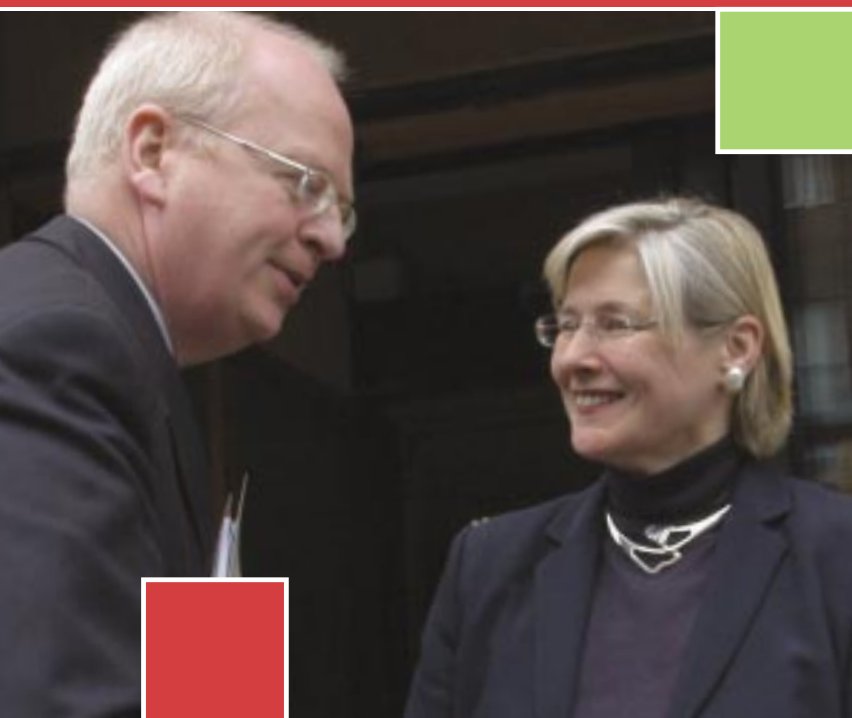


Equality News

Summer 2004



*Launch of 2003 Annual Report
(photo left)*

Equality & Diversity in Nursing

Diversity in the Workplace: B&Q

Equality Bill 2004

*Viewpoint: Young People
and Stereotyping*

*National Action Plans against
Poverty and Social Exclusion*

*Recent Events: Briefing meeting
in Longford
(photo left and above)*



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

Contents

- p2 Update by Niall Crowley, Chief Executive Officer, Equality Authority
- p4 European Briefing by Brian Harvey
- p7 Equality & Diversity in Nursing by Madeline Spiers, President INO and Clare Treacy, Director of Social Policy
- p10 Equality Authority highlights Equality Challenge in the Public Sector by Patrick O'Leary, Equality Authority
- p14 B&Q and Diversity by Sue O'Neill, Diversity Manager, B&Q
- p17 Viewpoint: Sex, Drugs and Stereotypes by Maurice Devlin, NUI, Maynooth
- p20 National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion, by Carole Sullivan, Equality Authority
- p22 Equality Bill 2004 by Eilis Barry, Equality Authority
- p24 Eagothromaíocht inscne sa mhúinteoireacht bunscoile/Gender Imbalance in Primary Teaching by Deirbhile Nic Craith, INTO
- p28 Events/Diary

The contributions to Equality News are welcome and appreciated. The opinions of contributors do not necessarily reflect the position of the Equality Authority. We welcome your feedback on any article in Equality News and will publish information about events or diary notices of interest to our readers. Please send information to Patrick O'Leary (contact details on back page).

Update

By Niall Crowley

Anti-Racist Workplace Week

The fifth Anti-Racist Workplace Week is being organised for November 2004. It is being organised under the broad theme "Together, Ireland is working" and will have a particular focus on supporting new practice at enterprise level to address any potential for racism and to develop an intercultural and inclusive workplace.

This year the week continues to involve the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Construction Industry Federation, the Small Firms Association, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, and the Equality Authority. These organisations have been joined by the Irish Farmers Association and the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland for this year's events.

The importance of Anti-Racist Workplace Week was underlined with the launch of the Equality Authority's Annual Report 2003. This highlights the rapid growth of casework on the race ground under the Employment Equality Act. In 2003 the race ground was the highest area for Equality Authority casework with 166 casefiles being worked on out of a total of 561 (30%). At the heart of this growth is a broad range of claims of discrimination by migrant workers.

New Initiatives

The Equality Authority has recently initiated three new projects. The first is a joint venture with the National Youth Council of Ireland and will focus on stereotyping of young people. A background paper has been commissioned on the process and impact of negative stereotyping of younger people and on the manner in which this might happen in an Irish context. It is envisaged that a



programme of joint work will flow from this background paper.

The second new project focuses on anti-poverty measures and how most effectively to include an equality focus within such measures such that they can effectively address the experience and situation of the full diversity of people living in poverty. This will start with research work examining the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion produced by each Member State of the European Union so as to identify examples of good practice in this area. In documenting this good practice it is intended to support its take up in an Irish context.

The third new project is the formation of an advisory committee on implementing equality for carers. The advisory committee has met three times and has focussed its attention so far on developing an agreed equality lens through which to explore the situation and experience of carers, on employment issues for carers and on income issues for carers. Current work is exploring the provision of health and social services and their impact on carers.

The work of the advisory committee will be resourced by the forthcoming publication of new research for the Equality Authority on carers and employment. The research entitled 'Caring, Work and Public Policy: Implications for Equality of Access to Employment Opportunities' explores the difficulties encountered by carers in a broad range of caring situations who seek to combine paid employment and caring. It examines their access to the services required to facilitate both these roles.

Strategic Enforcement

The Equality Authority has been concerned to stimulate debate among specialised equality bodies about strategic enforcement. This is a debate about how best to deploy the full range of powers and functions available to specialised equality bodies such as the Equality Authority.

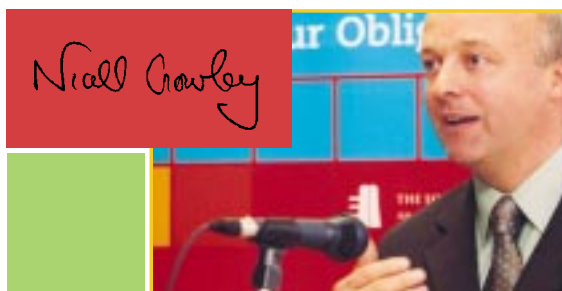
The Equality Authority hosted a meeting of the emerging European Union network of

specialised equality bodies to mark the Irish Presidency of the European Union. The theme for this meeting was strategic enforcement and the papers will shortly be published. This emphasised the importance of linking enforcement and developmental powers and functions to achieve strategic objectives. It sets out the need to further evolve a legislative framework to allow the impact of strategic enforcement approaches to be maximised.

As part of its cooperation within the Joint Equality and Human Rights Forum, which brings together the specialised equality bodies and human rights bodies in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain, the Equality Authority organised a round table event of legal personnel on strategic litigation. This explored different approaches to decision making on the number and nature of cases to be supported by the bodies. It emphasised the role of casework in creating a climate of enforcement, in establishing legal precedent, and in stimulating change in particular sectors and geographical areas. It highlighted the importance of supporting a broader range of supports for claimants.

Regional Outreach

Finally, the Equality Authority has continued to implement its regional outreach strategy. A key element of this remains the creation of opportunities for dialogue between the Equality Authority and employer, service provider, trade union and community sector interests at local level. Over the past month events were organised in Kilkenny and Longford and a further event is planned for Cork in September.





European briefing



Equality and the new European constitution

by **Brian Harvey**

A new draft European constitution has been in circulation for a year now. The purpose of this constitution is to bring up to date, in a single instrument, the many European treaties agreed over recent years (Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice) and turn their convoluted and untidy texts into a simplified document that would last for some time.

Last December, the heads of government tried, but failed, to reach agreement on its text. The Irish presidency of the European Union re-launched the attempt culminating in an agreement in June. Here, we examine what the constitution says about equality - and the implications, if and when it comes into force.

