

Provision for Ethnic Minority Pupils and Parents in Ireland

Report for Learning Migration Network Transnational Seminar Group for Educational Authorities

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Migration in the Island of Ireland

The current situation

In 2005 10.4% of the population of Ireland was 'foreign born'. This is the eighth highest figure of 23 OECD countries, the average being 7.8%.

The projection is that 1 million people in Ireland will be 'foreign born' by 2030, compared to 0.4 million at the moment. This would represent 18% of the population. This projection is based on a strong sustained migration model.

It is difficult to gather accurate figures but since May 2004 over 200,000 new national insurance numbers have been issued to citizens of the new EU member states, mostly Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian.

The top ten nationalities in Ireland in 2005 were: Polish 150,000; Chinese 60,000; Lithuanian 45,000; Latvian 30,000; Nigerian 28,000; UK/British 25,000; American 6,000; Romanian 5,000; Pilipino 5,000; Pakistani 4,500.

History

Before the 'Great Famine' in the 1800s there were almost 8.5 million people living in Ireland. A steady decline in population reduced this number to fewer than 4.5 million in 1926. It had risen again to 5.5 million in 2002. In six of the counties of Ulster a population of 1.6-1.7 million in 1841 fell to 1.2 million in 1891.

Emigration from Ireland began before the 'Great Famine' of the 1840s. Ireland's emigrants were young and were leaving unemployment in rural areas to find work in cities abroad. Their migration was almost always permanent.

Emigration patterns have changed radically. In 1989 outward migration peaked at 70,000 people per year, while just 27,000 immigrated to Ireland. Census figures from 2005 suggest a complete reversal with 70,000 immigrant to Ireland and 16,000 emigrants. Nearly 38% of the new immigrants have come from the ten newest members of the EU.

Recent migration patterns to Ireland have ensured its place within a globalised world. Ireland is the 10th wealthiest country of the 191 states in the world. Its young people are less attracted to lower paid jobs in the service sector. The economy therefore has a labour deficiency that is being filled by the immigrant population from abroad.

Many of the ethnic groupings are replicating the patterns of previous Irish emigrants. Many choose to live among their own, partly because of the support structure and partly because of economic circumstances that influence the availability of rented accommodation.

There is a new ethnic redefinition of Ireland's population, a prime example of a scattering of peoples from their countries of origin. We have seen it all before but in reverse.

National minorities: Traveller Community

The History of Irish Travellers

Although not much historical research has been carried out on the Traveller way of life, there are references to nomadic groups dating back to 12th and even 5th century. As industrialisation brought new methods of communication, Travellers, as with other groups in Ireland, began to experience a change in their role in Irish society and had to adapt their lifestyle to accommodate these changes.

The Traveller identity is marked by a number of common features; a common history and experience, an oral tradition, their own language, value system and of course a nomadic way of life. The distinctive Traveller lifestyle and culture sets Travellers apart from 'settled people'. Travellers have a unique history and value system, as well as language, customs and traditions. The Traveller languages are called Cant, Gammon, or Shelta.

According to Census 2002:

- There are 23,681 Travellers nationally, approximately 0.6% of the population
- Only 3.3% of the Traveller population are over 65 years compared to 11.1% of the general population
- 63% of Travellers are under 25 years compared with 37% of the general population
- 42% of Travellers are under 15 years compared with 21% of the general population
- The average age for Travellers is 18 years compared to a national figure of 32 years
- 21,549 Travellers identified themselves as Roman Catholic

Membership of the Traveller community was identified as one of the nine grounds for discrimination under the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000.

In Ireland the use of the words 'Traveller' or 'Traveller Community' is how Travellers prefer to be called.

Traveller Communities in N. Ireland

The Traveller Community in N. Ireland comprises of roughly 120 families, 1200 people including 700 children. The largest concentration is in West Belfast. A number of these families are 'settled', living on serviced caravan sites and some in houses. Some families still live on the roadside.

Education

The Education Reform Order of 1989 requires that all pupils of compulsory school age have access to the school curriculum. This includes Traveller children and provides parents with the right to express a preference with regard to mainstream schools.

Each of the Education and Library Boards in N. Ireland has appointed a Traveller Liaison Officer to develop strategies at local level for meeting the needs of Traveller children, supporting the schools and providing training for teachers.

However, the attendance of Traveller children is variable. Attendance at primary school is better. Secondary school attendance is irregular and a cause for concern. There are also concern about the levels of attainment of traveller children and the dropout rate at post primary level. These are explained in more detail on the next page.

