A Report for
the Centre for Cross Border Studies
and the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South

DIVERSITY IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION NORTH AND SOUTH

Implications for Teacher Education

Máirín Kenny Helen McLaughlin

October 2004

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Introductory Note

This research project, which has examined the difficulties facing teachers and very young children in dealing with conflict and diversity in both Irish jurisdictions, has been a hugely valuable exercise in North/South mutual learning for all concerned. It was also very timely, coming in the aftermath of the harrowing scenes of young children being harassed on a daily basis outside a school in north Belfast.

The proposal for such a study was put by Philomena Donnelly of St Patrick's College Drumcondra and myself – with the support of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) – to the Special EU Programmes Body in August 2002. Its implementation over the past two years has brought together early years education specialists, college of education lecturers and primary schoolteachers from a dozen places in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to explore and discuss an area of vital importance to both societies: the education of very young children in the ethos of mutual understanding and respect for others. We thank the two researchers, Máirín Kenny and Helen McLaughlin, for all their hard and highly professional work. We also owe particular thanks to Professor Richard McMinn and Dr Pauric Travers, the heads of the two largest teacher education institutions on the island, Stranmillis University College and St Patrick's College Drumcondra, for their great enthusiasm and support.

In the process, we have all learned a lot, not only about the education of young children, but also about working with people in the other jurisdiction on a matter of mutual interest and concern. Cross-border relationships have been created and nurtured and will continue long after this project has finished. The beginning of a diversity framework to be used in teacher education institutions, North and South, involved in preparing teachers to work with 4-7 year olds, has been signposted. This research project has been a model for how people of different backgrounds and views can come together to work across jurisdictional boundaries and cultural barriers for the good of the coming generation.

Andy Pollak
Director, The Centre for Cross Border Studies
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October 2004

Foreword

Recent research by Paul Connolly of Queen's University Belfast and others has highlighted the significance of diversity-related issues for early years pupils. Children as young as three years old, it has been shown, can perceive colour and racial difference or, in the Northern Ireland context, display awareness of the cultural and political significance of at least one event or symbol identified with their own culture, such as a football shirt associated with a particular team. A powerful tide of inward immigration, strengthened by the extension of membership of the EU on 1 May 2004, has transformed not only major Irish cities north and south but also smaller centres from Ballymena to Ballyjamesduff into ethnically diverse communities. Several generations of teachers, trained in very different eras, now have to confront the classroom challenges posed by such developments. The recent study undertaken for the Northern Ireland Equality Commission by Queen's University Belfast's Graduate School of Education, entitled *Equality Awareness in Teacher Education and Training in Northern Ireland* (2004) has underlined the scale of the teacher education gap at both pre-service and in-service levels. Work by Norman Richardson and James Nelson of Stranmillis University College has highlighted the realities behind the attempts in some initial teacher education institutions to tackle the issue of preparing teachers for this brave, new multi-cultural world. Despite the absence of equivalent studies south of the border and notwithstanding some isolated initiatives, it is clear that similar deficits exist within teacher education in the Republic.

How timely then that a joint team of researchers from two of the major providers of initial teacher education, north and south – Stranmillis University College and Saint Patrick's College – have come together to address the issue of diversity in early years education and how teacher preparation could be improved to respond to it. Their work has been informed by engagement on the ground with the realities in schools, north and south of the border. The preliminary findings were then shaped and refined at a two-day conference held in Newry in April 2004, which we both had the privilege of attending.

The two higher education institutions involved have, over a considerable number of years, been active participants in cross-border projects such as an annual residential summer programme for Irish student teachers in the United States (Wider Horizons Project) which has been in place now for 15 years. More recently, regular exchanges between the student unions of both institutions have taken place and Stranmillis and Saint Patrick's have been proactively involved in North-South student teacher exchanges for school-based work, funded by the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme through the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the British Council and Leargas. The support of the last-named organisation for this particular research initiative has also been crucial. Given the introduction of a revised primary curriculum in the Republic and given that from 2006-07 a revised Northern Ireland Curriculum will be phased in, with an even stronger emphasis than heretofore on personal, diversity and citizenship education, the debate to which this report is such an important contribution assumes an even greater significance. Its findings challenge all of us involved in teacher education on the island of Ireland and we commend it to you.

Richard McMinn   **Pauric Travers**
Principal   **President**
Stranmillis University College   **St. Patrick's College**

October 2004

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Charts and Tables

Abbreviations and acronyms

NI	Northern Ireland	ROI	Republic of Ireland
DENI	Department of Education NI	DES	Department of Education and Science (ROI)
NISRA	NI Statistical Research Agency	CSO	Central Statistics Office (ROI)

RE	Religious Education
EMU	Education for Mutual Understanding (NI)
PSE	Personal Social and Emotional education (NI Curriculum)
SPHE	Social, Personal, and Health Education (ROI Curriculum)

Diversity in Early Years Education, North and South: Executive Summary

The key role of education in healing divisions and developing reconciliation, mutual understanding and respect between communities and traditions has been long recognised internationally and in Ireland. In promoting openness, inclusiveness and respect for diversity among young people, teachers play a key role in the task of realising the vision of peace and reconciliation in Ireland, North and South. This two-year joint North-South research project, comprising two complementary studies of teachers' experience in selected schools on both sides of the border, was inspired by the need to develop an understanding of how mutual understanding could be promoted in early childhood education, and of the implications of this for initial teacher education. The project was rooted in the vision of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS). The project **aim** was to identify the difficulties facing teachers and children in areas of conflict, tension and misunderstanding on both sides of the Irish border with a view to developing a framework suitable for initial and in-service teacher education, to be used in all institutions, North and South, involved in preparing teachers to work with children in the early years.

Thirty five schools (eighteen in N. Ireland, seventeen in the Republic) participated in the research survey and six in each state participated in the field study. All sets met the criteria set out in the project brief. The Northern sample schools represented controlled, maintained and integrated sectors, and interface and border locations; the Republic sample schools represented the major denominational and multi-denominational sectors, areas of community tension, and border and hinterland locations. School size, gender and ethnic mix, and socio-economic status were also considered. Experienced teachers were numerically dominant among the Infant teachers who took part in the survey and school sessions in both states. The data from these small samples were rich and adequate for the purposes of this project.

The contexts for the analysis of data was established by a review of official and research literature. This opens with an analysis of relevant census data for each state. This showed that in terms of established forms of diversity (religious), Northern Ireland had the more varied profile but the Republic had a higher level of what might be termed 'new diversities' (ethnic/ immigrant). A review of current law and official education policy indicates that there is strong international and state commitment to equality and respect for diversity, but that conceptualisations are sometimes fragmented: concepts of childhood come from a mix of developmental and social constructivist frameworks; concepts of social diversity and concepts of social deficit also coexist uncomfortably. In current education research diversity is a major focus. However there has been little research into religious diversity and conflict and the implications for education, although a significant contribution to that small body of work comes from Northern Ireland. History, including very recent history, is crucial in the Northern conflict. This history is passed on in stories, in the environments of young children who are avid and listeners and learners. This conflict is truly European. Its roots are centuries old, and it owes nothing to the recent immigration waves which are a major focus in interculturalism debates.

Generally, teacher education emerges in the research as a key area. The need for a balance of experiential and conceptual learning is emphasised, as is the need to include anti-bias and awareness raising modules in teacher education programmes. The growing diversity in classrooms is an outcome in part of an international as well as a national thrust towards inclusion, supported by law and policy. Few teachers referred to this body of official literature. It must be remembered that the teachers who contributed to this research were all voluntary participants. They can be presumed to be interested in the issues, although while this interest is possibly widespread, it would seem from other research that it would need to be far more so.

The Field Study

In the research analysis component of this report, teacher input from the postal survey and from interviews and discussions were combined for analysis. Researchers included two other data collection strategies: participant observation with the infant classes, and observations of the school and classroom environment and resources. Time spent in participant observation in the Infant classes was useful. In short, the children showed elements that could be read as 'pre-prejudice': varied levels of knowledge of racist or other exclusionary terminology, not organised into an effective a priori framework governing how they behaved. Observations of school and classroom environments suggest that resources, however variable in quality and range, reflect understandings of diversity in the school ethos and in teacher perceptions. Questions arise as to the prevalence of images of the dominant denominational or political identities, and what this says to pupils and parents of other persuasions. This seemingly minor indicator suggests the need for reflection on the denominational structure and religious and socio-political ethos of Irish education, North and South.

Teachers' reflections on their perceptions, practice and professional context comprised the main body of data in this research project. It is possible and helpful to view their discourse as organised in function of two intersecting conceptual lines. One was their conceptualisation of children, which was on a continuum from 'child as innocent' to 'child as engaged', and the other was their conceptualisation of the purpose of school, which was on a continuum from 'school as haven', to 'school as engaged'. In the table below, these two continua are used to construct a matrix in which the key themes can be analytically summarised:

Concepts of children and school, and allied possibilities

	Schools as haven	School as engaged
Child as innocent (develop-mental model)	Protect children, keep community conflict outside. Children cannot be biased, are too young for critical discussion of social issues Engage children in learning to share and care.	Fields of concern for adults different from those for children. Engage children in cultural activities; reflection on personal, interpersonal and familial relations but not social critique.
Child as engaged (social constructivist model)	Fields of concern for adults different from those for children. Children's learning scaffolded: engage in cultural activities and critique but within safe (personal/ interpersonal/familial) limits.	Social concerns discussed with both adults and children. Children's learning scaffolded: reflect on their perceptions, relationships, and the wider world in the light of anti-bias principles.

The whole matrix of thought and strategies is nested in the wider community context, and teachers in effect located themselves variably, depending on the particular issue in question at any time, and on factors such as the urgency and pain in that context; the level of and pace of diversification in the community and school, and the wider school and systemic support or lack of it that they experienced in their work with the children. Teachers' identification of the issues was characterised by the focus on issues to do with children as individuals, which informed their initial teacher education. As the literature indicates, teachers are pragmatists, deeply absorbed by the fine-grained and very complex life in the classroom.

The 'border issue' looms large in the data, as might be expected given the criteria for the sample sets. Religious diversity was to the fore in the Northern set, while ethnic diversity (including Travellers) was most often discussed in the Republic set. Traditionally homogenous schools are ceasing to be the norm in 'remote' as well as in urban locations. However comments from some teachers in the Republic suggest that traditional religious divides shape social relations throughout the country.

Key concepts: childhood, diversity and exclusion

The pupil-teacher relation was in a sense like the centre of a nest of concentric spheres of influence. The teachers were committed to their pupils, to their personal growth and educational achievement; their familial and community contexts were important as the context for that development and growth. Wider social issues impinged with painful urgency in interface areas and other areas of community tension – the further the school community was from such social situations, the more generalised the discussion of them was, whether between teacher and researcher, or teacher and class. In the Republic, there was a locus of remarkable difference between teachers in areas away from the border and teachers close to the border or to conflict areas. However, in both the North and in the Republic's border region schools the issue of the Northern Ireland conflict was cloaked in silence in classroom and other locations of adult-child interactions. Children were being protected. Teachers' perceptions of diversity and its management in that context were governed by their understandings of childhood.

Data suggests that diversification in the classroom was putting pressure on the developmental model of childhood which teachers had developed in their initial education: the teachers' discussion was nuanced and elements of the social constructivist model were operant. However their discussion reflected the consensualist ideology informing the education system, and in the absence from their initial education of an adequate theoretical framework for reading social change, it is perhaps not surprising that very few teachers mentioned issues such as the need for anti-racism training. The teachers were working on the basis of ad hoc knowledge, developed through their personal experience and interest; this showed in their 'pragmatic interculturalism'. This is not an adequate basis for the levels of innovation they felt they needed in their classroom practice. A well articulated social constructivist paradigm would articulate better with the kinds of issues the teachers were addressing. The Vygotskian concept of the child as an active and competent learner, and of learning as social construction, is honoured in the recent curricula North and South. A core requirement is access to opportunities for conceptual development for teachers.

Teaching and learning for mutual understanding

The curriculum for primary schools in both states is full of internal linkages and cross-references from one 'subject' area to another; teachers' comments indicate that they used this structure to promote diversity. In the cross-curricular themes initiated in the North in 1992 and the interactive structure in the Republic curriculum, interculturalism is not another subject area but rather a constitutive dimension of everything that is done in the

learning community. Some nodes in this network, however, had particular importance for the teachers in this study: teachers strongly endorsed the spirituality, values and life skills areas (RE, PSE, EMU, SPHE) and history. Pedagogic strategies were the key element: enlisting children's imaginations through story and play, and in particular through circle time. In the values areas, they used circle time to promote children's respect for self, others and diversity. However the data suggest that focus was on moral concern for the welfare and inclusion of people with disabilities, and on development education or Third World issues. Again, this resonates with the conceptual slippage in many education policy and curriculum texts noted above.

A number of teachers noted the importance of how history is taught and how conflict is managed in the senior classes in creating a good environment for developing inclusive and tolerant Infant classrooms. They also felt that issues of community conflict were appropriately addressed in more senior classes. The history themes in infant classrooms focus on the immediate and personal worlds of the child. However data shows that this can include experiences of community conflict. The early years curriculum does not deal in depth with how to teach on sensitive issues of diversity/sectarianism in the context of Northern Ireland. There is a need to develop programmes to address issues of diversity sensitively but regularly and often in the early years classrooms.

Resources

There are useful materials and resources available in Northern Ireland and the Republic relating to diversity, inclusiveness and conflict management. Two examples are *Primary Values* (Montgomery and Smith, 1997) and Derman-Sparks' *ABC Curriculum* (2000). Both support early years classroom work with ideas and strategies deeply informed with good theory. This should help to ensure that when teachers adapt ideas to suit local situations, their innovations will be conceptually sound. Delivering the full potential of the curriculum requires downstream applications and materials that reflect the Irish reality. Children's imaginations also need to be engaged: myth and story offer them an entrée into imaginatively exploring cultural identities, and the potential for positive endorsement of diverse cultural heritages is clear. Again, teachers need to know what is possible in this domain across the range of cultures.

Relationships, conflict and leadership in schools

Two key areas of concern require comment in regard to school relationships as they were exemplified in this study sample: conflict management in relation to pupils, parents and local community, and colleagues; and leadership and collegiality in the learning community.

Conflict management was an area that deeply concerned many teachers, both as regards their pupils and as regards relations with parents and community. In the Northern Ireland field visit schools it was clear that the conflict in terms of the religious divide was scarcely addressed. Teachers talked at length about the intersections between school and home life, and about the need to include parents in the processes around diversity and specifically around conflict resolution. In the Northern sample this issue was strongly felt in interface schools where there was sectarian conflict; in the Republic it was most urgent in schools in areas of community conflict. The majority of teachers and principals in schools in Northern Ireland or near the border stated that parents did not want the Northern Ireland conflict issue addressed in schools; this was seen as a major obstacle to addressing issues of religious conflict, or even to maintaining an EMU programme (in the Republic the further the school was from the border, the less sensitive the issue was). Teacher education and schools programmes require the support of a systemic commitment to community education for reconciliation, if the school system is to be effective in this domain.

Effective leadership in schools is required to promote inclusion and address conflict. However though all the schools in the sample sets had policies and codes of practice to address forms of conflict that have been officially written into child education (such as bullying and sexism), most had no written policy or procedures pertaining to local conflict issues. Hence teachers relied on prior experiences or advice from colleagues who had dealt with such issues.

Leadership also needs to be examined from state to local level; structural differentiation in Irish education North and South sends out messages. Denominational schooling is coming under increasing strain. This issue arose in relation to pupils being allowed exemption from the school's RE programme but offered nothing to support their own religious identities.

Principals and others in school leadership roles require systemic support in the form of clearly articulated targeted state policy in order to promote local policy and codes of practice. Principals and teachers also need negotiation skills to operate in the collegial model required by anti-bias programmes and practice. They need opportunities for personal reflection such as are built into anti-bias training and awareness raising modules.

Teacher education

The teachers felt that their initial professional education had not equipped them for current classrooms. Awareness-raising and anti-bias training are required in initial teacher education, and ongoing professional development work is needed for the teaching body as a whole. Promoting teachers' awareness of their own attitudes and the reality of racism, sectarianism and other forms of exclusion requires an experiential approach involving self-reflection as well as exposure to diversity on teaching practice. Also at both initial and ongoing levels there will be reluctant learners. However educators must uphold the law and equality is legally protected. The concept of institutional racism is prominent in research literature. Current developments in law and international policy (and the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Report in policy in the UK) highlight the importance of addressing this concept in teacher education. As current events amply illustrate, society is ill prepared for the increasing levels of racism and xenophobia; education is an obvious arena for improvement.

Leadership and teacher education institutions

Teacher education providers have a systemic leadership role: they can model good practice. College courses should themselves be informed by principles of anti-bias and promotion of mutual understanding, promoted through experiential and conceptual learning opportunities, and all should be informed by sound theory. Principals and some teachers in the Republic sample raised the issue of separate denominational teacher education. All believed that communication and relations between student bodies across the denominational spectrum should be fostered. However participants affiliated to churches with small memberships felt that a mix of separate and integrated programmes would both give students from minority faiths space to develop their own religious identity, and enable them to engage with others. There are issues to be teased out in this regard among the patron bodies and other education authorities in the churches.

Main points and recommendations

The project **aim** was to identify the difficulties facing teachers and children in areas of conflict, tension and misunderstanding on both sides of the Irish border with a view to developing a framework suitable for initial and in-service teacher education, to be used in all institutions, North and South, involved in preparing teachers to work with children in the early years.

1. *The conceptual frame:* As was seen in the last section, two concepts are central to the teachers' evaluations: their concept of childhood, and their concept of the role of schools in society. A third conceptual area that frames these two is their perspective on human diversity and discrimination. These conceptual areas are also central to education policy. The paucity of education research into religious diversity, and the absence of substantial literature specifically relevant to the Irish situation, suggest that further research is needed in the area of education and religious diversity, racism and education, and anti-bias education generally and in their specifically Irish manifestations.

Recommendations
   1.1. Colleges/departments of education should foster research dedicated to promoting anti-bias and pro-diversity education theory, pedagogy and practice.
   1.2. Adequate and fruitful conceptual frameworks for articulating and progressing teachers' professional practice need to be disseminated among practising teachers, as well as among future teachers.
   1.3. Official policy texts as well as college curricula need to be audited to ensure sound conceptualisation of childhood, education, diversity and discrimination, and sound deployment of these concepts in the argumentation regarding education programme aims, content and outcomes.

2. *Systemic leadership:* There is a call from research for education institutions in leadership roles (teacher education colleges being the key ones) to model the philosophy and practice that they seek to promote in students' practice as future teachers. This is particularly important because the effectiveness of the response to the teachers' highly relevant requests is dependent on the coherence of the conceptual framework informing all levels of the system. For truly effective transformation of education into an agent of inclusion and affirmation of diversity, schools must be supported by a committed systemic context. Leadership committed to inclusion and pro-diversity principles must be evident at all levels of the education system. This includes state, patron and management bodies, teacher education colleges and research centres, parent bodies, unions and local school community partners. In the medium term progress towards a holistic system will be facilitated by offering ample in-career education opportunities to school staffs and other education partners, along the lines proposed below for initial teacher education. It is particularly important to target school leaders, given their role in promoting change.

   2.1. **Recommendation:** priority should be given to in-career education provision relating to interculturalism and anti-bias, targeting leaders at all levels, from state and patron system level, to local learning communities and schools.

3. **Resources** specific to the social context in Ireland emerged as badly needed (though this issue was secondary to teachers' own sense of competence and confidence in their capacity to engage sensitively and productively with human diversity).

Recommendation

3.1. Colleges of Education should identify and promote knowledge of good resources, and invest in developing materials for the Irish reality. In the Republic the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment intercultural guidelines should be published without delay. Areas that could be explored include:

3.1.1. Resources for promoting anti-racism and pro-diversity awareness within arts curricula, as part of informing the whole curriculum with these principles.

3.1.2. The contribution of myth and story to nurturing children's imaginative exploration of identities, and use of local artefacts and lore.

4. *The infrastructure for teacher education for diversity*

As noted above, teachers in this project registered a need for sound conceptual support in relation to understanding how to approach issues of diversity in education. Within this frame, in relation to their classroom practice the teachers sought knowledge – information on other religions and cultures, socio-economic and justice issues – and experience – teaching practice placements across religious and other divides. They required skills for managing conflict and for celebrating diversity appropriately. Literature endorses these priorities, and adds the need to engage in experiential learning targeting teachers' and student teachers' own attitudes and prejudices, in anti-racism and awareness raising modules but also in treatment of diversity issues across the teacher education programme. There is a need to develop a common set of principles to inform and support a teacher education framework and provide a seamless continuum of development for pre–service and in-service education for teachers.

Recommendations

1. Given the similarity between the situation in the North and South, shared rationale and guiding principles are appropriate and should be developed and adopted.
2. All of the colleges should be involved and committed in offering both integrated and specific modules on equal opportunities.
3. Colleges should positively recruit students from different backgrounds and cultures.
4. Young teachers should have a 'follow through' when they begin in schools in order to share experiences.
5. Student teachers should experience a broad range of schools on teacher education practice/SBW.
6. The initiative should include indicators for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the framework.
   6.1. There should be a co-ordinator across Ireland who is free from other responsibilities and represents a co-ordinated approach by the teacher education colleges
7. Colleges and schools should
   7.1. develop whole-institution policy on a local basis;
   7.2. view local communities as a resource;
   7.3. concentrate on commonalties rather than differences in the community;
   7.4. involve parents and local communities in the drawing up of the modules;
   7.5. take a multidisciplinary approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

In the immediate term recommendations for a framework for teacher education should be developed. Such modules must be theoretically sound and involve experiential as well as academic and professional learning. Specifically to promote education for mutual understanding, the conceptual frame should include the following elements:

1. Knowledge of law and policy, national and international, that will govern their professional practice.
2. An understanding of the social factors that have generated and support exclusion in all its forms.
3. A knowledge of basic strands that go to make up our society, and more important, a knowledge of where to learn about forms of diversity they will encounter.
4. Awareness that culture is a social practice or cluster of practices, not an artefact, and that groups constantly modulate their cultural practices to match their reality. Students need to learn how to celebrate diversity without 'fixing' people even in positive facets of their traditions.
5. Cultural hybridity is a concept that needs to be explored in teacher education. Students have an avenue into this concept from their own lived experience in modern youth culture.
6. An understanding of the potential role of the school as an integral part of the local learning community.
   6.1. The kinds of teamwork possible between educators of all levels (teachers, parents, adult educators, community leaders, etc.) need to be explored, and competence in engaging in team work needs to be inculcated.
   6.2. Students need to gain a clear awareness of the importance of the inclusion of parents and of the positive potential of community involvement for work in the classroom,
   6.3. Students need to gain a clear understanding of the specific responsibilities of the teacher's professional role.

7. Knowledge of available resources is essential, as is the skill to identify sources of material suited to later stages in an ever-changing society.
   7.1. Students need to learn not alone what is available, but to develop the flexibility and lateral thinking needed to identify and avail of new resources for new situations.
8. Through experiential learning these modules would promote:
   8.1. Self-awareness including readiness to monitor one's attitudes to issues of diversity. The deliverers of the modules will need to have explored this in their own regard; ideally, all college staffs should undergo this process.
   8.2. Competence in delivering education to children from diverse backgrounds, with diverse abilities, learning styles and needs.
       8.2.1. Liaison with selected schools to work with students, maximising their social learning from their teaching practice.
   8.3. Communication skills.
       8.3.1. Engaging with members of minority communities to explore what they hope for in their children's education.
       8.3.2. The capacity to hold to principles and engage in appropriate cross-cultural learning and challenge, to apply their professional evaluations fairly.

Indicators of relevant resources

Derman-Sparks' manual is an effective introduction to this area but material specific to the European and the Irish realities is required; the Pavee Point early years anti-bias programme, *Éist*, offers tailored anti-bias and awareness raising training for practising teachers and students. The censuses, North and South, offer an excellent opportunity to students to explore the complexity of Irish society, while also learning how to read graphs and tables; this could feed into their teaching. Teacher education colleges are already substantially addressing this issue and a review of the innovations already in train would help in coordinating practice in relation to teacher education for diversity, and articulating it within the operational frame indicated above.

Closing comments

This small-scale project has added to the specifically Irish element in available research. More is needed, but the findings do indicate that steps can be taken in the short and medium as well as in the long term, to promote truly inclusive education that reflects the vision of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South. The innovativeness and commitment of teachers in this project are an indicator that whatever the difficulties, any developments in teacher education that enable students to engage competently, flexibly and imaginatively with the growing diversity in Irish society, North and South, will prove effective and fruitful for all.

DIVERSITY IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION, NORTH AND SOUTH:
THE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The key role of education in healing divisions and developing reconciliation, mutual understanding and respect between communities and traditions has been long recognised internationally and in Ireland. In promoting openness, inclusiveness and respect for diversity among young people, teachers play a key role in the task of realising the vision of peace and reconciliation in Ireland, North and South.

This two-year joint North-South research project, comprising two complementary studies of teachers' experience in selected schools on both sides of the border, was inspired by the need to develop an understanding of how mutual understanding could be promoted in early childhood education, and of the implications of this for initial teacher education. The project was rooted in the vision of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South:

Teacher education is strategically positioned to play a catalytic role in promoting greater mutual understanding and co-operation focussed on current and future generations. Teacher education professionals work with teachers within a lifelong learning framework. They exercise considerable influence on the understanding, attitudes and skills of teachers during the formative periods of pre-service training and early professional development. Furthermore… they are in a position to encourage co-operative activity of mutual benefit to trainee teachers in both parts of Ireland during their initial education and training.

Teacher education colleges, where young student teachers have more time and room and do not have to deal with the considerable demands of an often overloaded curriculum, are an obvious place to begin the process of working with teachers on a cross-border basis. Hitherto there has been little or no co-operation between the colleges of education on this island. The outcome of this project an improved framework for teacher education - will promote students' learning under the four objectives of the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme: fostering respect for others, understanding conflict, appreciating interdependence and cultural understanding.

This project, initiated under the auspices of the North-South Early Years Network (which is part of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South - SCoTENS), was based in Stranmillis University College in Belfast, and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, in Dublin. The project was funded from the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme. It was a two-part project: a researcher attached to Stranmillis University College conducted the field study and analysis of findings in Northern Ireland, and a researcher attached to St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, conducted parallel research in the South. The two strands were conducted within a close collaborative frame and with the objective of producing a joint framework for teacher education, North and South.

This study focused on the first two years of primary schooling in six selected schools in each state. In Northern Ireland six schools were selected to ensure a spread of controlled, maintained, integrated, interface (areas of inter-community tension), and border schools. In the Republic the six selected schools included schools in border areas and further south, schools with monocultural and diverse pupil intakes, schools in areas of known community tension, and schools under denominational and multi-denominational patronage.

The research involved enquiring into:
- The areas in which teachers feel they need more professional development opportunities that address dealing with conflict and promoting diversity.
- The views and perceptions of the children on difference and diversity
- How the Early Years curriculum deals with diversity
- What approaches and methodologies are used to promote diversity through the curriculum
- What resources are available for its implementation

The focus of this project is early childhood education provision in primary schools (Key Stage One which caters for children aged four to seven years in Northern Ireland, and the Infant and Junior Classes in the Republic). In the Republic of Ireland the Infant classes cater for what would be classed as pre-school children in many countries (Department of Education and Science (DES), 1999; Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, 2002).

The results of this research will form the basis for drafting a framework of best practice for teacher preparation for early years education in schools in both jurisdictions where there are issues of conflict, identity and ethnicity. This project will require early childhood education personnel in teacher education institutions in both jurisdictions to work in close co-operation to develop and implement this framework. The aim will be to assist student teachers to incorporate conflict resolution and prejudice reduction into their teaching practice, and thus work to remove the barriers of ignorance, prejudice and fear in the minds of their pupils.

Report structure

This report is in three parts – a review of public policy and research literature, the analysis of the research project data, and conclusions and recommendations arising from the findings.

Chapters 1 and 2 comprise the literature review. In Chapter 1 a review of population profiles in the two states, with focus on religious and ethnic/national diversity, sets the social context. There follows a brief critique of relevant policy documents (Section 1.2). Chapter 2 is a review of relevant research literature and treatments of certain key concepts underpinning teacher education are discussed.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 the research project is described and the data from the postal survey and the school visits and interviews are analysed. Chapter 3 is a brief outline of the field study methodology and operation. Chapter 4 opens with a brief review of quantifiable and tabulated data, to set the context for a reading of the analysis of detailed data. Section 4.2 is the beginning of the qualitative analysis: the focus is on the children from the perspective of the researchers' observations of their discussions and practice relating to diversity, and from the perspective of the teachers' views on how their pupils understand and respond to diversity. Chapter 5 is entirely devoted to discussion of teachers' discussions of their social context, their teaching strategies, and their evaluations of what is required for effective schools and teacher education.

In Chapter 6 the research findings are discussed in the light of the literature. This discussion leads to recommendations for teacher education presented in Chapter 7.

Preparing student primary school teachers to deliver inclusive early childhood education is inseparable from preparing them to deliver inclusive education in primary education as a whole. This requires a transformation of teaching. Within this transformed frame there are specific forms of skills and knowledge to be developed, but the overall frame must be integrated around the same principles.