Before doing so, it must be said that most of the debate on the treaty has focussed on institutional issues, such as: How many commissioners? How should voting take place at European Council meetings? Social policy issues, such as equality, have not been high on the agenda, despite some impressive efforts by European Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to make them more prominent.

The constitution has three main parts.

Part I: The main constitutional text

Part II: The Charter of fundamental rights

Part III: The policies and functioning of the Union

Equality issues may be found in the new constitution in a number of areas.

Equality and the constitution (part I)

The preamble refers to Europe being based on the good of the 'weakest and most deprived', 'social progress', democracy and transparency.

"Article 2 defines the Union's values as: equality, pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination."

Article 2 defines the Union's values as: equality, pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination

Article 3 defines the Union's objectives as: A sustainable Europe based on balanced economic growth, a social market economy, highly competitive, aiming at full employment and social progress. It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of children's rights. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity between states.

Article 46 states that Union institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

Part II of the constitution is the Charter of fundamental rights. This was one of the most contentious social policy areas of the debate when the constitution was prepared. Most states favoured the charter being adopted as an integral, legal part of the constitution, but this was opposed by Britain and Ireland. The result was a compromise: the charter is part of the constitution, but it is hedged around with two pages of conditions limiting its applicability. The charter has 54 articles, of which the following are relevant:

Equality and the Charter of fundamental rights (part II) Article 20, setting down the principle of equality

Article 21, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of: sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, belief, political or other opinion, membership of a minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation.

Article 23, enunciating that the principle that 'equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay', permitting measures of advantage to be taken to rectify imbalances of one sex or the other.

Article 24, stating the right of children to protection and care.

“Article 21, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of: sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, belief, political or other opinion, membership of a minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation.”



Article 25, which says that elderly people have the right to live in dignity, independence and participate in social and cultural life.

Article 26, declaring the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the community.

Article 34, affirming the right to social protection, free movement, social and housing assistance to ensure a decent existence, as already laid down by Union and national law.

Article 35, setting down the right to health care as already laid down by Union and national law. A high level of health protection is to be ensured.

Article 41 declares the right of citizens to good administration.

Article 47 says that there is a right to effective remedy within reasonable time, with legal aid.

Equality in part III: Policies and function of the Union

Article 2 declares that the Union has, as an aim, the elimination of inequalities and to promote equality between men and women.

In article 3, the Union says it will 'combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation'.

Articles 103 to 115 are dedicated to social policy. The Union shall promote cooperation in social protection and combating exclusion. Existing policy competences are listed, emphasizing the Union's work in promoting equality between men and women. Existing procedures and systems are restated at some length.

Implications for equality

European NGOs concerned with equality issues have criticized the constitution on several grounds. They have criticized the manner in which the legal basis of the Charter of fundamental rights has been compromised by clauses limiting its applicability. There are still too many policy areas which are either reserved to member states or which require unanimity. Discrimination is one example, for unanimity is still required for further new legislation in this area. One member state could still veto any European action in the area.

"The equality consequences of the new European constitution, assuming it is adopted, may be long-term and subtle."

The equality consequences of the new European constitution, assuming it is adopted, may be long-term and subtle. Both the preamble and the opening clauses of the European constitution, referring as they do to such values and concepts as equality, solidarity, social justice, pluralism, non-discrimination, full employment, tolerance, equality between men and



Pictured at a recent Equality Authority meeting in Kilkenny are (L to R) Michael O'Connor, Kilkenny City Vintners; Ann Lennon, St. Francis Abbey Brewery, Kilkenny; Niall Crowley, CEO, Equality Authority and Ian Coulter, Comhairle, Kilkenny.

"These new values will inform legal, constitutional and political thinking for a long time to come."

women, social progress and children's rights are markedly different to their equivalent clauses in our Bunreacht na hEireann, 1937, over which the new constitution will take precedence. These new values will inform legal, constitutional and political thinking for a long time to come. Gender equality remains at the top of the hierarchy of equality concerns, although all forms of discrimination are condemned and there is a comprehensive and specific listing of prohibited discriminations in the charter. Such a values shift will strengthen the hand of those arguing for equality and more just societies in all European countries.

Equality and diversity in nursing

**Madeline Spiers President INO and
Clare Treacy Director of Social Policy,
INO**

Introduction

Nurses are no strangers to equality issues. As a female segregated profession with a history based on a religious and military ethos and the culture of nursing being inextricably linked with the medical patriarchal culture, nursing in itself carries an amount of equality related 'baggage'. We continue to be affected by occupational segregation with nursing uniquely having both vertical and horizontal segregation. Despite the overwhelming female composition of the nursing workforce (95%) men continue to be disproportionately represented in senior decision making positions. Thus the gender pay gap is as obvious in nursing, as it is in many other occupations. Gender discrimination is still an occurrence within nursing with few challenging its existence despite a number of successful equality cases supported by the INO and others. Research undertaken by O Connor (1996) found that the possibility of women being promoted from a basic staff nurse grade to senior management was extraordinarily slim, with men twice as likely to gain a promotional position. Although gender issues are a major priority for the INO in recent years, the area of cultural diversity has become very prominent with over 5,000 nurses and midwives from outside the EU registered to work in Ireland.

Nursing shortages

Nursing shortages have been a global phenomenon. Irish nurses, like many other workers in Ireland in the 50's experienced the economic necessity of emigration to find work. They formed the backbone of the NHS in Britain and traveled to the United States and beyond. Nurses comprise the majority of any healthcare workforce and their absence would paralyze any health service.

"The Irish Nurses Organisation is a trade union representing one of the front line staff groups who have acutely experienced the staffing shortages in the health services."

The Irish Nurses Organisation is a trade union representing one of the front line staff groups who have acutely experienced the staffing shortages in the health services. Shortages were discussed throughout the nineties and were recognized as a serious problem in 2000, (Conroy 2003). The Health Services Employers Agency described it as one of the 'biggest human resource challenges facing health service employers'. The Health Strategy in 2001 referred to the skills shortages, difficulties in recruitment



and retaining qualified staff, stressful working conditions, high turnover rates, poor morale and complex industrial relations (Conroy 2003). Against this background the recruitment of overseas nurses and midwives began. By 2002 more than 60% of nurses and midwives registering with An Bord Altranais (Irish Nurses Registration Body) were non-Irish nationals with nurses from the Philippines, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand as the top non- Irish registrants.

The Irish Nurses Organisation recognized that migrants or returned emigrants may face a range of issues which involve their integration into the Irish Health service. Whether such issues should involve a separate and different treatment and to what extent, from other nurses, was and continues to be a core challenge.

The INO has been active on both racism and migration issues. Issues concerning overseas recruitment of nurses have manifested themselves within the INO at all levels up to and including the General Secretary. In the early days of hospital recruitment programmes, a number of fundamental issues arose for overseas nurses such as the well publicised sub-standard accommodation which some nurses were living in. In addition more traditional industrial relation matters were prevalent such as incorrect salaries and grading. In the private sector more sinister matters such as breach of contractual hours of work, and gross underpayments and at time appalling work conditions were notified to the INO.

Some nurses in this sector were employed under the work permit system rather than the more favourable work visa (Harney visa) thus leaving them more vulnerable .These matters were dealt with through the usual industrial channels, with media interest only evident for the more 'headline grabbing issues'.

“The Irish Nurses Organisation recognized that migrants or returned emigrants may face a range of issues which involve their integration into the Irish Health service.”

Cultural Diversity Task Force

As a trade union the INO became more aware that individual INO members had an interest in acting to combat racism in the workplace. These expressions of opinion gave rise to the formation of an ad-hoc working party. The Cultural Diversity Task Force of the INO was formed in May 2002. It is an ad-hoc group of members supported and recognized by the INO through its Social Policy Division. It has highlighted policy issues and contributed to policy formation in a number of ways including:

- Providing a forum for overseas recruited nurses to express their concerns and interests and to participate in the INO structures;
- Contributing to and drafting a submission from the INO to the National Action Plan Against Racism;
- Communicating on overseas recruitment and migration issues through the World of Irish Nurse (INO members Journal);
- Publishing INO policy guidelines on cultural diversity; and
- Commissioning research papers on the role of the INO as an integration factor for overseas nurses into the health care system.

