'éist'

Respecting diversity in *early childhood* care, education *and* training

Colette Murray
and Annie O'Doherty

A Pavee Point Publication

"Éist" means "Listen" in Irish

'éist'

Respecting diversity
in *early Childhood*
care, education
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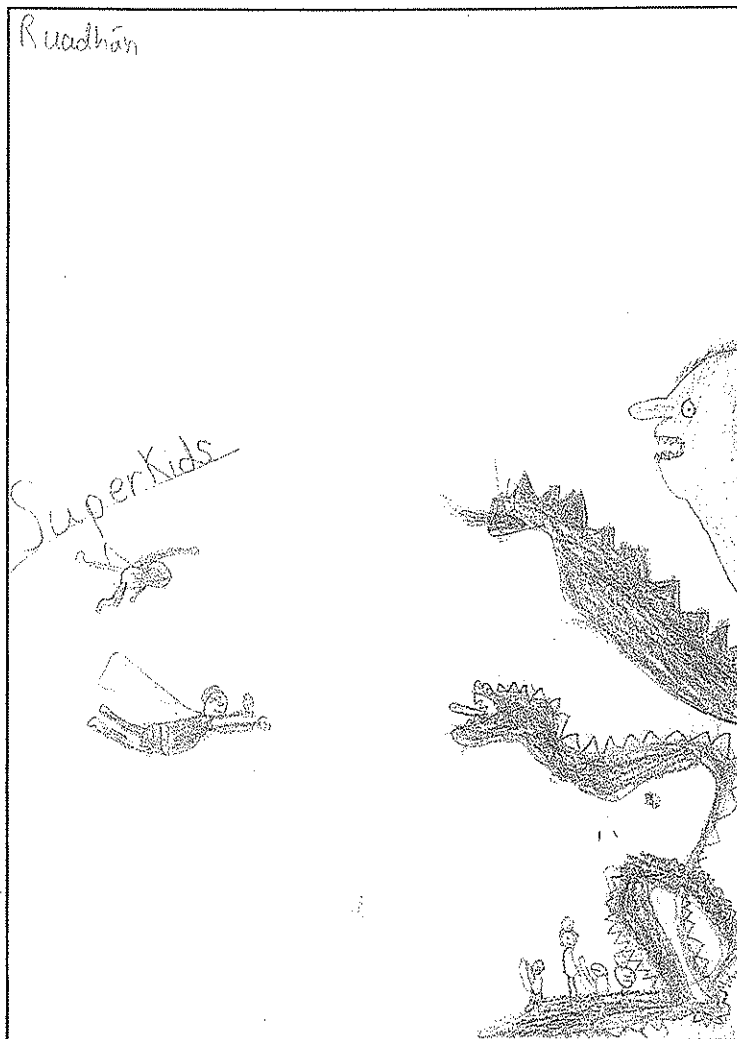
A Pavee Point Publication

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Ruadhán

SuperKids

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Foreword

RECOGNISING THE CHANGES IN IRISH SOCIETY AND THE absence of diversity training in early years education, Pavee Point initiated discussion by hosting a conference *"Education without Prejudice for the Early Years: a challenge for early years educators in Ireland"* in October 1998. The keynote speaker was Louise Derman-Sparks who developed the approach *Anti-Bias Curriculum, Tools for Empowering Young Children* (1989). There was a huge response to this initiative and many delegates strongly agreed that the need existed to develop a diversity approach for incorporation into early years training courses, with a network to support trainers and practitioners. Guided by this response we established a consultative committee of Irish early years experts to explore the feasibility of developing and/or adapting a diversity approach for policy makers, Irish trainers and practitioners together with a possible strategy for implementing such a training process. The Bernard van Leer Foundation supported that phase. This document is the result of this consultation and partnership.

We wish to acknowledge the participation of:

Consultative Group and Advisors 1998-2000

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◈ Margaret Rogers: Regional Manager, Midwest, Barnardos, Limerick

◈ Francis Douglas: Director of B. A. Degree, Early Childhood Studies, Head of the Education Department, University College Cork, Cork

◈ Irene Gunning: Director of Training, Irish Pre-school Playgroups Association, Dublin

◈ Maria McCarthy: Press Officer, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Dublin

◈ Midge Nolan: Coordinator, Barnardos, Traveller Education Support Options (TESO) Project, Finglas, Dublin