LITERATURE REVIEW:
POLICY AND RESEARCH

1 SOCIAL DIVERSITY, CHANGE AND EDUCATION POLICY

The first section of this chapter is an overview of elements of social diversity on this island that are central to this study. Data are drawn from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) reports on the NI 2001 Census; the Republic of Ireland Central Statistics Office (CSO) reports on the 2002 ROI Census (for more detail than can be presented in this section, see tables and charts in Appendix 3). This sets the context and highlights the relevance of what follows in the literature review, as well as illustrating the need for this study. Section 1.2 is a brief outline of elements in policy texts that mandate and direct current reforms in education for inclusion and interculturalism in a human rights framework, in Northern Ireland and in the Republic.

Issues of diversity enter classrooms in large part because they enter the fabric of local and national societies. Profiles of the populations drawn from these censuses are highly relevant to discussion of how teachers need to be prepared to work in schools in the two states in Ireland. Two main, often closely related forms of diversity will be examined: religion and ethnicity. The UK report to the European Network against Racism (ENAR UK, 2003) notes that tide of religious conflict and intolerance is rising internationally. It links the inclusion for the first time of a question on religion in the UK National Census in 2001 to the emerging debate on the importance of religion. Religion is an important identity marker for many people, particularly where it intersects with political and other social identities – this has particular urgency in relation to the Northern Ireland conflict (Inglis, 1998). Religion and ethnicity often overlap, as in the case of Jews and Muslims. Gollnick and Chinn (2004) note that this link is reflected in commonly used terms such as Irish Catholics and Norwegian Lutherans. The very brief review of census data presented below shows how such common perceptions can be very wrong, even as regards longstanding religious denominations in Irish society.

1.1.1 Religious diversity

The following charts highlight the marked difference between the two states as regards major religious affiliations (labels are taken from their respective census data source tables):

Charts 1 a & b: Profiles of main religions and clusters of religions/philosophies

1a: Northern Ireland

Other Religions & Philosophies 0%
Other Christian (& Related) 6%
Methodist Church in Ireland 4%
Church of Ireland 15%
Presbyterian Church in Ireland 21%
Catholic 40%
No Religion/not stated 14%
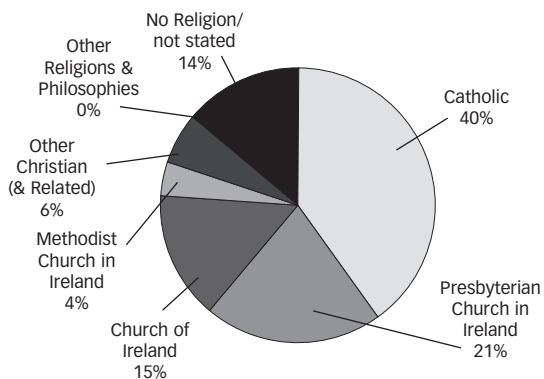
Data source: NISRA Table KS05A

1b: Republic of Ireland

Church of Ireland (incl. Protestant) 2.95%
Presbyterian 0.53%
Other Christian rel., n.e.s 0.55%
Muslim (Islamic) 0.49%
Methodist 0.26%
Orthodox 0.27%
Other stated religions 1.02%
No Religion 3.53%
Not stated 2.02%
Roman Catholic 88.39%
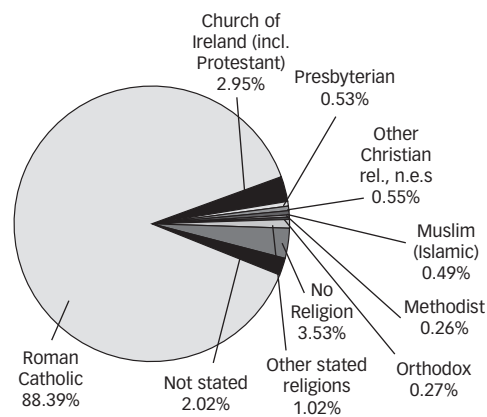
Data source: CSO, Vol. 12, Table 5

When the smaller clusters aggregated above in 'other Christian and related' and 'other religions and philosophies' (NI chart), and 'Other Christian' and 'other stated religions' (Republic chart) are itemised, they highlight further the contrast in levels of traditional diversity in Irish society. Charts 2a and 2b show the larger of the religions with small memberships (for more detailed data see Appendix 3):

Charts 2 a & b: Religions with memberships 0.08%-1.0% of the state populations
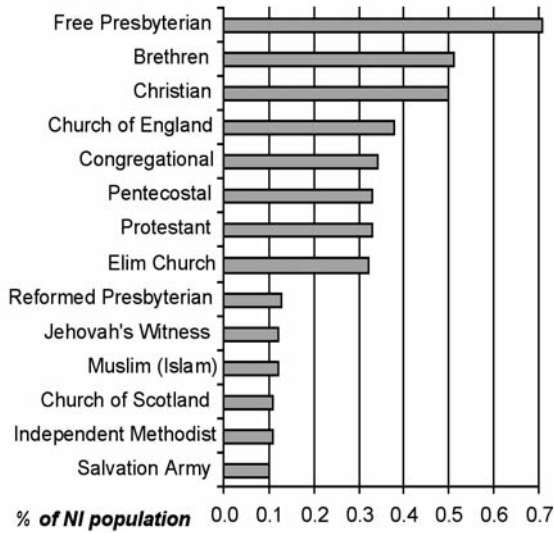
2a: Northern Ireland   **2b: Republic of Ireland**
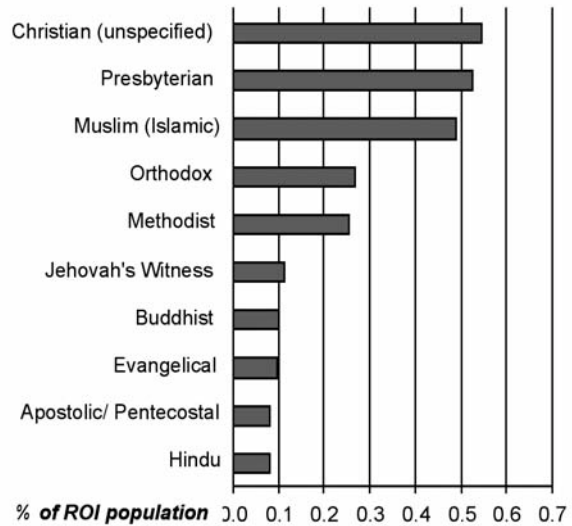
Data source: NISRA, Table KS07C   *Data: CSO, Vol. 12, Table 5*

Finally, society in Ireland is generally seen as becoming secularised. Again, the registered level of non-affiliation is generally higher for N. Ireland than for Republic of Ireland:

Chart 3: % distribution of 'no religion'/ 'religion not stated' responses, by age band
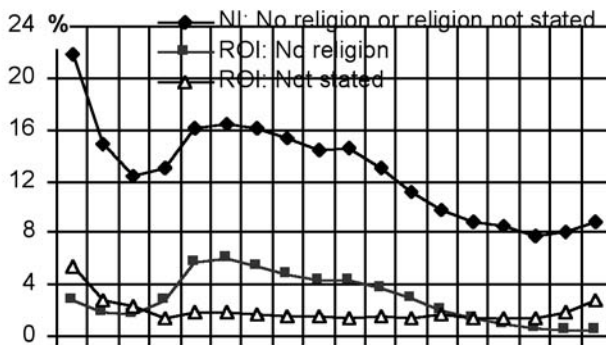
Data sources: NISRA, Table S306A; CSO, Vol. 12, Table 8

To register as having no religion is different from leaving the question unanswered but the two 'responses' were aggregated in the N. Ireland 2001 census report. The Republic data suggest connections between patterns of registered non-affiliation and non-reply: young adults dominate in the former and parents of young children (young parents?) were more likely not to reply on children's behalf.

In short, traditional diversities are marked in Northern Ireland, compared to the Republic. However in both states the range of registered religions is expanding rapidly, mainly perhaps due to immigration, but anecdotal evidence suggests that in both states there is growing interest in evangelical Christian movements, religious traditions other than Christian, and 'alternative' philosophies.

1.1.2 Ethnic diversity

In the Northern Ireland 2001 census the current UK policy frameworks for registering ethnic diversity were used. In the Republic 2002 census, respondents were asked to state their nationality/ies; they were also asked if they were members of the Traveller community. Data on respondents' places of birth were collected in both censuses; this measure will be used below because it permits comparisons between the two states.

There is a common perception that ethnic diversity is a recent development in Irish society. As has been well documented, in the 1990s and early years of the 21st century Ireland began to undergo a major and historic shift, from being a country of net emigration to being one of net immigration. However Irish society was never homogenous. Longstanding religious diversity has been outlined above; immigration has gone on since earliest record. Within traditional 'indigenous' society there have also been forms of social diversity which, if not identified as 'ethnic', are highly congruent. These diversities are evidenced by the two mythological cycles, and in the historical development of relations between different political and religious traditions in the country. Historical records show that the persistent Traveller-settled divide is ancient. There are divergences between Gaelic and English-speaking populations, and between urban and rural areas.

The following two charts give a general picture of the current ethnic profiles of the two states, as registered in the censuses in the data on place of birth:

Charts 4 a & b: Population by place of birth

4a: Northern Ireland
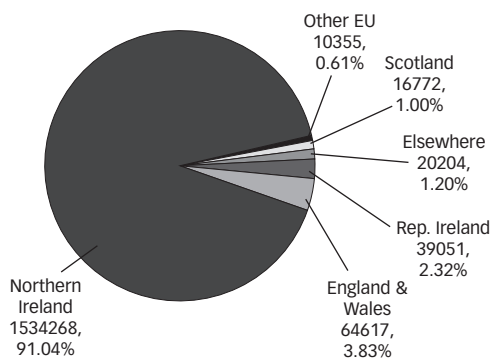
4b: Republic of Ireland

Data source: NISRA Table KS05
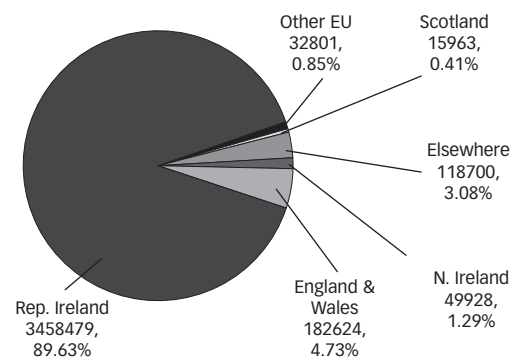
Data source: CSO, Principal Demographic Results (PDR) Table 21

Residents' nationalities were recorded in both state censuses; when data on the Traveller population are included the picture for the top ten 'minority' groups in each state is as follows:

Charts 5 a & b: Ethnic profiles: percentage profile of the minority ethnic child population in each state, by national/regional birth place (plus Travellers)

5a: N. Ireland

5b: Republic of Ireland
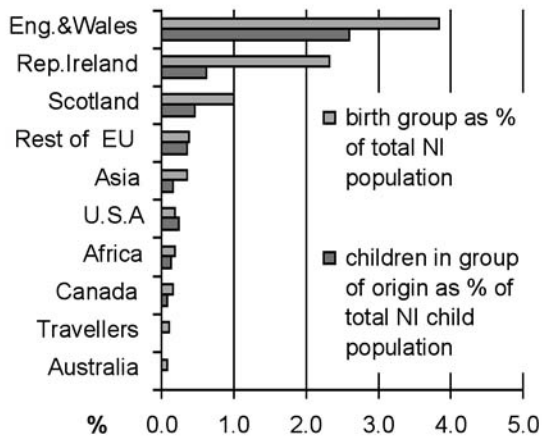
Data source: NISRA, Table T42
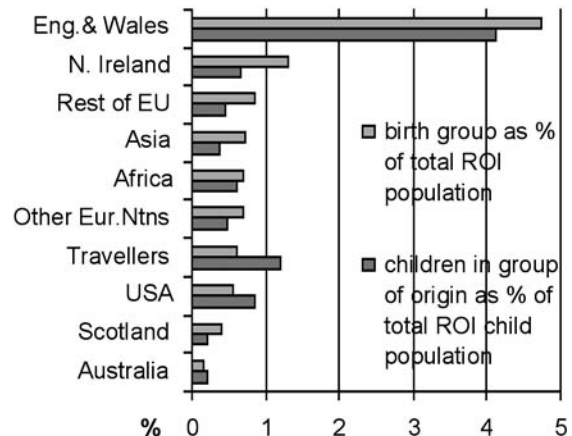
Data source: CSO, PDR Table 21

The child population of each group as a percentage of the child population in each state is shown here because of its relevance to primary schooling. For instance, in the Republic the overall Traveller population ranks well down the list in Chart 5b, but Traveller children comprise one of the larger minority ethnic child populations – as will be seen in the examination of data gathered in this study, issues to do with Travellers, whether as a topic in the teaching programme or as pupils in the school, remain substantial for teachers there.

In terms of 'new diversities' related to immigration (as indicated by the level of presence as a percentage of the national population), the Republic is somewhat more diverse than Northern Ireland. However the range of places of origin in each state is unfortunately hidden under the divergent practices of NISRA and CSO in relation to aggregating statistics on small groups. The difficulty of registering all aspects of this diversity is evident in data from both states. The N. Ireland census data register the intersection of ethnic and birthplace identities: for instance, over 80% of those with birthplaces in southern Africa registered under the ethnic category 'White' (NISRA Table S314). In the Republic there are divergences between birthplace and nationality data: 88% registered as born in Ireland, while 90% registered Irish nationality. Other divergences are more marked. For instance, the number who registered American birthplaces was nearly double the number who registered American nationalities; registered Asian birthplaces exceeded registered Asian nationalities by almost seven thousand (CSO, 2002 Principal Demographic Results, Tables 20 and 25). In short, census data suggest but do not fully depict the growing diversity.

Other forms of diversity also intersect – for instance, minority ethnic children who have special needs require culturally appropriate assessments. A substantial number of immigrant workers are in low-paid employment, while those with asylum seeker status cannot take up employment – such immigrants often find accommodation only in severely disadvantaged areas. Finally about one third of the working population in both states are now in the professional and managerial/technical sectors. The traditional centrality of the agricultural base for society North and South, and traditional industries have given way to urbanisation and high technology job opportunities – hence the swing from being a country of net emigration to being a country attracting and needing migrant workers.

These graphs suggest the complexity of group identities. Factors to do with ethnicity and migration also intersect with socio-economic and political issues for migrant and 'home' populations in varying ways, all of which can impact on the classroom.

1.2 Policy texts

State education policy is a matter of concern for practising teachers, because it is the framework within which they must operate: it both constrains and enables them. International commitment to respect and support for human diversity in education is expressed in the first two articles of the UNESCO declaration on education for all:

1. Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. … The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures , and inevitably, changes with the passage of time.

2. The satisfaction of these needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a responsibility to respect and build upon their collective cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage, … to be tolerant towards social, political and religious systems which differ from their own, ensuring that commonly accepted humanistic values and human rights are upheld, and to work for international peace and solidarity in an interdependent world.
(UNESCO, 1990)

The curricula and state policy, North and South, endorse this vision. And well before the UN declaration, the Northern Ireland Department of Education in its circular, *The Improvement of Community Relations: the Contributions of Schools*, registered the need for systemic commitment to inclusive intercultural education:

Every teacher, every school manager, Board member and trustee, and every educational administrator within the system, has a responsibility for helping children to learn to understand and respect each other, and their differing customs and traditions, and of preparing them to live together in harmony in adult life.
(Circular 1981/21, cited in DENI, 1999: paragraph 16)

The DES White Paper on Education, Charting our Education Future states that

National education policy … must be firmly set in an international context … recent geopolitical developments, including major changes in Eastern Europe, concern about an apparent resurgence of racism, violence and xenophobia in many countries … serve to underline the importance of education in areas such as human rights, tolerance, mutual understanding, cultural identity.
(DES, 1997: 203-204)

The DES Strategic plan for 2003-2005 endorses this within the current Irish context. 'Meeting the challenge of change' includes the following positive notes on change:

Greater awareness of cultural diversity and the roles of Irish and other cultures and languages in promoting identity in a European and international context… a substantial immigrant population and returning emigrants, [provide] opportunities for greater diversity
(DES, 2003: 16).

A key objective (Objective 4.5) for the coming years is contribution *'in the context of the Good Friday Agreement, to the development of North/South co-operation and common action in the field of education'* (DES, 2003: 45).

The main negotiating body for primary teachers on this island, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, is well placed to know the significance of policy in furthering teachers' professional work. In its policy document on education and diversity, it says:

The integration of intercultural education into the curriculum is at the core of the development of all policy and practice regarding the integration of ethnic minority children in Irish primary schools.
(INTO, 1988: 50)

Catherine Byrne, INTO Deputy General Secretary, reflects the emergent position in the current debate on religious diversity:

If we are serious about inclusion, then the mere presence of minorities of all faiths and none in denominational schools does not fit the bill. Our responsibilities towards minority religions cannot be fulfilled by permission to exclude during religion classes or by commitments to resource the establishment of separate schools based on minimum numbers.
(INTO/Equality Authority, 2004: 10)

These key elements in policy on the issue must suffice to set the context for a brief review of relevant state law and policy in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

1.2.1 Northern Ireland

The Education Reform Act (1988) implemented a curriculum for all children and gave parents more choice in their children's education. The Green Paper 'Excellence for All', (DfEE, 1987), the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), and The Code of Practice (DENI, 1996) strengthened the education rights of all children. These documents mainly refer to inclusion in mainstream school in terms of increased participation of disabled children being educated in the same location as able bodied children. However, the same inclusionary principles refer to any group of pupils who may, for whatever reason, have been identified as different and/or may have been discriminated against in terms of access to educational opportunities or educational treatment and/or outcomes.

The *Educational Reform (Northern Ireland)* Order (1989) introduced educational cross-curricular themes as a means of addressing the conflict within Northern Ireland. These have been compulsory elements of the curriculum of all grant-aided schools since August 1992, and the Anti-Bias Curriculum (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, 1998) is implemented in all integrated schools. The educational cross curriculum themes entail a whole school approach; they allow for progression to be built on expanding experiences offered in an extended range of contexts within the curriculum as pupils move through their school career. The themes are seen as important strands of learning, not add-on subjects but integral to the whole curriculum and incorporated into the normal everyday work of teaching and learning. They are also seen as not simply generated by the Northern Ireland situation. Promotion of mutual respect and understanding is an internationally recognised educational project (Delors, 1996, for UNESCO). However, it must not be just non-negative:

> 7. … *'tolerance' is too feeble a term to express the values of inclusiveness, mutual support and appreciation … society, at its best, should not be satisfied to have its children educated to 'put up with' one another, but will wish for the development in them of an active and informed respect for and appreciation of, the variety and rich diversity of our cultures..*
> (DENI, 1999: 3).

This DENI consultative, citing Smith and Robinson (1996), notes difficulties in the EMU programmes. As will be seen, the following issues noted by them resonate with input from teachers in this project: too great a tendency to focus on pursuing interschool contact as an end in itself while not engaging in building community relations; low participation rates by pupils in many schools; and teachers feeling unequipped to address sensitive issues in the classroom. The Northern Ireland Anti-bias Curriculum and the curriculum themes noted above will be discussed later in the report.

1.2.2 The Republic of Ireland

Murray and O'Doherty (2001) provide an exhaustive review of the national, European and International legal instruments that mandate and support inclusive early childhood education. Here, a few points will suffice to draw attention to the need for sound conceptualisation as a framework for such policy. In the Republic of Ireland, several recent Acts have relevance to the promotion of respect for diversity in education. Although the Education Act (1998) and the Equal Status Act (2000) both recognise the position of the churches in relation to denominational education, Glendenning (1999) suggests that changes in Irish society are placing the constitutional position regarding denominational education increasingly under strain. The *National Children's Strategy* (Department of Health and Children, 2000) includes an excellent discussion of children's diverse identities; however, it is located in the section on special needs. The White Paper on early childhood education, *Ready to Learn* (DES, 1999) does not register the concept at all. In the report of the working committee on teacher education (DES, 2002) there is one reference to Travellers and one to interculturalism; both are in passing and again they are located under the heading of special needs.

This conceptual slippage could weaken support for the spirit of the Equal Status Act in the education sector. At a joint INTO/Equality Authority conference Niall Crowley, Chair of the Equality Authority, noted that 11.5% of cases brought to the Authority under that Act are from educational establishments; he noted a '*culture of disrespect*' in some schools:

> … *denial and silence in relation to sexual orientation, an overt hostility (in particular to Travellers), caution and a lack of knowledge in relation to religious diversity, and pity in relation to people with disabilities.*
> (INTO/Equality Authority, 2004: 14)

This clearly has relevance to teacher education. As regards policy and future developments in relation to provision for young children, it is reasonable to expect that the principles outlined above will be reflected in policies and practice.

Closing comment

The portrait of Irish society in the two censuses show that communities North and South are undergoing rapid change; they also reveal that forms of diversity and complexity traditionally characterised society in both states. Religious and political identities are intertwined. Diversity issues related to these forms of identity construction and maintenance are a core concern of this study.

Finally there is an issue of systemic structures. The education systems in Northern Ireland and the Republic are predominantly denominational. Writing for the United Nations (2001), Abdelfattah Amor suggests that this is not supported by international policy. Furthermore, to remain valid, local provision must ensure that children are taught to understand and respect all traditions because:

> *Openness to other countries' cultures: teaching the heritage, history, culture, languages and religions of minorities and of the majority is a vital pre-emptive tool to improve understanding of others and promote a positive image of others' culture.*
> (UN General Assembly, 2001: paragraph 114 (b)

This comment applies of course to any culture that is 'other'. In short, international and national policy texts abound with eloquent statements of the ideals of education for peace and mutual understanding, but the practical issues of how to deliver this education need to be worked out at state, systemic, community and school levels (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Lynch, 1999).

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMES: CHILDREN, TEACHER EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

This Chapter reviews relevant research literature in relation to three key areas:
- Key concepts (in particular, concepts of childhood, diversity and discrimination).
- The task of re-shaping teachers' and student teachers' conceptual frames relating to issues of multiculturalism and diversity in all its forms.
- Educational leadership.

This review of literature will open with comment on the concept of respect for diversity, which is core to this project.

Section 2.1 is a discussion of conceptualisations of childhood, a concept central to teacher education. Section 2.2 is a review of literature relating to key intersecting concepts that were identified in the analysis of the data gathered in the field survey: diversity and discrimination, promoting inclusion in classroom practice, communication with parents particularly in relation to areas of conflict, the need for leadership, and curriculum areas of opportunity and challenge. Key areas identified by the teachers were religious education and other personal and social development programmes, and history; Section 2.3 is a discussion of relevant research literature and of the relevant programmes in the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the Republic of Ireland Curriculum for Primary Schools.

Participating teachers discussed how teacher education prepared or did not prepare them for this diversity in their classrooms. The research literature has insights in relation to implementing change in education provision including teacher education.

2.1 Key concepts

Three conceptual areas will be briefly reviewed: diversity, childhood, and discrimination. The concept of diversity requires clarification both in relation to the framework for teacher education and in relation to this study as such. Diversity is a social concept and it cuts across traditional individualistic understandings of child development and of the child as learner. Finally, social diversity owes some of its topicality to its negative accompaniment: discrimination.

2.1.1 Diversity and education

In his preface to the UNESCO report, Learning: the treasure within, Jacques Delors lists the four pillars of education identified by the Commission: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others, and learning to be. The Commission gives priority to the third:

> *Learning to live together, by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which … would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way. Utopia, some*

might think, but it is a necessary Utopia, indeed a vital one if we are to escape from a dangerous cycle sustained by cynicism or by resignation.
(Delors, 1996: 20)

The principle of respect for diversity is central to this project: while the concept of diversity seems familiar, it is difficult to define because it inheres in all facets of human life and the educational process. The following comment catches the boundary-lessness of the concept:

Diversity in an educational context goes beyond regional/geographic, ethnic, and racial distinctions. It also includes language, religion, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, and age, as well as physical, mental, and emotional exceptionalities.
Fu and Stremmel (1998: 10)

However there is perhaps a step before the positive. Legislation regarding diversity and prejudice focuses on preventing harm – a necessary forerunner to the promotion of positive acceptance. This suggests two stages in the process:

- **Respect diversity** Respect the right of the individual or group to embrace all forms of human being and doing that do not harm self, others or the environment.
- **Celebrate diversity** Recognise and cherish all forms of human being and human doing that contribute to the self, others and the environment.

While this first stage is not, as the DENI consultative document (1999) points out, a sufficient aim for education, it is worth considering how much discourse about respect for diversity actually goes farther than this (or even this far: see Crowley's comments to the joint INTO/Equality Authority conference, cited above).

A vision of diversity in harmony informs all the international documents on education, while the need to address intersecting ethnic and religious tensions is also given substantial consideration. Education is crucial to this task because 'it all starts in the head. *A soldier fighting a war starts out as a schoolboy fighting in the schoolyard*' (Yacoub, 1998, cited in UN General Assembly, 2001, paragraph 7). In this domain teachers are key facilitators of attitudinal change. Education is inclusive when it contributes to pupil's opportunities and skills to function in a just and pluriform society, which, ideally, is characterised by social cohesion and room for different perspectives on the world.

2.1.2 Concepts of childhood

Effective teaching and learning needs a coherent theoretical base (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2003). Donnelly (2004) notes that Piaget's thinking on child development has so deeply informed psychological and pedagogic thinking as to be largely invisible. The still prevalent Piagetian conceptualisation of small children as egocentric and developmentally unready for abstract thought and learning, can limit the programmes envisaged as appropriate for early years classrooms. This conceptual frame distorts its adherents' perception of what children are doing when they ask philosophical questions, empathise with others, and explore major issues. On the other hand a Vygotskian social constructivist framework makes room for children's capacity for abstract and de-centred thought and social interaction. Donnelly sums it up thus: for Piaget this capacity is age related, for Vygotsky it is not – rather, it is a fundamental facet of being human.

A conceptual slippage was noted in policy texts (equating diversity with deficit: see Chapter 2). Donnelly notes a similar slippage relating to the conceptualisation of children. Although the social constructivist model of children and their learning is gaining centre stage thanks to the acknowledged work of Vygotsky and others, the Piagetian framework still informs key documents regarding early childhood education. In the Republic a consultative document, *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2004), addresses the education of three to six year old children. This document advocates developmentally appropriate programmes that '*reflect a child's particular age and stage of development*' (2004: 2). The Primary Curriculum (DES, 1999) emphasises the importance of oral language and, in its recommendations to teachers, it is strong and even radical in its aspirations: the teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, helping the children to be explicit in what they say through modelling responses, thinking aloud, questioning, prompting, clarifying and extending vocabulary. However, in the expansions on such statements, the envisaged programme for small children is constrained and there is an over-focus on use of closed questions and concrete focus in language development work deemed developmentally appropriate for this age level.

The history of the concept of childhood (Aries, 1960) suggests that the concept of the child that was endorsed by developmental psychology is not restricted to the domain of professional provision for young children; it pervaded at least Western European culture in the twentieth century. The notion of the child as marked by original sin and needing reform, prevalent from the late eighteenth century, informed by Christian church teaching, has had wide currency in throughout society and in provision for children in Ireland right through to the launch of the 1969

Curriculum. In the decades when most of the teachers involved in this project were in college, concepts of early childhood and appropriate education for that stage were informed by developmental psychology. Children were perceived as consumed with self at this stage of development, which Piaget (1963) termed egocentric.

As Donnelly (2004) says, '*the abandonment of the long accepted belief in pronounced childhood ego-centrism has far-reaching implications for pedagogical approaches in early years education*'. It is easy to lay the blame for what happens in schools on teachers without critically analysing the content of programmes for student teachers. Donnelly argues that if teachers are to become comfortable and expert in encouraging children in meaning making, they need to experience such processes and become conscious of and educated in the difference between the alternative views on how children's thinking develops.

Finally, young children engage in learning as a social activity in constructing their social and personal self-identities. Ethnic identity is socially constructed through human interaction (Lentin and McVeigh, 2002; Mac An Ghaill, 1999); the same is the case with religious or other forms of social or group identities. The Vygotskian concept of learning articulates more organically with concepts of the construction of social self identities, and the observably deep engagement of young children with this social process also calls in question the traditional individualised models of learning still operant in education provision.

This very brief note on the larger conceptual frame for teacher education must suffice for this literature review, which will focus on literature specifically relevant to the data gathered in the field survey.

2.1.3 Diversity and exclusion

Prejudice and discrimination are the shadow side of diversity in society. In this discussion, the focus is on discrimination based on collective identities; the most widely known discussions are in relation to racism but the same arguments can be made regarding discrimination targeting people on the basis of socio-economic status, ethnic diversity, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, etc. Goffman (1970) argues that all forms of exclusion and stigmatisation are similar in their construction, in that they are informed by a common human desire to control the social world, to develop category expectations that enable 'normal' people to predict with comfort – indeed without much thought – what to expect in interactions with people they are likely to encounter. He traces a trajectory in reactions to the unexpected in social interactions: for the 'normals' what begins as discomfort ends with 'righteously presented demands' that human beings who disturbs the category expectations, reform or remove themselves. He argues that this dynamic is common to all forms of stigmatisation and exclusion, and that what is distinctive to each case is only clear when the common elements are recognised. The causes, experience and outcomes of sexism are different from those of racism, for instance, but there is a common core.