The Task Force has mobilized opinion within the INO on issues relating to combating racism in the workplace and overseas recruited nurses. A recent decision of the INO Executive Council to form a Section specifically for overseas nurses has been controversial but welcomed by the vast majority of members. This decision was made in recognition that migrant nurses have issues that are not necessarily shared by other nurses and midwives such as matters pertaining to visas. The recent change to the rights of spouses of holders of work visas was a major win for the overseas nurses section who worked closely with officials from the INO to lobby the Government to give working visas to the spouses of nurses working here. This change was welcomed by INO members for many reasons in particular the right to family reunification and the right to work as part of that reunification. Moreover positive benefits to the continuity of care

within our health system will occur if nurses remain in Ireland rather than leaving for a jurisdiction which offers more benefits to the spouses of nurses.

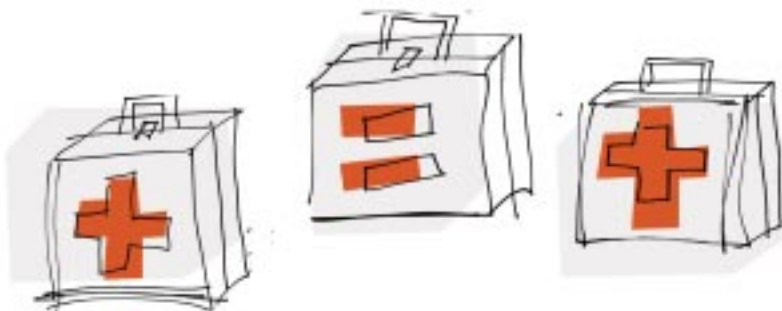
Some critics of this approach argue that forming a section can in effect segregate overseas nurses but to date it appears that the formation of a section has created an additional avenue for participation. The overseas nurses section actively participated at our recent annual delegates conference and we now have a number of overseas nurses who are active nurse/union representatives within their workplace, involving representation of all nurses. Recently, an overseas nurse who has been working in Ireland for the last three years, has been elected to the position of Branch chairperson. Winning a Metro Eireann Media and Multicultural Awards (MAMA) award for the work done by the overseas nurses section has confirmed that the recognition for this work is much wider than anticipated. These developments can only be seen as positive for nurses, nursing and Trade Unions.

References

An Bord Altranais Annual Report 2001

Conroy, Pauline (2003) *The Role of the INO in the Integration of Overseas recruited nurses into the INO and the health Services*. Unpublished.

O Connor, Pat, (1996) *Barriers to Women's Promotion in the Midlands and Mid-Western Health Boards*, Turner Printing group: Dublin.



Equality Authority highlights equality challenge in the public sector

By Patrick O'Leary, Equality Authority

The 2003 Annual Report of the Equality Authority was launched recently by Michael Mc Dowell, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The Minister's comment that the imposition of a positive statutory duty on public bodies is "a very worthwhile suggestion" was particularly welcome.

The Equality Authority's Annual Report highlighted that a substantial number of Equality Authority casefiles under the Equal Status Act concern allegations of discrimination by government departments, health boards and local authorities. A total of 171 such complaints were made to the Equality Authority in 2003. The range and importance of services provided by public bodies means these bodies have a significant impact on the quality of life of people who experience inequality in terms of health, education, accommodation, employment, social welfare and economic development. Public services have a key role to play in tackling disadvantage in society and equality needs to be identified as a bedrock for

service delivery – discrimination should not feature in service provision in this area.

The public sector is well placed to set the standards and provide leadership in promoting equality. Good work already done in this area clearly needs to be built on if this discrimination is to be addressed. A commitment to equality proofing key decisions made in policy making, programme design and service delivery is needed. In this way an equality focus should be threaded through all aspects of public sector activity. The experience of a statutory equality duty on the public sector in Northern Ireland to have due regard to equality in carrying out their functions could usefully be transposed into Irish equality legislation. In the meantime a voluntary adoption by public bodies of such an approach would be valuable.

The 2003 casefiles of the Equality Authority covers a broad range of grounds and issues. A number of patterns can be identified in the casefiles worked on by the Equality Authority during 2003. These include:

- For the first time the ground of race is the largest category of casefiles under the Employment Equality Act at 30%. This reflects the very difficult experiences of migrant workers in some sectors of the Irish economy.



Equality Authority
Annual Report

- In the workplace, reported gender discrimination cases in 2003 to the Equality Authority amounted to 29% of total casefiles. A considerable amount of these refer to women who have been discriminated against because of pregnancy and who have experienced sexual harassment.
- Discrimination on the disability ground is also significant in that it is at a high level under both the Equal Status Act (17%) and the Employment Equality Act (16%). This reflects the failure by service providers in many sectors to make reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities and the many barriers experienced by people with disabilities in seeking to access the labour market and get a job. In this regard the transposition of the EU Framework Employment Directive into the equality legislation is welcome for the higher onus it places on employers to make reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities.
- A substantial number of casefiles (171) relate to allegations of discrimination on a wide range of grounds against government departments, health boards and local authorities under the Equal Status Act.
- Access to licensed premises remains the biggest category of casefiles under the Equal Status Act.

- Claims of discrimination in relation to educational establishments are the second largest category under the Equal Status Act. These claims relate to access to schools, harassment in educational establishments and failure to reasonably accommodate pupils with disability.
- The Traveller community ground is the largest ground in the casefiles under the Equal Status Act (41%). Casefiles relate to access to schools, accommodation, shops and licensed premises.

The levels of and breadth of discrimination evidenced in these casefiles highlight the need for employers and service providers to be planned and systematic in pursuing ambitious equality objectives. Employers and service providers need to be proactive in pursuing equality and taking positive action to achieve full equality in practice. They need to be flexible in making adjustments and providing facilities to take account of the practical implications of difference and diversity and to take steps to prevent discrimination happening.

Queries to the Public Information Centre of the Equality Authority during 2003 remained at a high level. These queries sought information and materials on the equality legislation, the Maternity Protection Act 1994, the Parental Leave Act 1998 and the Adoptive Leave Act 1995, and

the work of the Equality Authority. They totalled 10,799 during 2003. The total number of publications downloaded from the Equality Authority website was 65,109.

During 2003 an important partnership between the Equality Authority and the social partners, IBEC and Congress continued. This was made possible through the work of the Equal Opportunities Framework Committee. The work of this committee supported enterprises to be more planned and systematic in their approach to equality in the workplace. This involved building an organisational equality infrastructure involving equality policies, equality and diversity training. Also it included equality reviews and action plans, appointing an equality committee and focussing on dialogue with employees and customers from across the nine grounds to identify needs and effective responses to these.

2003 saw the full development of the Equality Authority's research capacity. A key contribution was made through research on labour market inequalities to support a new capacity in the provision of education and training programmes to accommodate diversity and achieve equality. This work had a particular focus on Travellers, other minority ethnic groups, older people and people with disabilities.

The Report demonstrates the contribution that can be made by such an independent specialised equality body. This includes stimulating a focus on issues of equality and inequality, serving as a catalyst to engage a leadership for equality across a broad range of sectors, articulating an independent, credible and critical perspective on policy and practice, supporting a practical implementation of rights established under the legislation and resourcing a new innovation in equality strategies.

