

Institutional Racism in Irish Adult Education: Fact or Fiction?

FIONA O'CONNOR, WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Introduction

This paper examines the concept of institutional racism in Irish adult education. The study of institutional racism in education has been an area relatively untouched by Irish academics to date, and so represents a green field for interested academics and adult educators. For the purpose of providing some context for this concept, a brief outline of race and racism in Ireland is included. This paper will not seek to provide definitive answers to a multifaceted problem, instead, it is intended to present the concept from an Irish adult education perspective and explore its implications for Irish adult education providers. This draws on published literature and from the author's teaching experience. Finally, initiatives which cater for cultural diversity in adult education are discussed.

Racism and Ireland

The increase of immigrants into Ireland since the mid-1990s has encouraged discussions about ethnic and cultural diversity. Over the years many minority ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups have played their part in making Ireland the country it is today (Regan and Tormey, 2002).

Much of the research suggests that a traditional view of Irishness (a view where cultural diversity and ethnicity is not welcomed or encouraged) has made several Irish people from minority groups feel isolated and excluded. Being "Irish" has also meant that people are part of a "settled" community. This is one reason why the Irish Traveller community have found it so difficult to become part of the "settled" communities in modern Irish society (Ibid, 2002).

Research studies from the 1970s to the 2000s show that Irish people hold hostile views and attitudes toward minority ethnic groups. In 1977, a study conducted by Mac Gréil entitled Prejudice and Tolerance in Ireland, highlighted the racist views held by Irish people:

- 16.7 per cent of Irish people believed that Black people because of their temperament could never become good Irish people.
- 10.8 per cent of the Irish sample was of the opinion that Black people were inferior to white people.
- 13.5 per cent of his national sample said that they would welcome a Traveller into the family through marriage, while 59 per cent said they would not welcome members of the Travelling community as next door neighbours.

In 2000, a Euro Barometer study found Irish people to be very unwelcoming to minority ethnic groups in comparison to our European counterparts. The study found that in Ireland:

- 13 per cent of the sample portrayed very negative attitudes towards minority ethnic groups.
- 31 per cent of the sample support promoting equality at all levels of social life (again the lowest figure in the EU).
- Only 32 per cent of Irish people feel minority ethnic groups enrich the Irish culture compared to 50 per cent of all EU citizens.
- Irish people are prepared to welcome Muslims into the country but, are less welcoming to people who have fled situations of conflict or human rights abuses.

(Euro Barometer study 2000, as cited in Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School, NCCA, 2006)

Therefore, while we might as a nation pride ourselves on being the land of a hundred thousand welcomes, it is clear from studies such as the above that there is a certain amount of suspicion in Irish society toward minority ethnic groups. Brady (2008) claims:

Irish people would probably pride themselves on being non-racist and indeed it is probably easier to perceive oneself as such if the population is relatively homogeneous. But one only has to look at the treatment of travellers, or indeed look at the experience in Northern Ireland to see how complex it is to develop a society where equality and justice prevail.

(Brady, 2008, p. 3)

To combat these attitudes the author of this analysis believes an educational response is required to promote and welcome ethnic diversity. Intercultural education requires the student to question, debate, and develop an understanding of the complex issues involved in racism in order to create a more inclusive Irish society (Fanning, 2002).

Institutional racism

The concept of institutional racism first came to the fore in the USA in 1967. Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) used the term to depict how white interests, opinions, and attitudes influence the key institutions which form the American way of life. Racism is a multifaceted, occasionally subtle, but forever powerful presence at the core of contemporary society. Education can influence anti-racism and liberation but, all too often, the education system itself adds to the many racist problems which exist in modern society (Haran and Tormey, 2003). Over the years the concept of institutional racism has been variously defined. However, much of the literature suggests there is a disagreement among academics as to what constitutes 'institutional racism'. Most of the literature defines institutional racism with terms such as 'identity', 'culture', 'discrimination', 'ethnic', and 'minority'. It seems bizarre that a concept so obviously significant to Irish society and indeed to education lacks a straightforward and clear definition. Carmichael was one of the first people to define institutional racism:

Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual Blacks, and acts by the total white community against the Black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism.

(Carmichael, 1967, p. 3-4)

In his definition Carmichael (1967) emphasises the concept of institutional racism as a Black/white issue. From reviewing the literature, it becomes apparent that institutional racism incorporates so much more than the colour of a

person's skin. Curtis (1984) cites that due to the famine in Ireland many Irish people had to migrate to Britain. It was during this period that the Irish were often described as 'human chimpanzees', charged with 'backwardness'. Ideas of inferiority were based on the belief that the Anglo-Saxon blood of the English was superior to the Celtic blood of the Irish (Curtis, 1984). The author believes this demonstrates that racism is not always an anti-black issue.

From an Irish educational perspective the term institutional racism has been defined by the NCCA (2006, p. 23) as "a form of discriminatory provisions in legislation, regulations or other formal practices". The author believes this definition does little to define the concept of institutional racism. From an educational context there is no mention of the inadequate English language classes, the insufficient literacy and numeracy classes, the use of unsuitable curricula and assessment methods, and the poor Government funding for education provisions. The recipients of institutional racism are also not included. There is no mention of members of the Travelling community who are the main recipients of institutional racism in Ireland. The White Paper in Adult Education (2000, p. 48) clarifies this point by stating "... Travellers and other minority groups continue to experience serious problems in education generally and in adult education in particular". Two underlying problems faced by Travellers and minority groups are cultural patterns not acknowledged in an educational setting, and poor basic literacy and language education (Ibid, 2000). The author believes that all of the above factors equate to institutional racism in Irish adult education.

