

Roma and Travellers in Public Education

RAXEN

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Executive Summary

The objective in this report is to provide information on intercultural education policies for the Traveller community in Ireland, an analysis of the processes and strategies involved in the formulation and implementation of these policies and an assessment of both their “adverse” and “positive” impact. The discussion of provision will include the formal and community sectors.

Travellers and Roma have substantial cultural affinities but until the 1990s Irish Travellers were the only ethnic group in the Roma/Gypsy/Traveller ethnic cluster with an established presence in Ireland. The Irish Traveller community is an indigenous ethnic group. The Equal Status Act 2000 defines Travellers as:

The community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland¹.

In the past small numbers of Roma migrated temporarily to Ireland for short-term work but in the past ten years, for the first time, Roma migrant workers and asylum seekers have arrived in Ireland with the intention of staying. It is estimated that about 1,700 Roma live in Ireland, originating mainly from Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.. The Irish education system has hardly begun to register specific issues relating to Roma; like all immigrants who do not have refugee or citizenship status, their only entitlement to educational support is a fixed period of English language tuition. Given the recent nature of their migration to Ireland very little is known about this small, but growing community.

Given the very different experiences and situations of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland this report will focus on an analysis of education provision for the Traveller community.

Following the introduction, the main body of the Report is divided into three parts. The introduction includes a note on the different situations of the Roma and Traveller communities in Ireland, and the rationale for the focus on Travellers in this report. It is to be hoped that the lessons of history regarding Travellers in education, reviewed in this report, will be applied in the case of the Roma, and other minority ethnic groups.

Part 1 Section A is a review of history of Irish Travellers and how they are conceptualised and excluded by the majority. Experiences of racism and discrimination by the Traveller community have severely affected their freedom and capacity to engage with the education system.

Section B is a review of education law, policy, administration, curricula, and professional education. Travellers have the same legal education rights as all citizens, but they are specifically mentioned in equality legislation and in curriculum policy. Conceptualisations of Travellers shape both specific provision for them, and their portrayal in intercultural curricula for all students.

Curriculum development could play a key role in promoting understandings of culture as process, as well as a knowledge of Traveller traditions. Teacher education is a pivotal element in ensuring that such understandings and knowledge are not reinterpreted to fit old moulds, and in the transformation of school policies, codes of practice and programmes. Traveller involvement in developing policy and curricula and in delivering education at all levels must be promoted.

¹ Ireland (2000) *Equal Status Act*, 2(1)

The forthcoming National Council for Curriculum and Assessment interculturalism guidelines are a key new development. Schools will require resources and information to implement them effectively in programmes for all students.

Part 2 is a review of Traveller participation in education provision, in the formal sector (Section A), in the community sector (Section B), and in third level (Section C). In the formal sector Traveller enrolment at primary level is satisfactory but attendance and attainment require improvement. There has been substantial progress in enrolment in Junior Cycle in secondary level schools and growth is beginning in the Senior Cycle; however drop-out rates and attendance levels are very problematic. A thorough assessment is difficult given the lack of disaggregated data regarding students' attendance, learning needs and attainment. In the community sector, preschool provision for Travellers tends to be segregated. However, when the Department of Education and Science opens up general preschool provision it will be informed by anti-discrimination and intercultural policy. Segregated further education and training provision for adults is also in a process of transition to integration.

Change can be more difficult in the formal sector, but is likely to be researched, resourced and backed by policy. Ad hoc developments in the voluntary or community sector have remedied State failure to introduce provision – for instance preschools for Travellers – but have also led to contradictions; innovations can end up under-resourced, isolated and in some instances self-perpetuating. However, community education and development is powerful in promoting community capacity to engage with the formal system. Community initiatives need to be placed on a sound long-term policy, funding and resource footing.

No discussion of education at any level can be complete without considering the role of third level: that level is central in promoting appropriate research, curriculum development and teacher education, and Travellers' involvement in professional roles. Also, the sectors of society with social and political capital are educated there: any transformation of their perspective will contribute to building a just and inclusive society. Travellers, Roma and other minorities must engage with third level if they are to maximise their education options, including professional roles at all levels of education planning, development and provision. As with policy and curricula, so with provision: Travellers will not be fully included until they are present, achieving, and engaged in shaping all levels of education.

This report is informed by a number of key principles including:

- All facets of education provision must be informed by principles of equality, interculturalism and anti-discrimination.
- A thorough audit is required, of policy, codes of practice, curriculum texts and materials, in the light of these principles.
- All those involved in delivering this education must be educated in the theory and application of these principles.
- The adoption of these principles will transform education for all students and this is necessary for Irish society today.

Travellers are intensely marginalised in Irish society. Education is a powerful tool in confronting this situation but unless policy and practice are soundly conceptualised its impact will be at least not fully effective. As regards Travellers, education is a key to achieving their human right to a full and dignified working and personal life as citizens and as proud members of their own ethnic community. As regards the majority, education is essential to confront prejudice and ignorance and promote knowledgeable respect for diversity. Racism is a practice of the majority; it cannot be challenged and undone by focusing on the minority.

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Introduction

The objective in this report is to provide information on the education policies for Travellers in Ireland, an analysis of the processes and strategies involved in the formulation and implementation of these policies and an assessment of both their “adverse” and “positive” impact. The impact of other positive actions and initiatives that may or may not affect public policy is presented and analysed. Any absence of educational policies, positive actions and initiatives for these specific groups is noted and explained in the context of educational policies regarding indigenous or immigrant minorities in general.

Given the different situations of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland, this report will focus on the provision of intercultural education responses as they relate to experiences of discrimination by the Traveller community. This introduction will begin with a brief analysis of the situation of the Roma population in Ireland, thereby providing the context for the focus of the report.

The Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland

Travellers and Roma have substantial cultural affinities² but Ireland is perhaps unique in Europe, in that historic pan-European migrations of Roma did not substantially reach Ireland. Until the 1990s Irish Travellers were the only ethnic group in the Roma/Gypsy/Traveller ethnic cluster with an established presence in Ireland. This is probably due to Ireland’s colonisation and the resultant impoverishment of the peasantry; Irish Travellers absorbed any economic opportunities there were for nomadic service providers³. In more recent times, small numbers of Roma migrated temporarily to Ireland for short-term work but since the mid 1990s Roma migrant workers and asylum seekers are immigrating with intent to remain in Ireland. An estimated 1,700 Roma now live in Ireland, originating mainly from Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria⁴.

Anti-Roma racism in their countries of origin is continued in Ireland but immigrant Roma are outside their familiar geographic, linguistic and social context. Most live in “direct provision” for asylum seekers⁵; as with other asylum seeking communities they find this accommodation inadequate, confining and stressful; their extended family linkages are threatened; and unless they get refugee status they cannot take employment. They tend to be more marginalized than other asylum seeker groups because of their lack of education, low language skills and historic and systematic discrimination. However, the Roma Support Group, Pavee Point and other Traveller groups are building liaison between their communities. This solidarity should strengthen the position of the Roma in dealings with Irish bureaucracy and with Irish anti-nomadic racism.

The Irish education system has hardly begun to register specific issues relating to Roma; like all immigrants with work permits or asylum seeker status, their only entitlement to educational

² O’Connell, J. (1998) *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers of Europe: An Examination of Discrimination and Racism*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications

³ Kenny, M. (1997) *The Routes of Resistance: Travellers and Second-level schooling*, Aldershot: Ashgate

⁴ Main sources of information in this section are: Roma Support Group and Pavee Point (2002) *Roma in Ireland – an initial needs analysis*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications; National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (2004) *Traveller and Roma Community*, available at <http://www.nccri.com/cdsu-travellers.html>, (10.09.04).

⁵ Newly arrived asylum seekers are directly allocated full-board hostel/hotel accommodation typically based outside Dublin; they receive a residual income maintenance payment of €9.05 per week for an adult and €9.52 for a child. Discretionary needs payments can also be provided in exceptional circumstances.

support is a limited period of English language tuition. An outreach services is required to meet the specific needs of the Roma⁶. For Roma parents enrolling their children in schools is made difficult by language and by the conditions of living in direct provision. There is also the absence in many cases of a tradition of attending school in their countries of origin where many Roma children were at best placed in segregated schools, often for children with intellectual disabilities. However, as the Irish primary school teachers' trade union states:

... it has been a continuous struggle at international level to maintain the inclusion of Travellers in Roma/Gypsy resolutions and initiatives in the Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations. That battle now appears to have been won and it is, therefore, disappointing to note that Roma children are not offered the same supports and benefits as Travellers in the education system in Ireland.⁷

The Roma Support Group notes that analysis of the situation of the Roma in Ireland is undermined by the absence of disaggregated State statistical data; besides:

There is only limited reference to the specific needs of the Roma community in the existing research undertaken by both statutory and non-governmental organisations.⁸

Given the substantially undocumented historic and current situation of Roma in Ireland, in this report the focus is on Travellers. It is to be hoped that the lessons of history regarding Travellers in education, reviewed in this report, will be applied in relation to the Roma.

Report structure and key points

This report comprises three parts. Part 1 provides the context for the discussion of education provision in Part 2, while Part 3 draws key conclusions.

Part 1, Section A is a review of issues to education provision for Travellers: these relate to their demographic profile, and conditions of accommodation, health, employment and social exclusion. Section B is an overview of key diversity-related elements in the education system including policy development, curricula, teacher education and system administration.

Part 2 is a consideration of education provision for Travellers and of Traveller participation, in the formal sector (Section A) and in community based innovations (Section B). Both sectors have valuable elements; however, though change can be more difficult to realise in the formal sector, it is more soundly based in terms of policy and resources. In the community based sector provision tends to be segregated, and resource starvation and short-term funding militate against development. However, that sector is powerful in promoting community capacity to engage with the formal system, and it has remedied State failure to introduce provision, for instance in the preschool sector.

Part 2 concludes with a review of the situation in third level. This level of provision is central to the issue of an inclusive system: the professional education of educators is provided there; the sectors of society with substantial social and political capital are educated there, and any transformation of their perspective will contribute to the building of a just and inclusive society; finally, Travellers and other minorities must participate in third level if they are to maximise their education options, and if they are to become involved as professionals at all levels of education planning, development and provision.

⁶ Ward, T. (2002) *Asylum Seekers in Adult Education: A Study of Language and Literacy Needs*, Dublin: City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, p. 136

⁷ Irish National Teachers Organisation (2004) *Traveller Education: INTO policies and proposals updated*, Dublin: INTO, p. 15

⁸ Roma Support Group and Pavee Point (2002) *Roma in Ireland – an initial needs analysis*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, pp. 5, 11

Part 1: Frameworks

Section A: The Irish Traveller community

1.1 History and identity issues

The Irish Traveller community is an indigenous ethnic group; their presence in the country was first recorded in the fifteenth century and indicators are that they to have been part of Irish society since time immemorial. Their economic activities - plying goods and services to local settled people – both facilitated and required a nomadic lifestyle. In rural Ireland prior to the mid-twentieth century Travellers also played a role as entertainers in the settled communities as they passed through; present day folklorists value their stock of traditional Irish music and folklore⁹. Their language, customs, values, traditions and history, profoundly shaped by nomadism, give Travellers their distinct group identity. The Equal Status Act defines Travellers as:

The community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland¹⁰.

