



OECD Reviews of Migrant Education

Ireland

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Frances Kelly

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December 2009



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy review of migrant education in Ireland would not have been possible without the support of the national authority and the stakeholders involved. The OECD Secretariat would like to thank the national co-ordinator, Breda Naughton, and her team, Anne O'Mahony and Sarah Miley, for their work in providing information and advice and organising the visits. We would also like to thank all those who gave their time during our visits to inform the review team of their views, experiences and knowledge and responded to our many questions.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AfL	Assessment for Learning
AIM	Accessing Intercultural Materials
ARP	Adult Refugee Programme
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CECDE	Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ESCS	Economic, Social and Cultural Status
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
EVA	The Danish Evaluation Institute
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOALL	Guiding Our Assessment for Literacy Learning
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
ITABE	Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education Programme
NAER	National Assessment of English Reading
NAMA	National Assessment of Mathematical Achievement
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC(P)	The National Parents' Council (Primary)
NPC(PP)	The National Parents' Council (Post-Primary)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMCYA	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Post-Leaving Certificate
PPDS	Primary Professional Development Service
PPS	Personal Public Service
QE	Quality in Education
QUIMS	Quality in Multi-Ethnic Schools
RIA	Reception and Integration Agency
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SLSS	Second Level Support Service
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
UK	United Kingdom
US/USA	United States of America
VEC	Vocational Education Committees
VFM	Value for Money

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland. Between 8 and 10% of students in Irish schools have an immigrant background representing many countries, cultures and languages. Their education outcomes are, on average, similar to their Irish-born peers.

Irish schools experienced a rapid increase in the inflow of immigrant students only in recent years, and the main focus of migrant education is first-generation immigrants. Currently about 10% of students in primary schools and about 8% of students in post-primary schools have immigrant backgrounds. Unlike most other OECD countries, first-generation immigrant students in Ireland, on average, achieve education outcomes similar to their Irish-born peers, possibly because the socio-economic backgrounds of these students are similar to or higher than those of their Irish-born peers.

However, there is a gap in achievement between those who speak English at home and those who do not. The government has quickly launched initiatives to provide adequate language support and promote intercultural understanding. It now needs to focus on implementing its initiatives.

The immigrant students in Ireland are a heterogeneous group. There is a gap in achievement between those students who speak English at home and those who do not. Ireland aims to provide “inclusive, high quality education for all students”. To address the issues that have arisen as a result of the sudden inflow of immigrants, the government has responded quickly with a strong political commitment and policy initiatives, tools, and materials to provide language support and intercultural education. Nevertheless, there is scope for improvement. It is now time to focus on dissemination of such tools and materials, and build needed capacity for the whole school in order to fully implement the initiatives.

Implementing “Free Pre-School Year for All” should be a priority, ensuring the actual participation of immigrant children. The implementation should be accompanied by the successful implementation of “Síolta” and “Aistear”.

The Free Pre-school Year for All (age 3 to 4) should be successfully implemented, placing a priority on minority children, including immigrant children, thus ensuring that all children will benefit from the scheme. It needs to be aligned with “Síolta” (*The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*), “Aistear” (*The Framework for Early Learning* (age 0 to 6)), and the “Workforce Development Plan for the ECCE sector”. The Early Start programme should be integrated into the new Free Pre-School Year in order to ensure universal pre-school access and to take into account the needs of the heterogeneous cohort of 3-to-4-year-olds, including the particular needs of immigrant children.

Initial and ongoing learning opportunities for EAL teachers should be strengthened.

Effective EAL support requires more than training in general language teaching. The current provision of two years of support is generally considered sufficient for conversational English, but if immigrant students are to make a successful transition to upper second level education and higher, they will need longer support to achieve mastery of academic English. Professional learning programmes for EAL teachers should address the importance of the pedagogy in language modelling; the place of the first

language as the basis for second language development; the importance of developing the cognitive and academic dimensions of language, curriculum and materials analysis, and adaptation; and the role of empowerment of learners and their communities.

A “whole-school approach” – involving all teachers, school leaders, parents and communities – is essential to make schools more culturally and linguistically diverse.

Not only EAL teachers but also mainstream teachers should be trained to cope with linguistic and cultural challenges in the classroom. This will require substantive investments in training and professional development for all teachers as “language teachers”. Teachers need support from school leaders and colleagues as they make changes to their practice, and the transformation of teaching and assessment approaches for the new diversity.

International research highlights the importance of parental involvement in education for improving achievement of students, independently of their socio-demographic background. However, such involvement is not always easy for immigrant parents as parental involvement in schools can be influenced by language proficiency in the language of school instruction and cultural influences. Priorities now should be to ensure that information is disseminated to all immigrant students and their parents, and to encourage immigrant parents to participate in their school’s parent councils, board of management and other school-based activities. In order to ensure immigrant parents become involved in their child’s school life, it is important to take an integrated approach, in which not only the HSCL co-ordinators but also the whole school team actively engage with parents.

Networking and cooperation among schools and other community groups are necessary and important to provide quality education and integration for immigrant students and their families. Individual schools can cooperate with ethnic agencies, NGOs, libraries and the local VEC. School leaders, HSCL co-ordinators and members of the school team are critical to building this kind of networking and cooperation.

The government should identify schools with good practice in whole-school approach and disseminate such practice to other schools.

Extra effort is needed to ensure that immigrant parents are better informed in their decisions about their children’s education.

Newly arrived immigrant families should be made aware of the overall education system and quality of schools, and be able to make well-informed decisions about their children’s education. The Department of Education and Science and patron bodies should ensure that schools take a more active role in circulating such information, and the Inspectorate should monitor the effectiveness of such measures.

Obtain data on applicants and enrolments by immigrant status to further encourage schools to adopt diversity and inclusive education

There is a wealth of outcome data available at varying levels of the Irish schooling system, but rarely are migrant students made visible in them. Collecting data from schools on applicants and enrolments would make it possible to differentiate between the experience of immigrants and native Irish students. The Inspectorate should monitor the effectiveness of schools in achieving more mixed group class balance in their enrolments (taking into account patterns of residential concentration), assess whether the accessibility and effectiveness of schools differs for different patron bodies, and, if so, determine why such differences exist, and whether the role of patron bodies should be reconsidered.

A coherent framework for continuous feedback embedded in policy evaluation and school inspection will help improve school outcomes.

A coherent framework for overall assessment and feedback will help not only individual EAL teachers but mainstream teachers in classrooms, as well as their schools, to know whether their choice of interventions is as effective as others.

The Inspectorate is an essential vehicle for promoting and supporting improvement. It is currently preparing publications based on inspections and the evaluation of EAL teaching and learning. From this work it can develop a component of its ongoing whole-school review process in both primary and post-primary schools looking at provision for migrant students. In addition, national assessment surveys conducted by the Educational Research System for the Department of Education and Science should enlarge newcomer samples, so that trends in this cohort can be examined.

CHAPTER 1: KEY CHALLENGES

Large-scale immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland, arising only in the past decade. Irish schools experienced a rapid increase in the inflow of immigrant students in recent years and the main focus of migrant education is first-generation immigrants. Currently about 10% of students in primary schools and about 8% of students in post-primary schools have immigrant backgrounds.

Unlike most other OECD countries, first-generation immigrant students in Ireland, on average, achieve education outcomes similar to their Irish-born peers. This may be largely due to the socio-economic backgrounds of these students, which tend to be similar to or higher than those of their Irish-born peers.

The immigrant students in Ireland are a heterogeneous group, however, and policymakers should pay careful attention to the variations in performance among first-generation immigrant students. There is a gap in student achievements between those who speak English at home and those who do not. Currently, building capacity for schools, teachers and communities to provide quality language instruction should be given high priority for Ireland. Priorities should be reconsidered regularly by monitoring the policy interventions as well as compositional changes of immigrant student population, especially after the economic crisis.

Policy makers also need to consider differentiating priorities among different groups. The newly arrived who first enter school at the post-primary level may face more challenges in achieving the requisite level of English proficiency than newcomers who arrive at an earlier age. Those newcomers with a low proficiency level in reading and those with low SES backgrounds have relatively disadvantaged educational outcomes.

OECD Review of Migrant Education

This review is one of a series of policy reviews of migrant education in OECD countries (see Box 1.1) and follows the policy evaluation framework established for the OECD Review of Migrant Education. However, policy challenges and priority issues for immigrant students vary from country to country. To this end, each country was invited to tailor the focus of the policy review in consultation with the OECD Secretariat in order to ensure that the immediate output of the review will meet the specific needs of the country. This policy review of Ireland presents selected policy options designed to respond to the main challenges and supported by evidence and research drawn from other country practice (See Annex A for the Terms of Reference and Annex B for the visit programs). This Review should be read in conjunction with the Country Background Report prepared by the Irish authorities (Irish Department of Education and Science, 2008).¹

Box 1.1. OECD Review of Migrant Education

The OECD launched the Review of Migrant Education in January 2008. The scope of the project includes pre-school, primary school, and post-primary school. The overarching question of the review is *what policies will promote successful education outcomes for first- and second-generation immigrant students?*¹

To examine the question from a relevant policy perspective, “education outcomes” are defined as follows:

- **Access** – Whether immigrant students have the same access to quality education as their native peers; and if not, what policies may facilitate or hinder their access.
- **Participation** – Whether immigrant students may drop out more easily or leave school earlier than their native peers; and if so, what policies may influence immigrant students’ completion of schooling.
- **Performance** – Whether immigrant students perform as well as their native peers; and if not, what policies may effectively raise immigrant students’ performance at school, especially for those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The project consists of two strands of activities: analytical work and country policy reviews.

- **Analytical work** draws on evidence from all OECD countries. It includes an international questionnaire on migrant policies, reviews previous OECD work and academic literature regarding migrant education, and explores statistical data from PISA and other sources.
- **Country policy reviews** aim to provide country-specific policy recommendations. Reviews are being conducted in Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Each participating country has prepared a Country Background Report based on common OECD guidelines. The results of both the analytical work and country policy reviews will feed into the final report of the Review of Migrant Education.

¹ First-generation immigrant students: Students who were born outside the country of assessment and whose parents were also born in a different country. Second-generation immigrant students: Students who themselves were born in the country of review but whose parents were born in a different country, *i.e.* students who are following/have followed all their pre-school/schooling in the review country.

Box 1.2. Limits on immigrant student data in Ireland

The statistical basis for gauging the situation and experience of immigrant students and comparing them to native students is less well-developed and robust in Ireland than in many other countries because immigration patterns in Ireland shifted recently and suddenly. A decade ago, the immigrant share of the population in Ireland was well below the median for the OECD; today, it is well above. Though certain issues regarding immigration are more visible now than before, the arrangements for collecting relevant survey and administrative data have not kept pace with the sudden inflows. Thus there are gaps in the evidence that might shed light on developments and the current situation of immigrants and education for immigrants.

The recent and sudden shifts in immigration patterns have also resulted in a more complex mix than in other countries. The population of immigrant students is segmented into two distinct groups: those whose mother tongue is English (typically from United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, or the United States), and those whose mother tongue is either another language or English but requiring English language support. Students from the first group comprises roughly a third of today's immigrant population and has been a long-standing presence in Ireland. The second group includes mostly children of immigrants who came over since the economic boom, starting in the mid-1990s and accelerating after EU enlargement in 2004, and a much smaller group of asylum seekers who are seeking residency rights (less than one in ten of all immigrants), Asians and Africans. Because of the late arrival of the second group (the group that transformed the nature of the immigrant population in Ireland), Ireland does not yet have many second-generation immigrant students (students born in Ireland to one or more immigrant parents).

These facts make it difficult to get statistically significant survey-based measures of experience and performance for the distinct immigrant groups. Because of gaps in the administrative data much of the description and analyses below depend heavily on sources such as PISA and the work carried out by Economic and Social Research Institute (Smyth *et al.*, 2009). Because of the relatively small numbers of immigrant students included in the PISA sample, these data need to be treated cautiously; where possible the description and analyses incorporate oral accounts and other evidence collected during the visits of the review team.

Overview of the situation of immigrants and their children in Ireland

Ireland's history of out-migration and in-migration has been strongly influenced by ebb and flow of economic opportunity. Until the late 1980s, Ireland had a long history of emigration. Irish citizens emigrated into the world to seek jobs outside Ireland, or to rejoin family and friends in the Irish Diaspora. Before the mid-1990s there was only a small share of immigrants in Ireland – estimated to be slightly more than 5% of the total population – who came typically from various parts of the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries (OECD, 2008). The pattern of substantial out-flows of migrants and limited inflows were related to the limited economic opportunities in Ireland. In 1990, Ireland's GDP per capita ranked it behind all OECD countries (24 at that time) except Greece, Portugal and Turkey. A decade and a half later, Ireland's standing was dramatically changed. In the early 1990s, GDP growth in Ireland was about even with that of the OECD and the European Union. Between 1995 and 2000, GDP per capita grew two to three times faster than the average for the OECD and the EU.

In the 1990s, Ireland's economic performance improved, and the numbers and composition of the immigrant population began to change dramatically from around 2000. For the first time in recent history,

Ireland became a destination of choice for large numbers of immigrants as well as for returning Irish émigrés. Ireland experienced a particularly robust economic boom starting around 2000 and continuing into 2008, largely driven by a combination of massive direct investment by foreign owned companies, attracted by the lowest corporate tax rates in the OECD and a comparatively young and well-educated English-speaking workforce, social partnership, and infrastructure investment, much supported by the European Union. Between 1993 and 2007, employment grew by 77%, and widespread labour shortages emerged. The unemployment rate fell well below the OECD average. Agricultural employment declined and service sector employment grew. Between 1996 and 2006, the foreign-born share of the labour force more than doubled to 13.9%, putting it ahead of most European countries. Flows from new EU Member States were particularly large after May 2004; in 2006 long-term migration (over one year) added 2% to the Irish population, with the large majority coming from these countries (OECD, 2008, p. 250). By 2006, Ireland had the third-highest GDP per capita of all OECD countries, trailing only Luxembourg and Norway.

OECD 2009 Economic Outlook reports that Ireland's period of exceptionally high growth rates ended in 2008, when annual growth in GDP turned from plus 6% in 2007 to minus 2.3% in 2008 and a forecast of minus 9.8% in 2009. In 2010, GDP growth is expected to be minus 4.1%. In 2007, unemployment was 4.6%, well below the OECD average. In 2008, it jumped to 6% – slightly above the OECD average and since then has continued to rise well above the OECD average (OECD, 2009). Figures released by the CSO show that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased from 8.1% in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 10.2% in the first quarter of 2009. The unemployment rate in Ireland in 2009 is at its highest level since 1997.

A combination of economic boom and job creation, Ireland's entry into the European common currency, EU expansion in May 2004, liberalised EU labour movement, low personal income taxes, and a highly regarded education system attracted large numbers of immigrants to well paid, often high-skilled jobs, including many who had left Ireland during leaner years. Between 2002 and 2006, the population of EU immigrants rose more than five-fold, with 90% of that increase from EU accession countries post May 2004. The bulk of new immigrants arrived for work-related reasons. It should be noted, however, that many immigrants are not in employment commensurate with their qualifications (OECD, 2008). Asylum seekers comprised a small and declining share of the foreign-born population.² By 2007, immigrants comprised about 11% of the population, an increase of 60% in ten years. Thanks to the combined effect of these forces, the Irish population grew seven times faster between 1996 and 2006 than in the preceding 10 years. The number of births rose from 55 000 in 2000 to 75 000 in 2008. The implications of the economic downturn for the immigration flows and the situation of immigrants residing in Ireland are not yet clear. At a minimum, it appears that the flows into Ireland have slowed, based on the amount of new PPS Numbers being issued;³ there is some evidence that some immigrants are moving elsewhere or returning home.⁴ Further analysis of recent migration trends to April 2009 is available in the CSO's "Population and Migration Estimates".⁵

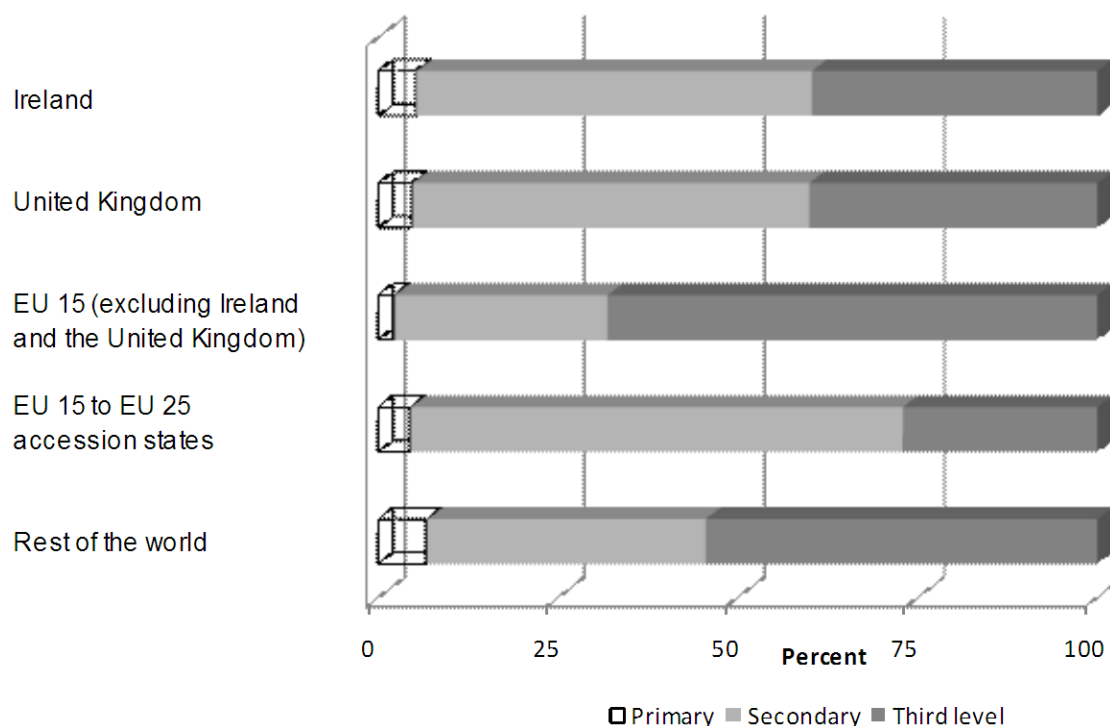
By 2006, the composition of Ireland's immigrant population was far more diverse than it had been (Table 1.1). The Central Statistics Office (CSO) found that non-Irish nationals represented 188 countries, with many of the largest nationalities being from non-English-speaking countries.

Table 1.1. Composition of immigrant population according to the 2006 census

United Kingdom	27%
EU 15 (excluding U.K.)	10%
EU 10	29%
Other Europe	6%
Asia	11%
Africa	8%
America	5%
Australia	1%
Other	3%
Total immigrant population responding to the census	420 000

Source: Central Statistics Office (2008).

The 2006 census also found that on average, non-Irish nationals had higher levels of education than the Irish population. This, however, is influenced by the fact that a cohort of older Irish natives finished their education before free second level education became available in the late 1960s. When education levels of immigrants are compared to the native population, age 15 to 44, then education levels are comparable. There are, however, significant variations between different groups of nationalities (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Level of education of 15-to-44-year-olds living in Ireland in 2006

Note 1: In this figure, "secondary" is comprised of lower secondary, upper secondary and technical/vocational qualifications.

Source: Figure 12 in Central Statistics Office (2008).

Immigrants to Ireland, while somewhat concentrated in towns and cities, are nevertheless widely distributed around the country (CSO, 2008). All of these factors are important in considering the

educational and linguistic needs of newcomer children attending schools. The inflow of migrants to Ireland greatly increased the number of immigrant children in schools, putting new demands on the system. It is currently estimated that about 10% of students in primary schools and 8% of students in post-primary schools have nationalities other than Irish. The share of immigrant students in schools roughly doubled from 1996 to 2006: in 1996, about 6% of children of age 5 to 9 and about 4% of young people of age 10 to 19 were of non-Irish nationality; in 2006, the share increased to 12% and 10% respectively (CSO database). There are no signs so far of any such outflows having a significant impact on school enrolments of newcomer students.⁶

The Irish education system

In Ireland, “inclusive, high quality education for all students” is the objective of the education system. The Education Act, 1998 states that a statutory role of the Minister is to ensure the provision of a level and quality of education, appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of each person, including a person with a disability, or who has other special educational needs. Since the 1990s the government has introduced policies and strategies to promote equity, inclusion and quality in education for all students, and to identify and address educational disadvantage in schools. The government has provided additional supports for students for whom English is not their first language. The government also identifies and supports disadvantaged schools with the action plan for educational inclusion, called “Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools” (DEIS). The Equal Status Acts, 2000-04 also promote inclusiveness and diversity. In particular, they identify race and membership of the Travelling Community as amongst the nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited.

Children attend primary school between the ages of 4/5 and 12/13. There were some 3 300 primary schools in 2008/09. Primary education is also referred to as first level education. Primary school covers eight years – a two-year infant cycle followed by six years from first to sixth class. Children move to the next class at the end of each school year. Primary schools can be very small; more than 1 800 primary schools had three teachers or fewer in 2007/08.⁷ Students from 12/13 to 17/18 years attend one of the more than 730 post-primary schools.⁸ Post-primary education is also referred to as second level education. Post-primary schools are generally larger than primary schools and, as a consequence there are far fewer of them. Further and Higher education follows this level, but they are beyond the scope of this review. Nearly all post-primary schools have immigrant students but up to 40% of primary schools do not have these students.

