

6. Reading Instruction at Infant Level in Ireland: Some Insights from a Nationwide Survey of Teacher Understandings, Attitudes and Practices

Brian Murphy¹

The ideology of reading development in Irish primary school curricula long espoused a skills-focused understanding and model. In the context of a growing international trend towards a more balanced whole-language approach to reading development, the introduction of a revised curriculum in 1999 marked a milestone in the evolution of the pedagogy of reading development in Irish schools by advocating such an approach. The main methodological practices of this interactive model, as outlined in the 1999 curriculum, are briefly discussed. In the context of a 'fidelity-type' study of curriculum implementation, which aimed to gauge how the curriculum guidelines with respect to reading development were informing classroom practice, the paper goes on to present and discuss the views, attitudes, and methodological practices of Infant teachers with respect to the interactive model of reading development, gleaned from a nationwide questionnaire survey. It emerges that the understandings and opinions of a majority of the surveyed teachers are generally in line with the interactive model of reading development outlined in the curriculum. However, some strong traditional beliefs and classroom practices continue to endure. The paper concludes with some suggestions, as to what might enhance understanding and implementation of the advocated curriculum methodologies and practices.

¹ Address for Correspondence: Education Dept., University College, Cork. Email: BMurphy@education.ucc.ie

INTRODUCTION

The history of the pedagogy of beginning reading in Ireland reveals an enduring traditional skills-based understanding and approach. The Primary School Curriculum (An Roinn Oideachais 1971), which covered the period 1971-1999, endorsed this model of reading development. Although it mentioned the broader aims of reading in terms of 'reading to learn' and in terms of training pupils to find enjoyment and entertainment in books, it stated unequivocally that reading in the primary school was mainly concerned with "the drills and mechanics of the various skills involved and with the development of skill in comprehending what is read" (An Roinn Oideachais 1971, Part 1 p. 89).

In early reading, the curriculum emphasised the role of developing the skills of reading readiness (e.g., visual and auditory discrimination and memory activities), the building of a sight vocabulary through whole-word and look-and-say approaches, and the eventual stage of readiness for reading, which was the step "to establish and consolidate word-recognition skills, as well as to master the process of reading consecutive words, phrases and sentences and to obtain meaning from them" (An Roinn Oideachais 1971, Part 1 p. 92). Emphasis was clearly on formal phonic approaches to word recognition (e.g., phonic and structural analysis and synthesis), on structured reading lessons, and on the use of reading scheme texts, which were to be "the main source of graded material for practice of these [mechanical] reading skills" (An Roinn Oideachais 1971, Part 1 p. 93). The reality of this practice was noted by Morgan and Martin (1995) in their reflections on the results of the IEA literacy study with respect to Ireland. Not surprisingly, they noted the study findings that reading development in Irish primary schools was characterised by far greater attention to skill-orientated aims as opposed to interest-enhancing aims (Morgan & Martin 1995, p. 247).

A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN APPROACH

The revised Primary School Curriculum (DES/NCCA 1999a, 1999b, to be referred in this article as PSC 1999) marked a considerable change in the approach to reading and a significant step towards application of a

more balanced interactive approach (Rumelhart 2004) to reading development. Across a wide breath of recent significant international literature (e.g., Adams 1990 & 1991; Fitzgerald 1999; Hiebert et al. 1998; Morrow et al. 1999; National Reading Panel 2000; Pressley et al. 1996), it is proposed that effective reading instruction comprises a blend of both skill and meaning approaches (Chall 1967, 1983), of explicit instruction in reading skills (e.g., phonic, phonological awareness, comprehension strategies) grounded in the context of authentic and meaningful text and a "...language-rich classroom environment" (Blair & Zygouris-Coe 2003, p. 129). It is this balanced approach, combining the skills and meaning emphasises, which characterises the pedagogy of reading espoused by the PSC 1999. It clearly grounds all stages, but particularly the early stages of reading and literacy, in the child's general language experience and incorporates many of the practices of the aforementioned balanced model. This is clearly illustrated in the Teacher Guidelines for English:

...oral language activities will provide the basis for the children's preparation for reading. This will progressively involve the child in the creation and reading of oral-based texts and in the collaborative reading of large format books. Building on this foundation of language activity, the child will learn to use a number of strategies that will enable him/her to read and understand an increasingly complex range of text. (DES/NCCA 1999b, Teacher Guidelines for English, p. 50)

A central role is also accorded to the provision of a print-rich environment in the classroom, characterised by an interaction between children and books, and activities to develop children's curiosity about print including collaborative reading of a variety of texts and language-experience approaches. Reading aloud to children is seen as a crucially important element of overall reading development. Phonic word identification strategies are broadened to include a programme of phonological and phonemic awareness development fostered through rhyme, riddle and language game activities. This practice is clearly grounded in the understanding that "in acquiring the ability to use sound-letter relationships (grapho/phonic cues), the child needs to develop phonological and phonemic awareness, that is the ability to

manipulate the sound segments in words” (DES/NCCA 1999b, Teacher Guidelines for English, p. 58). The use of semantic and syntactic cues as important word identification strategies is also recognised.

The traditional skills emphasis on the development of a basic sight vocabulary is still acknowledged to be an important feature in early reading development. It is envisaged however that this basic sight vocabulary will be acquired from a broader range of sources and contexts, to include language-experience material, large-format books, environmental print and labelling, as well as from the traditional use of flash cards. Perhaps the most significant change in terms of early reading development is the advocated delayed introduction of the structured reading programme, which can preferably begin “some time during senior infant class” (DES/NCCA 1999b, Teacher Guidelines for English, p. 54) as opposed to the traditional practice of introducing formal structured reading early in the initial Junior Infant year. This broader and more holistic approach to reading readiness is indicative of a more balanced interactive model of reading development.

AIMS OF AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

A less formal skills-based approach to reading development has been a clear feature of the reading curriculum in Ireland since 1999. The degree of implementation of this pedagogy in classroom practice has however been less clear. In order to ascertain a general sense of the views and practices of infant teachers with respect to the implementation of the more balanced reading development programme of the 1999 curriculum, a nationwide questionnaire survey of three hundred randomly selected Senior Infant teachers (second year of primary school with pupils typically aged between 5- and 6-years old) was conducted covering questions of reading resources, teaching methods and attitudes in the context of the PSC 1999.

The advantages of questionnaires have been well documented in terms of the ease of administration, comparison and follow-up, as well as the amount of quantifiable data which can be yielded for later generalisation

(Bell 1997; Hopkins 1993). Data received from questionnaires can thus be used to test existing hypotheses and to produce new theories since causal relationships may be established through multivariate analysis. Questionnaires are acknowledged to be particularly useful when data are required of a large number of people. Since this study sought to gauge a sense of Senior Infant teacher opinion and practice nationwide, the use of a questionnaire was clearly justified.

A small sample pilot study allowed the reliability of the questionnaire instrument to be tested. Copies of the initial questionnaire were sent out to approximately thirty Senior Infant teachers. Any feedback regarding the pilot study questionnaire was taken on board and changes implemented where necessary. Cronbach's Alpha Co-Efficient of Reliability was used to test the accuracy of the attitudinal section at pilot and actual survey stages.²

The revised questionnaire was then circulated to approximately three hundred Senior Infant teachers in primary schools nationwide, randomly selected according to the variables of gender category of school (single-sex, a particular historically enduring variable of the Irish school system, or mixed), school location (urban and rural) and school size (single class and multiple class grouping situations). Three hundred schools were selected on the basis that this represented a sample size of approximately ten percent of all primary schools nationwide. The Senior Infant teacher of each of the three hundred selected schools was circularised explaining the nature of the study and seeking their co-operation in completing the questionnaire. Each dispatched questionnaire was coded to allow for one reminder to be sent if questionnaires had not been returned by the required specified date.