◈ Órla Lynch: Project Officer, National Council for Vocational Awards, Dublin

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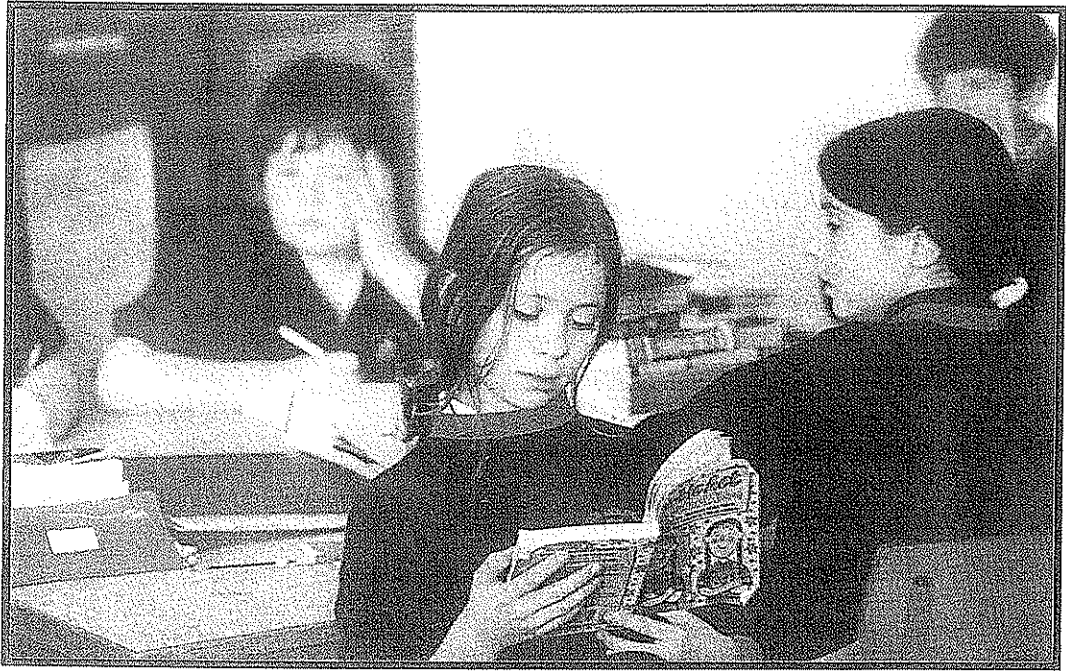
Preface

THIS REPORT IS WRITTEN for a diverse and multi-professional audience including both policy makers and professionals working in the field of early childhood care, education and training. The ultimate beneficiaries should be all children living in Ireland. By raising awareness and providing concrete recommendations for the inclusion of diversity education in all early years training centres and colleges (which includes primary level teacher training), childcare organisations and early years settings, we hope this report will enhance the lives of children attending these services.

All children are influenced by racism and other forms of discrimination. This is true regardless of family background or home environment. Children are receptive to both positive and negative attitudes and behaviours including stereotyping and misinformation about certain groups, even if they personally have never seen or had contact with these groups. They are learning prejudice from the prevailing attitudes in society.

There is ample research evidence which shows how racism and discrimination affects the lives of people from minority ethnic groups and other minority groups. However much of the evidence pertains to older children or adults in the community. Very little research has been undertaken to determine the direct effects of racism and discrimination on young children from minority groups or minority ethnic communities.

We do know from international research and from focus groups undertaken with Traveller children in Ireland that racist and discriminatory incidents are frequently experienced, and that this affects the lives and participation levels of children from various minority groups in society. The voices of all children must be heard and their rights and needs addressed in early years settings in order to ensure access, equality of participation and quality outcomes for all children.

This report aims to demonstrate and stimulate the need for research, development and action in diversity education throughout the early years and the primary sector. It outlines the mechanisms for that change through legislative and policy development and critiques

various ideological practices in diversity education. It furthermore outlines guidelines for practice and makes recommendations for the future development of diversity education with particular reference to the establishment of an anti-bias training approach. It encourages comprehensive involvement at all levels and promotes equality of outcomes for all children living in a diverse Ireland.

It is important to stress that one of the main aims of this report is to stimulate debate. Diversity education and the anti-bias approach are new to Ireland. The approach needs to be developed and piloted. Following this, open debate and critical evaluation are required prior to implementation. This report represents a beginning to this process. It should be emphasised that specialist support training will be essential in initiating an anti-bias approach in specific settings.

Terminology is important, but can be confusing. It is therefore essential for the reader to refer to the section on 'General Terminology' (p. 11) and also to the more specific terms defined at the beginning of section 3.

The title *"Éist"* means "Listen" in Irish, and calls on us as early years policy makers, professionals and parents to listen. And by listening to understand the actions which are now
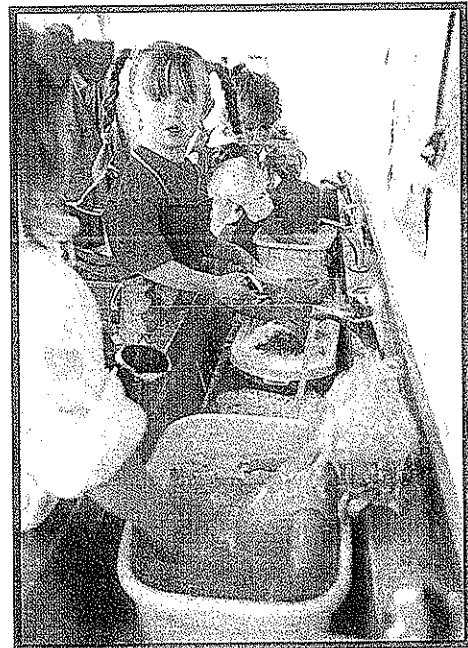
required. Developing a diversity approach which meets the growing needs of educators and children as Ireland experiences accelerated changes and increasingly becomes a multicultural society. Diversity education will benefit all children. An educational approach which equally acknowledges, respects and values all children and empowers them to learn to respect and positively value each others' differences and similarities can only be seen as a positive move.