In addition to the primary schooling system, the Department of Education and Science provides for a targeted early childhood programme, called “Early Start”, to meet the needs of three and four year olds in disadvantaged areas who are at risk of not reaching their potential within the school system. Early Start involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. Less than 3% of children currently attend an Early Start programme. In April 2009, the government announced the introduction of a free Pre-School Year for all children between the ages of three years, three months and four years, six months. This is a major policy change for the Irish government.

Education is provided in schools that are established and overseen by “patron bodies”, and managed by local boards of management that include parents, and operate within broad guidance provided by the Department of Education and Science. Schools are funded by the Department. The vast majority of primary (over 90%) and a majority of post-primary schools (over 50%) are under the patronage of the Catholic Church; the balance are generally under the patronage of the Church of Ireland, other religions and, particularly at post-primary level, Vocational Education Committees (VECs). Community and Comprehensive schools have been a feature of post-primary education since the 1970’s. About 2% of

primary schools are operated by multi-denominational/inter-denominational patron bodies. A new model of primary school patronage, under the VEC structure, catering for children of all beliefs and none, reflecting the increasing diversity in this area, is currently in operation in two locations in Dublin (Chapter 2 discusses the role of patron bodies in more details).

Though the different patron bodies try to preserve their own particular “ethos” in their schools, all schools must operate within the framework of the Irish Constitution and relevant national legislation, including the Education Act, 1998, and the Equal Status Acts, 2000-04. In addition, the government formulates guidelines and circulars intended to provide national leadership and steer the direction of schooling. Other relevant reports/policy documents include:

- *Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education*, published in 1995, advocates “the promotion of quality, equality, pluralism, partnership and accountability”;
- *Planning for Diversity – The National Plan Against Racism 2005-2008*, published in 2005, mandates development of a national intercultural education strategy, and advocates for an intercultural school environment.
- *Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, 2006-2015* provides for enhanced support for the effective integration of migrant children at both primary and second levels through the provision of an extra 550 language support teachers by 2009 and the reform of the then limit of two additional language support teachers per school.

The *Agreed Programme for Government 2009* makes a reference to language support.⁹ The government also exercised leadership in matters relating to the integration of immigrants when it appointed a Minister of State for Integration in 2007. The Minister’s remit spans three departments: Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Education and Science; and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.¹⁰ The Minister is responsible for ensuring, inter alia, that education policies “take into account the need to integrate immigrants and their families [and for] coordinating the work of the Department of Education and Science on the integration of newcomers with the related work of other relevant Departments and State Agencies” (Department of Education and Science, 2008, p. 121).

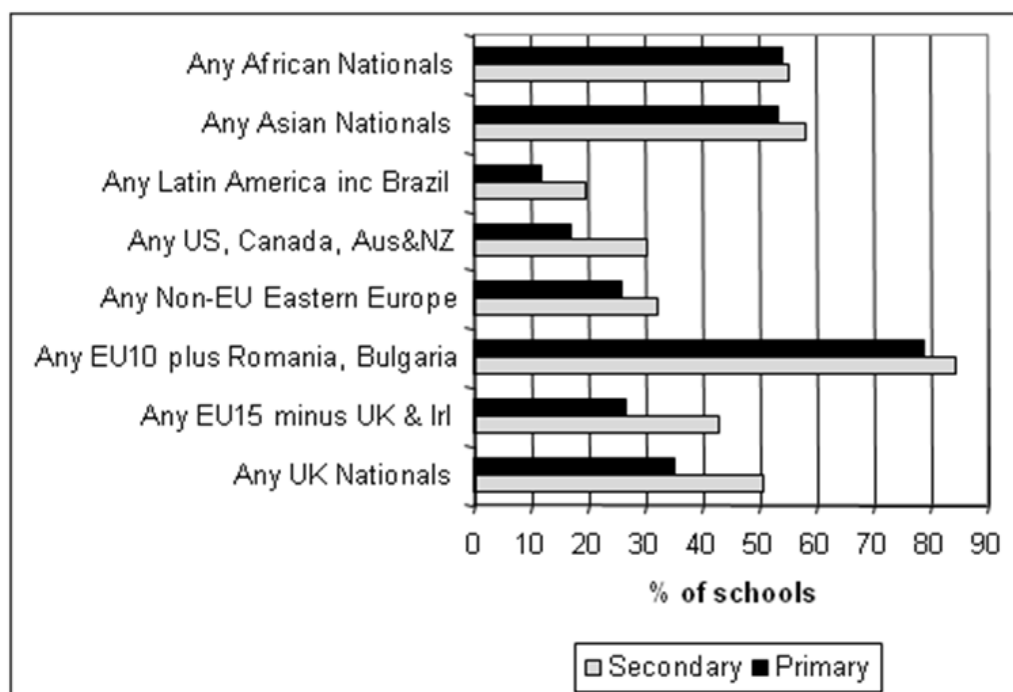
Identifying possible priority target groups

First-generation immigrant students – not second-generation immigrant students

The focus of this review is on newly arrived immigrant students – not the second-generation immigrant students, because the share of the second-generation immigrant students (*i.e.* students born in Ireland of one or more immigrant parents) is fairly small, for reasons mentioned earlier. There are no national data that identify second-generation immigrant students. However, the PISA samples provide some indication of how small the population may be: they represented only 0.8% in 2000 data and 1.1% in 2006 data. Due to the small sample size, the data for second-generation immigrant students are not used here for statistical analysis.

Newcomer students come from various national groups (Figure 1.2). As a result of a recent increase in immigrant population described earlier, the composition of students in Irish schools has changed from students with very similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds to students with more varied, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic backgrounds. For example, there are over 160 nationalities represented in post-primary schools. The policy challenge is therefore how to respond to the needs of the increasingly heterogeneous student cohort.

Figure 1.2. Percentage of schools with newcomer children from various national groups



Note 1: The term "Secondary" in this figure relates to second-level education.

Source: Figure 4.5 in Smyth *et al.* (2009).

Newcomer students in urban areas

Newcomer students are more likely to attend big schools in urban areas both at primary and post-primary levels, due to the availability of both employment and available housing. In addition, they are somewhat more likely to attend schools with designated disadvantaged status (DEIS schools) (Smyth *et al.*, 2009). This is a challenge for schools because those with high proportion of newcomers are also likely to have more socio-economically disadvantaged students or students with learning or behavioural needs. However, principals in designated disadvantaged schools were significantly more likely than those in other schools to believe that "newcomer students may raise the standard and learning expectations in schools with a disadvantaged student intake" (Smyth *et al.*, 2009, p. 53).

Though immigrant students tend to be concentrated in large urban schools, the degree of concentration is much lower than that in most other OECD countries. For instance, almost half of newcomer students attend post-primary schools where they make up 2 to 9% of the total student population. No newcomer students at post-primary level and about only 10% of newcomer students at primary level attend schools with more than 50% of first-generation immigrant students. Such schools represent less than 2% of all primary schools (Smyth *et al.*, 2009). In contrast, in other OECD countries, on average 30% of first-generation students attend schools where over half of the students are immigrants in PISA 2003 (OECD, 2006b).

Newcomer students with low socio-economic backgrounds and low levels of proficiency in reading

The education background of families of immigrant students in Ireland is, on average, slightly higher than that of their native peers, which is a contrast to many other immigration countries. According to the 2006 census data, parents of immigrant students are more highly educated than parents of their native peers both for fathers and mothers in general; they have double the percentage of qualifications of native parents at higher levels of qualification such as doctorate, post-graduate and professional degrees (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Levels of education of parents of Irish born and non-Irish born children
Age 15 or less

Census 2006

Education level	Father		Mother	
	Irish	Non-Irish	Irish	Non-Irish
Primary Education	91 134 (18%)	2 203 (5%)	92 922 (15%)	2 694 (5%)
Primary degree	21 856 (4%)	3 058 (7%)	23 199 (4%)	4 104 (8%)
Lower Secondary	133 433 (26%)	6 994 (17%)	147 038 (24%)	9 337 (19%)
Leaving Cert.	88 862 (17.5%)	5 935 (14%)	155 118 (25%)	9 272 (19%)
Technical Vocational and Leaving Cert.	12 763 (2.5%)	2 672 (6.5%)	17 580 (3%)	2 697 (5%)
Technical or Vocational	39 587 (8%)	4 540 (11%)	20 499 (3%)	2 857 (6%)
Professional qualification (degree status)	12 781 (2.5%)	1 981 (5%)	12 943 (2%)	2 217 (4%)
Post-graduate certificate or diploma	11 348 (2%)	1 507 (4%)	21 368(3%)	2 171 (4%)
Post-graduate degree	14 468 (3%)	2 323 (6%)	10 484 (2%)	2 322 (4.7%)
Both degree and professional qualification	17 185 (3%)	2 612 (6%)	16 445 (2.6%)	2 750 (5.5%)
Doctorate (Ph. D)	2 846 (0.6%)	815(2%)	1 503 (0.2%)	397 (0.7%)
No Formal Education	1 527 (0.3%)	147 (0.3%)	1 685 (0.3%)	272 (0.5%)
Non-degree	49 620 (10%)	4 292 (10%)	80 031 (13%)	6 082 (12%)
Not stated	10 413 (2%)	1 976 (5%)	14 077 (2%)	2 567 (5%)

Source: Tables 14 and 15 in Irish Department of Education and Science (2008).

These data are consistent with the picture concerning the age group of 15-year-olds in PISA 2006 data. First-generation immigrants in Ireland have somewhat better family backgrounds than their native peers measured by the index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) together with Australia and Canada, while immigrant students in most other countries, on average, have more disadvantaged educational and economic family backgrounds than their native peers.

Such aggregated data, however, mask important factors that are relevant to how policy is targeted. Research shows that socio-economic background is strongly associated with students' performance. Given that the cultural, social and economic backgrounds of newcomer students are quite diverse, it is important to examine whether differences between the backgrounds of newcomer students and native students are associated with differences in performance. This consideration may help when designing policy for certain groups.

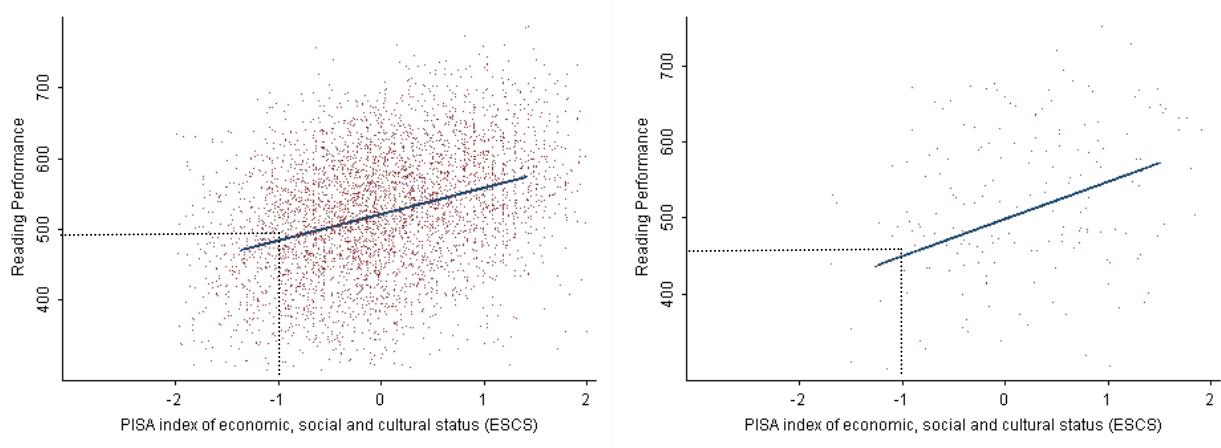
A policy assessment tool by Williams (2006), the so-called "learning bar" (*i.e.* the relationship between student performance and student socio-economic background) can be used for this purpose.¹¹ Figure 1.3 presents the learning bars for native students and first-generation immigrant students age 15 years in 2006 in Ireland.

Figure 1.3. Relationship between reading performance and students' SES background

PISA 2006

Panel A. Performance for native students

Panel B. Performance for first-generation immigrants



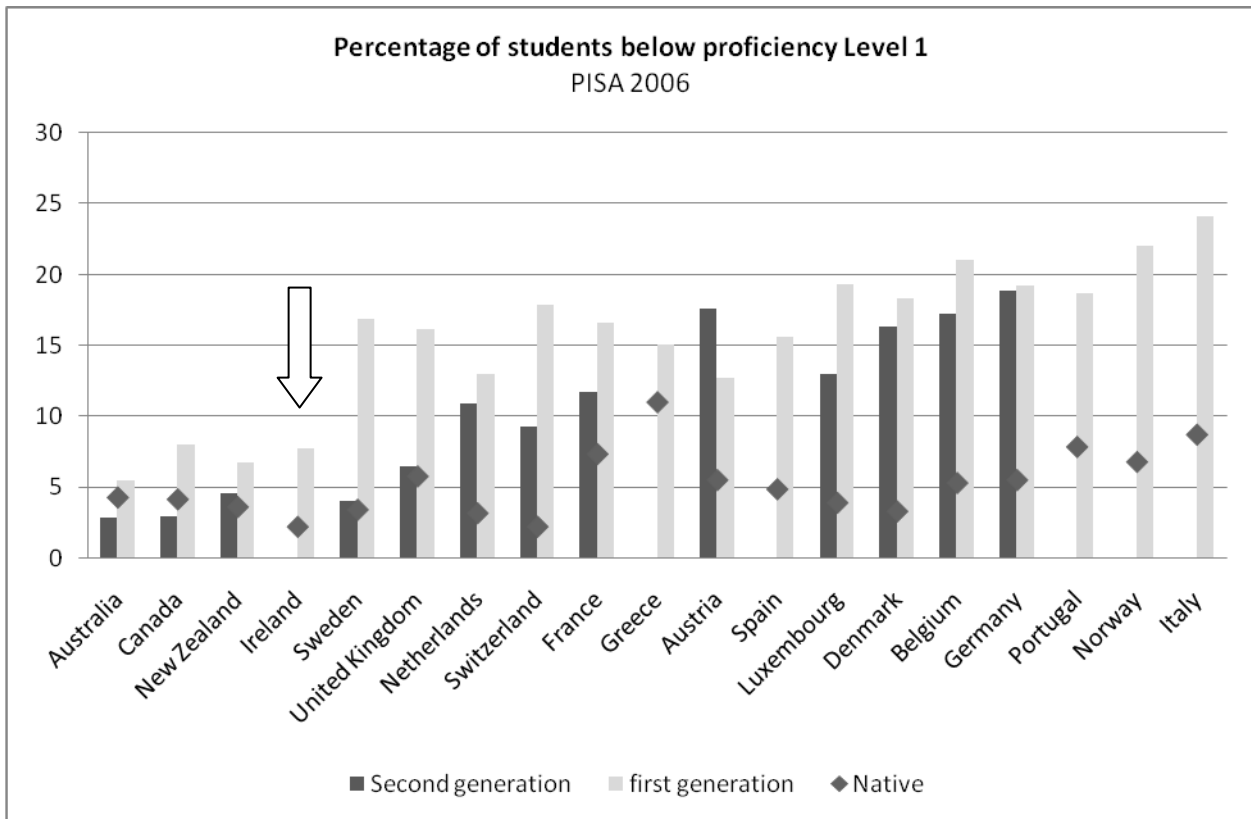
Note1: Each dot represents a student plotted for his or her reading performance and socio-economic and cultural status.

Source: OECD PISA 2006 database.

On average there is no significant performance gap between these two groups. Therefore, one could conclude that a universal measure, covering both native and immigrant students, may be an effective and fair policy intervention. However, the slope of the learning bar is steeper for first-generation immigrant students than for native students. This indicates that the effect of socio-economic status on students' reading performance is greater for immigrant students than for their native peers. This means that those newcomer students at the lower end of the socio-economic spread may be more strongly affected by their home backgrounds than their native peers of the same socio-economic status. In addition, first-generation immigrant students with low socio-economic backgrounds performed lower than their corresponding native peers (See the dotted lines). This indicates that targeted policies might be needed to raise educational outcomes for low-performing newcomer students and/or those with disadvantaged family background. For instance, newcomer students who have sustained academic difficulties described by a tenth of school principals in a study by Smyth *et al.* (2009) may be a target group.

Figure 1.4 shows the percentage of students who scored below proficiency Level 1 by immigrant status in PISA 2006.¹² Ireland can be found amongst the countries with a smaller share of students who perform below proficiency Level 1 along with Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Among these countries, however, Ireland has the highest percentage of the first immigrant students belonging to the group of student below proficiency Level 1. In addition, in Ireland the percentage of first-generation immigrant students below proficiency Level 1 (*i.e.* about 8.8%) is three times higher than that of their native peers. This indicates that about 9% of first-generation immigrant students are not able to routinely show the most basic reading skills that PISA seeks to measure. These students may have serious deficiencies in their ability to use reading literacy as a tool for the knowledge acquisition in other areas (OECD, 2007). One implication of this is that Ireland could design a targeted intervention that may help newcomer students at the very low end of the achievement scores.

Figure 1.4. Percentage of students scoring below proficiency Level 1 in reading



Source: OECD PISA 2006 database.

Non-English speaking newcomer students

Some immigrant students such as those from English-speaking countries and Anglophone countries, already speak the language of the host country, although they may have some dialects. These children, without needing to learn the language of the instruction, may learn to adapt themselves to the new curricula, school environments, and cultural norms with relative ease. Others, however, need to learn the language of instruction in addition to learning new subjects and appropriate behaviours and expectations in the Irish education system and society at large. For these reasons they need language support based on identified needs when they arrive and on a continuous basis afterwards until they achieve level B1 proficiency.

Due to the limited availability of statistical data by immigrant status in Ireland, this report relies heavily on PISA 2006 and an empirical national ESRI study on newcomer students by Smyth *et al.* (2009). The results of both studies confirm that language difficulties may be a major barrier for the integration of immigrant students, particularly when they commence their education.

Insights from international and national performance data

PISA 2006 reading performance data show that, in Ireland, first-generation immigrant students (506 points) performed slightly above the OECD average of reading performance for all students (492 points), which is also the case for a limited number of countries: *i.e.* Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. In Ireland, the reading performance gap between first-generation immigrant students and their native peers was 14 points, which is not statistically significant. When split by language spoken at home, a performance

gap is observed between non-English speaking immigrant students and their native peers (Table 1.3). English-speaking immigrant students had mean reading scores exceeding those of their native peers, while non-English speaking immigrant students had mean scores about 60 points lower than their native peers. This needs to be interpreted with caution. Due to the small number of non-English speaking immigrants (*i.e.* only 2% of total PISA 2006 participating students in Ireland), the comparison of non-English speaking immigrants with other groups is only indicative.¹³ However, it does imply a need for further analysis.

Table 1.3. Mean reading, science and mathematics scores in PISA 2006
By immigrant/language status

	Reading			Science			Mathematics		
	Mean	SE	SD	Mean	SE	SD	Mean	SE	SD
Native	519.99	3.42	90.43	510.42	2.99	92.73	503.75	2.732	80.57
Immigrant - English speaking	530.88	8.84	90.04	528.72	9.67	95.99	506.48	6.973	80.739
Immigrant - Other language	460.32	28.41	127.92	447.17	24.40	124.86	450.43	23.510	112.295

Note 1: SE stands for standard error and SD stands for standard deviation. The standard errors require special attention in interpreting this result.

Source: Table 17 in Irish Department of Education and Science (2008).

The findings from the international performance test are consistent with the results from the national test on English reading (Table 1.4). The 2.4% of first class students who spoke a language other than English or Irish achieved a significantly lower mean score (229.6) than students who spoke English as their first language (250.4) (*i.e.* almost 21 points lower). However, due to its large standard error, the mean achievement score (224.8) of the 2.2% of fifth class students who spoke a language other than Irish or English does not differ significantly from that of English speakers. The mean achievement scores of the sizeable minority of students (8.4% at first class and 10.5% at fifth) who were not born in Ireland did not differ significantly from the mean scores of Irish-born students. In interpreting the findings of the national test, it must be kept in mind that the sample was not designed to be representative of immigrant students and that at both class levels (first and fifth), almost all students typically spoke English at home, while a small minority (0.7% and 0.8% at first and fifth class, respectively) spoke Irish at home.