In the webpage on 'deeper issues' in the Australian *Bullying. No Way!* Website, bullying is discussed under these specific identity-related headings; it defines race/racism thus:

> '*Race*' *is a social idea used to maintain group boundaries and position some people as* '*other*', *inferior to or excluded from the dominant culture that is regarded as* '*normal*'*…. Racism happens everywhere. It can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). It takes different forms, but always involves the misuse of power by individuals, groups and communities against each other.*
> Australian Education Authorities (2002)

The rise in racism in Ireland is a frequent topic in the media and in research (Fanning, 2002; Lentin and McVeigh, 2002). Mac Gréil (1996) found a hardening of attitudes since the time of his first survey of prejudice and tolerance in Ireland (Mac Gréil, 1977). Research has found that Travellers are targets of the most virulent racism in this country (McVeigh, 1996), and their experience in the education system has been deeply problematic (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2000).

Given this commonality, arguments about racism can be paralleled in relation to other forms of discrimination. In Britain and Northern Ireland the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry (1999) generated significant strategies to address institutional racism, which the report on that enquiry, citing the Commission for Racial Equality, defines in terms of outcomes:

> *6.30 Institutional racism has been defined as those established laws, customs, and practices which systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities in society. If racist consequences accrue … the institution is racist whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racial intentions.*

It also highlighted that very young children have been involved in racist incidents:

> *2.19 … Recent research … showed that 50% of the racist incidents considered by the Race Equality Council involved young people under 16 years old, and 25% of these incidents involved children between the ages of six and 10 years. …*

There is strong evidence that children as young as three can perceive colour and racial difference and by the age of four show a significant degree of ethnic awareness (Aboud and Sherry, 1984; Bernstein, Zimmermann, Werner-Wilson and Vorkering, 2002; Brand, Ruiz and Patilla, 1974). Research by Connolly, Smith and Kelly (2002) indicate that 51% of the 352 three year olds involved in their survey in Northern Ireland displayed an awareness of the cultural and political significance of at least one event or symbol associated with their own culture. The authors argue that with age children show a growing awareness of the cultural/ political significance of parades, flags and Irish dancing. They also infer that one in five were able to show awareness of football shirts and of the violence associated with the conflict more generally. They argue that the findings of the survey clearly show that the conflict in Northern Ireland and the community divisions, which underpin it, are influencing young children's social lives.

However, other studies (Cairns, 1987; Jahoda and Harrison, 1975; McWhirter and Gamble, 1982; and Tajfel, Nemeth, Jahoda, Campbell and Johnson, 1970) suggest that though children as young as three may show awareness of social categorisations, most are older before they develop the concept of sectarianism or can interpret and deploy the meaning/concept 'Protestant/Catholic'. In short, recent research shows that young children know more and do more about exclusion than earlier developmental approaches would suggest, but that though they have knowledge of the elements in categorisation processes, a priori applications may only begin after seven years (Sani, Bennett, Agostini, Malucchi and Ferguson, 2000). Devine, Kenny and Mc Neela (2002) cite Troyna and Hacker (1992):

> Society makes available to children a powerfully charged vocabulary of racist terms, but their use, while trading on negative meanings that they bear, does not necessarily imply a commitment to the racist ideologies from which they derive.

Though perhaps more modulated than the conclusions of Connolly et al. (2002), these studies, and work by Derman-Sparks (2000) and Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2002) all point to the conclusion that at least pre-prejudice does exist in young children and must be addressed in early education:

> The goals are to facilitate children's awareness that their racial identity does not change, to help them understand that they are part of a large group with similar characteristics (not "different" from everyone else) and to foster their desire to be exactly who they are.
> Derman-Sparks (2000: 32)

As the research by Connolly et al. (2002) indicates specifically in relation to the Irish reality, sectarianism and racism are similar forms of social discrimination; the insights arising from research on racism and its implications for education are relevant to any form of discrimination. These issues will be discussed further in the next section.

2.2 Re-shaping the conceptual frame for teacher education

As society becomes more globalised and flexible and as traditional moral certainties and trust in traditional knowledge bases are fading, teachers are coming under increasing pressure and role overload (Hargreaves, 1994). The answer is to find theoretical and applied ways of engaging with this postmodern society and its children. One facet of this change is the worldwide mobility of populations. With or without wars and displacement, migration is here to stay and societies are becoming increasingly culturally diverse. One outcome from the perspective of teacher educators is the need to equip teachers to address diversity and its negative partner, exclusion. Studies of racism and other forms of bias among children and in education indicate that teacher education should include awareness raising in relation to race, ethnicity, culture and nationality; student teachers need to develop conceptual and linguistic resources suitable for dealing with the topic of human diversity. It is difficult to integrate concepts of diversity and discrimination with traditional individualistic concepts of childhood development; societal and structural issues articulate more effectively with social constructivist models of childhood, teaching and learning.

The research literature highlights some relevant points regarding teacher education. The first is the well noted gap between teachers' pragmatic interests, and developments in research and theory (Day, 1997; Horgan and Douglas, 2000). A response to this is for colleges to create a climate in which students understand the theory-practice relationship (Peters, 1983, cited in Horgan and Douglas, 2000) and to liaise with schools and practising teachers in grounded research and collaborations in teacher education (King, 2000). As noted by Burke (2000), this gap is viewed among some policy makers as validating a call for return to apprenticeship training. Given the situation regarding interculturalism in practice (discussed below), any potential theoretical input on that topic is hardly likely to be matched by the insights of many current practitioners who might become the mentors of such apprentices.

The research literature highlights different methods used to enhance awareness of diversity among student and practising teachers, and raises some relevant points regarding teacher education. If preservice and practising teachers are to come to terms with the impact of diversity on teaching and learning they must make its role in society and in their own lives visible (Lawrence, 1997; Sleeter, 1994). Colleges need both to create an environment in which students understand the theory-practice relationship, and to liaise with schools and practising teachers in grounded research and collaboration in teacher education (NCATE, 2001). However even positive field experiences

are bounded and cannot be presumed to shape teaching practice in the long term (Mahan & Rains, 1990; Olmedo, 1997; Wilhelm, Cowart, Hume and Rademacher, 1960). As Gomes (1997) found in an experimental, intensive multicultural programme, stories from the field, teacher beliefs and theory/research could be well integrated, but field experience attached to one semester course did not have the same effect: more time, experience, reflection and long term follow-up were needed.

Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell & Middleton (1999) argue that teachers should keep their focus first on transcending problems that are common in important ways to all students, cultures and nations such as poverty, disease, ignorance and hunger; second to that comes focus on the cultural differences manifested in their students learning and behaviour styles. To make a difference in the lives of pupils and to address racial tensions, teachers must first liberate themselves from provincial and narrow conceptions about people, teaching and learning, and aim to elicit excellence within the context of the pupils' own cultural perspectives.

Chan (2002) focused on a cross-cultural movement approach which engaged participants as living bodies in cross-cultural movement practices such as Caribbean, Korean and African dances, Chinese tai chi and Indian yoga. These experiences made invisible cultural values visible, enhanced student teachers' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, and offered them an alternative approach to developing multicultural curricula. In their research in Florida (USA), Laframboise & Griffith (1997) investigated how pre-service teachers make meaning from instances of cultural conflict portrayed in literature. Selected story material gave students vicarious experience of people and situations outside their immediate life context, in ways that encouraged reflection on critical issues relating to teaching.

Kai, Spencer, Wilkes & Gill (1999) maintain that promoting inclusion involves the skill to negotiate effectively, and a heightened awareness of one's own attitude and sensitivity to issues such as stereotyping, racism and prejudice. However, students can be reluctant to pursue these paths. Several studies depict students who resist changing their perceptions of marginalised children (Kincheloe, 2002; Neuharth-Pritchard, Reiff and Pearson, 2001; Wise and West, 2002). Old established discourses shape students' and teachers' responses to diversity - seeing difference as deficit, or as something to be modified to fit into the school ethos, or as a tool for teaching, or as a curriculum in itself (Kenny, 1997; Pacini-Ketchabaw and Schecter, 2002). Neuharth-Pritchard et al (2001) investigated their student teachers' understandings of multicultural education, and their sources for these understandings. They found that the majority of students had a minimal understanding of the concept, limited mainly to race and ethnicity. They had gained it from books rather than from their own lived experience. Students seemed to presume their own experience was the norm, and ultimately this led to a 'diversity as them' attitude, rather than constructing an understanding of diversity by starting from within their own selves. Furthermore, even sympathetic students could be swept off course by the drag factor that they experience in unsympathetic schools and from some experienced but unsympathetic practitioners whom they met on school placements. The authors advocate getting students to identify their own experience of 'being' diverse, non-standard, in whatever way, and how that affected their lives: '*critical reflection may help students gain a "personal stake" in diversity, that is, a personal connection to the importance and complexity of diversity*' (Neuharth-Pritchard et al., 2001: 265).

Wise and West (2002) did something similar in the field of religious education, encouraging students of all faiths and none to explore what their different belief systems had to say about issues such as racism, sexism, social inequities, and the challenges that critical thinkers on those domains could put to their belief systems. Thus the students gained an added perspective both on their religious affiliations and/or value systems and on the issues under discussion. This is one of the few reports on research regarding religious diversity/conflict and education (Korn, 2002; Wise and West, 2002). Bursztyn (2002) links the absence of religious diversity from 'multicultural discourse' to the American tradition of separating church and state. However, as Gollnick and Chinn (2004) note, religion has inspired people to die or to inflict great pain, and religious identities can impact profoundly on issues of gender, race and ethnicity: '*of all the microcultures …. religion may be the most problematic for educators*' (Gollnick and Chinn 2004: 200). Bursztyn points out the dangers of ignoring this diversity:

> The multicultural discourse, reflecting fear of hegemonic positions, tends to abandon controversy about different definitions of personal freedom and supports, instead, a bland moral and cultural relativism. Uncritical celebration of culturally diverse practices and traditions, however, creates blind spots regarding the protection of individual rights
> (Burzstyn, 2002: 193)

This raises issues of cross-cultural challenge, as well as of respecting varieties of religious commitment. Derman-Sparks' definitions of an anti-bias curriculum contain within them definitions both of the young child as an active learner, and of diversity (including both intercultural celebration and intercultural challenge):

> Curriculum goals [in anti-bias education] are to enable every child to construct a knowledgeable, confident self-identity; to develop comfortable, empathetic, and just interaction with diversity; and to develop critical thinking and the skills for standing up for oneself and others in the face of injustice.

Anti-bias curriculum embraces an educational philosophy as well as specific techniques and content. It is value-based: Differences are good; oppressive ideas and behaviours are not. It sets up a creative tension between respecting differences and not accepting unfair beliefs and acts. … An anti-bias perspective is integral to all aspects of classroom life.
(Derman-Sparks, 2000, ix, x)

This approach to education requires a commitment at whole-institution level (school, college and overall education system) to an inclusive philosophy. This raises the issue of leadership.

2.2.1 Leadership in education

The leadership of the principal is of paramount importance to the primary school. Principals have the task of maintaining the school and must have the ability deal with strategic issues, turn things around and have the skills to motivate staff and bring them on board to carry out strategies (Blair, Coffin, Creese and Kenner, 2002; Hargreaves, 1995). Falconer and Byrnes (2003) cite Eisner's (1991) five dimensions of education settings (intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative) that must be examined in order to understand the institution and its practices. They note that school leadership is crucial in determining the shape of these dimensions. Blair et al. (2002) also found in their examination of effective multiethnic schools that leadership was crucial to that effectiveness. This applies to leadership at all levels of the education system. At local level the principal's leadership is vital as she/he is responsible for the management of the organisation and is answerable through the governing body for the internal organisation, discipline and curriculum of the school. The principal has to show capabilities such as being able to tell how changes can be applied in practice, and has to have the ability to guide the organisation to a new and more compelling vision. Blair et al. (2002) found in their examination of effective multiethnic schools that leadership was crucial to that effectiveness.

This suggests that professional development in interculturalism and antiracism for principals and others in leadership roles in the education system is essential in order to ensure effective change, and to provide a solid support for experienced and new teachers in developing inclusive practice. Drudy and Lynch (1993) argue that the Irish educational system is informed by a consensualist ideology, and that teachers are both predominantly middle class, and traditionally work as professionals in solo command of their classrooms. The consensualist ideology militates against change in the direction of adopting an anti-racist policy, because such policy acknowledges the reality of conflict. Commitment to anti-racism also calls for collective work on school ethos and policies, and there are many examples in this literature of conflict within staffs on the issue of racism. If such conflict is silenced in the staffroom culture, anti-racism or any other form of policy that recognises and challenges power inequities is likely to be silenced too, or at least inhibited. Lynch (1999) also notes that teachers tend to ameliorate the personal and interpersonal harshness of marginalisation rather than to address the structural reality of class or ethnic inequity.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education is a recognised professional accreditation body in teacher education the USA. In its accreditation framework (2001) it lays down standards for college and student performance. The Council requires that teacher education courses be theoretically sound, and that in delivering their programmes, the colleges model the best practices they aim to inculcate in their future teachers. The framework includes two criteria that directly relate to issues of diversity:
- That all students have ample opportunities to work in culturally diverse schools during the field experience segment of the programme.
- That content and major issues related to ethnic, racial and cultural diversity are infused throughout the professional studies component of the teacher-preparation curriculum.

The teacher participants in this study were convinced of the need for experiential learning in professional education, particularly in relation to diversity. Experiential learning occurs through placements in classrooms in diverse contexts. It also occurs in the context of their teacher education courses. Institutes of teacher education lead change by offering programmes informed by principles of inclusion and respect for diversity. In the next section, the potential for promoting inclusiveness through curricula at primary level will be discussed.

2.3 Identity and belonging: key teaching areas in Early Years classrooms

Issues of identity and belonging, as they are treated in the curriculum, are key to education for a diverse society and for the resolution of conflict. Data gathered in this study highlight the centrality of programmes promoting social and personal development: Religious Education (RE) in both states, Personal, Social and Emotional development (PSE) in Northern Ireland, and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in the Republic. All are areas in which 'circle time' proved powerful in building capacity for personal reflection, human relations and reflection on wider ethical issues relating to inclusion. The teaching of history is also highly significant in generating a school ethos that is supportive of inclusive Early Years education.

2.3.1 Spirituality, values and life skills programmes

The importance of religion in the formation of group identity for many groups has been recognised but there is little research into this factor in relation to education (Korn, 2002). It is closely related to group history (Gollnick and Chinn, 2004; Korn, 2002; UN, 2001). As noted above in relation to engaging student teachers in reflection on issues of identity and justice, religious education is a significant arena for doing this at all levels, as is evident in religious education programmes such as the Alive-O Scheme for primary schools. Amor, writing for the UN General Assembly (UN, 2001), argues the importance of promoting inter-denominational understanding, knowledge and respect within the general frame of promoting respect for diversity. However, as noted above, issues of religious diversity have been neglected in education research.

Strategies have been developed in Northern Ireland to address conflict issues: these include the 'Educational Cross Curricular Themes', Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU), Cultural Heritage and Local and Global Citizenship. These weave conflict resolution into the everyday fabric of all schools. EMU is about learning to live with differences in a spirit of acceptance, fairness and respect. Its four objectives are
- Fostering respect for self and others and building relationships;
- Understanding and dealing creatively with conflict;
- Developing an awareness of interdependence locally and globally; and
- Understanding cultural diversity.

Richardson (1996) states that EMU and Cultural Heritage are both concerned with affirming the richness of diversity and helping people to live with differences in a spirit of acceptance, fairness and mutual respect. Montgomery and Smith (1997:76) found a growing interest in the role of values education; many teachers saw EMU as being the quintessential expression of values within the curriculum. The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education cite Connolly et al. (2002), who set the following aims for early childhood education:

> *Children aged 3+ are encouraged to explore and experience a range of different cultural practices, events and symbols and to appreciate and respect difference and cultural diversity.*

> *Children aged 5+ are encouraged to understand the negative effects of sectarian stereotypes and prejudices and be able to identify them in their own attitudes.*
> (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, 2002 :10)

This suggests why critical reflection on historic issues is important in the education of student teachers of young children. Epstein (1993) successfully engaged with her early childhood pupils in critical reflection in relation to sexism and racism in their library corner books. It underlines that the child's sense of identity and belonging is being built in these years, through absorption of his/her personal, family and community stories and experience. Though children will take longer to develop an organised framework for viewing and interpreting the world, elements of pre-prejudice and/or elements of an inclusive vision are being laid in during these years.

The teachers in this study voiced particular concern about promoting positive attitudes to Travellers. The DES in the Republic has published guidelines on Traveller education for primary and for secondary schools (2002). The secondary schools guidelines note that not enough is known about Traveller culture to enable substantial work in schools, but in the primary schools guidelines there is a framework illustrating how 'an intercultural approach could be used in the oral programme from infants to second class'. These latter guidelines suggest using stories reflecting the range of traditions and cultures; finding opportunities for children to talk about their own experiences; and validating individual experiences. The guidelines suggest where the approach to the curriculum can be informed by interculturalism, and give a long list of possible resources for this. These guidelines and the resources promoted in them have wider application: the same principles inform positive inclusion and promotion of respect for any minority ethnic group. However across the board there is a dearth of knowledge among teachers about the cultural traditions, practices and experience of minority ethnic populations (Devine et al., 2002; Ward, 2004).

Religious Education, North and South

The same vision informs the Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for Religious Education (DENI, 1996), and the denominational Religious Education programmes for primary schools in the Republic (the best known and for obvious reasons the most widely used one being the Roman Catholic Alive-O programme): to enable pupils to develop awareness, knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the key Christian teachings, scriptures and spirituality. The programmes aim to promote pupils' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the growth of Christianity, its worship, prayer and religious language, and of the meaning of belonging to a Christian tradition. Finally they promote sensitivity towards the beliefs of others. The multi-denominational Educate Together schools in the Republic have developed programmes to enable pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of the major world belief systems. Regarding moral development, all religious education programmes aim to help pupils to develop their ability to reflect on moral issues, to relate moral principles to personal and social life, and to identify values and attitudes that influence behaviour.

These programmes promote self esteem: their aim is that pupils learn to respect themselves as unique and special, learn that they are loved and respected, and that they should care for themselves and for the environment. In the early years classes mutual respect and understanding are promoted mainly at interpersonal level, through encouraging co-operation, helping others, honesty and critical self reflection.

The Northern Ireland RE curriculum, programme of study and the core syllabus suggest that diversity is firmly at the heart of the education system, but they do not give specific guidelines on what to teach, and the topic of diversity in terms of the divided society that is Northern Ireland is not addressed. Similarly, in programmes in the Republic there is a lack of resources and direction in relation to teaching about wider social issues to do with the kinds of diversity that children often encounter in current Irish society.

2.3.2 The teaching of history

History is a curriculum area traditionally seen as relating more to senior classes. However it is difficult to envisage a teacher education programme that is adequate in regard to interculturalism for one level and not for the other, and future teachers will need to be knowledgeable and competent in all areas of the curriculum in order to contribute to whole school curriculum development. Secondly, though teachers may well not deal with specific historic or political issues in their work in Infant classes, their own management of pupil diversity in those classes is a powerful lesson for the children. Thirdly, management will be informed by teachers' appreciation of the major issues and the underlying factors.

The Runnymede Report (Parekh, 2001) decries nationalism as atavistic and exclusionary. Even without going so far as rejecting the concept of national identity, there is relevance for the Irish situation in the elements put forward in this report. The first four areas it opens up for discussion are: Rethinking the National Story; Identities in Transition; Cohesion, Equality and Difference; and Dealing with Racisms. These are key elements in a programme for inclusive history programmes in the Irish context. The *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* (web address in References) seems to offer relevant analyses of trends in history curricula and pedagogy – in the European/Irish context this is a key location for anti-bias work. The January 2003 issue focuses on nationalism and carries several papers relating to teaching history in Northern Ireland, but discussions in papers referring to other regions are also relevant. Leeuw-Roord (2001) notes that across Europe 'school history presents national mirrors of pride and pain' which students carry with them and pass on. Thus historical myths have long lives.

> *…that there is not a single truth, that there is often not even a clear right and wrong however, sometimes there is an unmistakable good or bad. … that a complex present is related to a complex past. And that also for their future it is important that they ask themselves every now and then <u>how did we get to this certain point and what sort of message could that give me before I take any further steps.</u>*
> (Leeuw-Roord, 2001: 12. emphasis the author's)

Cullingford (2003) argues that young children can grasp and reflect on issues of social justice and injustice in stories and in their experience. They can exercise the historian's skill of 'point of view'. Barton (2001) investigated how primary school children in Northern Ireland and the US viewed historical evidence. He found that in both states children believed history was known because stories were passed on orally by grandparents, parents and others through the generations, in families and elsewhere; they did not attribute it to books. However the Northern Irish children had well-developed skills of critical enquiry while the American children accepted the stories as fact – he attributed this to different teaching methodologies in the two locations. Young children, critical observers and learners, hear stories of the past in their homes and neighbourhoods, perhaps also in school, and process them long before they start into study of what is popularly recognised as 'history'. Their skills of critical listening require scaffolding. Barton, McCully and Conway (2003) found that students in Northern Ireland, far more than school students in mainland Britain, '*rank their history classes as far more influential than any other source of information about national history*', closely followed by history text books (Barton et al., 2003: 35). However, traditional perspectives come to the fore in their identity formation as they get older. Schools, these authors argue, have great influence but could do more. They note that at primary level the approach has been one of '*avoiding stories of national history and instead focusing on learning about historic societies … as well as learning skills of enquiry and interpretation*' (2003: 27). The teaching of history seems to be an area warranting collaboration in relation to teacher education across Europe.

History curricula, North and South

In Northern Ireland the National Curriculum programme of study distinguishes how history is taught at Key Stage One. It suggests that the aim of history-related aspects of topic work is to use appropriate opportunities for children is to help them develop a sense of period by reference to characteristics of the period: for example, ways of life, clothes, transport, ways of working, entertainments etc.

Themes should also provide children with the opportunity to reflect on similarities and difference between themselves and other children in the class and beyond. For example, comparing similarities and differences in

traditional celebrations in their own and other cultures like birthday celebrations, Halloween, Chinese New Year, Christmas and so forth. The programme of study infers that the thematic content may be used flexibly in the planning of appropriate topics, which may be cross-curricular or history-led. It further denotes that throughout the work relating to the programme of study, pupils should have opportunities to engage in discussion and to undertake activities which fulfil the objectives of the cross-curricular themes. In some cases the theme objectives overlap: for example EMU, Cultural Heritage and PSE all have strands which relate to personal development and the environment.

In the Republic of Ireland the current Curriculum for Primary Schools provides a framework for exploring personal and social identities, diversity and cohesion, and the promotion of inclusion in and through schools. Its history curriculum offers a framework for critical enquiry into how things came to be the way they are. In its intent it is far removed from the 'nationalist school of Irish history [which] was an important component in the building of the "Irish nation"', and which nourished an exclusionary ethos vis a vis Protestants citizens (Fanning, 2002). Waldron (2002) outlines the transition from the nationalistic history curriculum of the early twentieth century, on to the 1971 curriculum which focused on social history and the lives of ordinary people, and then on to the 'relentlessly post-nationalist document' that is the new history curriculum. While commending its continuing focus on social history, she is critical of the downplaying of Irish myths. Her argument highlights a gap in the programme: how to address issues relating to national identity and conflict, particularly where these are part of children's current lived experience at local level.

For the first time a history programme for Infant classes is included in the Republic curriculum: the focus is on the children's immediate experience and on enabling them to reflect, to gain a sense of time and of identity and belonging. This agenda goes across the curriculum, as elements in story, drama, social studies and art resonate with these themes. Involvement with the community in researching local history is a key element, and this begins with family work in the Infant classrooms. The Teachers' Guidelines for the History curriculum state that '*in all cases, the school policy should give explicit guidance to teachers on the way in which this work should be undertaken*'. (DES, 1999: 36). Given the often specific local sensitivity of issues to do with Irish history and national identities, this principle has particular importance if schools are to address these issues.

This curriculum is designed to scaffold an indefinite range of possible critical enquiries and creative work in all areas. There are frequent references to diversity in Irish society. This suggests that the concept of diversity is rightly considered as a primarily constitutive rather than substantive: it is an organising frame within which the teacher and pupils work, rather than an extension within other frames. However the substantive element is key to the richness of the concept, and the concept of diversity in the curriculum is not very rich.

Final comment

Explicit work with children on their experiences and understanding of diversity can and should be done regularly and often in early childhood education (Derman-Sparks, 2000; Murray and O'Doherty, 2001). Research and policy literature concur as to the significance of teacher education in the project of building an inclusive society:

> *Even the best planned reforms are bound to fail if teachers are not properly trained and not committed in their work to combating discrimination and intolerance…. Intercultural education and the fight against xenophobia, racial prejudice and intolerance should be integrated into the official initial and further teacher training.*
> (UN General Assembly, 2001, paragraph 107)

A start can be made, but as the DES acknowledged in sanctioning the establishment of an Intercultural Committee in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, a lot more is required (unfortunately its guidelines on interculturalism and the curriculum, expected in 2004, are not yet available). Findings from this research project endorse those in extensive research cited above: despite the longer experience of promoting intercultural curricula and policies in the UK, and the work of EMU and other projects in Northern Ireland, gaps remain in resources and in teacher education regarding specific issues of concern.

Proper use of resources is reliant on informed and open practitioners. Goldstein (2001) cites a quotation from Paley's *White Teacher* (1989, which sets a visionary though challenging note and highlights the need for awareness raising as part of that education. A black parent responded to a white teacher who claimed to be colour blind ('*All children look alike to me*'):

> '*What rot,*' said Mrs Hawkins '*My children are black. They don't look like your children. They know they're black, and we want it recognised. It's a positive difference, an interesting difference. At least it could be, if you teachers learned to value difference more. What you value, you talk about.*'
> (Goldstein, 2001: 12)

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

3 THE PROJECT BRIEF AND METHODOLOGY

This brief chapter comprises Section 3.1 in which the project brief is outlined, followed by a short account, in Section 3.2, of the project methodology, field work and data analysis. This includes quantitative data on the schools selected for the postal survey and of the six schools selected for field visits.

3.1 Project brief

The following paragraphs in this section are adapted from the project proposal as approved and funded by the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme.

Little research has been carried out on a cross-border basis into the contribution early childhood education in schools can make to overcoming barriers of fear, ignorance and prejudice caused by religious, cultural, political and social divisions on this island, North and South. This North-South research study into Early Childhood Education in Schools was a two year study. The project **aim** was to identify the challenges facing teachers and children in relation to diversity in schools on both sides of the Irish border, both as regards the potential for developing mutual knowledge and respect, and the threat of conflict, tension and misunderstanding. The study examined how children and their teachers in the early years of primary school in both states respond to these challenges in their different environments.

The intention of all involved in the study is that the findings will contribute to developing a diversity-sensitive framework for initial and in-service teacher education, to be used in all institutions, North and South, involved in preparing teachers to work with children in the early years. The process and its outcomes have already made a positive contribution in developing cross-border activities in education by building partnerships between teachers and researchers in early childhood education in schools. For the first time they have exchanged mutual experience and learning across the Irish border. The lessons of that experience will inform a framework of best practice for preparing primary teachers in colleges of education throughout the island.

The research involved:
- Survey, interviews and discussion, to identify the areas in which teachers feel they need more professional education opportunities that address dealing with conflict and promoting diversity.
- Participant observation to register the thinking informing children's talk and practice relating to difference and diversity
- Identifying approaches and methodologies used to promote diversity through the curriculum
- Identifying resources available for its implementation

This project was designed to yield findings that will contribute to the basis for drafting a framework of best practice regarding teacher preparation for early years education in schools in both jurisdictions. The aim will be to assist student teachers to incorporate conflict resolution and prejudice reduction into their teaching practice, thus working to remove barriers of ignorance, prejudice and fear in the minds of their pupils. The particular focus of the project was on issues of religious and ethnic identity and conflict.

3.2 Field survey methodology

There were two phases in the field study. Phase one was a postal survey of early years teachers in a small purposive sample of schools in each state (eighteen in the North, seventeen in the Republic). Phase two comprised visits to six schools selected from the survey samples in each jurisdiction to engage in participant observation in early years classes and conduct interviews with principals, class teachers and other teachers with relevant responsibilities.

Phase one

The survey schools were geographically dispersed; they were selected to represent the following criteria set out in the project brief:
- Border and non-border locations
- Interface locations (NI)
- Location in areas of known community tension
- Controlled, maintained and integrated (NI)
- Main denominational and inter/multi-denominational sectors (RoI)

On consideration by the steering group and the researchers, it was felt that the following criteria should be added:
- Ethnic mix
- Mixed and disadvantaged catchments
- Rural and urban (town and city) locations
- Size: large (multi-class), medium (one class per level) and small (combined-class)
- Scoileanna lán Gaelach (ROI)

It hardly needs stating that most schools met at least three of the above criteria. A semi-structured essay-type questionnaire was devised (see text of this in Appendix 1). Early Years teachers in the survey sample schools were asked about

- their perceptions and experience of diversity in their schools
- how they felt about it
- how they addressed the topic and associated issues in their work
- what resources they had
- how their initial and ongoing teacher education had prepared them
- What they felt was needed.

Twenty eight forms (over one third of the total) were completed and returned. This sufficed for the purpose of the project: the replies provided rich data in themselves, and also provided a pointer to aid selection of schools for phase two, and a benchmark for the data gathered in visits to the small school sample in phase two.

