Challenges for Early Career Teachers in DEIS Schools

Dr Gareth Burns

Article for information

Review of DEIS: Poverty and Social Inclusion in Education

Joint Conference: INTO and Education Disadvantage Centre, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra

December 2015

Challenges for Early Career Teachers in DEIS Schools

Dr Gareth Burns

Introduction: The Focus on Literacy and Numeracy in DEIS

Fuelled by concerns around 'international competitiveness', Irish teachers are coming under increasing pressure to orient their practices towards satisfying the demands of 'new' accountabilities that are defined by their narrow focus on literacy and numeracy and standardised test scores (Conway & Murphy 2013; O'Donnell, 2014). Teachers working in DEIS schools, and especially those at the early stages of their careers, are particularly affected by pressures emanating from the rigorous testing regime that operates in these schools (Kitching, 2010).

Reflecting the legislative and policy framework, DEIS (DES, 2005) is exclusively concerned with changing the student and the school, rather than challenging inequalities that are rooted in the social structures of society. Recent evaluation reports on the DEIS programme highlight enhanced achievement in literacy, and to a lesser extent in numeracy, as measured in test scores (Shiel, Kavanagh, & Millar, 2014; Smyth, McCoy, & Kingston, 2015). The introduction of *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020* (DES 2011) has precipitated an increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy attainment in DEIS schools.

In relation to DEIS schools, the intensity of focus on test scores and measurable outcomes only add to the already rigorous testing regime that the DEIS programme obliges participating schools to implement. Indeed, as Kitching (2010) notes, such rigorous testing is not required in other 'advantaged' schools. In terms of teaching and learning, there are many potential negative outcomes of a focus on standardised testing. According to Mac Ruairc (2009) these negative consequences include a 'teach to test' culture in schools (Anagnostopoulos, 2005) and the avoidance of risk taking and innovative practice (Williams & Ryan, 2000).

While promoting literacy and numeracy is an important aim of Irish educational policy, there is increasing concern that it is having an adverse effect on teachers' ability to preserve the breath and richness of the primary curriculum. These concerns are heightened in light of the contradictory sentiment regarding the narrowing of the primary curriculum that is evident in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy:

While the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy maintains that 'placing a strong focus in schools on the development and monitoring of students' literacy and numeracy skills is not incompatible with a broad and balanced curriculum' (DES, 2011, p. 44), it emphasises the need 'to re-prioritise spending away from *desirable but ultimately less important* activities' (DES, 2011, p. 15, emphasis added). (Ó Breacháin & O'Toole, 2013, p. 402)

The failure to acknowledge, or indeed address socio-cultural practice in the approaches to literacy advocated by DEIS (Kitching, 2010) creates difficulties for teachers' ability to employ methodologies that are 'connected' to working-class children's life experiences (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). As consistently highlighted by the National Adult Literacy Agency, there are wider goals of literacy than simply employment and competitiveness, such as active citizenship, personal and social development, community empowerment and leadership, participation in society, as well as poverty reduction and social inclusion.

In response to this new environment, the majority of research on teachers' work in DEIS schools has been quantitative research based on test results and measuring student achievement (e.g. Shiel et al., 2014; Smyth et al., 2015). Consequently, the voices of teachers have received little attention from researchers and policymakers. This paper attempts to address this research gap by giving full legitimacy to the lived experiences of teachers.

Focusing specifically on early career teachers (ECTs) in DEIS schools, this paper explores their daily practices and contextualises their perception of their ability to incorporate a social justice agenda into their understanding of their professional role and responsibilities. The PhD study (Burns, 2014) from which this paper draws on, defines ECTs as those with a minimum of three and a maximum of nine year's experience. The fact that the majority of those teaching in urban DEIS schools have been teaching for less than five years (McCoy, Quail, & Smyth, 2014), and in light of their role as educators working in communities that are experiencing intense social challenge, ECTs' explicit and tacit understandings of what they deem possible, practical and important in terms of their felt responsibilities and practices assumes critical importance. Drawing on data from a narrative life history study carried out with 18 ECTs working in DEIS schools (Burns, 2014), ECTs' understandings of their professional role and what shape this takes in their day-to-day practice are explored.