Casework Highlights

The Equality Authority supported a wide range of legal cases. Some of the successful outcomes include:

- The refusal of a motor insurance quotation in 2001 by Royal and Sun Alliance to Mr. Jim Ross was found to be discrimination on the age ground under the Equal Status Act 2000. Mr. Ross was 77 years old at the time and the company's across the board policy of refusing quotations to persons over 70 years of age was deemed to be unacceptable.
- Maximum compensation of two years salary had been awarded to a community employment scheme worker who claimed she was subjected to "sexually abusive behaviour" by her supervisor. The Equality Officer found that there were "serious flaws" in the manner in which the woman's complaint had been dealt with by her employer. This case is noteworthy for the effective and dissuasive nature of the remedy achieved.
- A case by the Equality Authority against Portmarnock Golf Club over the venue's men only membership policy was initiated. This was the first case relating to the provisions on registered clubs under the Equal Status Act.
- A gay pensioner won the right for his partner to benefit from his free travel pass after the Equality Authority settled the case with the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The couple asked the Equality Authority to fight their claim after the Department refused to issue a travel pass to the co-habiting partner of the gay man under the Free Travel Scheme.



Karen Erwin, Chairperson of the Equality Authority, speaking at the launch of the Annual Report 2003

Employment Equality - Casework Activity

Employment Equality Act	Gender	Marital Status	Family Status	Sexual Orientation	Religious Belief	Age	Disability	Race	T.C.	Mixed	Total
Access to Employment	6	0	0	2	3	14	25	22	5	6	83
Access to Promotion	15	0	0	0	0	9	7	1	0	6	38
Access to Training	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	0	0	7
Working Conditions	43	2	6	4	1	11	24	77	0	10	178
Harassment	8	2	0	2	0	2	11	8	0	8	41
Dismissal	32	0	1	4	0	4	16	34	4	8	103
Equal Pay	19	1	0	0	0	2	1	12	0	0	35
Sexual Harassment	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
Victimisation	7	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	4	15
Advertising	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	5
Advice	4	1	0	1	0	6	2	5	0	8	27
Enforcement Proceeding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	164	6	7	14	4	50	90	166	9	51	561

Equal Status Act, 2000 - Casework Activity

Equal Status Act	Gender	Marital Status	Family Status	Sexual Orientation	Religious Belief	Age	Disability	Race	T.C.	Mixed	Total
Provision of services*	35	12	14	23	8	67	115	58	285	34	651
Accommodation**	3	1	2	0	0	0	3	10	26	5	50
Education	7	0	1	2	7	2	18	12	16	13	78
Golf Clubs	10	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	13
Total	55	13	17	25	15	70	138	80	327	52	792

* The category breakdown under 'Provision of services' is: licensed premises, insurance, shops, social welfare, health boards, local authorities, state department & bodies, transport, banking/financial and other.

** The category breakdown under 'Accommodation' is: private and public housing.

The Equality Authority also received requests for assistance in 33 instances in matters which did not come within the ambit of the Equal Status Act, 2000.

The Equality Authority Annual Report 2003 (Summary) in Irish and English, detailing the key initiatives and events for 2003 is available from our Public Information Centre at Lo Call number 1890 245 545 or can be downloaded from www.equality.ie

B&Q and Diversity

By Sue O'Neill,
Diversity Manager,
B&Q, UK



Diversity for B&Q means understanding and reflecting the community in which we trade, building customer and employee loyalty, and gaining additional skills through employing a diverse workforce. Respect for people and being a 'great place to work and shop' are the core values in our approach, as well as valuing and utilising the differences that our people bring to our business, and providing the evidence to show that a diverse workforce is more likely to result in a mix of talents needed for a successful company. The legal moral and business case for diversity are inseparable elements of what for us is a holistic approach to the issues. Senior level commitment drives forward this strategic approach in close collaboration with all areas of the business including, employees, customers, suppliers and external partners.

Benefits to the business and our employees are numerous there is improved retention; increased employee satisfaction and loyalty, which creates better team work, understanding, pride and belonging; and widening of the recruitment pool to attract

great people to work with us. With a more diverse workforce comes a widening of the customer base. At the same time, underrepresented groups in the workforce are being given greater opportunities to develop a career, and stereotypes and prejudices are challenged both in the workplace and beyond.

About B&Q

B&Q is the UK's biggest and most successful Home Improvement retailer with 328 stores in the UK & Eire and employing over 37,000 people, with a £3.7b turnover and £360m profit. We continue to grow at 15% per annum creating 4,000-5,000 new jobs per year. With staff turnover, we need to recruit 13,000 to 14,000 new staff each year. Recruitment and retention is therefore key to the success of the business.

B&Q's diversity strategy is based upon treating everyone with respect and valuing difference. It is also part of a much broader strategy on corporate social responsibility that is based on two basic principles – being a better neighbour and improving the quality of life for all the people the business touches. B&Q is a successful business and social responsibility gives us a competitive advantage. By anticipating consumer and legislative trends we can respond in a positive, pro-active, timely and cost-effective manner. We also believe that although you can't put a price on reputation our customers, staff and shareholders expect us to act in a socially responsible way.

"B&Q's diversity strategy is based upon treating everyone with respect and valuing difference."

Age

B&Q is well known for its policy on actively recruiting older workers. The idea originated from a customer comment to B&Q's managing director that he wanted to

be served by someone who had lived in a house of their own and knew something of DIY. In 1989 the newly opened store in Macclesfield was staffed entirely with people over 50. Two years later a study by Warwick University commissioned by B&Q found how it compared with other benchmark stores:

- Profits were higher by 18%
- Staff turnover was six times lower
- Absenteeism was down by 39%
- Customer perception of service improved
- Skill base amongst staff increased

As a result a culture change occurred within B&Q as store managers began to acknowledge the success of the over 50s initiative. By attracting a number of over 50s in each store the whole store benefited from an increased range of skills and knowledge.

In 1999 we removed the retirement age for employees' altogether and our oldest worker is 90. There are no age restrictions to promotion and training, and our fast track management programme is open to employees of all ages.

Disability

In 1998 B&Q began work on a disability programme, a customer focussed policy with the aim of ensuring that disabled people would be able to shop with confidence and ease in our stores and be treated with respect and dignity.

In response to the growth in applications from disabled people, recruitment policies

and procedures have been reviewed to ensure maximum accessibility, and practical guidelines have been issued.

B&Q take the inclusive approach into our product range and market products that fit an 'easier to use' definition. B&Q has worked with the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre to sponsor a research associate to design two new easy to use products, and are producing guidelines for suppliers on inclusive design.

B&Q has invested £3.8 million in ensuring stores are accessible for the next stage of the Disability Discrimination Act in October 2004.

"There are no age restrictions to promotion and training, and our fast track management programme is open to employees of all ages."

Cultural Diversity & Religion

Over the last two years we have been developing our approach to cultural diversity. The policy encompasses culture, race, nationality and religion and celebrates the different cultures of the people working in our stores. Our work has been focussed around raising awareness of different cultural groups. B&Q began by sending out a calendar of religious festivals, now incorporated into the B&Q business calendar.





“A career development programme for women has been developed and this will be part of the B&Q talent scheme. “

As a result of both formal and informal consultation with staff and requests for greater flexibility, in particular from Muslim and Jewish employees, managers are encouraged to be flexible around shift patterns and rotas. Managers are supported with information and guidelines on different religions and are advised to talk to employees to discuss arrangements for prayer and worship.

After surveying our staff we found that over 1,200 staff spoke over 60 different languages, and many are multi-lingual. Staff who choose to, now wear badges to show customers whose first language is not English, that they can communicate in their own language if they prefer. This greatly improves customer service and helps to attract more culturally diverse customer base.

Gender, Flexible Working & Sexual Orientation

In 2003 we turned our attention to Women in Management, with B&Q's plans to double in size over the next five years we need to recognise opportunities that exist to expand our customer base, and women

are a growing consumer market increasingly interested in DIY and home improvement. To respond effectively we need more senior women in decision-making positions within B&Q and to respond to a changing talent pool. This prompted us to look at how we attract, encourage and develop women both internally and externally.

This began with a review of the current statistics and a Board presentation to communicate our strategy on Women in Management. Our Chief Executive was appointed champion for gender, and communicated the policy statement and targets linked to customer markets and talent pool to the board and senior executives. Information on women as consumers is linked to B&Q's marketing and commercial activity.

A career development programme for women has been developed and this will be part of the B&Q talent scheme. Career break, home working and dignity at work policies are to be introduced this year. Maternity, paternity, adoption and flexible working policies were introduced in April 2003 with enhancements to statutory entitlements.