Phase two

Following an initial reading of the returned survey forms, six schools in the North and six in the Republic were invited to take part in the second phase of the field work. The criteria outlined above were met in this smaller selection. The following table lists the main criteria and their representation across the two sets of schools (each met several of these criteria):

Table 1: Distribution of selection criteria across the field visit schools

Northern Ireland criteria	No. schools meeting criteria	Republic of Ireland criteria	No. schools meeting criteria
Border location	3	Border location	4
Interface area	3	Conflict area	2
Ethnic mix	2	Ethnic mix	4
Integrated	2	Roman Catholic	4
Maintained	2	Church of Ireland	1
Controlled	2	Multi-Denominational	1

Other variations in the schools are not tabulated because to make sense this would require tabulation of details about the schools in a data matrix and this might make the schools identifiable. In the Northern Ireland set the (Catholic) maintained schools had single gender pupil intake, from similar religious and economic backgrounds. The (mainly Protestant) controlled schools had mixed gender intake, but from similar religious and economic backgrounds. The integrated schools had mixed gender and religious intake from varied economic backgrounds. In the Republic of Ireland set all schools had mixed gender pupil intakes; two schools were classified disadvantaged and the others were socio-economically mixed. Both sets of schools were varied in terms of urban/rural locations and school size.

In the survey schools all the class teacher participants were female; half of the principals were male; two special needs teachers in the North were male (all the non-principal teachers in the Republic were female). There was no significant pattern warranting separate examination of data on the basis of gender, age groupings or teaching experience.

All the class teachers taught single-level classes in the Northern Ireland set. One of the six selected schools in that set had two classes at each level of Key Stage One, bringing the total classes to twenty-one, or seven at each level. In the Republic set, class organisation was more varied: in all, observation and group sessions were done with fifteen classes in nine classrooms, across the six schools. Three teachers in three schools taught combined Junior and Senior Infant classes; the early years teacher in a fourth school taught combined Junior Infants, Senior Infants, First and Second classes. In the other two (large) schools there were multiple Infant classes: three teachers in one of these schools, and two in the other, took part in the project.

In the initial phone contact and in the introductory visit to each school to discuss the research plans and strategies were discussed with the principal and involved teachers. In the schools in both sample sets the researchers collected data through observation of classroom and playground activities. This was done in each school over a period sufficient to ensure that all the target classes were observed in these settings. Diversity-related elements in the school and class environments and materials were also noted. The aim in the observations was to ascertain if/when the topic or issue of diversity arose, how it was dealt with and the resources used. The two major activities were class discussions and interviews with teachers and principals.

Focused group sessions were conducted with the classes, led by the class teacher who discussed the process with the researcher and took the lead in deciding which of a possible range of diversity-related stimulus materials and activities would suit the class in question (this planning discussion was a rich ground for gathering insights relating to the project). The researchers offered materials (picture collections) for use but the choice was the teacher's: in many cases they opted for suitable items from their classroom resources. These sessions started with the teacher engaging the children in a discussion of the selected stimulus material, usually a story or set of pictures illustrating diversity; this was followed by art work on the theme, and the session closed with a circle time discussion. Topics covered in circle time included bullying, fighting and name calling (which names hurt most, and why, was a revealing question), helping others, feelings, being left out, disabilities, different people we know etc. The teachers led these sessions while the researcher observed. Field notes were made during and after the sessions.

Interviews were conducted with class teachers, principals and other relevant staff. In the Northern Ireland sample schools interviewees were conducted with twenty one Key Stage One teachers, six principals and three relevant support teachers (SENCO). Interviews were conducted with teachers and principals individually followed by group sessions at the end of the observation period. In the Republic sample, interviews were conducted with the principals, the nine early years teachers and three support teachers (a learning support teacher, a multiculturalism support teacher, and a language support teacher). Interviews were conducted with teachers individually or in groups as the needs of school and teachers required. Participants were asked in advance if they consented to being audio-taped or would prefer the researcher to take notes. They were assured that they had control of what could be recorded, and the duration of the interview.

Interview questions broadly followed the lines of the survey questions. Topics covered included the teachers' perspective on children's perception of diversity; and how discrimination might manifest in children's talk and behaviour. Teachers were asked about their classroom approach to diversity issues (in the North specifically in terms of the religious conflict within Northern Ireland), and whether it was dealt with as a separate topic and/or integrated within other curricular areas. They were also asked what resources were available to them in their setting and if these were appropriate. Finally, teachers were asked if they felt their initial teacher education had prepared them to deal with conflict and diversity in their settings or had they done any related in-service courses. They were also asked to identify any additional professional development needs.

Ethical considerations. No identifying features of schools or of individual teacher respondents (addresses, names, etc) were asked for in the survey. The purpose of the research was explained in a covering letter (see text in Appendix 1). As noted, schools and individual teachers within them participated voluntarily in the phase two activities. In the initial contact phone calls and visits to these schools the project rationale and aims, and plans for data collection were fully discussed with principals and teachers. Personnel were consulted as to the acceptability of the procedures designed to collect data in classrooms. In all the schools the principals and class teachers felt that the procedures were well within the range of normal school activity and parental consent was not required. During the classroom activities the researchers were careful not to override children's right to privacy Teachers were, of course, sensitive in raising difficult issues, and the researchers took care not to make invasive enquiries. In interview sessions the outline questions were available to participants and, as noted above, they had control of recording methods, what could be recorded and the duration of the interview.

In the preparation of the reports all identifying data relating to the schools visited, children and teachers were kept confidential. No identifiers were required for the purposes of presenting the analysis, apart from noting whether the input is from the Northern or the Republic sample, and whether quotations were drawn from survey responses or face-to-face interviews. In a few quotations, where first names were used in the original input from children or teachers and names are required to retain the flavour of the quotation, pseudonyms are used. In the presentation of extracts in the data analysis it is only necessary to identify them by their input category. Extracts from postal survey responses and research notes will be identified as such – it can be taken that all other data quotes are from face-to-face interview and discussion records.

All recorded data (survey forms, audio-tapes and transcripts) were securely stored. Finally, interim reports on the data analysis were presented at a conference to which teachers and principals in participating schools were invited. Very few could come, but one key purpose of this conference was to provide a vehicle for feedback on interpretations of the data that were gathered in those schools which had generously taken part in the project.

Feedback: A consultative conference was held in April 2004 to discuss the data and the interim findings of this research with representatives of the participating schools, teacher educators and other stakeholders. Fifty people attended; and the discussion strongly endorsed the researchers' analysis. These findings further informed analysis and contributed to developing the framework for initial teacher education. The key points in the reports from the discussion sessions at this conference form the framework for the recommendations (the text of Norman Richardson's Keynote address is in Appendix 4).

3.2.1 Data analysis

Relevant quantitative data were gathered from survey responses and discussion in phase two: teachers' qualifications, years of experience, and kinds of diversity registered among pupils in their class. Whole-school data relating to the project brief criteria were also collected. These data were tabulated to highlight the sample profile, and compliance with the criteria was checked.

Qualitative data were gathered by means of a semi-structured essay-type questionnaire as outlined in the note on Phase 1 above. Semi-structured interviews, using the same questions as a guide, were conducted in the six schools in each jurisdiction selected for field visits. Observation of children in the selected schools were recorded in field notes made during and after classroom and playground sessions, and notes were also made of resources and visual displays in the classroom and school environment.

The survey returns helped to identify foci for field visits. The responses are also useful in themselves, as statements and indicators of what was and is needed in teacher education both as perceived by the teachers and as evidenced in their arguments. The quantifiable elements that proved relevant to the purposes of this study were tabulated and are analysed below.

Essay-type survey responses, interview tapes, interview and field notes were transcribed. This formed the total body of transcript data for qualitative analysis. For purposes of analysis some discourse analytical procedures were used: for instance, identification of key recurring phrases and terms. Data were categorised under headings arising from the material itself. Given the focus of the research a high level of congruity emerged in relation to the themes that teachers engaged with, although they took varying positions with regard to these. For the purposes of this project, and given the clear focus of the field study and the small numbers of participating teachers, theme identification sufficed to give a framework for the data analysis.

The validity of the analysis was endorsed by the internal coherence of the data; where contradictions or divergent points occurred, these were explainable by context and they often added a dimension of insight to the overall analysis. The discussion of the interim findings at the consultative conference was an effective evaluation also. Finally, researchers' interpretations of the data were critiqued in the light of literature in the field. There is a high level of coherence, but the data and analysis add a dimension to the insights available in current research in Ireland in relation to diversity in schools.

4 DATA ANALYSIS: TEACHERS AND CHILDREN

Section 4.1 of this chapter is an overview of the participating teachers and schools, drawn from survey and field visit data. Teacher qualifications and class size are graphed, and key issues noted by the teachers are identified. In this section also, teachers' general identifications of diversity-related issues will be outlined. Section 4.2 marks the start of the qualitative analysis: the topic is the children's discussion and management of diversity issues, as observed by the researchers in classroom visits, and as noted by the teachers in survey responses and interview discussions. Findings from participant observation sessions with children will be discussed, followed by discussion of teachers' evaluations, in survey returns and interviews, of children's understanding and management of diversity.

4.1 Profiles from the quantifiable data

Chart 6 Infant Class teachers grouped by time of qualification
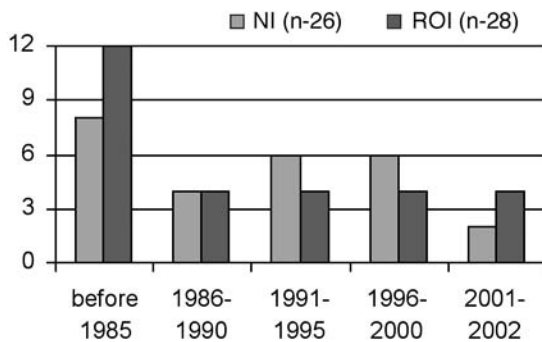
As noted in the last chapter, gender, age and experience were not significant elements in the data gathered in this study. Time of qualification is relevant in one regard: teachers' initial professional education and the period in which it occurred gives the context for reading their evaluations. Chart 6 shows the year bands in which participating class teachers qualified (data from survey forms and interviews, with duplications eliminated). Almost two-thirds of these teachers graduated prior to 1996: it is hardly surprising that these respondents found their initial professional education had not prepared them to address diversity in the classroom.

Chart 7: Class sizes
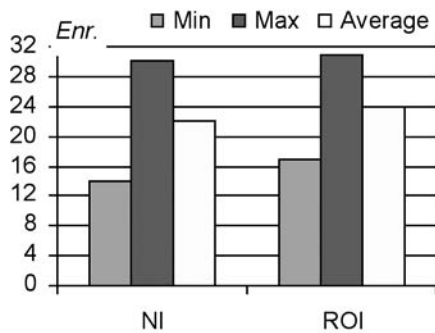
Chart 7 gives a useful indicator of the range of class sizes: the minimum, maximum and average class sizes registered by participating teachers in each sample set. However in situ this is complicated by variations in organisation. All teachers in the phase two schools in the North had single-level classes. In one school the policy was to keep the numbers at 20 per class: 'this makes it more manageable for the teacher'. In some schools in the Republic set class size was complicated by other factors - for instance, one teacher in that set had twenty seven pupils in a combined Junior Infants, Senior Infants, First and Second Class. This represents a different set of challenges from those posed by the class of thirty one (a Junior Infants Class).

The criteria for selecting schools for this phase of the project, and the researchers' procedures when visiting the schools, have been outlined above. In short, the researchers observed classroom practice and pupils' peer interactions in classroom and playground; interviews and group discussions were conducted with key personnel. The classroom sessions with children and teachers, but mainly the interviews with the teachers, were the most substantial and valuable source of data. The following section on teachers' identifications of issues sets the context for the analysis of data on children's performance in relation to diversity.

4.2 Teachers' identifications of key factors and issues

Teachers identified kinds of diversity they encountered in their professional work in two senses: the kinds of diversity that teachers feel should feature in classroom work, and the kinds of diversity evident in these classes. The following is a list of the kinds of diversity mentioned by participants in both states (the overlap was substantial):

| **Mentioned by most**	**Mentioned by some**
Learning ability	Gender
Family background	Travellers (RoI)
Socio-economic background	Political affiliation
Language	Urban/rural contrasts
Nationality	Culture
Physical disabilities	
Religion	

It is not appropriate to attempt weightings of these listings, given the softness of the data in relation to diversity both as a topic and as a class characteristic. Three indicators of this softness warrant mentioning. Firstly, ethnicity and religion were mentioned often, but this could be substantially due to the fact that this was the focus of the survey. The second point relates to the topic of diversity in teaching. All the teachers in the Northern sample mentioned religion as an aspect of diversity, but in interview the majority concurred that religious differences are not addressed at this early stage of children's development. In the Republic of Ireland sample a major factor in the border schools is the sectarian divide; as will be seen, the teachers felt that it was dealt with mainly by silence, or rendered invisible by denominational intake. So some facets of diversity were mentioned as warranting treatment in Infant classes, others for the opposite reason. Finally, only two teachers in the Republic sample mentioned Traveller pupils (one in a scoil lán gaelach). However in some cases non-mention was an oversight: there were Travellers in the Infant and other classes in four of the six schools visited; only the multi-denominational school had never had Travellers on its roll and one other did not have any Traveller pupils at the time of the visits. Some survey participants identified the Traveller pupils as 'settled': this suggests that there might be variable levels of knowledge of current thinking on Travellers' ethnic identity.

Yet the listings are useful. They suggest that in the context of focus on diversity generated by this research project the respondents seem to reflect the general perception of issues that affect teachers. The top three listings suggest that issues absorbing these teachers could be seen as forming concentric rings, with teacher and pupils at the centre, the teacher's core focus on the personal and interpersonal and observable differences in the classroom, and this in turn surrounded by the familial and communal, with the wider context perhaps increasingly impinging. The level of focus on life within the classroom for many teachers is suggested for instance by the fact that in the Republic ten of the seventeen survey respondents did not mention socio-economic factors at all. A thematic analysis of the survey responses for the North sample yielded the following identification of diversity-related difficulties registered by the teachers, again showing the priority set on issues directly impinging on pupils' life and work in the class:

Table 2: Diversity and difficulty in the classroom

Types of difficulty	No. teachers registering
Parent expectations	*26*
Children who display weaker learning abilities	*21*
Children whose first language is not English	*12*
Children who display behavioural problems	*10*
Children with disabilities	*6*

These teachers cited pupils' behavioural problems, learning and other disabilities, and mother tongue other than English as obstacles to promoting diversity. However they all indicated that parental expectation was the biggest obstacle they faced when dealing with issues of diversity especially in terms of the conflict in Northern Ireland. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Diversity in society is increasingly impinging on schools, as illustrated in Table 3 below showing responses from the Republic of Ireland sample (fifteen entries – two respondents did not reply to this question). Entries are ranked in order of class size (the first column gives the numbers enrolled (Enr) in the respondents' classes). Transcripts of the replies to the survey question about kinds of diversity in the class are provided in the main column.

Table 3: Kinds of diversity in fifteen classes

Enr	Kinds of diversity in class
11	Mexican, Russian, Jordanian, Nigerian, Irish. I am fortunate in that all my pupils speak English. Socioeconomic. Religious.
17	6 African, 1 Pakistani, 1 Danish, 1 English, 8 Irish. 3 Muslim children.
18	Socio-economic evident in poor to high language skills. A second generation settled Traveller. I take an 8 year old Lithuanian for extra support in English and Maths. A child with cerebral palsy.
18	Eagsúlacht ó thaobh eachnamaíochta [economic diversity].
19	Small country school, very little ethnic or religious diversity to be seen here.
19	Caitlicigh meaneachnamaíochta ar fad [all middle class Catholics]. Cailín gorm amháin [one black girl].
19	One special needs. All the same socio-economic background.
20	Leath rang socheachnamaíocht isle, leath mean-árd. [half lower socio-economic class, half middle]. Beirt lucht siúil [Two Travellers].
24	Mainly 'working' class. Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, no belief/faith. Irish Nigerian, Romanian, American, Russian.
27	Various religions. Some ethnic diversity.
29	Socio-economic from wealthy to families where careful management is needed. All have at least 1 parent working but there are a number of stay-at-home mums. Also a number of separated families. Various Christian denominations. A number of English families, but no great ethnic diversity.
29	Ethnic.
30	About 50% attend RC instruction. The other 50% a variety of theistic backgrounds. Socio-economically mixed.
30	Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, no religion. One child with Spanish as first language, English as second language. Socio-economically mixed.
31	One Muslim (local, Irish mother), one Malysian Buddhist (recent arrival), one Lithuanian Christian.

There are implications for teacher education contained even in these initial listings of issues and pupil characteristics; these will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. This tabular overview sets the context for discussion of the detailed data drawn from the surveys and school visits regarding children and their engagement with diversity.

4.3 Children and diversity: researchers' observations

Before carrying out observations of peer interactions, the researchers in both project sets talked with the teachers about the project and what they had come to the school to do. During these discussions they asked the teachers if they had witnessed any discriminatory remarks or behaviour among pupils in the classroom or playground. Teachers also discussed this in the interviews, where they expressed nuanced and complex views. However the teachers' generalised comments in these initial conversations are also interesting. Most initially expressed the view that the majority of children at this age were only aware of issues of diversity that they could visualise or had encountered in everyday life, that they were generally very accepting at this age, but were not cognitively aware of diversity issues they could not see.

Insights into children's perceptions and interpretations of diversity were gleaned from their incidental talk in the classroom and playground, and from the discussions during the focused classroom sessions. In relation to children's management of conflict and diversity, it is useful to discuss playground and classroom observations separately. Their understandings of what diversity means were most clearly expressed in classroom discussions. Their management of conflict and peer interactions in the freer arena of the playground will be discussed separately.

4.3.1 Children's classroom interactions and discussions

In this section two facets of the children's understanding and management of diversity will be commented on:
- children's ongoing construction of insider/outsider categorisation strategies
- children's understandings and management of 'recognised' forms of diversity: disability, ethnic diversity and religious diversity.

Insider/outsider categorisation strategies: The focused sessions with their stimulus activity and ensuing circle time discussions were typical of what can go on in Religious Education or humanities curriculum work. In discussion with the teachers, children displayed what they had learned and worked further on developing and absorbing it. For instance, in one circle time discussion with a Primary Three class (six and seven year-olds) in a Northern sample school the circle time topic was friendship but specifically why pupils continue to fall out during break times:

Teacher   If we all know what it feels like when someone falls out, why do I have to deal with long faces after break times?

Pupil A   But Miss sometimes you can't help it.

Teacher   What do you mean by you can't help it?

Pupil B   Because some people don't share.

Teacher   Why do they not share?

Pupil B   Because they are selfish

Teacher [to the group] What does selfish mean?

In the discussion the pupils showed an understanding of words such as mean, greedy, sharing and turn taking. The children showed that they were aware of others' feeling when they were excluded, stating that they would feel hurt, sad and lonely. They showed that they could perceive what it means to feel excluded or treated differently.

Both researchers observed that for activities and for choice of seating where this was allowed, children tend to cluster along gender lines, but they happily went along with the teachers' strategies to promote mixing also. However their tactics for drawing and operating insider/outsider boundaries were often far more subtle. Discussions of name calling were revealing. Even in the most guarded discussion of name calling, where none of the established 'bad' names or words were cited, the children did show that they had effective skills for denigrating an unwanted peer – for instance by mispronouncing her/his name or adding rhyming syllables (as in 'Nessa-Pessa').

Appearance in the sense of fashion or 'style' was the key trigger for exclusionary tactics and names – being fat, spotty, dirty or badly dressed etc. Intellectual, emotional, and physical difficulties (vague ones such as ungainliness or poor coordination, rather than marked disabilities) were also key triggers of exclusion. *'Stupid'/'idiot'* were generally cited bad names. The children's comments on these terms suggested that they denoted more than simple intellectual difficulty: they seemed to also involve poor social skills and physical awkwardness.

Understandings and management of disability In one Senior Infants class, during the discussion of the trigger photographs, the children had expressed highly positive attitudes towards the idea of having children with disabilities in their class. However in the discussion of name calling, several said they had been called 'rehab' and 'handicap'. The teacher asked them to please explain, that she did not know what those words meant. The children's responses included *'sick', 'bad name', 'deaf', 'dumb', 'head like that', 'reading funny', 'if you're old and can't walk right and like you're drunk, funny'.* The teacher said to them 'there are lots of children just like you who are handicapped' (continuing with the children's terminology kept the focus on the issue in question). *'But that's not what it means'* said a child - who looked puzzled and tense as the teacher expanded on her point. When she said that in the Special Olympics they would see *'lots of handicapped people who could do lots of things far better than you can'*, a gasped *'What!'* came from around the group. There were several worried faces during this discussion.

Understandings and management of ethnic/racial identities During discussions children showed an awareness of issues that might hurt others such as name-calling, exclusion from playground activities and falling out. However in relation to such practices no reference was made to children with a disability or of a different ethnic/ background. In schools where visible minorities were present, issues to do with ethnic racial diversity could arise more easily in the classroom, but even in ethnically mixed classes the level of expressed awareness of factors such as skin colour varied widely. In some of these classes the children talked openly about skin colour, but in others when the teacher asked the children what differences they could see among the (visibly diverse) children in the stimulus photographs, the children did not remark on colour at all. When they did talk about skin colour it was as matter-of-fact as their talk about hair colour or clothing. It was never the first differentiating factor mentioned, and usually was not remarked on until the teacher asked, for instance, if all the faces were the same. In one class discussion a child pointed to a black girl in the photograph and said to a fair-haired girl in the group *'she looks like you'.* The group accepted this comfortably and without remark. The similarity was the all-over plaited hairstyle – at least, that is the only similarity that the researcher could (silently) detect.

Where art sessions followed the stimulus story/picture discussion, the plan was that the art would reflect the diversity theme. However children gravitated towards drawing themselves and their family or immediate friends – very few showed awareness of wider forms of human diversity. In discussion with the researcher, when a child identified people in her/his picture as being for instance Chinese, this was occasionally accompanied by laughter at 'slitty eyes' or at the idea that the child would want to be the same colour (possible pre-prejudice in evidence). Most children (black and white) said they would like to be white but one (confident, pretty, talented and popular) black child said she would like to be *'black like I am'.*

Understandings of religious diversity In the Northern Ireland single religious schools in interface areas, during circle time when the discussion was on 'how we hurt others', not one child referred to another's religion. Reasons for this could include: that the principals and teachers did not deal with the topic of conflict in terms of Northern Ireland; or that children living in these conditions accepted them as the norm.

In schools in the Republic most teachers did not elicit any discussion of religious diversity. The commitment of teachers and researchers to avoiding directing the children through leading questions meant that issues that the children had not experienced directly often simply did not arise. However this does not mean that the issues are not working in the environment in which the children are growing up and learning. In one border school the teacher asked questions to elicit knowledge of religious difference (for instance, why does X go to the other school/church?). Children showed no knowledge of, or need to know why there were these differences – though one child did remark that they wouldn't know who would go where, but *'the daddies would know'.*

Where there was a low level of diversity, or a low level of kinds of diversity of which the children were aware, the children gave very little evidence of knowledge of exclusionary talk and practice. Some issues require further reflection. For instance, as was seen above, the children had learned (and sincerely used) a repertoire of 'correct' talk about disability although conflicting ideas were still at work. However they had not gone on the same learning journey regarding more 'politically' sensitive issues such as race and religion. On the whole the teachers did not observe any difficulties in this regard among their pupils at this young age, but as will be seen in next section, the teachers were sometimes shocked at how polished the children's performance of exclusion on any of these recognised grounds was when they reached the stage or found a situation which called for it. This has implications for the topics addressed and not addressed in religious education and curriculum areas concerned with personal and social development.

4.3.2 Interactions in the playground

In the playground children's peer relations are crucial to their play. The instances here are from the Northern Ireland sample but, as will be obvious, such interactions are not peculiar to that location.

In one instance where a child had cerebral palsy the teacher stated 'children come to perceive what they know as normal – John is accepted by all pupils and is actively involved in all aspect of school life'. The researcher observed

that in classroom practice and playground activities the children did talk to John as they did to any other pupil in the classroom, and they accepted him in playground activities. For example, with the aid of his classroom assistant John kicked the football with the other children. After lunch when the children were lining up to go back into the class, they moved back to let John go first. The researcher asked Jim why everyone moved. Jim said, *'to let John go first'*. The researcher asked Jim *'Why does John have to go first?'* Jim and another pupil said *'He can't walk good if he gets stuck, then we help him'*. At that, the line of children went into class. In another school an autistic child took part in all curricular activities and his classmates interacted with him at break times. He did not have the attention span to participate fully in games: he would wonder off and when he came back the other children did not make any comment.

In another school playground a minority ethnic child was playing with a group of children when all of a sudden she was left on her own. When the researcher asked the child why she was not playing with her friend she said *'Cara won't let me play'*. The researcher asked the child why. She said *'cause I wouldn't give her the horse.'* The researcher asked her if she wouldn't share and she replied *'She had it all morning and it's my horse'*.

At no time during observation of playground activities did the Northern Ireland researcher observe name calling directly related to religious divisions, even in schools affected by the conflict. In sum, during observations of playground activities, the only form of conflict the Northern Ireland researcher witnessed was what most teachers call normal everyday conflict over not sharing. The examples given above would indeed indicate that the levels of discriminatory remarks were low. This may be due to the fact that pupils from four of the six schools came from similar cultural backgrounds.

In the Republic set, in a school serving a population in which there are ongoing serious inter-group conflicts, this filtered into the school in the shape of often vicious playground fights. Teachers on yard duty were on the alert to spot and defuse these as quickly as possible, and there were codes in place for dealing with those involved. These fights were mainly among the pupils from 3rd or 4th Class up but all ages shared the yard. The teachers reported that they heard hostile talk from children in First Class but not in Infants. No divide along the community conflict lines, or along ethnic or dis/ability lines, was observable in the Infants groups. In other schools the teachers had the same observations: for instance, minority ethnic children were easily accepted among their peers in Infants classes, whereas in the more senior classes the divides were observable (an exception being children who were good at sport - they were popular whatever their background). Teachers' discussions of these issues will be examined in the next section.

4.4 Teachers' perspectives on pupils' perceptions of diversity

In both sample sets teachers generally were of the opinion that pupils of this age (4-7 years) were not cognitively aware of diversity in the way adults perceived it, and that adults were quick to attach labels whereas children were more accepting. However, most of the teachers did observe that children had some awareness of visible difference (physical disabilities, skin colour, height, hair, colour, etc.), but that very few would be aware of religious differences. In general, teachers' views reflected the Piagetian concept of the egocentric child.

On the question of religious diversity, teachers in the Northern Ireland integrated schools indicated that it was not until about the age of 7-8 that children made a connection. They indicated that religion was not discussed in Primary One; in Primary Two the children went to separate religion class, and they accepted this as the norm. The issue only arose when the Catholic children made their First Communion and wore beautiful white dresses – three teachers observed Protestant children wanting to wear the same dress as the Catholic children. One teacher told how a Protestant child said she *'wanted to look like a princess too'*. The teachers indicated that when they explained that it was because Jane, Paula and Kate go to a different church from Jan, Sara and Julie the children generally accepted the explanation and there was no big issue.

Teachers working in interface areas that were directly affected by the conflict stated that issues were only addressed if they arose. Teachers did acknowledge that children learnt by example and that while the children were in school the teachers became the role model. As the discussion of playground interactions indicated (see Section 4.3.2), when the teachers promoted inclusionary practice they accepted that.

A number of teachers indicated that children from the ethnic minority did show an awareness that they were different from the majority grouping of children. However teachers indicated that these children did not want to be given special attention – they wanted to be treated the same as the other children.

In the Republic sample teachers' opinions on whether their pupils were aware of diversity showed wider variations. This may reflect the greater level of diversity in several of the participating schools. However the general thrust of teacher opinions resonated with those of teachers in the Northern sample. Many felt that pupils were aware of and interested in diversity around them, while perhaps as many felt that if they did register difference it did not matter to them. Most felt that the children were caught up in the personal and immediate levels of their experience.

They were flicking through [magazines] … and one of the kids asked who are these people and I said they were Chinese. A little kid then pointed at the little [Chinese] girl and said 'her's a China man!'. It was the first time it dawned on her and she was looking at the picture and looking at [that girl] and she had never made the connection that she was different.

I think the infants just haven't got the sense or they just have the innocence to just accept people at face value.

Infants do see difference but don't follow through with exclusion. There's a big difference in the senior classes. The same for the Travellers (interview notes)

A few held strongly that small children are colour blind:

Young kids do not see colour - I mean it's a fact, they do not see it… We create these prejudices ourselves by passing on our own interpretation of the situation.

However another teacher learned that at least some minority children were not blind to their own colour:

Lee's mother said that Lee was so delighted to meet Inez who was the same colour as her as it can be an issue for her if people talk about her hair and say it's different. The first few days of being in the Junior Infants were so anxious for her going to school but once she made one friend … she was fine. … She always looks around, even Ray's mum says he is always looking around and if he sees one person with skin like him he thinks that's great. They are looking for people like them – they don't want to be the person that's different.