Sincere thanks to Derek Speirs for his sensitivity to the subjects of diversity, communication and children. His photographs open our eyes to the reality of the child/children as active participants in their own development.

Much gratitude to Pat Pidgeon whose enthusiasm and creativity along with Derek's photographs captured the essence of the report and brought it to life.

Thanks to all the schools listed below for allowing access to photograph the children:

- Scoil Móloga, Harolds Cross
- Clontarf Montessori School, Clontarf
- Naíonra Nathí, Rathfarnham
- Enable Ireland Pre-school, Sandymount
- Traveller Pre-school, Barnardo's, TESO Project, Finglas
- Pavee Point Creche, 46 North Great Charles Street
- Brian Crean, Irish Deaf Society
- Child's Play, Blackpits
- The Little Learners Creche Dublin, Adult Learning Centre, 3 Mountjoy Square,
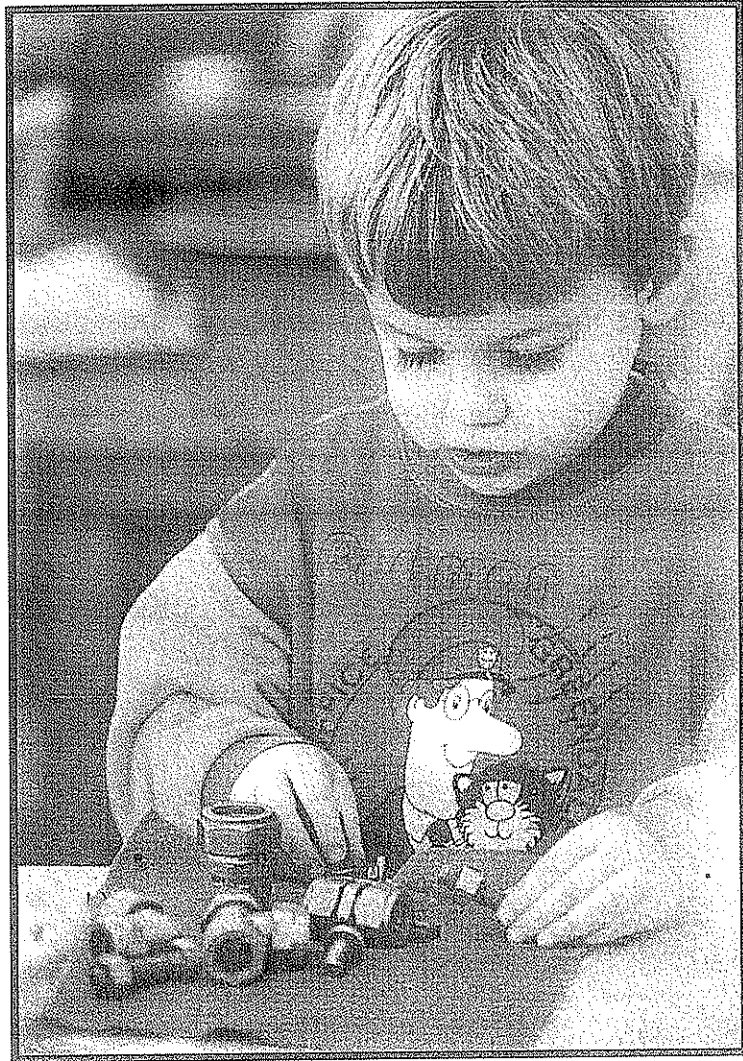
General Terminology

General terms which appear throughout this report are defined as follows

'Child care' has generally been taken to mean the range of services for children in need of care and protection up to the age of 18. The term **'childcare'**, as one word, now generally refers to a variety of services providing non-parental care and education for children 0-14 years.

'Diversity education' is used as a general term not one which specifically identifies any individual approach but encompasses the range of approaches which share a central concept of anti-racism.

'Early years educator' refers to all who work with children 0-12 years including parents.

'Early years setting' refers to all the places children are cared for and educated including the home, creches, pre-school after-school programme and primary schools.

'Inclusion' refers to the inclusion of all children without discrimination in line with the nine grounds identified in the equality legislation.

'Multicultural society' refers to the type of society rather than any type of educational approach.

'Minority' refers to all those who come from any minority including race, age, gender, religion, culture, language, sexual orientation disability or class.