We are committed to the equal treatment of people regardless of their sexual orientation and have completed a policy review to ensure that all policies are equitable for same sex.

Viewpoint

Sex, drugs and stereotypes

by Maurice Devlin, NUI, Maynooth

“Three out of five 15 to 17 year-olds drink alcohol, youth poll finds.”

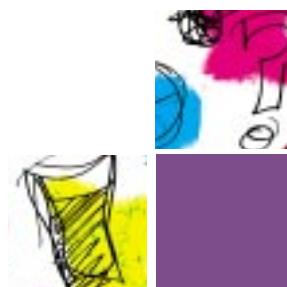
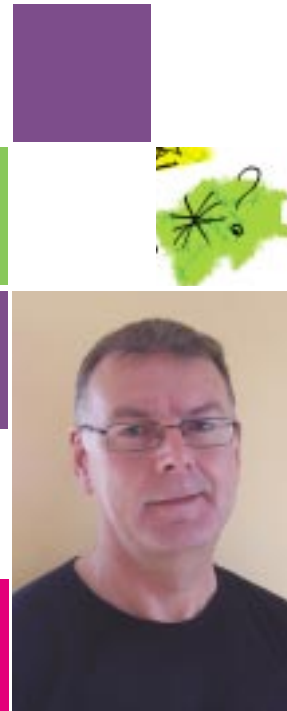
“One in four 15 to 17 year-olds have had sex – poll.”

“55% of young know of peer suicide attempts.”

These were the headlines on the front page of the Irish Times on three consecutive days last September when the results of a ‘youth poll’ carried out by TNS MRBI on behalf of the newspaper were published. On each day, in addition to the front page ‘news’ story, a further two full pages were devoted to the poll’s findings. In keeping with the headlines, these two-page ‘spreads’ were, on the first and second days respectively, devoted entirely to drink/drugs and sexual behaviour. The third day’s spread dealt with a broader range of issues (health, media consumption, religion, politics) but obviously in much less depth. Taken as a whole, the thrust of the series was to portray young people as being in one way or another ‘problematic’.

There is a remarkable consistency in the way the news media portray young people. The coverage of the survey in the Irish Times was

reminiscent of a series in the Sunday World a few years ago. Over two weeks in 1998, that newspaper presented the findings of what it called ‘Ireland’s first major survey on our youth’. The front page headline on the first week was ‘TEEN SEX: THE FACTS’, with the sub-heading ‘What our children are REALLY getting up to’. The second week it was ‘TEENS DRUG DRINK SHOCK’. Fifteen pages were devoted to the survey over the two weeks, and only in the last two of these pages did aspects of young people’s lives and lifestyles not related to drink/drugs or sex get addressed. There are many obvious differences between the Irish Times and the Sunday World, but clearly the editors of both believe that when it comes to stories featuring young people, what the public wants to hear about - what sells in other words - is the sex/drugs angle.





These are just two examples (countless others could be given) of the consistent pattern whereby young people are portrayed in the media, and in public life more broadly, in profoundly stereotypical ways. The precise nature of the stereotype varies considerably, depending on a variety of contextual factors. For instance, while the picture sketched above suggests that young people in general represent a problem because of their drink/drug taking and their sexual activity, a more detailed examination reveals the ways in which young men and young women are presented differently (often with young women's behaviour presented as particularly decadent and alarming, in keeping with the old 'double standard' in gender relations). Where crime is at issue, the imagery used tends to be overwhelmingly of young working class males, and even the language used can be seen to follow a formulaic pattern (with the words 'youth' and 'youths' most commonly chosen to refer to the young people in question). In certain contexts it may suit to stereotype the young in more positive ways, as being exceptionally energetic, or idealistic, or socially and economically valuable ('our greatest natural resource',

as the hackneyed political phrase has it). If the targeted audience consists primarily of young people themselves rather than adults (as in many TV 'soaps' and 'teen magazines'), the stereotype has a different complexion altogether, focusing on certain types of behaviour not so much as problems for society to confront but as norms for individual young people to conform to, almost compulsorily. But this is still stereotyping, and whatever the medium, these messages and these images are almost always being manipulated by adults.

And this is the key point. Stereotyping, regardless of who is being stereotyped, relies on the use of handy 'composite images' to capture what is seen as the essence of a social group or category (e.g. 'the drunken Irish'), and it most commonly occurs in the context of unequal power relations. Of course, not all adults have the same amount of power (far from it!), and the same is true of young people. However, adults collectively have more power than young people (a fact reflected in numerous pieces of legislation, including the Equal Status Act), and part of this power is the institutional power to create and apply labels, in a way that is not true in reverse.

A further common feature of stereotyping (in addition to its link to power relations) is ambivalence or ambiguity. The group which creates and applies stereotypical labels or images frequently has muddled - and even mutually contradictory - views about the group it is stereotyping, often based on fear or mistrust (e.g. historically, colonisers' views of the colonised have often encompassed both the notion that 'they're warm, friendly, spontaneous people' and also the notion that 'they're devious and treacherous and not to be trusted!'). This pattern clearly applies to many of the common stereotypes of young people. In fact, what is significant is that there are so many common stereotypes, many of them mutually contradictory, but any one of which can be drawn upon by adults as the context requires (be it news item, TV soap



or popular film, public policy statement or press release). Again, it is important to stress that this does not apply in reverse. One very simple, but telling, reflection of this can be found at the level of vocabulary: there is a plethora of words and terms which can be chosen to describe and portray young people, depending on what image or message adults want to convey ('youth', 'teenager', 'teen', 'minor', 'youngster', 'adolescent', 'juvenile', 'young person' and so on). By contrast, how many words can you substitute for 'adult'?

organisations, in communities and in society at large - and then add that this partnership will be an 'appropriate' one, based on our definition of what is appropriate, their response falls a little short of unbridled enthusiasm? They are entitled to insist that as a first step we should get some of our own thinking straight!

Maurice Devlin teaches at the Centre for Applied Social Studies, NUI Maynooth. He has carried out extensive research into the ways in which young people are portrayed by the media, policy-makers and academics.

"In one breath we tell them to grow up and 'act their age'; in another we tell them they aren't yet able to handle the onerous responsibilities of adulthood..."

This 'repertoire of labels' enables adults - and the institutions we run - to give profoundly mixed messages to young people. In one breath we tell them to grow up and 'act their age'; in another we tell them they aren't yet able to handle the onerous responsibilities of adulthood (e.g. as regards voting). In one we tell them we admire their exuberance, energy and idealism; in another we say we can't trust them and we don't like what they're 'getting up to' behind our backs. Is it any wonder that when we tell them we want them to participate fully as 'partners' - in



National action plans against poverty and social exclusion

By Carole Sullivan, Equality Authority

Introduction

All EU Member States produced National Actions Plans Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPS/incl for short) last year. This was Ireland's second plan and will cover the period from 2003-2005. This plan, together with those of the other EU Member States, is part of an EU wide drive to meet the EU objective set by the European Council at Lisbon in 2000 "to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010". The NAPS/incl describes what each member state plans to do to combat poverty and social exclusion and is based on common objectives agreed at EU level.

The common objectives are as follows:

- To facilitate participation in employment and access to resources, rights, goods and services for all;
- To prevent the risks of exclusion;
- To help the most vulnerable;
- To mobilise all relevant bodies.

The NAPS/incl translate these common objectives into national action plans for each country for the period of 2003-2005. These plans are of particular importance for groups covered by the equality legislation as many people who experience discrimination are also living in poverty. Therefore it is essential that anti-poverty

strategies/initiatives have the capacity to accommodate the diversity of people living in poverty. This diversity includes people with disabilities, Travellers, women, older people and young people, people with caring responsibilities, gay and lesbian people and Black and minority ethnic people, including Travellers.

Equality Proofing

The Equality Authority's strategic plan identifies a particular focus on the specific experience and situation of people across the nine grounds who also experience the added burden of poverty. In furthering work in this area we were involved in an innovative exercise to equality proof the Irish National Action Plan for Social Inclusion with the Office for Social Inclusion. Equality proofing involves placing equality at the heart of decision making and the overall objective of the equality proofing exercise was to ensure that the NAPS/incl could accommodate the diversity of people living in poverty.