Another teacher felt that the majority children had a primarily positive awareness:

It would be more of an observation 'Why does he have brown skin and I don't, teacher?'. Some of the white children would find it quite fascinating. I know a little girl went out at Christmas and she deliberately asked for a black baby doll because she was so taken with black skin.

In the border county schools, as well as further south, all the teachers felt that religious and political issues were well above the Infant children's heads. However at an experiential level the impact of these issues can enter the Infant classroom:

I had [a child] last year he would have said 'my uncle was shot by the soldiers'. [His brother] - I don't know if he is aware of it. He is in Junior Infants but [the first child] very early on he would have said, if we were saying prayers for the dead in November, 'my uncle he was shot by the soldiers'.

Several teachers remarked on the differences between junior and senior pupils – awareness and barriers grow as children get older:

[I've heard] comments from the older children that the place will be full of Latvians. I said could they come to this school and X said no we wouldn't understand them they would have their own school.

Acceptance is markedly related to children's capacity to engage in popular activities:

The [senior]boys who can play football and play it well, it doesn't matter if you're black, white, purple, a Traveller, whatever. If you're good at football, it seems to be the job. The girls tend to stick together in the senior end of the school…

Diversity of ability is another issue. When a child's disability is such that it interferes with smooth interactions and play, the group tend to start marginalising that child very early:

There is a gap growing in my room. Already and it's January of Junior Infants. By the time you get to Senior Infants they are poles apart… They may not verbalise that they see those children as different, but there is a diversity – they certainly wouldn't play with them as much.

The teachers said that even where the parents show mutual animosity when they meet at delivery and home time, the children come into the Infants classrooms and mix as if there were no problems. There were no visible minorities in this school, and talk of them did not occur. Again the teachers reported that when they did have the occasional immigrant child or Traveller, the child was accepted in a matter-of-fact way (yet, as will be seen, they also noted that Travellers and Traveller identity featured in conflict situations). Children with learning difficulties were isolated and were increasingly so as they went up the school.

Concluding comment

Data from research notes on the participant observation sessions indicate that these children had an awareness of differences in terms of disabilities and colour but their deployment of this is heavily dependent on context and the age of the child. The young children in the observed class and playground sessions showed an awareness of other people's feelings and knew it was wrong to exclude others or to call people names, yet this was a continual problem faced by teachers after break times. Thus although children had some awareness of diversity in terms of differences and exclusion, they had not yet mastered the skill of conflict management to deal with playground disagreement. Though the possibility that there was a level of performing for the stranger cannot be forgotten, the participant observation sessions were useful. The teachers were intrigued by what emerged (and did not emerge) and a number said that they would return to these issues with their class.

Teachers' discussions of their pupils' management of diversity and conflict showed that traditional developmental concepts of early childhood might be under pressure from knowledge born of experience. Different viewpoints coexist and challenge each other in the body of data as a whole, but often also within the reflections of individual participants. The difference between the teachers in the two sample sets reflects the levels of diversity in their teaching settings. However underlying the variations in the levels of diversity they observed, the teachers' evaluations of the children's management of diversity remained substantially informed by common and traditional conceptualisations of childhood.

5 TEACHERS: INTERVIEWS AND SURVEY RESPONSES

Substantially the same range of issues and perspectives were expressed by teachers in the surveys and in the interviews. However the interviews and discussions with class teachers gave an opportunity for nuances and for introduction of themes not mentioned in the questions.

The analysis of data from classroom and playground sessions was structured to a minor extent to reflect the two sample data sets. Overall, the distinction between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland teachers is marked in relation to their discussions of diversity and conflict in society; it is less so in relation to their perspective on their pupils, and there is a high level of congruence in their comments on their professional work with these pupils. Material from the Northern and Republic sample sets is analysed separately in Sections 5.1 and 5.2. In the discussion of teachers' reflections on teaching (Section 5.3), the two sets of data are drawn on as required by the topic. In Section 5.1 the teachers' perceptions of diversity and conflict are discussed. Section 5.2 is a discussion of teaching strategies, resources and requirements. Section 5.3 is concerned with the role of the adult stakeholders: the issues of leadership, parental involvement, and teacher-teacher relations are discussed. Finally, in Section 5.4, teachers' observations on their initial professional education are discussed.

5.1 Teachers' perception of diversity

5.1.1 The Northern Ireland sample

Survey and interview data gathered in Northern Ireland indicate that teachers, principals and other key personal at Key Stage One perceived diversity in terms of the schools' general inclusion policy; the schools did not have a separate diversity policy. The following, from notes of interviews with two principals, sum up this policy position:

It was the ethos of the school to build a community of respect amongst staff, parents and the community.

Everyone is welcome, pupils are treated as individuals, with different learning abilities and different needs.

The teachers' position was that diversity was dealt with throughout the daily routine of the classroom and through focusing on the individual pupil and their family background. It was also about promoting mutual respect amongst the pupils and staff, developing the child's self-esteem and confidence, promoting turn taking, sharing and mutual co-operation.

In relation to promoting diversity in the classroom, the teachers' definition diverged slightly, and included children with individual learning abilities and Special Educational Needs. None of the interviewees mentioned religion in terms of diversity within the school. In the interviews and group discussions with the principals and teachers, the researcher specifically asked did they deal with diversity in terms of the conflict within Northern Ireland. Generally it seemed that religious diversity was deemed to be dealt with in terms of Christian values, suggesting that religion in terms of the Northern Ireland conflict was not addressed in Key Stage I. Observations of classroom practice confirm this as no reference to religious differences were made at any time during the observations in all six Northern schools.

Addressing conflict: Northern Ireland issues

Analysis of discussion material with the teachers regarding the Northern Ireland conflict revealed that the teachers addressed it from four perspectives: the position of the schools, the reactions of the teachers, the children's responses, and the schools' and teachers' efforts to adopt and develop programmes to address the conflict.

The Schools: Many teachers felt that

> *The schools did not address issues of conflict in terms of Northern Ireland – issues of conflict were addressed in terms of normal everyday conflict within the school.*

Generally speaking, teachers did not see the situation in Northern Ireland as a problem for the school. From one school even came the response

> *There is no conflict within the community – people from both sides are tolerant of one another.*

Such views can be attributed to the fact that in Protestant and Catholic areas generally speaking children go to different schools and live in different areas - hence there is little or no contact.

The teachers: One teacher indicated that even when one thought they had come to terms with the past and learned to be tolerant of the other side, something would happen and bring everything to the fore. She said:

> *It is not easy to be tolerant or forgiving when you are having your home attacked continuously.*

Another teacher said

> *This kind of thing goes on in both communities regularly.*

Five of the principals indicated that schools can only do so much, and what really needed to be addressed is housing issues and socio-economic status.

The children: Teachers in the integrated schools agreed that the majority of pupils in Key Stage I were not aware of religious differences amongst children in the classroom. They further indicated that even those who had shown some awareness, when questioned, indicated that they had heard it at home but had no concept of what the words meant (e.g. 'Taig' and 'Prod'). Teachers indicated that the biggest issues were children falling out (exclusion of peers, name calling and not sharing) during playground activities, no matter how often they addressed these issues.

Programme responses: One principal did assert that the school addressed issues of diversity in terms of the conflict in Northern Ireland. In interviews teachers at Key Stage One in that school affirmed this, but said that it was addressed further up the school at Key Stage Two and not in Key Stage One. Teachers indicated that in general most children had limited experience of diversity issues and even children living in interface areas were sheltered from sectarian issues by both parents and schools.

This and much of the commentary quoted above would indicate that schools are still viewed as a safe haven, and that the issues that still divide both communities in Northern Ireland are not discussed in schools, although all the schools have the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme, which aims to provide pupils with opportunities:
- to learn to respect and value themselves and others;
- to appreciate the interdependence of people within society;
- to know about and understand what is shared as well as what is different about their cultural traditions;
- to appreciate how conflict may be handled in non-violent ways.

All principals acknowledged that EMU was one programme specifically designed to deal with the conflict in Northern Ireland. However the degree to which EMU was implemented depended very much on the area. Two principals in interface schools expressed the view that parental and community pressure would not tolerate relationships with the other community. Another principal said that they no longer had contact with their partner school and cited this pressure as the main reason. However in a border area a school which has suffered considerably during the heightened conflict years had fully implemented the EMU programme and children continued to make contact with their partner school. Then again the principal pointed out that there was only one pre-school to service both communities, and that children were not actually meeting new friends but sustaining friendships that already existed. The question is whether this was due to parents not wanting their children to miss out in the pre-school years, or indicative of a community who have learned to be tolerant of one another. A further two schools indicated that they had contact with schools and students from different community backgrounds and positive links between schools via video links and visits. However when pupils from the South came to visit the North the pupils were not able to stay within the hosting community, due to community pressure.

Another principal from a controlled school did indicate that a few pupils were from the Roman Catholic faith and that their religious education programme 'A-live O' could be administered to pupils of any faith as it was all about promoting values. The A-live O programme was being used by one of the maintained schools as their Religious Education Programme.

Generally speaking teachers addressed issues of diversity in accordance with the Core Syllabus for Religious Education Order (NI) 1993, by promoting values, respect for self and others, enhancing pupil's self-esteem, and delivering a curriculum that is inclusive of every pupil, regardless of disability or learning ability. One teacher stated

> *Education is about much more than ensuring children achieve academically, it is about developing their communication skills, preparing them to be tolerant of others. It is about developing the core skill necessary to contribute to society as they grow older.*

However the data cited here suggest that there is a wall of silence when it comes to issues of diversity in terms of the Northern Ireland situation, and schools are still seen as safe havens. The general thrust of the discussion regarding the Northern conflict, as illustrated above, indicates that teachers require substantial support and high quality professional development opportunities.

5.1.2 The Republic of Ireland sample

Teachers welcomed diversity as 'good for the country, 'good for the children'. They were concerned about diversity issues, but the kinds of concerns and the urgency associated with them were related to the location and/or social context of their school. Interviewees from border county schools were keenly aware of religious identity and divisions, but the expressed awareness was almost notional in the schools distant from the border. The teachers' own attitudes to diversity were interesting in themselves. Personal experience was a key factor.

One survey respondent linked her comfort with the Republic's growing ethnic variety to her experience teaching abroad. As regards religious diversity one teacher remarked:

> I had gone from a mixed, Protestant-ethos primary school to a comprehensive secondary – where there was all different types and different ways - to a very closed sort of all female Church of Ireland college and it was an awful shock

Two teachers in an Educate Together school had a joint interview. As children they had gone to separate denominational schools in this very small town, but one of them said:

> It goes on into how people socialise. We both work in [this town] and we never met - even as you grow up your friends are Catholic and it promotes segregation of religions.

Several teachers talked about not knowing colleagues of another faith. One teacher from a minority faith tentatively commented that many Protestant schools made efforts to reach out and make connections, that they had to do so in order to survive, in a way that Roman Catholic schools did not seem to feel the need to. A Roman Catholic teacher who worked in a Church of Ireland school as learning support teacher remarked:

> For me actually working in a Church of Ireland school is interesting too. Recently the principal said that basically we are teaching the same programme – it's very alike. … before I would nearly be afraid to talk them about the First Penance or First Communion. Now I wouldn't be afraid – they would ask me what is the power of the priest or whatever and talk about Sunday School and that… You do have to start with the children because as adults we really have so many prejudices coming from our own background.

Ethnic diversity had been by implication an issue in the staffroom in this teacher's school. The teachers and children had a similar enlightenment:

> Jan [an African parent employed as a classroom assistant in the school] talked to the staff about values, men and women's roles, history, home practices. What they've been through to come here. Those stories led to a total change in perspective… She visited classes, told the kids about her life. One kid said 'Jan, we won't throw stones at your windows any more'…You can read all you like, the biggest resource is people coming in.
> (interview notes)

There were critical discussions of the political issues in several interviews in border county schools – these were linked to the maintenance of a culture of silence in the school. There were also experiential accounts. In a joint interview two colleagues were asked if the area's problems were rooted in history or religion: they concurred in responding that 'it is about history'. They then recounted a long series of incidents, of border crossings and harassment, and local sectarianism. They instanced relatives who had crossed the religious divide to take up employment and had experienced being given inferior uniforms, or being consistently called by the wrong first name (wrong both because it was not the person's name, and because it was a name from the other tradition. This echoes the contemptuous games children play with each other's names, mentioned above). In short:

> T1. The border has been a whole psychological barrier between North and South – you just sort of didn't cross over it. It blocked off geographically and in our minds as well. It was really a cut-off point and the whole natural hinterland was cut off. It is only recently the roads have been opened again.

Again, they classified the relatively recent experiences that they had recounted as 'history':

> … but that is going back in history. Some of their relations would be living here. It's all to do with the history. Thank God things have moved on a long, long way.

Generally speaking, diversity and mutual understanding were welcomed along all the diversity boundaries. However when comments on issues of religious identity were made, they indicated that religious diversity, even in the relatively narrow frame of the established Christian denominations in the country, is linked to experiences of boundaries, marginalisation and mutual ignorance.

Addressing conflict issues in schools in the Republic

> *It's funny how children instinctively know how wounding it is to pick on a feature whether it would be fatness or colour. They know it goes to the very core of your being.*

On the question of whether Infant class children were aware of larger issues of religious or ethnic conflict, the teachers generally felt that such questions were too abstract for them. On the issue of whether they actually discriminated against their peers on the basis of religious or ethnic identity, teachers ranged from fairly sure to emphatically sure that the children in their Infant classes did not do this. In the surveys and interviews, teachers said that they never or hardly ever saw conflict along religious or ethnic lines in their Infant classrooms, and they rarely had to deal with it up the school. When they did, they addressed it as they would any kind of bullying or unfair treatment of one child by another. All felt that the difference between younger and older children was not so much in terms of what they knew, but in terms of how they acted on it.

Teachers in schools where the threat or reality of community conflict was marked spoke in very similar terms about addressing conflict and tolerance issues in their teaching. Regardless of the cause of the conflict, they found it extremely difficult to address in the school, and in the two schools in this situation (one in a border county, one well south of that) the policy was to keep the conflict strictly outside the school. Addressing issues such as sectarianism is acutely different in schools close to or immersed in areas of conflict.

> *I see massive a massive difference between the Infants school and senior school. Last year most of our day was spent when they came in from the yard separating people who were fighting. All that [community conflict] came into the school and name calling was horrendous … The Infants accept it when the teacher says not to.*

> *It's a double-edged sword, because if you push an issue, then you might accentuate it more. Sometimes you've got to let things take a natural course.*

As noted above, teachers in Infant classes held a strong line on blocking out conflict from their classrooms. It could be said that they believed in the concept of the school as haven.

> *We [Infant teachers] have always said that while our children are happy for the few hours they are in the school, that is the most we can so. We can't right the world but we can make their day nice while they are in here.*

Some teachers cited incidents that made them wonder about their beliefs about young children's capacity to register diversity and discriminate on that basis: one teacher reported that, at the end of her three-year cycle with a class, she was astonished to hear a white girl fling racist slurs in a fight with a black girl: they had been seemingly colour-blind best friends in her class from the start. She also noted that children did not need to understand terms in order to use them to hurt:

> *The word 'gay' – they have no awareness of it, they hear it and know it is a wounding word – they don't need to understand it for it to have an effect…. The names they sling at each other are things like 'knacker' and the other one that is really the most wounding ones is 'gay', 'lesbian'.*

Another teacher came back repeatedly to this issue in her interview, and summed it up thus:

> *I'm well aware they know swear words. That has come out when they have been very highly frustrated. But I've never heard anything like 'nigger', 'black' or anything nasty said. I must say there have been times when they have been rowing and it hasn't come out.*

A few teachers had English (UK) children in their class. This next extract is from a teacher who had the daughter of returned emigrants in her class:

> *I remember it was hurtful because do you remember [she] cried. They were being called 'Yankee' something or other because their accent was different.*

Very few teachers explicitly mentioned racism in relation to interethnic conflict or discrimination, although all asserted that issues warranting that title had to be confronted. However the identification of what children are doing when they use racist terms can be blunted by this lack of racism awareness:

> *You'd hear on the yard 'you black this' or I have heard them on the yard roaring obscenities at each other - but it's no more than that they must have ammunition to roar at somebody. They'd roar as quick at me for wearing glasses.*

5.2 Mutual understanding among adults in the school context

The issue of community involvement and parent education arose in both sets of survey responses and sample schools. As teachers in a border school in the Republic reflected, it opens up what could be done in the classroom:

T1: More education for the parents is what you need …

T2: If they have those kind of activities and if they can have build up when they come to middle classes - then when they are more aware of the different religions and different loyalties, they can think 'we are all the same'.

However where parents were involved in cross border projects, the focus was on sport or other activities that the communities shared, and 'they never met religion head on'. In the Northern Ireland sample schools parents' opposition proved a major block to progress in developing EMU and allied programmes. One principal stated:

Parents may send their children to an integrated school but they do not want the issue of religious conflict as a curricular activity.

However meeting religious identity issues 'head on' cannot be postponed indefinitely. Several teachers mentioned that they did not have skills in conflict resolution, or in communicating with parents around sensitive issues.

If you bring in parents who haven't moved themselves and are completely swinging one way, you might cause more damage. What you really need to be doing is getting the children to question their parents' attitude, ever so slightly, if they're coming from a background where the attitude is so extreme.

An awful lot comes from parents. We don't discuss these kind of issues with parents – you don't want to open a can of worms.

Approaches to and management of conflict within staffs can be another area of silence. One teacher in a border school in the Republic compared the tacit staffroom pact in her school to that observed by a colleague who had taught in the Middle East after the Iran-Iraq war:

Teachers from opposite sides of the conflict were together in the staffroom. They made a rule never to discuss the divide. It's the same in this school – the Northern conflict is never discussed, in class or in staffroom.

Another teacher in a Southern border school, talking about involving parents in peace and reconciliation events, talked about staff and parents as all caught in the same process:

It was working with parents – and I suppose with inbuilt prejudiced mind-sets. They would have had difficulty with meeting people. One of the teachers, for example,on the other [side]would have had a brother that was killed by the IRA and here you had people whose relations were killed by soldiers.

As she said, they focused on sport or other things they held in common, and never discussed religion or politics 'head on'. The contradictions in the next extract from a joint interview with two teachers in a border school mirror how people are caught in their histories and at the same time are moving forward:

T1: It is the children that you have to free up, free their minds and open their minds. I think the peace process has gone a long way to do that.… The area of the conflict I suppose [is in] peoples minds and their reminiscences and stories ….There is not much conflict around here.The fact that the children from the area can go to the RUC sports day is a major thing.

T2: Some won't let their children go.

This underlines the significance of the issues facing schools in the border areas. However the similarity in experiences in areas where there is community conflict of any kind endorses the obvious - that conflict is not unique to sectarianism:

T2: In the parish there would have been conflict and they are all following the same faith.

T2: People would be very militant when it comes to an issue.

T1: Tolerance and seeing others people" views is quite a difficult thing to do. Only recently I was doing it in my small groups. I was doing debating and talking about two sides of the argument. …. when we have

discussed the two opinions they have to write about them and they can't - they find it hard to change their opinion.

Finally a number of teachers commented on the difficulty of teaching about Travellers:

What seems to be very significantly absent for us is the Traveller element - does it feature in the text books, I don't know. Except of course if people choose to cover this issue there are plenty of materials.

This issue is ghettoised – material is available if the teacher is specifically interested, but otherwise it is scarcely visible in teaching materials. Other difficulties arose for a resource teacher who tried to get an intercultural dimension that included Travellers, into her work in the community.

The African children were mesmerised to see their parents on stage. Same for the Travellers … Bring in Travellers' own traditions. We wanted to include them in the multicultural day… One group was assigned to do this. Not to identify individuals. Someone said 'sure you're a Traveller! The Traveller parents complained and that stopped that project.
(Interview notes)

A common factor - minority ambivalence in relation to how their group identity is seen by the majority - informs this account. The same teacher commented on the difficulty of addressing this when it emerged in the school – for instance when a Traveller called someone else a knacker. Finally, there were a few references to the trouble English children and returned emigrants from England can have. Traces of historic animosities get revived and feature in playground conflict.

Several teachers emphasised the importance of leadership and whole school approaches to issues of conflict and diversity if they are to effectively address these issues in their classroom programmes and in interactions with each other, with students and with parents.

5.2.1 Leadership in schools

One of the main issues to arise from the field study was the need for strong leadership. Principals indicated that to have an effective school and promote a community of respect there was a need to have the commitment of everyone involved within the school and the community, and not just the teachers. Parents, children, auxiliary staff and support teachers must be involved. One principal said

Policies mean nothing unless you have the commitment of staff to carry them through.

For the majority of teachers the principal and staff were the main source of support when dealing with diversity. The principals were in agreement that policies and practices must be carried on throughout the school and must not only cover classroom practice but whole school practice. The leadership of the principal is of paramount importance to the primary school: the principal must maintain the school; be able to deal with strategic issues; turn things around, and have the skills to motivate staff and bring them on board to carry out strategies. He or she must also lead in building mutually beneficial relations with parents and the overall adult community. To date principals in the Republic of Ireland are not offered professional development opportunities for this executive role.

In both the Northern and Republic sample schools the principals generally put the view that diversity was about promoting values; developing pupil's morals; and creating a community of respect between staff, pupils, involved parents and the community served by the school by promoting respect for self and others, empathy, equality and individuality. In the Northern sample schools the need for strong leadership and effective school policies was related to issues of religious diversity and to behaviour management. The context here gave specific urgency to these issues, but the core issues were present in both samples. Consistent policies for addressing conflict among students, parents, teachers and other staff are required.

Religion and religious education was a particular area of focus in relation to school leadership and to local school and broader system policy. The issue of how to meet the needs of children from denominations other than that of the school was mentioned by several teachers. As one teacher from the Republic set said:

It would be very difficult to be a Jehovah Witness or a Muslim or an Atheist in a school where the stated and singular mission of the school is Catholic education. And it is even more difficult in circumstances where there is a town in rural Ireland or along the border where the only school is the Catholic school.

Several principals and teachers also spoke about the need for systemic leadership. This teacher was critical of policy at national level:

> *The [ROI] state gives the right to parents to exclude their children from denominational instruction … That is almost a constructive dismissal of the faith or views or philosophy of the excluded person.*

A substantial percentage of pupils in one Church of Ireland (border) school in the Republic were Roman Catholic, but religion was not an issue. Staff attributed this in part to the fact that the parents of both denominations distanced themselves from the Northern conflict – a lot were also nominal rather than committed church members. The principal had also worked with the staff also to pare back the school's religious education programme to bible studies, supplemented by specific provision for denominational instruction as required (a Roman Catholic staff member prepared children for sacraments in that church, while the requirements of Church of Ireland children were met by the rector). This programme met the needs of all the Christian denominations attending – the Muslims also accepted it, as did those of no religious affiliation.

Leadership also shows in the school environment. This includes registering a welcome for diversity visually in the illustrations, maps and messages of all sorts, and displays of students' work on the school walls. It also includes how the ethos of the school is registered. A few teachers remarked on the impact that strongly religious features such as statues, particularly when juxtaposed with imagery of the nation state, must have on parents and children of other faiths and traditions.

Leadership can occur at any level, given a well developed whole school ethos. A resource teacher in the Republic set felt that the approach had to be on a whole school basis:

> *You could cause a moment. You could write down –, I want to work on sectarianism in the school. How am I going to do that? …. You could start a programme and put the strands into English, into History, into SPHE, and maybe the whole school could be doing this, say every three months. So that it's under the surface, it's creeping into them without them actually realising it.*

Strong leadership is required to create a positive context for new teachers:

> *When teachers come out of college they are idealistic, but as they get up the chain the chain is corrupt. Leadership should be targeted.*

The targeting this teacher was referring to is professional development for leaders in education – from senior Departmental level through to all levels of responsibility in local schools. Such targeting would both protect the chain from 'corruption' and ensure that the student or graduate teacher had a sound context for acquiring initial teaching experience. Senior teachers in some schools are involved in mentoring both students and new graduates who join the staff.

Finally, the following are the key ideas that came through regarding what teachers felt they needed for their increasingly diversifying classrooms.

5.3 Teaching about diversity

All teachers indicated that diversity was taught throughout the daily routine of school life. It was about promoting respect for self and others, promoting turn-taking, sharing, helping others and trying to get children to understand others' viewpoints. The majority of teachers indicated that the way they dealt with diversity was very much through experiences they had encountered over their years of teaching. Although in Northern Ireland most schools had EMU and PSE as curriculum subjects, it was left very much to the teacher how these were implemented. Most of the Key Stage One teachers indicated that they used circle time as a means of promoting these subject areas: what they were trying to get across to the children was how to relate to their own experiences. Teachers in the Republic sample paralleled this in their use of the Alive O and SPHE programmes, and circle time.

Two recurring aspects of diversity that appear in the responses of teachers and principals are promoting respect and understanding. Teachers indicate that these two aspects cannot simply be pigeonholed into a particular subject topic - they must be promoted in all curriculum areas and through out the daily routine of the school. Much of the comment about teaching about diversity was focused on the first of these aspects. Comments on the second aspect focused mainly on the teaching of religion and history.

5.3.1 The Northern Ireland sample: using circle time for promoting mutual respect and understanding

The majority of teachers indicated that the best way of teaching children about mutual respect was to relate it to their own experiences and feeling. Circle time was deemed by all teachers as the most effective way to get children of this age to relate their own experience to those of others. One teacher of a Primary Three class said

> *Circle time is a very effective way of introducing children to conflict management. The teacher acts as the mentor and the teddy bear controls who speaks. Therefore everyone involved with the problem gets to*

put across their concern, but they also have to listen to what the others have to say. They then will have the opportunity to seek a solution to the problem.

Another teacher of a Primary One class said

I use circle time to let the children reflect on their own experiences of feeling sad, happy, and on ways they have helped people. This makes them think of others and promotes an understanding that others feel the same way they do when they are happy or sad.

Teachers indicated that circle time could be used in association with other subject topics: for example, 'differences in ourselves' – hair colour, eye colour or height (i.e. a science topic) could also be a topic for circle time. This was observed in a Primary Three class where the teacher used circle time to reflect what, if anything, the children has learned about bullying (a topic of story time). The teacher said

This allows children to speak freely about bullying and how the person in the book felt. It also lets them consider how they would feel if they were bullied. None of the children like the bully in the book – they decided he was bad and jealous because the boy being bullied was better at football than him.

However this work must be reinforced in all situations:

You cannot expect children to take turns and share during structured classes, if you are prepared to let them do whatever they want during break times. Children need to be supervised during break times and if conflict breaks out over not sharing, taking turns or name calling, then the teacher or classroom assistant must explain why it is important to share, take turns and ask how they would feel if they were called names.

Another teacher from the same school said

It is through reinforcing positive behaviour, and continually explaining to children why they should share – emphasising how they would feel if the shoe was on the other foot that they come to understand and respect others.

In the Northern sample schools, EMU, PSE, RE and the Anti-Bias Curriculum (used in integrated schools) were all identified as opportunities for dealing with diversity issues. However the main strategy observed during the field study was circle time: through circle time children could openly talk about issues going on in their community, family life or things that affect them in general, and openly discuss their feelings. This allowed teachers to address these issues in a positive way and allowed children to learn about others and to consider other people's feelings. It further assists with building their confidence and self-esteem as it allows them to see that they are not the only people to be affected by such issues.

5.3.2 The Republic of Ireland sample: integration, tolerance and knowledge

Most teachers were at least willing to adopt a policy of integration; creating a welcoming classroom; 'starting from scratch with each child', and dealing with issues of difference as they arise, but without 'making an issue of it', as the following survey response exemplifies:

Ní mór abheith níos curamaí faoi chad a deirim, a mhúinim agus na háiseanna a úsáidim agus gan dabht smacht a choimead ar a ndeirfear sa rang (ó dhaltaí/ tuistí). Seachas sin más fíor oideachas ón bpáiste amach atá más mhodh teagaisc is féidir é a láimhseáil.

[It is necessary to be more careful about what I say, how I teach and the opportunities I use, and without a doubt to keep strict watch on the language used in the class (by pupils and parents). Notwithstanding that, if true child-centred education methods are used, this can be managed well.]

The next comment is possibly more reflective of position of the majority of respondents:

Because we have discussed and are aware of the diversity in the room, issues such as bullying are easier to explore. The children are very open and love to learn about their differences. They seem to be a lot more enthusiastic and tolerant than other schools I have worked in that do not have such diversity. (survey response)

However, most teachers registered a lack of skills to address the new challenges:

…the fact that a lot of them [asylum seekers] are so traumatised and the fact that a lot of them would be living with family [problems], you have that going on as well.

The following teacher's comment reflects the contradictory situation of dealing with issues about which she felt uninformed:

> You must instil respect in the pupils for themselves and for each other. Apart from that it would be very difficult to teach about difference. I think the new SPHE programme will be very good. I think a lot of it has to do with knowledge and it will be good that the children will investigate the different cultures.