Table 1.4. Student achievement in the national test on English reading
By language spoken at home

	1st class				5th class			
	%T	%A	Mean	SE	%T	%A	Mean	SE
English	94.9	96.9	250.4	2.55	95.2	97.0	250.5	2.58
Irish	0.7	0.7	272.0	14.36	0.8	0.8	250.7	9.32
Other	2.3	2.4	229.6	5.58	2.2	2.2	224.8	10.30
Missing	2.0	0.0	246.2	8.53	1.9	0.0	252.1	7.71
Comparisons	Diff	SED	95% BCI		Diff	SED	95% BCI	
Irish-English	21.6	15.02	-15.5	58.7	0.2	10.73	-26.2	26.5
Other-English	-20.8	5.78	-35.1	-6.6	-25.7	10.74	-52.1	0.7
Missing-English	-4.2	7.93	-23.8	15.4	1.5	9.02	-20.7	23.7

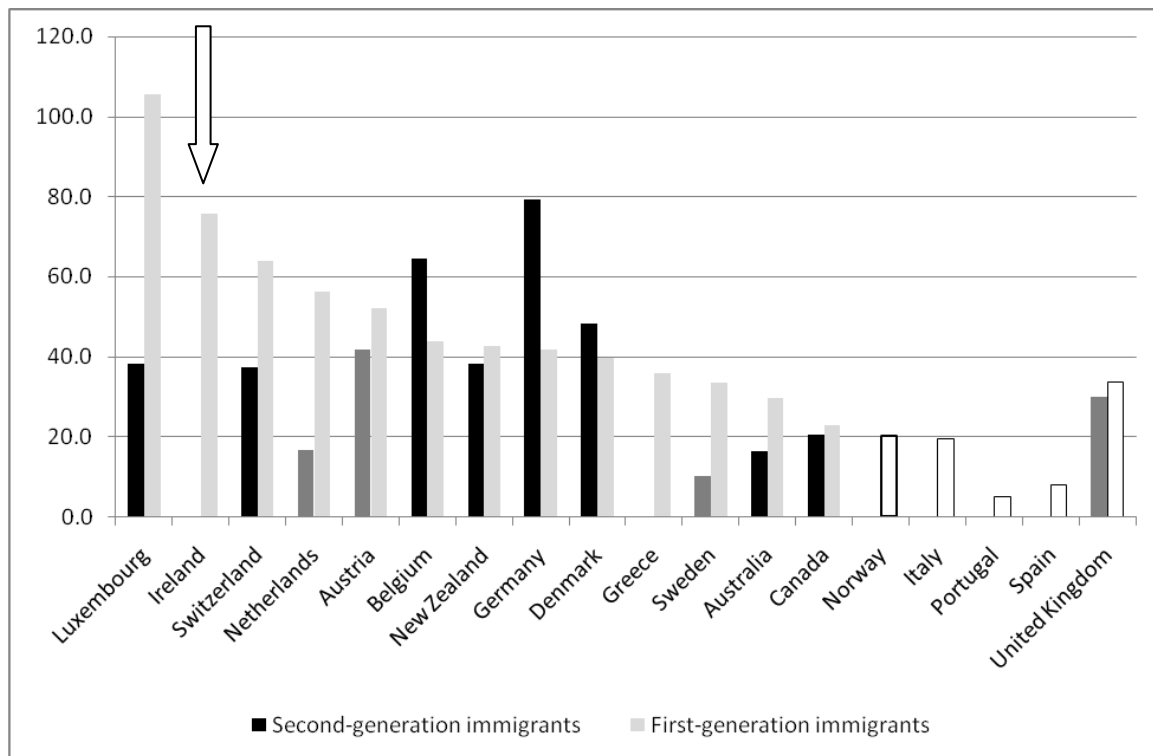
Source: Table 5.A2 in Eivers *et al.* (2005).

With this indication, it is worth examining the possible effect of language spoken at home on students' performance in PISA 2006 reading. If an immigrant student is from English-speaking countries and/or speaks English at home, he/she would gain 60 scores higher than the immigrant students who do not

speak the language of instruction at home (Figure 1.5). Ireland displays the second highest correlation, next to Luxembourg, between speaking the host country language at home and reading performance for first-generation immigrant students from the available PISA 2006 data, which has met the statistical requirements.

Figure 1.5. Relationship between reading performance and language spoken at home

Additional reading scores if immigrant students speak the country language at home



Source: OECD PISA 2006 database.

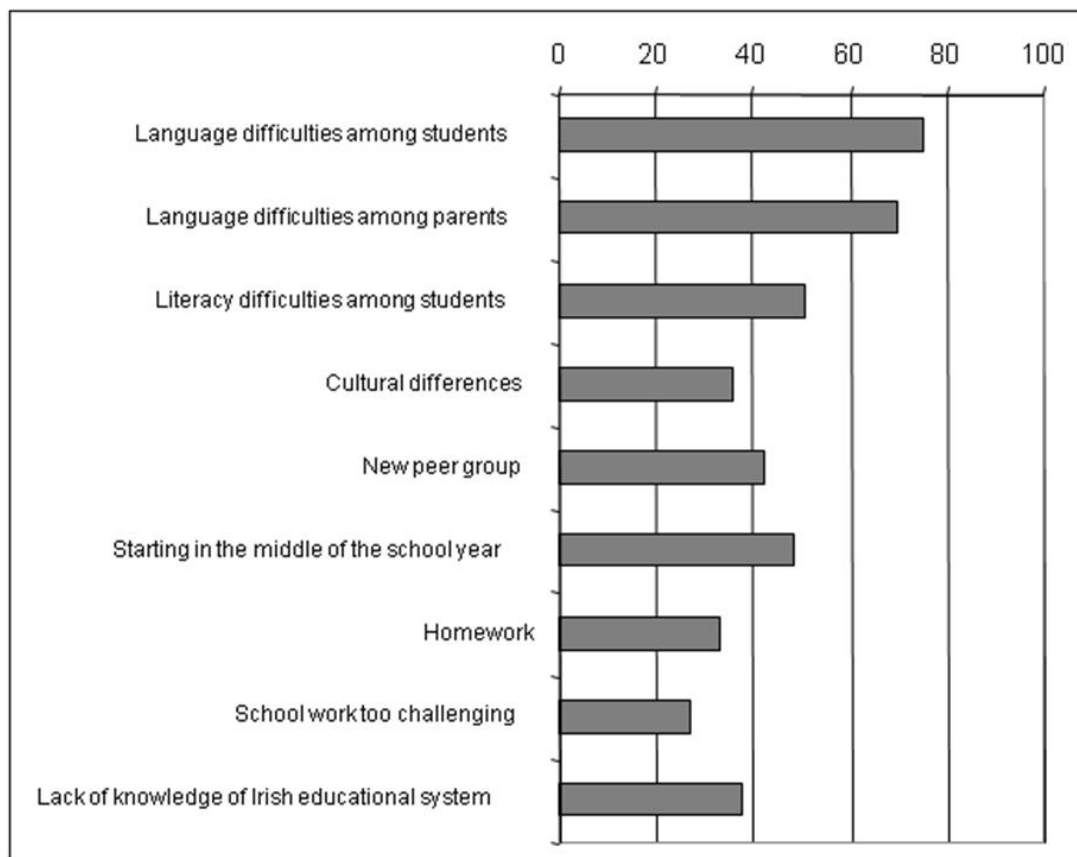
Further evidence from surveys and observation

The statistical indication (described above) is supported by the observations collected through the OECD policy review. Through the fact-finding and review visits, the OECD review team consistently heard of difficulties that immigrant families and children who do not speak English well face in various settings. These include difficulties experienced by children in learning subject matter and integrating in school, parents' difficulties in communicating with school, and obtaining necessary information about the education system, cultural practices, and school activities. Such difficulties were usually attributed to language barriers.

The ESRI's study of newcomer students in Irish primary and post-primary schools confirms that language difficulties are strongly associated with social and personal difficulties experienced by newcomers in both primary and post-primary schools. Language difficulties among newcomers were also the most frequently identified by school principals as a contributing factor to difficulties for newcomers, as seen in Figure 1.6, which presents the major factors most frequently identified by school principals in post-primary schools as contributing "quite a lot" or "a lot" to difficulties experienced by newcomers (Smyth *et al.*, 2009).

Figure 1.6. Difficulties faced by newcomers at post-primary level

Percentage of principals identifying factors which contribute to difficulties for newcomers

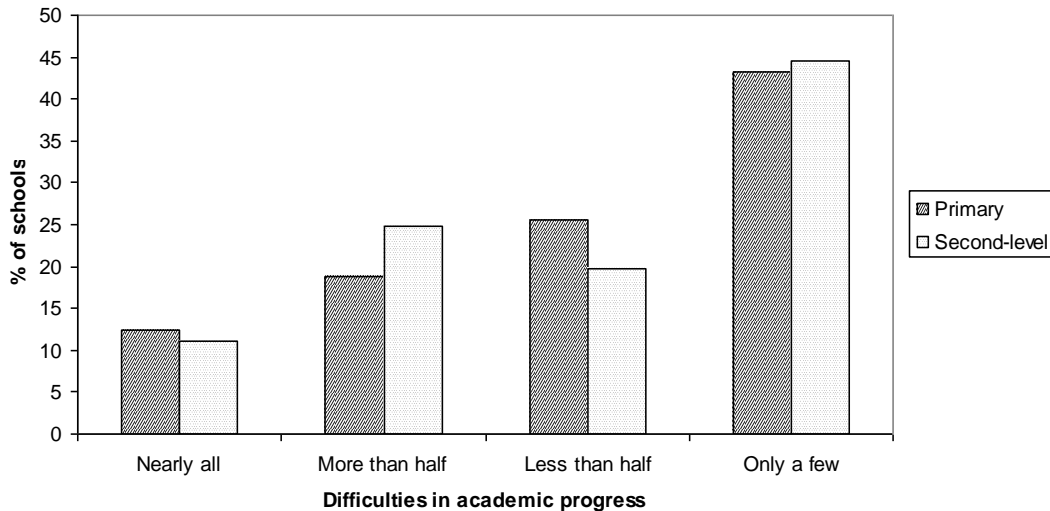


Source: Figure 5.9, Smyth *et al.* (2009).

According to the study, two-thirds of principals indicated that only a minority of newcomer students had sustained academic difficulties, as seen in Figure 1.7. However, schools with high proportion of students with language difficulties are much more likely to report academic difficulties than other schools.

Figure 1.7. Varying levels of academic difficulties among newcomers

Percentage of primary and post-primary schools whose principals identified the difficulties



Source: Figure 7.5 in Smyth *et al.* (2009).

According to the ESRI's report (Smyth *et al.*, 2009), over 75% of newcomers at primary level and about 70% of newcomers at post-primary level are non-English speaking students.

Immigrant students in post-primary education

If we only consider the size of the immigrant student population (*i.e.* the percentage of immigrant students in schools), then, as discussed above, the proportion of immigrant students in the post-primary level (8%) is less than that of the primary level (10%). However, when we consider the distribution of immigrant students among schools, about 90% of the almost 730 post-primary schools in Ireland have enrolments that are between 2 to 9% immigrant students, while only 56% of the almost 3 300 primary schools have immigrant students. In addition, post-primary schools have a greater variety of nationalities of immigrant students than primary schools do (Smyth *et al.*, 2009). This implies that post-primary schools have to accommodate a more diverse student body than primary schools do.

Furthermore, the “critical period hypothesis theory” in second language acquisition and brain research suggests that students who arrive in Ireland when they are of post-primary school age will have more difficulties in acquiring a second language than students commencing their education when they are of primary school age (OECD, 2002).

In addition, difference in curriculum and curriculum delivery (*i.e.* more inclusive and cross-curricular at primary level versus more technical and subject specific at post-primary level), teacher differences (a classroom teacher versus a range of subject specialist teachers) and State examinations at post-primary level can present more challenges to post-primary schools when compared to primary schools, in terms of providing for immigrant students. Perceived language difficulties are a strong predictor of academic difficulties for newcomer students, and the effect of language difficulties on academic difficulties is bigger in post-primary schools than in primary schools (Annex C). However, both sectors are facing different challenges.

NOTES

- 1 The country background report is available at www.oecd.org/edu/migration.
- 2 The number of asylum seekers entering Ireland declined by two-thirds from a peak of 11 634 in 2002 to 3 866 in 2008, reflecting a general reduction in the numbers of asylum applications across Europe, and also the success of strategies aimed at combating abuse of the asylum process (across the spectrum), and the streamlining of processing arrangements in the asylum area.
- 3 It should be noted that this may not provide the exact number of the flows as people leaving the country still retain their PPS Number; and, in some cases, migrants entering the country do not apply for one.
- 4 The economic crisis is having observable impacts on spending for education. Significant cuts in the education sector are being implemented (Smyth and McCoy, 2009). Starting in September 2009, the number of language support teachers available to schools with EAL students was reduced (Department of Education and Science Schools Division, Circular 0015/2009).
- 5 “The number of emigrants from the State in the year to April 2009 is estimated to have increased by over 40% from 45 300 to 65 100, while the number of immigrants continued to decline over the same period, from 83 800 to 57 300. These combined changes have resulted in a return to net outward migration for Ireland (-7 800) for the first time since 1995. Over the same period, the number of births reached a new high of 74 500 (not seen since 1896) while the number of deaths was 29 400, resulting in strong natural growth for the year to April 2009 of 45 100. The combined effect of the natural increase and migration resulted in a population increase of 37 300 (+0.8%) bringing the population estimate to 4.46 million in April 2009.” The economic crisis is having observable impacts on spending for education. Significant cuts in the education sector are being implemented (Smyth and McCoy, 2009). Starting in September 2009 the number of language support teachers available to schools with EAL (English as an Additional Language) students was reduced (Department of Education and Science Schools Division, Circular 0015/2009).
- 6 Higher numbers of immigrant students are enrolled in post-primary schools in 2008/09 than in the previous year. In addition, the birth rate for 2008 was the highest since 1896. Over 15% of those children were born to mothers from countries other than the UK or Ireland.
- 7 See www.cso.ie/px/des/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=EDA60&ti=National+School+Teachers+by+Year,+Teacher+Size+of+School+and+Statistic&path=../Database/DES/Staff%20in%20education/&lang=1
- 8 These schools include secondary schools, vocational schools and community and comprehensive schools. Students at this level typically follow a three year programme, culminating in the Junior

Certificate examinations. This may be followed by an optional Transition Year, offered by more than 66% of schools, and a two year programme for the Leaving Certificate Examinations-Leaving Certificate (Established), Leaving Certificate (Applied) and Leaving Certificate (Vocational).

- 9 See www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Government_Press_Office/Taoiseach's_Press_Releases_2009/Taoiseach_Brian_Cowen_Comments_on_the_proposed_Programme_for_Government_.html for 2009. The Agreed Programme 2007 stated that the government would: will: further increase the number of language support teachers from 1 450 to 1 800; improve teacher training and give extra supports to schools with large numbers of students with different languages and cultures to improve home-school links; provide access to English language classes for adult immigrants; and ensure that our education system and personnel are well-equipped for a multi-cultural society.
- 10 The Department is responsible for promoting linguistic, cultural, social, physical and economic development of the Gaeltacht areas.
- 11 The positioning of the bar with respect to the vertical axes or the average height in Figure 1.3 indicates the overall level of student performance. The higher the bar is, the better the students perform on reading. The slope of the bar is an indication of how much student reading performance changes with a change of one unit on students' socio-economic background. The steeper the slope is the more inequity students experience (OECD, 2008). The vertical axis shows student reading performance (scores) and the horizontal axis shows values on the ESCS in PISA 2006.
- 12 Reading scores in PISA 2006 are reported by five levels of proficiency, which makes it possible to describe what students can do at each level of reading literacy. Students who do not reach Level 1 (e.g. who do not reach 335 points on the reading scale) of the five levels are not able to routinely show the most basic skills that PISA seeks to measure. In PISA participating countries, immigrant students face a relatively higher risk of not reaching the proficiency level of being capable of basic reading tasks than native students in the PISA assessment framework.
- 13 In PISA data analysis, there are minimum requirements for the size of observations to provide reliable estimates (*i.e.* more than 30 students or more than 3% of students). In this respect, the sample size of first-generation immigrant students in Ireland is 1.4% in 2000 and 4.5% in 2006; second-generation peers, 0.8% in 2000 and 1.1% in 2006. Therefore, the analysis has been done only for first-generation immigrant students in 2006.

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CHAPTER 2: POLICY ORIENTATIONS

The academic performance of immigrant students in Ireland is not significantly different from that of native students. In most OECD countries, low socio-economic status and lack of language proficiency in the host country are strongly related to weak academic performance of immigrant students at age 15. In Ireland, socio-economic status of immigrant students is similar to that of their native peers. Language, however, remains a key challenge and needs to be addressed in combination with other factors that may affect education outcomes of immigrant students.

Ireland aims to provide “inclusive, high quality education for all students”. To achieve the goal, the government identifies and supports disadvantaged schools with the action plan for educational inclusion, “Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools” (DEIS). To address the issues that have arisen as a result of the sudden inflow of immigrants, the government has responded quickly with a strong political commitment and policy initiatives, tools, and materials. Provision of language supports to students for who English is an Additional Language (EAL) has been a policy focus. Recently, the government distributed language assessment kits to teachers, prepared intercultural education guidelines and is currently finalising an intercultural education strategy to enhance a whole-community approach.

Nevertheless, there is scope for improvement. It is now time to focus on the implementation of these policies and dissemination of such tools and materials. The Free Pre-school Year for All should be successfully implemented, placing a priority on disadvantaged children. Teachers – mainstream teachers as well as language teachers – should be trained so that they can cope with linguistic and cultural challenges in the classroom by using, for example, the language assessment kits and the intercultural education guidelines. The government should monitor the capacity of schools to meet the needs of all students and consider whether the current patronage model is still well-suited to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of children in Ireland. School leaders should also be trained so that they may take initiatives such as getting immigrant parents and communities more involved in school activities and education for immigrant children outside school. Ireland has started to be actively engaged in the use of evaluation at various levels. To ensure effectiveness of the evaluation exercise, the government now needs to connect it to continuous feedback in a coherent framework.

Early childhood education and care

Strengths

Well-established early education within primary education for children age four to six and increasing political and technical support to cover age zero to six

In Ireland, childcare services (age zero to six) are offered in different forms, including full-day care, half-day programmes, child-minders, community childcare programmes, drop-in centres, etc. The Child Care (Pre-School Services [No 2]) Regulations 2006 govern the regulation of pre-school services. Child minders who take care of not more than three children (age 0 to 14 years) in their own homes are not required to notify the Health Service Executive, although there are tax incentives for doing so. Some of the larger direct provision centres for asylum seekers have dedicated pre-school services for the children of asylum seekers.

Early childhood education (age four to six years) is arranged systemically and offered as “two years of infant classes” within primary schools. Although compulsory schooling starts at age six, almost all five-year-olds and about half of the four-year-olds attend primary schools.

Ready to Learn, the 1999 White Paper on Early Childhood Education, set out the core objectives for early childhood education and care, focusing on quality of provision. Following this, the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) was established in 2002 to:

- Develop a quality framework for early childhood education, including a Quality in Education (QE) Mark for providers in the sector;
- Develop targeted interventions on a pilot basis for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs; and
- Prepare the groundwork for the establishment of an Early Childhood Education Agency, as envisaged by the White Paper.

In 2006, the Centre published “*Síolta*” – *The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*. “*Síolta*” represents the views, thoughts and practices of a wide range of stakeholders and is built on a solid research foundation. The Centre was closed in 2008 when government funding ceased. Responsibility for implementing “*Síolta*”, along with the other functions of the CECDE, now lies within the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

“*Aistear*” – *The Framework for Early Learning* was published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 2009. “*Aistear*” aims to support children’s learning and development from zero to six. To ensure implementation of the framework, the NCCA has also published practical tools, such as planning tools and tipsheets, to support practitioners in becoming familiar with “*Aistear*” and in beginning to use it in their work with young children. The Council will also work with practitioners, children and parents to gather examples of “*Aistear*” in action across a variety of settings. These examples might include short video clips, photographs, and samples of children’s work and conversations with adults and other children. The purpose of the examples is to share practice across settings.

Targeting disadvantaged children from age 3 – The Early Start Programme

The Early Start programme is a one-year intervention scheme offered in selected schools in designated disadvantaged areas. It targets three-to-four-year-olds who are at risk of not reaching their potential within the school system. The class size is limited to 15 children. The project involves an

educational programme to enhance overall child development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of socio-economic disadvantage.

Each Early Start class, set up in vacant classrooms in existing schools, caters for up to 30 children – 15 in the morning and 15 in the afternoon. Each class is run by a qualified primary school teacher and a qualified child care worker, who are appointed by the school's Board of Management. Sixteen of the Early Start Centres cater for 60 children by providing two pre-school classes.

Parental involvement is a key element in the programme. Staff encourage parents to take part in the centre's activities, taking turns to spend time each week in the centre. The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinators play a crucial role. The HSCL scheme began in 1990, with the appointment of a number of teachers to primary schools throughout the country in areas of urban disadvantage. The scheme has been well received and was later extended to all designated disadvantaged schools.

The Early Start curriculum focuses on language, cognition and social and personal development. The programme aims to engage children through structured play activities and enhance the children's development in these core areas. Within these play activities, teachers set specific learning objectives for each child, emphasising the important aspects of play and positive adult-child interaction. These are part of the key aspects to define "quality". The latest report of the longitudinal study from New Zealand has pointed to five measures of quality in early childhood education, which has had a positive effect at age 16, irrespective of their family backgrounds. They are: i) staff joining children in their play; ii) staff responsiveness; iii) staff guiding children in activities; iv) staff asking children open-ended questions; and v) providing a print-saturated environment (Wylie *et al.*, 2009).

Political support for universal early childhood education (age 3 to 4)

As part of the April 2009 budget, the Early Childcare Supplement (€1 000 per annum) for pre-school children was replaced by the provision of a free Pre-School Year for all children between the ages of three years, three months and four years, six months. Universal pre-school provision will be introduced in January 2010 and represents a major policy change for the government. It indicates an increased awareness of the importance of early childhood education for all children, especially those at risk of educational disadvantage.