Changes in the actual name of this population are reflected in the titles of the committees that were convened by the Government to study their situation: the Commission on Itinerancy in the early 1960s¹¹, the Travelling People Review Body in the early 1980s¹², and Task Force on the Travelling Community in the 1990s¹³. Currently a committee convened by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform monitors the implementation of the Task Force recommendations. All the committees have comprised representatives of the major sectors – justice, health, industry, education, the churches; since the 1980s the proportion of Traveller representatives has increased on each successive committee.

Prior to the appointment of the Commission in 1960 Travellers were commonly known as “tinkers” though they themselves preferred the title “Traveller”¹⁴. In the strict dictionary sense “tinker” means “tinsmith” but as a title for the Traveller community it had acquired racist overtones – reflected in phrases such as “dirty tinker” or in “tinkering” defined as botched work. However, the term “itinerant” had its own problematic overtones (to be discussed below), and was replaced in the 1980s by the term “Travelling People”. Since then Travellers have gained the right to say how they as a people should be named, and the terms “Travellers/Traveller community” were adopted in official policy; they are used in this report.

Travellers’ cultural status has been disputed. The 1963 Commission Report presents Travellers as deviant, destitute drop-outs from a homogeneous settled Irish population; the 1983 Review Body Report recognises their distinct social status and nomadic tradition but treats these

⁹ Ó Riain, G. (ed.) (1992) *Traveller ways, Traveller words*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications; Ní Laodhóg, N. (ed.) (1995) *A Heritage Ahead: Cultural Action and Travellers*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications.

¹⁰ Ireland (2000) *Equal Status Act*, 2(1)

¹¹ Commission on Itinerancy, Department of Social Welfare (1963) *Report on the Conditions of Itinerants*, Dublin: Stationery Office.

¹² Travelling People Review Body, Department of the Environment, (1983) *Report of the Travelling People Review Body*, Dublin: Stationery Office, paragraph 1.6.

¹³ Task Force on the Travelling Community, Department of the Environment (1995) *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office

¹⁴ Mac Gréine (1932) ‘Irish Tinkers or “Travellers”’, in: *Béaloides*, Vol. 3, pp. 170-186.

primarily as elements of a subculture of poverty. The 1996 Task Force Report discusses their culture as a group process rather than a fixed body of content¹⁵. Travellers share much of the content of their cultural practices with traditional Irish society (extended family systems, music and folklore for instance); the distinctiveness lies in how their tradition of nomadism and inter-ethnic relations with settled society have profoundly shaped their practice of these traditions:

“Nomadism is neither entirely the product nor the producer of culture, it is a basic component which confers on the whole a marked flavour”¹⁶

This issue of what is distinctive about Traveller culture arises in relation to curricula for schools. Doubts about this issue reflect ignorance of elements cited in studies of Traveller culture¹⁷ – such as Travellers’ distinctive versions of traditional music and folklore, how their extended family networking intersects with nomadism to make it quite different in quality from extended families in agricultural society, their customs relating to daily living, and other cultural elements such as their language, Gammon (known in academia as Shelta). The contested naming of Travellers and the doubts about their cultural status also reflect the historic silencing and denigration of Traveller culture in Ireland.

1.1.1 Racism and Travellers

Travellers have suffered systematic exclusion from Irish society. It was noted above that the term “itinerant”, adopted officially as the title for Travellers in the 1960s, is problematic. Itinerancy has been linked with vagabondage, vagrancy and roguery:

... the racialization of cultural difference by the mid-Victorian intelligentsia had its roots, not only in the conjunction of social-evolutionist ideas, colonial expansion, and the creation of an urban industrial proletariat, but in folk myth and long-standing domestic prejudice directed at gypsies, Jews, and especially in England, Celtic vagabonds ... discourses on itinerancy, class, criminality, race, and morality interrelated to construct the "vagabond savage." ¹⁸

Anti-nomadic racism is perhaps the most ancient form of racism, identifiable even in the Book of Genesis¹⁹ and racism against Gypsies and Travellers still goes unremarked across Europe, to an extent that is not true of other groups²⁰. In Ireland institutional racism is becoming more visible due to the presence of new minorities but the case of the Travellers shows that racism in Ireland pre-dated current immigration. There is also a long history of institutional racism against Travellers; its impact will be amply illustrated in the sections that follow.

The 1995 Task Force was the first State body in Ireland to formally recognise discrimination against Travellers as racism. It cites from the European Parliament Committee of Inquiry on

¹⁵ Task Force on the Travelling Community, Department of the Environment (1995) *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office, Section B

¹⁶ Liégeois, J-P. (1987) *Gypsies and Travellers*, Dossiers for the Intercultural Training of Teachers, Council of Europe. Cited in the Task Force Report, p. 75

¹⁷ Binchy, A. (1994) *The Status and Functions of Shelta*, unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford University; Mac Aongusa, M. (1992) *The Alienation of Travellers from the Educational System*, Dublin: Sociological Association of Ireland; McCann, M., Ó Síocháin, S. and Ruane, J. (eds.) (1994) *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity*, Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast.

¹⁸ Hansen, A (2004) “Exhibiting Vagrancy, 1851: Victorian London and the ‘Vagabond Savage’”, in: *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, Vol. 2, No. 2, available at <http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/london-journal/>, (05/10/2004).

¹⁹ Clébert, J.P. (1963) *The Gypsies*, London: Penguin.

²⁰ Save the Children (2001) *Denied a future? The right to education of Roma/Gypsy & Traveller children in Europe, Volume 2: Western & Central Europe*, London: Save the Children, p. 21.

Racism and Xenophobia (1991), that “the single most discriminated against ethnic group [in Ireland] is the ‘Travelling People’”²¹.

In Ireland anti-Traveller racism is the most virulent form of racist discrimination even in this period of immigration and xenophobia²². Mac Gréil²³ found that between the time of his first and second studies of prejudice and tolerance in Ireland, hostility to Travellers had hardened. The government’s Know Racism campaign²⁴ published research findings on racism and attitudes to minority groups: 48 per cent disagreed with the statement that the Traveller community make a positive contribution to Irish society, while 72 per cent agreed that the settled community is not willing to accept members of the Traveller community living among them.²⁵

As regards access to social venues and activities in the local community, the Irish Traveller Movement²⁶ note that in a survey of five hundred Travellers, 71 per cent reported discrimination from public house owners; between 30 and 40 per cent reported discrimination by social venues, police, Local Authorities and Social Welfare officials; 25 per cent experienced discrimination from schools. The Equality Authority, established in the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, receives complaints regarding breaches of equality legislation; 11 per cent of cases lodged with the Equality Authority under the Equal Status Act relate to discrimination by schools. Where the evidence warrants legal proceedings cases are brought before the Equality Tribunal; 75 per cent of cases in 2002 and 49 percent of cases in 2003, under the Equal Status Act were from Travellers.

1.2 Population and conditions of life

Three censuses of Travellers were conducted at roughly twenty-year intervals: in 1961²⁷, 1981²⁸, and 2002²⁹. Traveller organisations and scholars argue that the enumerating procedures were gravely flawed and that at least 25 per cent of the Traveller population were not registered. For this report it is tentatively assumed that profiles for the total Traveller population would be similar to those for the enumerated subset of that population. Focus will be on identifying trends and patterns in the population’s age, accommodation and education profiles.

In 1961 the enumerated population of Travellers was about 6,000 persons (two per thousand of the national population). In 1981 the enumerated population of Travellers was about 14,000

²¹ Task Force on the Travelling Community, Department of the Environment (1995) *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 81

²² Fanning, B. (2002) *Racism and social change in the Republic of Ireland*, Manchester University Press; McVeigh, R. (1997) “Theorising sedentarism: the roots of anti-nomadism”, in *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, Hertfordshire University Press.

²³ Mac Gréil, M. (1977) *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ireland*, Dublin: College of Industrial Relations; (1996) *Prejudice in Ireland Revisited*, Maynooth: St. Patrick’s College.

²⁴ The Irish government’s three year Know Racism public awareness campaign came to an end in 2004, though it is expected that the activities of the campaign will be continued through the implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism

²⁵ Millward Brown IMS (2004) *Presentation of Research Finding on Opinions on Racism and Attitudes to Minority Groups*, 26 February 2004, Dublin: Know Racism

²⁶ Irish Traveller Movement (2002) *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Second Report by Ireland 1999. Submission by the Irish Traveller Movement. April 2002*, available at <http://www.itmtrav.com/Submission%20Covenant%20Economic,%20Social%20and%20Cultural%20Rights.doc>, (10.08.2004)

²⁷ Commission on Itinerancy, Department of Social Welfare (1963) *Report on the Conditions of Itinerants*, Dublin: Stationery Office.

²⁸ Rottman, D.B., Dale Tussing, A. and Wiley, M.M. (1986) *The population structure and living circumstances of Irish Travellers: Results from the 1981 census of Traveller families*, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute

²⁹ Central Statistics Office (2004) *2002 Census, Volume 8: the Irish Traveller Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office

persons (four per thousand of the national population). In 2002 about 24,000 Travellers were enumerated (six per thousand of the national population – roughly equivalent to the ratio of Gypsies to the national population in France³⁰); enumerated Traveller children under fourteen years old comprise about twelve per thousand of the national population in that age band. About 25 per cent of enumerated Travellers are registered as living in households of four or more persons. The growth rate in the Traveller population is showing signs of slowing: the proportion of adults to children dropped from 53 per cent in 1961 to 42 per cent in 2002. However, the overall population is still very young, as demonstrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Aged band distribution (percentages) for the national population and for the Traveller population, by gender

Age bands	% of male age band populations		% of female age band populations	
	National	Traveller	National	Traveller
0-14yrs	22.0	43.5	20.7	41.0
15-24yrs	16.7	20.3	15.9	20.7
25-34yrs	15.7	13.8	15.6	14.8
35-44yrs	14.3	9.5	14.4	10.2
45-54yrs	12.4	6.3	12.1	6.1
55-64yrs	9.1	3.7	8.8	3.7
65-74yrs	6.0	2.0	6.5	2.1
75yrs&+	3.7	1.0	6.0	1.4

The proportion of the population who are in the age bands likely to be in education is far higher for Travellers than for the national population while the proportion likely to be in retirement is far lower. As will be seen, this differential reflects Travellers' health status; it has implications for comparative economic profiles and for education participation rates.