'Minority Ethnic' refers to the Traveller community, indigenous Black Irish, long established Islamic, Chinese and Jewish communities and new arrivals from Zaire, Vietnam, Bosnia, Kurdistan, Romania, Somalia and others and EU and non EU citizens living in this country.

'Majority' refers to the predominant culture in Irish society.
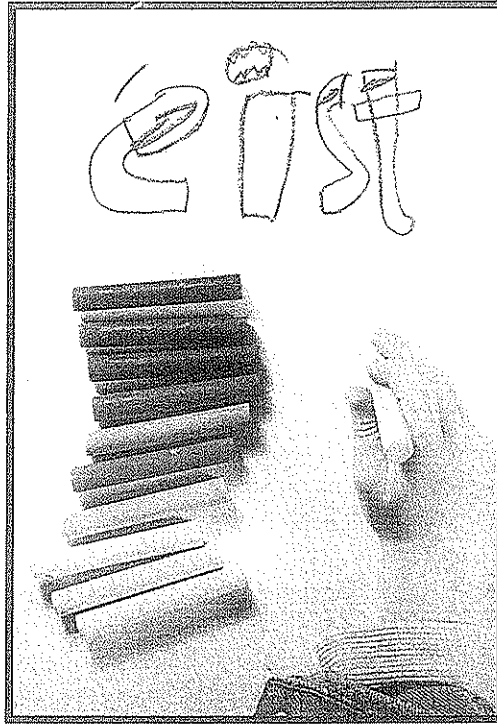
Context, Aims and Objectives

1.0 Introduction

"I treat all children the same in my group; children accept everyone and see no difference. Why can't we leave well enough alone and not burden children with all this stuff about difference?"

Anonymous (pre-school teacher).

THIS IS A COMMON VIEW held by many parents and educators. When asked, they maintain that children in the early years are not aware of or affected by difference and feel it would overburden the young child if adults were to draw attention to diversity. However, research shows that this is not the case. In fact very young children notice, classify and categorise difference earlier than was previously realised. We know that from birth children are learning and assimilating not only from what we intend to teach them but from all of their experiences. The way we treat people, laugh at things, eat, drink and go about our daily lives are what children in our company assimilate and becomes part of their world view. If we deny this effect we are denying that children are influenced by their socialisation. We as carers and educators of the young child have not always seen the need to offer all children guidance and support in developing positive attitudes towards all people and in particular differently abled or black and minority ethnic people. Research shows that children learn positive and negative feelings about racial groups and other minority groups from an early age.

This report addresses the issue of diversity from a holistic perspective. All children have equal rights and deserve the best we can offer

them. Early years education must ensure that the needs of all individuals attending early years settings are being met.

It is therefore important for adults to recognise that this is not an educational issue that concerns children alone but is also fundamentally an adult issue, and one which is vital to ensure equity for all people. We live in an increasingly culturally diverse Ireland and need to incorporate that diversity into the every day practice of our colleges of education and our early years settings.

Through this document we want to explore why we should, and how we can, acknowledge, celebrate and benefit from our differences. This means that our educators and trainers need to be equipped to empower a new generation of Irish children to challenge inequality and respect and embrace individual and group difference in our society.

In broad terms the report sets out to present:

◈ the historical and legislative situation with respect to diversity and childcare.

◈ an examination and discussion of the need for and the various approaches to diversity education.

◈ guidelines and recommendations on how diversity education can be incorporated and fully implemented into early years training and practice in Ireland.

We outline and discuss critically a number of approaches to diversity education which have been adopted elsewhere and assess the relative benefits of these approaches. We conclude that an anti-bias approach can best meet the needs of all children in an equitable way and can be tailored to meet Irish needs. The anti-bias approach addresses all areas of difference including culture, gender, class, disability and religion and also teaches children how to deal positively with difficult issues around difference. This process involves the adults and children from both majority and minority groups. The anti-bias goals (outlined in section 3) ensure that children are supported, affirmed, respected and empowered.

The reality is that Ireland is increasingly becoming a multicultural society and must recognise the challenges and benefits this change will bring to the country. Racism, discrimination and prejudice exist and have always existed in Ireland. We now have an opportunity to address this very serious area within our early years settings. We should grasp the moment and ensure our trainers and workers are equipped to confront the racism and disrespect experienced by many children on a daily basis and work toward empowering all our children to respect, embrace and stand up for their peers.