The most widely utilised definition of institutional racism comes from a report entitled the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, published in 1999. It defines institutional racism as:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people, because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin, it can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage Black and minority ethnic.

(Macpherson, 1999, p. 28)

The author believes Macpherson's (1999) definition of institutional racism is the most descriptive in terms of what constitutes institutional racism. The author believes this definition highlights that certain processes exist in all

organisations (including education) and as a result of these processes, however unintentionally, disadvantage ethnic minority groups. Carter et al., (2000, p. 3-4) concur with this statement when they highlight that two interconnected processes in particular tend to be focused on: the 'institutional culture', which "is racist if it constitutes a climate of assumptions which are hostile to outsider groups, racially or ethnically defined" and 'routine practices', which are racist if they involve unfair treatment of minority ethnic groups.

The author believes the acceptance of Macpherson's definition by the British Government, and consequent acknowledgement of its applicability to key organisations and institutions' (including education) represents a giant step forward. It entails recognition "that, to thrive, racism does not require overtly racist individuals, and conceives of it rather as arising through social and cultural processes" (Parekh, 2000, p. 71).

Overall, the author maintains the above definitions of 'institutional racism' have given a title to the process of discrimination, and inequality but have eliminated a person's motive, and responsibility for racial abuse. From an educational perspective, the author is of the opinion that much more needs to be done in order to define the concept in the context of adult education. The author maintains factors such as cultural differences, the inappropriate proactive measures used to avoid discrimination, equality of access to and participation of many ethnic minority groups in adult education programmes, the inadequate resources for teaching adults with learning difficulties, and the lack of professional training for adult educators in dealing with diversity all need to be addressed in order to begin defining institutional racism from an adult education perspective.

The Context: institutional racism in Irish adult education

The relationship between education and racism is extremely complex. Institutional racism in adult education often occurs in an indirect manner and is regularly not acknowledged as racism. It has become entangled with the intellectual and moral standards of many further and higher education institutions in Ireland. Adult education institutions by and large operate with a colour blind approach, and rarely admit that they are institutionally racist.

The White Paper on Adult Education 'Learning for Life' (2000) outlines three principles for the provision and practice of adult education services in Ireland: (1) Lifelong learning as a system approach, (2) Equality and (3)

Interculturalism. The White paper (2000, p. 13) makes a commitment to promote “equality of access, participation and outcome for participants in adult education, with pro-active strategies to counteract barriers arising from differences of socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and disability.”

One particular area mentioned in the document is the term ‘Inter-culturalism’. The paper states:

The need to frame educational policy and practice in the context of serving a diverse population as opposed to a uniform one, and the development of curricula, materials, training and in-service, modes of assessment and delivery methods which accept such diversity as the norm. This refers not only to combating racism and encouraging participation of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in education, but also to a recognition that many minority groups such as travelers, people with disabilities, older adults, participants in disadvantaged areas may have distinct needs and cultural patterns which must be respected and reflected in an educational context. It also envisages a more active role by adult educators in the promotion of Irish language and culture.

(Learning for Life -White Paper on Adult Education, 2000, p. 13)

The White paper (2000) recognizes that some minority groups have problems accessing the education system and acknowledges the challenge this poses to adult education in terms of: curricula, language, extra-curricular activities, course materials, and modes of teacher training and selection. It reiterates that marginalized groups should be in a position to influence and shape policy. The intercultural principle is welcomed as it illustrates a philosophy of inclusiveness, however, very little has been implemented from the document since its inception in 2000. McDonnell (2002, p.4) concurs with this when she states “much remains to be done in practical terms to make this inclusive vision a reality”. Former Minister of Education and Skills Noel Dempsey (2002) concurs with this when he states that:

Interculturalism in the education sector is essentially about dialogue and interaction, and tailoring of programmes to meet the specific needs of different target groups. It is about inclusion by design, not as a default or an add on. It challenges us to create a more flexible and relevant education system, not only for minority linguistic groups, but also for Travellers, people with

disabilities, and people in disadvantaged areas. It is about realising that “one size does not fit all”, that we must plan to welcome diversity and to cater for it, and that in so doing, we will benefit from the process. It is also about promoting equality and providing positive actions to combat the barriers which different groups face in accessing and benefiting from education.

(Department of Education and Skills, 2010)

This point is further acknowledged by the Parekh Report (2000) in the UK. It states that different language, cultural and ethnic groups often have varied needs and experiences. A fair society and education system is one that can provide for both people’s individuality and their shared identities. The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain –highlights:

Since citizens have different needs, equal treatment requires full account to be taken of their differences. When equality ignores relevant differences and insists on uniformity of treatment, it leads to injustice and inequality; when differences ignore the demands of equality that results in discrimination. Equality must be defined in a culturally sensitive way and applied in a discriminating but not discriminatory manner.