1.2.1 Accommodation

Accommodation is the central determinant of conditions of life for Travellers, including their access to educational opportunities. The national accommodation profiles (Table 2) show a dramatic improvement between 1981 and 2000 (the difference in the temporary accommodation data from the 2000 count and the 2002 Census does not indicate change over those years, so much as differences in category definitions and in the way data are organised):

Table 2: Traveller families' accommodation in Local Authority 1981 and 2000 counts, and Travellers in all-Traveller households³¹, in 2002 National Census: percentage distribution by type of accommodation³²

Department of the Environment	1981	2000	2002 Census	2002
In standard housing	46.5	54.2	Permanent accommodation	55.6
a) In halting sites	7.1	23.5		
b) On the roadside	46.4	22.3		
Total temporary (a and b above)	53.5	45.8	Temporary accommodation	36.9
			Not stated	7.6

The number of families in illegal sites (= on the roadside) has particular relevance for their children's health and educational progress. Table 3 reveals some of the complexity beneath the national profile, exemplified in the profile of children living on illegal sites in three Local

³⁰ Save the Children (2001) *Denied a future? The right to education of Roma/Gypsy & Traveller children in Europe, Volume 2: Western & Central Europe*, London: Save the Children, p. 17.

³¹ The National Census counted all-Traveller and mixed Traveller/settled households separately. It found that 84 percent of enumerated Travellers were in all-Traveller households. Over 90 per cent of persons in mixed households were in standard housing.

³² Data source: Traveller Health Unit, Department of Health and Children (2002) *Travellers health, a national strategy*, Dublin: Department of Health and Children, p. 27 Central Statistics Office (2004) *2002 Census, Vol. 8, The Irish Traveller Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office, Table 26

Authorities in Dublin. In 2001 about one third of all Traveller children under twelve years old in the greater Dublin area were living on illegal sites; the rate was highest for younger children.

Table 3: Traveller children: Percentage from each age band living on illegal sites in three Dublin Local Authorities (2001)³³

Local Authorities	Age bands, % of children on illegal sites				
	0/2yrs	3/4yrs	5/12yrs	13/16yrs	17+yrs
Fingal	42	44	33	31	27
South Dublin	30	25	28	36	31
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	42	50	27	30	43

Young families are more likely to be in illegal accommodation. The national profile is better than most Dublin area profiles but it must be noted that the situation everywhere is grave – and not just for the almost 25 per cent of Travellers who live in illegal sites: many official or legal halting sites are also in very poor condition³⁴.

1.2.2 Health and Disability

Infant mortality rates for Traveller children were seven times the national rate in 1961³⁵. In the only major survey of Traveller health to date, the combined stillbirth, perinatal death and infant mortality rate in 1987 was found to be three times the national average.³⁶ The authors of this study also note the following facts. In 1961 Travellers' life expectancy was thirty years of age; by 1987 it had risen to about sixty years – which was the level for the settled population in the 1940s. Compared to rates for the same-sex settled population, male Travellers were more than twice as likely to die, and female Travellers were more than three times as likely to die, in a given year. The accidental death ratio was far higher, particularly for women (over six times that for settled women), and most such deaths occurred to women in roadside camps. In the enumerated population of Travellers in the 2002 census, disability rates among Traveller children and youth are markedly higher than among settled children and youth, and the gap widens with age particularly for males, as shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Youth with disability: national and Traveller populations, percentage of age band³⁷

Age Band	% of male age band population		% of female age band population	
	National	Traveller	National	Traveller
0-4 yrs	0.8	1.8	0.7	1.2
5-9 yrs	3.3	3.4	1.9	2.7
10-14 yrs	3.6	4.4	2.1	3.7
15-19 yrs	3.1	6	2.5	5.3

Living conditions and occupational hazards substantially explain why Traveller children and youth, particularly boys are exposed to more threats of acquired disability. In a study³⁸ of a sample of Traveller women in the late 1990s 43 per cent were found to display “psychiatric caseness”; there was a strong correlation between the women’s distress and their accommodation, but the number of children they had was not a factor. The authors noted that

³³ Weafer, J.A. (2001) *The Education and Accommodation Needs of Travellers in the Archdiocese of Dublin: A Report*, Dublin: Crosscare.

³⁴ Monitoring Committee, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2000) *First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 37-45

³⁵ Commission on Itinerancy, Department of Social Welfare (1963) *Report on the Conditions of Itinerants*, Dublin: Stationery Office, paragraph 27.

³⁶ Data source: Barry, J., Herity, B. and Solan, J. (1989) *Vital Statistics of Travelling People, 1987*, Dublin: The Health Research Board, pp. 14-15.

³⁷ Central Statistics Office (2004) *2002 Census, Volume 8, the Irish Traveller Community*, Dublin: CSO, Table 16 and Vol. 10, Table 19

³⁸ Herron, S., Barry, J., Fitzgerald, M. and MacLachlan, M. (2000). “The Psychosocial Health of Irish Traveller Mothers”, in: MacLachlan, M. and O’Connell, M. (eds.) *Cultivating Pluralism. Psychological, Social and Cultural Perspectives on a Changing Ireland*. Dublin: Oak Tree Press, pp. 93-116

endogamy helps to preserve group solidarity, and “Traveller group psychology provides Travellers with a protective shelter to deal with the negative psychological effects the continual pejorativisation of their culture causes”.

1.2.3 Employment and social inclusion

Accommodation and racism have shaped Travellers’ access to employment and social activities as well as to education. A second factor that shapes Travellers’ participation is the age structure of the population. As shown in Table 1 above, the age profile for the Traveller population is in marked contrast to that for the national population: a very high proportion of Travellers are in the childhood and youth age bands (likely to be in education) and a very low proportion are over sixty five years old (the retirement age bracket).

Travellers are self-employed by tradition. Historically their economic activities served the local farm population and included casual migrant labouring, trade in farm animals and making and mending tin ware; market trading and scrap collecting are currently two major areas of activity³⁹. However, growing numbers are finding employment in the building and service sectors. In 2002 the main elements in the labour force profile (participation⁴⁰, unemployment and continuing education rates) for the enumerated Traveller population aged fifteen years and over, as compared to the profile for same-age national population, are as follows:

Table 5: Labour force participation and unemployment rates, and students in the enumerated Traveller and national populations aged 15 years and over, by gender, 2002

Population	Labour force participation rates (% of total population)		Unemployment (% of labour force participants)		Not ceased education (% of total population)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Travellers	71.8	37.5	44.8	19.1	18.1	20.5
National	71.6	49.4	5.8	3.2	14.6	15.6

Labour force participation rates for Traveller males are slightly higher than for all males (reflecting the low percentage of male Travellers aged over sixty five years); while participation rates for Traveller females are substantially lower than the rates for all females (reflecting the high percentage of Traveller women full-time in the home and not registered for employment). Ongoing education rates for Travellers are higher than the rates for the national population, and highest for female Travellers (reflecting the high percentage of Travellers in the younger age bands). Depressed educational attainment levels contribute to this profile as well as blocking access to wider occupational options⁴¹.

Section B: The Education System – law and policy

1.3 Legislation

The Equal Status Act 2000 prohibits discrimination by public services, including education, on any of nine grounds. One is the “race ground” (includes race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin). Another is the “Traveller ground”. This Act adds specific discussion of ethnicity and Traveller identity to the legal framework within which education policy and practice is developed.

³⁹ Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (1993) *Recycling and the Traveller Economy: Income, jobs and wealth creation*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications; McCarthy, D. and McCarthy, P. (1998) *Market Economies. Trading in the Traveller Economy*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications

⁴⁰ Labour force participation = registered for employment, whether employed or not.

⁴¹ McCoy, S. and Smyth, E. (2004) “Educational expenditure: implications for equality”, in: Callan, T., Doris, A. and McCoy, D. (eds.) *Budget Perspectives 2004*, Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, p. 84.

The Equality Act 2004 amends a number of provisions of the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000, to give effect to Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation; and Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women.

1.3.1 Education legislation

The Education Act 1998 makes provision in the interests of the common good for the education of every person in the State, including any person who has a disability or special educational needs. Education is to be informed by respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, language and traditions in Irish society, and in a spirit of partnership between all the education partners. This Act legally supports Travellers' inclusion under the head of disadvantage rather than – as had been the case since the 1960s – under the head of special learning needs.

The Education Welfare Act 2000 raises the minimum school leaving age to sixteen years, or the completion of the secondary school Junior Cycle, whichever is later. It also puts school attendance within a more rigorous legal frame: schools are legally obliged to report cases of children who fail to attend for more than an accumulated total of twenty days in a school year. The issue and the reasons for it then rest between the personnel of the National Education Welfare Board and the child and parents. The role of this Board and its officers is envisaged as primarily supportive.

The Education for People with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 establishes citizens' legal right to education suited to their individual requirements. The legal implications of this are being worked out in the policy arena, and in the courts. Minority ethnic people with disabilities have identity issues and are marginalised, on several intersecting fronts⁴² and minority children are at particular risk. Diniz points out that they can be either over-represented or under-represented within the ranks of children with disabilities.⁴³ For instance, children who have not had the opportunity to develop the linguistic and other skills required in the school culture (Travellers are often cited in this regard) can too easily be classified as having learning difficulties; while children who have developmental language difficulties but whose mother tongue is not English, can be overlooked on the assumption that they just need English language tuition.

In short, all persons regardless of background are legally entitled to enrolment and integrated placement in their local publicly funded schools or other education provision; their learning needs must be addressed and they are entitled to effective education provision. Diversity of traditions must be respected. Law both mandates and enables the promotion of inclusive policy; for instance the Department of Education and Science guidelines on Traveller education cite the Acts noted above and the implications of them for a school's enrolment, placement and tuition policy and practice. The role of law is to defend and enforce, while policy should promote and inspire. The spirit and purpose of legislation is promoted in policy as articulated in various White Papers.

1.4 Policy development

Ireland is now a country of net immigration, and minority ethnic groups, including Roma, are increasingly enrolling in schools. At the same time, segregated provision for children with

⁴² Pierce, M. *Minority Ethnic People with Disabilities in Ireland. Equality Research Series*, Dublin: Equality Authority

⁴³ Diniz, F.A. (1999) "Race and special educational needs in the 1990s", in *British Journal of Special Education*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 213-217.

special needs is being phased out. Inclusionary policy and practice requires a basis in pro-diversity and anti-bias principles that address the rights of all including Travellers. In this era of diversification schools can play a significant role in shaping value base of society⁴⁴.

Racism is a practice of the majority population: therefore all children require an education informed by principles of equality, inclusion, interculturalism and anti-bias. Given their extreme marginalisation in Irish society, there must be specific treatment of Travellers in any such text or module promoting inclusion.

Sound conceptualisation is a necessary substratum for good policy. The White Paper on Adult Education⁴⁵ locates the concept of social diversity in its opening section and in general it informs the argument in the document; however, in policy regarding children the treatment of diversity is weaker. The National Children's Strategy includes an excellent discussion of children's diverse social identities; however, it is located in a section with the title "Some children have special needs"⁴⁶. The White Paper on Education recognises the need to educate all children for a global society but its treatment of diversity in schools is minimal and related to Travellers' needs⁴⁷. The White Paper on Early Childhood Education⁴⁸ does not register the concept at all. In the Report of the Working Committee on Teacher Education⁴⁹ 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. Such conceptual slippage could weaken support for the spirit of the Equal Status Act in the education sector. As Neil Crowley, Central Executive Officer of the Equality Authority put it, there is 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 disabilities⁵⁰.