The Northern Ireland Forum for the Education of Traveller Children was set up in 1995 to maintain a strategic overview of Traveller education. It monitors existing provision and helps develop intercultural materials.

Traveller Communities in the Republic of Ireland

In 2004-2005 it was estimated that almost 6000 Traveller children enrolled in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland, nearly 100%.

RTTs (Resource teachers for travellers) are allocated to schools on the basis of having 14 Traveller children with identified need. At present, Department of Education Policy states that, if children are to receive assistance for learning support, they must have parental consent. The allocation of a Resource Teacher for Travellers (RTT) to a school is made on the basis that "Traveller children are taught either within their classroom with the RTT working in partnership with their classroom teacher or withdrawn in groups for intensive tuition according to their ages and perceived needs by the RTTs." Currently there are 540 RTTs employed by the Department of Education and Science. For each Traveller child enrolled in a post-primary school, a grant is provided; namely €427 for each Traveller child in addition to the €286 standard grant. Teaching hours are also allocated to schools on the basis of the number of Travellers enrolled. The posts are calculated as 1.5 hours per week for each Traveller child.

However, there is concern about low levels of attainment among Traveller children. The Chief Inspector's report (2001-2004) suggested that the levels of attainment among Traveller children were not equal to non-Traveller peers. Traveller parents have expressed concerns that their children are being withdrawn during classroom teaching of core subjects, so that they don't always have access to the whole school curriculum.

The transfer rate for Travellers to post-primary level was 85 per cent in 2003. There are approximately 1,850 Traveller students in mainstream post-primary schools at present out of a possible 4,000 i.e. 46 per cent of all Traveller students of post-primary school age. There is a high dropout rate with the majority of young travellers leaving school before completing their education.

Irish Medium Education

Bunscolaíocht & Iar-Bhunscolaíocht | Primary and Post-Primary

All subjects except for English are taught through Irish in a gaelscoil or "all-Irish" school, and these are located in Gaeltacht areas and elsewhere in Ireland. Gaeltacht areas are regions in Ireland where the people speak Irish as their first language.

Currently, there are 217 gaelscoileanna on the island (158 of which are primary schools and 36 of which are secondary schools). Many gaelscoileanna outside the Gaeltacht have been established by parents.

Some pupils of gaelscoileanna do not speak Irish at home. Night classes in the language are often provided by the schools to help parents develop their language skills.

Gaelscoileanna

Gaelscoileanna is the main co-ordinating body for all-Irish schools. It assists with the furthering of education through the medium of Irish all over Ireland. Support is provided to parents who want their children educated through Irish, and to local committees wishing to establish all-Irish schools in their own locality. (www.gaelscoileanna.ie)

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Established in 2000 by the Northern Irish Department of Education, this organization encourages and develops education through the Irish language in the North. (www.comhairle.org)

Dr. Gabrielle Maguire established the organisation **GAELOILIÚINT** in September 1991. It is an umbrella group for all the Irish-medium schools in N. Ireland.

At present, five schools in N. Ireland are recognised and state-funded. Every other all-Irish school is 'independent' and so relies wholly on donations or monies collected by parents, teachers or school committees. GO is at present conducting research throughout N. Ireland to establish which communities could sustain an Irish-medium school.

Basic aim of Irish-medium education

To make Irish-medium education available to all those children in Northern Ireland whose parents wish to avail of it and to make it accessible to all sections of the community.

2. Objectives of Irish-medium education

Linguistic: To produce children who are effective and competent users of Irish.

Educational: To ensure that children in Irish-medium schools receive all the normal benefits of education, in terms of their social, emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual and vocational development. To create an ethos within the schools providing Irish-medium education in which the children regard the language as meaningful and relevant.

Cultural: To give the children awareness, appreciation and knowledge of their cultural and linguistic heritage.

Social: To involve parents as significant partners in their children's education and to encourage the use of Irish among families of children attending Irish-medium schools. To enable the children and their families to contribute to the development of the social infrastructure of the Irish-speaking community.



A leaflet outlining the nine advantages of bilingualism has been produced by the following bodies. It has been attached with this report.



**COMHAIRLE
NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA**



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
MÁNNSTRÍE O LEAR**

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Team in the SELB

The Ethnic Minority Achievement team in the Southern Education & Library Board is relatively new, starting in September 2005. Until that time there had been a peripatetic service in place. There is one team leader who is also the advisor for languages and two assistant advisory officers.