The importance of a "quality" pre-school experience is recognised. The pre-school year leader should hold a certification for a major award in childcare/early education at a minimum of Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications of Ireland or an equivalent recognised qualification through Accreditation of Prior Learning in the childcare/early education field. In recognition of the complex nature of educational attainment of staff within the ECCE sector, pre-school year leaders with awards in early childhood care and education that includes significant content relating to early childhood education/early learning and child development and have at least two years experience of working in a position of responsibility with children in the 0 to 6 age range, will meet the requirements.

Challenges

Implementing Pre-School Year for All (age 3 to 4)

The decision on Free Pre-School Year for All was announced in April 2009 and the scheme is scheduled to start in January 2010. To ensure universal access, several countries have made it a statutory right from age three (or even younger) while a few other countries support expanded provision without establishing legal entitlements (*e.g.* Australia, the UK and the US). Though governments may signal strong political will and commitment by establishing legal entitlements, such an approach does not ensure universal participation. The right to access may not be guaranteed or exercised if sufficient places are not

made available, duty holders (providers) are not aware of legal obligations, or families are not aware of, or able to exercise, their rights. In these cases, it is often the immigrant children who do not participate. In Norway, for instance, universal access is a legal right, but immigrant children are under-represented especially under age three, compared to their native peers. At age three, while the participation rate for all children is 92%, it is 72% for immigrant children (Statistics Norway, 2009).

The reasons for under-representation of immigrant children in early childhood education and care are often reported as the lack of information about such rights and parent's limited language proficiency in the host country, especially asylum seekers;¹ financial barriers; and cultural norms regarding the age when children should start pre-schooling (OECD, 2001; Leseman, 2002; Otero and McCoshan, 2005; Eurydice, 2009). This indicates that even with the universal approach, a targeted measure may be necessary to provide a safety net to catch those children.

Where provision is encouraged but not established as an entitlement, there is also a risk of failing to ensure places for the most disadvantaged children even with a strong political and financial commitment to implementation. Notwithstanding strong commitment to targeting low-income families, for instance, the Head Start pre-school programme for children from low income families in the US has served only about 36% of eligible children (OECD, 2001).

While the position will change radically from January 2010 with the introduction of free pre-school provision, at present parents can access quality early childhood care and education service where they can pay for it in the private sector or where they attend government supported community services. Disadvantaged and low-income parents attending community services will continue to access quality pre-school services in addition to the new pre-school year. As the socio-economic status of immigrant families in Ireland is not, on average, considerably lower than that of native families, inequity may not be seen as an issue for immigrant children. In the future, however, the proportion of the most vulnerable immigrant families at the lower ends of the distribution might increase. The review team heard from school principals during the policy review visit that the families of middle-income immigrant students have started to move back to their countries (*e.g.* Poland), although there is very little evidence on any significant scale at this stage, and low-income immigrant families with refugee status and those in Ireland due to official family reunification measures are remaining in the country. There is also a concern that, despite the generally even distribution of immigrants throughout the country, there is some evidence of clustering of immigrants in some areas. In such cases, there may not be much interaction with the host community, and immigrants may not know what services are available locally. Under such circumstances a targeted measure for these groups, along with their Irish native peers in similar circumstances, may be necessary to ensure full participation rates for all children in the new Free Pre-School Year.

Bringing practitioners and parents together for promoting cultural diversity

Immigrant parents tend to seek out services which value and respect their own language, culture and customs (OECD, 2001). The government acknowledges such needs and has taken some initiatives in the school sector. Although the criteria for allocation of EAL teachers have changed due to the current financial situation, such teachers continue to be allocated to schools with immigrant students. Diversity training or intercultural education is offered as part of professional development for EAL teachers.

Junior and Senior infant classes, as part of the school system in Ireland, are able to benefit from such schemes. During the review visit in March 2009, however, some school principals and teachers expressed concerns. First, despite the fact that the positive effects of HSCL co-ordinators, the number of such teachers is being cut. Second, HSCL co-ordinators may have difficulty communicating with the immigrant families because of language barriers. Third, cooperation between HSCL co-ordinators and social workers is often difficult due to the high turnover rates among social workers and lack of time to communicate.

Effective communication between the two is critical, especially in the case of immigrant families, so as to be fully aware of their situation at home – not only their socio-economic circumstances but also specific information, such as their language, culture, immigrant status, etc. These challenges should be addressed in the new initiative, from September 2009, to integrate the HSCL co-ordinators into a single School Support Programme under the National Educational Welfare Board, with an integrated whole-school approach.

There is scope for promoting cultural diversity in the early childhood education sector for junior and senior infants; “Aistear” has principles and themes which address both language development and intercultural education. Although both “Síolta” and “Aistear” are applicable in all settings where children age birth to six years are present, the review team has not been able to identify such opportunities for child care for children under the age of three.

Furthermore, although the Diversity and Equality Guidelines for practitioners were produced by the OMCYA in 2006, the team has not heard of any training opportunities offered to social workers or staff working in the childcare sector.² The OECD team notes that encouraging staff development is a general issue in the sector. The production of guidelines should be supported by capacity building activities for the guidelines to be successfully implemented.

Parental involvement (parenting at home and parent-staff communication) is of critical importance in the early stages of development of the child for children’s cognitive development, especially pre-literacy skills (Olmsted and Montie, 2001; Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002; Sylva, 2000; and Sylva *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, it would be important that early childhood education and care under age three does not miss the opportunity.

Policy options

Prioritising the disadvantaged children, such as by integrating the Early Start Programme into the new policy package, in order to successfully implement Free Pre-School Year for All (age 3 to 4)

The OECD review team supports the government’s most recent decision on the Free Pre-School Year for all children. It is in line with the overall OECD policy suggestion as well as other research findings, *i.e.* a universal approach to quality early childhood education and care, with particular attention to children in need of special support, will help promote equality of educational opportunity and outcomes for all children, ensure greatest socio-economic benefits for society at large, especially for those with disadvantaged backgrounds, and promote inter-generational mobility in socio-economic backgrounds (OECD, 2001; Cunha *et al.*, 2005; Heckman, 2006a; 2006b; OECD, 2009).

The government now needs to carefully and swiftly implement the Free Pre-School Year, ensuring that all children will benefit from the scheme. As discussed as a challenge, it is of critical importance that disadvantaged children will be captured through a targeted measure while the new Free Pre-School Year will be guaranteed for all. To this end, the Early Start Programme has a potential to serve the purpose and should be embedded in the implementation of the new scheme: it should be integrated into the Free Pre-School Year; otherwise, there is a risk of failing to ensure equity with the new scheme.

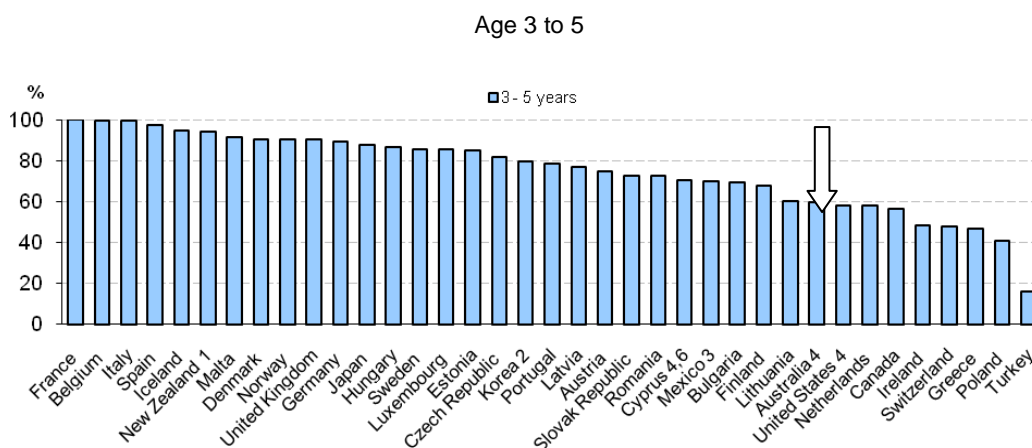
The review team understands that: i) Early Start has not been expanded since its inception in the 1990s; ii) it will not be expanded now that universal pre-school provision has been introduced; iii) it is continuing while the universal pre-school year is being rolled out; and iv) further consideration will be given to future arrangements in light of the implementation of the universal pre-school year and its impact, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

It is still unclear about what the impact of universal pre-school provision will be on the Early Start Programme. Parents might prefer to enrol their children in a pre-school service which is in the ECCE

scheme as it offers a longer day than the Early Start scheme. Regardless of the different stakeholder's behaviour, it is important to make continued efforts to enhance the quality of the Early Start Programme, which has improved over the years, through such measures as greater parental involvement, better working-relationships between teachers and childcare workers, and more small-group learning environments (Lewis and Archer, 2002, 2003).

As the OECD review of early childhood education and care (2004) points out Ireland still lags behind many other countries with regard to participation in pre-school programmes. The compulsory school-starting age ranges from five to seven in OECD countries. Since pre-school education and care is not compulsory, there is no formal “starting age”. However, the current trend in most OECD countries is also to move toward full coverage of the 3-to-6-years-old age group and to give all children at least two years of free publicly-funded provision before beginning compulsory schooling. This starts at age 2 in France; 2.5 years in Belgium; from 3 years in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, etc; and from 4 years in the Netherlands (OECD, 2006). In the majority of the OECD countries, more than 50% of children age three to five are enrolled in early childhood education and care; the enrolment rate for that age group in Ireland 48.6% (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Enrolment in early childhood education and care



Source : the OECD Family Database

Concentrate efforts on implementing “Siolta” and “Aistear” (age 0 to 6), with special attention to language development and socio-cultural competencies of immigrant children

“Siolta” – *The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* – and “Aistear” – *The Framework for Early Learning* – are the most recent initiatives of the government. A “Workforce Development Plan for the ECCE sector” has been also developed. These initiatives should be implemented in light of the priority placed on the implementation of the Free Pre-School Year for all children. The Early Start programme should be embedded into universal pre-school access. In order to deliver intended outcomes most effectively and efficiently, initiatives should be implemented as “one package” rather than a collation of single projects.

In the implementation of the “package”, the specific needs of immigrant children should not be overlooked; they should be addressed in all areas of the initiatives but especially through the language and socio-cultural development of the child through pedagogy and curriculum, training of teachers, and parental and community involvement.

On pedagogy and curriculum, Norway, like Ireland, puts a strong focus on the importance of language stimulation at an early stage of life. This is expected to be especially beneficial for immigrant children. Norway recently revised the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*, which will require early childhood education and care providers to promote not only their skills in the host language but to actively support children in using their mother language (OECD, 2009d). Although international research on the effects of mother language support presents mixed results (Nusche, 2009), Norway emphasises the importance of developing all-round language development for this age, with a strong emphasis of family learning, which is also the case in Sweden. In Denmark, all three-year-old children are given language tests, which is found to be beneficial both for native and immigrant children. With respect to the development of the host language, it would be important to take multi-cultural and anti-bias approaches to curriculum development and implementation (OECD, 2001).

It is important that immigrant children are exposed to teachers with immigrant backgrounds, who can learn to teach both language and culture into the overall pedagogical activities. Based on their own experiences of being an immigrant, such teachers may be more culturally sensitive to the child's language, social and emotional development, all of which are the prerequisite for successful integration and social cohesion. This has been done by the governments of the Netherlands and the Flemish Community of Belgium (OECD, 2001). In Ireland, it may be effective and essential to provide additional diversity training to social workers and HSCL co-ordinators, or to recruit such people with immigrant backgrounds.

Parental involvement is found to be one key factor in determining quality of early childhood education and care, which will help improve a child's literacy development (Barnett, 1995; Reynolds *et al.*, 2004; Heckmann, 2008). In the United States, the Migrant Even Start Family Literacy Programme, which aims to equip immigrant parents with the skills to support their children's language learning, has shown positive outcomes in children's language development (St Claire and Jackson, 2006). Parents are also expected to become involved through effective communication with school. A comprehensive communication strategy would be of significant importance with the implementation of the new initiative. Such a strategy will help avoid duplicating efforts such as creating materials in different languages and finding interpreters; facilitate outreach work by community workers; and ensure long-term language support for both children and their parents – which are found to be the critical needs of immigrant families in early childhood education and care (OECD, 2001).

School – Primary and post-primary

Strengths

Motivated teachers and quality teaching

Teachers and teaching are the backbone of any education system. The capacity of the education system to deal with the challenges posed by an increasingly intercultural student population that is more diverse in its learning styles and needs is determined in large part by the capacity of its teachers, and the climate in which learning takes place.

In this respect, Ireland has certain clear and exceptional strengths. Irish teachers are as a group professional and highly motivated. In comparison to many other countries, a teaching career is seen as a positive choice for high performing school leavers and degree holders. Primary teaching still attracts recruits from the top quartile of school leaving examination results, and the great majority of applicants to the graduate programmes have reached honours standards in their undergraduate degrees. Coolahan (2003) highlighted that the role of teachers has traditionally been respected by the Irish public even when they did not benefit from high salaries.

The teaching practices associated with assessment for learning, collecting and analysing assessment information to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately, have been introduced and are beginning to spread.

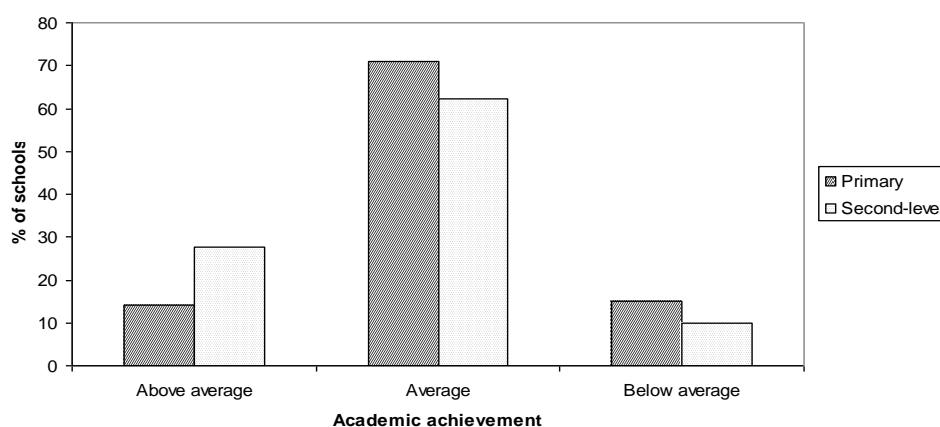
Political support for intercultural education

The professional capacity of the management team and teachers is complemented by a political climate that has provided strong leadership. This has taken the form of supporting diversity through the formulation of the NCCA's intercultural education guidelines for both the primary and the post-primary sector,³ through curriculum flexibility that can be adapted to cultural diversity including the provision for an optional transition year (available in 66% of schools) at the start of upper secondary education, and through additional English language support for schools with eligible newcomer students who do not speak English as their first language. The Department's intercultural education strategy (currently being developed) will further bolster this supportive environment.

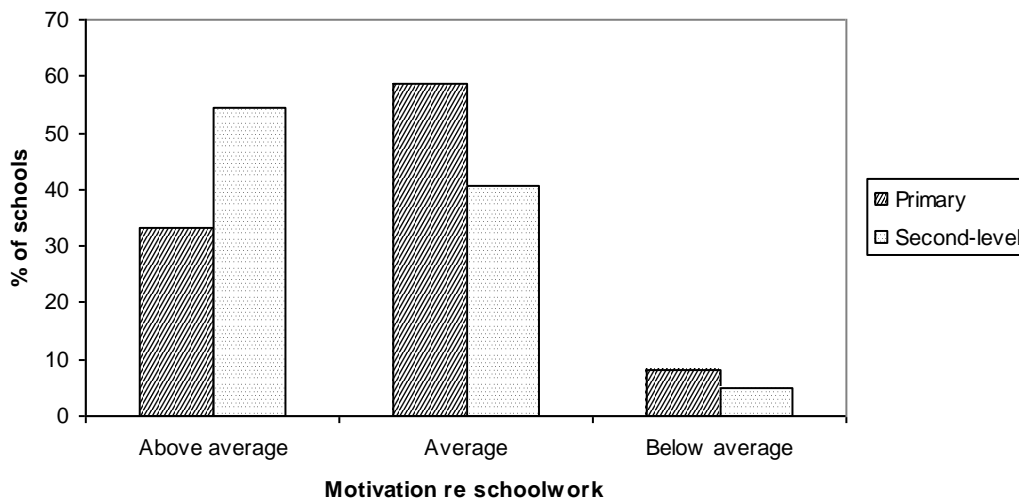
Motivated immigrant students and immigrant-friendly learning environments

The generally high performance of many of Ireland's immigrant students is seen in many areas as an advantage to stimulate performance of other students, particularly in schools in low socio-economic areas. The ESRI study (Smyth *et al.*, 2009) found that the majority of both primary and post-primary school principals perceive newcomer students as being "above average" or "average" in relation to their motivation and academic achievements, compared to Irish students, with only a very small proportion perceiving them as below average (see Figure 2.2 and 2.3). Principals in designated disadvantaged schools were significantly more likely than those in other schools to believe "that newcomer students may raise the standard and learning expectations in schools with a disadvantaged student intake" (Smyth *et al.*, 2009, p. 53).

Figure 2.2. Principals' perceptions of academic achievement of newcomers



Source: Figure 7.1 in Smyth *et al.* (2009)

Figure 2.3. Principals' rating of newcomer students on motivation relative to schoolwork

Source: Figure 7.2 in Smyth *et al.* (2009)

During their visits, the review team heard from researchers, school officials and teachers that some immigrant parents and students criticised the disciplinary climate of schools as being too lax, compared to other education systems, and the academic aspirations of schools not sufficiently challenging. Some teachers also reported that average performance of schools actually rose because of the positive impact of the presence of immigrants.

Specialised teachers to support language acquisition

Language support is a key factor to the successful integration of immigrants who lack proficiency in the language(s) of the host country. Those who do not speak English at home as a mother tongue require extra support in achieving necessary levels of proficiency not only in “social” English, but also in “academic” English in order to be able to fully participate in education. There are over 160 nationalities represented in the post-primary school population (Irish Department of Education and Science, 2008). The 2006 census found over 180 nationalities represented in Ireland (CSO, 2008). More than 200 languages are reported to be spoken in the Irish immigrant community, presenting both a challenge in the area of language support and an opportunity to expand the national language pool.

The provision of additional teaching hours / posts to schools for language support for their EAL students has been the general practice in Ireland in recent years. Under the regime introduced in May 2007, schools had:

- one whole-time equivalent/post for 14 to 27 students;
- two for 28 to 41;
- three for 42 to 64;
- four for 65 to 90;
- five for 91 to 120; and
- six for 121 or more.

Even following the cuts in provision from the October 2008 budget, schools can, from September 2009, apply for one whole-time equivalent/post if they have between 14 to 30 students, and a second post

for between 31 to 90 students, with the potential, based on the size and nature of the demand, for a third or fourth post. Some schools, on appealing their allocation were provided a total allocation of six EAL teachers. Primary schools with fewer than 14 students requiring specific language support receive a grant to purchase such support. In 2008/09, there were 1 632 full-time EAL teachers at primary level, and 560 whole-time equivalents at post-primary. The changes from September 2009 are estimated to mean that, in primary and post-primary schools, there will be over 1 500 EAL teacher posts, whole time equivalents plus further EAL teachers in part-time posts/hours where schools have less than 14 EAL students.

Practical tools provided to support language teachers

In 2008, English Language Assessment Kits were sent to all primary schools. In 2009, such a kit was distributed to all post-primary schools. The kits allow teachers to identify the initial language proficiency of students, soon after they start in school, in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and to plan for the appropriate supports. “Follow-on tests” monitor progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, highlight areas where language support must focus, and identify the point at which students are enabled to fully access the curriculum. The kits use A0 to B1 from the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Schools are currently free to choose to adopt the new tools, or to continue with whatever assessment tools they were using prior to the introduction of the new kits, with the exception that where they are applying for an additional year beyond the two-year period for language support, they then must conduct an assessment using the new kit within three months of the date of the submission of the request for prolonged support.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) provides guidelines for teachers on English as an Additional Language (EAL) in Irish schools: “Guidelines for Teachers” (targeted at all primary teachers). There is also online support available to complement the guidelines, which include video examples of mainstream teachers, samples of students work, and photos. “Integrating non-English speaking students into the school and curriculum” (targeted at all post-primary teachers) was prepared by Integrate Ireland Language and Training.⁴

Preventing early school leavers

Dropping out from school is not a big issue for now in Ireland, compared to some other OECD countries. In 2007, only 2% left schools without any qualifications in post-primary education; in 1980, 9% of students left schools with no qualifications according to the school leavers’ survey (Byrne *et al.*, 2008). However, those results should not be a reason for complacency: inasmuch as they do not differentiate between native and immigrant students, there is no way of telling whether the increased immigrant share of the school population is associated with an increased or decreased risk of dropping out.

Challenges

Insufficient training for English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers

Because large-scale immigration is a comparatively new phenomenon in Ireland, the demand created by the language needs of immigrants has outstripped the capacity of educators to build up the necessary skills. EAL teachers must be primary or post-primary trained teachers, but the amount of training provided to train them as specialists in their EAL role has been inadequate and fragmented. The length, content or coverage does not yet meet the needs of all involved.