The impetus for this work is the recognition that the foundations for equality and respect
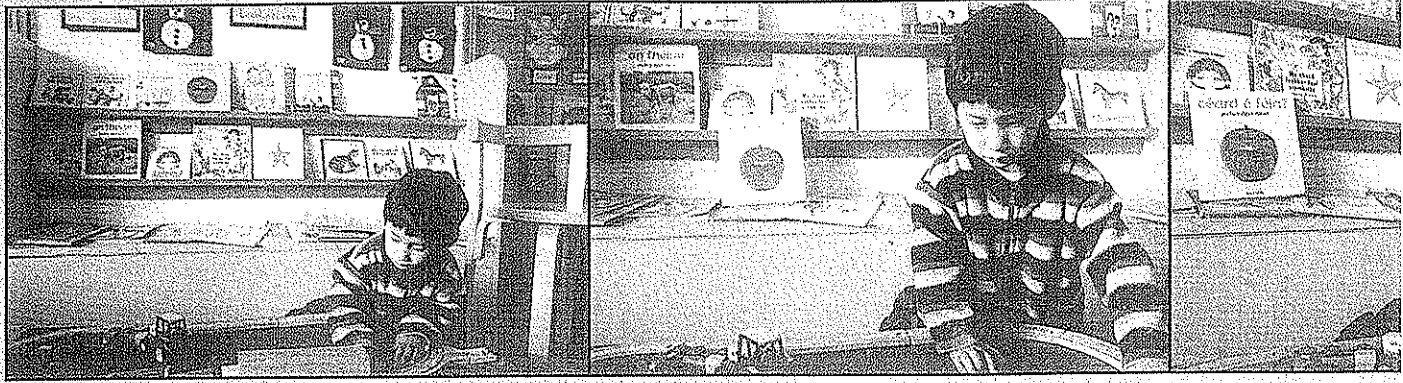
are laid in the early years. We tend to think of older children learning formally about justice and equality but young children can and should be confident, informed critical thinkers and defenders of each other in times of difficulty. Learning to recognise and appreciate positively each others differences and similarities in childhood, should be seen as a critical investment towards Ireland's growing multicultural society.

The proposals for framing the change required to tackle racism, discrimination and prejudice during the earliest years will be discussed in this report.

They centre on four areas of innovation:

◈ the development of an anti-bias approach applicable to the Irish context.

◈ incorporation of anti-bias training into pre-service and in-service training.

◈ implementation of an anti-bias approach within early years services.

◈ the development of racial equality policies in early years structures and provision.

Following an outline discussion of the rationale and the possible structures for future development, the conclusions of our consultative process are presented and the anti-bias approach proposed as appropriate for effective change is outlined.

The current legislative context is described as are childcare policies in Ireland and Europe. We also point to an urgent need for research in the area of diversity education specific to the Irish context. While our focus is primarily on early years education (which is inclusive of the primary school sector), the approach can be extended to suit the wider needs of those involved in other areas of the child care sector, such as foster care or refuge provision for children.

The report recognises the demographic changes particular to Ireland today, emphasising the issues of racism and discrimination in some detail. While prejudice and discrimination with respect to gender, disability and class are also highlighted it is not possible to address all categories of discrimination and the associated legislative and policy developments in Ireland and Europe in the same detail. However the anti-bias approach is both applicable and is intended to cover all areas of discrimination.

It is important to emphasise that racism and discrimination concern everyone in society and perhaps particularly the majority or 'dominant' groups. This is an issue which is often not fully appreciated. One of the key reasons for embracing the anti-bias approach is that it endeavours to meet the needs of children from both minority and majority groups and assists adults to unlearn discrimination in all its forms. The development of an anti-bias approach for early years services should be seen as an essential contribution to all our futures.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This report aims to raise awareness of the necessity for the incorporation of an anti-bias approach in early years education for all children in Ireland. The approach will be adapted in a way that will be culturally appropriate to the Irish context. It will be developed for use in training colleges and to guide good practice in early years settings

The principal objectives are:

1. to raise awareness of the importance and necessity for an anti-bias approach within mainstream early years educational colleges and settings.

2. to analyse present legislation, conventions and policy regarding anti-racist and anti-discrimination practice, children and human rights in Ireland and within the broader international context.

3. to highlight and make recommendations for the development of policy guidelines for use in early education organisations, voluntary childcare organisations, county childcare committees, the primary sector and all early years settings.

4. to make recommendations on training needs for pre-service and in-service early years courses in order to incorporate an anti-bias approach in early years settings.

5. to offer broad guidelines for the implementation of the anti-bias approach in early years training institutions and early years settings.

6. to identify ways forward in meeting the aims and objectives of this report.

1.2 Methodology

A consultative process was put in place to identify an appropriate approach for Ireland. Several early years organisations were invited to be part of the consultative process and a second consultative group of trainers was established to maintain ongoing discussion and development.

Many members of the consultative groups met with Louise Derman-Sparks who was responsible for the development of the anti-bias approach in the United States. The meetings were held in the context of a major conference entitled *"Education without Prejudice: a challenge for early years educators in Ireland"*, designed to promote discussion on diversity education. The conference was held in Dublin Castle in October 1998 and Louise Derman-Sparks was the keynote speaker.