Policy needs to be conceptually sound if it is to be effective in dislodging old paradigms and practices. In response to this clear need, the Department of Education and Science instituted an intercultural education committee within the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and its guidelines will shortly be published. The Department also promotes interculturalism in its guidelines on Traveller education, and has funded research into ethnicity and racism in schools.

1.4.1 Travellers in education policy

Until the 1960s the Traveller community was absent from education policy and provision in Ireland. Official concern was first formally expressed in the Commission on Itinerancy Report⁵¹.

⁴⁴ Crowley, N. (2001) "Building the Inclusive School", in: *Proceedings of the Joint Equality Authority/Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland conference for Second Level Teachers*, Dublin: Equality Authority/ASTI, pp. 27-36.

⁴⁵ Department of Education and Science (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, Dublin: Stationery Office

⁴⁶ The National Children's Strategy Committee, Department of Health and Children, (2000). *Our Children – Their Lives*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 70-71

⁴⁷ Department of Education and Science (1997) *Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 9, 26, 57 [

⁴⁸ Department of Education and Science (1999) *Ready to Learn: White Paper on Early Childhood Education*, Dublin: Stationery Office

⁴⁹ Department of Education and Science (2002) *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century. Report of the Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education*, Dublin: Stationery Office

⁵⁰ Crowley, N. (2004) "Meeting the inclusion challenge", in: *The Inclusive School. Proceedings of the Joint Conference of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Equality Authority. Limerick, 27th March 2004*, Dublin: INTO/Equality Authority, p. 14.

⁵¹ Commission on Itinerancy, Department of Social Welfare (1963) *Report on the Conditions of Itinerants*, Dublin: Stationery Office.

The Commission operated out of an assimilationist model of integration; the Report called for conversion and charity on the part of the settled society, and settlement and conformity on the part of the Traveller community. Its recommendations for education⁵² focused on the reform of Traveller deviancy and the alleviation of destitution; it suggested segregated provision as a short-term strategy aimed to prepare Traveller children for absorption into the normal classes. The programme envisaged for the segregated phase was to emphasise hygiene, functional literacy, numeracy and manual skills training.

Twenty years later the Review Body Report⁵³ used a subculture of poverty framework: Traveller children's low school attainment is blamed in particular on the lack of permanent accommodation, but also on poor home conditions and inadequate parenting; it recommends a compensatory education response. The Report does not address the issue of discriminatory practice in the system. It endorses all-Traveller pre-schools as well as special classes and schools, and Training Centres for young adult Travellers to address basic education deficits and to equip them with vocational skills.

The 1995 Task Force Report⁵⁴ recognises Travellers as a culturally distinct or ethnic group. It moves the focus from Travellers' education deficit to the need for the system to deliver their education rights. It identifies key principles for education provision that should apply to all levels from preschool to third level and further education: equality of opportunity, anti-discrimination, respect for diversity, recognition of children's legal right to enrolment and integrated school placement regardless of social background, and parental involvement in decision making. It calls for strategies to enable delivery of effective education to nomadic people, including record transfer systems and standardised texts and programmes. As indicated by the Department of Education and Science input to the Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the Task Force Recommendations, the Task Force Report contributed substantially to current policy of mainstreaming all forms of provision for Travellers⁵⁵.

Since the 1960s, two shifts in theoretical understandings have occurred. In line with developments elsewhere in law and social policy, segregated education for children with special needs has given way to a commitment to inclusive education. Over the same time frame the concept of Travellers as a deprived subgroup of the "normal" settled population has given way to the concept of Travellers as a distinct social/ethnic group; a subset of this shift has been the recognition that all Traveller children do not have innate learning difficulties. However, the influence of previous concepts persists in education policy, provision and practice in relation to Travellers. This can be demonstrated by reference to the administrative arrangements concerning provision of education to the Traveller community.

1.4.2 Location of Travellers in the administration system

There is a reciprocal relation between administration and theorisation. However, some policy decisions are intended as purely administrative strategies and their impact on conceptualisation often goes unrecognised. This happened with provision for Travellers: even after the move in policy texts to principles of integration, provision for Travellers remained under the authority of the Special Education Branch of the Department of Education and Science – because this

⁵² Commission on Itinerancy, Department of Social Welfare (1963) *Report on the Conditions of Itinerants*, Dublin: Stationery Office, Chapter X.

⁵³ Travelling People Review Body, Department of the Environment, (1983) *Report of the Travelling People Review Body*, Dublin: Stationery Office, paragraph 1.6, and Chapter VII: Education.

⁵⁴ Task Force on the Travelling Community, Department of the Environment (1995) *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office, Section B: Culture, C: Discrimination, and F: Education

⁵⁵ Monitoring Committee on Travellers, Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2001) *First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 149-208

facilitated better funding for support provision for Travellers. However, this location fed into the conceptual frame: the assumption that Traveller children had innate learning needs was supported by their location in this sector.

Traveller education is now located under the aegis of the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Science but the organisation of funding channels keep it linked to the Special Needs Unit⁵⁶. The Department of Education and Science is committed to full integration of Traveller children in primary and secondary schools. In its Report on Preschool Education for Travellers, and in the White Paper on Adult Education⁵⁷ a move towards integration of Traveller targeted and mainstream provision is envisaged.

However, a conceptual and administrative weakness remains. Issues of disadvantage and ethnicity can intersect, and either or both can intersect with special educational needs. The parliament Joint Committee on Education and Science envisages the appointment of a National Co-ordinator to oversee issues of interculturalism across the complex of Department of Education and Science structures and services⁵⁸. Data presented in this study would indicate that this area requires a Department of Education and Science Unit, similar in scope and status to the Social Inclusion and Special Needs Units. It warrants consideration that structures targeting education for Travellers should, like possible provision for other minority ethnic groups, be within that broader diversity framework.

A rich discussion of Travellers' cultural identity would strengthen policy under all three headings – cultural diversity, learning needs and disadvantage. In the next section the important issue of how Travellers (or other minorities) are conceptualised in curricula will be discussed. This area could be a mechanism for addressing the knowledge gap that helps to weaken commitment to diversity in policy.

1.5 Curriculum development

In relation to education for diversity, and an appropriate curriculum for that agenda, in 1998 the United Nations⁵⁹ expressed concern at Ireland's performance. In Article 29(1)(c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations defines education for diversity as:

The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country... and for civilizations different from his or her own.⁶⁰

In its commentary on this article the UN says:

The effective promotion of article 29 (1) requires the fundamental reworking of curricula ... and the systematic revision of textbooks and other teaching materials and technologies, as well as school policies. Approaches which do no more than

⁵⁶ Demonstrated for instance by the location of information on the Department of Education and Science Website <http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?pcategory=27173&ecategory=27173&language=EN>, (02.08.04)

⁵⁷ Department of Education and Science (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 172; (2003) *Pre-Schools for Travellers: National Evaluation Report*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 73-74

⁵⁸ Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science (2004) *Second Report. The Provision of Educational Services in a Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Society. April 2004*, p. 6. ["oireachtas"=Houses of the Irish government: the Dáil (Lower House) and Seanad (Upper House)]

⁵⁹ United Nations (1998) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Ireland 04/02/98. CRC/C/15/Add.85 (Concluding Observations/Comments, Geneva, United Nations, p. 6.

⁶⁰ United Nations (1989) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 20th November 1989, (Ratified by Ireland, September 1992) Geneva, United Nations, Article 29 (1).

seek to superimpose the aims and values of the article on the existing system without encouraging any deeper changes are clearly inadequate ...⁶¹

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will shortly launch its guidelines on interculturalism in the primary curriculum, and similar guidelines for secondary schools are in preparation. In its *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-Level Schools*⁶² the Department of Education and Science notes that interculturalism is not an add-on or another subject, but a commitment to teaching all subjects informed by knowledge of diversity.

Discussion of issues relating to Travellers must be part of the programme for all students. However, the Department notes that little is known about Traveller history and that while the curriculum offers “many opportunities to include and validate Traveller culture ... more needs to be done to identify and promote these opportunities”. In its report on preschools for Travellers⁶³ the Department also advocates training and programmes that reflect Traveller culture, but does not expand on what the content of such training and programmes might be. The Department *Guidelines for Primary Schools* includes an extensive list of materials for use in classrooms⁶⁴ but relatively few items have specifically reference to Travellers. Clearly much remains to be done. The Task Force may have identified a key difficulty; Traveller culture is a delicate network of practices shaped profoundly by their tradition of nomadism, but also interwoven with majority traditions. Travellers and settled people definitely recognise each other as “different” but Travellers’ culture does not lend itself easily to inclusion in essentialist understandings of teaching about cultural diversity.

There are possibilities: for instance, Travellers’ (well known if not well recorded) historic socio-economic roles and cultural contribution to Irish society should form part of relevant arts and social studies programmes. Modules on Travellers’ language should be offered. Current heritage projects being run in the context of community development programmes in Traveller communities could reveal additional resources. Modules specifically on Traveller issues should be developed, but these do not substitute for integrated treatment. Anti-racism principles should inform critiques of the portrayal of Travellers, from social policy and law to the liberal arts, from preschool materials to academic texts.

Universities, in partnership with Traveller organisations and with other education providers, can promote ethnically sensitive research and development in relation to curricula and teaching programmes and materials. Research is required to inform development of inclusionary policy that specifically reflects and values diversity in Irish society; sound and relevant materials and pedagogies that register diversity in all teaching; and pre-service and in-career education for teachers and other education professionals. Research programmes should be monitored to ensure that sound ethical principles inform choice and operation of research projects that target Traveller issues. Travellers/Traveller organisations should be partners in such research.

1.5.1 School policies and cultures – the hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum referred to here is the values that inform the culture of the school. Irish schools culture is deeply informed by a consensualist ethos and a bias towards conformity⁶⁵.

⁶¹ United Nations (2001) *The Aims of Education*: 17/04/2001. CRC/GC/2001/1. General Comment No. 1: The Aims of Education. Article 29 (1) (2001) Distr. GENERAL. Para. 18, available at [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(symbol\)/CRC.GC.2001.1.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(symbol)/CRC.GC.2001.1.En?OpenDocument), (10.02.04).

⁶² Department of Education and Science (2003) *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-Level Schools*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 7, 40

⁶³ Department of Education and Science (2003) *Pre-Schools for Travellers: National Evaluation Report*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 45-49

⁶⁴ Department of Education and Science (2003) *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools*, Dublin: Stationery Office, Appendix 1

⁶⁵ Lynch, K. (1999) *Equality in Schools*, Dublin: Gill & MacMillan.