In recognition of the fact that equality proofing is a complex exercise, it was agreed that this initial exercise would be seen as a first step towards building a more developed equality proofing process into the future.



The equality proofing exercise included the participation of groups experiencing inequality and was successful in establishing some key principles that should inform any anti-poverty strategy. These included the following:

- anti-poverty measures should be able to accommodate the diversity of people living in poverty in terms of situation, identity and experience;
- Additional resources may need to be targeted on specific groups at high risk of poverty. Some of these groups will be covered by the nine grounds and therefore this targeting must be able to take into account the interaction between poverty and inequality;
- Most importantly, anti-poverty strategies need to be able to build an institutional capacity to further address the poverty/inequality interface.

When Ireland's plan was published in July it contained an important commitment to "continue and further develop this process (i.e. equality proofing) over the life of this plan."

Developing the process

The European Commission's Joint Report on Social inclusion summarises the results of an examination of all the NAPS/incl across the EU member states. It assesses progress made in their implementation, sets key priorities for urgent action and identifies good practice and innovative approaches of common interest to member states. It seeks to promote more ambitious and effective policy strategies for social inclusion through mutual learning across the member states.

The Joint Report on Social Inclusion found that in general this round of NAPS/incl were better. The plans are broader in scope, reflect the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and exclusion and cover a wider range of policy fields, such as health, education and housing. It concludes that in order to keep the momentum of the positive development in NAPS/incl that Member States and the European Union should:

- "Continue to promote the mobilisation and participation of all stakeholders from civil society as well as marginalised persons themselves in the implementation and monitoring of the plans
- Take full account of gender issues and the increasingly significant issue of exclusion among immigrants and ethnic minorities
- Make full use of the pool of good practices already displayed by NAPS/incl, by intensifying the process of exchange of best practice by ensuring effective dissemination of learning and supporting this through EU funding programmes such as EQUAL or the Community Action Programme to combat social exclusion"

Based on the conclusions of the Joint Report (in particular the emphasis on the sharing of good practice) along with the outcomes of the initial equality proofing exercise carried out on the Irish NAPS/incl, the Equality Authority will be examining other EU country's NAPS/incl for examples of good practice in securing an equality focus in anti-poverty strategies. The review will:-

- Highlight examples of good practice in key anti-poverty policies or programmes that incorporate an ambitious equality focus.
- Highlight examples of good practice from an equality perspective in institutional mechanisms or processes that have secured this ambitious focus in anti-poverty policies and programmes.
- Analyse this good practice and highlight areas where this good practice could be adapted and applied in Irish anti-poverty policies and programmes.

It is hoped that this review will also provide us with examples of good practice that can inform the development of a more sophisticated model of equality proofing for the next round of NAPS/incl.

New Equality Bill

By Eilis Barry BL, Legal Advisor,
Equality Authority

Disabled workers, workers over 65 and the self employed will enjoy a far greater level of protection when the Equality Bill 2004 is enacted. The Equality Bill is currently awaiting Committee Stage in the Dail. For the first time employers will be able to take positive action measures to achieve “full equality in practice” across the nine discriminatory grounds. The vulnerable position of migrant and other workers employed in private households will be significantly improved. It will be easier to prove claims involving indirect discrimination, sexual harassment and harassment. However, the Ministers, Health Boards, immigration officers, local and other “public authorities” will be able to discriminate against non-nationals who have applied for and have not been granted refugee status.

The Equality Bill 2004 aims to implement three EU Directives – the Race Directive, the Framework Employment Directive and the revised Gender Equal Treatment Directive. These Directives take precedence over the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000. In some respects the Equality Bill 2004 provides greater protection than is required by the Directives. However, the Bill appears to fall short of the requirements of the Directives particularly in the areas of remedies, enforcement and exemptions.

Under the Employment Equality Act 1998 employers are only obliged to provide reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities to the extent that this does not cost more than nominal cost. This minimal responsibility reflects a perhaps overcautious response to the judgement of the Supreme Court which found inter alia the disability provisions of the earlier Employment Bill 1996 to be unconstitutional. The effect of the Framework Employment Directive is to roll back the Supreme Court judgement by imposing a more onerous responsibility on employers to facilitate participation by disabled people. The Equality Bill 2004 implements this obligation by requiring employers to take appropriate measures to enable a person who has a disability to have access to employment, to participate or advance in employment or to undergo training unless this would impose a disproportionate burden.



The Equality Bill 2004 aims to implement three EU Directives – the Race Directive, the Framework Employment Directive and the revised Gender Equal Treatment Directive.



The prohibition on discrimination in employment in the Employment Equality Act 1998 did not apply to workers over 65

or under 18 (apart from provisions on vocational training). The Equality Bill 2004 abolishes the upper age limit (with certain exemptions in relation to occupational benefits scheme and exemptions which allow employers to offer fixed term contracts). The newer lower age limit is the school leaving age (16) but with a provision to allow an employer to set a minimum age up to 18 years for recruitment.

The Equality Bill 2004 expands the permitted categories of positive action in the workplace to encompass all of the nine grounds and to allow measures to ensure full equality in practice.

The position of migrant domestic workers is improved by the abolition of the absolute exemption in relation to employment for the purposes of a private household. Employers can still discriminate in relation to hiring persons employed in another persons home for the provision of personal services but cannot discriminate in relation to other terms and conditions of employment. However, none of the binding parts of the Directives permit exemption in relation to any aspect of employment in a private household.



The Equality Bill 2004 expands the permitted categories of positive action in the workplace to encompass all of the nine grounds and to allow measures to ensure full equality in practice.



The Equality Bill 2004 would appear to fall short of the Directives in a number of respects. All three Directives have provisions requiring sanctions to be “effective, proportionate and dissuasive”. In the light of the provisions and the case law of the European Court of Justice it is surprising that the Equality Bill contains no provisions:

a) Providing an option for all non gender claims to be initiated in the Circuit Court as currently pertains for gender claims under the Employment Equality Act 1998.

b) Removing the current ceiling of 6,350 on the maximum compensation that can be awarded under the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003 (in respect of race and the Traveller community grounds).

c) Remove the two month written notification provision in the Equal Status Act 2000 (in respect of the race and Traveller grounds).

The Race Directive has a very broad scope with very limited exemptions. It is therefore surprising that no steps have been taken to abolish the exemption in section 14 of the Equal Status Act 2000 which allows legislated discrimination and the unique exemption in relation to licensed premises in section 15. There are no provisions in the Equality Bill 2004 deeming laws, policies and practices in breach of the Directives to be void. Implementation of the Race Directive will therefore be on a fragmented case by case basis.

The Equality Bill contains no practical provisions to implement the State’s obligation (under the revised Gender Equal Treatment Directive) to promote gender employment equality. Equivalent duties have been effectively implemented in Northern Ireland by the introduction of a statutory duty on the public sector to have due regard to equality considerations in carrying out their function.

Eilis Barry BL is legal advisor to the Equality Authority and co-editor of Equality in Diversity, the New Equality Directives (ICEL no. 29).

This article is reproduced with the permission of the Irish Times.



Éagothromaíocht inscne sa mhúinteoireacht bunscoile

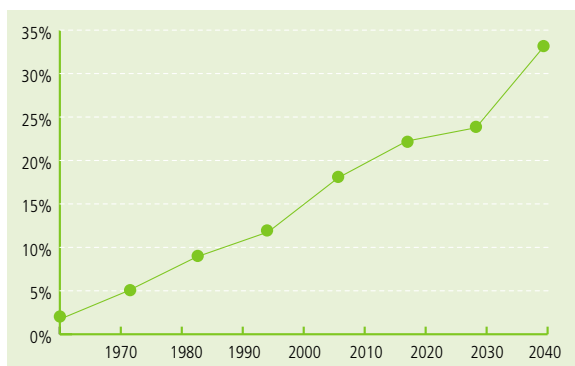
Gender imbalance in primary teaching

Deirbhile Nic Craith
Oifigeach Oideachais
INTO



Cá bhfuil na fir?