(Parekh, 2000 as cited in Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School, NCCA, 2006)

Minority presence in Irish adult education

In recent times, concepts such as cultural diversity and celebrating difference have been highlighted regularly across many media forms in Ireland. In a so called ‘liberal’ societal context, it could be said that such positive expressions are not respected and celebrated. While primary and second level education in Ireland could be considered evenly balanced as regards access, presently access to further and higher education is incredibly unequal as the low numbers of Travellers, Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and non-EU citizens in Irish Universities and colleges suggest. The Irish Government’s policies of distribution and direct provision for access to third level education have done little to prevent institutional racism from occurring in the Irish education system. In 2004, Former Minister of State Willie O’Dea was quoted as saying that:

It was considered that paying grants to all comers could place intolerable strains on the student support system and might act as an incentive for non-EU nationals to come to the State.

(Dail Debates, May 2004 as cited in Culleton 2007)

The Learning for Life -White Paper on Adult Education (2000) notes the lack of data available relating to Traveller participation in Adult Education. The Travelling Community is Ireland's largest minority ethnic group. It is this ethnic group which suffers the most when it comes to participating in adult education programmes around the country. The white paper (2000) cites that there is a requirement to develop specific strategies to make certain that integration in adult education occurs for Travellers by:

Awareness training, culturally relevant programmes and materials, an inter-cultural anti-racist curriculum, supporting services such as guidance and childcare, and outreach networking and dialogue with Traveller Organisations concerning the delivery of programmes.

(Learning for Life -White Paper on Adult Education, 2000, p. 172)

Participation and achievement rates of minority ethnic groups in Irish adult education

Participation rates in further and higher education by members of the Travelling Community are extremely low. A report published in 2006, entitled Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy highlighted that in 2004, a total of only 835 Travellers were participating in the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) in colleges of further education. Higher education has always been portrayed as playing a role in producing a just and equal society. The Universities Act (1997) is testament to this. The Act compels universities to:

Promote access to the university and to university education by economically or socially disadvantaged people and by people from sections of society significantly underrepresented.

(The Universities Act, 1997)

Similar responsibilities are also bestowed on the fourteen institutes of technology around the country. Until recently very few Travellers have participated in higher education. In 2002 it was estimated that less than 20 Travellers attended higher education. This figure rose slightly in 2004 when 28 Travellers were enrolled in higher education (Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy, 2006). A study conducted by the Higher Education Equality Unit (1999, p. 5) highlighted how some Travellers felt about further and higher education in Ireland. The study noted that many Travellers felt that college "environments and staff are not open or welcoming to Travellers and that the

college curricula do not reflect traveller culture and experience". Members of the Travelling community who participate in further and higher education feel "isolated and vulnerable in college" (Ibid p. 5). The high financial cost of attending a further and higher educational institution in Ireland has also prohibited Travellers from attending college or university.

The inadequate empirical evidence available on issues of access, student experiences and achievement rates within further and higher education are stark. For those Travellers that do participate in further and higher education empirical research is urgently required. We only have scraps of anecdotal evidence and personal testimony from families whose children have tried to secure a place at college or university, and the very few who have actually made it to further and higher education. Therefore, without precise quantitative and qualitative information it will be difficult to tackle issues regarding Travellers in adult education. Issues such as nomadism, culture, identity, attitudes, and independence all need to be addressed, if members of the Travelling community are to participate in further and higher education in Ireland in the future (Higher Education Equality Unit, 1999).

Refugees and asylum seekers who live in Ireland also experience very low participation rates at further and higher education. They experience many different forms of discrimination. Many refugees and asylum seekers have come from war torn countries. When they arrive in Ireland they are in a state of legal limbo. Only refugees and those with humanitarian leave can access further and higher education in Ireland. However, residency clauses and recognition of prior educational qualifications cause many problems for this group. Many colleges still endeavour to charge foreign national fees to many people even though they have been granted refugee status (Higher Education Equality Unit, 1999). The link between refugees and poverty has also been established. This can also inhibit many refugees and asylum seekers chances of accessing and participating in Irish adult education.

The White Paper in Adult Education (2000, p. 50) highlights "recognition that many immigrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, have specific urgent requirements, from basic information through to language training". Ward (2001) believes there is little research conducted in Ireland in relation to the language needs of refugees and asylum seekers. This lack of research makes it difficult to assess the 'real' problems associated with refugees and asylum seek-

ers in relation to accessing and participating in adult education. Aontas (2009, p. 5) reports “nine percent of the workforce and 11% of the population are newcomers to Ireland yet there is no dedicated funding to support the teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages” (ESOL Learners: NALA, 2006 as cited in Aontas, 2009). While language programmes exist in the form of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), they have been deemed to be unsuitable because they are designed for people who are educated, and who are learning English as a second language. Such TEFL programmes have reported high absenteeism because of the following factors: long driving distances, no crèche facilities, and people who work illegally cannot participate in such courses in case they are deported (Ward, 2001). These factors hinder refugees and asylum seekers from obtaining formal qualifications because they cannot understand the native tongue. As a result, refugees and asylum seekers are excluded from participating in adult education initiatives. McDonnell (2002, p. 10) cites that “much remains to be done in terms of developing and implementing a coherent national service for immigration groups and speakers of other languages”.