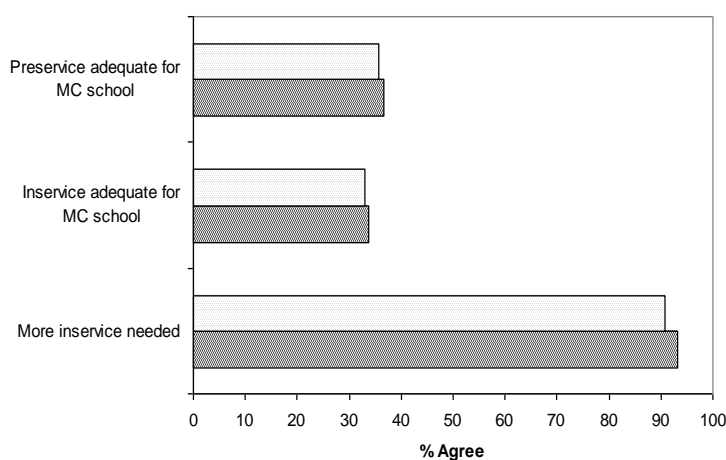
The ESRI study found three groups of language support teachers: those with a background in teaching English as a second language, those with a background in learning support, and mainstream teachers. There is little in the way of provision of continuing professional development in age-specific teaching and assessment methods, language acquisition methodologies, curriculum adaptation, or intercultural education. While pre-service teacher training in English language acquisition has become indispensable and widespread in recent years, training to support interculturalism lags behind. Provision of language support training improved in 2008/09 when a network of DES trainers at primary and post-primary levels provided continuing professional development and ongoing advice and guidance to EAL teachers. In-service training in English Language Support was offered to all EAL teachers in 2008/09, but the take-up rate was greater at primary than at post-primary level. To meet the needs of their students most effectively, these teachers need more than the “dedication” reported in the ESRI study.

Lack of training for mainstream teachers and school managers for diversity

Teachers and school leaders in Irish schools are predominantly Irish. Given the dispersal of immigrants throughout Ireland,⁵ all teachers and school leaders in post-primary schools are likely to encounter immigrant students during their careers. The ESRI study (Smyth *et al.*, 2009) reports more concentrated patterns in primary schools, but teacher and student mobility would suggest a universal approach of giving continuing professional development to all staff would best operate here too, where and when resources permit.

While training for EAL teachers is not sufficient, training for mainstream teachers and school leaders is even more limited. These shortcomings in capacity are aggravated by a lack of coordination between EAL teachers and class teachers at the primary level, and subject teachers at the post-primary level. There is little time available for such co-ordination. There are some grassroots based developments. There is a recognised need for specialised training for **all** teachers to better equip them to diagnose and adapt to the learning needs, and in particular, the language needs of immigrant children.

Most teachers in Irish schools were teaching long before large numbers of immigrants reached Ireland and their children enrolled in its classrooms. Existing teachers have prioritised the need for professional development to meet cultural diversity in a number of studies. Twenty-four % of the Irish teachers of Junior Cycle students who responded in the OECD TALIS teacher survey identified that they had a “high level of need” for professional development in the area of teaching in multicultural settings. This compares with 14% of teachers on average across TALIS countries (OECD 2009a). With respect to training of teachers for a multicultural teaching environment, the ESRI study reports that only a third of principals feel that initial training and in-service education prepares teachers for working in a multicultural setting; and over nine out of ten principals feel that more in-service training is needed to promote inclusion within schools, as shown in Figure 2.4 (Smyth *et al.*, 2009).

Figure 2.4. Attitudes toward teacher professional development

Source: Figure 7.8 in Smyth *et al.* (2009)

It should be noted, however, that recently qualified teachers are more likely to have completed some studies in this area, as most teacher education programmes are providing courses on the topic, in response to Ireland's changing demographics. In addition, Ireland has processes in place for teachers from immigrant backgrounds to have their qualifications assessed (Qualifications Recognition service of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and, in particular, the Teaching Council). At the primary level, teachers trained outside of Ireland are given five years to acquire the necessary proficiency in the Irish language, Gaeilge, for full registration, though few have taken up this option. It may be that this requirement may not be well known among the immigrant communities.

School leaders play a strong role in recognising the value of cultural pluralism, and attaching high positive value to preserving and reinforcing mother tongue languages of immigrants in learning, in addition to English and Irish. The school leadership team through the principal, senior management and the board of management are all key actors in creating and sustaining an inclusive quality school. However, school leaders and ancillary staff, though often more than willing, lack specific training in this area.

Racism and bullying

In newly heterogeneous classrooms and schools, particular attention needs to be paid to the climate for learning. Teachers need to attend to classroom discipline with early identification and responses to cultural conflicts, peer pressure and bullying. Devine and Kenny (2002) found that by and large teachers in Ireland did not perceive racism as a major problem at school, but that this contrasted with the level of racist abuse recounted by minority ethnic children of all ages, and that their repertoires of racially abusive terms came from use and experience in their school lives. This was reinforced in the ESRI study (Smyth *et al.*, 2009), which found that the student interviews indicated some racist bullying of which principals may be unaware, in line with previous studies, which show that only a minority of bullying is officially reported. In fact, only 8% of primary principals and 6% at post-primary found that bullying and racism were contributing "a lot" or "quite a lot" to difficulties among newcomer students. The report also notes that school principals and teachers were unaware of the extent of racist bullying – making it hard to intervene effectively. The report also references the fact that there may be more racist behaviour in the neighbourhood of the school when compared to the school itself (Smyth *et al.*, 2009).

Many more school leaders and mainstream teachers need access to sustained quality training to learn how to use cultural diversity as a positive construct in their teaching methods.

Supporting acquisition of English as an additional language

While the government has tried to support non-English speaking immigrant students by providing extra resources such as EAL teachers in Ireland, no language support is provided in the native language of the student. Although research findings may be inconclusive about the effects of bilingual education per se (Nusche, 2009), and the variety of first languages spoken by Ireland's immigrants (approximately 200) would make it prohibitively expensive anyway, the learner's mother tongue could be a significant building block for second language acquisition.

Devine (2009) reports that among the children she interviewed in her study of the experiences of immigrant children age 9 to 12, those who did not have English as their mother tongue considered acquiring fluency as a central requirement. Attitudes toward the possibility of learning through their native tongue were ambiguous, and this was attributed to an awareness of the lack of currency and recognition of their first languages in the classroom. In some cases, the lack of awareness was reinforced through rules which discouraged them from speaking to each other in their mother tongue.

As the Intercultural Guidelines published by NCCA identify, children's first language continues to be important in their linguistic, social and cognitive development. Therefore it is important that the school would use every opportunity to respect the children's native languages and encourage continued development of these languages where possible (NCCA, 2005). The 2008/09 Continuing Professional Development programmes for primary and post-primary teachers promoted the NCCA's approach to the children's first language.

Some immigrants may be able to obtain some certification in their native language, through the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. At Junior Certificate level, the suite of curricular languages available may include the student's mother tongue. On the other hand, the Leaving Certificate exams offer a mix of curricular and non-curricular languages. For the latter, schools do not provide lessons, and candidates must speak the chosen examination language as their mother tongue. The languages available through both curricular and non-curricular languages are extensive.⁶ Overall, however, few assessment tools are available in languages other than Irish or English, so it is difficult for immigrant students to show their curriculum understanding in any way divorced from their English language competence.

Constraints on language support provision

The recent government spending constraints on the funding available to provide language support makes it more important than ever that the provision of such support makes the most effective and efficient use of the money provided. The October 2008 budget decisions set new limits on the level of funding provided for English language support. Schools with a significant concentration of students requiring support can apply for up to four language support posts or up to 6 on appeal, as noted earlier.

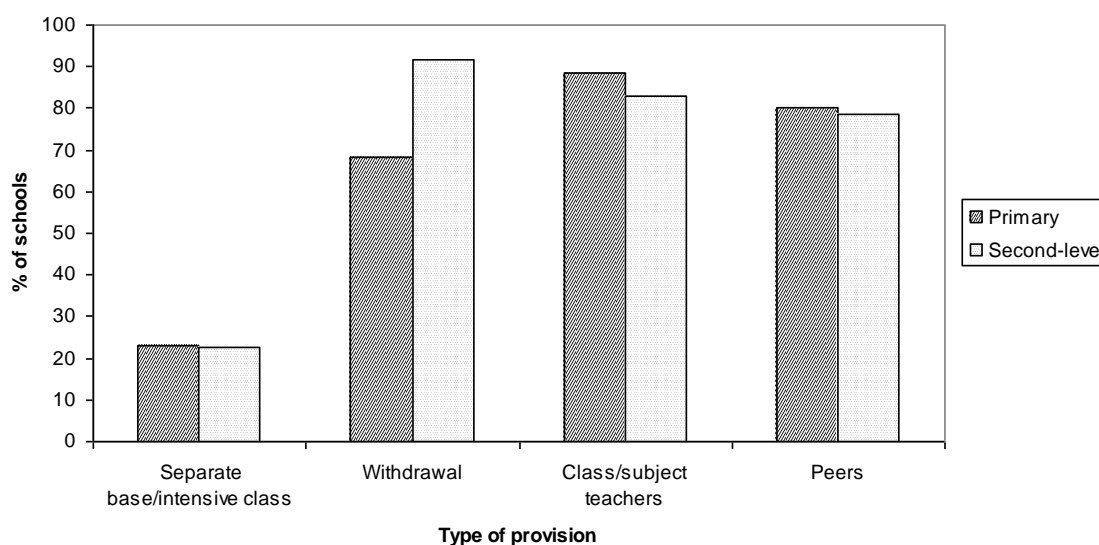
The ESRI report, "Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students", 2009, identified that while the schools it surveyed reported satisfaction with the dedication of those involved in providing language support, there was dissatisfaction with the time allotted to students⁷ and with the lack of availability of trained teachers. The level of dissatisfaction was highest where the language needs were most acute (Smyth *et al.*, 2009).

It is up to individual schools to decide how the funding and/or positions are used. EAL teachers identify students requiring additional language support, assess their proficiency in English, devise appropriate language programmes, deliver the programmes and record and monitor students' progress. The

role of the EAL teacher is conceptualised as providing additional EAL support teaching, while the student remains the responsibility of the mainstream class teacher at the primary level and the subject specialist teachers at post-primary level.

The ESRI report indicates that language support is provided mainly by withdrawal classes (especially at the post-primary level) and by class or subject teachers, as seen in Figure 2.5. Peer support at both primary and post-primary levels is also seen as significant in reinforcing language support. While peer interaction may also lead to greater inclusion and integration, unless it is closely monitored and the Irish peers helped to understand their roles and responsibilities, there is no guarantee that this will happen.

Figure 2.5. Use of different methods of language support across schools



Source: Figure 6.1 in Smyth *et al.* (2009)

To be successful, withdrawal classes need to be structured to take account of the learning needs of the mainstream classroom. EAL teachers need to be specialist in language acquisition, and able to constantly negotiate the connections back to the classroom learning. There needs to be planned collaboration and co-operation between the EAL teachers and the classroom/subject specialist teachers. Schools need to ensure that the potential of negative labelling or stereotyping of students in withdrawal programmes does not occur.

In addition, language support provided by class or subject teachers requires all teachers to be skilled in understanding language acquisition and its techniques in their subject areas. While such support may offer a more holistic approach and be able to deal with needs as they arise, unless the teachers have the professional capability and access to the necessary materials it is unlikely to succeed. The Council of Europe emphasises that the important role of language in all subjects means that all subject teachers need to become more language-sensitive (Vollmer, 2009).

Cooperating with post-graduate teaching and research programmes

Post graduate TESOL courses and programmes are offered by many of the universities in Ireland, and a number of faculties of education have begun to engage in research related to migrant education. Teachers and students would be better served, though, by greater coordination amongst those involved in such work, to improve the flow of information from research through learning to practice.

Preparing for the future

While the arrival of new immigrants appears to have slowed down, it should not be assumed that the demands for English language support will quickly die away. New entrants born in Ireland to migrant parents will continue to arrive into the primary school system with little English for a number of years to come. Also, the evidence points to the current cohort of migrant children staying in Ireland. OECD PISA data show that in several countries second-generation migrants fare less well than those of the first generation and in other countries second-generation children perform better than their parents. Ireland will want to take advantage of the potential of its migrants by ensuring that they fall into the latter category.

Policy options*Placing a priority on providing initial and continuing professional development for all teachers for cultural diversity*

Effective teaching for diverse students demands a high level of universal intercultural understanding, and an approach to education which includes but is not limited to providing adequate language support for migrants learning English and Irish. In the first instance, this requires appropriate expectations in initial teacher education.

Ireland has prepared intercultural guidelines; however, international country practices (in Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the UK) show that such official guidelines on intercultural teacher education are not easily implemented, or integrated into curriculum and pedagogy (Nusche, 2009).

The Teaching Council has in its remit “to establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of standards of teacher education”, and indicated in its meeting with the review team that it intends to address the issue of teaching in a multicultural environment in its review of initial teacher education. This will require an explicit emphasis on ensuring that newly qualified teachers learn a culturally responsive pedagogy, using and building upon immigrant students’ previous experiences and knowledge, understanding the different social and educational experiences of immigrant students, and learning how to work with their families and communities.

The Teaching Council’s work does not stop with the initial teacher education programmes. Its principal functions include establishing procedures in relation to induction and probation for beginning teachers. The experiential learning involved in induction and/or probationary periods is particularly important for moving from an understanding of intercultural education in theory to its characteristics in practice.

The Teaching Council Act, 2001, provides that “The Council shall promote the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers.” This section of the Act has not yet been commenced. In the future, however, it is possible that the Teaching Council may, like other similar professional bodies, require that a minimum amount of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is completed prior to renewal of registration for teachers throughout their career.

The homogeneity of the teaching force, though, reinforces the importance of the teacher’s role in representing the inclusivity of the class community, through using pedagogical practices that pro-actively value and address diversity. The CPD should continue to take account of the NCCA Guidelines for Intercultural Education in both primary and post-primary schools. While these are excellent documents, they will have limited impact until they are integrated into the expected outcomes of professional formation programmes.

New Zealand has found “The traditions of ‘us’ and ‘othering’ that can be signalled through exclusive, albeit unconscious, language use provides a foundation for bullying, name-calling, racism and practices that lead to patterns of social and academic exclusion” (Alton-Lee *et al.*, 2001; Alton-Lee, 2003). Nuttall (1999) emphasised the need for teachers to design curriculum-relevant tasks which increase levels of trust, acceptance, sharing and mutual support, and enable diverse valuing of student knowledge and skills.

In Denmark, intercultural education is embedded in part of mandatory subjects of pre-service training, and it can be part of in-service teacher training if ordered by schools or municipalities based on particular needs. An evaluation of this training reports that it has improved the teaching practice at the schools involved (EVA, 2007).

Further, the CPD should include understanding of second language acquisition, inclusive pedagogical approaches and formative assessment, from which not only immigrant students but all students will benefit.

Supporting a whole-school approach to immigrant education

Teachers need support from school leaders and colleagues as they make changes to their practice, and the transformation of teaching and assessment approaches for the new diversity that is the Irish classroom requires serious investments in training and professional development. For the existing teacher workforce, a whole-school approach can provide this support as well as ensuring that the changes made in some classrooms are not undermined by the overarching school culture.

Brind *et al.* (2008) identified a range of characteristics of good practice in a whole-school approach in their literature review of policies aimed at the education of minority, migrant and marginalised children in Europe (Box 2.1).

Box 2.1. Selected characteristics of good practice in the whole-school approach

- Schools where there is a culture for critical reflection.
- Schools where inclusion and diversity are reflected in the curriculum and school organisation.
- Strong school leadership with a vision and commitment to addressing inequality and to mainstreaming initiatives to raise achievement.
- Induction strategies for “newly arrived” immigrant students – including children of asylum seeker or refugee families.
- High quality training so that staff can tackle the needs of immigrant students with confidence.
- The meaningful involvement of parents and community.
- High expectations from teachers and all school staff of their students, and the availability of mentoring programmes.
- Utilising “restorative” and “preventative” approaches to behaviour management that seek to mediate the root causes of conflict rather than simply punishing students.

To put the whole-school approach into practice, professional training for school leaders is as important as training for teachers. They should be embedded into one coherent strategy for school improvement. Country experience from England may support this option. England has set up the whole-school professional development programme “Raising the Achievement of Bilingual Learners”. It covered a wide range of components: *e.g.* building school leadership teams, creating an inclusive school culture, appointment of a consultant within the schools, diagnostic visit by a specialist, development of a migrant

achievement plan, professional development for teachers, and additional support in the classroom. The evaluation of the programme has found that it helped raise the confidence of teachers and the performance of immigrant students (White *et al.*, 2006; Benton and White, 2007).

CPD initiatives should not undermine education goals by diminishing teaching time. Indeed, the Social Partnership Agreement 2006-15 warned about “the disruption caused in schools by the delivery of in-service training during normal school time”. Under the Agreement, social partners identified means for reducing such disruption and agreed to explore how in-service training needs could be accommodated in a less disruptive way (Department of the Taoiseach 2006, part 2, section 31). Subsequently, a study prepared for the Department of Finance stated that any revision of the teacher contract should call for an increase in the statutory working time sufficient to allow time needed for teaching as well as for necessary development. The report specified that “...activities such as in-service training and school planning should be routinely scheduled so as not to erode school teaching time” (Department of Finance, 2009, p. 63).⁸

Strengthening initial and ongoing learning opportunities for EAL teachers and learners

Effective EAL support requires more than a background of general teaching competence or training in general learning support. Professional learning programmes should address the importance of the teacher’s own languages and language modelling; the place of the first language as the basis for second language development; the importance of developing the cognitive and academic dimensions of language, curriculum and materials analysis, and adaptation; and the place of empowerment of learners and their communities.

Given the reduction in the overall numbers of EAL support teachers from September 2009, priority should be given to retaining those who are most qualified and increasingly requiring appropriate qualifications as a pre-requisite for working as an EAL teacher.

As the flow of new migrant students arriving in schools eases somewhat given the reduction in the numbers of immigrants entering Ireland, but mindful of the fact that the children of immigrant families will continue to enrol their children, many of whom may not speak English, further attention might be given to extending the period of support available for individual students, based on identified English language need. The current provision of two years of support is generally considered sufficient for conversational English, but if migrant students are to make a successful transition to upper second level education and then on to further or higher education, they will need to have mastery of academic English. Cummins (1979) argues that this may take up to five years (also see Cummins, 2007, 2008).

Building a one-stop point of networks for school (practitioners and managers) to be connected with researchers and policy makers

Research into the experiences of immigrant students and the practices of those in the education system with whom they come into contact is beginning, but is not yet an established field. In this respect, the NCCA, which is responsible for developing curriculum for schools, could take a leading role to build cooperation and networks with teacher education sector, researchers and instructors in third level. Furthermore, the cooperation can be enlarged into one between Ireland and Northern Ireland since this is an area of common interest. The network can discuss the integration agenda and EAL. It could consider developing curriculum, training teachers, advancing research on methodology and curriculum development, and making material and know-how accessible to schools, classroom teachers, and language support teachers. The information portal for accessing intercultural materials relevant to education (AIM) recently established by the government can be used as a web-based model of dissemination for the network.⁹

Preparing to take more preventive measures against dropouts

In Ireland, early school leaving is currently less problematic for immigrant students, compared with other OECD countries. This may be due to the fact that the majority of immigrant students are at the younger end of the spectrum and that their family backgrounds are similar to their native peers, as discussed earlier. Possible changes in the composition, which may occur as a result of the economic crisis, would require a forward-looking approach to prevent dropout rates from increasing.

In the United States, high school dropouts are estimated to be highly costly to the state in terms of its economic losses and social costs (Belfield and Levin, 2009; Jimerson *et al.*, 2008; Belfield and Levin, 2007). To prevent and fight against early school leaving, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands have introduced programmes targeting immigrant children (European Commission, 2006).

The national School Leavers Survey indicates that school factors are also important as a reason for early school leaving (Byrne *et al.*, 2008). Schools should ensure systematic support to potential early leavers. *First*, it is critical to collect appropriate data on dropout rates by language spoken at home or country of origin (for detail, see the data collection section). With the changing immigrant students' composition, they may need more targeted interventions for those immigrant students with lower socio-economic status than their native peers. The detailed data can help design effective targeted policies at the system level. *Second*, teachers should more closely monitor student proficiency and progress to identify those with language and basic skill deficiencies in earlier stages of education. Early identification of at-risk students can facilitate early intervention, especially for disadvantaged immigrant students. *Third*, the result of the monitoring exercise should feed into the feedback to students and their parents (see the formative assessment in the data collection section). It can be an informal regular feedback from teachers to students in classroom or in a form of academic and career guidance or mentoring provided more systemically.

Some countries provide ethnic mentoring services to prevent dropout from schools without qualification for immigrant students. For example, in the United Kingdom (Leeds), *the Leeds Black and Ethnic Minority Mentoring Programme* was developed to target ethnic minority students (African Caribbean, Black Other, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) who have the potential to move on to higher education, but who are also at risk of leaving education early through lack of motivation, or lack of academic support (Brind *et al.*, 2008).