The sample schools in the Republic included schools with a substantial presence of children from minority ethnic groups, including Travellers. Classrooms generally contained a selection of books and visual materials that reflected diversity, but the level of prominence given to this varied widely, from portrayals of diversity as the normal image of society, to rooms where most diversity-related illustrations were linked to religious or third world issues. In schools with a high level of diversity in the pupil population, this tended to be reflected in the visual environment in the Infant classroom and on the passages. Even in schools where there are no visible minorities, as this teacher says, teachable moments can be triggered by the right resources:

> In choosing books for your library corner and in choosing some toys - like dolls' skin colour - you could have diversity in those materials, but the opportunities that would arise if you had actually living bodies in the class…

As with the Northern sample teachers, there was strong consensus in the Republic sample that children in the Infant classes are too young for programmes addressing sectarianism or racism, but most of the teachers wanted to promote respect for and knowledge of diversity in class work. Celebrating festivals, ethnic traditions, using stories from other cultures, involving parents, were all mentioned as ways to promote positive perceptions of diversity. One school had some minority ethnic classroom assistants – they had done sessions with staff and with children, and this had transformed attitudes among both.

Young children can accept and respect different viewpoints even on core issues:

> They were curious at first as to 'Why isn't such and such coming to the church?'. And I would say that his mummy and daddy go to a different church… It was fine – they don't really pass much remarks at that age. It's just 'why not?' and once it's explained it's fine.

However, the teachers registered problems in the area of knowledge and skills.

> I wouldn't go near [teaching about Islam] at the moment – I really wouldn't know enough myself. I'd know a little bit but it wouldn't be enough to get across to the children. I wouldn't like to try it – I'd end up in more trouble.

Where teachers can manage to invest time and resources in developing new professional knowledge it is worthwhile. This teacher had responsibility for developing the school's interdenominational religious education programme:

> I think it was useful in that we all grew personally by devising the programme. Teachers are so busy with so many things now I wouldn't think that devising a programme from scratch...

Several teachers in the Republic sample also expressed concern about approaches to teaching history. They mentioned that the way in which issues were addressed in the senior classes was important in relation to what could be done in the junior classes. The teaching of history is a touchstone. One had taught a senior class the previous year. She said:

> The history I found very challenging. At that time I just got interested in the Stone Age and Iron Age and did a whole lot of research on it. I just didn't feel comfortable teaching 1916 etc. I avoided all that political history. Having said that, a teacher who was teaching it for a number of years said that was the total wrong thing to do ... It's a responsibility – you have to teach that area in history. It's incumbent on you to feel comfortable with that part of history and to teach it. They will only hear their parents and will learn it in a totally different way.

Resources to promote respect, knowledge and understanding

The teachers in both samples talked about useful curriculum areas and targeted programmes (EMU, PSE, citizenship programmes, anti-bias curricula, SPHE and RE, and circle time). They also mentioned several other specific resources which they used. The listing warrants presentation here:

Drama/structured play   *BBC and Channel 4 programmes*
Science/history/geography   *Computer programmes*
Assembly   *Oxford reading tree scheme*
Little Pathways part 1   *Stories from around the world*
Speedwell/Breaking down barriers *Primary Values*

Sources of resources that were mentioned included agencies such as:

Amnesty International   *Development Education Centres*
Church agencies   *Third World Development Agencies*

Teachers indicated that the above resources were useful, but felt that resources on topics such as single parents, divorce/separation, death, illness and so forth were not easy to come across.

Observations of classroom practice confirm the responses from teachers: there were numerous books to do with feelings, sharing, turn taking and friendship. Books, jigsaws and pictures around the walls depict cultures from around the world. However in the Northern sample classrooms there were no resources identified to deal with diversity in terms of the Northern Ireland conflict.

The issue of resources is in a sense superficial in this domain. As one teacher in the Republic sample put it:

> *I think it is much deeper... We'll all go and listen to all the fabulous things that are trotted out to us. But the bottom line is put it into practice. Making it work for children who know no boundaries is very difficult.*

This comment refers mainly to resources for conflict resolution, but in a sense it also applies to promoting understanding. The Republic sample teachers mentioned curriculum areas such as RE, SPHE and the Walk Tall programme as good areas for promoting positive attitudes to diversity. Several also mentioned using resources from England. Some found the English curriculum excellent, but the majority would like to see more materials tailored to the Irish situation. Teaching about Traveller culture posed a difficulty for several teachers. This gap in relation to intercultural material that reflected Travellers as a normal part of Irish society echoes the identified lack of locally specific resources in the Northern sample.

5.4 Teachers on teacher education

Three areas of need featured in teachers' discussions of teacher education:
- the need for concepts and knowledge
- the need for experiential learning
- the need for skills

As will be seen in the brief commentary below, the teachers' comments highlight how these areas intersect: experiential learning is blocked by inadequate conceptual frames, while teaching theory in advance of the experience that will illuminate its relevance is also less than effective.

Virtually all the teachers in both sample sets said that their initial teacher education had not prepared them for the diversity of all kinds that they are encountering in their professional work. Teachers indicated that it was through reflective practice, shared experiences, staff meetings, support and leadership from the principal, and experience of dealing with situations that equipped them to deal with issues of diversity. They further indicated that community and parent pressure was also a contributing factor to how the school dealt with issues of diversity.

The majority of the participating teachers had trained at least ten years ago. Their comments may reflect the fact that they missed out on recent developments in teacher education, but they may also reflect the fact that some diversity-related course elements did not register because their experience at the time did not give them a context for 'hearing'. The hesitancy of this young teacher (Republic sample) about what she did or did not get suggests this:

> *This is my fourth year out and honestly I never imagined that I would be teaching in such a class with such diversity. I wasn't prepared for it at all. There was no training done. It might have been mentioned in passing. … And then I suppose we would have done a bit on religious differences, although not enough to have prepared me to teach about a different religion as such.*

Recently qualified teachers in the Northern sample set also said that though they did have some training on EMU they felt it did not prepare them to deal with diversity.

Several teachers said that students should have experience teaching in a broad range of schools so that they would gain experience with children across the spectrum of diversity:

I think that the most important thing I would have liked to have done in college is I would have liked to have visited and spent a number of weeks in different kinds of schools around the country. Not just have watched but been part of the classroom working with the teacher, helping the teacher. I think that would have been the most important learning experience for me.

[Interestingly, seven Colleges of Education in Belfast, Dublin and Limerick are currently involved in the third year of an EU-funded, Centre for Cross Border Studies-managed North-South project involving student teachers doing part of their assessed teaching practice in primary schools in the other jurisdiction.]

One principal asserted that students should be sent on teaching practice to recognised centres of good practice. And when students graduate they should start on the path of professional lifelong learning by being supported in their initial period:

…something for the first three months when they start in a school [with a lot of social issues].[It would be good if] if a link was maintained with the college and if something was done just around managing children.

Many of these teachers had done teaching practice in disadvantaged schools, but they felt that their professional education gave them nothing to prepare them for the level of diversity in intellectual and emotional development that they encounter. They identified needs in the areas of knowledge and skills.

I would definitely like to have more knowledge on the ethnic minorities and more on religious differences … obviously there was the library and internet, but we weren't guided through anything like that. So that would have been useful.

I think what is needed is a lot of role play around conflict resolution. I mean role play where they are actually doing it. Teachers come out from college and they are very well qualified in areas of the curriculum. The areas that cause challenges for young idealistic teachers are children not co-operating.

Initial teacher education needs the accompaniment of ongoing professional development programmes. Newly qualified teachers come into established staffrooms. Several teachers referred to the need to promote ongoing professional development that would generate school practice that would support new teachers. One specific area, mentioned by only one teacher, is anti-racism training:

I really think we need an anti racism programme for all schools –not just optional but compulsory. I've heard teachers make dreadful comments to me that were racist.... Teachers need to be educated. I think that can't come soon enough. I think it would be very useful as part of our ongoing service that the Department would allocate a day or two for talking about issues like anti racism or interculturalism.

There are other kinds of skills:

[When students come in as teachers] they need to be open to what things are hidden: ethos, the hidden agendas, tensions in schools... They need to be able to come to a meaningful understanding about what is not being said about a class or school.

Finally, in relation to religious diversity the issue of denominational teacher education arises. Most of the principals and several teachers felt that pre-service education should be integrated rather than in separate denominational colleges; that student teachers needed to learn about each other across the divides of religion as well as other divides, if truly inclusive education is to happen in schools. However the principal in the Church of Ireland school in the Republic felt that to support its identity and vision, this numerically small religious community needed a separate college, but that students from the various denominational colleges should come together for modules and activities and to study other religions, and that students should cross denominational boundaries for teaching practice placements.

A challenge for teacher education is to transmit the theory in ways that register within the experiential frames of the student teachers, and/or to expand those frames to match current classroom realities more closely.

Closing comment

This chapter completes the presentation of data analysis. As the next chapter is a discussion of the findings, comment here will be limited to an overall observation regarding the trends in teachers' talk when they were discussing matters outside their classroom and school, and when they were focussing on their professional work. In the Republic of Ireland sample, teachers in schools far from the border were remarkably generalised and uninvolved in any discussion of Northern conflict issues, whereas the border county teachers' reflections were

much closer in tone to those of their Northern colleagues. This divergence was most marked in teachers' discussion of their perspective on diversity and conflict in society; it is less marked when they discuss how they believe their pupils engage with diversity, and it fades still further in their discussion of their work with these pupils.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Teachers' reflections on their perceptions, practice and professional context comprised the main body of data in this research project. It is possible and helpful to view their discourse as organised along two intersecting conceptual lines. One was their conceptualisation of children, which was on a continuum from 'child as innocent' to 'child as engaged', and the other was their conceptualisation of the purpose of school, which was on a continuum from 'school as haven', to 'school as engaged'. These two intersected to shape their thinking as to what can and ought to be done in early years classrooms in a society marked by diversity, discrimination and even conflict. In Table 4 below, these two continua are used to construct a matrix in which the key themes can be analytically summarised:

Table 4: Concepts of children and school, and allied possibilities

	Schools as haven	**School as engaged**
Child as innocent (develop-mental model)	Protect children, keep community conflict outside. Children cannot be biased, are too young for critical discussion of social issues Engage children in learning to share and care.	Fields of concern for adults different from those for children. Engage children in cultural activities; reflection on personal, interpersonal and familial relations but not social critique.
Child as engaged (social constructivist model)	Fields of concern for adults different from those for children. Children's learning scaffolded: engage in cultural activities and critique but within safe (personal/interpersonal/familial) limits.	Social concerns discussed with both adults and children. Children's learning scaffolded: reflect on their perceptions, relationships, and the wider world in the light of anti-bias principles.

The whole matrix of thought and strategies is nested in the wider community context, and teachers/principals in effect located themselves variably, depending on their understanding of diversity, on the particular issue in question at any time, and on factors such as the urgency and pain in that context, the level of and pace of diversification in the community and school, and the wider school and systemic support or lack of it that they experienced in their work with the children.

In this discussion of the research findings the survey process is evaluated in Section 6.1 and the need for this kind of research is reviewed in the light of the demographic and policy framework North and South. Reflecting the identifications in the matrix above, the following are the themes of other sections of this discussion:

6.2: *Core concepts:* This relates to the two sets of (child and school) headings in the matrix above. At the immediate level of relating with the complex mix of children in the early years classroom of today, the issues are the teachers' own perception on issues of diversity, and the gaps in their initial and ongoing teacher education.

6.3: *Teaching and learning for mutual understanding:* This relates to the content of the matrix. At the level of working with children, there are issues to do with teachers' knowledge, skills and resources.

6.4: *Relationships, conflict and leadership in the learning community:* This relates to the larger context within which both the organising concepts and the classroom possibilities suggested in the matrix are actually developed. These classrooms are in the overall school context, and at this level the issues are community and parent pressure, and leadership in schools and in the education system generally.

6.5: *Teacher education,* the core issue for this research, is a second element in the context in which these teachers worked. The closing comments in this section and chapter comprise indicators of the implications of the research findings and literature for teacher education for diversity. However all the teachers' discussion had implications for teacher education, so that theme runs through this chapter.

These teachers were all voluntary participants in this project – they were interested in the issues. While this interest is probably widespread, it would seem from other research that it would need to be far more so (Curriculum Development Unit, 2004; INTO/Equality Authority, 2004; Lynch, 1999). The urgency of the need to promote inclusiveness in education is indicated by census data (CSO, 2002; NISRA, 2001). International official concern at the international rise of racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance (ENAR, 2002; UN, 2001), exemplified in the conflicts within this country, is a negative indicator of this need. A positive indicator of commitment to inclusiveness at official level lies in current diversity and equality law North and South and in curriculum texts (DENI, 1999; DES, 1999). However the conceptual slippages in policy texts, noted in Chapters 1 and 2 of this report, are part of the context in which schools and teachers operate: at the highest level of education

policy making, concepts of diversity can slip towards being read as categories of need, and conceptualisation of children as learners still carry layers of Piagetian theory. This slippage does not help to stem the exclusionary practices identified by Crowley (INTO/Equality Authority, 2004).

6.1 The survey: teachers in context

Schools that participated in the research survey and ensuing visits met the criteria set out in the project brief. Two thirds were in border counties. The Northern sample schools represented controlled, maintained and integrated sectors, and interface and border locations; the Republic sample schools represented the major denominational and multi-denominational sectors, areas of community tension, and border and non-border locations. School size, gender and ethnic mix, and socio-economic status were also considered. The data from these small samples were rich and adequate for the purposes of this project. Experienced teachers were numerically dominant among the Infant teachers who took part in the survey and school sessions in both states. Their identification of the issues was characterised by the focus on issues to do with children as individuals, which informed their initial teacher education. As the literature indicates, teachers are pragmatists, deeply absorbed by the fine-grained and very complex life in the classroom (Day, 1997; Horgan and Douglas, 2000; Lynch, 1999). The insights gained through discussions with the teachers, and analysis of their input in the light of the research literature, warrant the development of recommendations for innovation in teacher education.

The 'border issue' looms large in the data, as might be expected given the criteria for the sample sets. Indicators of diversity in the sample sets suggest that traditionally homogenous schools are ceasing to be the norm in 'remote' as well as in urban locations. Indicators of ethnic diversity seemed greater in the schools in the Republic – immigration is higher there. Besides, the growing diversity in Republic classrooms is on the whole visible and recent, whereas the main forms of diversity in the North are longstanding. Apart from the silence that has been identified as the established pedagogic response to that community conflict, there was no novelty to prompt teachers to talk about diversity. Teachers in the Northern Ireland sample focused more on the Northern conflict whereas those in the South spoke more about the challenges attending ethnic diversity: for example, several in the Republic sample talked about Travellers whereas they were scarcely mentioned in the Northern sample. It is also worth noting comments from some teachers in the Republic sample about social segregation well south of the border, due to separate denominational school systems. This suggests that traditional religious divides continue to shape social relations throughout the country.

The reality in these schools reflects the changes identified in the censuses (noted above) and in the growing body of literature on education and inclusion (Centre for Early Childhood Care and Development, 2002; Connolly et al., 2002; Devine et al., 2002; INTO/Equality Authority, 2004; Lynch, 1999). As well coming within the project criteria framework, all the schools dealt with children's diverse learning abilities, family background and physical dis/abilities. New teachers will face a range of intersecting kinds of diversity – variations in capability, socio-economic status, ethnic and religious identities, as well as familial and personal issues and possibilities. This growing diversity in the classroom is an outcome in part of an international as well as national thrust towards inclusion, supported by law and policy. Few teachers referred to this body of official literature.

The short period of time spent in participant observation with the children in the Infant classes was useful, especially when viewed in the light of teacher perceptions. In short, the children showed elements that could be read as 'pre-prejudice' (Connolly et al., 2002; Derman-Sparks, 2000; Murray and O'Doherty, 2001). They showed varied levels of knowledge of racist or other exclusionary terminology, and even what they did know was not organised into an effective a priori framework governing how they behaved (Devine et al., 2002; Sani et al., 2000).

6.2 Key concepts: childhood, diversity and exclusion

The pupil-teacher relation can be compared to the centre of a nest of concentric spheres of influence. The teachers were committed to their pupils, to their personal growth and educational achievement. Their familial and community contexts were important as the context for that development and growth. Wider social issues impinged with painful urgency in interface areas and other areas of community tension – the further the school community was from such social situations, the more generalised the discussion of them was, whether between teacher and researcher, or teacher and class. However in the North and in the Republic's border schools the issue of the Northern Ireland conflict was cloaked in silence in classroom and other locations of adult-child interactions: the children were being protected. Teachers' perceptions of diversity and its management in that context were governed by their understandings of childhood.

These teachers articulated a predominantly developmental concept of childhood, but they also took note of, for instance, how skilfully many immigrant children negotiated their way into their peer group. This suggests that diversification in the classroom puts pressure on the developmental model of childhood. It did not replace it, but the teachers' talk was nuanced and elements of the social constructivist model were operant, leading to a mixed articulation and operation of concepts of childhood. In the Northern sample, teachers' thinking about children's

engagement with diversity in relation to the Northern Ireland conflict reflects the findings of Taijfel et al. (1970), Jahoda and Harrison (1975), McWhirter and Gamble (1982) and Cairns (1987). Generally the teachers' perspectives were akin to what Lynch (1999) noted in relation to social disadvantage: teachers on the whole are aware of class, but are not class conscious; issues are individualised and the structural dimension of social inequities is not to the fore. However there is evidence in the data of shifts in conceptualisation. The teachers were in effect learning as they worked, expanding their perceptions and understandings of childhood and of diversity to reflect their experience in their community and in their classrooms – this showed in their 'pragmatic interculturalism' (Day, 1997; Horgan and Douglas, 2000).

Given that the school system is deeply informed by consensualist ideology (Drudy and Lynch, 1993), and that these teachers' initial education did not offer them an adequate theoretical framework for reading social change, it is perhaps not surprising that very few teachers mentioned issues such as the need for anti-racism training. However the teachers did talk about how children go about drawing boundaries, keeping certain types in or out. The teachers' operationalised concept of childhood (as evidenced in their interactions with their pupils) was perhaps closer to the social constructivist model than their articulated concept (they still used terms drawn from the developmental model at the time of their training).

The teachers – North and South – addressed issues of diversity in terms of the individual child promoting respect for self and others. As noted above, this is in accordance with even some very recent official texts which still reflect a Piagetian concept of the child as learner (Donnelly, 2004). However, the Vygotskian concept of the child as an active and competent learner, and of learning as social construction, is honoured in the recent curricula North and South. A social constructivist paradigm would articulate better with the kinds of issues the teachers were addressing. Data in this study suggest that a core requirement for teachers is access to professional opportunities to familiarise themselves with this paradigm if they are not to reinterpret these texts through the lens of traditional understandings of childhood. The conceptual slippages in policy texts (noted above) suggest that in the first place policy makers need to audit their conceptual frameworks in relation to diversity and childhood.

6.3 Teaching and learning for mutual understanding

The Curriculum for primary schools in both states is full of internal linkages and cross-references from one 'subject' area to another. Teachers' comments indicate that they used this structure to promote diversity in specific curriculum areas and across educational themes. The cross-curricular themes initiated in Northern Ireland in 1992 were not intended to be additional subjects on the timetable but rather to be part of the whole curriculum and integrated into everyday teaching and learning. Each of the themes has two dimensions: skills, knowledge and understanding, and personal qualities, attitudes and skills. The same applies to the interactive structure in the Republic curriculum. Interculturalism then is not another area to be taught, but rather a constitutive dimension of everything that is done in the classroom/learning community.

Some nodes in this network, however, had particular importance for the teachers in this study. Teachers' focus was on the spirituality, values and life skills areas (RE, PSE, EMU, SPHE) and history, but within these domains, pedagogic strategies are the key element: enlisting children's imaginations through story and play, and in particular through circle time.

The teachers spoke highly of the values and life skills themes in the curriculum ('excellent', 'great'). RE programmes (and in the North the EMU programme) were mentioned by virtually every teacher as an excellent opportunity and resource for development of respect for self, others and diversity (Montgomery and Smith, 1997; Richardson, 1996). However, the data suggest that teaching on diversity has been most strongly explored in relation to moral concern for the welfare and inclusion of people with disabilities, and to development education or Third World issues: again this resonates with the conceptual slippage in many education policy and curriculum texts, noted above.

The teachers attested that they found circle time invaluable for promoting growth, relationship skills and learning, and the children clearly enjoyed and benefited from it. Their experience bears out Bayley's (2002) argument that circle time can develop important personal and social skills, enhance children's self-esteem and extend their thinking skills as they grapple with important moral issues. Teachers create a classroom environment in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and gain the confidence to express their opinion during discussions. A sensitive, respectful and informed approach is required to issues that are sensitive in the community (e.g., DENI, 1999; DES, 1999; UN, 2001). Infant classrooms must have a nourishing context at two levels – school ethos and community relations. However, as noted above, issues that were deeply sensitive in the local community rarely came into the school, even in circle time. Issues that did arise – occasional racist or other exclusionary name-calling, community conflicts reflected in school yard fights – were dealt with as they arose. This topic will be discussed further in relation to leadership.

Religious and ethnic identities can overlap and even be coterminous (UNESCO, 2001, 2003), and religious affiliation can be an important element of a community's social identity, even when religious practice is waning (Inglis, 1999). However, there is little or no research into issues to do with religious identity in the area of multicultural education

(Burzstyn, 2002; Korn, 2002; West and Wise, 2001). History, including very recent history, is crucial in the Northern conflict, and this history is passed on in stories in the environments of young children who are avid and listeners and learners (Barton, 2001; Cullingford, 2003). This conflict is truly European. Its roots are centuries old, and it owes nothing to the recent immigration waves which are a major focus in interculturalism debates. Teachers of history across Europe are engaging with issues of mutual understanding (Barton, McCully and Conway, 2003; Cullingford, 2003; Leeuw-Roord, 2001; Parekh, 2001; Waldron, 2002).

A number of teachers said that how history is taught in the senior classes is very important in relation to creating a good environment for developing inclusive and tolerant Infant classrooms. In their history work in the early years classrooms, the teachers facilitated pupils in exploring topics such as differences and similarities between children within the classroom and in the wider world. Pupils were given the opportunity to compare similarities and differences in traditional celebrations in their own and other cultures. They had opportunities to engage in discussion and to undertake activities on cross-curricular themes. However, as some of the comments by teachers suggest, even though history in the Infant classes is focused on the immediate and personal worlds of the young child, those worlds can include experience of conflicts. Teachers require a framework that recognises the issues involved and suggests age-appropriate ways of responding to them.

The Early Years curriculum, including the areas briefly reviewed here, allows for intercultural work, and for reflection on conflict and mutual respect and acceptance. However, it does not deal in depth with how to teach on sensitive issues of diversity/sectarianism in the context of Northern Ireland. In the Northern sample, in schools that dealt with diversity in terms of the Northern Ireland conflict, the teachers felt that this was appropriate at Key Stage Two, not Key Stage One. Similarly in the Republic sample, where there was community conflict, that issue was seen as appropriately addressed in more senior classes. Clearly the way such conflicts are dealt with in the senior classes is a highly important element in providing a secure support for anti-bias work in the Early Years classes, but there is also a need to develop programmes to address issues of diversity sensitively but regularly and often in the early years classrooms (Epstein, 1993; Murray and O'Doherty, 2001).

6.3.2 Resources

There are useful materials and resources available in Northern Ireland and the Republic relating to diversity, inclusiveness and conflict management. Two examples are selected for comment because they exemplify the kind of material that should support sound practice. *Primary Values* (Montgomery & Birthistle, 2001) is designed for use in Key Stages 1 and 2 to assist teachers in promoting children's ability to engage with issues of identity, interdependence and conflict. It provides materials for work on a series of themes. All of the themes are underpinned by a detailed conceptual framework of the kind of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, issues and questions that the pack seeks to address through the stories, discussions and activities. Each thematic framework outlines how children can address different issues from various perspectives of me, family, school, community and the world. A similarly structured resource, but designed to address a wide gamut of forms of diversity, is Derman-Sparks' *ABC Curriculum* (2000). In this handbook for early years classroom work, the presentation of ideas and strategies is deeply informed with good theory. This should help to ensure that when teachers adapt the ideas to suit local situations, their innovations will be conceptually sound.

Teachers commented on the lack of resources that reflect to-day's society. As well as needing material to address political/ethnic/religious issues, social realities in the children's lives - such as divorce, bereavement and single parent families - need to be reflected in materials. Waldron (2002) criticises the history curriculum (RoI) for neglecting myth – story offers pupils in early years an entrée into imaginatively exploring identities, and the potential for positive endorsement of diverse cultural heritages is clear. Again, teachers would need to know what is possible in this domain across the range of cultures.

Teachers' calls for relevant materials suggest that delivering the full potential of the curriculum requires the development of downstream applications and materials that reflect the Irish reality. In the meantime, resources developed elsewhere prove useful. Teachers mentioned the Internet – there are excellent websites (see Appendix 2) which both educate the teacher user and provide materials for use in relation to policy and teaching practice.

6.4 Relationships, conflict and leadership in schools

Two key areas of concern require comment in regard to school relationships as they were exemplified in this study sample: conflict management in relation to pupils, parents and the local community, and in relation to fellow teachers; and leadership and collegiality in the learning community.

6.4.1 Conflict management

Conflict management was an area that deeply concerned many teachers, both as regards their pupils and as regards relations with the pupils' parents and home community. In the Northern Ireland field visit schools it was clear that the conflict in terms of the religious divide was scarcely addressed – this reflects published research

findings (DENI, 2003). None of the teachers spontaneously mentioned religious conflict as an issue related to diversity, although the schools were selected to represent the spectrum of provision and social context. Data from the sample schools also indicate that the teachers were not aware of resources that would have enabled diversity to be dealt with in terms of the Northern Ireland situation for this specific age group.

Overall teachers talked at length about the intersections between classroom issues and home life, and about the need to include parents in the processes around diversity and specifically conflict resolution. In the Northern sample this issue was strongly felt in interface schools where there was sectarian conflict. In the Republic it was most urgent in schools in areas of community conflict. However on the one hand the teachers felt that many parents from these communities would be difficult to involve; while on the other hand the teachers said that parental and community pressure strongly dictated how schools dealt with diversity. Principals and teachers in interface schools in the Northern sample noted parental pressure as a major obstacle to addressing issues of religious conflict or even to maintaining contact with the partner school in an EMU programme.Similar community opposition was noted in border schools in the Republic (in the Republic the further the school was from the border, the less sensitive the issue was). Schools identified their own way of working with children, albeit not by addressing the specific conflict but by promoting individuality, respect, empathy and equality. Teacher education and schools programmes require the support of a systemic commitment to community education for reconciliation, if the school is to be effective in this domain.

6.4.2 Leadership and collegiality in the learning community

Promoting inclusion and dealing effectively with conflict requires effective leadership in schools (Blair et al., 2002). Good leadership supports sound conceptualisation, organisation, design, delivery and evaluation of codes of practice and taught programmes (Falconer and Byrnes, 2003). This requires communication and team building skills – principals play a key role here but leadership needs to be shared through the community. An interesting indicator of how experienced staff can support new teachers was mentioned in the Northern sample. Two recently qualified teachers indicated that they had received two days' EMU training and that this had not adequately prepared them for the issues of diversity they faced in the school environment. They said they were lucky that they had other staff members with more experience and could discuss issues and ask advice from them. Indeed, although all the schools in the sample sets had policies and codes of practice to address forms of conflict that have been officially written into child education, such as bullying and sexism, most had no written policy or procedures pertaining specifically to local conflict issues. Hence, teachers relied on prior experiences or advice from colleagues.

Some teachers in this project alluded in passing to differences of perspective among staff but no teacher talked about staff relations as an area in which they needed skills. The teachers were aware too of how negative perceptions and experience had touched their own life experiences and helped to frame their understanding of the conflicts they witnessed in the student and parent bodies. This suggests that the issue of ongoing professional development and teacher training is significant and should not only address issues of diversity, but also personal reflection and communication skills for positive conflict management and communication with parents and colleagues.

Leadership needs to be examined from state to local level; denominational differentiation in Irish education North and South sends out messages (Lynch, 1999). Observations of school and classroom environments suggest that resources, however variable in quality and range, reflect understandings of diversity in the school ethos and in teacher perceptions. Questions arise as to the prevalence of images of the dominant denominational or political identities, and what this says to pupils and parents of other persuasions. Denominational schooling is coming under increasing strain (Devine et al., 2002; Glendenning, 1999; INTO/Equality Authority, 2004; UN General Assembly, 2001). This issue arose in relation to pupils being allowed exemption from a school's RE programme but offered nothing to support their own religious identities: one teacher likened this to '*constructive dismissal*', a term echoed in the evaluations of a conference held by the INTO/Equality Authority in 2004.

6.5 Teacher education

The teachers' conceptualisation and analysis of the changing situation was based on the theoretical foundation they acquired in their initial training, which was in part challenged, in part reinforced by their experience of and strategies to address the issues in the classroom. They felt that their initial professional education had not equipped them for current classrooms – several also remarked on the impact of established school ethos and practices on incoming student and newly qualified teachers (Neuharth-Pritchard et al., 2001; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2002). This suggests that the issue of ongoing professional development is significant if established teachers are to have opportunities to maximise the value of their experience, and new teachers are to implement effectively the theoretical and professional insights of their initial teacher education.

Awareness-raising and anti-bias training are required in initial and ongoing teacher education. Literature on promoting teachers' awareness of their own attitudes and the reality of racism and other forms of exclusion emphasises the need for an experiential approach involving self-reflection (Lawrence, 1997; Sleeter, 1994) This is

not adequately addressed through exposure to diversity on teaching practice; this must be supported by structured reflection and theoretical input (Cockrell et al., 1999; Gomes, 1997; Mahan and Rain, 1990; Olmedo, 1997; Wilhelm et al., 1996). Also at both initial and ongoing levels there will be reluctant learners (Kai et al., 1999; Neuharth-Pritchard et al., 2001; Wise and West, 2002). However educators must uphold the law and equality is legally protected.