An mbeidh fear ar bith fágtha ag múineadh i mbunscoileanna na tíre seo faoi lár an 21ú aois? De réir na bhfigiúirí, d'fhéadfaí a rá gur mar sin a bheidh an scéal, cé i ndáiríre gur beag seans nach mbeadh fear ar bith fágtha. Bhí níos mó mná i gcónaí ag múineadh i mbunscoileanna, ach tá líon na bhfear a roghnaíonn an mhúinteoireacht bunscoile mar ghairm beatha ag laghdú – ní in Éirinn amháin, ach ar fud an domhain fhorbartha. An gá gur mar seo a bheadh sé? Agus más mar seo a bheas sé, an bhfuil impleachtaí ann do ghairm na múinteoireachta agus d'oideachas na leanaí?



Tá an pátrún céanna tugtha faoi ndeara i mórchuid tíortha eile – An Astráil, Meiriceá, Alba, an Bhreatain – agus tá feachtais éagsúla ar bun chun fir a mhealladh isteach sa ghairm. Tá Coiste bunaithe ag An Roinn Oideachais & Eolaíochta le déanaí chun an cheist a chíoradh. Rinne An Roinn taighde a choimisiniú ar an ábhar, agus cé nach bhfuil an taighde foilsithe fós, tá tuairisc curtha ar fáil don Roinn. 'Siad an Dr Sheelagh Drudy, agus an Dr Maeve Martin a rinne an taighde, agus beidh sé á fhoilsiú acu go luath.

Céatadán na bhFear sa Mhúinteoireacht Bunscoile

2003	17.5%
1990	22%
1980	27%
1970	32%

Ní hionann sin agus a rá go bhfuil na fir faoi mhíbhuntáiste! Go dtí le déanaí b'fhir iad tromlach na bpríomhoidí – is tromlach iad na mná anois ag 51%.

Iarrthóirí don Mhúinteoireacht

Léiríonn figiúirí ón CAO gur fir iad idir 14% agus 16% de na hiarrthóirí ar na Coláistí

Oideachais. Mar sin féin, is léir ó na staitisticí ó na Coláistí féin, gur fir iad 9.6% de na micléinn B. Oid. agus gur fir iad 11.5 % de na micléinn ar na cúrsaí d'iarchéimithe (2003-2004). Éiríonn le céatadán níos airde de na cailíní a roghnaíonn an bhunmhúinteoireacht ar an bhfoirm CAO ná mar a éiríonn leis na buachaillí. Ach dar ndóigh, éiríonn níos fearr le cailíní sna scrúduithe Ardteistiméireacht i gcoitinne.

Bíonn onóracha sa Ghaeilge san Ardteist de dhíth ar mhicléinn ar mian leo dul leis an múinteoireacht bunscoile. Glacann céatadán níos lú de bhuachaillí ná de chailíní an páipéar onóracha sa Ghaeilge agus baineann céatadán níos airde de chailíní onóracha amach. Tugann seo buntáiste do na cailíní i gcomparáid leis na buachaillí. Mura bhfuil an cúrsa onóracha sa Ghaeilge roghnaithe ag buachaillí, ní bhíonn ar a gcumas an mhúinteoireacht bunscoile a roghnú ar fhoirm an CAO. Is léir nach dtuigtear seo nuair a bhíonn ábhair á roghnú don ArdTeist, ach go háirithe i scoileanna do bhuachaillí amháin. Is annamh a bhíonn iarrthóirí ar an múinteoireacht bunscoile ó scoileanna do bhuachaillí amháin. Dá n-athrófaí an t-éileamh go mbeadh gá onóracha a bheith ag iarrthóirí sa Ghaeilge, seans nach mbeadh an bac céanna ann d'fhir, cé nach bhfuil aon chinnteacht ann go méadófaí líon na bhfear sa ghairm. Chomh maith leis sin, bheadh sé níos déine ar na Coláistí Oideachais an caighdeán céanna a bhaint amach ag ceann an chúrsa, rud a bheadh riachtanach, ionas nach dtitfeadh caighdeán na Gaeilge i gcoitinne i measc múinteoirí cáilithe.

Eolas Treoir Ghairme

Tá gá le h-eolas ar an ngairm a bheith ar fáil do mhicléinn iarbhunscoile – eolas a bheadh cruinn, ach tarraingteach agus mealltach freisin. Is uasal é gairm an oide ach is léir ón taighde a rinne Drudy (2002) nach bhfuil eolas cruinn ar an ngairm ar fáil ag micléinn iarbhunscoile. Beidh cúram amach anseo ar an gComhairle

Múinteoireachta gairm na múinteoireachta a chur chun cinn. Bheimis ag súil go mbeadh feabhas ar chúrsaí maidir le h-eolas a bheith ar fáil, faoi mar atá i gcás na n-altraí, agus an cúram glactha ag an mBord Altranais.

An nDéanann sé Difir?

'Sí an cheist, áfach, ná an ndéanann sé aon dochar, gan ach céatadán íseal d'fhir a bheith ag múineadh sna bunscoileanna. Dar le Drudy, tá trí ghné a bhaineann leis an scéal:

- Comhionannas sa Mhargadh Saothair;
- Sóisialú na ngasúr;
- An Curaclam do-fheicthe – cad é an léargas a thugtar do ghasúir maidir le caidreamh idir fir agus mná má bhíonn an ghairm féin agus na struchtúir bhainistíochta éagothrom ó thaobh inscne de?

Is léir sa lá atá inniu ann go bhfuil méadú ar líon na ngasúr atá á dtógáil i dteaghlaigh le tuismitheoir amháin – leis an mháthair de ghnáth – agus mar sin go bhfuil gá go mbeadh fir mar mhúinteoirí bunscoile, mar eiseamláir chun tacú le sóisialú na ngasúr seo. Creideann múinteoirí i gcoitinne go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go mbeadh taithí ag gasúir ar fhir agus ar mhná mar mhúinteoirí ach tá éagsúlacht tuairimí ann i measc taighdeoirí ar an gceist seo. Tá fianaise áirithe ann go bhfuil gá le eiseamláirí fireanna, (Connell, 1996; NUT, 2002). Ní bhíonn daltaí níos measa as ó thaobh na foghlama mar a mheastar i dtástálacha é, ach tá i bhfad níos mó i gceist sa bhunscoil ná foghlaim acadúil amháin.

An Bealach chun Cinn

Tráth dá raibh coláistí oideachais ar leith ann d'fhir agus do mhná, bhí céatadán níos airde d'fhir ag dul le múinteoireacht bunscoile. Ar bhealach, bhíodh sé ar nós cuóta a bheith ann d'fhir agus do mhná. Faoi láthair, tá cuóta ar leith ann do mhic léinn Gaeltachta, sa chaoi go mbíonn comórtas ar leith ann dóibh i gcóras an CAO. D'fhéadfaí a rá freisin go bhfuil cineál cuóta ann do lucht Eaglais na hÉireann, ar

an mbonn go bhfuil coláiste ar leith ann dóibh. Is í an cheist ná an ceart go mbeadh cuóta ginearálta ann arís d'fhir agus do mhná chun a chinntiú go mbíonn cothromaíocht níos fearr inscne i ngairm na múinteoireachta bunscoile? Bheadh sé conspóideach agus seans nach mbeadh sé ceadaithe de réir dlí. Ach, má tá sé tábhachtach go mbeadh eiseamláirí fireanna agus bainearra araon ag gasúir bunscoile, an fiú an chéim a thógáil? Ceadaítear gníomhaíocht dhearfach a ghlacadh má chuidítear le dream atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste. Sa chás seo, seans gurb iad na gasúir atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste, seachas na fir, mura bhfuil teacht ag na gasúir ar mhúinteoirí fireanna. Chomh maith leis sin bíonn cuóta ó thaobh inscne i bhfeidhm ag an rialtas i gcomhthéacsanna eile sa saol.