Partnership and engagement

Strengths

Well-developed adult learning opportunities, especially language, for adult immigrants

The “Migration Nation – Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management”, was launched in May 2008. In this context, the Department of Education and Science decided that in Further and Adult Education all direct tuition provision should be mainstreamed and provided by the VEC sector which has already developed best practices in the provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages. VECs advertise, attend exhibitions and undertake outreach activities to highlight ESOL services as part of their Further and Adult Education provision.

Funding for ESOL is provided through the Department's adult literacy budget. In 2008, over 12 500 migrants availed of English language tuition through the adult literacy service at an estimated cost of €10 million. Since 2003, over 60 000 learners have availed of English Language tuition through the ESOL service. The ESOL service is aimed at those migrants most in need and is provided free of charge. The VECs have discretion on the level and nature of service provided, which is normally dictated by demand.

Currently, there are approximately 100 VEC colleges, 100 Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) colleges, 100 Youthreach centres and some community groups providing ESOL classes.

Immigrants can avail of other courses provided in the suite of Adult and Further Education programmes. The Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education Programme (ITABE) which provides up to six hours of tuition per week to learners instead of the normal two hours and a family literacy pilot scheme to address poor literacy from an intergenerational family perspective are provided for within the literacy programme. The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) is the Further Education part-time option. It provides an opportunity for adults to combine a return to learning with family, work or other responsibilities. A high priority is to target the individuals and groups that experience particular and acute barriers to participation and are more difficult to engage in the formal learning process. People for whom English is not the mother tongue, who require literacy and language supports are a target group. In 2008, over 10% of BTEI participants were migrants. ESOL, literacy and BTEI students may also access the Adult Guidance and Counselling service where it is available.

The Department also provides for the English language and socialisation needs of adult refugees through the Adult Refugee Programme (ARP), provided through the VEC sector. County Dublin VEC co-ordinates the delivery of the service and is responsible for arranging the resources (tutors, materials, accommodation, etc.) that are required for the programme nationwide. In 2009, funding of €2.8 million has been provided for the Programme which includes €150 000 for County Dublin VECs co-ordination. The programme provides refugees with tuition for 20 hours per week for 1 year. Participants are provided with eight weeks orientation-type tuition prior to the commencement of their ARP course to help them acclimatize to life in Ireland, which includes basic English language tuition and civic classes.

These programmes work out of an adult education approach where the centrality of the learner and his/her learning needs and goals are paramount. They are intended to achieve the Departmental goal of enabling individuals to achieve their full potential, to participate fully as members of society and to contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development – thereby promoting a more inclusive society.

Information and language support for parents

Language barriers may make it hard for immigrant parents to be actively engaged in their children's school. In Ireland information about the Irish education system has been available in the main languages of immigrants and in different formats (*i.e.* booklets, DVD and broadband video) in order to assist non-English speaking immigrant people. For instance, the Department of Education and Science, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, National Parents Council (at primary level) and NGOs such as the Jesuit Refugee Service provide information about the Irish school system in a range of languages. The government has recently developed an information portal, AIM (Accessing Intercultural Materials) to share existing information so as to assist with the education of immigrant students. The Reception and Integration Agency (which caters for the needs of asylum seekers) provides support and information on, *inter alia*, the Irish education system in the nine main languages of the asylum population.

In addition, language support is available for non-English speaking immigrant parents. Some schools (*i.e.* one in six at primary and one in five at post-primary schools according to Smyth *et al.*, 2009) have established English courses for immigrant parents. In addition, the local Vocational Education Committees (VEC) provides language and training courses for adult immigrants, as mentioned earlier. Local libraries and NGOs, such as the Fáilte Isteach project, also operate language classes throughout the country. The libraries have computer facilities to enhance language learning.

Growing awareness of immigrant parents and communities as resources

Ireland has a strong tradition of parental involvement in education, through their membership of a school's parent council and Board of Management, as well as the National Parents' Council (Primary), NPC(P), and the National Parents' Council (Post-Primary), NPC(PP). The NPC(P), in particular, has worked at encouraging immigrant parents to be represented more on parents' councils in schools and the NPC(P) itself. The NPC (P) has established a migrant parent group as one of its special interest groups within the NPC(P), in order to represent migrant parents' perspectives in the NPC(P).¹⁰

In addition, there are some schools which effectively ensure immigrant parents become involved in school life, in particular using immigrant parents as a resource for the school and the community. For instance, immigrant parents participate in promoting linguistic diversity in classrooms through multilingual storytelling and creating multilingual cards; providing translation and interpretation services if needed in schools and for other immigrant parents; and volunteering extra-curricular activities in schools.

Several immigrant communities provide courses in mother languages at weekends or outside school hours. For instance, the Polish community provides classes in Polish language, history and geography for students from primary to third level education. The Japanese community also makes a similar arrangement (Irish Department of Education and Science, 2008).

Strong political support for establishing collaboration between parents and schools

In Ireland, the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme has been a proactive initiative aiming at establishing collaboration between parents and teachers and communities, targeting disadvantaged families and/or neighbourhoods. The scheme has been highlighted as an example of good practices in comprehensive strategies for social inclusion through education in the Green Paper by the Commission of the European Communities "Migration and Mobility: Challenges and Opportunities for EU Education Systems" (Commission of the European Communities, 2008). As of the school year 2008/09, in total, there are 651 schools (370 primary schools and 281 post-primary schools)¹¹ that receive HSCL services through 450 local co-ordinator posts.

The HSCL scheme provides various supports for parents to become more involved in their children's school life. Examples of such supports include courses and training for parents in schools to build their capacity for involvement in school life. In some schools, the HSCL scheme provides a parent room that is used to support parent activities and parental development, as well as being a drop-in centre for parents within the school (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007). In addition, as part of their normal remit, HSCL co-ordinators would regularly visit homes and facilitate communication between home and school.

Challenges*Dissemination of available information and support for immigrant families*

A report on Irish newcomer students (equivalent to first-generation immigrant students in this review) indicates that language difficulties among parents and lack of knowledge of the Irish education system are included in the most significant factors to contribute "quite a lot" or "a lot" to difficulties experienced by newcomer students (see Figure 1.6 in Smyth *et al.*, 2009). This implies that although the Department, other agencies and NGOs have provided information on the Irish education system in the main immigrant languages, there are some challenges in sharing and disseminating information and resources provided by various agencies to immigrant families.

It is more challenging for immigrant parents to be aware of supports available to them. As described in the previous section, there are several arrangements for immigrant parents to build up their language

capacities through schools, local VECs and other community agencies such as libraries and NGOs. During the country visit, however, the OECD review team found that some immigrant parents are not aware of available supports for them possibly because those with limited English may find it difficult to obtain information about learning opportunities. Few schools have access to formal interpreting services.

Lack of involvement of immigrant parents in schools

Literature on immigrant education suggests that the main barrier to parental involvement is lack of competency in the language of the host country, cultural differences and the lack of knowledge of the education system and resources of the host country (Heckmann, 2008; Schofield, 2006; Brilliant, 2001). Ireland has comparative advantages in the profiles of adult immigrants in terms of language and level of education. Nevertheless research on Irish immigrant students shows that the common barriers such as the lack of information and low English proficiency affect immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education (Smyth *et al.*, 2009).

In Ireland, at the national level the NPC(P) has started to build a representative group of immigrant parents. At the individual school level the HSCL co-ordinators have acted as facilitators for communication between school and parents with disadvantaged backgrounds, as described above. However, the NPC(P) noted that its recently established migrant parent group does not as yet represent immigrant parents very well at the regional and national level. The NPC(P) received funding for a defined period to provide a drop-in service for migrant parents in the greater Dublin area. This service offered interpretation services, as requested by parents. However, it was noted that after an initial period, the interpreter was not required, as migrant parents preferred to communicate directly with school staff. The ESRI (2009) report notes that almost one-third of primary-level principals cite lack of parental involvement as a factor contributing "quite a lot" or "a lot" to difficulties experienced by newcomer students (Smyth *et al.*, 2009). This implies that in spite of strong support of parental involvement for immigrant parents by the NPC(P) and the HSCL co-ordinators, there is still a need to enhance and convince immigrant parents' of the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

Although language barriers are less problematic in Ireland than elsewhere, as the majority of immigrant parents are well-educated and may already speak English as a prerequisite to working in the Irish labour market, many immigrant students and their parents might not have sufficient English to interact effectively with schools, teachers and communities. For instance, primary school teachers in Dublin 15 stated that this fact hampers school-parent conversation (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007). In addition, the ESRI report presents that more than two-third of primary-level principals cite language difficulties among parents as a factor contributing "quite a lot" or "a lot" to difficulties experienced by newcomer students (see Figure 1.6 in Smyth *et al.*, 2009).

Cultural differences may also hinder immigrant parents to become actively involved in their children's school life and communities. In some cultures, immigrant parents may simply trust teachers and schools and may not expect to take an active role in their children's school life. In Ireland, the ESRI report includes cultural differences as a factor contributing "quite a lot" or "a lot" to difficulties experienced by newcomer students in primary and post-primary schools (*Ibid.*).

The limited role of HSCL co-ordinators for immigrant parents

Though the HSCL scheme, where available, is important for keeping immigrant parents engaged in their children's education and for communication with teachers, the focus of the HSCL scheme has been on working with the most disadvantaged and marginalised families. There might be some overlap between the disadvantaged and the immigrant families, but this is not the case with the majority of immigrant families in Ireland. Furthermore, implementation of the HSCL scheme is far from universal: only 11% of

primary schools and about 38% of post-primary schools have such services,¹² while about 56% of primary schools and about 90% of post-primary schools have first-generation immigrant students (*Ibid.*).

Even in a school with an HSCL co-ordinator, the effectiveness of the scheme may be hindered by the lack of English language proficiency among immigrant parents. In some cases, immigrant parents may not speak any English at all. In addition, in order to meet immigrant families' needs, the HSCL co-ordinators are required to identify individual immigrant families' needs and coordinate various community services such as social workers, in particular, in the case where multiple problems are identified. Although there are local committees comprised of HSCL co-ordinators, principals and parents under the HSCL scheme, co-ordination with other voluntary and statutory agencies may not always be optimal.

Policy options

Encouraging involvement of immigrant parents

International research highlights the importance of parental involvement in education for improving achievement of students, independently of their socio-demographic background (Jeynes 2005; Henderson and Mapp, 2002). However, such involvement is not always easy for immigrant parents as parental involvement in schools can be influenced by language proficiency and cultural influences. Recently published reports on immigrant students in Irish schools also confirm that encouraging parental involvement of immigrant families in schools is one of the most important but also difficult areas in improving the quality of education and integration for immigrant students, as mentioned in the previous section (Smyth *et al.*, 2009; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007).

In Ireland, various agencies provide immigrant families with information on the Irish education system in the main migrant languages as mentioned earlier. A priority now is to ensure that information is disseminated to all immigrant students and their parents. Several practical arrangements can be considered to distribute information to immigrant families: provide information through home visits by the HSCL co-ordinators; use the NPC(P) and NPC(PP) to disseminate information to individual schools; and provide information through local community agencies including ethnic communities. AIM (Accessing Intercultural Materials), a recently established information portal by the government as a response to consultation with stakeholders on this OECD review and on the intercultural education strategy, could be a good source of information on the Irish education system for immigrants. There are other referral networks at local level, including VECs, resource centres, FÁS, teacher unions, NGOs, etc., where information on educational services may be obtained.

Another necessary condition for the promotion of the involvement of immigrant families would be to mitigate language and cultural barriers. Language training for immigrant families is also one of the most important ways to improve integration (OECD, 2008). Although the ESRI study (2009) showed that one in five post-primary and one in six primary schools offer language courses and other training opportunities to immigrant parents, provision of language classes for immigrant families is often limited to VEC classes throughout the country. In order to increase the access to supports for immigrant parents, it is critical to provide immigrant parents with information on language and other supports available within schools, in further education colleges and from local communities. The practical issue of disseminating information on the Irish education system discussed earlier can be applied to the case of language and other supports for immigrant parents. Further, in order to ensure the accessibility of courses for immigrant parents, creating a consortium of language and a consortium of other training classes among local schools would be an option to increase access to language class in school environments for immigrant parents. It should be noted that whilst classes are often provided, there can be high rates of attrition based on general engagement with Irish society, cultural issues, proposed length of stay, etc. Flexible learning opportunities should be promoted for parents, especially immigrant parents.

A further proactive measure would be to continue to encourage immigrant parents to participate in their school's parent councils, board of management and other school-based activities such as participating in extra-curriculum programmes. While research into language support practices in Irish schools identifies the contribution made by immigrant adults, this does not appear to be recognised in the formal structures of the Irish education system. Devine writes of a case where "We have three or four [parents] who come in to do parent reading...on a voluntary basis...an Indian lady, a Chinese lady, and a Nigerian man...they joined the group to help, they interacted, they became involved" (Devine 2009 p.7). Formalising such roles, either by creating a post or inviting a volunteer, could enable the immigrant community to be more visible as successful models in the school community and help negotiate the language and cultural boundaries between home and school.

The NPC(P) and schools may take an active role in promoting parental engagement in their children's schools. For example, the HSCL co-ordinators can encourage the whole school team to engage with parents. The current good practices in some schools to involve parents can be shared with other schools. School evaluations by the Inspectorate also play an important role in promoting parental involvement insofar as Inspectors meet parent representatives as part of the evaluation process.

Enhancing the HSCL scheme, through CPD, to support immigrant families

The HSCL scheme may not be a panacea to promote participation and integration of immigrant parents in their children's school and in Irish society. However, the HSCL co-ordinators have a crucial role in supporting both Irish and immigrant families and in reaching out to them through home visits. As indicated above, there are two main challenges here. One challenge is how to provide the HSCL services for immigrant families, given that the original focus group of the scheme is disadvantaged families. The other challenge is how to ensure that schools with a high proportion of immigrant students, which are not designated disadvantaged schools, can create formal links between the school and the home.

In order to ensure access to home school community liaison services for immigrant families, the easiest approach is to extend the HSCL scheme to schools with high concentration of immigrant students or to set up a separate service for immigrant families, a so called "cultural liaison officer" (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007). However, these two suggestions are very costly and may be deemed unrealistic, in particular given the current economic circumstances.

The role of the HSCL co-ordinators, as it relates to immigrant students and their families, needs to be highlighted. HSCL co-ordinators could collaborate with the School Completion Service Programme staff, if immigrant students are at risk of dropping out of school. They could also continue to liaise with other general community-supporting agencies such as social workers and community welfare officers. In addition, their role requires more in-service training, so that they fully understand inclusion and diversity challenges and opportunities. This is also the case for other community support staff.

The other approach would be to ensure that home school liaison services for immigrant families provide such services in appropriate languages through networks with other schools and other community organisations such as immigrant community groups. In particular, immigrant parents themselves can be resources for home school liaison services, like in New Zealand where parents of the same ethnicity as immigrant students take a role of "community liaison co-ordinator", to facilitate communication between immigrant families and schools.

Ensuring cooperation with local community services for immigrant families

Immigrant families face multiple challenges when integrating into the host society. Several agencies and organisations support immigrant families to help their integration. RIA hosts, on a quarterly basis,

interagency meetings for service providers working with asylum seekers in RIA's direct provision centres. Networking and cooperation among schools and other community groups are, therefore, necessary and important to provide quality education and integration for immigrant students and their families. Individual schools can cooperate with ethnic agencies, NGOs, libraries and the local VEC, which would be represented on local networks and committees addressing education issues, so as to support immigrant students and their families. The leadership of individual schools and, in particular, the role of the HSCL co-ordinators are critical to building this kind of networking and cooperation.

The cooperation can be extended to the third level education institutions and local businesses. Many countries practice mentoring services for immigrant students through connecting immigrant students in primary and post-primary schools with college students from the same ethnic groups. For instance, in the Netherlands ethnic minority secondary school students receive support from a mentor, often a college student with an immigrant background, who can provide counselling in choosing further courses as well as acting as a role model (Herweijer, 2009). The business sector can also be used as a resource for immigrant students by participating in extra-curriculum activities or acting as a role model. In Ireland, many volunteers work with asylum seekers and economic migrants. *Fáilte Isteach* is one example, whereby older people volunteer their time to teach conversational English classes to immigrants.¹³

The government should encourage and support schools to establish such cooperation through identifying schools with good practice and disseminating such practice to other schools. In Sweden, the "idea schools" programme was introduced to recognise good practices of schools and to help them to share those practices with other schools.

Access to quality education

Strengths

Political and constitutional support for the integration of immigrant children

The overall framework of the Irish Constitution provides the basis for the government to take a role in steering the provision of education.¹⁴ Actual provision of education is by schools under the aegis of "patron bodies".

The political system responded quickly to the fast moving immigration dynamics with a number of laws and measures, including the creation of a Minister for Integration with responsibilities across a number of departments, and the establishment of policies and programmes to encourage settlement and integration throughout Ireland. To ensure equal access for their children to quality education, the government uses a number of policy and administrative levers.

Ireland makes it an explicit policy goal to integrate all students, including immigrant students into mainstream education. To this end, a substantial investment in the provision of additional EAL supports (*i.e.* some €140m in 2008/09) has been made to enable non-English speaking immigrant students to gain proficiency in the language so that they can participate in mainstream education on a par with their Irish peers (see "School – primary and post-primary").

A focus on migrant education

The Department oversees an Inspectorate that is responsible for inspecting and evaluating the quality of schooling, advising on education policy, and supporting teachers and school managers. The inspection role has been carried out in various forms since the 19th century; the roles and responsibilities of the Inspectorate today were established in the Education Act of 1998.¹⁵

As part of its general responsibility for evaluating the quality of education, the Inspectorate launched, in 2008, a thematic evaluation of the provision of English as an additional language in schools. This particular thematic evaluation was carried out because a need to investigate EAL practice and outcomes was identified, with a particular focus on informing future policy. The special evaluation covered a sample of 30 primary schools and 15 post-primary schools around the country and involved extensive interviews with mainstream teachers and EAL teachers, head teachers and students. The views of a large sample of parents were captured through questionnaires, which were made available in 33 languages for primary parents and 45 languages for post-primary parents.

The inspections focused on the quality of provision, planning and support for EAL students and included evaluations of the teaching and learning of EAL students in both EAL support classes and mainstream classes in the sample schools. The purpose of the evaluation was to gauge the effectiveness of strategies addressing the learning needs of students requiring EAL support, for the purpose of providing individual schools with feedback as well as advising the Department on the effectiveness of its policies to ensure that immigrants have access to quality education.¹⁶

The evaluation is intended as well to provide input to a separate “value for money” (VFM) review of EAL that is being carried out by the Department in 2009. The Department will use, inter alia, findings from the ESRI (2009) report, the Inspectorate’s evaluation, the VFM review, the Governance evaluations, the audit of school enrolment policies and this report to inform its considerations of the most appropriate way to comply with one of its four mission goals “to support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools” and to assist with the development of the intercultural education strategy.

Challenges

In spite of the government’s strong leadership in encouraging the integration of immigrants, there is evidence to suggest that access of children to their parents’ school of choice may be more constrained for children of immigrants than children of native parents. This is attributable in part to the residency patterns of the immigrant population (see Chapter 1) that lead to some concentration in urban areas. It appears to be related as well to the fact that access is regulated by the rules established by patron bodies.¹⁷

Residential pattern, siblings and admission policy

Immigrant students are widely spread across post-primary schools with the student body of most schools comprised of 2 to 9% newcomers. At primary level, almost 40% of schools have no newcomer students as discussed above, although the proportion of immigrant students in primary level (10%) is slightly higher than that of post-primary (8%).

Principals in 20% of schools involved in the ESRI review reported that at least some selection occurred because such schools were over-subscribed; the remaining 80% take all students who seek to enrol. Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of school selection criteria used.

Table 2.1. School selection criteria

Percent of principals reporting using the criteria indicated

	Lives in local area	Siblings attended	Religion	Primary school attended
Primary	59%	73%	31%	(not applicable)
Post-primary (Secondary)	49%	87%	23%	63%

Note 1: Criteria used by the 20% of schools that do not accept all students applying for admission

Source: Smyth *et al.* (2009) pp. 59, 63.

The use of residency and sibling students as selection criteria tends to reinforce the effects of residential concentration. In a limited number of cases, the criteria adopted for enrolment by individual schools can discourage particular groups of immigrant students or newly-arrived Irish families to an area from applying to the schools.¹⁸

Urban schools are more likely than rural schools to have newcomer students. In addition, designated disadvantaged schools are also more likely to have a higher proportion of newcomer students than non-disadvantaged schools.

If schools have only limited places, they may select students on the basis of admission policies that, for example, give preference to siblings. This may prevent those families trying to enrol their oldest child, their only child and all newly locating families to an area. The effect on access is not limited to immigrant families. Native Irish parents can also face similar barriers.

Religious ethos and admission policy

The proportion of immigrant students in Catholic schools is slightly lower than in schools under the patronage of other bodies. This most likely reflects the religious diversity found amongst the newcomer population (Smyth *et al.*, 2009). However, the majority of newcomer students have religious backgrounds similar to those of their native peers; and in numerical terms, the overwhelming majority of immigrants attend Catholic schools where they evidently are welcome.