The concept of institutional racism is prominent in research literature. Although this perspective on racism did not feature in teachers' discussions, the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Report in policy across the UK is indicative of the importance of addressing this concept in teacher education. The concerns in this report also are addressed in international and national law and policy. As current events amply illustrate, society is ill prepared for the increasing levels of racism and xenophobia, and education is an obvious arena for improvement.

Research literature on anti-racism and interculturalism (e.g. Derman-Sparks, 2000; Korn, 2002; Rizvi, 1996) indicates strongly that developing whole school policy and practice in a collegial approach to these areas is crucial. However examples cited in that literature suggest that the introduction of collegial work practices and anti-bias principles and codes of practice can increase the level of mutual challenge and even conflict. In general, schools staffs are being increasingly called on to operate collegially, and the communications and negotiation skills that go with that model should be incorporated into teacher education (Kai et al., 1999).

6.5.1 Leadership and teacher education institutions

Principals and some teachers in the Republic sample discussed the issue of separate denominational teacher education. All believed that communication and relations between College of Education student bodies across the denominational spectrum should be fostered. However participants affiliated to churches with small memberships felt that, given the smallness of their population, a mix of separate and integrated programmes would both give students from minority faiths space to develop their own religious identity, and enable them to engage with others. Clearly there are issues to be teased out in this regard among the patron bodies and other education authorities in the churches.

The leadership role of teacher education providers within the larger system is highlighted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2001). It requires institutions to model good practice: college courses should themselves be informed by principles of anti-bias and the promotion of mutual understanding; and they should provide experiential as well as conceptual learning opportunities, and all should be informed by sound theory.

Concluding comments

These teachers expressed a need for both the theoretical and the experiential facets of teacher education. They felt the lack of theoretical knowledge when faced with new realities (such as children with unfamiliar religious affiliations in their class), and they strongly advocated experiential learning – they felt that student teachers should have well supported hands-on placements in carefully chosen schools. The balance of their identification of theoretical and experiential learning needs endorses Burke's (2000) argument regarding the limits of the apprenticeship model of teacher training. To be effectively delivered, what they were arguing for would require a reciprocal relation between theory and practice, college and school (as advocated by Horgan and Douglas, 2000; King, 2000; Gomes, 1997). How these findings can contribute to a framework for practice in teacher education will be outlined in the recommendations in the next chapter.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project aim was to identify the difficulties facing teachers and children in areas of conflict, tension and misunderstanding on both sides of the Irish border with a view to developing a framework suitable for initial and in-service teacher education to be used in all institutions, North and South, involved in preparing teachers to work with children in the Early Years. In Section 7.1 of this chapter the key issues are summarised and general recommendations are made relating to the research findings. In Section 7.2 more specific recommendations are made regarding strategies for initial teacher education.

7.1 Main points and recommendations

7.1.1 The conceptual frame

As was seen in the last chapter, two concepts are central to the teachers' evaluations: their concept of childhood, and their concept of the role of schools in society. A third conceptual area that frames these two is their perspective on human diversity and discrimination. These conceptual areas are also central to education policy. The paucity of education research into religious diversity, and the absence of substantial literature specifically relevant to the Irish situation, suggest that further research is needed in the area of education and religious diversity, racism and education, and anti-bias education in general and in Irish manifestations in particular.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
i   **Colleges/departments of education should foster research dedicated to promoting anti-bias and pro-diversity education theory, pedagogy and practice.**

ii   **Adequate and fruitful conceptual frameworks for articulating and progressing teachers' professional practice need to be disseminated among practising teachers, as well as among future teachers.**

iii   **Official policy texts as well as college curricula need to be audited to ensure sound conceptualisation of childhood, education, diversity and discrimination, and sound deployment of these concepts in the argumentation regarding education programme aims, content and outcomes.**

7.1.2 Systemic leadership

There is a call for research from education institutions – and from Colleges of Education in particular – in leadership roles (teacher education colleges being key ones) to model the philosophy and practice that they seek to promote in students' practice as future teachers. This is particularly important because the effectiveness of the response to the teachers' highly relevant requests is dependent on the coherence of the conceptual framework informing all levels of the system. For truly effective transformation of education into an agent of inclusion and affirmation of diversity, schools must be supported by a committed systemic context – leadership committed to inclusion and pro-diversity principles must be evident at all levels of the education system. This includes state, patron and management bodies, teacher education colleges and research centres, parent bodies, unions and local school community partners. In the medium term, progress towards a holistic system will be facilitated by offering ample in-career education opportunities to schools staffs and other education partners, along the lines proposed below for initial teacher education. It is particularly important to target school *leaders*, given their role in promoting change.

RECOMMENDATION:
iv   **Priority should be given to in-career education provision relating to interculturalism and anti-bias, targeting leaders at all levels, from state and patron system level, to schools and local learning communities.**

7.1.3 Resources

Resources specific to the social context in Ireland emerged as badly needed (though this issue was secondary to teachers' own sense of competence and confidence in their capacity to engage sensitively and productively with human diversity).

RECOMMENDATION:
v   **Institutes of education should identify and promote knowledge of good resources, and invest in developing materials for the Irish reality. In the Republic the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment intercultural guidelines should be published without delay. Areas that could be explored include:**
  - **Resources for promoting anti-racism and pro-diversity awareness within arts curricula, as part of informing the whole curriculum with these principles.**

- **The contribution of myth and story to nurturing children's imaginative exploration of identities, and use of local artefacts and lore.**

7.1.4 The infrastructure for teacher education for diversity

As noted above, teachers in this project registered a need for sound conceptual support in relation to understanding how to approach issues of diversity in education. In relation to their classroom practice, the teachers sought knowledge in the form of information on other religions and cultures, socio-economic and justice issues. They sought experience in the form of teaching practice placements across religious and other divides. They required skills for managing conflict and for celebrating diversity appropriately. Literature endorses these priorities, and adds the need for anti-bias and awareness raising, targeting teachers' and students teachers' own attitudes and prejudices, in specific modules but also in treatment of diversity issues across the teacher education programme. To provide a professional education that will equip teachers to address the challenge and opportunity inherent in the diversity in their schools, a number of things need to be in place. There is a need to develop a common set of principles to inform and support a teacher education framework and provide a seamless continuum of development for pre–service and in-service education for teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
vi   **Given the similarities between the situation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, shared rationale and guiding principles are appropriate and should be developed and adopted.**
vii   **All of the colleges should be involved and committed in offering both integrated and specific modules on equal opportunities**
viii   **Colleges should positively recruit students from different backgrounds and cultures.**
ix   **Young teachers should have a 'follow through' when they begin in schools in order to share experiences.**
x   **Student teachers should experience a broad range of schools on teacher education practice/SBW.**
xi   **The initiative should include indicators for monitoring implementation of the framework.**
- **There should be an islandwide (NI and ROI) co-ordinator, whose sole responsibility would be to support a co-ordinated approach by teacher education colleges**
xii   **Colleges and schools should:**
- **Develop whole-institution policy on a local basis**
- **View local communities as a resource.**
- **Concentrate on commonalties rather than differences in the community.**
- **Involve parents and local communities in the drawing up of the modules.**
- **Take a multidisciplinary approach.**

7.2 Recommendations for a framework for teacher education

In the immediate term the following recommendations for a framework for teacher education should be considered. The framework must have a theoretical element of underpinning knowledge. Concepts of childhood and of the roles of schools are two elements in this. There are others, of which strand one could be an 'equality in society' module devised for all colleges. Such modules must be theoretically sound, and involve experiential as well as academic and professional learning. Specifically to promote education for mutual understanding, the conceptual frame should include the following elements:

xiii   **A knowledge of law and policy, national and international, that will govern their practice as teachers.**
xiv   **An understanding of the social factors that have generated and supported exclusion in all its forms.**
xv   **A knowledge of basic strands that go to make up our societies, North and South, and even more importantly, a knowledge of where to learn about forms of diversity they will encounter.**
xvi   **Awareness that culture is a social practice or cluster of practices, not an artefact, and that groups constantly modulate their cultural practices to match their reality. Students need to learn how to celebrate diversity without 'fixing' people even in positive facets of their traditions.**
xvii   **Cultural hybridity is a concept that needs to be explored in teacher education. Students have an avenue into this concept from their own lived experience in modern youth culture.**
xviii   **An understanding of the potential role of the school as an integral part of the local learning community.**
- **The kinds of teamwork possible between educators at all levels (teachers, parents, adult educators, community leaders, etc.) need to be explored, and competence in engaging in team work needs to be inculcated.**
- **Students need to gain a clear awareness of the importance of parent participation and of the positive potential of community involvement for work in the classroom,**
- **Students need to gain a clear understanding of the specific responsibilities of the teacher's professional role.**

xix   **Knowledge of available resources is essential, as is the skill to identify sources of material suited to an ever-changing society.**
- **Students need to learn not alone what is available, but to develop the flexibility and lateral thinking needed to identify and avail of new resources for new situations.**

xx   **Through experiential learning this module would promote:**
- **Self-awareness including readiness to monitor one's attitudes to issues of diversity. The deliverers of the module will need to have explored this in their own regard – ideally, all college staffs should undergo this process.**
- **Competence in delivering e ducation to children from diverse backgrounds, with diverse abilities, learning styles and needs.**
  - Liaison with selected schools to work with student teachers, maximising their social learning from their teaching practice.
- **Communication skills**
  - Engaging with members of minority communities to explore what they hope for in their children's education.
  - The capacity to hold to principles and engage in appropriate cross-cultural learning and challenge, to apply their professional evaluations fairly.

Indicators of relevant resources

Three such indicators received particular mention in this report. Derman-Sparks' manual is an effective introduction to this area but material specific to the European and the Irish realities is required. Tailored anti-bias and awareness raising training for practising teachers and students is offered in the Pavee Point early years anti-bias programme, Éist. The censuses, North and South, offer an excellent opportunity to students to explore the complexity of Irish society, while also learning how to read graphs and tables; this could feed into their teaching. For further developments a review of the innovations already in train would help in coordinating practice in relation to teacher education for diversity, and articulating it within the operational frame indicated above.

Closing comments

This small-scale project has added to the specifically Irish element in available research. More is needed, but the findings do indicate that steps can be taken in the short and medium term, as well as in the long term, to promote truly inclusive education in both Irish jurisdictions. The innovativeness and commitment of teachers in this project are an indicator that whatever the difficulties, any developments in teacher education that enable students to engage competently, flexibly and imaginatively with the growing diversity in Irish society, North and South, will prove effective and fruitful for all.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Text of Postal survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. The aim of the survey is to identify issues facing teachers as Irish society becomes more socially diverse. Nowadays schools have pupils of many faiths and none, Travellers, children from local families, and immigrants from across the world.
The data gathered will help in identifying what is needed in both initial and in-service teacher education, to equip teachers to operate confidently in this changing social context.
All responses will be seen by the research committee only, and will be dealt with in strict confidence. In written reports of the analysis, all identifying details will be removed or replaced by pseudonyms.
Thank you for giving us your time.

Background data requested:
Age (4 ten-year bands and one for 60+ years)
Gender
Qualification and year of graduation
Years in teaching
Year of commencement on the staff of current school
Class taught
Number of male and female pupils.
Range of diversity in the class (socio-economic/religious/ethnic/Traveller etc.)

Questions (each followed by a blank page section for response):
How do you as a teacher feel about the growing diversity in schools?
Have you had difficulties relating to diversity, in relationships among your pupils and in your teaching? How do you manage these if they arise?
If you have found positive value in diversity, for relationships and teaching, how did you use it?
How useful do you find the programmes and resources that are available to you, in teaching about issues of diversity with your pupils?
How did your initial training prepare you for teaching in this increasingly diverse society?
Have you had any further in-service training that has helped?
What do you think is the best way to address diversity in the Infants' classroom?

Appendix 2: Internet resources

Australian Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers:
http://www.racismnoway.com.au/

Australian Education Authorities website pages on bullying as related to diversity in personal and collective identities, analysis of the causes and suggestions for programmes to address it:
http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/

Western Australia state education website: policy on language tuition for students from 'Non-English speaking backgrounds' and on teaching languages other than English:
http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/SAER/policy/nesbobj1.htm and
http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/pages/framework/framework07a.htm

Education Queensland website: inter/multicultural curriculum webpages offering programmes and linked materials for use with all students:
http://education.qld.gov.au/soc-sci/soc-grp/race-rel/underskin/html/immigration/teacher/imprep.html

Canadian Race Relations Foundation website: an information booklet addressing all the education partners, outlining the rational for anti-racism, guidelines for schools policy and codes of practice and advice on how to support this:
http://www.crr.ca/en/MediaCentre/FactSheets/FACTJune2000.pdf

Scottish Authority Education Department website: sample pages from A Route to Equality and Fairness: a self-audit tools for schools, relating to anti-racism and inter/ multiculturalism in policy, codes of practice and taught programmes:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents-w7/ref-11.htm

UNESCO Associated School Project Network (ASPnet): Database on Human Rights Education
http://www.unhchr.ch/hredu.nsf/M06en?OpenForm&Start=1&Count=1000&ExpandView&StartKey=U

UNHCHR http://www.unhchr.ch/hredu.nsf/   Site contents listing:
http://www.unhchr.ch/hredu.nsf/MATFSEn?OpenFrameSet

The Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC), Department of Learning and Education Development, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne gives a resource list at:
http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/LED/CEIEC/links/

A Runnymede Trust resource source list is available at:
http://www.runnymedetrust.org/resources/links.html#Education

Appendix 3: Northern Ireland and the Republic: Census Data

(Birthplaces, Ethnicities, Nationalities, and Religions)

Tables 5 a and b : Northern Ireland: Country of Birth, and Ethnic group

5a: place of birth
NISRA Table S015: Country of Birth by Sex & Age

Place of birth	Nos	%tot. pop	Place of birth	Nos	%tot. pop
United Kingdom	**1615769**	**95.88**	**Asia**	**7006**	**0.42**
England	61609	3.66	Middle East	939	0.06
Scotland	16772	1.00	Cyprus	380	0.02
Northern Ireland	1534268	91.04	Iran	137	0.01
Wales	3008	0.18	Other Middle East	422	0.03
UK part not specified	112	0.01	Far East	4326	0.26
Republic of Ireland	**39051**	**2.32**	China	756	0.04
Ireland part not specified	**3221**	**0.19**	Hong Kong	1746	0.10
Channel Is& Isle of Man	**567**	**0.03**	Japan	116	0.01
Other Western Europe	**6970**	**0.41**	Malaysia	582	0.03
EU countries	6455	0.38	Singapore	271	0.02
France	750	0.04	Other Far East	855	0.05
Germany	3879	0.23	South Asia	1741	0.10
Italy	288	0.02	Bangladesh	142	0.01
Netherlands	398	0.02	India	1170	0.07
Spain	364	0.02	Pakistan	324	0.02
Other EU	776	0.05	Other South Asia	105	0.01
Non EU in W. Europe	515	0.03	**North America**	**6093**	**0.36**
Eastern Europe	710	0.04	Canada	2449	0.15
Poland	102	0.01	Carribbean & West Indies	198	0.01
Other Eastern Europe	608	0.04	Jamaica	81	0.00
Africa	**3118**	**0.19**	Other Car..& W Indies	117	0.01
North Africa	481	0.03	U.S.A	3369	0.20
Central and W. Africa	300	0.02	Other North America	77	0.00
Nigeria	169	0.01	**South America**	**374**	**0.02**
Other C & W Africa	131	0.01	**Oceania**	**2166**	**0.13**
South and Eastern Africa	2337	0.14	Australia	1544	0.09
Kenya	228	0.01	New Zealand	448	0.03
South Africa	1301	0.08	Other Oceania	174	0.01
Zimbabwe	289	0.02	Other	229	0.01
Other S. and E. Africa	519	0.03			

5b: NI: Ethnic group
Data: Table

Ethnic group	Nos	%tot. pop
Other Asian	194	0.01
Bangladeshi	252	0.01
Black Caribbean	255	0.02
Other Black	387	0.02
Black African	494	0.03
Pakistani	666	0.04
Other Ethnic Group	1290	0.08
Indian	1567	0.09
Irish Traveller	1710	0.1
Mixed	3319	0.2
Chinese	4145	0.25
Total	**14279**	**0.85**
White	1670988	99.15

Table 6a and b: Republic of Ireland: Places of birth and nationalities

6a: ROI: Places of birth
Data source: PDR Table 20: Persons, males and females, usually resident and present in the State on Census night, classified by place of birth.

Place of birth	Nos	%tot. pop
Ireland	3458479	88.29
Total Other EU	**281316**	**7.18**
Northern Ireland	49928	1.27
England and Wales	182624	4.66
Scotland	15963	0.41
Austria	533	0.01
Belgium	1141	0.03
Denmark	692	0.02
Finland	687	0.02
France	6794	0.17
Germany	8770	0.22
Greece	345	0.01
Italy	3705	0.09
Luxembourg	85	0.00
Netherlands	3512	0.09
Portugal	590	0.02
Spain	4632	0.12
Sweden	1315	0.03
Total Rest of Europe	**26235**	**0.67**
Romania	5838	0.15
Russia	2556	0.07
Latvia	2281	0.06
Poland	2167	0.06
Lithuania	2120	0.05
Ukraine	1485	0.04
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1058	0.03
Moldova	1032	0.03
Other	7698	0.20
Total Africa	**26515**	**0.68**
Nigeria	9225	0.24
South Africa	6260	0.16
Zimbabwe	1462	0.04
Congo	1132	0.03
Other	8436	0.22
Total Asia	**28132**	**0.72**
China	5669	0.14
Philippines	4086	0.10
India	3402	0.09
Pakistan	3391	0.09
Malaysia	2195	0.06
Hong Kong	1696	0.04
Other	7693	0.20
Total America	**29119**	**0.74**
USA	21541	0.55
Canada	4081	0.10
Brazil	1232	0.03
Other	**2265**	**0.06**
Australia	**6107**	**0.16**
New Zealand	**2256**	**0.06**

6b: ROI: Nationalities
Table 25: Persons, males and females, usually resident and present in the State on Census night, classified by nationality

Nationality	Nos	% tot. pop
Irish	3535676	90.26
Irish-English	20491	0.52
Irish-American	12387	0.32
Irish-European	4172	0.11
Irish-Other	12249	0.31
UK	103476	2.64
Other EU	133436	0.77
Rest of Europe	23105	0.59
Africa	20981	0.54
Asia	21779	0.56
America	15383	0.39
Australia	3706	0.09
New Zealand	1637	0.04
Other nationalities	1894	0.05
Multi Nationality	2340	0.06
No Nationality	847	0.02
Not Stated	48412	1.24

Table 7 a and b: Religions in Northern Ireland and in the Republic

In these tables groups with memberships below 0.01% of the population are aggregated.

7a: Religions in NI
(Data: Table KS07c)

Religion/philosophy	Nos	%pop
Catholic	678462	40.26
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	348742	20.69
Church of Ireland	257788	15.30
Methodist Church in Ireland	59173	3.51
Baptist	18974	1.13
Free Presbyterian	11902	0.71
Brethren	8595	0.51
Christian	8502	0.50
Church of England	6417	0.38
Congregational Church	5701	0.34
Pentecostal	5533	0.33
Elim Church	5448	0.32
Protestant	3674	0.33
Other Presbyterian churches (5)	2946	0.17
Reformed Presbyterian	2238	0.13
Jehovah's Witness	1993	0.12
Church of Scotland	1901	0.11
Independent Methodist	1771	0.11
Salvation Army	1640	0.10
Latter Day Saints (Mormons)	1414	0.08
Evangelical	1229	0.07
Church of the Nazarene	1215	0.07
Non Denominational	1115	0.07
Christian Fellowship	1015	0.06
Church of God	990	0.06
Rel. Soc. of Friends (Quakers)	749	0.04
Moravian	691	0.04
Protestant (Mixed)	625	0.04
Whitewell Metropol. Tabernacle	399	0.02
Methodist	379	0.02
Unitarian	342	2.00
Independent	305	0.02
Church of Christ	273	0.02
Free Methodist	266	0.02
Apostolic Church	237	0.01
Seventh Day Adventist	232	0.01
Assemblies of God	216	0.01
Church	194	0.01
Lutheran	186	0.01
City Mission	184	0.01
House Church	138	0.01
Interdenominational	131	0.01
Anglican	128	0.01
Metropolitan Church	125	0.01
Independent Evangelist	120	0.01
Orthodox Church	113	0.01
Christian Fellowship Church	111	0.01
Church in Wales	100	0.01
Greek Orthodox	94	0.01
Charismatic	93	0.01
Reformed	92	0.01
Fellowship Church	89	0.01
Vineyard Churches	87	0.01
Oth. Christian &rel. <0.01% pop.	1309	0.08

Religion/philosophy	Nos	%pop
Muslim (Islam)	1943	0.12
Hindu	825	0.05
Buddhist	533	0.03
Jewish	365	0.02
Baha ' i	254	0.02
Sikh	219	0.01
Pagan	148	0.01
Atheist	106	0.01
Spiritualist	106	0.01
Oth. rels/philosophies, <01% pop.	529	0.03
No religion or religion not stated	233853	13.88

7b: Religions in ROI
(Data: Table 5, Vol 12)

| Religion/philosophy	Nos	%pop
Roman Catholic	3462606	88.39
Ch. of Ireland (incl. Protestant)	115611	2.95
Christian (unspecified)	21403	0.55
Presbyterian	20582	0.53
Muslim (Islamic)	19147	0.49
Orthodox	10437	0.27
Methodist	10033	0.26
Jehovah's Witness	4430	0.11
Buddhist	3894	0.10
Evangelical	3780	0.10
Apostolic or Pentecostal	3152	0.08
Hindu	3099	0.08
Lutheran	3068	0.08
Baptist	2265	0.06
Jewish	1790	0.05
Pantheist	1106	0.03
Agnostic	1028	0.03
Quaker (Society of Friends)	859	0.02
Latter Day Saints (Mormon)	833	0.02
Lapsed Roman Catholic	590	0.02
Atheist	500	0.01
Baha'i	490	0.01
Brethren	222	0.01
Other stated, <0.01% of pop*	8920	0.23
Not stated	79094	2.02
No religion	138264	3.53

Charts 8a and b: Main religious affiliations, 1991 and 2001/02

Data in each graph are ranked in by order of volume in the most recent Census (NI: 2001. ROI: 2002)
(Note: scale in ROI graph is one tenth that of the NI graph)

Chart 8a: N. Ireland, 1991 and 2001
(Data source: NISRA, 1991 Census: Religion and Gender by Geographic Area; 2001 Census: Standard Tables, S306A)

Chart 8b: Rep. of Ireland, 1991 and 2002
(Data source: CSO, Vol 12, Religions, Table 1)
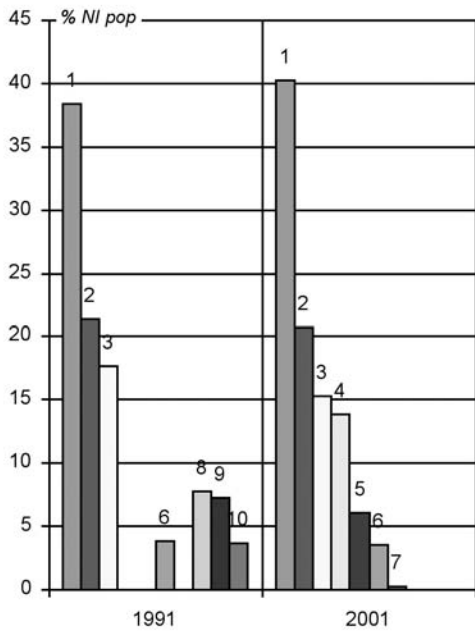
Key to column numbers (Census headings)
Catholic
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Church of Ireland
No Religion /not Stated (2001 only)
Other Christian (incl. Christian Related)
Methodist Church in Ireland
Other Religions and Philosophies
Other Denomination (1991 only)
*Not stated (1991 only)*
None (1991 only)
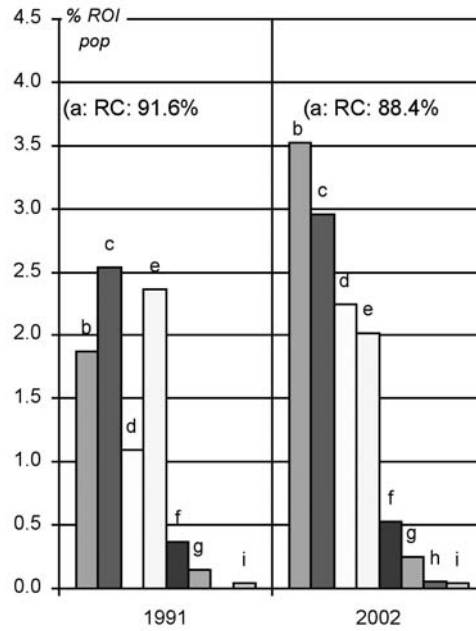
Key to column numbers (Census headings)
(Roman Catholic: % noted but not graphed)
No religion
Church of Ireland (incl. Protestant)
Other stated religion
Religion not stated
Presbyterian
Methodist
Muslim (2001 only)
Jewish

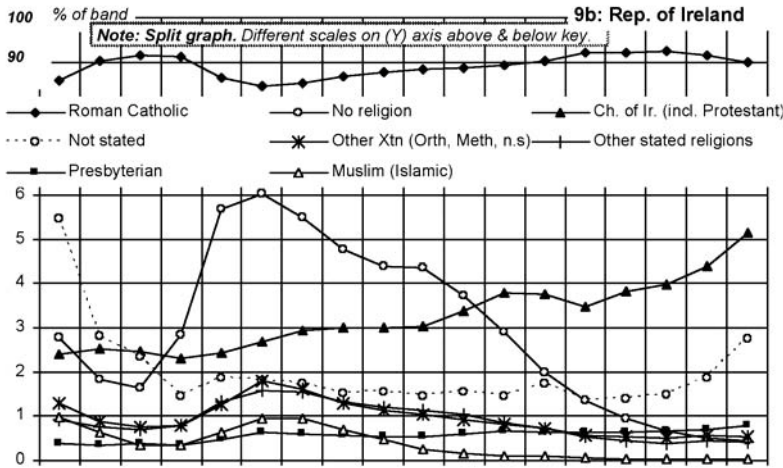**Charts 9 a and b: Registered religions, % by age band**

(Note % scale below key in ROI graph is one fifth the scale of the NI graph)

Charts 9a N. Ireland
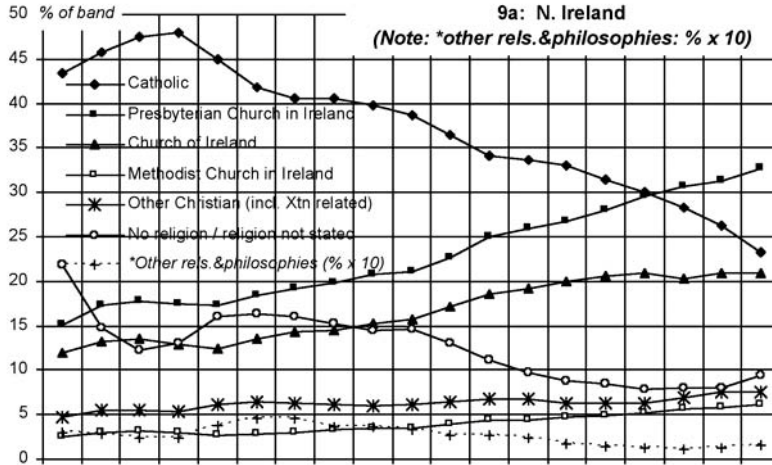
Data source: NISRA, 2001 Census, 1. Demography: People, Family and Households, Table S306A

Charts 9b Rep. of Ireland Note: split graph. Different scales on (Y) axis above & below key.

Data source: CSO, 2002 Census Vol. 12: Religions, Table 6

APPENDIX 4: CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE ON DIVERSITY IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

NEWRY, 2-3 APRIL 2004

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
YOU'VE GOT TO BE CAREFULLY TAUGHT!
Diversity, Early Years and Teachers
Norman Richardson

It may have escaped all but the most dedicated musical theatre buffs that my main title is a quote from a Rogers and Hammerstein musical! South Pacific was made into a movie in the late 1950s and as an impressionable 11 year old I committed virtually the whole sound track to memory. One of the characters, an American GI officer, falls in love with a Polynesian girl, and the themes of race and prejudice quickly come to the surface. His song made a particular impression, and it has stayed with me quite vividly ever since:

You've got to be taught to hate and fear
You've got to be taught from year to year
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully taught

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made
And people whose skin is a different shade
You've got to be carefully taught

You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives hate
You've got to be carefully taught
You've got to be carefully taught

Rogers & Hammerstein: *South Pacific*

I don't imagine I need to persuade anyone here about the importance of being carefully taught, or about the dangers of prejudice and stereotypes. I'm sure that we would wish to think of ourselves as relatively free from these constraints – after all, that's why we're here – and yet we know that many of those prejudices have been ingrained for as long as we can remember.