The Higher Education Equality Unit (1999) also draws attention to the language needs of asylum seekers. It highlights that asylum seekers are in low-paid unskilled employment and are caught into a cycle of dependency on social welfare. As a result they do not have access to free language tuition. Inglis (2001, p.23) report’s that “asylum seekers are still one of the most materially disadvantaged groups in Irish society”.

Article four of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960 (as cited in Higher Education Equality Unit, 1999) compels Governments to develop and apply policy in a manner which will “promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the manner of education”. The Government of Ireland and particularly the Department of Education and Skills have failed many adults hoping to return to education. The White Paper on Adult Education (2000, p. 49) acknowledges this when it states “...nationally organised education systems find it difficult to respond to the needs of particular sub-groups”. In 2007, the budget for education was approximately €8 billion. However, adult education was only allocated two per cent of that budget (Aontas, 2009). With such an insignificant budget many adult education initiatives such as education and language projects cannot take place. As a result, asylum seekers, refugees and other minority ethnic groups who depend on these adult education services will continue to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in Irish society.

McDonnell (2002) maintains that inadequate provision of literacy and language training is only part of the problem. She claims:

Funding provision for adult education and training opportunities for refugees/ asylum seekers/ migrant workers needs to go beyond the provision of literacy and language training. Otherwise, real inter-culturalism will not be achieved, and the potential of adult education in promoting anti-racism will not be adequately.

(McDonnell, 2002, p. 7)

Brady (2008) is also of the opinion that:

Facilitating intercultural communication in adult/ community education needs to be adequately resourced in terms of funding and materials. Funding must be ring-fenced to facilitate intercultural communication including the training of educators in approaches and materials developed to support that work. Supports must also be put in place to ensure that minority ethnic groups are able to participate in adult & community education.

(Brady, 2008, p. 5)

Practices of institutional racism in teaching and learning in adult education

Many adult learners’ experiences of institutional racism and discrimination in adult education are not homogeneous; they are experienced in numerous ways by different people in different places and at different times. Racism permeates the very notions that shape our educational system (Richards, 1997). The author believes there are many subtle examples of institutional racism taking place in the Irish adult education system. It exists in our forms of assessment, in the classroom and in the staffroom. From teaching experience, the author has witnessed while sitting in staffrooms racist things being said about adult learners. Many adult educators have openly admitted to ignoring ‘certain’ students in the classroom. Many educators have also suggested that ‘some’ students take different subject modules from their own so that they do not have to teach them.

The role of adult educators is often overlooked in relation to the provision of adult education. Educators need to be aware when considering the teaching and learning environment and the needs of all students. The practice of learning should be inclusive and consider the needs of all adult learners in relation to their ethnicity, religion, gender, disability and so on. Educators must be

aware their expectations for students may be based on stereotypes, and notions about particular ethnic groups and their potential for achievement (Haran and Tormey, 2003). The educator's lack of teaching experience and qualifications can often lead to indirect discrimination, particularly with the lack of teacher training, and the unsuitable teaching methods and approaches often used in a classroom. The White Paper (2000, p. 152) cites "those employed in the Adult Education field have been recruited on the basis of a second-level teaching qualification or a trade or business qualification". This highlights the need for teacher trained adult educators in the sector. The author maintains if students from different backgrounds, cultural beliefs, and educational needs are to be treated equally; the need for trained educators is a must. McDonnell (2002, p.7) maintains a review of internal policies of adult education centres and "addressing staff training needs" is crucial to the Irish adult education system. The White Paper (2000, p. 150) concurs with this as it states "it can only do so on the basis of a highly trained corps of adult educators and trainers who are dynamic and equipped to lead change".

Education institutions and adult educators need to reflect upon their assessment practices, and their curriculum to make sure they consider the numerous ways in which current subject matters may discriminate against minority ethnic groups because of the inappropriate use of teaching resources and materials. Curricula in the adult education system should promote respect for all cultures and traditions in society. Assessment methods used for adult learners whom English is not the mother tongue should be flexible. Whitty et al., (1998) believes exam arrangements should allow the adult learner a dictionary, extra time or an oral exam, should the level of attainment in English prevent an adult learner from understanding or answering a question satisfactorily. These scholars are also of the opinion that libraries in educational institutions should have books in the adult learners' native language.

Much is found in the literature about the benefits of active learning techniques used in education. Active learning approaches are crucial to the successful delivery of most subjects. Active learning techniques allow adult learners an opportunity to show what they know from previous classroom or life experiences. Material must be presented in a number of ways to allow for student engagement in all subjects. However, this active learning approach is not occurring in the adult education sector. Morgan (2000) (as cited in McVeigh and Lentin, 2002) conducted a study into the methods of instruction used in adult educa-

tion courses. The study showed that 80.6 per cent of all adult educators used instruction, seminars or workshops to deliver their subject. Clearly, these teaching methods of instruction may not be meeting the needs of many adult learners. Whitty et al., (1998) claim that experiential learning methodologies must be incorporated into the adult education system. They believe peer education, collaborative learning and cross-curricular work will promote anti-racist intercultural education. However, they also note that teaching staff have to be well resourced in terms of teaching skills, teaching resources, class size and space. The author of this analysis claims if adult educators had the 'appropriate' training they would be in a better position to meet the needs of adult learners, which would lead to a more inclusive adult education system.