The patronage model worked well during a time when the composition of society was relatively homogeneous and there were spaces available in all schools. It continues to work well for the majority of students; 80% of principals in primary and post-primary schools accept all children who seek enrolment to their schools (Smyth *et al.*, 2009).

It has started to show some strains, as immigration and other societal changes (such as the mainstreaming of special needs students and travellers, greater concentrations of population in urban suburbs and satellite towns) increased the diversity and pluralism of Irish society and as demand for places in some urban areas exceeds the supply, forcing some schools to select. The question that emerges in this context is whether the relative share of schools operated by the different patron bodies reflects the changing composition of society in Ireland. If not, it could be argued that not all students have the same chance of gaining access to education in schools operated by patron bodies of their choice.¹⁹ The rationale for relying on different patron bodies to provide education is to leave room for differentiation in the type of education according to criteria that transcend the usual criteria for judging education quality. If access to differentiated forms of education is not equitable, there is a problem.

As early as 1997 and again in 2007, the Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Primary School Management Association (the patron body for Catholic primary schools) argued for considering additional forms of patronage and for schools to reflect changing preferences of parents. “The real issue here is the provision of alternative models of patronage to meet the needs of a rapidly changing pluralist society”.²⁰ The implication is that there may be limits as to how far individual patron bodies – and the schools for which they are responsible – can go in accommodating diversity. Indeed, in a society that is becoming increasingly heterogeneous, the practice of relying on patron bodies for the provision of education begins to look anachronistic.

One alternative is to increase the diversity of the cross-section of patron bodies. In fact, the number of primary schools under independent and multi-denominational patronage bodies has increased significantly in recent years, although the majority of primary schools are still under the patronage of the Catholic Church (Table 2.2). The increase of these schools reflects more the ethos of different immigrant groups and the changing nature of the preference of some of the indigenous host society.

Table 2.2. Number of primary schools organised by different patron bodies 2005, 2008

Year	Church of Ireland	Catholic	Presbyterian	Methodist	Multidenominational	Interdenominational	Muslim	Jewish	Other	VEC / community schools	Total
2005	183	3039	14	1	34	5	2	1	0	0	3279
2008	183	3027	14	1	58	9	2	1	5	2	3302
Share in 2008	5.4%	91.7%	<0.4%	<0.1%	1.8%	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%	100%

Source: Table 17 in Irish Department of Education and Science (2008).

But, the number of non-Catholic primary schools is still small. In the context of a climate in which financial resources for starting new schools are limited, a strategy of changing the composition of schools by supporting new patronage bodies is likely to be slow even if the numbers of students are projected to rise.²¹ Such a strategy will also await the findings of the review of the establishment of new primary schools.²² In view of the fact that some localities will have numbers of immigrants that would be too small to justify the establishment of additional schools, an option would be to ensure that school enrolments would reflect the diversity within school catchment areas. However, if schools have difficulty in simultaneously accommodating diversity and preserving the ethos of their patron bodies, and if the ethnic composition of catchment areas is subject to change, even re-configuration of patron bodies begins looking Procrustean. A more radical option would be to channel expansion, and even transfer the authority over existing institutions away from the system of education provision by patron bodies.

Helping parents make informed decisions about schooling

Lack of information and community networks may be an issue affecting informed school choice by migrant parents. As already noted, there are many sources of information for parents to access. Many are translated into a number of different languages. AIM is now a central portal for this information. However, lack of proficiency in the English language may be a key barrier for many immigrant parents. Providing information on the Irish education system and on rights and responsibilities in education is

critical for immigrant students and their parents in order to ensure that they can access a school of their choice. In particular, in order to strengthen their capacity to exercise informed school choice, it is very important to support immigrant parents with better information about schools. In particular, the practice of school choice is highly correlated with the educational level of parents. In some countries, such as Sweden, additional support may be given to parents with low level of education. In Ireland, parents can, where one is available, seek advice from the Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator.

Policy Options

Obtaining data on applicants and enrolments by immigrant status to further encourage patron bodies to adopt diversity and inclusive education in their admission practices

It would be useful to collect data from schools on applicants and enrolments, broken down in a way that would make it possible to differentiate between the experience of immigrants and native Irish students.

It might be useful to break down the results of educational performance in post-primary schools by students' nationality in order to conduct further analysis on educational outcomes for immigrant students in post-primary schools. There are two state administered exams – the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate in post-primary level, with the latter directly related to proceeding to higher education.

Though Smyth *et al.* (2009) shows that a fifth of students may not be able to enrol in their school of choice, it is impossible to determine whether the selection that does occur has disproportionate negative consequences for immigrants or other categories of students. Swedish experience shows, for example, that school selection by ability at independent schools (this is not permitted in Ireland) has led to a marked increase in segregation across schools by immigrant status (Björklund *et al.*, 2004). In the Netherlands and Flemish Belgium, liberal choice regimes that typically reflect cultural and religious preferences rather than student ability, are associated with high degrees of concentration of native and immigrant students (Netherlands Country Report, forthcoming).

Insofar as there is concern that selection in general may have negative effects for immigrants, one strategy for achieving access to schools of their choice in the Irish context would be to encourage schools to reflect on their admission policies such as by taking a “softer form” of affirmative action (Farley, 2007).²³

Whilst much responsibility for schools is devolved to patrons and boards of management in line with the Education Act, 1998,²⁴ the Department of Education and Science should work with patron bodies to:

- Support the exercise of fairer and inclusive enrolment policies among principals and school boards by providing national guidelines on school enrolment policies. Further research on current enrolment policies and good enrolment practices may be needed (*i.e.* the research by the ESRI on newcomers) to identify the current practices in schools.
- Encourage schools and their boards of management to network and cooperate to ensure a more even distribution in enrolment of immigrant students, particularly to make better use of specialized resources. Some schools have enrolment policies to improve inclusive education; these could be expanded to other schools.
- Encourage schools to carefully design culturally mixed group classes in mainstream education (*e.g.* affirmative action) where the differences within the whole group are celebrated. Classes should, in fact, reflect the diversity of their community and should include not only immigrants but also students with disability or special needs, travellers, students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds etc.

The Inspectorate should monitor the effectiveness of schools in achieving more mixed group class balance in their enrolments (taking into account patterns of residential concentration), assess whether the effectiveness of schools differs for different patronage bodies, and if so, determine why such differences exist. It is important to note, however, that there is a very low incidence of clustering of migrants in Ireland (as found in the last census and reported by the CSO in 2008), except in a few urban suburbs and satellite towns. It should also be noted that parental choice is a very significant factor in school enrolment in Ireland, compared to the catchment policies adopted in other countries, such as England and Wales.

It would be useful as well to explore the feasibility of establishing state schools apart from the structure of patron bodies. The Community National School is being piloted in two schools presently under the patronage of County Dublin VEC. These new schools are multi-denominational. If they prove to be effective, the Irish authorities should consider creating net new capacity and re-deploying existing capacity²⁵ through this channel.

Ensuring that immigrant parents are better informed in their decisions about their children's education

It is important that newly arrived immigrant families be made aware of the overall education system and quality of schools, and that they are able to make well-informed decisions about their children's education. Translation or interpretation services may be needed to ensure that limited English language proficiency is not a barrier to access to the relevant material provided by, for example, a school or the Department of Education and Science. This might be done best through face-to-face consultation (with interpreters/translated materials) through HSCL co-ordinators and regional offices. Some countries, such as the Netherlands and Sweden also arrange school visits for parents in order to give them an opportunity to gain first-hand information about schools. The recently launched information portal (AIM) can be used for accessing information translated in various languages in Ireland and providing immigrant families with accessible information.

The Department of Education and Science should work with the patron bodies to ensure that schools take a more active role in circulating such information, and the Inspectorate should monitor the effectiveness of such measures.

With the increasing diversity of Irish society the Office of the Minister for Integration is currently working on improving the efficiency of interpretation and translation with other Departments, in order to respond more effectively to today's demand for interpretation and translation services. The background report of this initiative, "Developing Quality, Cost Effective Interpreting and Translation Services for Government Service Providers in Ireland" was launched in October 2008. This initiative should be pursued.

Data collection for evaluation and feedback

Strengths

Growing practices of evaluation and assessment at all levels – for individual learners, teachers, schools, and the system

Ireland has recently launched a range of tools to cultivate the culture of evaluation and assessment. The 2007 NCCA publication "Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools" provides a good introduction to the principles and practices of assessment for general learning (NCCA, 2007), and the NCCA continues to provide support for its use in schools, e.g. the online AfL videos from GOALL. The introduction of the new primary and post-primary language assessment kits to diagnose and monitor progress of students for whom English is an additional language is a very important practical

intervention. These initiatives can offer an excellent model for creating feedback and improvement loops for teachers to better teach immigrant students and for these students to learn how to learn better.

The Inspectorate carries out whole-school evaluations, in which school level data are used in the context of self-evaluation and school planning and are presented to the Inspectors. The Inspectorate produced “Looking at our School”, the guidelines for self-evaluation and asks schools to consider the extent to which assessment outcomes are used to assist and improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programme, and the extent to which student achievement in the curriculum is regularly evaluated in comparison with national norms.

The Department of Education and Science commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to undertake a large scale study into how an increasing diversity of students impacts on day to day teaching and learning in primary and post primary schools and the recently published report, “Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students”, has been extensively referred to throughout this report. This report is based on questionnaire responses from principals from approximately 30% of primary and post-primary schools throughout the country and qualitative data from interviews with 16 schools. The study sought to determine how the integration of newcomer students into Irish schools is being achieved.

Primary Schools are required to use standardised tests at the end of first / beginning of second class, and at the end of fourth / beginning of fifth class, and most are reported to use them with every year group.²⁶ The most commonly used, Sigma-T, Micra-T, and the Drumcondra Primary Tests, have been standardised for Ireland, but it will take some time until the standardisation reflects the new heterogeneity of nationalities in Irish schools. In its 2005 report to the Minister on standardised testing in compulsory schooling the NCCA stated that “In general, standardised tests will not serve the assessment needs of children for whom English is an additional language, or many children with special educational needs.”²⁷ While this is a valid argument, excluding immigrant students from these assessments may risk making the EAL students invisible when the school analyses its data and determines its ongoing development plans. The new (language) assessment kits will aim to complement other assessment tools, which all together will facilitate a more holistic evaluation of students’ progress.

Post-primary schools are expected to use the feedback from the national examinations. Students generally sit the Junior Certificate after three years of post-primary education, and one of the forms of the Leaving Certificate (Established, Vocational or Applied) after five or six years. Students can choose to be examined at either ordinary or higher level, on each of a range of subject areas, and in Mathematics and Irish a further option of assessment at foundation level is offered.

In 2008, 31 793 students took Leaving Certificate English at higher level and 17 590 at ordinary level. 14 513 grades were given in link modules which relate to the Leaving Certificate Vocational, although it is not clear from the statistics what number of individual students this represents. A total of 3 400 students received the Leaving Certificate Applied. The range of possible analyses is therefore wide, but it is not clear how common or sophisticated the practices at individual schools might be, or the extent to which they include analyses of the pathways and outcomes of immigrant students.

Emerging practice of collecting data specific to immigrant students

At the system level information is needed on the numbers and origin of immigrants, their language proficiency levels, the access they have chosen to various aspects of education, the extent and nature of their participation, and how well they perform. Such data may be obtained through administrative sources, surveys and assessments.

Currently net enrolment rates can be broken down by native students and foreign nationals. Data specific to immigrants and their children is not systemically collected, although, the Post-Primary Pupil Database contains some information such as nationalities and programmes being taken and the Primary Census has more limited information. Data on nationality is available from the post-primary pupil database but it is not transferred to the SEC for the purpose of analysing examination results.

Challenges

Lack of a consistent framework for analysis and feedback for improvement at all levels – individual learners, teachers, schools and system

“Feedback” refers to various kinds of information on the results of developments and action. To operate as a systemic policy instrument, it needs to occur at the classroom, the school and the system levels, and be tied to a coherent approach to developing and implementing strategies for improvement. Ireland has elements operating at each level, but they lack systemic coherence, and almost always mask the migrant students’ issues because identifying data on immigrant status or language competence is not generally available. Where the teacher has knowledge of the language base and immigrant status of the individual student he or she does not have the broader comparative data required to know whether the outcomes being achieved could be improved upon. However, where the outcome data is held at the system level, at the State Examinations Commission, for example, no data are currently retained that can differentiate by immigrant status or language characteristics.

Feedback can serve to take stock of need (*i.e.* how many migrants have limited language abilities), to ensure accountability (*i.e.* if schools are reaching all students in need of language support), and provide a basis for improving performance (*i.e.* allowing teachers to determine whether particular teaching approaches are working, and to better understand why some approaches work better than others).

Assessment for learning in the classroom

Black *et al.*, (2003) define “assessment for learning” as any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students’ quality learning. Assessment becomes “for learning” only when the evidence is actually used to adapt teaching practice to meet identified learning needs. The use of this approach in classrooms provides teachers with immediate information on the comparative performance of individuals and groups within the class. To be effective at this point, however, the teacher must have access to a variety of developmental materials which enable this information to be acted upon. OECD CERI’s study of Formative Assessment (2005) identified six key elements of formative assessment:

1. Establishment of a classroom culture that encourages interaction and the use of assessment tools
2. Establishment of learning goals, and tracking of individual progress towards these goals
3. Use of varied approaches to assessing student understanding
4. Feedback plus adaptation of instruction
5. Use of varied instruction methods to meet diverse students needs
6. Active involvement of students in the learning process

Assessment for learning is being introduced into Irish schools through the NCCA assessment guidelines and the practical online tools and professional development supporting AfL. However, it is not clear to what extent it has been put into practice in general or whether the practices are inclusive of assessment of immigrant students as a group in need of specific attention (individually or as a group).

Feedback for improving teaching for the teacher

Feedback is also important for the ongoing development of teacher capability. The OECD TALIS survey of teachers reported that one quarter of Irish teachers teaching lower second level (Junior Certificate) students had not received appraisal or feedback on their teaching in their current school – the fourth highest percentage among the 23 participating countries. Moreover, Irish teachers reported that teaching in a multicultural setting was among the lowest rated criteria of those used for teacher appraisal. Fifty-eight % of the teachers who reported moderate or high development needs in this area received appraisal or feedback that gave little importance to this aspect of teaching (OECD, 2009a).

Feedback for peer-learning for the school

Comparative statistical data are not currently available in the Irish system. However, the gap in comparative data should be addressed. Inasmuch as the new EAL assessment kits, referred to earlier, provide an objective means of formative assessment and placement, they might serve as well as a source of school level data that could be collated and analysed at a national level. The Inspectorate plays a critical role of providing individual schools with feedback on how their immigrant students are progressing compared to immigrant students in other schools. The Inspectorate's broader perspective on the quality of provision for EAL students provides school staff with means to judge the effectiveness of their practice.

Thirty-nine % of the teachers who responded to the TALIS survey stated that they worked in schools which had received no external evaluation in the last five years. Even where external evaluations had occurred, until the recent EAL project by the Inspectorate, they reported that little or no priority has been given to intercultural teaching environments or indeed to education for immigrants. While it is reported that this is now changing, following the Inspectorate's review of migrant education, and its intention to continue to include this as a component of future inspections, the legacy of the current situation is that schools and teachers had not seen it as an Inspectorate priority to date.

The Inspectorate's guide to school self-evaluations asks schools to address provision for students from minority groups; its focus is on inputs and processes rather than outcomes (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Inspectorate's guide to school self-evaluation for students from minority groups

Component	Themes for self evaluation
School's provision of support for students from minority groups	The manner in which the school identifies and provides for the educational needs of students from minority groups.
	The extent to which staff avail of professional development, particularly in the areas of teaching strategies and methodologies, to meet the needs of students from such backgrounds.
	The support given to parents of students from such backgrounds to participate in the operation of the school, and the way that participation is facilitated.
	How effectively Department of Education and Science supports for students from minority groups are utilised.

Source: Department of Education and Science (2003b)

While these are all valid questions to ask, they need to be framed in the context of the outcomes for these minority students, with specific contexts for immigrant students.

Feedback for System Improvement

At the system level, feedback loops seek to help answer two key questions: are the current policies the right policies, and are they being implemented? The Department of Education and Science is currently carrying out a value for money review of EAL expenditure and expects to report on its findings before the end of 2009. In the context of current budget constraints and in the absence of appropriate data, more efforts on “giving feedback” can be made at different levels.

It is not currently possible to find statistics that indicate the various pathways immigrant, or EAL students take, or their relative success patterns at post-primary. For example, anecdotal reports suggest many are encouraged to take the additional “Transition Year” making the senior cycle a three year programme, but there is no way of knowing whether this is a general approach, or what impact the additional year makes. Transition Year is not an option available in one third of post-primary schools.

National statistics published by the State Examinations Commission provide no breakdown by nationality. Non-curricular subject statistics for the Leaving Certificate higher level indicate that, for example, in 2008, 50 students took Latvian, 131 took Lithuanian, 230 took Russian, and 119 took Arabic. Yet there is no basis for determining what percentage of the immigrant population took examinations in these subjects. There has been no action taken yet for correlating performance in these language assessments against performance across the curriculum.

Policy Options

Setting up a coherent framework for continuous feedback

A coherent framework for overall assessment and feedback will help not only individual EAL teachers but mainstream teachers, as well as their schools, to know whether their choice of interventions is as effective as others. The framework will equip the relevant practitioners at all levels with the capacity to diagnose and monitor migrant outcomes, if it can be constructed to include necessary building blocks, which needs to take place at different levels, as suggested below.

Student assessment for learning in the classroom

There is a useful opportunity to draw on the broader assessment for learning strategies, professional development and support to help classroom teachers make the most effective judgements about the progress being made by immigrant, and especially second language learning students.

The primary and post-primary assessment (language) kits and the data they provide should not be seen as simply the domain of the EAL teachers. They provide important information for primary classroom and post-primary subject teachers, and should be integrated into the whole-school’s approach to assessment for learning. There needs to be formal opportunities for co-operation and collaboration between all players in the school team.

Black *et al.* (2003) maintain that any programme in formative assessment will only lead to a sustained change in the school’s work if it has at the outset or comes to have as it develops, full support from the leadership (such as principals, board of management, senior management team). They argue the need for a sustained plan with a time horizon of at least two years, with structured initiation, support, evaluation and review, if the desired outcomes are to be achieved. This complements the earlier recommendation to take a whole-school approach to the development of intercultural professional capability.

While the developmental work in Assessment for Learning is very promising, in line with many other OECD countries too few educators in Ireland have the statistical training or background or indeed

sufficient incentive to effectively use the information they collect to improve learning outcomes beyond the level of the individual learner. Apart from the standardised assessments, there seems to be a lack of information of how students are expected to perform at different ages in different subjects. For teacher used to working with students who are under performing, this may result in lower aspirations and expectations for their students.

The multiple levels and avenues of the Junior and Leaving Certificates make the post-primary schools' tasks even more challenging in ensuring that through their analysis they are being sufficiently self-critical of their programmes and practices and the advice and guidance they provide.

School evaluation through strengthening the role of the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate is an essential vehicle for promoting and supporting improvement. It can build capacity for analysing assessment information gathered at the classroom and school levels, and provide access to comparative data on the performance of other schools with similar student profiles. Their reports are public documents which in themselves should be useful for other schools looking to do a comparative analysis of their own performance, as well as providing a barometer by which organisations such as the Department as a whole, NCCA and other bodies can assess the extent to which their efforts are actually resulting in good practice.²⁸

The Inspectorate is currently preparing publications in its "Looking at" series based on focused evaluation of practice in schools it inspected in the second half of 2008 on the evaluation of EAL teaching and learning. From this work it can develop a component of its ongoing whole-school review process in both primary and post-primary schools looking at provision for migrant students.

In the future, it would be particularly useful for assessment surveys such as PISA, NAER (National Assessment of English Reading) and NAMA (National Assessment of Mathematical Achievement) to have enlarged newcomer samples, so that trends in this cohort can be examined. The sample size of immigrant students in PISA 2006, as noted previously, was small, and only gave indicative data.

Ireland has developed a carefully thought out approach to the use of standardised testing, and in particular wants to avoid the creation of league tables and the associated risks it has observed from these in other countries. This makes it even more necessary that the Department of Education and Science provides schools with alternative ways to access comparative data at a greater level of sophistication than a national norm.

Policy evaluation through collecting data on individual characteristics

There is a wealth of outcome data available at varying levels of the Irish schooling system, but rarely are migrant students made visible in them. Ireland is conscious of the privacy rights of its citizens, and the need to justify the collection of any identifying data. Most data are presented in an anonymised style.

For example, the Teaching Council does not hold data on the ethnicity or immigrant status of all its registered teachers. With effect from mid 2008, we were told that the Council has commenced recording the nationality of new applicants for registration (when this data is provided by the applicant) but this is purely for statistical purposes. The State Examinations Commission provides a gender breakdown for their statistics, but it would seem that so little other information is retained that its usefulness for system or school feedback is limited.