The Western Education & Library Board, with whom SELB work, also operated a peripatetic service.

However, after consultation with teachers in schools, reading on the services in other parts of the UK and in Australia and study visits to Hounslow and Hampshire, it was decided to change the structure of our service. In both boards now, the ethnic minority achievement service is an advisory one.

The service organises and delivers school and centre based in-service support for teachers and helps schools adapt and use resources.

Schools receive help and advice on developing school policies and plans to meet the needs of ethnic minority children, stressing the need for team learning: principals, teachers, classroom assistants and ancillary staff. There are three key areas: pastoral issues; basic language acquisition and accessing the curriculum.

Schools are supported through a process of review and self-evaluation with a view to becoming more inclusive. This will be continuous and will help schools to build the capacity to cope with ethnic minority pupils in the future. It is therefore more sustainable.

The SELB EMA team has worked collaboratively with other board colleagues in the delivery of staff awareness training for ethnic minority achievement and language awareness. Local colleges of Further Education have asked the team to deliver awareness training to classroom assistants in order to dispel some of the myths about ethnic minority pupils and their parents. This all helps to have a shared vision across the various sectors within SELB.

The team has also been working in cross border projects on language and intercultural development to have a broader view and input from other perspectives. It is also important to consider the movement of migrant workers throughout the island of Ireland and the EU in general so that we have agreed procedures and practices and can make informed adjustments to practice.

At the moment there are roughly 1500 pupils in schools on the SELB. It has been very difficult to collate accurate figures.

Why did the SELB and WELB move away from a peripatetic service?

As a result of a period of evaluation and due to the increase in numbers of ethnic minority children, the SELB and WELB teams decided to move from a peripatetic service to an advisory role. The peripatetic role was considered ineffective because:

- More time was spent travelling than teaching and so pupils had little contact time with peripatetic teachers.
- Due to increasing numbers of pupils, some pupils lost support early because of the need to prioritise for new arrivals.
- Monitoring progress across the curriculum was not always possible as peripatetic staff did not have enough time to meet mainstream teachers to discuss this.
- There was no joint planning with teachers and so no time given to inclusion and access to the curriculum.
- Withdrawal with an external teacher is an exclusive practice. If a pupil is withdrawn from class by an external teacher, they are perceived as 'different'. The other pupils don't know the peripatetic teacher and so this adds to the 'different' perception. While the child is attending withdrawal sessions, they miss out on the class lesson, class interaction and can feel very lost when they return. An external teacher will have moved on to another school and so, no discussion takes place about what the child 'missed' and how they can be helped with this.
- Teachers felt that they were not skilled to teach the pupils and principals felt the need for whole staff development and for specific expertise within the school.
- There was an uncertainty between principals and peripatetic staff with regard to accountability for the pupils.
- There was uncertainty with regard to the status of peripatetic teachers.

The national strategy in the Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland the Department of Education and Science set up a system of peripatetic teachers in the early 1990s to respond to small numbers of immigrant families. However, by the end of the 1990s, the arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers and others demanded immediate action and a change of approach.

So, the DES set up a structure of language support teachers for schools. Full time temporary posts were sanctioned for schools with 14 or more students. For schools with fewer students they provided grant assistance to allow for provision of teaching hours and resources. The DES charged the Integrate Ireland Language & Training Unit (IILT), through Trinity College, with the responsibility for providing support to language teachers.

IILT also developed English Language proficiency benchmarks and a format for tracking the progress of ethnic minority children: the European Language Portfolio. This was validated by the Council of Europe in 2001 and updated in 2004.

Recent evaluation of the structures in place in the Republic of Ireland has identified some areas for improvement:

The temporary nature of language teacher posts in this area means that schools find it hard to plan for the next year. It also creates a sense of impermanence, which makes it very difficult to plan a language support programme that is an effective element of the support structure of the school. Language teachers felt that their status was deemed lower than others as their post were not permanent. The consequence of 'last minute' confirmation results in a lack of experienced teachers taking up language posts.

Schools expressed a concern over lower levels of language skills among English speaking children. This coupled with large numbers of ESL children could result in a decrease in standards all round. Again this emphasises the need for more permanency of posts to ensure that appropriate measures are in place in schools when new children arrive.

Many teachers develop a high level of skill in the delivery of language support but move quickly back into mainstream. This is a gain for mainstream but results in a need for constant re-training of new staff, not a capacity building approach.