In 1997, a survey was conducted by the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey to establish the literacy skills of Irish adults aged 16-24. Findings from the survey are startling. The survey reported that twenty five per cent of Irish adults were at the lowest level from a literacy perspective. The survey found those Irish adults particularly the unemployed, older adults and early school leavers were most at risk of experiencing literacy difficulties (McDonnell, 2002). It is well documented that there are inadequate literacy and numeracy services available to many adults in Ireland. These inadequate services are examples of institutional racism in adult education. As Connolly (2005, p. 56) notes, literacy and numeracy problems are "debilitating for the individual". The White Paper (2000, p. 50) acknowledges this problem when it cites, there is a need to "provide specific tailored programmes and basic literacy....education". From teaching experience the author has experienced the majority of adult learners who come from disadvantaged backgrounds particularly members of the Travelling community suffer the most with literacy, and numeracy problems. Access to third-level and adult education programmes is impossible for such people. The White Paper in Adult Education (2000, p. 172) notes there is a need for Travellers to be, "targeted within adult literacy and VTOS programmes and for dialogue on how the schemes can be adapted to strengthen their relevance for these groups".

The author believes that practices of institutional racism in Irish adult education are so deeply rooted in the culture of adult educational institutions that the majority privilege is largely unrecognised. The author is of the opinion that making adult educators aware of their prejudices is the first step to tackling institutional racism.

The author of this analysis is acutely aware that this article gives only an anecdotal account of the issues contributing to institutional racism in Irish adult education. The author acknowledges that without adequate research and hard facts some information in this article could be open to dispute. Therefore, the author maintains that empirical research on how ethnic minority groups experience adult, further and higher education in Ireland is urgently required.

Anti-racist policies and initiatives in the Irish adult education sector

In recent times, the Irish Government has worked to combat racism and to promote intercultural policies, practices and procedures in Ireland. The Government has introduced both legislation and initiatives. The most applicable initiative to education was the Government's development of the National Action Plan Against Racism (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2010). This is an action plan used to tackle racism in Irish education. The document is informed by legal and policy instruments, incorporating a human rights, democracy and equality framework. Development and intercultural education viewpoints also inform the document.

The National Action Plan Against Racism has developed many initiatives to help combat institutionally racist practices in the adult education sector. It highlights that education can play a crucial role in promoting a respect for different cultures and ethnic minority groups.

In Further and Adult Education funding was secured to Integrate Ireland Language Training for staff development and resources for addressing the literacy and language needs of adult asylum seekers. Programme delivery is provided for in VEC's but only to the extent that that the Literacy budget allows.

Many educational establishments around the country have undertaken research on interculturalism issues with funding provided by the Irish Government. The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) in collaboration with the Dublin project and the Integrate Ireland Language Training Unit examine the issue of addressing adult literacy and language needs, and make recommendations on a framework and costings for addressing future needs in this area. In 2002, Former Minister of Education and Skills Noel Dempsey acknowledged the importance of research in the area of racism and interculturalism. He highlighted that:

Combating racism and discrimination is not merely an attitudinal issue. A meaningful equality strategy requires that positive actions are put in place to address barriers which particular groups face. In this case, the issue is not merely a question of resources, but also an issue of how best to go about the task, which is new territory for our education system. This is why research and reports...are so important, so that we can build on best practice internationally and adapt it as necessary to meet our needs.

(Department of Education and Skills, 2010)

Over the last number of years many initiatives have taken place to combat racism and to promote intercultural policies, practices and procedures in the Irish education system. The Department of Education and Skills have established an Integration Unit to liaise with other Government departments and educational organisations to address issues of racism and interculturalism.

The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education highlighted in its Plan 2008-2013, that Ireland needs to have special regard to the needs of recent immigrants. Many migrants have experienced dissatisfaction at not having their qualifications recognised in Ireland. To help combat this, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland established 'Qualifications Recognition Ireland' (QRI). It provides advice on international qualifications and their equivalence to Irish qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications. Former Minister for Integration, Lenihan (2008) stated "It is critical for migrants coming to Ireland that their existing education and qualifications are recognised so that they can fully participate and integrate into Irish society" *Department of Education and Skills, 2010*.

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) in collaboration with the students union of Ireland run anti-racism campaigns in third level colleges to promote diversity and multiculturalism in higher education. The Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) supports projects aimed at widening participation for all ethnic minority groups in Irish education.

In 2002, Former Minister of Education and Skills Noel Dempsey launched a resource pack developed by the Higher Education Equality Unit aimed at personnel working in the higher education sector on addressing issues of racism and interculturalism. Department of Education and Skills, 2010.

In 2006, the Department of Education and Skills in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education launched a document entitled the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy. The report examined the existing provisions and resources allocated for Travellers from primary education to the third level education. Former Minister of Education and Skills (2006) Mary Hanafin, noted that:

We must ensure that equality and diversity permeate all aspects of our education system. Education is a vital element in supporting greater participation and empowerment by Travellers in our society. The report contains many recommendations across the education spectrum for parents, pre-school, primary, post primary, further education, higher education and lifelong learning. It provides a catalyst for moving on from what was, in the past, a negative experience for many Travellers, towards a quality education for all in an inclusive and integrated setting.