“Ní hionann sin agus a rá go bhfuil na fir faoi mhíbhuntáiste! Go dtí le déanaí b’fhir iad tromlach na bpríomhoidí – is tromlach iad na mná anois ag 51%.”

Ní haon scéal nua é gur mionlach iad na fir i ngairm na bunmhúinteoireachta. Tá líon na bhfear ag titim i gcónaí, áfach, agus is ábhar buartha é seo dar leis na múinteoirí. Tuigtear gur thosaigh an titim tubaisteach sna seachtóidí. Tá cúpla cúis leis seo dar leis an Tuairisc a d’fhoilsigh Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann i 1991. Is iad sin:- dearcadh traidisiúnta i leith ról na bhfear agus na mban san oideachas; deireadh leis an cuóta inscne sna coláistí oideachais; méadú ar rogha na ngairmeacha do lucht fágála scoile; an cháilíocht B.Oid. agus easpa eiseamláirí. Cáilíocht teoranta é an B.Oid. Baintear amach cáilíocht mar mhúinteoir bunscoile. Feictear gur gairm é an mhúinteoireacht bunscoile a bhaineann le cúram, agus samhlaítear cúram leis na mná go hiondúil. Dar le Skelton agus Hall (2001), níl sé sláintiúil gurb é an teachtaireacht a bheadh á fáil ag gasúir ná go mbaineann cúram leanaí le mná agus le mná amháin.

“Creideann múinteoirí i gcoitinne go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go mbeadh taithí ag gasúir ar fhir agus ar mhná mar mhúinteoirí...”

Tá múinteoirí buartha freisin go dtiocfaidh athrú ar a stádas, má fhéachtar ar ghairm na múinteoireachta mar ghairm bainearra. Ní mór plé a dhéanamh ar thrí ghné éagsúil chun dul i ngleic leis an gceist seo:

- Ní mór gairm na múinteoireachta a phoibliú agus a chur chun cinn;
- Ní mór plé a dhéanamh ar cheist na Gaeilge san Ardteist agus ar cheist cuóta d’fhir agus do mhná;
- Caithfear anailís agus iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar cháilíocht an B.Oid. agus ar chúinsí oibre múinteoirí– cáilíocht níos leithne, b’fhéidir, an scála incriminteach a ghiorrú, agus tuarastal príomhoidí ag an mbun agus ag an dara leibhéal a bheith cothrom.

B’fhéidir ansin go mbeadh tuiscint níos fearr againn ar cheist an éagthroime inscne i ngairm na múinteoireachta bunscoile.

Tagairtí

Connell, R.W. (1996), *Teaching the Boys, Teachers’ College Record*, 98(2)

Drudy, S. (2002) *The Teaching Profession in Ireland: Its Role and Current Challenges, Studies Vol:90, No: 360*

National Union of Teachers, (2002), *Man enough to Teach – in Primary and Early Years, NUT:UK*

Skelton, C. & Hall, H. (2001) *The Development of Gender Roles in Young Children: A Review of Policy and Literature, EOC:UK*

Táim buíoch de mo chomhleacaí, Noel Ward, Oifigeach Comhionannais, as an tacaíocht a thug sé dom an t-alt seo a chur le chéile.

Gender Imbalance in Primary Teaching – Summary of Main Points

- Currently 17.5% of primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland are male.
- The decline in the numbers of male teachers, particularly at primary level, is common in many developed countries.
- Membership statistics for the INTO (Republic of Ireland) indicate that 1417 (43%) primary schools do not have a male teacher on staff.
- The Minister for Education and Science has established a committee to advise on strategies and initiatives which might be undertaken to increase the number of males entering primary teaching.
- Applicants for primary teaching in 2003 included 15.3% male applicants.
- Only 9.6% of students in the Colleges of Education B.Ed. programme are male whereas 11.5% of the students on the postgraduate programme are male.
- Fewer boys have the opportunity to study Irish at honours level for the Leaving Certificate, which is a requirement for entry for primary teaching. Girls sit the Honours Irish paper at a ratio of 2:1. The Gaeilge requirement may unintentionally, act as a gender biased filter.
- Research in relation to whether teacher gender matters in education is inconclusive. Apparently teacher gender does not have an impact on test results, but education is far more complex than test scores. There is some research identifying the importance of role models, of both male and female teachers for both boys and girls. In a society of increasing single parent families, usually families with a female parent, teachers believe that it's crucial that children are exposed to male role models in schools.

- Males in primary teaching are not disadvantaged as they are more likely than their female colleagues to become principal teachers.
- Introducing quotas to ensure a minimum number of both male and female teachers is controversial, but may be necessary. It may not be permissible under current legislation. However, it is Government policy to introduce gender quotas in other spheres of life such as membership of State Boards and interview boards for teaching positions. It is an issue that needs to be discussed if it is believed that teacher gender matters.
- Primary teaching as a profession needs to be promoted as an attractive and rewarding profession for both male and female students.

I am indebted to my colleague Noel Ward, Equality Officer, for his assistance in compiling this article.

Equality Authority briefing meeting in Longford



Pictured at a recent Equality Authority briefing in Longford are Martina Ward, St. Mel's Training Centre; Martin McCabe, Chairperson Longford Friends of Asthma Society; Karen Erwin, Chairperson Equality Authority and Parvez Butt, Green Party. This photo and two on the cover © William Farrell Photography.

Events/Diary

IFA welcome "Gender Proofed" Department Booklet

IFA's Equality Officer, Mary Carroll, recently welcomed the new "gender-proofed" terminology in the recently published Department of Agriculture's 'Explanatory Guide on Single Farm Payment'.

According to Ms Carroll, "This is a very positive step forward in recognising that both men and women are farmers. It is an important and welcome signal from the Department in their recognition of women as a key client group".

Ms Carroll continued "This step forward, especially obvious when compared to a September 2003 Department explanatory guide on the CAP Reform decisions, where all examples refer to the farmer as male, is very welcome, and the Department are to be praised".

Ms Carroll continued, "This issue is about more than just words, it is an important sign of how the Department recognises women in agriculture, who often feel 'invisible' and 'ignored'. Because of this there is a need to take specific steps such as this to ensure women are recognised as key players in Irish agriculture".

Issued by: National Press Office, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12. Tel: (01) 450 0266
Contact Derek Cunningham: (01) 450 1931/ 086 2430535/ 01-833 5159 (H)
or Tara Mulvany (086) 2633940
Email: www.ifa.ie

The Equality Authority,
2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.
Business Tel: 353-1-417 3336
Information – Lo Call: 1890 245 545
Tel: +353-1-417 3333
Fax: +353-1-417 3366
Text Phone: +353-1-417 3385
Email: info@equality.ie
Web: www.equality.ie

Comhairle launches
Directory of
National Voluntary
Organisations
and Other Agencies
2004 – 2005



The 2004 – 2005 Directory of National and Voluntary Organisations and Other Agencies is now available from Comhairle. This is the definitive guide to whatever organisation working in the voluntary sector in Ireland you need to find.

Comhairle, the state agency responsible for the provision of information advice and advocacy on social services to the public, publishes the Directory. It is also available online as part of the Resource Database for the Voluntary and Community Sector at www.comhairle.ie. This is continually updated and provides a range of other useful information resources.

Copies of the Directory are available at €10 (plus p&p) and can be ordered by contacting Comhairle at (01) 605 9000 or by email to directory@comhairle.ie

Equality Authority Library

The Equality Authority's library service aims to enhance the quality and availability of information materials and equal treatment in the workplace and in the provision of goods and services. The library provides collections consisting of books, newspaper cuttings, magazines, pamphlets and videos on a diverse range of topics, including employment, poverty, education, social policy, EU developments etc. Our librarian Anne O'Grady can be contacted at 01-417 3335, for further information or aogrady@equality.ie

The Equality Authority would like to advise all callers that they can visit www.equality.ie or contact our Public Information Centre directly at 01 417 3333 or Lo Call number 1890 245 545, for information on the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000. Information is also available on the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995 and the Parental Leave Act, 1998.