At some stage, if the complexity of its population continues to grow, and if it is concerned about outcomes for particular groups in its education system, the Department of Education and Science will need to re-examine what distinguishing information is necessary to monitor the interventions it funds to support

different groups. The policy-driven data collection may facilitate analysis of the varying outcomes by years in the Irish education system, or the impact of the quantity and nature of second language support on outcomes, especially for EAL students

Results of such analysis and monitoring may be used to consider effective management of the resources provided, and enable better sharing of good practice. For example, Switzerland has launched the *Quality in Multi-Ethnic Schools (QUIMS)* programme. It provides financial and professional support to schools with 40% or more immigrant students. The support ranges from language instruction, adaptation of assessments for immigrant students, and an inclusive and non-discriminatory school ethos from the state as well as advisory services, professional development, materials and handbooks, and evaluations from the local administration (Gomolla, 2006).

Box 2.2. Summary of Suggested Policy Options Discussed in Chapter 2

Early Childhood Education and Care

- Prioritising disadvantaged children, in order to successfully implement Free Pre-School Year for All (age 3 to 4)
- Concentrating efforts on implementing the “Siolta” and “Aistear” frameworks (age 0 to 6), with special attention to language development and socio-cultural competencies of immigrant children

School

- Placing a priority on providing initial training and CPD to all teachers in EAL and cultural diversity
- Supporting a whole-school approach to immigrant education
- Strengthening initial and ongoing learning opportunities for EAL teachers and learners
- Building a one-stop point of networks for school (practitioners and managers) to be connected with researchers and policy makers
- Preparing to take more preventive measures against dropouts

Partnership and Engagement

- Encouraging involvement of immigrant parents
- Enhancing the HSCL scheme, through CPD, to support immigrant families
- Encouraging cooperation with local community services for immigrant families

Equal access to quality education

- Obtaining data on applicants and enrolments by immigrant status to further encourage patron bodies to adopt diversity and inclusive education in their admission practices and to determine whether the current patronage model is still well-suited to respond to the increasingly multicultural character of children in Ireland
- Ensuring that immigrant parents can make better informed decisions about their children’s education

Data collection for evaluation and feedback

- Setting up a coherent framework for continuous feedback
 - Student assessment for learning in the classroom
 - School evaluation through strengthening the role of the Inspectorate
 - Policy evaluation through collecting data on individual characteristics
 - Extension of national assessments to provide regular data on the performance of various immigrant groups

NOTES

- 1 Programme refugees received considerable assistance from the Office of the Minister for Integration.
- 2 Although the review team did not hear any training opportunities during their visit, capacity is being developed within the sector to deliver training on Equality and Diversity. A FETAC accredited module (50 hours) has been developed around these guidelines. Twelve people have completed a “train the trainers” course. There is a question of funding to support people to do the training. There is a Workforce Development Plan being developed for the sector.
- 3 “Intercultural education in the primary school” (2005) and “Intercultural education in the post-primary school” (2006).
- 4 These resources are available at www.ncca.ie. Other resources can be accessed through the AIM portal at www.integration.ie or www.education.ie.
- 5 Both PISA 2006 and Census 2006 data show Ireland as having the most evenly distributed spread of migrant students across schools within the country of any of the participating OECD countries. According to the ESRI report, at post-primary level, approximately 90% of post-primary schools in Ireland record newcomer students and at primary level 56% of primary schools record newcomer students.
- 6 For Leaving Certificate 2009, the EU non-curricular languages, for example, were Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Modern Greek, Finnish, Polish, Estonian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Swedish, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Danish and Dutch.
- 7 The survey took place before provision was increased in line with circular M53/07.
- 8 Such an approach follows the model of “directed time” that is found in the agreement on teachers pay and working conditions in Northern Ireland. That agreement establishes a time envelope (1 265 hours worked over 195 days per year), which must include time for professional development as well as teaching and other responsibilities (Department of Education of Northern Ireland, 1987).
- 9 AIM is available at www.integration.ie, the website of the Office of the Minister for Integration or via www.education.ie.
- 10 There are five special interest groups, minority religion group, special educational needs group, Irish medium schools group, migrant parent group, traveller parent, in the NPC(P). Being part of a migrant parent group allows immigrant parents to explore the particular issues pertaining to their group and to exchange information and ideas to further benefit the education and wellbeing of their children.
- 11 Out of a total of some 3 300 primary and some 730 post-primary schools in the country.
- 12 In 2008/09, there are about 3300 primary schools and about 730 post-primary schools in Ireland. Among them, 370 primary schools and 203 post-primary schools have access to the HSCL service.

- 13 For more information: www.thirdagefoundation.ie.
- 14 It specifies that: The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation (Article 42.4).
- 15 For more details on the Inspectorate see: www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=32818&pcategory=32818&ecategory=32818§ionpage=27692&language=EN&link=&page=1.
- 16 Each school's feedback report is made available at www.education.ie. The composite report on this thematic evaluation is due early in 2010.
- 17 Ireland has a long tradition of providing schooling through patron bodies. Such bodies are individuals or independent bodies recognised by the Department of Education and Science to oversee the establishment of schools. The schools themselves are operated and managed by boards of management (which are subject to the patrons), reflecting the ethos of the patron bodies. Once recognised the schools are funded by the Department of Education and Science.
- 18 Source: Sunday Tribune, August 10, 2008, www.tribune.ie/news/home-news/article/2008/aug/10/minister-considers-new-law-to-prevent-schools-from/.
- 19 This is not to imply that every student should be guaranteed access to a school operated by a patron body of their choice; but there should be assurances that the chances of access are equal, regardless of preference.
- 20 Most Reverend Leo O'Reilly DD as quoted in a submission to the OECD Secretariat provided by Assistant General Secretary of the Catholic Primary School Management Association, 4 June 2009.
- 21 There were 54 789 births in 2000 and 75 065 in 2008.
- 22 In September 2008, the Minister for Education and Science, instructed that a review of the criteria and procedures for the establishment of new primary schools be undertaken by the Commission on School Accommodation. A Technical Working Group was established with representatives from the various education partners. A report is expected by the end of 2009. Some of the key issues under consideration as part of the review process are: Legislation / Constitution of schools; Diversity; Social inclusion; Patronage of Schools; Existing capacity / best use of spare capacity; Optimum school size (minimum threshold for opening of a new school); Different school types; The Irish language.
- 23 This would complement arrangements under which the National Educational Welfare Board is charged with ensuring that all children receive an education, and works proactively with parents and schools to prevent problems, and deal with any if they arise. In addition, Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, allows parents to make an appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science if their child is not enrolled in the school of their choice.
- 24 The Education Act (Section 15 (2)(d) specifically notes that the Board of Management shall "publish, in such manner as the board with the agreement of the patron considers appropriate, the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school... and ensure that as regards that policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice are respected... having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school and the constitutional rights of all persons concerned". Selection by schools cannot be based on ability. Schools are not allowed to

use examinations as a screening tool for admission. Schools are required to make copies of their admission policies, with their admissions criteria available to parents. Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 gives parents the right to appeal admission decisions to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science. The Equal Status Acts, 2000-04, allow for very limited discriminatory enrolment policies in order to preserve the religious ethos of certain schools, as well as policies regarding tertiary education fees that are common to European Union countries.

- 25 The issue of shifting patronage has been a recurrent issue in public debate. In mid-2009, the Archbishop of Dublin again expressed the willingness of the Roman Catholic Church to cede patronage of schools in areas where Catholic schools were over-represented. He described “the virtual Catholic monopoly of primary school patronage as a historical hangover which did not reflect the reality of modern Ireland”. *Irish Times*, 22 June, 2009, www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2009/0622/1224249265703.html
- 26 These tests are only available from first to sixth class.
- 27 NCCA 2005 Supporting Assessment in Schools – 3 Standardised Testing in Compulsory Schooling, NCCA Dublin.
- 28 The reports are available at www.education.ie.

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ANNEX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE

National policy context

In 2005, the National Action Plan against Racism was launched. One of the specific action points of that plan was the development of “a national intercultural education strategy with reference to equality/diversity policy”. In response to this, the Department of Education and Science has consulted widely on the development of an intercultural education strategy, which will be launched at the start of 2010 and is addressed in more detail below.

In May 2008, the Office of the Minister for Integration produced “Migration Nation – Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management”. The document sets out the key principles which inform and underpin State policy with regard to integration:

- A partnership approach between the government and non-governmental organisations, as well as civil society bodies, to deepen and enhance the opportunities for integration.
- A strong link between integration policy and wider state social inclusion measures, strategies and initiatives.
- A clear public policy focus that avoids the creation of parallel societies, communities and urban ghettos, *i.e.* a mainstream approach to service delivery to migrants.
- A commitment to effective local delivery mechanisms that align services to migrants with those for indigenous communities.

The Statement of Strategy for the Department of Education and Science (Department), 2008-10 acknowledges that within “a relatively short space of time, Ireland has become a richly diverse society, with a new mix of languages, cultures and expectations”. It also recognises that the “education system is at the very fore of the government’s efforts to successfully integrate newcomers into Irish society”.

The Strategy also sets, *inter alia*, the following high level goals:

- Support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools.
- Support the delivery and development of education through policy formulation, high-quality planning and a strong customer focus.

The appointment of a Minister for Integration in July 2007 and the subsequent publication of “Migration Nation” is a reflection of the changed profile of the Irish population over the past 10 years. The size and nature of the immigrant population in Ireland has changed significantly over the past 10 years. The 2006 census showed that migrants constitute at least 10% of the overall population. This is an increase of 87% on the previous census figures in 2002. In the context of the economic recession, the profile of migrants in Ireland is likely to change, particularly as employment opportunities decrease.

The Department is currently developing an intercultural education strategy, as noted above, which will address intercultural education in a lifelong learning context. The Department has consulted widely

with the education stakeholders and is also taking part in a range of research, including this study, to inform the development of the strategy. Stakeholders attending the consultative meetings on the Intercultural Education Strategy were also asked to comment on this OECD study and the EU Green Paper “Migration and Mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems.” The Department provided a formal response on the EU Green Paper and also a summary of its understanding of the stakeholders’ views on the EU Green Paper.

Specific questions to be addressed

The overarching policy question of the Thematic Review on Migrant Education is: “What policies will promote successful education outcomes for first- and second-generation immigrant students?”

The Country specific priority questions are in line with this overarching policy question. They are outlined below:

1. To evaluate existing measures to ensure that migrant children are able to perform in primary and post-primary education on a par with their native peers and to identify any gaps in policy/current provision in this regard.
2. To facilitate open policy dialogue among key stakeholders on migrant education
3. To provide recommendations that will effectively help to address any immigrant student performance gap identified in the current regime

Purpose of the OECD review

To make the Irish country review visits as focused and relevant as possible, the review will focus on:

Language support for immigrant students

- What policies and practices can raise English proficiency of immigrant students in the Irish context in as efficient and effective a manner as possible (*e.g.* immersion, withdrawal, bilingual education and mother tongue tuition or support at school) so as to enable immigrant students to fully participate in mainstream education?

Quality teaching and learning environments

- What policies and practices can ensure quality teaching and learning environments and school responsiveness to cultural diversity to better meet the needs of immigrant students such as:
 - Teachers – teaching methods, intercultural understanding, qualifications and training, etc.
 - Leadership through school principals and deputy principals
 - Curriculum adaptation
 - Intercultural understanding of all students (both immigrant and host community)
 - Guidance and counselling (academic, career and/or cultural) to maximise their involvement in education

Partnership and engagement

- What policies and practices lead to the most effective communication and cooperation between school, parents (host and immigrant) and communities (host and immigrant)?

- What kinds of support measures are effective in helping immigrant parents to understand the Irish education system and to bring possible positive impacts on their children's performance at school?

Preventive measures

- What are the effective preventive interventions for potential early school leaving immigrant students (at system and school levels)?

Scope of Review

The level of education addressed in the review will include: pre-primary, primary and post-primary (lower and upper) education and transition to higher education but the main focus will be on pre-school, primary and post-primary education.

The target students for the purpose of this review are: first generation students (i.e. students who were not born in this country and whose parents are not Irish nationals) as the percentage of second generation students is negligible at present.

Main questions to be addressed

- What educational factors most relate to immigrant students' better performance in the Irish context?
- What are the major challenges in promoting successful educational outcomes for immigrant students? Do current comprehensive and universal measures and targeted interventions address the challenges sufficiently – what is working/not working?
- What opportunities do immigrant students, parents and communities bring to schools?
- What lessons can be learnt from other countries that would assist Ireland to provide a better quality teaching and learning environment for all students – host and immigrant? And what are the most feasible strategies available which will incorporate lessons that respect the culture, values and traditions of the Irish education system? Which are the most important challenges requiring urgent attention?
- To implement such strategies, what initiatives might be pursued by the State, schools and other key stakeholders in Ireland?

Timeline

- Agreement on the terms of reference: December 2008.
- Fact-finding visit by the policy review team: December 2008.
- Policy review visit by the policy review team: March 2009.
- Submission of the draft report by the review team: end of July 2009.
- Validation by the country: November 2009.
- Launch of the final country note: December 2009.

ANNEX B: POLICY REVIEW VISIT OF IRELAND

Programme for OECD Fact-finding Mission 1-5 December 2008

Monday, 1 December

Participation in primary forum on intercultural education	This is one of a series of seven sectoral fora on the development of an intercultural education strategy. The forum will also look at questions on the issue of migrant education raised in the EU Green Paper "Migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems" and the OECD thematic study. The aim of the session for OECD delegates is to allow them to get a feel for some of the main issues arising in the field at primary level. The OECD review team met with the key primary sector stakeholders who attended.
Lunch meeting	Mairéad Twohig, Deputy Director for Inclusion, Primary Professional Development Service Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) The PPDS is rolling out in-career professional development training for teachers who are teaching English as an additional language in primary schools. The purpose of this session is to give the delegates an understanding of the support being put in place for teachers and some assessment of success to date.
Meeting with EAL (English as an additional language) inspectorate evaluation team	Harold Hislop, Assistant Chief Inspector and team (Carmel O'Doherty, Divisional Inspector (Primary), Kevin O'Donovan, Senior Inspector (Post-primary), and Siobhan Broderick, Senior Inspector (Post-primary))
Meeting with the CEO of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Anne Looney, Chief Executive NCCA
Dinner meeting	Paddy McDonagh (DES Assistant Secretary), Brendan Doody (Inspector) and Integration Unit staff

Tuesday, December 2

Meeting with Minister of State for Integration and the Cross-Departmental Group on Integration Policy	Stakeholders from key departments involved in the integration of newcomers in Ireland.
Education Research Centre, the Economic and Social Research Institute and statistics section, Department of Education and Science	Emer Smyth, ESRI Dr. Jude Cosgrave, ERC Dr. Gerry Shiel, ERC Brian Brogan, Post Primary Administration, Department of Education and Science Nicola Tickner, Statistics Section, Department of Education and Science
Early Years Policy Unit, Department of Education and Science	Catherine Hynes Heino Schonfeld

Wednesday, December 3

St. Teresa's National School – DEIS Band 2 (Disadvantaged)	Principal (Aidan Heron), staff, parents and students
Educate Together National School, Balbriggan	Principal (Fintan McCutcheon), staff, parents and students.
Balbriggan Community College	Principal (Pat Halpin), teachers, parents, children and the County Dublin VEC language support service
National Parents Council (Primary)	CEO- Áine Lynch

Thursday, December 4

St. Brigid's, The Coombe, Dublin City – both mainstream primary school and early start programme	Principal (Deirdre Early), teachers, parents and children.
Lunch meeting	Enda McGorman, Principal, Mary Mother of Hope, Dublin 15, and Pairic Clerkin, Principal, St. Patrick's NS, Diswellstown
Firhouse Community College	Principal (Margaret Cavanagh), Deputy Principal (Emer O'Connor), teachers, parents and children
National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education (Higher Education Authority)	Orla Christle
Dinner meeting	Pauline Kelly, Second Level Support Services, Breda Naughton, Integration Unit, and OECD Review Team

Friday, December 5

Model Primary School (Senior), DES Grounds, DEIS (disadvantaged school)	Principal (John Caul), teachers, parents and children.
Belvedere College (Second Level), Dublin 1	Principal (Gerry Healy), teachers, staff and students
Jesuit Refugee Service, Dublin 1	Eugene Quinn and team
Larkin Community College, Dublin 1	Deputy Principal, teachers and students

Programme for OECD Policy Visit 23-26 March 2009

Monday, March 23

Meeting with Integration Unit and representative from the Inspectorate	
Meeting of the Department of Education and Science's Newcomer Committee	
Meeting with researchers and statisticians	Dr. Jude Cosgrave, Education Research Centre Dr. Gerry Shiel, Education Research Centre Merike Darmody, Economic and Social Research Institute Nicola Tickner, Statistics Section Department of Education and Science Brian Brogan, Post Primary Administration Department of Education and Science Shaun McLoughlin, Central Statistics Office
Meeting with support services	Pauline Kelly, Second Level Support Service Sinead Breathnach and Anne Henry, School Development Planning Initiative

Tuesday, March 24

Meeting with representatives of third level education involved in initial teacher training	Representatives from various third- level institutions involved in the provision of initial teacher training
Meeting with academic researchers from third level institutions on the question of migrant education	Representatives from third level institutions and schools, who have completed research on the topic of migrant education
Meeting with trainers providing in-service training of English language teachers at primary level Meeting with representatives of HSCL and SCP	Mia Tracey, PPDS Denis McCarthy, HSCL scheme Mary Kenny, School Completion Programme
Meeting with National Office for Access to Higher Education (Higher Education Authority)	Orla Christle
Meeting with National Council for Curriculum and Assessment,	Anne Looney, Chief Executive
Meeting with Teacher Education Section	Lynda O'Toole

Wednesday, March 25

Meeting with key education stakeholders	Management representing teachers and school patronage representative bodies.
Meeting with Non-Governmental Organisations	Management representing NGOs and community organisations.
Meeting with Teaching Council and Qualifications Recognition Ireland	Áine Lawlor, Director, Teaching Council Declan O'Leary, Assistant Registration Officer, Teaching Council Cliona McLoughlin Higher Executive Officer Laura Carrigan

Thursday, March 26

Debriefing with Integration Unit staff	
Meeting with Minister for Integration	Conor Lenihan, T.D.

ANNEX C: DIFFICULTIES IN ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR NEWCOMERS

Table C.1. Factors predicting difficulties in academic progress
Among more than half of newcomers

	Primary		Post-primary	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	-1.032***	3.143	-0.787**	1.192
School type:				
Girls' secondary			-0.543	-0.452
Boys' secondary			0.010	0.036
Vocational			-0.204	-0.220
Community/comprehensive (Ref. Coed secondary)			0.760‡	0.748
Gaelscoil	1.249*	1.562*	1.453*	1.467
Designated disadvantaged status	0.258	0.060	0.675*	0.187
School size:				
Very small (<50)	0.050	1.060*		
Small (51-100) (Ref.: >100)	0.126	0.536		
Perceived language difficulties:				
Nearly all		2.212***		3.067***
Over half		1.465**		1.982***
Less than half (Ref.: Only a few)		0.250		1.205*
Positive school climate		-1.591**		-1.024**
Nagelkerke R ²	0.024	0.243	0.082	0.087

Note 1: *** p<=0.001; **p<=0.01; *p<=0.05.

Note 2: Table C1 presents a logistic regression model indicating the factors predicting a high frequency (more than half or nearly all) of academic difficulties among newcomer students in primary and post-primary schools. In model 1, the types of school, gaelscoileanna, designated disadvantaged status of schools, and the size of schools (reference: less than 100) are included and in model 2 includes the degree of perceived language difficulties among newcomer students and school climate in addition to the factors in model 1.

Source: Table A7.3 in Smyth *et al.* (2009).

OECD Reviews of Migrant Education

IRELAND

Net migration to the OECD has tripled since 1960. There has been extensive research on the successful integration of migrants into labour markets, but very little research at the international level focusing on the education outcomes of their children and the effectiveness of education policy interventions. In many OECD countries, immigrant students tend to have more restricted access to quality education, leave school earlier, and have lower academic achievements than their native peers. Therefore, improving the education of immigrant students is often high on policy agendas.

The OECD Review of Migrant Education was launched to help policy makers to design and implement migrant education policy successfully in their countries. It will provide solid facts about access, participation and student performance of immigrant students in comparison with their native peers and identify a set of policy options based on evidence of what works and examples of experience from many countries.

By international standards, immigrant students in Ireland, on average, perform as well as their native peers at age 15. However, non-English speaking immigrants face particular challenges and do less well. Ireland is currently undertaking measures with a strong focus on language support and intercultural education. There is scope to:

- Improve access to quality early childhood education and care for all, especially immigrant children, by implementing "Free Pre-School Year for All".
- Strengthen initial and ongoing learning opportunities for language support teachers.
- Concentrate efforts on mainstreaming language support and intercultural education into regular curriculum, teacher education and research.
- Reinforce a "whole-school approach" by enhancing capacities of teachers and school leaders to be more responsive to the growing linguistic and cultural diversity of students.
- Ensure access to school, home and community liaison services for immigrant families, with careful attention to language and cultural barriers.
- Collect better data to further encourage schools to adopt diversity and inclusive education
- Set up a coherent framework for continuous feedback – at classroom, school and system - embedded in policy evaluation and school inspection.

The OECD is conducting policy reviews of migrant education in Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. This report is one in the series of country policy reviews and provides country-specific diagnosis and policy recommendations. The overall findings of the OECD Review of Migrant Education will be published in 2010 as a concise, action-oriented handbook for policy makers.

Background information and documents are available at www.oecd.org/edu/migration.