The questionnaire was eventually completed and returned by 62% (n=186) of the three hundred surveyed Senior Infant practitioners. Response rate was particularly low from teachers in many urban schools,

² The value of alpha on this section was 0.83 for the pilot survey, and 0.87 for the main survey.

particularly in the Dublin area. Other variables such as questionnaire length (Burchell & Marsh 1992), questionnaire respondent fatigue or inadequate response time and number of reminders may have contributed to lowering the overall response rate (Heberlein & Baumgartner 1978). Of the 186 questionnaires actually returned, all were from females, which is indicative of the reality that the gender composition of infant teachers in Irish primary schools is almost exclusively female. Respondents were evenly divided in terms of age profile, with 51% in the 20-39 age bracket and 49% being aged over 40, the age usually considered to represent the mid-career point of the average teacher.

The average class size of the Senior Infant teacher respondents was 27 pupils, with sizes ranging from 14 to 36. Such large classes at his level would be indicative of the general lack of funding and resources afforded to the Irish primary school sector. Most surveyed teachers called for a considerable reduction in class size in Irish Infant classrooms. This variable of class size did emerge as significant to the overall findings of the survey and this will be discussed later.

RESULTS

Background understandings and practices

When asked to define literacy, 35% (n=65) of the respondents indicated an understanding of the term very much in line with the balanced model of literacy development outlined in the PSC (1999), which sees literacy as an integrated language process comprising oral, reading and writing skills. In contrast, however, 47% (n=88) of respondents saw literacy in a narrower more traditional light, with 29% defining the term as the ability to read and write and a further 18% of respondents defining the term to be concerned solely with the skills of reading. The difficulty, which some teachers experienced in defining the term literacy is perhaps evident from the fact that 18% (n=34) of responding teachers failed to specify any definition of the term at all. There was however overwhelming agreement (95%) that literacy was both caught and taught, indicating that the teachers saw a role for both explicit teaching and implicit development of literacy skills, akin to the balanced approach to reading and literacy development as espoused by the PSC 1999.

Further responses indicate that certain traditional reading practices continue to strongly endure in spite of the pedagogical recommendations of the PSC 1999. Traditional reading schemes were being used by 96% of respondents in their classrooms, with 83% having switched to one of the new schemes, which had been published in conjunction with the introduction of the new programme. Practice with respect to delaying of the formal introduction of structured reading to the Senior Infant year, as outlined in the new curriculum, appears not to have changed on the ground with 72% (n=134) of teachers indicating that formal readers had and continued to be introduced to the pupils during the initial Junior Infant year of schooling. Only 25% (n=47) of respondents indicated that formal reading had been delayed until Senior Infants, with the majority (20% of all teachers) indicating a pre-Christmas introduction of reading in the Senior Infant year clearly in contrast to the curriculum vision of a later introduction. This data provide evidence for the existence of the ingrained practice in Irish primary schools of pupils being introduced to formal reading at an early stage during their initial year in primary school.

All teachers mentioned informal observation and teacher-designed tests as being standard in their assessment of how Senior Infant pupils' progress was measured with respect to literacy development. Only 58% mentioned that they used one or two standardised tests for this purpose, with the vast majority of these (36% of all teachers) mentioning use of Irish standardised reading tests (e.g., MICRA-T, Marino, Belfield and Rain tests), illustrating that the heightened focus on use of more formal assessment outlined in the 1999 curriculum may be slower to impact on the ground. These data would again appear to suggest that traditional informal reading assessment practices remain strong in Irish classrooms.

In contrast, however, it is significant to note also that three particular literacy variables were indicated by the teachers as the main means by which the overall 1999 curriculum, across all subjects, had impacted on their classroom practice. Thirty-nine percent (n=73) of respondents indicated that they had placed a greater emphasis on oral language and discussion activities, 24% (n=45) indicated an approach which comprised less formal reading (in spite of the earlier statistic on use of

structured basal reading schemes), and 23% indicated an increased emphasis on rhyme and phonological awareness activity. These data would appear to indicate that some elements of the reading pedagogy outlined in the PSC 1999 may enjoy a heightened profile and a pride of place in respect of practitioners' thoughts, priorities and practices regarding the revised curriculum.