Both consultative groups met regularly to define the project's aims and terms of reference. There were also a number of individual and collective meetings to facilitate in-depth discussion on relevant issues. Draft chapters were circulated to members of the consultative group for their comments and suggestions. These have been incorporated into the final version of this report.
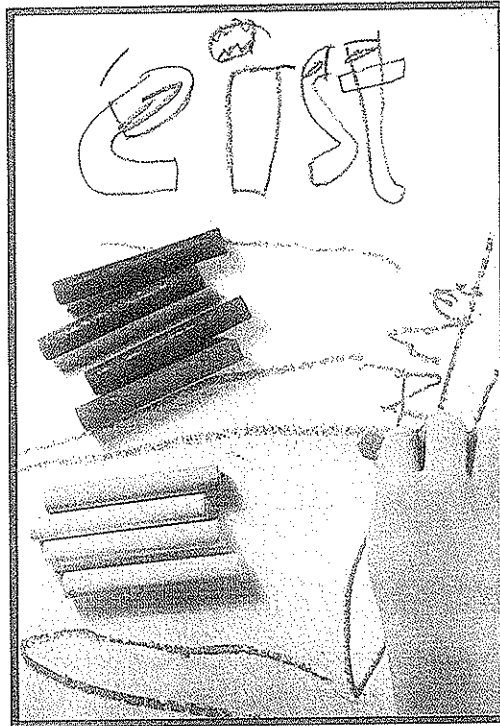
Racism and discrimination: defining the problem, the legislative context and child care developments

2.0 Background and Terms of Reference

To TACKLE RACISM AND discrimination in any society a number of different approaches need to be pursued on political, institutional and individual levels. In order to take responsibility at institutional and personal levels, it is necessary to acknowledge and understand the dynamics of racism and discrimination. This knowledge can help us to work collectively towards the elimination of racism and discrimination.

The aim of this section is to outline the historical context of racism and discrimination in Ireland and then to explore what racism is and

means. This includes the necessary discussion and clarification of terminological issues. It also considers the legislative and policy changes on racism, discrimination, equality and interculturalism at national, European and global levels. In particular, we draw attention to recent early years policy developments with specific reference to recommendations for the inclusion of diversity education and training.

2.1 Racism

2.1.1 The Irish Context

Historically, Ireland has essentially seen itself as a mono-cultural society. It has traditionally been a country of emigration not immigration. Because of Ireland's history, there has been a

tendency to assume that, as a colonised nation and subject to large scale emigration, it has generally been on the receiving end of racism. We can cite Irish immigrants being targets of racism in the countries where they settled, while many of those who stayed at home suffered as the oppressed underclass. The reality is that, all along, there have also been a variety of minority groups experiencing racism in Ireland. These include Travellers, Jewish, Black Irish and Chinese people.

Members of these groups who were born and raised in Ireland have reported that racism has always been a part of their experience in this country. Ireland's indigenous ethnic group the Traveller community has long suffered a general lack of respect and recognition. A culture of disrespect has been a major problem for the members of the Traveller community when accessing various services including educational provision.[1] Until recently the government and society in general has made little provision for Travellers and many policies have impacted negatively on the Traveller community and other minority ethnic groups. The recently enacted Equal Status Act 2000, will assist in addressing these issues.

Public comments by politicians and councillors supplement the testimony of minority ethnic groups in Ireland who have identified serious problems of racism. However there has been little quantitative analysis of the experience of racism by minority ethnic people and, in particular, minority ethnic children in Ireland. Research is certainly necessary to document the existence and extent of racism and to move society in the direction of meaningful support to minority ethnic groups in Ireland.

The deep conservatism of the Irish in relation to culture, and the country's comparative poverty and isolation 'protected' us until recently from having to make decisions about multi-ethnicity[2]. The recent prosperity in Ireland and the difficulties experienced by asylum seekers and refugees on entering European countries have contributed to the creation of a very different kind of Ireland. This change has led to the return of some of the migratory diaspora and has led Ireland to become a destination for members of non-EU ethnic communities. These include refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants. Their arrival has shaken Irish society and thrown up uncomfortable questions in relation to racism, social values, cultural diversity and identity. These changes are challenging, they are permanent, and they have implications for every sector of Irish society, not least the education system at pre-school, primary and post primary levels. As a society we need to examine and understand the reasons for racism if we wish to understand and challenge its expression.

2.1.2 Racism[3] Explored

"Any theory involving the claim that racial or ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior, thus implying that some would be entitled to dominate or eliminate others who would be inferior; or which places a value judgement on racial differentiation, has no scientific foundation and is contrary to the moral and ethical principles of humanity."[4]

Racism is a specific form of discrimination usually associated with skin colour or ethnicity. It is an ideology of superiority which provides a rationalisation for oppression. It also involves an abuse of power by one group over another group. So, although racism involves negative stereotypes and assumptions it should not be reduced simply to attitudes, thereby equating it with prejudice. When prejudice is combined with unequal power, it enables more powerful groups to threaten others in racist ways by denying them access to opportunities, resources and decision-making processes.[5]

One of the major challenges in our society is racism. Racism is not new to Ireland but has become more visible now due to the rapid changes in our society. Racism is the responsibility of all people in Ireland, although too often it is presented as a problem only for racialised minorities. We hear regular statements that racism has only come into existence and become a problem in the past few years. It is this deep-rooted denial which needs to be challenged and changed for future generations

1   Irish National Teachers' Organisation (I.N.T.O.) (1998): *The Challenge of Diversity: Education Support for Ethnic Minority Children.* Dublin: Author. p. v.

