irish education – namely the issue of teacher quality and school effectiveness. They note that various efforts were made over the course of the nineteenth century to address the issues of teacher quality and school effectiveness observing that the paid monitor was introduced in the early 1840s to convent and ordinary national schools, with paid pupil–teacher programmes recognised in the larger convent and national schools during the same period. Furthermore, they identify how a more strategic and system-wide effort was made to address the issue of teacher quality with the introduction of an in-service type intervention from the mid-1850s to provide a school-based programme for teachers and managers in effective school organisation. Their paper examines the intervention in terms of its rationale and purpose, the way in which it was planned and implemented, its impact, and finally they address its historical legacy?

The next paper by Coyne, Devitt, Lyons and McCoy addresses the 'Perceived benefits and barriers to the use of high-speed broadband in Ireland's second-level schools' in the context of Ireland's National Digital Strategy, a centrepiece of which is the roll out of high-speed broadband to all second-level schools to support greater use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education. They note how the programme signals a move from slow and unreliable broadband connections for many schools to a guaranteed high-speed connection with technical support. Contextualising the roll out, they note that theoretically, it should allow for behaviours and pedagogies to adapt, incorporating ICT into education. Drawing on an extensive data set consisting of survey data from teachers and principals in a sample from second-level schools, the survey collected factual and attitudinal variables including attitudes towards ICT integration, current availability of infrastructure and barriers to ICT use, before schools received high-speed broadband connectivity. We examine the factors influencing teachers' attitudes to ICT and their perceived barriers in adopting new technologies in their day-to-day teaching. They note that analysis of the baseline period is essential in an iterative digital strategy, informing future strategies, targeting policy most effectively and achieving policy objectives.

This issue concludes with a final paper, by O'Brien and Furlong, on professional practice with a focus on the 'Continuities and discontinuities in the life histories of teacher educators in changing times'. The authors frame the paper in terms of how despite teacher education having undergone radical reforms in many jurisdictions, who teacher educators are, their lives, and their work, continue to be a somewhat underexplored area internationally, while remaining a 'secret garden' in the Irish context. In order to address this lacuna in Irish research, O'Brien and Furlong adopt a life history, phenomenological approach to the exploration of teacher educator identities. In doing so, they tentatively explore the diverse pathways, values and experiences that construct them as teacher educators in the present, in order to gain insight into the strength of former teacher identities: the old overshadowing the 'new'. They conclude that privileged primary school teacher identities continue to

shape teacher educator practices and values despite global and diverse influences at play.

In the first issue of IES in 2015, the editorial noted that the January 2015 ESAI Newsletter advertised two positions on the IES Editorial Team: a Reviews Editor and an additional Co-editor position. The journal's Editorial Board has recently appointed Dr Tony Hall (NUI Galway), as Reviews Editor and Dr Delma Byrne (Maynooth University), as Co-editor, in order to extend the Editorial Team given the very significant increase in the volume of submissions to the journal since adoption of the online submission system by IES in early 2013.

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