Availability and frequency of use of literacy/reading resources

The findings with respect to the availability of literacy resources indicated a nationwide trend that equipment is provided, which supports both skill and meaning-based pedagogical practices. With the exception of computer software at 85%, in each case the figure for availability was significantly over 90%, spanning a variety of traditional and more progressive reading resources e.g., phonic resources (99%), flashcards (98%), 'real' library books (98%), word games (95%) and big books (91%). However, indicated frequency of use of the materials perhaps reveals a more traditional classroom methodological practice with the flashcards, phonic resources (e.g., charts, worksheets, workbooks) and library books being prioritised and used frequently or very frequently by 72% (n=134) of teachers, and newer type resources of big books, 'real' books, word games and computer software being used sometimes, seldom or never in anything between half and three-quarters of classrooms. Although resources for progressive reading development may be available in schools, it does appear that some teachers may not be using them at all or at least not to a frequency commensurate with the approaches outlined in the PSC 1999. From these data on reading resources, the picture of the degree of impact of the pedagogical practices associated with the balanced approach to reading development is again mixed. Awareness of the curriculum changes is evident, some practices have changed but, as indicated by the availability and frequency of the use of many reading resources, other traditional methodological practices continue to enjoy a pride of position. Further light was shed on this position when the teachers were specifically surveyed regarding their methodology of reading development.

Literacy/reading teaching methodologies employed

With respect to the range of specific approaches employed for the development of reading and literacy skills, opinions expressed among the respondents appear to point to classroom practices somewhat more in line with the balanced model of literacy development, as outlined in the PSC 1999. Formal and informal oral language lessons, storytelling, whole-word, phonic and especially phonological awareness activities were indicated to be used frequently or very frequently by over 70% (n=130) of teachers in each case. Although pupils were indicated to be reading 'real' (non-reading scheme) books frequently or very frequently by 66% of teachers, further diversity within reading instruction was not as pronounced, with paired reading and shared reading techniques (e.g., big books) being used seldom or never by over one quarter of all surveyed teachers. Group discussion and shared writing activities, usually associated with and clearly related to the language-experience approach and the overall approach to reading, were also less prevalent, being used frequently or very frequently in just under half of all surveyed teachers' classrooms. The overall picture, which appears to emerge with respect to curricular methodologies employed is indicative of a mixed practice in reading development, which appears to have diversified to some degree to somewhat reflect the main overall approaches outlined in the new curriculum. However the data gathered do point to the reality that some traditional pedagogical practices continue to hold strong in Irish classrooms and that there remains a reliance on the use of formal reading resources, materials and activities to support a sometimes traditional reading pedagogy.

Attitudes of teachers regarding specific reading pedagogy issues

There was widespread acceptance (83%, n=155) among surveyed Senior Infant teachers that it was important to teach formal reading at this level and that the reading act comprised more than a mere mechanical decoding activity (92%) (Table 1). This does reflect an awareness of the need for the two elements of the balanced approach to reading development. Overall statements 1-5 display a strong consensus that effective early reading development embraces practice from the curriculum-endorsed balanced approach, comprising elements of both the traditional skills and the more recently favoured 'meaning emphasis'

92 Reading Instruction at Infant Level in Ireland

approaches. This is also illustrated by the fact that the teachers felt that the development of word recognition entailed a methodological blend of traditional look-and-say/whole-word approaches, traditional phonics (91% disagreed that they had no role to play) and newer phonological awareness activities (78%, n=145, strongly agreed), very much along the lines of practice envisaged in the PSC 1999.