Teachers' Experiences of Sameness and Care

Through their participation in my research study on ECTs working in DEIS schools (Burns, 2014), participants were provided with an opportunity to critically reflect upon their own professional role, responsibilities and priorities; and to consider and discuss their own positionality in the social and policy context and its influence on their professional practices. Interviews were carried out with 18 ECTs who had started their teaching careers in urban primary DEIS schools. In order to shine light on the lived experiences of ECTs, their voices

are articulated through quotes from participants who are given pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity. In order to explore the possible effects, if any, of contextual factors on teachers' practice, the study's participants were drawn relatively evenly from two urban DEIS 1 schools (Millplace N.S. and Limefield N.S.) located in the suburbs of a major city, and one DEIS 2 school (Tupper N.S.) located in a provincial town.

The study focused exclusively on participants' daily practices and contextualised their perception of their ability to incorporate a social justice agenda into their understanding of their professional role and responsibilities. Central to realising a vision of social justice is an educator's commitment to 'praxis' - a combination of both action and reflection which achieves a powerful and liberating force (Freire, 1996). A philosophy of praxis is based on the premise that people's previous experiences must be the starting point for new learning. Here participant commitment to a justice praxis that is 'connected' with students' life experiences (Lingard & Keddie, 2013) is explored in relation to the following four themes that emerged from the data:

- Promoting experiential and holistic learning, and developing students' critical thinking skills;
- A devolved, power sharing approach to classroom management;
- An ethic of care that is conscious of achieving the balance between supporting students, and making enough intellectual demands of them;
- Working with and valuing of diversity.

The findings reveal a high degree of support and care for students but not enough connectedness in their teaching methodologies to their students' worlds, or to a commitment to a democratic classroom management approach, or engagement with and a valuing of diversity.

The passionate and principled commitment of the study's participants to making a real and lasting difference in the lives of their students was a strong and consistent feature of their professional role. Intensified and exacerbated by students' experiences of living in communities that are coping with inter-generational poverty, the cohort as a whole were very conscious of what they saw as their heightened moral responsibility to respond to the care needs of their students. Creating opportunities for their students to experience happiness in order to distract them from the perceived sadness that permeates some of their lives outside the confines of school, was a theme expanded upon by many participants, with Leona stating:

> They shouldn't be coming in here crying because they don't want to come in to this place … because there are some of those kids and they go home to horrible things, so that's what I want my classroom to be ultimately. I want it to be a happy place.

Becoming an advocate for children that don't have a voice is an aspect of their professional role that many teachers spoke passionately about, a passion which is evident in Anna's account of the close relationship she developed with a girl whom she describes as having "very low self-esteem and whose family are very disadvantaged". Anna attributes the success of her advocacy to the level of encouragement and support she gave her:

> I think my relationship with her was very strong … I said to her 'you can be anything you want to be' and I took an interest in her daily news, in her activities, and how she was getting on with her classmates; and I tried to stand up for her.

However, the pervasive influence of an accountability driven policy discourse that promotes functional, 'means to an end' connections with students that produce results and measurable outcomes (Kelchtermans, 2011) have in many cases consigned these affective practices largely to the realm of care rather than infusing the majority of participants' approach to the academic development of their students.

The Inequality of Sameness
The failure of most participants to recognise and develop *all* forms of intelligence and human capabilities, and to relate the curriculum to their students' worlds and legitimise locally produced knowledge, demonstrated a tendency to treat all students the same. This most benefits those with the requisite cultural capital that is bestowed upon them by their socialisation within the home and acts to further disadvantage the already disadvantaged in terms of such capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). While participants' strong commitment to their caring role should indeed be recognised, such articulations of care while necessary is however not sufficient in terms of the holistic development of the child (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). The shared consensus among the Millplace (DEIS 1) cohort that the academic development of their students is a secondary concern in light of the acuteness of their students' care needs lessens the focus on the implementation of 'intellectually demanding pedagogies' which require higher order thinking and substantive connections to the world beyond the classroom (Newmann & Associates, 1996). Frances' contribution reflects a shared clarity in relation to what the majority of the Millplace cohort perceive to be their students' primary needs, as she states that she would be satisfied if her students were "happy enough here and that they see school as a safe place, as a positive place". This concern with creating a safe and caring educational environment has an inverse correlation with many of the ECTs' concern about developing their students academically.