Advocates of multicultural education have often challenged our white, Eurocentric perceptions through programmes focused on Black History, although these are still rather less common in Ireland. Such work runs the risk of being somewhat token, but it may be helpful in provoking us to think outside the box! If we, as professionals, can't do so ourselves there's little hope of persuading our children or our students to challenge their own prejudices. So our first task today is one of personal development!

Let's start with a word association. If I say "inventor" (*let's pause for a mental image*) we probably resort to a little absent-minded professor type – white, of course. The name Garrett Morgan may mean little to us, but he was a significant inventor who died in the 1960s – an African-American, best known for inventing traffic lights and fire safety protection hoods. Everyone has heard of Florence Nightingale and her work as a nurse in the Crimean War, but few of us have heard of Mary Seacole, a nurse of Caribbean origin, who was no less revered by the troops in Crimea but who had been refused permission to travel there with Nightingale because of her colour and who had to make her own way. I remember from the earliest times learning about "darkest Africa", and how brave white men like David Livingstone went to open up the "Dark Continent" by taking the light of the Gospel – no sense there of any significant African history before the Europeans arrived with "civilisation". Going to Timbuktu – perceived as the ultimate "back-end of nowhere" – was a common childhood saying and something of a joke, and I knew nothing of its role as a centre of scholarship long before Europeans started to carve up the continent for themselves. Or to be a little more provocative – what is your visual image of Jesus? Robert Powell? Or blonde, long-haired and very European? He was, of course, Jewish and Palestinian, more akin, perhaps, to our mental picture of Mohammed!

Here is an image that I prepared originally for an inter-faith conference presentation in Europe last summer, but which I now use with our teacher education students to explore cultural expectations and stereotypes. I go through it in some detail with the students, asking them what religion or religious background they think might apply to each of the people in the picture. After some guesswork I clarify the details: one is obviously a Sikh, of Indian origin; one is a young Muslim student who speaks with a Northern Irish accent; the Chinese man also speaks with a

Northern Ireland accent; the lady wearing the sari is Indian, a member of the Krishna Consciousness strand of Hinduism; of the three Western-looking members of the group one is a Buddhist, one is a Bahá'í and the other is a Catholic married to a Hindu! The white children sitting in our schools and nurseries may actually come from cultural and religious backgrounds different from our expectations, and some of those whose skin colour is dark or whose dress is non-Western may be indigenous members of our community.

This kind of discussion reminds me of when Mohandas Gandhi travelled to England in the 1930s to negotiate for Indian independence and was asked by a journalist what he thought of Western Civilisation. He replied that it would be a good idea!

Such stereotypes are not altogether surprising, and we may well pride ourselves in having moved beyond them. Nevertheless we are conscious that to do so there is a necessary process of having to unlearn what perhaps we should never have learned in the first place. For many of us such re-learning may well have come relatively late in life – probably not in school and probably not even as part of our teacher education or other professional training. For some, however, such re-learning seems never to come.

Over 20 years ago, when I moved out of the classroom and transformed myself into my decade-long role as a "peace education officer", one of the first articles I remember reading was on research in the USA about how racially-aware attitudes were evident in children as young as 3 years, and how such children showed a capacity to make prejudiced remarks about children of other races, and how, if allowed to continue, such attitudes were seen to harden through later childhood and into adolescence. This was almost two decades before the research carried out by Paul Connolly and others on racist and sectarian attitudes in young children in Northern Ireland with which I'm sure most of us here are well aware, and to which I'll return. At that time I used the accounts of that research to make the point that attitudinal challenge through education needed to begin in the early years, and this reinforced my long-held belief that learning about other cultures and religions needed to begin in the primary school. Yet in the period since then I have frequently heard teachers and students express the view that young children should not be exposed to contentious or sensitive issues; or that such concerns will inevitably lead to conflict in the classroom; or that young children are "colour blind"; or that Protestant and Catholic children should focus on their similarities but need not, or should not, learn about their differences or their divisions; or that, in particular, to learn about "other religions" (other than Christianity) under the age of 16, will simply make children "confused".

I have often quoted the occasion when I opened up a discussion with a group of Stranmillis Religious Studies undergraduate teacher education students who the previous day had taken part in visits to a Presbyterian and a Catholic church with their counterparts from St. Mary's College. The day seemed to have gone very well, with opportunities for mutual questions and the sharing of perceptions about the visits, but the students complained that they didn't like having to talk about religion! This particular group were all main subject Religious Studies specialists, and several of them spent their summer months evangelising in Europe, Africa and, indeed, the South of Ireland – but they didn't want to speak about religion; it was embarrassing and awkward! They were being asked to share ideas with people who were different, as *equals*, and this seemed to have been quite beyond their experience and well outside their comfort zones.

Such hesitations and reservations have made our work in Teacher Education very difficult in relation to the preparation of teachers to deal with issues of diversity, equality, inclusion and mutual understanding, especially where the theoretical issues transform into instances of hurt, abuse and exclusion. Despite over a decade of statutory Education for Mutual Understanding and two more decades of unofficial community relations initiatives in education, despite significant awareness of multicultural and anti-racist work in Britain and elsewhere, and despite much evidence, anecdotal and researched, of the serious impact of sectarianism, racism and other forms of exclusion on children and young people, we seem to have made little impact on the young adults who are now entering initial teacher education, and sadly even precious little on those who emerge from four years of higher education into the nurseries, schools and colleges. It's not even that most of these approaches have failed; for the most part they have simply not been implemented. In such a scenario we simply preserve for yet another generation the culture of avoidance and contribute to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes or ignorance.

The song with which I started makes its point very succinctly, but the age of learning prejudice – "before you are six or seven or eight" – needs to be clarified more precisely. Babette Brown has suggested that "between the ages of three and six, most children have developed a deeper understanding of themselves and their world" (Brown, 1998, p.14) and that in the process children pick up both positive and negative attitudes and behaviour. From a range of research, much of it emanating from the United States, we know that pre-school children can express strong race or difference-related values. Jane Elliot, of the famous Brown-Eyes, Blue-Eyes experiment in the late 1960s, is scathing about people who claim that children are colour-blind, and another champion of anti-racism in education, Louise Derman-Sparks, describes it as "pernicious" and "analogous to the ostrich's head-in-the-sand strategy" (Derman-Sparks Higa & Sparks, nd). The process appears to begin very early in life as infants learn to categorise objects by appearance and function. Such young children have limited experience on which to base their descriptions of difference, and restricted language with which to express it, but there seems little doubt that the capacity to identify difference is present.

There are studies which show that 3 to 5 year olds are most conscious of physical differences, such as colour, but also of cultural characteristics such as language and dress (Derman-Sparks et al, nd). Studies in Britain have also shown that 3 to 5 year olds are learning to attach value to skin colour and that there is a pecking order whereby White is at the top and Black is at the bottom (Milner, 1983). It is clear from other studies that in 3 to 4 year olds awareness of gender diversity and stereotyped gender roles also appears to be very strong. Studies in integrated, all-white and all-black schools in the States have shown how children perceive their racial identity and that children in separate-race schools showed more evidence of dislike of other races (Dutton, Singer & Devlin, 1998). One study indicated that pre-school children were more likely to mention racial differences when the researcher was of the same race as themselves (Glover & Smith, 1997). American children in the study I read in the early 1980s had shown a canny awareness of adult attitudes by using respectful language when questioned by a researcher but when they thought no-one was listening had been heard over a concealed microphone using terms which were much more racist in nature.

This is reflected in the project study from the Republic (as recorded by Máirín Kenny) whereby some children did not remark on colour at all when shown the trigger photographs, while their teachers noted that they are aware of such talk but that it is more likely to "erupt in a moment of conflict after years of harmony and seemingly deep friendship". (At an adult level I am reminded of a friend's account of a conversation in a café in Sarajevo in the 1980s, when the Northern Ireland conflict was being discussed and several local people expressed dismay and a strong conviction that "this could never happen here"!)

Louise Derman-Sparks and her colleagues argue that inaccurate stereotypical and caricatured images and information about racial and/or cultural groups – such as those that children may pick up from the media or the home – are particularly harmful at this age:

> "Having not yet fully formed clear concepts of themselves or others, preschoolers are still in the process of learning to determine what is authentic and what is not. Especially when children do not have many opportunities for feedback about their ideas through direct interaction with people different from themselves, caricatured images can form the basis of their thinking." (Derman Sparks, Higa & Sparks, nd)

American studies with older children, in the 5 to 8 age range, have shown that programmes designed to reduce negative racial attitudes can be effective (Singh & Yancey, 1974). Children at this age are more conscious of their peers and able to develop a concept of "fairness". Derman-Sparks suggests that "while prejudice can become a part of children's thinking at this age, it is also possible to utilise their emerging moral sense to help them perceive the 'unfairness' of racism and to teach them tools for dealing with expressions of ethnocentrism and prejudice in their immediate world".

In Northern Ireland there was little clear evidence of the impact of the Troubles and sectarianism on very young children until the recent studies of Paul Connolly and his collaborators. Conscious that previous work, usually on older children, had been limited by being based on adult constructs and understandings, Connolly's 2002 study involved a random sample of 352 three-to-five-year-olds. The results show that young children in Northern Ireland are influenced from an early age by cultural and political events and symbols, starting with those associated with their own culture and extending with age to an awareness of the significance and cultural/political associations with different cultures:

> "For a very small number, this developing awareness provides the foundations upon which they have already begun to identify with a particular community and/or develop sectarian attitudes. However, for the majority, it represents the foundations upon which a significant minority tend to develop community identities and prejudiced attitudes over the following few years." (Connolly, Smith and Kelly, 2002, p.50)

Elsewhere Connolly has suggested that racial prejudice is, in fact, even more prevalent in Northern Ireland than sectarianism, and recent widely publicised racist attacks in the province have brought a chilling credibility to his findings:

> "Overall racial prejudice appears to be around twice as significant as sectarian prejudice in the initial attitudes of the population of Northern Ireland. Around twice as many respondents stated that they would be unwilling to accept and/or mix with members of minority ethnic communities than they would with members of the other main religious traditions (i.e. Catholic and Protestant)."
> (Connolly & Keenan, 2001)

That Connolly's work has become relatively well-known is something for which we should be grateful. It makes the argument that young children should be immured from such considerations much harder to sustain. Taken together with the international research on prejudiced attitudes in young children it helps us to address the issues around education for anti-bias and positive awareness of diversity in the early years with much greater seriousness and focus.

The research which forms the basis of this project has explored some of the ways in which these issues are being approached by schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic. Although there are wide differences in the ways in which children express their awareness of diversity and of some of the negatives associated with it, evidence from both jurisdictions indicates that there are real issues for schools which are inevitably sharper in areas where there

has been difference-related conflict. As the Southern researcher, Mairín Kenny, notes:
"… the children showed elements that could be classed as what Derman-Sparks called 'pre-prejudice'. They showed varied levels of knowledge of racist and other exclusionary terminology".
This knowledge does not yet appear to inform specific patterns of behaviour, but this "begins to emerge as children go up the school." Máirín Kenny points out that "the difference between younger and older children was not so much in terms of what they knew, but in terms of how they acted on it".

In Northern Ireland the cultural-religious conflict has until recently been the more dominant concern, although there is a rapidly growing recognition of the need for addressing issues of racism. Not surprisingly the issues of Irish religious identity and related cultural divisions were particularly significant in Border area schools. However, there does seem to be a view, perhaps more prominent among the Northern teachers, that there are no significant issues or problems amongst early years children. Religion – which, of course, may mean a number of things not necessarily to do with spiritual observances – was not seen as a problem in either jurisdiction with this age group. And "conflict" (which is often used as though it were synonymous with religion!) was similarly not seen as an issue. Does this suggest that the research findings on young children's attitudes are simply wrong? Or is the problem something to do with adult discomfort in certain areas, leading to denial and avoidance?

It's clear that schools in both jurisdictions do see themselves as dealing with general issues of diversity, based on a general principle of promoting respect for self and others through the everyday concerns and routines of the classroom. The study indicates how schools noted the importance of whole-school ethos along with home-school relationships, and of the curriculum areas of Religious Education, Social Personal and Health Education and programmes such as *Walk Tall* in the Republic, while in Northern Ireland Science, Education for Mutual Understanding (which unfortunately seems to have been understood almost exclusively in terms of contact activities), PSE, Circle Time, Structured Play, Story Time and Assembly are highlighted. In as much as there are clearly existing areas of the school curriculum, in the broadest sense, that are perceived as appropriate for dealing with issues of diversity, equality and inclusion, this is a positive on which further work can be built. We have moved on, at least to some degree, from the position of excluding these considerations altogether from the experience of young children in our schools.

In both jurisdictions, however, the study reveals significant hesitations and reservations about the extent to which such concerns should impinge, and the detail of these will hardly come as a surprise to most of us here. Some teachers seemed unwilling to extend their perception of diversity beyond the individual needs of different children, and few schools had a distinct diversity policy. Teachers indicated considerable wariness about broaching issues of community conflict in Northern Ireland, particularly with young children, and a similar attitude seems often to be taken in relation to Travellers especially in the Republic. There was a clear preference for dealing only with "softer" issues, sometimes seeing diversity only in terms of "the third world" or in its relatively uncontroversial expressions. I've spent much of my own career advocating the importance of the place of world religions in Religious Education, but I take no joy in the teacher who would prefer to send his or her pupils to visit a synagogue or mosque rather than a Catholic church!

The study also indicates that there is still a significant number of teachers who will argue for schools as "safe havens' or "sanctuaries". Children, they suggest, need to feel secure and safe from the nasty expressions of the world outside. The problem is that we seem to have taken our images of security from what we have seen of the building of defensive walls and barriers rather than the more significant image of building strong, secure human and community relationships. Schools, as I have argued elsewhere, would do better to see themselves as bridges to the community, not enclosures to keep the community out. I used to have a poster on my classroom wall with the slogan: "*A ship in a harbour is safe – but that is not what ships are for*"!

Even where teachers do recognise the importance of dealing constructively with these issues there are significant obstacles to progress. Access to appropriate resources seems mixed – perhaps more limited in the Republic – but particularly limited in relation to locally-based resources on race and ethnicity and on the harder-edged issues of diversity and conflict, especially for young children. Limited experience in dealing with difficult and controversial areas and the consequent insecurity of teachers is another factor. This surely reflects the lack of personal opportunities to discuss especially issues of race, ethnicity, culture and religion, which highlights a culture of separation and avoidance – what we might call a benign apartheid – and the failure of the education system and society in general to meet the needs thrown up by this situation. Training opportunities are also clearly very limited, from Initial Teacher Education right through Continuing Professional Development.

Work that I carried out last year on the attitudes of Catholic and Protestant student teachers to religious diversity suggested that there was a willingness to engage with such issues but that this was often frustrated by lack of awareness and skills and the opportunities to learn them. At the other end of the spectrum a study which I completed a few months ago with parents from minority faith communities painted a depressing picture of teachers in all kinds of schools who largely did not know how to deal with, or respond to, the questions, needs and concerns of members of different faiths and ethnic groups. A further concern expressed, particularly in the study in

the Republic, indicated a feeling on the part of some teachers that separate denominational teacher education provision was particularly unhelpful in relation to personal and professional preparation for dealing with diversity.

Having attempted to describe some of the difficulties around diversity in early years education, it falls to us to explore ways forward. What are the key values and principles upon such a process can be based? There are, I would suggest, both personal and professional values that we need to keep in mind even though they will inevitably overlap. Education is heavily value-laden; neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. Our values are conveyed both by what we teach and how we teach. Values are not just about what we expect of the children in our care – they are about what we expect of ourselves. According to Alison Montgomery in the introduction to the Primary Values materials (Montgomery & Birthistle, 2001), now generally available in Northern Ireland, if we want children to have a good sense of self-esteem, to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their own lives, then we have to value and promote autonomy. If we want children to relate well to others and understand their concerns and feelings, we have to value and promote empathy. If we want children to develop a sense of fairness, justice and equality and to respect human rights above personal interest, we have to value and promote a sense of transcendence. Daniel Goleman, the guru of the emotional intelligence movement, has written that "the root of altruism lies in empathy, the ability to read emotions in others." (Goleman, 1996).

I believe that these concepts come together in the ideal of promoting a culture of respect for diversity and for each other's human rights. In an increasingly diverse local and global society, where there remain many divisions and injustices, educators have a responsibility to value and play their part in creating such a culture. Just as in John Donne's words, "no man is an island, entire of itself", so no school is an isolated island. We prepare our children, however young, for life in a diverse world by what we do and, for that matter, no less by what we do not do.

Let me suggest, then, some key principles which may be drawn from these values.

- Firstly, diversity is real, unavoidable and a significant part of human experience. It is no longer possible to live in a mono-cultural world. We should recognise, enjoy, celebrate and respect diversity and encourage children to do so too. We might call this the *multicultural* principle, though some might prefer the term *intercultural* because it implies an added dimension of interaction between cultures, not just benign acceptance.
- Multiculturalism alone, however, may be limited in situations of injustice, oppression and unequal power relationships. It should be supplemented by positive action to promote good relations between groups or communities. Some would describe this in terms such as *anti-racism, anti-sectarianism, anti-discrimination* or *anti-bias* (though I would prefer us to find a way of saying this positively – what we are for, not just what we are against). This is a more critical, committed form of multiculturalism, as Babette Brown puts it: "embedded in an anti-discriminatory framework".
- Schools, nurseries and other educational institutions have a responsibility to promote inclusion and respect for equality and human rights. This can only be achieved if it is a holistic concern and incorporated into the policy and ethos of a school.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford and Priscilla Clarke suggest that there are six different stages at which we may perceive educators' attitudes towards these concerns. The lowest stage is one in which the crude idea that "everyone is the same" informs practice, which therefore makes no attempt to challenge or change discriminatory practices or to promote equality. The highest stage is one in which educators are "challenging inequality and promoting equity, where staff actively try to change the structures and power relations which inhibit equal opportunities" (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000, pp14-17).

At a practical level there are many suggestions in the literature as to how we can go about trying to achieve this. These might be summed up under a few headings:
- We educators need to make ourselves more aware of the diversity around us, and learn something of the practical needs of those who are different from us – celebrations, diet, customs, language, expectations.
- We can also make our young children more aware of diversity, even in schools or areas which do not seem particularly diverse. The view that "there's no problem here so we don't need to do anything about it" ignores the realities of how children increasingly perceive their surroundings in a small world. (We should also be very careful about implying that children from different cultural, ethnic, religious or linguistic backgrounds are "problems"!) Children need to have an awareness of both similarities and differences – it is a both/and, not either/or! Many educators have advocated a creative, cross-curricular approach to such learning – through the media of music, drama, story, the visual arts, dance and so forth. There is a wealth of story material that can help to open up children's – and our own – perceptions and contribute towards a positive and informed appreciation of diversity. The younger this can be commenced, the better.
- If we ourselves are able to speak comfortably and openly about difference, we are giving permission to others to do so. This is a principle I apply rigorously in my own Religious Studies classes, and it is important with all age groups.
- Appropriate classroom work should therefore focus on talking and listening, with an emphasis on emotional literacy, reinforced through creative and expressive activities.

- It is possible to model a positive approach to handling conflict and dealing with negative or discriminatory behaviour. We should never turn a blind eye to racist, sectarian or other prejudiced remarks, but it is the behaviour which we should challenge, while showing that the person is still valued.
- Parents can be brought in to discussions about issues of cultural diversity. What do we do about the Muslim child in Religious Education or the Nativity Play? Do we abandon familiar cultural practices in order to avoid offending anyone – a little like the Birmingham City Council's attempt in 1998 to replace Christmas with "Winterval" – or do we find ways of including everyone's special times and of learning from each other? Parents like to feel that their views are heard and valued and will normally respond to openness and the attempt to include.
- Perhaps we can help young children to develop a language of diversity, respect, inclusion, negotiation, openness and peace? If all that they hear from us is exclusive, belittling, negative and aggressive we should not be surprised if they develop these characteristics themselves. We must model the best of what we hope for the children in our charge.

Stemming from his research findings, Paul Connolly has made some particularly focused proposals for dealing with issues of difference in the early years. He suggests that:

- From the age of 3 onwards children should be encouraged to explore and experience a range of cultural practices and to appreciate and respect differences and cultural diversity.
- From the age of 5 children should be encouraged to understand the negative effects of sectarian stereotypes and prejudices, and recognise them in their own attitudes.
- Nurseries and schools should work closely with parents and local communities, and connect with community relations and cultural diversity initiatives locally.
- Parents should talk openly over time with their children about these issues and ask questions about the situations which give rise to them. (In the Fair Play booklet [Connolly, 2003, pp.12-13] he offers a number of specific examples of this.)
- Adults should show disapproval of sectarian or racist behaviour. Turning a "blind eye" is not an option. (Connolly, Smith & Kelly, 2002; Connolly, 2003; see also Connolly, 1999)

At the end of this presentation I will show the three short films which NIPPA and the Peace Initiatives Institute have recently made in order to attempt to put these ideas into practice with early years children.

These principles and procedures need to find their way into our policy statements and our curriculum. The inclusion of *Personal Development* in the forthcoming revised Northern Ireland Curriculum, is a positive way of mainstreaming these concerns and moving away from the peripheries which is too often where Education for Mutual Understanding dwelt. The two strands of this area of learning – *Personal Understanding and Health and Mutual Understanding in the Local and Global Community* – will provide a structure from the new Foundation Stage onwards culminating in *Local and Global Citizenship* in the post-primary school.

But the area that may yet need much attention is that of teacher education, not least at the initial stage. The research clearly indicated the difficulties of making an impact when so many teachers have attended separate schools, gone through separate teacher education and then returned to those separate schools to teach the next generation! Does this not demand that we ask challenging questions about such a constraint? Given the current context, however, existing programmes are changing, if slowly, and moving away from a simplistic focus on contact towards a more curriculum-based mainstreaming of the issues. We have to go further in this process and ensure that those who go through teacher education are challenged and their awareness-base extended.

I would suggest that at all stages in teacher education we need to focus on the personal development of teachers, opportunities to experience and learn from diversity, skills in classroom practice and awareness of resources. Very often we do the last first – and just hand resources to people who need much more personal preparation. Those of us who work with B.Ed. students have much to learn from the work of the Early Childhood Studies course that Stranmillis has been developing very successfully over recent years. The *Equal Opportunities in the Early Years* module in that course explores many of these areas, but there is as yet no direct equivalent module in our B.Ed. programme. I suspect that this may well be the case in other institutions. There are similarly valuable courses dealing with sectarianism and racism available through NIPPA - the Early Years Organisation. One of the most important outcomes of this project will be the drawing up of a proposed framework for teacher education in relation to diversity in the early years, and the workshop discussion later this morning will be very valuable in relation to this process.

I've said little about resources, although there are some very useful ones in the system. We clearly need to make these more widely known, but more importantly help teachers to feel that they have the skills to use them. Maybe the three one-minute *Respecting Difference* NIPPA films (NIPPA/The Media Initiative for Children, 2004) will help to provide a framework for future well-focused work with very young children. These films have already been shown as adverts on television and a set of supportive curriculum guidelines and activities is under development so that

they can be used intelligently in a nursery or classroom context. Under the title *Together in the Park* they focus on physical disability, racial difference and cultural identity, and a pilot evaluation study is planned, headed by Paul Connolly, to assess their value and effectiveness. The background thinking behind this project is available for scrutiny on the internet. To my mind they are an exciting and attractive attempt to raise the profile of these issues, and we should look forward to the outcomes of the study.

I'll leave you with a fairly well-known, but very appropriate, quote from Gandhi which is also used as an inscription on NIPPA's draft curriculum guide for the *Respecting Difference* programme:

"Almost everything you do will seem insignificant.
But it is very important that you do it …
You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

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CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2004

Diversity in Early Years Education: A North / South Project

Edited by B. McConnell

Introduction to the Research Project – A. Pollak

The Diversity and Early Years Research Project emerged from discussions between the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh and a number of early childhood education specialists in the summer of 2002. Out of these discussions came a funding application to the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme to undertake a two year study aimed at researching the difficulties facing teachers and very young schoolchildren in areas of conflict and diversity on both sides of the Irish border, with a view to developing a framework to be used in all colleges of education, North and South, involved in preparing teachers to work with children in the early years. In the autumn of 2002, following the award of £58,000 from the Peace Programme to carry out this study, a steering group was set up consisting of early years education specialists from Stranmillis, St Patrick's, Froebel College in Dublin and Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. Two researchers were employed to carry out the research and summaries of their findings are printed below.

Research Team

L. Quinn	P. Donnelly
S. Carville	J. Deegan
H. McLaughlin	U. McCabe
M. Kenny	NM NiMhurchu
B. McConnell	N. Richardson
A. Pollak	
N. Hayes	Project Evaluation

Delegates at the conference
Over 50 delegates attended the conference in the Canal Court Hotel from both North and South. >

Synopsis of Keynote Address – L. Quinn

Norman Richardson, in his Keynote speech, addressed why this study into diversity in early years education is so important. He began, "Over 20 years ago research suggested that in the USA racially-aware attitudes were evident in children as young as 3 years, and such children showed a capacity to make prejudiced remarks about children of other races, and how, if allowed to continue, such attitudes were seen to harden through later childhood and into adolescence. This was almost two decades before the research carried out by Paul Connolly and others on racist and sectarian attitudes in young children in Northern Ireland. Yet in the period since then I have frequently heard teachers and students express the view that young children should not be exposed to contentious or sensitive issues; or that such concerns will inevitably lead to conflict in the classroom". Towards the end of his extremely powerful talk Norman notes that there are some very useful resources in the system for dealing with these issues. These clearly need to be made more widely known, but more importantly teachers need to feel that they have the skills to use them. "One of the most important outcomes of this project will be the drawing up of a proposed framework for teacher education in relation to diversity in the early years."

Keynote Address
Norman Richardson
Stranmillis University College

Report from Northern Researcher – H. McLaughlin

12 KS 1 teachers responded to the postal questionnaire. From these, six schools agreed to participate in the case studies. Case studies involved participant observations; semi structured interviews with key personnel (eg.class teachers, SENCO, school principals); and a trigger activity (eg. circle time dealing with a diversity issue). The findings from the study indicated that teachers felt their initial teacher training did not prepare them to address issues of diversity in the classroom, particularly in terms of dealing with the conflict situation in NI. Generally it was noted how teachers deal with diversity from a values approach and resources identified included the 'ALIVO' package, 'Anti Bias Curriculum', 'Primary Values' etc. They felt that these resources were useful, but not always suitable for the younger age group or specific to diversity problem. It was also noted the need to have full commitment of the parents when addressing diversity in the classroom, and this would require training.

Report from Southern Researcher - M Kenny

18 Infant teachers, from the 35 schools surveyed, responded to the postal questionnaire. Six schools visited were participant observations and interviews with the class teachers, principals and support teachers were carried out. Teachers generally welcome diversity as enriching. They felt language was a difficulty, as they felt infant pupils were not yet aware of ethnic/race/religious issues. It was noted that knowledge and action were not co-ordinated, particularly evident in senior classes. To explore interculturalism, teachers identified the 'new curriculum', RE materials, festivals and events, parental involvement and 'teachable moments'. When diversity issues arose, teachers felt the need for a whole school policy. Effective pedagogy and practice were essential and good parent relations. Most felt the school was a 'haven'. Knowledge, skills and resources are needed to effectively deal with this issue.

Discussion group Friday – U McCabe

The discussion groups on Friday responded to the research presentations. A common reaction was that teachers lack the skills to adequately deal with diversity issues as they have not faced conflicts in their own backgrounds. Based on the research findings participants believed that teachers need to explore their own perceptions in relation to diversity issues. Resources for teachers were seen as secondary to skills needs of teachers. The importance of the inclusion of parents in the school approach was highlighted and it was suggested that teachers should have the skills to bring that approach into the community. It was felt that it is crucial to develop a whole-school policy on a local basis and to concentrate on commonalities rather than differences in the community. Theory was seen as important in the training of teachers but in-service training was viewed as particularly essential. Young teachers should have a 'follow through' when they begin in schools in order to share experiences. There should be a co-ordinator across Ireland who is free from other responsibilities and represents a co-ordinated approach by the training colleges.

Discussion group Saturday – P. Donnelly

The discussion group on Saturday examined the possible content for the framework document. The groups noted the similarity between the North and South research. The rationale and guiding principles would be common and would need to include indicators for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the framework. For teachers to face and deal with the reality of conflict resolution and celebrating diversity in their schools, a number of things need to be in place: Students and teachers need to explore issues of self perception, prejudice awareness and to develop critical thinking skills. A whole school approach to diversity could thus evolve. All of the colleges need to be involved and committed in offering both integrated and specific modules on equal opportunities and should positively recruit students from different backgrounds and cultures. Schools and colleges must take a multidisciplinary approach and involve parents and local communities in the drawing up of the modules. Local communities should be viewed as a resource. Student teachers need to experience a broad range of schools on SBW. Finally it was felt necessary to name the skills and resources needed to feel confident in implementing a positive approach to the diversity in their teaching. This would include an understanding of the relevant legislation.

Summary – B. McConnell

The conference closed with an address by Anastasia Crickley, from the Centre for Applied Social Studies in Maynooth. She summed up the importance and relevance of the study, contextualsing it within diversity in Ireland. Pauric Travers thanked all the delegates for their valued input, explaining how their comments and suggestions would help shape the Framework for supporting diversity teaching during Initial Teacher Education.

The steering committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in this study, in particular the staff in the research settings, both North and South.

Anastasia Crickley

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