Table 1. Teachers' Attitudes to the Teaching of Reading at Senior Infant Level

Statement	SD	D	NO	A	SA	NS
1. It is important to teach formal reading in Senior Infant classes	2%	8%	4%	57%	26%	3%
2. Reading is more than a mechanical decoding activity	1%	3%	3%	33%	59%	1%
3. Children should be exposed to phonological awareness activities to aid their reading development	2%	2%	0%	17%	78%	1%
4. Phonics alone sufficiently equip the young reader to read with understanding	38%	53%	1%	4%	3%	1%
5. Traditional look-and-say/whole-word phonic approaches have no role to play in reading development	33%	59%	0%	5%	2%	1%
6. Children acquire vital reading skills naturally and incidentally through interacting with print	8%	30%	6%	37%	17%	2%
7. Introduction of formal reading should be delayed until late in the Senior Infant year	10%	48%	5%	19%	16%	2%
8. A variety of concrete materials should be provided in the Senior Infant programme to enable the child to develop concepts necessary for reading	0%	3%	3%	43%	50%	1%
9. Frequent testing of Senior Infants is important to evaluate their progress in reading	0%	6%	3%	44%	44%	3%

Key: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; NO=No Opinion; A=Agree; SA= Strongly Agree; NS=Not Stated

A disposition towards more traditional reading development practice can also perhaps be gauged from the responses to statements 6 and 7. Opinion was clearly divided among the respondents with respect to the value of incidental interaction with print to children's overall acquisition of reading skills, a practice which is strongly advocated in the 1999 curriculum. With 38% (n=71) of teachers disagreeing that children acquire reading skills through such interaction, widespread implementation of this practice in Senior Infant classrooms would seem unlikely. Similarly, it appears that a majority of teachers need more convincing on the merits of implementing the curriculum ideal that formal structured reading would be delayed until later in the Senior Infant year, with 58% (n=108) disagreeing with this view and maintaining the value of the traditional practice of introducing formal reading during the previous Junior Infant year. Such opinions are once again indicative of the endurance of traditional beliefs and practices with respect to the early introduction of formal reading in the Irish primary system.

The last two statements indicate a strong consensus among respondents on both the importance of the provision of concrete materials (93%) and frequent assessment of progress (88%), for the effective development of reading at Senior Infant level. These sentiments are indicative of the approach outlined in the PSC 1999, but as evidenced from previously discussed data from this particular survey on assessment practice and availability and use of resources and materials, they may not necessarily transfer to actual pedagogical practice. Once again the data would appear to indicate attitudes and practices in flux with strong elements of traditional pedagogy interspersed with practices more akin to a more balanced approach. Understanding of the thrust of the balanced approach appears to exist among the practitioner respondents, especially regarding the need for a mix of skills and meaning approaches as well as a more holistic phonics practice incorporating phonological awareness. However, pedagogical practice is still strongly influenced by and centred on the widespread early introduction and use of formal reading schemes.

Possible factors influencing reading pedagogy

Table 2. Teachers' Attitudes to Factors impinging on the Pedagogy of Reading Development at Senior Infant level

Statement	SD	D	NO	A	SA	NS
10. Workbooks have a vital role to play in the development of literacy skills	15%	31%	13%	32%	8%	1%
11. Adequate learning materials need to be provided if the Senior Infant programme is to be effectively implemented	1%	1%	0%	11%	86%	1%
12. Implementation of the literacy programme is dependent upon provision of in-service courses	1%	11%	5%	35%	47%	1%
13. Implementation of the literacy programme is dependent upon improvement of the class size	0%	2%	3%	24%	70%	1%
14. Principal teachers expect Senior Infant teachers to adhere to strict timetables and schemes of work	13%	35%	19%	23%	9%	1%
15. The Senior Infant teacher should comply with parental pressure to develop literacy skills	29%	45%	9%	9%	6%	2%
16. The primary function of the infant literacy programme is to prepare the children for higher class levels	26%	48%	7%	14%	4%	1%

Key: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; NO=No Opinion A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree; NS=Not Stated

