

# Research and Innovation Overview 2024

## Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

In the 2022-23 academic year, the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education employed 22 academic staff and 3 professional service staff. A total of 87 postgraduate students were enrolled across various programmes, with 60 new students joining during the year. The department had a strong output of publications, including 1 book, 12 book chapters, 14 peer-reviewed journal articles, 66 conference presentations, and 46 multimedia educational resources. The department secured 8 research grants valued at €804,062, reflecting its commitment to fostering innovation and research excellence.

**Head of Department:** Niamh Fortune



### Research Themes and Focus Areas

The department's research is informed by Froebelian values, with a strong emphasis on social justice, inclusion, and sustainability. Key focus areas include:

- **Pedagogy of Teacher Education and Professional Development:** Exploring Froebelian philosophy and methods in early childhood and teacher education.
- **Sustainability and Global Citizenship Education:** A key research theme aimed at fostering environmental responsibility and social justice through education.
- **Language Arts and Plurilingualism:** Promoting respect for diverse languages and fostering language development in primary education.



### Collaborations and Partnerships

The department is involved in several international collaborations and national initiatives aimed at advancing educational research:

- **All Means All Project:** Led by Deirdre Forde, this Erasmus+ funded project involves 60 researchers and self-advocates co-creating an interactive OpenTextbook to promote inclusive and intersectional approaches in teacher education across Europe.
- **Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years Programme (LINC):** This programme, in collaboration with Mary Immaculate College and Early Childhood Ireland, aims to improve leadership in early childhood education through a Level 6 Special Purpose Award and a CPD programme.



### Significant Research Outputs

In 2022-23, the department produced a wide range of research outputs, contributing to national and international education scholarship:

#### Publications

- Dr Máire Nic An Bhaird co-edited Douglas Hyde: Irish Ideology and International Impact, which explores the cultural influence of Douglas Hyde on the Irish language revival.
- Dr Laoise Ní Chléirigh wrote a chapter on sustainability for the edited collection Global Citizenship Education: Curious Teachers, Critical Classrooms, a groundbreaking textbook transforming how global citizenship education is taught in primary schools.
- Dr Leah O'Toole and colleagues published on paper discussing Pedagogies of hope: Exploring play opportunities for young children in an urban environment
- Dr Máirín Glenn published a thought provoking paper discussing 'a slow approach' to action research in 'speedy circumstances'. The paper was published in the Scopus indexed journal Educational Action Research.

#### Awards

- Dr Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich led an independent evaluation of the Our World of Languages (OWL) Project, funded by the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal and Community Foundation Ireland, aimed at fostering multilingualism through arts-based storytelling in early childhood education.



### Research Impact and Societal Contributions

The department's research has a wide-reaching impact on education policy and practice, particularly in the areas of social inclusion and sustainability. The OWL Project, led by Dr Nic Fhionnlaoich, is an example of how arts-based research can foster multilingualism and cultural awareness in early childhood education. Additionally, the department's work on global citizenship education continues to shape how educators approach sustainability and social justice in primary education settings.



### Future Directions

The department will continue to focus on Froebelian pedagogy, global citizenship education, and inclusive teaching practices. Upcoming projects will expand on existing collaborations to explore new ways to integrate social justice and environmental sustainability into early childhood education and teacher education.

The Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University continues to make significant contributions to educational research and practice. Through its commitment to Froebelian values and its emphasis on social justice, inclusion, and sustainability, the department is shaping the future of early childhood and teacher education.

**Find out more** [www.maynoothuniversity.ie/froebel-department-primary-and-early-childhood-education](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/froebel-department-primary-and-early-childhood-education)

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