Research into ethnic diversity in Irish schools show that issues relating to Travellers are particularly urgent and that education providers need support, knowledge and skills to address them. These issues include the participation and attainment levels of the groups in question, but primarily they relate to the need for school policy and codes of practice that explicitly address exclusion and racist bullying. The key issue is the perceptions, attitudes and practices of the majority⁶⁶. More research is needed to reveal the specificity of these issues in the Irish context, and how to address them but it is already abundantly clear that anti-racism training and awareness raising should be promoted among staff at all levels to ensure that they can address issues relating to Travellers in their teaching and relations with all students. Promoting respect for ethnic diversity involves understanding and knowing how to engage with diversity in values relating for instance to gender roles and relations, attitudes to youth and age, to authority, and to education itself. It involves understanding how respect for human dignity calls for cross-cultural challenge, and knowing how to go about it. The cultural values and practices of the majority culture cannot be presumed to be the norm, or to be above challenge.

Intercultural education also involves understanding that cultures, whether of the local school or of ethnic groups, are not entities but collections of perceptions, values and practices, and that groups constantly modify, borrow, fuse, invent and drop elements in their cultures. In a rapidly globalising society cultural hybridity is increasingly evident⁶⁷; historically, Travellers and Gypsies have lived close to cultural boundaries and conducted their economic activities across them; their ethnic profiles suggest that they are accomplished cultural hybrids as well as being highly protective of their boundaries, language and lore⁶⁸. Teachers need to know how to promote respect and understanding of traditions while also promoting respect for change and fusion.

1.6 Teacher education

The United Nations commentary on Article 29 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

Pre-service and in-service training schemes which promote the principle reflected in article 29 (1) are ... essential for teachers, educational administrators and others involved in child education⁶⁹.

Teacher education is a pivotal element in the education system: teachers' understandings of interculturalism will shape their implementation of policy and their delivery of curricula. Teachers are central to effective transformation of the school system in the light of intercultural anti-racist principles. As noted above, diversity was not addressed by the Department of Education and Science working group on teacher education but it has been registered at government level as a major area requiring attention in relation to the growing diversity in Irish schools⁷⁰; the need has been widely registered by teacher organisations⁷¹ as well as in research⁷².

⁶⁶ Crowley, N. (2004) "Meeting the inclusion challenge", in: *The Inclusive School. Proceedings of the Joint Conference of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Equality Authority. Limerick, 27th March 2004*, Dublin: INTO/Equality Authority.

⁶⁷ Bhabha, H. (1994), *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge.

⁶⁸ Okely, J. (1983) *The Traveller Gypsies*, Cambridge University Press; Liégeois, J-P. (1994) *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press.

⁶⁹ United Nations (2001) The Aims of Education: 17/04/2001. CRC/GC/2001/1. General Comment No. 1: The Aims of Education Article 29 (1) (2001) Distr. GENERAL. Para. 18, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(symbol\)/CRC.GC.2001.1.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(symbol)/CRC.GC.2001.1.En?OpenDocument) (10.02.04).

⁷⁰ Houses of the Oireachtas, Joint Committee on Education and Science (2004) *Second Report. The Provision of Educational Services in a Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Society. April 2004*, p. 7

⁷¹ The need for inservice and preservice education was registered in all the submissions to the Department of Education and Science Traveller Education Strategy working group (see below)

⁷² Murray, C. and O'Doherty, A. (2004) *Éist: Respecting diversity in early childhood care, education and training*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications; Devine, D. and Kenny, M., with Mc Neela, E. *Ethnicity*

In Ireland, insofar as the need is addressed, two approaches tend to predominate. There is focus on specific curriculum areas such as language of instruction (English tuition for speakers of mother tongues other than English), social studies and religion; the second approach involves the delivery of specific interculturalism modules⁷³. However, interculturalism and anti-racism are not other subject areas: they are constitutive dimensions of everything that is done in the learning community. All facets of teacher education should be informed by the principles of interculturalism and anti-racism; and in delivering their programmes, colleges of teacher education should model the best practices which they aim to inculcate in future teachers. Once more, the issue is not how to teach the minorities, but how to teach everyone.

It has long been recognised that students' effective engagement with formal education is strongly encouraged by the presence of same-ethnic education providers. To date, Travellers have found roles in schools mainly as special needs assistants. Full equal access to and ownership of the education system requires that groups see themselves represented in all the professional layers of the education system. Also, to promote equality in schools and society all students, and not just the students from the Traveller, Roma and other minority communities, need to see these minorities represented in the teaching profession and in all echelons of education provision.

1.7 Instances of good practice in policy, curriculum and professional development

At state policy level, the Irish Government, following the World Conference Against Racism (Durban, 2001), made a commitment to prepare and implement a National Action Plan Against Racism. In response to this call the Department of Education and Science held a nationwide consultations on anti-racism and interculturalism, which culminated in the launch of its Draft Recommendations on interculturalism and anti-racism in education⁷⁴. The Department has issued guidelines for schools, for instance on Traveller education and on school policy and equality law.

The Department's Schools Development Policy Initiative supports schools policy development and, within budgetary constraints at any time, offers a structured way of mainstreaming good practice within the system. This Initiative supports schools in their policy development in relation to anti-racism and interculturalism.

At curriculum level, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is due to launch guidelines for intercultural education and the primary school curriculum, and similar guidelines for secondary level schools⁷⁵. The University of Limerick Music Department in its Irish World Music Centre promotes the preservation and development of traditional music including Traveller music⁷⁶. An Applied Junior Certificate syllabus on Travellers' language, Gammon, has been developed in the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee's Curriculum Development Unit.

and Schooling: a study of ethnic diversity in selected Irish primary and post-primary schools. Dublin: Department of Education and Science, unpublished

⁷³ Eurydice (2004). *Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe*. Brussels: Eurydice European Unit, pp. 63-65

⁷⁴ Department of Education and Science (2002) *Promoting Anti-racism and Interculturalism in Education: Draft Recommendations towards a National Action Plan*, Dublin: the Authors, , available at http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/fe_antiracism_report.doc, (10.09.2004)

⁷⁵ Houses of the Oireachtas, Joint Committee on Education and Science (2004) *Second Report. The Provision of Educational Services in a Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Society. April 2004*, Dublin: The Oireachtas, p. 6

⁷⁶ Remarks of John Hayden, Secretary/Chief Executive, HEA, to the National University of Ireland Maynooth Forum on Access for Travellers to University Education, 9th April 2003. Unpublished.

At ongoing teacher education level, a teachers' handbook⁷⁷ on Travellers, their culture and appropriate pedagogic responses, was produced (unfortunately it is out of print). An anti-racism awareness training module for use in teacher education has been developed in the *Éist* project in Pavee Point Travellers' Centre⁷⁸. Travellers were on the team that developed this module and delivered it in the pilot phase of training sessions with preschool teachers across the country. The package is now ready for delivery on a systemic footing but it requires adequate resources and commitment for proper delivery.

1.7.1 The Traveller Education Strategy

The Department of Education and Science Traveller Education Strategy is an element of good State practice that warrants separate consideration. In 1998 the Department established an Advisory Committee on Traveller Education, comprising representatives from the Department's Schools Inspectorate and other sectors, as well as managerial bodies, teachers and Traveller organisations. The Department also convened a working group to develop a Traveller Education Strategy to guide developments on policy and provision for the next five years. It is currently reviewing existing provision and inputs, the quality of outcomes and the experience of Travellers in the education system. The focus will be on equality of access, participation and outcomes in an intercultural framework – issues affecting education outcomes for Travellers. The Strategy committee sought submissions. To date the following national stakeholders in education have responded⁷⁹:

These submissions indicate that there is widespread awareness among the education partners of the need to promote and resource inclusive education. Issues include curriculum development, evaluation of the use and effectiveness of current support provision, development of ethnically sensitive disaggregated data collection methods, promotion of whole-school inclusion policy, issues of transfer from each education sector to the next, and second-chance education for adult Travellers. Closely allied to these issues is the need to address the education of educators, promoting their capacity to deliver pro-diversity education, and addressing attitudinal factors in the teaching and allied professions. Participation by the key partners in education, the parent community, requires building community capacity to engage reflectively and confidently with the education system at local and policy levels. Traveller nomadism (and in many cases their enforced mobility) continue to be a challenge for schools with their fixed order of operation. The Strategy group will examine possibilities for greater flexibility and inter-school networking. Finally, the persistent fragmentation in relation to education for Travellers is a focus: this stretches from addressing gaps and weaknesses in policy (noted above), to consideration of how to support the integration of the remaining segregated provision (these forms will be discussed in the next section).

⁷⁷ O'Reilly, M. (1993) *With Travellers: A Handbook for Teachers*, Dublin: Blackrock Education Centre.

⁷⁸ Murray, C. and O'Doherty, A. (2004) *Éist: Respecting diversity in early childhood care, education and training*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications

⁷⁹ See Appendix 1 for list of website and publication sources for the submission to the Traveller Education Strategy.

Part 2: Education provision

This chapter comprises an outline of each stage of the Irish education system, and provision for Travellers at that stage. The stages in the Irish system will be referenced to the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED). In Section A the focus is on primary and secondary level school provision, while in Section B community-based initiatives are reviewed. In Section C, current key issues relating to diversity and Travellers in third level are discussed. The context for this overview of education provision is set in the first section: the current education profile of the Traveller community.

In 1961 nearly all Travellers were illiterate; few adults had ever been to school and a little over 10 per cent of children were attending school with any kind of regularity⁸⁰. The current education status of Travellers as registered in the 2002 Census is summarised in Tables 6 and 7⁸¹. The rate of early cessation of education in Table 6 show the mark of that history of virtual non-access to schools:

Table 6: Population aged 15 years and over in 2002: age of termination of education

Cessation point		Males	Females
Percentage whose education ceased at age	<12 yrs	2.7	2.7
	12 yrs	8.0	7.1
	13 yrs	7.5	7.0
	14 yrs	15.3	14.0
	15 yrs	8.5	8.6
	16 yrs	5.3	5.8
	17 yrs	1.5	1.9
	18 yrs	1.1	1.6
	19 yrs	0.4	0.5
	20 yrs &+	1.0	1.0
	Not stated	30.5	29.3
Total percentage who have ceased education		81.9	79.5
Still in education (school, university, elsewhere)		18.1	20.5

The above profile shows the gender differential, with females more likely to remain in education. Table 7 gives the qualifications profiles of the population aged fifteen years and over among Travellers, the least advantaged social classes, and the national population:

Table 7: Population aged 15 years and over in 2002, Traveller, unskilled, semi-skilled and national populations: percentages having completed education at each level

Completion level	Travellers	Unskilled	Semi-skilled	General population
Primary (incl. no formal ed.)	54.8	42.1	23.9	17.9
Lower secondary	10.5	26.2	28.3	18.3
Upper secondary	2.5	13.9	26.4	23.4
Third level: Non-degree	0.6	1.9	5.2	8.1
Degree or higher	0.9	1.1	2.6	12.8
Not stated	11.4	3.8	2.4	4.3
<i>Total % ceased education</i>	<i>80.7</i>	<i>89.1</i>	<i>88.7</i>	<i>84.9</i>
Still in education	19.3	10.9	11.3	15.1

⁸⁰ Commission on Itinerancy, Department of Social Welfare (1963) *Report on the Conditions of Itinerants*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 65.