Context and Career-Stage Ideas around what ECTs deem Possible and Practical
The influence policies of accountability exerted at a personal and institutional level resulted in participants holding context and career-stage specific ideas around what was deemed both possible and practical. Consistent with the argument made in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES, 2011), many participants believed that if their students failed to grasp basic literacy and numeracy skills, they would be excluded from academic

achievement (Ó Breacháin & O'Toole, 2013). There was a general consensus among participants that prioritising the development of their students' literacy and numeracy skills at the expense of other subjects is a legitimate and justifiable trade off. Marta states:

> There are the subjects that do get pushed to the back. Like definitely drama, and music, and SESE really do get shortened through the day …. I know they are important subjects but you do have to have priorities.

While some participants were critical of what they perceived to be the negative consequences of the increasing value being placed on standardised testing in their respective schools, they also felt professionally self-affirmed by positive test scores. This focus on test scores and measurable outcomes could also help to explain the absence of dialogue on the role participants could play in the development of their students' emotional literacy. The integration of literacy with the arts and SPHE was also notably absent from participants' considerations of their role in their students' literacy development.

Local conditions such as level of poverty, social exclusion and school culture impacted significantly upon the way ECTs engaged with ideas around raising the standard of literacy and numeracy. The heightened pressure to produce positive test scores was particularly felt by the DEIS 1 cohort as a whole, and most especially by those with less teaching and life experience. Hannah's sense of frustration at the Inspectorate's lack of appreciation of the challenges that teachers in DEIS schools face on a consistent basis when evaluating their progress in the area of literacy and numeracy, is an example of the strain such pressure places on teachers. Hannah states:

> The Inspectorate should seriously get a grip. Come into our classes and look at what we are dealing with on a daily basis and then judge.

While one would expect that teachers working in the relatively more 'advantaged' DEIS 2 setting to be more responsive to pressure to 'raise the standard' (Devine, Fahie, & McGillycuddy, 2013), the tighter surveillance of test scores that surround DEIS 1 schools accounts for this apparent anomaly (Kitching, 2010). This felt pressure, and the migration of these concerns in some instances into 'test preparation' confirm anecdotal evidence that many teachers and principals are interpreting the recently imposed mandatory reporting of standardised test scores as particularly high stakes (Conway & Murphy, 2013). These findings also indicate that recent government attempts to cut funding to DEIS schools have heightened teachers' responsiveness to the structured, prescriptive literacy and numeracy programmes that are designed specifically to drive up standards.

In contrast, the more experienced DEIS 2 cohort was less consumed by the school and policy discourses around raising the standard of literacy and numeracy. The DEIS 2 cohort felt less disadvantaged by the setting they worked in, in terms of meeting the care and academic needs of their students. As a consequence, they experienced less pressure to choose

between their academic and care roles, which allowed them to maintain a greater level of connectedness in their teaching with the constructivist, holistic, and child-centred ideals that underpin the Primary Curriculum.

The significance of participants' years of teaching experience on teacher practice is especially noteworthy in the findings. There was a greater prevalence of more structured and control oriented methodologies amongst the younger, more professionally inexperienced members of the DEIS 1 cohort. Shared understandings around the perceived need to enforce strict discipline amongst working class students dominated the DEIS 1 participants' understandings of their professional role. Cumulatively, these findings indicate that a reliance on traditional, teacher-centred teaching methodologies, and concerns about maintaining classroom discipline and catering for individual difference that were found to be prevalent amongst Irish primary newly qualified teachers in their first year of teaching (Inspectorate of DES 2005a, 2005b; Killeavy & Murphy, 2006), continued to exercise the thoughts of these participants well into the early stage of their careers.

The inevitable tension that is created between the pressure to produce results and the parallel pressure to implement a curriculum that is ideologically at odds with the aforementioned performativity culture is palpable in the accounts of the less experienced (early career) teachers. The majority of the DEIS 1 cohort embraced their role in implementing the DEIS literacy and numeracy programmes which are seen as the antidote to the curriculum overload that many teachers find challenging. The professional confidence and pedagogical clarity that these programmes of instruction brought to teachers, many of whom may be unsure about the most effective way of teaching literacy and numeracy, is highlighted by Fiona:

> I think teachers were totally at sea and we were constantly being told that literacy was so important and yet we thought what are we supposed to be doing? How do we do it on a day to day basis? Whereas now we have this literacy hour going in the morning and it timetabled, broken down into 15, 20 minute little chunks.

In return for implementing the programmes and the erosion of their professional autonomy that their complicity entailed, a structured and largely prescriptive road map was provided for those struggling to cope with the 'realities' of teaching.

