

SCoTENS: Two Decades of Collaborative Research and Partnerships in Professional Learning

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It is with great pleasure that members of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS) welcome a Special Issue of the *Irish Journal of Education (IJE)* during this celebratory year, 20 years since the establishment of SCoTENS in 2003. The selection of papers published is based on collaborative research initiatives that were supported by SCoTENS. These initiatives represent examples of work from the significant corpus of cross-border research projects that have been approved and funded by SCoTENS over the past two decades. Reports from all funded research projects are available on the SCoTENS website (<https://scotens.org/>). However, the website and conference presentations are only the starting point for the dissemination and sharing of expertise, experiences, and learning among teacher education professionals and the wider education community, across the island of Ireland and internationally. This Special Issue of the *IJE* creates an invaluable opportunity for its readership to access findings and lessons learnt from joint research that has been supported by SCoTENS.

SCoTENS is a unique organisation in many important ways. There are three principal strands to the core services that are provided: i) seed-funding for collaborative research; ii) the Annual SCoTENS Conference on Teacher Education; and iii) the North-South Student Exchange Programme. As collaborative networks among members have strengthened and expanded, so has the range of projects further developed, such as the Research Webinar Event that is now held annually in the Spring term. All strands share a common commitment to effective partnerships among educational professionals, with a focus on teacher education and with promotion of children's learning as the ultimate objective. We hope that readers will gain some insights into that work through the papers presented in this Special Issue.

The SCoTENS organisation has grown and evolved against a backdrop of political, social, and economic unrest. During this time, it has remained steadfast to the values and principles that were espoused by founding members in 2003. We are committed to building on that early legacy of hope for a peaceful society. We continue to provide a forum where teacher educators and the wider education community across the island of Ireland can engage in open, critical, and constructive analysis of current issues in education, with a view to promoting a collaborative response to these

issues. The programme of activities provided by SCoTENS is designed to inspire and support student teachers and early career researchers as well as opening channels of communication with experienced practitioners and researchers. Positive relationships and partnerships across borders and jurisdictions are nurtured in all our endeavours, and these have proven to be sustainable and have consolidated over time.

We are very grateful to the Department of Education and more recently to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in the Republic of Ireland, and to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, for their funding and their positive engagement with SCoTENS over the years. Our appreciation extends to other benefactors and to the wider community of member organisations. On this occasion, we pay tribute to all the researchers who submitted papers to the *IJE* Special Issue, showcasing some of the diverse, creative, and pragmatic scholarly work that has been carried out by SCoTENS partners. Finally, we express sincere gratitude to the *IJE* editorial team for their innovative proposal and the diligent planning and review process that has resulted in the production of this Special Issue.

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