2   Toner, Bill S.J. (1998): *Rational Facts and Analysis of social and Economic Issues. Working Notes.* Dublin: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice.

3   See Section 3.1.1 below.

4   The UNESCO Declaration (1978): *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice*: UNESCO General Conference.

5   O'Connell, John (1998): *Roma Gypsies. Travellers of Europe: An Examination of Discrimination and Racism* (conference report). Dublin: Pavee Point Publications.
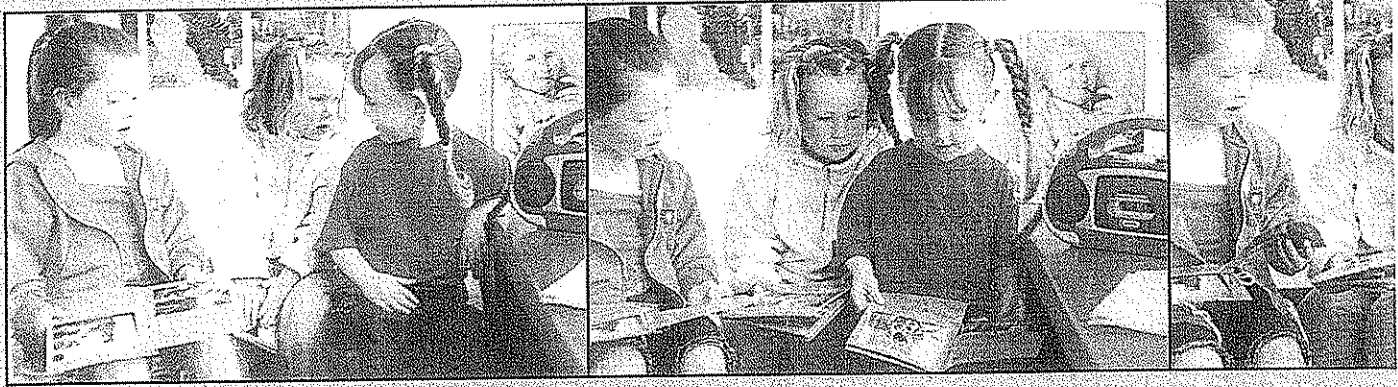
in order to ensure an Ireland which respects difference.

Racism is not a 'natural thing' which permeates every society; rather it is a socially constructed phenomenon. There are reasons for its existence in societies. There are aspects of 'Irishness' for example which are conducive to the development and reproduction of racism. This needs to be explored, understood and accepted if racist behaviour is to be constructively challenged.[6]

Racism can be both overt and covert and can operate on institutional and individual levels, through government policies and individual actions. Forms of racism interact and reinforce one another. While racism and discrimination come in many guises, it is important to realise that in victimising minority groups across culture, age, ability, class or gender divides, all experiences of racism and discrimination can be devastating.

2.1.3 Prejudice and Discrimination

"Prejudice involves holding preconceived views about an individual or a group, while discrimination refers to actual behaviours which deprive members of a group of opportunities that are open to others."[7]

Ethnic and cultural differences are increasingly the basis of prejudice and discrimination in Ireland, although they are not the only characteristics that we fail to respect. Gender, class, disability, religion, sexual orientation, economic status, language and age differences are also the subject of discrimination, disrespect and bias. Today in Ireland individuals and groups in all these categories have suffered and continue to suffer from prejudice and discrimination on a regular basis.

To cite disability as an example: disabled people have to contend with a range of public perceptions and attitudes over which they have little control. Characterisations such as 'pitiable', 'pathetic', 'invalid', 'helpless' and 'dependent' are evident in society. The actual reality for individuals is substantially different. Disabled people's feelings about their disability in fact range along a continuum from bitterness to acceptance to celebration.

Society's attitudes are influenced by disabling images of the disabled, and these attitudes, in turn, can represent the greatest obstacle to the full inclusion of disabled people in the community. For instance pupils with disabilities are no different to others in attributing great importance to peer relations which are vital to their self-concept at school. However, they often have to adopt mature strategies to cope with unkindness from their able-bodied peers.[8]

Discrimination and inequality across all these differences are deeply rooted in Irish society and continually and profoundly affect

6   McVeigh, Robbie (1998): Chapter 1 in Hainsworth, Paul (editor) (1998): *Divided Society: Ethnic Minorities and Racism in Northern Ireland*. London: Pluto Press.

7   O'Reilly Michael (1993): *With Travellers, A Handbook for Teachers*: Dublin: Blackrock Teachers Centre. p. 16.

8   Kenny, Máirín; McNeela Eileen; Shevlin, Michael and Daly, Tom (Report commissioned by South West Regional Authority 2000): *Hidden Voices Young People with Disabilities Speak about their Second level Schooling*. Cork: Bradshaw Books. p. 6-7.

the lives of children and their families.