⁸¹ Central Statistics Office (2004) *2002 Census, Volume 7: Education and Qualifications*, and *Volume 8: The Irish Traveller Community*, Dublin: CSO, Vol. 7, Tables 1A and 8. Vol. 8, Tables 14 and 15

Social class has a clear impact on access to educational opportunities but participation rates for Travellers in all levels except the ongoing sector are lowest. The higher percentage participation of Travellers in ongoing education is substantially explained by the higher percentage of Travellers in the fifteen to twenty nine year old population and the low percentage in the retirement age bands (see Table 1).

Traveller engagement with education has grown dramatically since 1961 but equity demands that their access, particularly early years education and to professional education and training programmes is effectively promoted. The levels at which difficulty is concentrated was revealed in the detailed review of school enrolments.

Section A: The school system and provision for Travellers

This section will outline the forms of provision that fall within the compulsory school attendance sector (a key element, pre-school provision, precedes these levels but because of its location in the Irish context it will be discussed in the next section).

2.1 Schools management

The Irish school system has a dual structure: the Department of Education and Science has ultimate authority in relation to schools operations, curricula and syllabi, required qualifications for staffs, appointments procedures, evaluations of schools, and the examination system. However, the system is predominantly denominational (this has Constitutional protection) and school properties are owned privately, and each schools is governed by a Board of Management. These Boards are agents of Patron Bodies, principally the churches but there are a growing number of schools under multi-denominational patronage. Regional Vocational Education Authorities manage their own schools; these are nondenominational.

Boards of Management are responsible for the day to day running of schools; they are the employers of school staff, while the Department of Education is the paymaster. Department funding to schools is channelled through management. The main fund for educational resources and activities is the capitation or per capita grant, paid per individual enrolment.

The Education Act 1998 states that “The School Plan shall state the objectives of the school relating to equality of access”⁸². Individual schools and their Boards of Management are responsible for drawing up School Plans and related policy documents. The Department of Education and Science pamphlet, “Schools and The Equal Status Act”, outlines the main features of equality legislation as they affect schools; it identifies how that legislation and the Education Acts can be used in building an inclusive school ethos. The Department now requires all schools to have anti-bullying, anti-discriminatory and equality policy statements and codes of practice that reflect the diversity of pupil intake⁸³. Schools are advised to review their plans and schools ethos to ensure that they are informed by intercultural and inclusive principles⁸⁴. The Department of Education and Science School Development Planning Support Service supports the adoption of whole school planning approaches – the effective way to develop policies, plans and codes of practice that all the stake holders value as their own.

Traveller parents can play a role in shaping school policy and provision at local level through involvement in management of schools. However, it is very difficult to get parents involved in management, and the presence of Travellers at school management level remains minimal. Capacity building and empowerment in relation to engaging with the school system should be

⁸² *Education Act 2000*, 21 (2)

⁸³ National Children’s Strategy Committee, Department of Health and Children (2004) *2003 Progress on the National Children’s Strategy*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 64

⁸⁴ Department of Education and Science (2003) *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools*, and *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-level Schools*, Dublin: Stationery Office

an objective in community development groups⁸⁵. The National Parents Council (Primary and Secondary branches) is a powerful body in the Irish education domain. Again Travellers need to be supported in getting involved and shaping that organisation's already stated commitment to inclusive education.

2.2 Primary schools (ISCED 1)

Virtually all children aged four to twelve years attend primary school; the system comprises two "Infant" classes for children under six years (an age group catered for in ISCED 0 provision in many countries), and six primary classes for six to twelve year olds. The vast majority of primary schools are State funded and privately owned. The curriculum followed is a child-centred one and it allows for flexibility in timetabling and teaching methods.

Since the 1980s Department of Education and Science policy has been to place Traveller children in mainstream classes, with support from a Resource Teacher for Travellers and/or from the Learning Support Teacher. Support can be given within the class but children are usually withdrawn (this is not a Traveller-specific practice: it is the de facto situation in relation to providing targeted tuition for any children needing support). Partly due to Traveller children starting school at a later than normal age, and partly due to their often disrupted and sparse education experience, there was a tendency to place Traveller children in classes well below the level appropriate for their age but current Department of Education and Science policy insists on age-appropriate mainstream placement. There are still two primary schools and three alternative post-primary units specifically for Travellers but the Department envisages that these will be phased out⁸⁶.

The Department sanctions teaching support posts where there a school has sufficient Travellers on roll, or where smaller schools can share such a post. Currently in mainstream primary schools there are 530 Resource Teachers for Travellers⁸⁷, with a pupil teacher ratio of fourteen to one. Schools that have a Resource Teacher for Travellers receive an augmented capitation/per capita grant for each Traveller pupil. The augmented grant is more than double the standard rate. The purpose of the additional funding is to enhance the Traveller child's school experience, for instance through organised trips and visits, purchase of art and other materials, culturally appropriate teaching materials, physical education equipment, books, computer support etc⁸⁸. The per capita rate for Traveller children over twelve years old is far higher and could make retaining Travellers in primary level attractive for the school. In 2002 there were 600-700 Traveller children aged twelve to fourteen years on primary school rolls. There can be valid individual reasons for this; the Department of Education and Science monitors such retentions.

Data suggest that virtually all Traveller children of the appropriate age are enrolled in primary schools. The estimated attendance levels are at around 80 per cent, roughly on a par with attendance levels in schools in disadvantaged areas.

2.3 Secondary level schools

Secondary level schools comprise secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary schools are privately owned and the Trustees are often religious orders; Vocational Schools are under the aegis of regional Vocational Education Committees, while the remainder have varying management structures. Notwithstanding their different histories and

⁸⁵ Irish Traveller Movement (2004) *Travellers in Education*, Dublin: ITM, p. 14

⁸⁶ National Children's Strategy Committee, Department of Health and Children (2004) *2003 Progress on the National Children's Strategy*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 65

⁸⁷ Estimates furnished (September 2004) by the Department of Education and Science National Education Officer for Travellers

⁸⁸ Department of Education and Science (2003) *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools*, Dublin: Stationery Office p. 21; (2003) *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-level Schools*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 55

structures all are largely State funded, follow the same State prescribed curriculum and take the same State public examinations.

The secondary level programme comprises a Junior cycle (ISCED 2) and a Senior Cycle (ISCED 3). To transfer to secondary level, students must have completed the primary cycle and be twelve years old on 1 January in the first year of attendance. There are two key public examinations: the Junior Certificate at the end of the Junior Cycle and the Leaving Certificate at the end of the Senior Cycle. Entry to third level education is closely linked to students' Leaving Certificate examination results. A system of programmes and examinations (the Junior Cycle Schools Certificate and the Applied Leaving Certificate) has been introduced to offer certification opportunities to students whose needs are not suited by the main system.

For each Traveller student on roll, secondary level schools receive sanction for additional teaching hours (one and a half ex-quota hours per student per week), the allocation to be devoted to supporting Traveller students. The schools receive an augmented per capita grant for these students, of more than double the standard rate.

In the 1980s a number of alternative post-primary education units for Travellers were opened. These units, known as Junior Training Centres or Junior Education Centres, were intended to encourage Travellers to stay in formal education when the majority of Traveller parents were totally opposed to transferring their children to mainstream secondary schools. For a period they did provide an alternative to complete non-attendance but their location – often not near the local secondary school – meant that linkages were weak. Unlike the old primary school special classes which were within the local mainstream school, the possibility of fusing the targeted and mainstream provision was limited in the case of the junior education centres. Three of these centres still operate, catering for about 100 students; but they are being phased out⁸⁹.

Data in Table 8 show that the profile of Traveller enrolments in secondary level schools has been changing rapidly:

Table 8: Enrolments in each Year of the Secondary School Junior Cycle for completed school years from 1999-2004⁹⁰

Level	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Junior Cycle					
1st Year	478	531	582	650	626
2nd Year	266	319	397	482	527
3rd Year	116	183	220	272	341
Senior Cycle					
4th Year (Transition)	31	27	31	26	44
5th Year	51	67	86	102	113
6th Year	19	38	49	62	63
TOTAL	961	1165	1365	1594	1714

The 2002 Census enumerated about 3,600 Travellers in the twelve to eighteen year-old age bracket, or an average one-year population of around 600 persons. Data in Table 8 suggest that enrolments in First and Second Year are moving towards the full complement but Third Year enrolment still lags well behind. Enrolment rates for the Senior Cycle are improving but they are extremely low though there is a recovery after the rather unpopular Fourth Year⁹¹. The

⁸⁹ Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2001) *First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 186

⁹⁰ Estimates furnished (September 2004) by the Department of Education and Science National Education Officer for Travellers (2004)

⁹¹ Transition Year is an optional year, introducing the Senior Cycle. Two key elements in the Transition Year are the focus on personal development and the work experience placements programme.

Visiting Teachers for Travellers are targeting this sector and supporting families and potential or actual students to promote the idea of school beyond the age of sixteen years.

Traveller enrolment in the secondary level Senior Cycle is affected by other options on offer for this age group: on reaching sixteen years Travellers can enrol in Training Centres for Travellers and Youthreach projects; trainees are paid an allowance and follow short-term practical programmes. This issue is also linked to Travellers' progress into other professional education and training options. The minimum legal school leaving age is sixteen years provided the secondary level Junior Cycle has been completed. As the data above show, enrolments fall short of this legal requirement. It is generally agreed that attendance levels are far more problematic, and deteriorate with seniority even in the legally compulsory Junior Cycle. However, once again analysis is prevented by the absence of disaggregated data.

2.4 Schools support services

The Resource Teacher for Travellers and Learning Support Teacher positions outlined above are supports located within individual schools (or shared between a few small schools). In addition there are regional and national support systems.

The Department of Education and Science *National Education Officer for Travellers* plays a co-ordinating role at national level, communicating with the Department of Education and Science, management bodies, Travellers and Traveller organisations, health authorities, social workers and voluntary organisations. The National Education Officer for Travellers works closely with the Visiting Teacher service and can identify needs and support the dissemination of sound innovations on a national basis.

The *Visiting Teacher service for Travellers* provides support where necessary for Traveller parents' and children's access to and ongoing relations with primary and secondary schools. There are currently forty two Visiting Teachers covering the entire state. Their brief is wide, involving liaison with schools management, the Department of Education and Science, and relevant agencies in the area. This service is generally credited with the recent upsurge in secondary schools enrolments. Visiting teachers focus intensive support on transition stages – from preschool to primary, from primary to secondary level, and now from Junior to Senior cycles in secondary level schools.

The Department of Education and Science *Schools Completion Programme* is particularly relevant; early school leaving is a major challenge in relation to promoting full maximum or even moderately satisfactory educational attainment by a significant number of Travellers. This programme, now offered in eighty two projects across the country, focuses on young people between the ages of four and eighteen years, targeting those at risk of dropping out. Supports are designed to address inequalities in education access, participation and outcomes. The local Visiting Teachers are represented on management committees, as are members of the targeted students' home communities. The programme involves the use of paired reading programmes, mentoring and friendship or buddy systems which can help Travellers to settle into school life. It is estimated that over 1,700 Travellers are currently targeted by this initiative but data are not available on their actual participation rates or the outcomes.