Statements 10-16 (Table 2) examined the perceived impact of various external and environmental constraints on the process of curriculum implementation. Findings here clearly mirror identified international factors affecting curriculum implementation, particularly the reality that “the extent to which intentions can be achieved depends on the support and encouragement provided, in terms of structure, resources and staff

development” (Le Métais 2002, p. 66). There was unanimous agreement among the teachers regarding the urgent and immediate need for the provision of adequate resources (97%), for a reduction in class size (94%), and for provision of in-career development courses (82%), if successful implementation of the PSC 1999 reading pedagogy was to be enacted. There was also consensus among the practitioners with up to three-quarters rejecting any narrowing of approach, which might arise from pressure of compliance with parental demands regarding the development of literacy and preparation of infant pupils for higher class levels, as well as possible school management pressures with respect to time allocation to and preparation of class work. Opinion was evenly split, however, regarding the relative importance of textbooks within the overall literacy programme, reflecting the previously discussed widespread use of structured reading schemes and textbooks in the overall approach to and practice of instruction in early reading.

Overall, the full requirements for a more whole-language based balanced approach to reading development do not on the whole appear to be fully appreciated and implemented, as yet, by a significant proportion of the surveyed teaching population. This finding and the main thrust of the findings of this nationwide survey reflect and concur with two recent official government publications on the implementation of the PSC 1999.

THE 1999 PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM – SOME OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS ON THE STATUS OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The revised *Primary School Curriculum* (DES/NCCA, 1999a; 1999b) has generally been welcomed with the balanced approach to reading development being heralded as one its defining features. Despite the consensus on the content and approaches during the formulation and development of the overall programme, the INTO did perhaps signal potential difficulties and prophetically warn in 1996 that there remains in Ireland “...a tendency to develop curricula independent of the realities of implementation” (INTO 1996, p. 18). These curriculum implementation issues, as also identified by the findings of this questionnaire survey, are now acknowledged as an important element of the overall curriculum

debate. Goodson (2003) identifies how curriculum guidelines play out when they're pronounced and mandated to teachers as the new site of curriculum contestation. Evidence of contestation in this respect has emerged from recent data from the Department of Education and Science's *Curriculum Implementation Evaluation* (2005) and the NCCA's *Primary Curriculum Review* (2005) publications concerning the English programme. Although both indicate some evidence regarding implementation of a balanced approach to reading development (e.g., increased oral language development and greater emphasis on the emergent reader), considerable difficulties are reported with respect to the implementation of core aspects of the balanced approach, as evidenced by "mechanical reading of texts and lack of variety in the reading material provided to children" (DES 2005, p. 5). These overall general contentions are mirrored across various elements of this particular survey of infant teachers.

OVERALL PICTURE OF IRISH INFANT CLASSROOM READING PRACTICE EMERGING FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

In spite of some significant change, certain features of Irish primary education, also identified as being significant factors internationally, appear to be militating against a more faithful implementation of the balanced approach to reading development envisaged in the PSC 1999. These include lack of availability of appropriate equipment and resources in the infant classroom, and large class sizes, which together appear to make provision of such pedagogy less realistic. A further and deeper reason for this failure to implement the principles stated in the curriculum appears to be that certain teacher assumptions and understandings about the approach to reading development differ from those upon which the curriculum is constructed. Many teachers appear not to fully appreciate the various elements of the required balanced pedagogy. Teachers' instructional practices appear to be influenced by their deeply ingrained personal beliefs and understandings rather than by the principles of the curriculum. Findings of this questionnaire survey further reflect a basic contention of many international specialists on curriculum change (e.g., Fullan 1991; Pinar, Reynolds & Slattery 2000;

Snyder, Bowlin & Zumwalt 1996) regarding the core need for adequate training of teachers to understand, deal with and manage curriculum change. This raises interesting questions for Irish educational administrators and policy-makers. It highlights, yet again, the reality that educational change cannot be achieved simply by producing new curriculum statements. It would seem that the starting point for a more faithfully balanced approach to reading development in Irish infant classrooms is to help teachers to re-construct their own understandings of reading pedagogy through professional development programmes, which allow for reflection and discussion. Such in-career development, in conjunction with improvements in resourcing of classrooms and in the pupil-teacher ratio should go some way towards ensuring a more balanced classroom reading pedagogy for our all pupils in line with the PSC 1999 and international best practice.