(Department of Education and Skills, 2010.)

In Ireland today, it is illegal to discriminate against people under two vital pieces of legislation, the Employment Equality Act (1998), and the Equal Status Act (2000) (NCCA, 2006). In 2000, the Education (Welfare) Act was enacted to provide an education specific legal foundation for anti-racism inclusive policies in educational establishments. The Education Act (1998) was ratified to:

Make provision...for the education of every person in the state, including any person, with a disability or...other special need and to provide generally for primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and vocational education and training; to ensure that the education system is accountable to students, their parents and the state for the education provided, respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society.

(The Education Act, 1998)

A large amount of Ireland's policy framework for education has sought to promote inter-culturalism and equality through all sectors of Irish education. The 1995 White Paper on Education – Charting our Education Future – points out that equality and pluralism are two of the crucial issues underpinning our educational policy. It also cites “the democratic character of this society requires education to embrace the diverse traditions, beliefs and values of its people” White Paper on Education – Charting our Education Future 1995, p. 9.

The author believes that the implementation of equal opportunities policies is something to be welcomed. However, it is worth pointing out there is always the danger that such policies become a theoretical blueprint that fails to have any association with the daily procedures within all institutions (including education), or that fails to change the working culture in any way. The author is of the opinion that passing policy is not the same as implementing or developing policy, both of which require dedication and resources with educational institutions.

Adult education initiatives catering for diversity

In the UK, the Rampton Report (1981, p. 27) states that:

A ‘good’ education cannot be based on one culture only...where ethnic minorities form a permanent and integral part of the population, we do not believe that education should seek to iron out the difference between cultures, nor attempt to draw everyone into the dominant culture.

From an Irish perspective, Inglis (2001) concurs with this statement when he claims;

Adult education, or formal learning programmes, can play a crucial role in creating a mature democratic inclusive civil society, in which there is recognition, acceptance and appreciation of difference.

(Inglis, 2001, p. 12)

Therefore, with this in mind it is worthwhile to note while much remains to be done to make the Irish adult education system inclusive to all minority ethnic groups, various initiatives have occurred within adult education which embrace cultural diversity and in turn, prevent institutional racism from happening in the future. Ward (2001, p. 21) reports in certain classrooms, there can be significant ethnic tension among many adult learners. However, there are many adult educators now “with intercultural working experience and conflict resolution skills”. The author believes this allows those educators to deal with difficult situations should they arise.

Ward (2001) also claims there are many adult educators who are taking an active learning approach in the classroom. She maintains adult educators are applying their subjects to real-life situations. She believes educators “began using communicative teaching approaches and started using authentic teach-

ing materials (i.e. bus timetables and so on) to enable students to cope with everyday situations” (Ward, 2001, p. 21). The author believes educators who apply active learning techniques will be in a better position to meet the needs of all adult learners in future years.

The creation and delivery of courses such as Graduate Diploma in Adult Education programmes means the Irish Government and those in decision making positions in education, acknowledge the need for suitably qualified adult educators to deal with all issues in a classroom, including cultural diversity. This is further acknowledged by the Irish Governments’ support for such courses to be applicable for tax relief for people interested in obtaining an adult education qualification.

Therefore, while it is obvious that initiatives have been established and targets set to achieve equality outcomes, these initiatives are not yielding the results that were anticipated and desired. There is an apparent need to tackle racism and discrimination against minority ethnic groups in adult education and indeed throughout Irish society as a whole. It is the opinion of the author, that if institutional racism is to be addressed satisfactorily in adult education, anti-racist legislation must be enforced in order to prevent racism and discrimination in the future.

Tackling institutional racism in Irish adult education in the future

In order to prevent racist practices from occurring in the Irish adult education system in the future, the National Action Plan Against Racism (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform) sets out a number of recommendations. A summary of which are as follows:

- Adult education programme providers should have clear anti-racist policies which are adequately monitored and committed to developing anti-racist practice.
- Adult education establishments need to develop policies which address recruitment, admission, equality, anti-racism and bullying issues and these policies should be accompanied by clear guidelines which are known and implemented by all adult educators.
- An anti-racist intercultural ethos should underline future policies and practices in the adult education sector.
- Adult educators should be appropriately trained and prepared to facilitate anti-racist education and training.

- Dialogue and partnership between Government departments, Traveller educational organisations and ethnic interest groups is essential to promote policies and best practice.
- Better funding and support mechanisms need to be put in place regarding adults who have childcare and other costs to contend with while attending adult education courses.
- All modules and curricula should promote respect for all ethnic minority groups
- New assessment methods need to be developed in line with best practice to make sure that language, qualification and other barriers do not result in unsuitable placements.
- Teaching and learning resources should be equality-proofed and reflect the cultural diversity of the classroom.

The author believes the guidelines drafted by the National Action Plan Against Racism lay a solid foundation in order to begin tackling institutional racism in Irish adult education. However, unless these guidelines are implemented and monitored adequately by adult education establishments not much success will be achieved in combating institutional racism.

The author also believes that it is worthwhile to note that the existence of anti-discriminatory policies and the seriousness afforded them, can impact on the culture of an educational establishment and influence the views, responsiveness and commitment of adult educators to anti-discriminatory practice.