Homework clubs for Travellers operate in some locations: some are part of programmes such as the Department of Education and Science schools completion programme and the "giving children an even break" programme. Some local voluntary initiatives have been funded by the Department of Education and Science; others have developed as purely voluntary initiatives. Visiting Teachers liaise between these units, the families and schools. The Irish Traveller movement noted that two of these clubs have had to close due to the loss of funding⁹².

⁹² Irish Traveller Movement (2004) *Travellers in Education*, Dublin: ITM, p. 9

Initiatives such as these require solid commitment over periods of at least five years if they are to engage in any kind of long-term planning and development.

Record transfer schemes and distance learning were recommended by the Task Force as supports for mobile Travellers in their transition from school to school. These supports are under consideration by the Traveller Education Strategy committee. Such schemes make demands on parents in terms of monitoring home study and keeping records up to date and available. Their specific form must fit the Irish Traveller reality if they are to be effective.

The Department of Education and Science pays 98 per cent of the running costs of **school transport** for Traveller children whether by approved special transport systems, Traveller specific provision or standard school transport services.

Finally, the Department of Education and Science have established a **National Educational Psychology Service** to provide assessments and educational advice to students and schools, and a **National Education Welfare Board** to monitor schools enrolments and attendance. Both have intercultural policies and are committed to developing appropriate educational assessment and support services for Travellers. However, to date there are no culturally appropriate instruments for use in assessments. Also, current Department of Education and Science policy on data collection operates in these services; data for instance on the level of applications, psychological assessment and educational needs recommendations that have been conducted specifically for Traveller children are not available. Neither are data on Travellers' attendance patterns.

With regard to all these supports, there are common problems. Data on provision, take-up and outcomes, where it is available, is not disaggregated so it is not possible to identify how Travellers are faring in relation to any of these services. The only evidence on which evaluations can be made is the anecdotal perceptions of local practitioners. Their input is valuable and will always be necessary to counterbalance impersonal assessment strategies. However, local wisdom needs to be situated in a structured and quantified context for effective analysis and monitoring of delivery. The second difficulty is the lack of co-ordination which is common to the range of initiatives targeting disadvantage⁹³.

Section B: Initiatives in the community sector

Two forms of institutional education provision have not yet been drawn into the move towards integration: preschools and further education and training provision, particularly in Training Centres for Travellers. Community-based initiatives as well as being the context for these institutional forms, also provide more fluid education opportunities.

2.5 Pre-primary education (ISCED 0) and Travellers

This sector internationally caters for children aged three to five years. There is no national pre-school system in Ireland but primary schools accept children on or after their fourth birthday. The State supports some preschool services, targeting children from disadvantaged backgrounds or special educational needs. The Department of Education and Science has a pilot scheme of Early Start preschools attached to schools in disadvantaged areas; along with a number of other Departments it also funds provision for children with special educational needs, and for Travellers.

Preschools for Travellers developed in the voluntary sector supported by Health Boards, Vocational Education Committees and NGOs; the Department of Education and Science funds

⁹³ McCoy, S. and Smyth, E. (2004) "Educational expenditure: implications for equality", in: Callan, T., Doris, A. and McCoy, D. (eds.) *Budget Perspectives 2004*, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute, p. 92.

98 percent of their tuition and transport costs⁹⁴, and provides an annual grant for resources. The origins and development of these preschools have resulted in wide variations in the quality of accommodation, furnishing, materials, and in management structures and staff qualifications.

Travellers are involved in preschool service delivery in their community, mainly as classroom assistants but there is potential for other roles. This is a significant positive element in preschool provision for Travellers.

There are currently forty five to fifty preschools catering for about 500 Traveller children⁹⁵. There is an enormous shortage of preschool places for Travellers, and indeed for all children. This layer of public education provision is still very underdeveloped in Ireland⁹⁶. The Department of Education and Science envisages that provision for Travellers should be integrated into overall provision for this level, as that develops in the wake of the White Paper and legislation on early childhood education⁹⁷.

2.6 Adult education and training

For young people and adults who have left formal education early or without adequate qualifications, second-chance and alternative education opportunities are available through adult, further and community education; the “post Leaving Certificate” programmes offered by many secondary level schools (ISCED 4) are key elements in this provision. These options are intended to address skills needs and promote equality and social inclusion.

2.6.1 Further education and training for Travellers

Youthreach programmes offer education, training and work experience to young people, generally in the fifteen to twenty year-old age band, who do not have any education or training qualifications. Over 200 Travellers participated in these programmes in 2003. Thirty *Senior Traveller Training Centres*⁹⁸ provide a general education programme for Travellers, including vocational training and work experience, as well as counselling/psychological services. The Centres are co-ordinated nationally; local Vocational Education Committees management set staffing requirements, approve programmes and evaluate delivery. Trainees are paid a weekly allowance. There is particular focus on adult literacy, numeracy and personal development. About 900 Travellers per year enrol in these centres, of whom less than one third are under eighteen years old. The centres have a policy of providing for older Travellers; besides offering ongoing education to a sector that experiences severe exclusion, this involvement of older Travellers (mainly mothers) in education has a positive impact on their children’s school performance.

There are concerns in relation to the impact of alternative provision for youth and young adults. These projects with their short-term practical programmes and trainee allowances can draw potential students away from formal education. This concern is expressed in relation to the drop-out rate among Travellers at the end of the Junior Cycle; it may also relate to their lack of

⁹⁴ National Children’s Strategy Committee, Department of Health and Children (2004) *2003 Progress on the National Children’s Strategy*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 65

⁹⁵ Estimates furnished (September 2004) by the Department of Education and Science National Education Officer for Travellers

⁹⁶ McCoy, S. and Smyth, E. (2004) “Educational expenditure: implications for equality”, in: Callan, T., Doris, A. and McCoy, D. (eds.) *Budget Perspectives 2004*, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute, p. 92; Murray, C. and O’Doherty, A. (2004) *Eist: Respecting diversity in early childhood care, education and training*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications

⁹⁷ Department of Education and Science (1999) *Ready to Learn: White Paper on Early Childhood Education*, Dublin: Stationery Office

⁹⁸ Griffin, G. and Harper, L. (2001) *A Consultative Report Designed to Contribute to the Future Development of Senior Traveller Training Centres*, available at www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/fe_sttc_report.pdf, (21.10.03).

interest in going on to third level and further education leading to more substantial career qualifications.

2.6.2 Community education and development programmes

Community-based initiatives are in place in Traveller communities across the country. Pavee Point Travellers' Centre pioneered this approach to working with Travellers, and continues to support it through consultancy and research. Travellers are involved in the development and delivery of these supports. Within the community education and development framework Travellers develop skills for instance in leadership, negotiations, personal development and child care. Cultural awareness and heritage projects help to build strong group identities; and there is particular focus on adult literacy.

Nineteen Vocational Education Authorities have adult literacy programmes for Travellers. To date, no substantial programme to attract adult male Travellers into ongoing education has been developed but, as is often the case in marginalised communities, many Traveller women are going from strength to strength. Particularly relevant to the health needs discussed above, primary health care training programmes are proving highly effective in giving Travellers the opportunity to discuss their health issues with primary health care workers who are Travellers; to date these are all women.

The community sector in education makes second-chance education (perhaps better called first-chance in the case of many Travellers) accessible to groups such as Travellers. This sector is also particularly important because of its power to build community capacity to engage with state agencies, including the formal education sector. However, where the voluntary sector does not have an adequate policy framework for innovations, such innovations can end up as isolated and self-perpetuating institutions. Also, as was the case with innovations in curricula and teacher education (Section 1.6) and homework clubs (Section 2.4), if community education innovations are not underpinned by long-term system policy and stable funding and resource commitment, their development is impeded and can be distorted. The current move within the Department of Education and Science to review and integrate the preschools and training centres into overall provision is highly desirable. Perhaps the core generative location for promoting and implementing change in education for diversity in relation to Travellers is within the Department of Education and Science itself.

2.6.3 Location of targeted provision for Travellers

Targeted provision for Travellers is under review by the Traveller Education Strategy (see Section 1.7.1). This provision includes pre-schools, resource teaching posts in primary and secondary schools, visiting teacher services, and post-compulsory provision in Training Centres and adult education. Pavee Point advocates that Training Centres should focus on Travellers aged over eighteen years so as to lessen competition with mainstream school enrolment, and that in the general the centres should develop a "mainstreaming role, integrating Travellers in a manner appropriate to their culture and identity into lifelong learning policies, strategies and initiatives"⁹⁹. The Department of Education and Science recommends building linkages and integrating Traveller preschools with Early Start programmes¹⁰⁰; and endorses networking among Traveller-targeted and other adult education provision.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Pavee Point (1998) *Bridges to the Future: A Report on future Roles for the Traveller Training Centres*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, pp. 64-66

¹⁰⁰ Department of Education and Science (2003) *Pre-Schools for Travellers: National Evaluation Report*, Dublin: Stationery Office, pp. 73-74

¹⁰¹ Department of Education and Science (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 172

In the progress towards mainstreamed provision, care is needed to ensure that expertise and experience built up by personnel in specialist services are evaluated, accredited, and made available in the wider education sphere. While it cannot be presumed that all personnel, policies and programmes in Traveller-targeted education provision are well informed about Traveller culture, it is also true that many mainstream service providers are under-informed about Traveller culture and identity. Best practice and insights in current specialist services should be identified and disseminated through the overall system.

Section C: Third level education

2.7 Inclusion and diversity in third level provision

Third level education (ISCED 5, 5a and 6) in Ireland offers degree and non-degree programmes, provided mainly by universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education; a number of specialist third level institutions provide education in professions such as medicine and law. Most third level education institutions are supported very substantially by the State.

In relation to promoting inclusiveness in education, third level provision is important on three fronts. Firstly, in common with the rest of the education system third level institutions are obliged to operate on principles of equality, inclusion, interculturalism and to challenge racism and all forms of exclusion. Secondly, it is essential to promote access to full education opportunities for Travellers and other ethnic minorities (this will be discussed below). Thirdly, third level colleges are centres of initial and ongoing teacher education, and teachers are pivotal in relation to promoting equality and respect for diversity throughout the system (see Section 1.6). On a more general note, third level students mainly come from sectors of society with cultural, social and political capital; promotion of anti-racism and interculturalism in this sector has significance for social change.

The Higher Education Authority is committed to broadening access to include the spectrum of marginal groups; there are Access Offices in all colleges, and staff members particularly in alternative access courses provide support also. However, universities (particularly older institutions) still have proportionately few entrants from ethnic minorities; those who do register tend to cluster in disciplines such as social studies and to be under-represented in areas such as medicine¹⁰². Colleges need to further promote an ethos of inclusion and to seek engagement by stakeholders in the minority populations. In relation to Travellers this requires commitment to liaison with their representative organisations and local communities.

