

# Editorial

In November 2018, we were saddened to learn of the passing of Páid McGee, visionary leader in special education and teacher education in Ireland for almost four decades. Páid's leadership in and contribution to the development of policy and practice in special and inclusive education in Ireland is widely recognised, and in this issue we are very pleased to publish a tribute documenting his extraordinary legacy (Travers). Charting Páid's contribution to key policy developments in special education, Travers draws on the insights of those who knew his work and on Páid's own words to illustrate the depth of Páid's understanding of and insight into special education in Ireland. At a time when the roles of special schools and classes appear to be coming under increasing scrutiny, the prescience of his call, fifteen years ago, for greater conceptual clarity about the roles of specialist settings (McGee, 2004) is striking.

Travers describes Páid McGee as “a true champion of special education in Ireland”. Many of us who knew, were taught and were inspired by him, will remember Páid as above all a champion of teachers and teaching with an unwavering belief that “the learning of the pupil with special educational needs depends, to an exceptional degree, on relevant teacher expertise.... Skilled and conscientious teaching in this area is highly demanding work but the logic of the situation is that the pupils concerned cannot afford less” (McGee, 2004, p. 78). This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the *Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education* (IATSE), primarily by a group of teachers completing the diploma course in special education at the former St. Patrick's College. The establishment of IATSE and subsequently in 1987 the publication of the first issue of REACH, the official journal of IATSE, represent potent indicators of the empowering impact of continuing professional development for teachers.

In this issue we are delighted to publish an article based on an award-winning final year B Ed research project investigating the use of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to evaluate the use of digital technologies to support inclusion (Woods & Leahy). Morrissey reports encouraging findings on the results of the design, implementation and impact of a bespoke teacher-designed behavioural intervention for one pupil. Both articles clearly illustrate the powerful impact of analytical, evidence-based, rigorous and reflective approaches to the improvement of classroom practice across the continuum of teacher professional learning. In a timely study, McGrotty and Sheridan document for the first time the experiences of Irish Deaf students, who use ISL as their primary language, working with interpreters in higher education. The findings and implications are

likely to be of interest to all who wish to support access and inclusion in higher education not least teacher educators working with the first students due to register on the B Ed. (Irish Sign Language) at DCU Institute of Education this September.

In 2004, highlighting the greater accessibility and value of the growing body of research literature relating to special education, Páid McGee urged teachers not only to be research-informed but also to continue to share their professional expertise. The Editorial Board therefore welcomes submissions relating to special and inclusive education from teachers and other professionals to [reach.editor.ia-tse@gmail.com](mailto:reach.editor.ia-tse@gmail.com).

**ANNA LOGAN**

Editor

Copyright of Reach is the property of Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.