The author of this analysis believes that to tackle institutional racism in the classroom adult educators should incorporate Bank’s (2001) Dimensions of Multicultural Education into their classrooms and subjects areas. The five dimensions are:

- Content integration: This deals with the extent to which adult educators use examples and subject matter from a multitude of cultures and groups to demonstrate the key concepts and theories in their subject area.
- The knowledge construction process: This refers to adult educators helping adult students learn how knowledge is structured and how it is influenced by social class, ethnic, and racial positions of diverse groups.
- Prejudice reduction: This helps adult learners to develop positive and democratic attitudes towards others.
- Equity pedagogy: This exists when adult educators change their teaching methods in ways that will allow adult learners to achieve academic success.

- An empowering school culture: This entails the restructuring of a classroom so that adult learners from different socioeconomic, ethnic, racial and language groups experience equality.

The author believes if all adult educators incorporated just two of the five overlapping principles suggested by Bank's (2001) it would be one huge step forward to combating institutional racism in Irish adult education.

Conclusion

Institutional racism is a concept relatively untouched by Irish academics to date. It is a way in which minority ethnic groups endure discrimination because of intrinsic racism in the structures of the Irish adult education system. The current system of further and higher education transparently fails to deliver equality of opportunity to many minority ethnic groups. Different levels of attainment and rates of exclusion highlight the practices of institutional racism in our adult education system. Institutional racism does exist in various guises in adult education. Asylum seekers and refugees more often than not cannot find 'suitable' English language courses because those courses which are available are only suited to educated people. Inadequate literacy services affect Ireland's biggest single minority group, Travellers. Unqualified adult educators have also led to institutional racism occurring in Irish adult education. Such educators lack the skills and appropriate teaching methods to teach adult learners. As a result, these educators fail to meet the needs of the adult learner.

It should be noted, that while institutional racism is occurring in adult education, there are some initiatives taking place in adult education that welcome cultural diversity. Most notably, some adult educators have intercultural working experience and conflict resolution skills to deal with situations. Many educators are starting to use authentic teaching materials which meet the needs of all adult learners. Finally, the creation and delivery of courses such as Graduate Diplomas in Adult Education affirms the Government's acknowledgement for the need of suitably qualified adult educators.

The National Action Plan Against Racism (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform) sets out a number of draft recommendations to tackle institutional racism in Irish adult education. Such developments have resources implications, but the author believes if there is a serious dedication to tackling institutional racism, resources should be provided.

Overall, it is clear that institutional racism occurs in subtle forms in the Irish adult education sector and what is worse, is that little has been done in the Irish adult education system to prevent this most menacing form of racism. If, as educationalists, we are serious about race equality, every one of us must critically examine our practices and beliefs. It is no longer possible or acceptable for adult educators to excuse their role in institutional racism on the basis of their ignorance. As Gambe et al., (1992) notes:

Anti-racism should not be seen as offering certainties, absolute for all time. We have to be ready to change and adopt our ideas in the light of experience, debate and developments.

(Gambe et al., 1992, p. 10)

References

- AONTAS (2009). *Aontas Strategic Plan 2007-2010: Policy Promotion Practice Partnership*, National Adult Learning Organisation, AONTAS, Dublin.
- Banks, J. (2001). *Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations*, Curriculum and Teaching, 4th edition, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brady, B. (2008). *Submission to the Department of Education and Science integration Unit on the Development of an Intercultural Education Strategy*. AONTAS, Dublin.
- Carmichael, S. and Hamilton, C.V. (1967). *Black Power: The Politics of liberation in America*. London: Penguin.
- Carter, J., Fenton, J and Modood, T. (2000). *Ethnicity and Employment in Higher Education*, London: Policy Studies Institute
- Connolly, T. (2005). *The Impact of Educational Disadvantage on Adult Citizenship and Participation in Ireland* AONTAS: Dublin, 53-60 (http://www.aontas.com/download/pdf/adult_learner_05.pdf).
- Culleton, J. (2007). *Institutional Racism in Ireland: Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Criminal Justice and Social Care Provision Systems*, European Journal of Social Education, Vol. No: 12/13
- Curtis, L. (1984). *Nothing but the same old story (the roots of anti-Irish racism)* Information on Ireland, London: Macmillan
- Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie) *Dempsey Launches the Higher Education Equality Unit's Resource Pack*, 16 November 2002, available: <http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&ecategory=402> (accessed 29.06.2010)
- Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie) *Dempsey Launches IVEA Working Group Report on a Pilot Framework for Educational Provision for Asylum Seekers*,

Refugees and Minority Linguistic Groups, 25 November 2002, available: <http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&ecategory=402> (accessed 29.06.2010)

Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie) *Dempsey Addresses National Conference Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education*, 27 November 2002, available <http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?main=&pcategory=40196&ecategory=EN&ecategory=40252&> (accessed 29.06.2010)

Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie) *Education is vital element in supporting greater Traveller participation and empowerment in society*, 21 November 2006, available: <http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&ecategory=402> (accessed 29.06.2010)

Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie) *Body provides key services for Migrants – Integration Minister addresses Qualifications Recognition Ireland*, 29 February 2008, available: <http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&ecategory=431> (accessed 29.06.2010)

Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie) *Opportunity to highlight anti-racism campaign in third level colleges – Minister Lenihan* 25 March 2008 available: <http://www.education.ie/robots/view.jsp?pcategory=10861&language=EN&ecategory=431> (accessed 29.06.2010)

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (www.justice.ie) *Promoting Anti-racism and interculturalism in education: Draft recommendations towards a National Action Plan* available: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/education.pdf/Files/education.pdf> (accessed 05.01.2010)

Equal at Work, *Equality Legislation – A Summary*, Republic of Ireland, www.dublinpact.ie/word/Equality-Legislation-IRL.doc, 2009, (accessed 21.11.2009)

Fanning, D. (2002). *Racism and Social Change in the Republic of Ireland*, Manchester University Press, UK

Flash Eurobarometer 217 (2000). *Intercultural Dialogue in Europe*. The Gallop Organisation, European Commission as cited in National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2006). *Intercultural Education in the post-primary school: enabling students to respect and celebrate diversity, to promote equality and to challenge unfair discrimination*, Guidelines for schools, NCCA, Merrion Square, Dublin 2

Gambe, D., Gomes, J., Kapur, V., Ranger, M., Shubbs, P. and Dutt, R. (1992) *Improving practice with children and families: a training manual*, Children and Society, vol 9, no 3, p 8-12.

Government of Ireland (1995). *White Paper on Education – Charting our Education Future*, Dublin: Stationary Office.

Government of Ireland (2000). *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, Dublin: Stationary Office.

Government of Ireland (2006). *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*, Dublin: Stationary Office.

Government of the United Kingdom (1981). *Rampton Report West Indian Children in Our Schools* London: Her Majesty's Stationery office.

Haran, H. and Tormey, R. (2003). *Celebrating Difference Promoting Equality: Towards a Framework for Intercultural Education in Irish Classrooms*, Limerick: Centre for Educational Disadvantage Research

Higher Education Equality Unit (1999). *Doing it Differently! Addressing Racism and Discrimination against Members of Minority Ethnic Groups in Higher Education in Ireland* http://www.ucc.ie/publications/heeu/Recommendations/Doing_it_Differently.htm (accessed 19.10.2009)

Inglis, T. (2001). *Racism, Power and Fear of Outsiders* The Adult Learner, AONTAS: Dublin, 7-14 (http://www.aontas.com/download/pdf/adult_learner_05.pdf).

Jarvis, P. (2004). *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning* (3rd edn), London: Routledge.

Mac Gréil, M. (1977). *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ireland: Based on a Survey of Intergroup Attitudes of Dublin Adults and Other Sources*, National College of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland

Mac Gréil, M. (1996). *Prejudice in Ireland Revisited*, Maynooth: Survey and Research Unit. St Patricks College.

Macpherson, Sir William. (1999). *Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, Report of an Inquiry by Sir William of Cluny, CM 4262-1, London: HMSO

McDonnell, F. (2002) *Promoting Anti-Racism and Inter-Culturalism at All Levels of the Education System*, Submission to the Educational Disadvantage Forum, AONTAS, Dublin

McVeigh, R. and Lentin, R. (2002). *Situated Racisms: A Theoretical Introduction* in Lentin, R. and McVeigh, R. (eds) *Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland*, Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications 1-48

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2006). *The Context of Intercultural Education*, NCCA, Merrion Square, Dublin 2

Neubeck, K and Glasberg, D. (2005). *Sociology: Diversity, Conflict and Change*, McGraw-Hill, New York, US

Parekh, B. (2000). *Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (The Parekh Report), Profile Books Ltd, London.

Parekh, B. (2000). *Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (The Parekh Report), Profile Books Ltd, London as cited in National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2006). *Intercultural Education in the post-primary school: enabling students to respect and celebrate diversity, to promote equality and to challenge unfair discrimination*, Guidelines for schools, NCCA, Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Regan, C. and Tormey, R. (2002). *Migration and Development: No Papers, No Voice, No Rights* in Regan, C (ed) 80:20 *Development in an Unequal World* Bray, 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World

Richards, G. (1997). *Race, Racism and Psychology: Towards a reflexive history*. London: Routledge

The Universities Act (1997). www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/act_universities/1997.htm (accessed 26.11.2009)

The Education Act (1998) www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/act_51_1998.pdf (accessed 21.05.2010)

The Education Welfare Act (2000) www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/act_22_2000.pdf (accessed 21.05.2010)

UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960: Guidelines for the preparation of reports for the seventh Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and the Recommendations against Discrimination in Education Available:http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURL_ID=52237&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html as cited in Higher Education Equality Unit (1999). *Doing it Differently! Addressing Racism and Discrimination against Members of Minority Ethnic Groups in Higher Education in Ireland* available http://www.ucc.ie/publications/heel/Recommendations/Doing_it_Differently.htm (accessed 19.10.2009)

Ward, T. (2001). *Researching the Language Needs of Asylum Seekers The Adult Learner*, AONTAS: Dublin, 15-23 http://www.aontas.com/download/pdf/adult_learner_01.pdf

Whitty, G., Power, S. and Halpin, D. (1998) *Devolution and Choice in Education*, Buckingham: Open University Press.