Plotting an Alternative Trajectory: The Role of Professional and Life Experience
In contrast with those ECTs with less teaching experience, the more professionally experienced cohort managed to maintain a higher level of connectedness between their beliefs in education as a relationships based process, and their everyday practices. As a consequence, they adopted a more democratic approach to classroom management than their less experienced counterparts, and were less consumed by overemphasising their role in the fostering of literacy and numeracy. The majority of this cohort held special duties

posts in their respective schools, and by successfully attending to the duties attached to their in-school management positions, these participants spoke with enthusiasm of organising whole school events that both students and teachers benefitted from. In this way, they were centrally involved in reaffirming the significance of relationships in the wider educational project.

Those participants that participated in masters' level studies in various educationally related areas were also identified as having a greater awareness of the workings of policy and how it impacts on teaching and learning. They also articulated a more robust interpretation of their professional responsibilities, manifested most vividly in their heightened willingness and confidence to work with and value diversity in their classrooms. Those participants that had taken alternative routes to becoming teachers also demonstrated a well-developed sense of political awareness and used this knowledge to inform positive practices in their schools. Cumulatively, these personally generated social, political and intellectual capitals have enabled participants with greater professional and life experience to appreciate the way in which policy and its political underpinnings influences and tries to shape the educational landscape. By re-imaging 'policy as problem', rather than 'policy as constraint' they have developed strategies of resistance to those aspects of policy that are in conflict with their 'core mission' as educators (Korthagen, 2012).

Working towards a Model of Social and Political Teacher Criticality
While the importance of teacher reflection is indisputable, the need to broaden and deepen the content of teacher reflection beyond the technical aspects of teaching that most often dominate has become an increasing concern (Kelchtermans, 2011; Korthagen, 2012). Given the evidence accumulated here, this concluding discussion suggests that it is through engagement with the political, as well as the moral, ethical and emotional dimensions of teaching that teachers can continue to make a significant difference to students' lives (Kelchtermans, 2011). Supported by evidence from the data, the role the continuum of teacher education can play in initiating and sustaining a process of political and social criticality amongst student and practicing teachers is explored.

From unquestioning belief in the legitimacy of a competitive meritocratic system, to the pervasiveness of theses of deficit, and to a lesser extent fixed ability, the findings of my research into ECTs' experiences of working in DEIS schools (Burns, 2014) point clearly to the need for teacher educators to provide pre-service and practicing teachers with opportunities to examine these implicit cultural assumptions and the damaging effect they can have on students' experience of schooling. Lowered teacher expectations of students, and the resultant 'normalisation' of low student attainment in schools with high levels of poverty and social exclusion (Dunne & Gazeley, 2008) are two of the negative teacher effects that can be attributed to the entrenchment of these implicit cultural assumptions. This self-imposed achievement ceiling in relation to what they as educators can achieve, and

the consequences this has for their students is consistent with a policy discourse that perceives inequality to be a given, and that the best society can do is try to ameliorate some of the worst effects of its existence rather than seeking to eliminate it (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon, & Walsh, 2004).

The development of social and political criticality is best done when situated and immersed in the lived experiences of communities experiencing intense social challenge (Apple, 2011). The findings of this study (Burns, 2014) support this assertion, as they clearly indicate the positive effect of teachers' interaction with working class communities during their youth, and subsequently during the course of their initial teacher education (ITE). These experiences helped participants to develop a positive attitude towards working in marginalised communities, and was articulated in their professional practice. A notable feature of the findings was the very distinct and positive contribution that participants from working-class backgrounds made in social justice terms. Their greater familiarity with, and knowledge of students' local communities enhanced their capacity to 'connect' with students on a personal level. Their felt desire to try and initiate more open and inclusive relations with working class parents also allowed them to resist to a large extent the boundary setting and professional protectionism that governed the majority of participants' relations with parents in the two DEIS 1 schools. These positive practices speak strongly to the need to develop a much firmer strategy on access to the teaching profession for people from marginalised communities (see Downes, 2014). In developing a model of social and political teacher criticality, what is also particularly salient in this study is the relationship between opportunities that participants had in ITE to critically reflect on these 'lived experiences', and their subsequent awareness and willingness to use these reflections to develop a culture of collaboration with students and parents. This alerts us to the importance of the nature of 'reflection' in teacher education, not only focusing on the technical concerns of the day which are neither irrelevant nor illegitimate (Kelchtermans, 2011), but also the need to shine a light on the moral purposes of the teacher (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).