2.7.1 Travellers in third level education

An essential pre-requisite for effective participation in third level provision is success in prior levels, from pre-school through second level schooling and/or second-chance provision. Travellers' second level participation and outcomes, particularly in the Senior Cycle, have a long way to go but a good start has been made. Travellers' participation in third level is the next major initiative to be pursued: it is the key to promoting the community's full involvement in education delivery in a culture of lifelong learning. Visible Traveller involvement at third level would support progress at prior levels by providing role models, building confidence and inspiring ambition. The relationship between the levels is reciprocal. The same applies to the Roma and other underrepresented minorities.

There are an estimated sixteen Travellers currently enrolled in third level in Ireland¹⁰³. The Department of Education and Science supports Travellers through the system of "top up"

¹⁰² Shiner, M. and Modood, T. (2002) "Help or Hindrance? Higher Education and the Route to Ethnic Equality", in: *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 209-232.

¹⁰³ Estimates furnished (September 2004) by the Department of Education and Science National Education Officer for Travellers

maintenance grants for disadvantaged students. There are no data on how many Travellers have availed of this grant. College Access Officers support students from marginal groups, as indeed do teaching staffs, perhaps particularly on alternative access courses. Access issues occur on intersecting economic, socio-cultural, political and affective levels; and in relation to the range of human diversity including ethnicity, gender, social status and dis/ability. An Access Officer for Travellers is required and should be resourced to liaise between colleges and these communities and organisations, promoting choice of and access to third level colleges and courses, and to financial and other supports.

There should be commitment to employing Travellers, particularly former students, in access facilitation roles. Promoting access begins with encouraging students in schools and other education venues to choose higher education. Universities already have links with feeder schools in disadvantaged areas; links should be built with Travellers. Visits to colleges, taster days, support mechanisms such as homework clubs and summer schools are examples of how access could be promoted and facilitated. Traveller participation in student clubs and other organisations should be promoted. Isolation is a major problem for many when they are effectively pioneers from their community in third level provision. Personal and social support is required, both for the individual student and for her/his family and community group.

Third level institutions should explicitly name and welcome Travellers in their statements, initiatives, programmes and policies; they should actively promote Traveller culture and distinct identity, and their full integration into the learning community. Pro-active policies are required to promote employment of Travellers and other underrepresented minorities in all sectors of university staff. Access departments should play a role in monitoring college courses and research to ensure application of anti-racism and interculturalism principles relating to Travellers and other minorities; personnel could also be involved in teaching and research relevant to their specialisms. For many minority students academic support is an essential service. Catch-up tuition for those who missed out on elements at prior levels, relevant language skills development, workshops on study skills, use of laboratories, libraries, equipment and ICT technology etc. are required.

Minority enrolment across the spectrum of disciplines should be promoted. In the past ten years at most, between ten and twenty Travellers per year have enrolled in third level, mainly through alternative access and in social studies diploma courses; completion levels are unknown but there is an observed high dropout rate. This historic breakthrough is a fragile new development. Traveller access to, participation in and successful completion of third level education and training programmes need to be promoted.

2.8 Instances of good practice in education provision

These instances are connected to good practice developments in policy, curricula and teacher education. There is a reciprocal relation between the two, as innovations in the field have a specific targeted quality.

Twelve secondary schools are involved in an initiative to develop anti-racism and inclusion policies. Students, parents, teachers, administrative and maintenance staff, and management in these schools are surveying their own members to identify the issues that need to be addressed in intercultural policy, and to promote the inclusive quality of their schools. Awareness and anti-racism training linked to the findings will be delivered and the partners will work on developing inclusive policy, codes of practice and pedagogy. The initiative is under the aegis of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee's Curriculum Development Unit, and the Department of Education and Science School Development Policy Support Service supports this project.

Schools are increasingly employing members of minority ethnic groups as classroom assistants. This promotes these groups' sense of ownership of the system, offers the children role models, facilitates introducing children's mother tongues into the school, and helps the phased introduction of English tuition and facilitates home-school communications. This is a strong rationale for sanctioning such posts¹⁰⁴.

The non-government organisation sector is responsible for the Éist teacher education project. The Éist project in Pavee Point Travellers' Centre¹⁰⁵ developed an anti-racism awareness training module for use in teacher education¹⁰⁶. Travellers were on the team that developed this module and delivered it in the pilot phase of training sessions with preschool teachers across the country. The package is now ready for delivery on a systemic footing but it requires adequate resources and commitment for proper delivery.

At local level, initiatives in the community sector have supplied services –for instance preschools for Travellers – where the Department have not yet put provision in place. The Traveller Education Strategy committee is considering how to integrate such provision into mainstream provision without losing the accumulated expertise in these services.

At third level, Maynooth University¹⁰⁷ has been exemplary in promoting access and participation for Travellers; other third level colleges promote similar access programmes. This is the next important step in furthering Traveller participation at all levels of the system.

¹⁰⁴ Irish National Teachers Organisation (1998) *The challenge of Diversity – Education Support for Ethnic Minority Children*, Dublin: INTO; Devine, D., Kenny, M., with Mc Neela, E. *Ethnicity and Schooling: a study of ethnic diversity in selected Irish primary and post-primary schools*. Dublin: Department of Education and Science, unpublished.

¹⁰⁵ Murray, C. and O'Doherty, A. (2004) *Éist: Respecting diversity in early childhood care, education and training*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications

¹⁰⁶ Murray, C. and O'Doherty, A. (2004) *Éist: Respecting diversity in early childhood care, education and training*, Dublin: Pavee Point Publications

¹⁰⁷ Remarks of John Hayden, Secretary/Chief Executive, HEA, to the National University of Ireland Maynooth Forum on Access for Travellers to University Education, 9th April 2003. Unpublished.

Part 3: Conclusions

The following are the main points in this report. As noted in the introduction to this report, availability of data on issues relating to Travellers' access to education is problematic but there are no direct data on the educational situation of the Roma. It is to be hoped that the lessons to be learned from the development of policy and provision for Travellers will be applied in developing educational responses for the Roma.

3.1 Education policies and programmes

There is systemic commitment to principles of anti-discrimination and interculturalism in education. To become real and effective this commitment needs to be supported through resources, particularly in relation to monitoring and evaluation systems, curricula, and perhaps above all through education for educators. The Traveller Education Strategy is focusing on these elements; this report suggests that a Department of Education and Science Unit overseeing provision for ethnic diversity (including Travellers), similar to and working in partnership with the Social Inclusion and the Special Educational Needs Units, would promote systemic commitment to principles of respect for diversity and anti-racism.

In the education system there is a major knowledge gap in relation to minorities and perhaps particularly in relation to Travellers. This knowledge gap needs to be addressed. The knowledge gap at the core of the system is reflected in curriculum provision, and if it is addressed in curriculum development, that enrichment should feed up into policy as well as down into classrooms and out into society. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment intercultural curriculum guidelines will be disseminated in the near future; schools require resources and information to implement them effectively in programmes for all students; schools also require support in developing appropriate education responses to Traveller students' needs and potential.

Teacher education is a pivotal factor in the transformation of school policies, codes of practice and programmes. The delivery of reforms designed to promote inclusion also depend on teachers' capacity to promote these principles. Teacher education programmes must be informed by the equality and diversity principles that it is hoped will guide teachers in schools. On a more general front, future teachers come from the same sectors of society as most third level students. These sectors are advantaged in terms of their cultural and political capital; effective transformation of the mindset and practices of people in these sectors is an important contribution to the promotion of a just inclusive society.

3.2 Education provision

Traveller enrolments at primary level are satisfactory but attendance still requires improvement. There has been substantial progress in enrolments in Junior Cycle in secondary level schools and growth is beginnings in the Senior Cycle; however the drop-out rates and attendance levels are very problematic. Disaggregated data collection is essential for monitoring students' attendance, learning needs and attainment.

Preschool provision for Travellers is segregated and provision levels are inadequate but there is very little State funded provision outside targeted sectors. When general provision opens up, it will be informed by Department of Education and Science anti-discrimination and intercultural policy. Like preschool provision, targeted further education and training sectors are in a process of transition to integrated provision. Ad hoc developments in provision have led to contradictions: strategies, often initiated in the voluntary sector, that were intended to promote inclusion can end up becoming under-resourced and isolated. Nonetheless adult education and community development initiatives contribute substantially to capacity building in the Traveller community and warrant establishment on a sound long term policy and resource footing.

Travellers' participation in third level and other education and professional accreditation opportunities is very low; however, the situation is improving; increasing focus on this sector at policy level demonstrates a recognition of its importance at this stage of Traveller engagement with education.

Instances of good practice at policy, curriculum, teacher education and service delivery levels are promising. However, several of the instances illustrate the fragility of innovations if they are not supported in policy from the highest level; all indicate an at least readiness in the key sectors to engage with issues of intercultural anti-racist education.

3.3 Closing comments

The following are the central arguments in this report:

- All facets of education provision must be informed by principles of equality, interculturalism and anti-discrimination.
- A thorough audit is required, of policy, codes of practice, curriculum texts and materials, in the light of these principles.
- All involved in delivering this education must be educated in the theory and application of these principles.
- That the adoption of these principles will transform education for all students and that this is necessary for Irish society today.

Travellers are marginalised in Irish society. Education is a powerful tool in confronting this situation but unless policy and practice are soundly conceptualised its impact will be at least not fully effective. As regards Travellers, education is a key to achieving their human right to a full and dignified working and personal life as citizens and as proud members of their own ethnic community. As regards the majority, education is essential to confront prejudice and ignorance and promote knowledgeable respect for diversity. Racism is a practice of the majority; it cannot be challenged and undone by focusing on the minority.

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Appendix 1: Sources for Submissions to the Traveller Education Strategy

Submissions from education organisations to the Traveller Education Strategy Committee are accessible at the following organisation or website addresses:

- Association of Secondary School Teachers of Ireland, www.asti.ie/pdfs/Policy%20Documents/travellersstrategy.pdf
- Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, <http://www.cecde.ie/english/pdf/Policy%20Submissions/Submission%20on%20Traveller%20Education%20to%20Educational%20Disadvantage%20Committee,%20January%202004.pdf>
- Educational Disadvantage Centre, www.spd.dcu.ie/main/academic/edc/documents/TravellerEducationStrategy.pdf
- Irish Association for Teachers in Special Education, www.iatseireland.com/subtontes.htm
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties, www.iccl.ie/minorities/travellers/04_travedstrategy.pdf
- Irish National Teachers Organisation (2004) Traveller Education: INTO Policies and Proposals Updated, Dublin, INTO
- National Consultative Committee for Racism and Interculturalism, www.nccri.com/submissions/04JanTravEducation.pdf
- National Disability Authority, www.nda.ie/cntmgmt.nsf/0/D85768ABF7186AE380256E4A0064C8C0?OpenDocument
- Presentation Sisters, www.presentation.ie/Newsletters/Newsletter04.pdf
- Youthreach, www.youthreach.ie/aatopmenu/Library/TravellersSubmission.htm