While there is training for specific language teachers for schools, there is no training for mainstream teachers. This must be addressed for two reasons: the school as a whole and mainstream teachers need to become skilled in providing appropriate support; the issue of curriculum access is not being addressed. A whole school approach is needed.

The situation in Northern Ireland

Unfortunately there is not yet a regional strategy in Northern Ireland. There are widely varying practices between the five boards, with some retaining a peripatetic service. We are moving towards a regional service later in 2007, when it is hoped that we will have agreed procedures and practices across N. Ireland.

Funding is allocated to schools according to the number of pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the October census. Schools are allocated £912 additional funding for pupils for whose mother tongue is not English, for the first two years. Difficulties arise when pupils arrive after the October census, as no funding is available until the next financial year.

Schools with larger numbers tend to use the funding to employ teachers from within the school to meet parents and work with small groups of pupils on induction, basic language acquisition and curriculum access. These teachers are often appointed as the coordinator for the school and oversee provision and monitoring of progress across the curriculum. Classroom assistants are also employed in schools with large and smaller numbers to help pupils and parents. Increasingly schools are seeking bilingual classroom assistants. Funding is also used to buy suitable resources.

A new centralised interpreting and translation service will be established as part of the regional service for N. Ireland.

In the meantime, the SELB will continue to develop capacity building training in schools and strengthen inter-agency, North-South and international links. Schools are encouraged to become involved in Comenius projects and to apply for Comenius Language Assistants, particularly from more recent EU member states, as we have increasing numbers of children from these countries. The SELB team is developing two major new strategies in primary and post primary. These are outlined in the next section.

A revised curriculum is being introduced in N. Ireland. To view details of this, refer to the following website: www.nicurriculum.org.uk

Joint North-South Initiatives

There has been much collaboration between SELB and colleagues in Integrate Ireland Language and Training in the Republic of Ireland.

In collaboration with IILT (Integrate Ireland Language and Training), areas for improvement or development north and south have been listed.

The areas for immediate collaboration were prioritised as such:

- Redefinition of existing specifications for classroom teachers to encompass ethnic minority support
- Development of in-service and pre-service training
- Development of a toolkit for teacher trainers

Common whole school issues:	Home-school communication Pastoral care & school ethos; intercultural environments Appropriate induction of new arrivals Interpreting & translation services The changing role of Boards of Governors
Partnership building:	Consolidation of current partnerships Involvement of other stakeholders Promotion of inter-agency partnerships
Pre-service & in-service training:	Module in pre-service training Training tools for teacher trainers Development of expertise of classroom teachers Development of joint school and centre-based INSET Entry testing to determine language needs
Common learning & assessment tools:	Tools for learning & assessment to support learner autonomy & mobility Pedagogically appropriate tests to confirm achievement

Both SELB and IILT have developed European Language Portfolios for children in primary schools and both have been accredited by the Council of Europe.

The two major initiatives aimed at helping teachers provide for pupils for whom English is not the first language, are outlined on the following pages.

Toolkit for Teachers and Trainers in the Primary School

The **SELB** and **Integrate Ireland Education and Training** are involved in a major North-South project to produce a toolkit for teachers and trainers in primary schools who are providing for the needs of pupils with English as a second language. It is to be ready for publication by the end of February 2007 and will be distributed to all primary schools in the island of Ireland by September 2007. It will take the form of a manual and accompanying CD. A training programme will be developed thereafter.

The project is funded by the departments of education North and South.

The table '**Toolkit for Teachers and Trainers in Primary Schools: Overview**' on the following pages outlines the content of the **Toolkit**.

Programme of support for language acquisition and curriculum access in Post Primary Schools: SELB

A programme of support for teachers and pupils in post primary schools has been put in place in a number of schools in the SELB area. The programme is called: '**The Way In: Accessing Language and the Curriculum in the Post Primary Context**'. The first cohort of eleven schools was involved in a five month training programme. This began with a full training day to examine the new programme followed by training sessions delivered to groups of coordinators from different schools and visits to individual schools to address specific issues. All schools received a file and CD with explanations and resources to back up the programme.

A further fourteen schools have been involved in the second cohort and a third cohort is to begin shortly.

Schools have been encouraged to conduct an audit of current practice, prioritise areas for development and draw up action plans to address these. The tables entitled '**Supporting Ethnic Minority Children: Audit of Current Provision and Practice**' and '**Planning for Provision for Ethnic Minority Pupils**' outline the main areas identified in the programme. Training targets these areas.