The recent reconceptualisation of the school placement experience offers exciting opportunities in this regard as it encourages student teachers to participate actively in school life, including supported engagement with parents and other professionals working in the community (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2013). However, a significant weakness of the new school placement programme is its failure to make school placements in marginalised communities an integral and mandatory part of the process.

The needs, feelings, emotions, concerns and motivations of teachers need to be positioned at the heart of professional reflection (Korthagen, 2004). While many participants demonstrated awareness of the socio-cultural and institutional impediments to some working-class students' and parents' engagement with schools, few of them interrogated

these political themes in terms of their relevance and connectedness to their own professional practice. In order to generate the emotional responsiveness that links reflection and action (O'Brien, 2011), which in turn creates transformative practices (Freire, 1996), there is a need to reaffirm the central role emotions play in teaching and learning, and the importance of teachers caring in a broad sense about their students' lives.

Final Thought

This research raises questions about the difficult terrain that teachers working in DEIS schools are asked to navigate. These teachers are being rewarded by a value system that on one hand mirrors 'broader social discourses of fast capitalism and self preservation' (Ryan, 2007), whilst on the other hand the profoundly moral and political activity of teaching in a community experiencing intense social challenge obligates them to make "value-laden choices, in the attempt to do justice to the pupil that has been entrusted to one's care and therefore one's responsibility" (Kelchtermans, 2011, p. 118).

In light of the balancing act that is required to satisfy all elements of these conflicting and competing ideologies and responsibilities, I am drawn back to the question of whether it is reasonable to expect already overstretched teachers "to go the extra mile, to be professionally responsible rather than play by the rules" (Sugrue, 2011, p. 182). The demands the system places on teachers working in areas of poverty and social exclusion highlight the importance of teachers taking due consideration of their own personal, professional, and situated circumstances in terms of mapping out the boundaries of their professional responsibilities. However, the parallel moral, ethical, emotional, and political dimension to these considerations (Kelchtermans, 2011) (that may conflict with their own personal and professional [self] interests) means that there is an inherent uncertainty and risk associated with the way in which they make sense of, and consequently address these demands.

It is hoped that this study's findings can help strengthen the call made by the INTO (2015) in its 'DEIS consultation submission' for new conceptualisations of DEIS to incorporate and reaffirm the importance of education as a relational and caring concern. It is also envisaged that the concerns raised in this paper in relation to 'pre-packaged' literacy and numeracy programmes that fail to address socio-cultural practice, will help focus attention on the need to customise DEIS literacy and numeracy programmes to the particular school context. Encouraging and supporting teachers to pursue creative approaches to literacy development that integrate literacy with the arts and SPHE can also help to expand the horizons of literacy development beyond the technical and instrumental concerns of the day that dominated the participating ECTs' understandings of their role in the teaching of literacy. Raising teachers' awareness of the pivotal role students' emotional literacy plays in the creation and development of the dialogical classroom is another emergent issue that this research can help generate debate around. In this way, the provision of meaningful and

cognitively challenging literacy and numeracy experiences that are connected to children's socio-cultural heritage, and which nourish children's sense of creativity, agency and autonomy can be (re) imagined. In terms of evaluating progress made by DEIS, the almost exclusive emphasis DEIS currently places on assessing literacy and numeracy gains through test scores and the narrowing effect this is having on teachers' practice, highlights the need to adopt a wider assessment of progress for future DEIS initiatives. Finally, it is also hoped that this study's findings can help provoke much needed debate toward assisting teachers to plot a route away from the professional marginalisation that a commitment to a holistic, child-centered teaching philosophy currently exposes them to, towards a path of resistance to the consensual 'deficit' understandings of working class communities that dominate the political and policy discourse.

References

Anagnostopoulos, D. (2005). Testing, tests and classroom texts. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 37*(1), 35-63.

Apple, M. W. (2011). Paulo Freire and the tasks of the critical educational scholar/activist. In A. O'Shea & M. O'Brien (Eds.), *Pedagogy, oppression and transformation in a 'post-critical' climate* (pp. 36-50). London: Continuum.

Baker, J., Lynch, K., Cantillon, S., and Walsh, J. (2004). *Equality - from theory to action*. Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage Publications.

Burns, G. (2014). *'Making a difference': What it means for early career teachers working in designated disadvantaged schools.* Unpublished PhD Thesis, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Conway, P. F., & Murphy, R. (2013). A rising tide meets a perfect storm: New accountabilities in teaching and teacher education in Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies, 32*(1), 11-36.