REFERENCES

- Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Adams, M.J. (1991). Why not phonics and whole language? In W. Ellis (Ed.), *All language and the creation of literacy*. Baltimore, MD: The Orton Dyslexia Society.
- An Roinn Oideachais (1971). *Curaclam na Bunscoile – Primary School Curriculum, Cuid 1 agus 2 – Parts 1 and 2*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Bell, J. (1997). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in the education and social science*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Blair, T.R., & Zygouris-Coe, V. (2003). Balanced literacy: Research-based practice for student learning. In G. Shiel & U. Ní Dhálaigh (Eds.), *Other ways of seeing: Diversity in language and literacy proceedings of the 12th European Conference on Reading, Volume Two* (pp. 125-132). Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland.
- Burchell, B., & Marsh, C. (1992). The effect of questionnaire length on survey response. *Quality and Quantity*, 26, 233-244
- Chall, J.S. (1967/1983). *Learning to read: The great debate* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

98 Reading Instruction at Infant Level in Ireland

- DES (Department of Education & Science). (2005). *The Primary Curriculum in Schools: Insights from the Curriculum Implementation Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review*. Dublin: Author.
- DES/NCCA (Department of Education and Science/National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (1999a). *Primary school curriculum. Content*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- DES/NCCA. (1999b). *Primary school curriculum. Teacher guidelines*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Fitzgerald, J. (1999). What is this thing called balance? *The Reading Teacher*, 47(2), 380-391.
- Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. London: Cassell.
- Goodson, I. (2003). Keynote address to joint ESAI-NCCA Conference on Curriculum Contestation. Dublin Castle, January 2003.
- Heberlein, T., & Baumgartner, R. (1978). Factors affecting response rates to mailed questionnaires: A quantitative analysis of the published literature. *American Sociological Review*, 43, 447-462.
- Hiebert, E.H., Pearson, D.P., Taylor, B.M., Richardson, V., & Paris, S.G. (1998). *Every child a reader: applying reading research in the classroom*. Ann Arbor, MI: Centre for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, University of Michigan.
- Hopkins, D. (1993). *A teacher's guide to classroom research* (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- INTO (Irish National Teachers Organisation). (1996). *Primary School Curriculum: An evolutionary process*. Dublin: Author.
- Le Métais, J. (2002). *New Zealand stocktake: An international critique*. Wellington: Ministry of Education & National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Morgan, M., & Martin, M. (1995). Reflections on the IEA literacy study. In G. Shiel, U. Ní Dhálaigh, & B. O'Reilly (Eds.), *Reading development to age 15: Overcoming difficulties*. Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland.
- Morrow, L.M., Tracey, D.H., Woo, D., & Pressley, M. (1999). Characteristics of exemplary first-grade literacy instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(5), 462-476.
- NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). (2005). *Primary curriculum review phase 1: Summary of findings and recommendations*. Dublin: Author.

- National Reading Panel (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Reports of the sub-groups*. Washington DC: National Development Clearinghouse.
- Pinar, W., Reynolds, W., & Slattery, P. (2000). *Understanding curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Pressley, M., Rankin, J., & Yokoi, L. (1996). A survey of the instructional practices of outstanding primary-level literacy teachers. *Elementary School Journal*, 96, 363-384.
- Rumelhart, D. (2004). Towards an interactive model of reading. In R.B. Ruddell & N.J. Urnau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (pp. 1149-1179). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Snyder J., Bolin, F. & Zumwalt, K. (1996). Curriculum Implementation. In P.W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum*. New York: Simon & Schuster/Macmillan.