Department of Education and Science (DES). (2005). *Delivering equality of opportunity in schools (DEIS): An action plan for educational inclusion.* Dublin: DES.

Department of Education and Skills (DES). (2011). *Literacy and numeracy for learning and for life: The national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011-2020.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

Devine, D., Fahie, D., & McGillicuddy, D. (2013). What is 'good' teaching? Teacher beliefs and practices about their teaching. *Irish Educational Studies, 32*(1), 83-108.

Downes, P. (2014). *Access to Education in Europe: A framework and agenda for system change.* Dordrecht: Springer-Verlag.

Dunne, M., & Gazeley, L. (2008). Teachers, social class and underachievement. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 29*(5), 451–463.

Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans. Revised ed.). Harmondsworth : Penguin.

Inspectorate of Department of Education and Science (DES). (2005a). *Beginning to teach*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Inspectorate of Department of Education and Science (DES). (2005b). *Literacy and numeracy in disadvantaged schools: Challenges for teachers and learners*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO). (2015). *DEIS consultation submission.* Dublin:INTO.http://www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/INTOSubmissions/DEIS_Submission.pdf

Kelchtermans, G. (2011). Professional responsibility: Persistent commitment, perpetual vulnerability. In C. Sugrue & T. D. Solbrekke (Eds.), *Professional responsibility: New horizons of praxis* (pp. 113-126). London & New York: Routledge.

Killeavy, M., & Murphy, R. (2006). *National pilot project on teacher induction: Report on phase 1 and 2 (2002-2004)*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Kitching, K. (2010). An excavation of the racialised politics of viability underpinning education policy in Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*, *29*(3), 213-229.

Korthagen, F. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: Towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(1), 77-97.

Korthagen, F. (2012). Linking practice, theory and person in teacher education. In F. Waldron, J. Smith, M. Fitzpatrick, & T. Dooley (Eds.), *Re-imagining initial teacher education: Perspectives on transformation* (pp. 117-134). Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Korthagen, F., & Vasalos, A. (2005). Levels in reflection: Core reflection as a means to enhance professional development. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 11*(1), 47-71.

Lingard, B., & Keddie, A. (2013). Redistribution, recognition and representation: Working against pedagogies of indifference. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society, 21*(3), 427-447.

Mac Ruairc, G. (2009). 'Dip, dip, sky blue, who's it? NOT YOU': Children's standardised testing: A socio-cultural analysis. *Irish Educational Studies, 28*(1), 47-66.

McCoy, S., A. Quail, and E. Smyth. (2014). The effects of school social mix: Unpacking the differences. *Irish Educational Studies, 33*(3), 307-330.

Newmann, F. M., & Associates. (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ó Breacháin, A., & O'Toole, L. (2013). Pedagogy or politics? Cyclical trends in literacy and numeracy in Ireland and beyond. *Irish Educational Studies, 32*(4), 401-419.

O'Brien, M. (2011). Towards a pedagogy of care and well-being: Restoring the vocation of becoming human through dialogue and relationality. In A. O'Shea & M. O'Brien (Eds.), *Pedagogy, oppression and transformation in a 'post-critical' climate* (pp. 14-35). London: Continuum.

O'Donnell, M. (2014). *Quality education: Teacher responsibility and accountability.* Dublin: INTO.http://www.into.ie/ROI/NewsEvents/Conferences/EducationConsultativeConfe

rence/EducationConsultativeConference2014/EducationConf2014web_programmea
ndbackgrounddoc.pdf

Ryan, M. (2007). Critical pedagogy and youth: Negotiating complex discourse worlds. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, *15*(2), 245-262.

Shiel, G., L. Kavanagh and D. Millar. (2014). *The 2014 national assessments of English reading and mathematics Vol 1: Performance Report.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Smyth, E., S. McCoy, and G. Kingston. (2015). *Learning from the evaluation of DEIS.* Dublin: ESRI Series Research No. 39.

Sugrue, C. (2011). Professional responsibility: New horizons of praxis. In C. Sugrue & T. D. Solbrekke (Eds.), *Professional responsibility: New horizons of praxis* (pp. 177-196). London & New York: Routledge.

Teaching Council of Ireland. (2013). *Guidelines on school placement.* Maynooth: Teaching Council of Ireland.

Williams, J., & Ryan, J. (2000). National testing and the improvement of classrooms teaching: Can they coexist? *British Educational Research Journal, 26*(1), 49-73.