However as against this the Irish have shown themselves capable of standing up against the negative forces of prejudice and discrimination[9]. Inequalities in Irish society have been created and perpetuated by Irish people and can only be changed by Irish people. All children are entitled to equality of access, participation and quality outcomes which includes the opportunity to learn in an inclusive, stimulating, culturally appropriate and non-discriminatory environment.

2.1.4 Diversity: Superiority versus Inferiority

Racism is:
'Belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied'.[10]

Relationships between black people and white people are characterised by the notion of supremacy. Relationships between Travellers and the settled community are similarly characterised. Travellers are often portrayed as

"....drop outs and misfits who because of personal inadequacy or vice are unable to function adequately in society".[11]

A recent survey (2000) reports that 42% of settled people have negative views of Travellers, 44% would not accept Travellers as members of their community, and 80% would not want to have a Traveller as a friend[12].

Irish newspaper reports of experiences of racism are increasingly frequent. One such report involving an African refugee family is quoted below as an example of an everyday experience:

"[This] family are virtually prisoners in their own Dublin home. Such is the hostility they face from their neighbours that the five children do not play with local kids, some of whom call them "niggers" and pelt their house with eggs and stones".[13]

The concept of superiority which underpins racist dynamics means that the dominant group fails to accept minorities as equal beings with their own contribution to make to society. It is important to remind ourselves that all of us belong to one or more 'ethnic' groups. However some of us happen to be in a majority ethnic group and others in a 'minority'. Ethnicity implies difference whereas it is often portrayed as deficit, (as seen in above examples). Members of minorities are often perceived as inferior and are subsequently subject to discrimination and hence oppression. Minority ethnic groups are ideologically presented as biologically different (from and by implication inferior to) the majority ethnic group. In this way ethnic difference (characterised by solidarity, shared values and posi-

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9   For example the public reaction to a recent newspaper report on the Para-Olympics. (Sunday Independent 22nd October 2000) anti-racism rallies, various campaigns and cultural initiatives.

10   Lorde 1984 as cited in, Thompson, Neil (1997): *Anti-Discriminatory Practice: Practical Social Work: (2nd Ed)*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd. p. 61.

11   Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (1992): *D.T.E.D.G File: Irish Travellers New Analysis and New Initiatives*. Dublin: Pavee Point Publications. p. 4.

12   Citizen Traveller Survey (2000): Attitudes To Travellers, Irish Times, March 4th, 2001.

13   Haughey, Nuala (2001): Irish Times, March 20th, 2001.

tively valued cultural identity) is constructed as racial inferiority (characterised by exclusion, marginalisation and oppression)[14].

The assumption is often made that institutional systems designed by the dominant group meet the needs of all. This is a 'superior' view within a narrowly defined concept of 'normality'. Unfortunately many service users' needs are not met when services are developed in this manner, the mistaken assumption being that dominant definitions of 'normality' translate into the everyday routines of minorities. In reflecting dominant cultural values institutionally, as in the school system or in the health system, the racist outcome may be unwitting but is nevertheless very real. For example, an assumption that Traveller families 'are not interested in education or like living in a field on the side of the road with no running water or toilet facilities' can and does lead to the denial of services to Travellers which they require and are entitled to. The intent may not be racist but the effect is, and is likely to be experienced as oppressive.

From an early age, white or dominant groups take for granted that services and institutional systems are there to meet their needs. Generally, white or dominant group people need to learn to work as equals with other people and to unlearn attitudes of superiority. Minority ethnic people need to become bi-cultural, both by being confident in maintaining their home culture and language and by ensuring they can operate successfully within the larger dominant society. Ideally all people should know how to live bi-culturally. White and dominant groups have to rid themselves of the arrogant assumption that they have something to offer Black people, the Traveller community and minority groups and that the minority groups provide nothing in return. The dominant group have to recognise that being different and equal is a right which is not readily available to all citizens.

Historically, it has to be recognised that minority groups have not been cowed by the white or dominant majority definitions of their place and role in the world. They have resisted their subordination overtly and covertly in the routines of everyday life and in liberation struggles. This is an indication of the deep roots of cultural identity. It suggests that cultural diversity rather than domination by one group should be seen as the 'norm'. The challenge is for society as a whole to find imaginative ways to be inclusive which in effect, means becoming intercultural.

A similar analysis of relationships between minority and dominant groups can be applied to other minority groups such as disabled or those of different sexual orientation.

2.2 Legislative Developments

2.2.1 National Dimension

In Ireland legislation has been enacted in relation to equality and human rights. In the absence of a statutory framework it has been very difficult for individuals and organisations to defend the rights of those subjected to dis-

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14 Thompson, Neil (1997): *Anti-Discriminatory Practice: Practical Social Work* (2nd ed), London: Macmillan Press Ltd. p. 60.
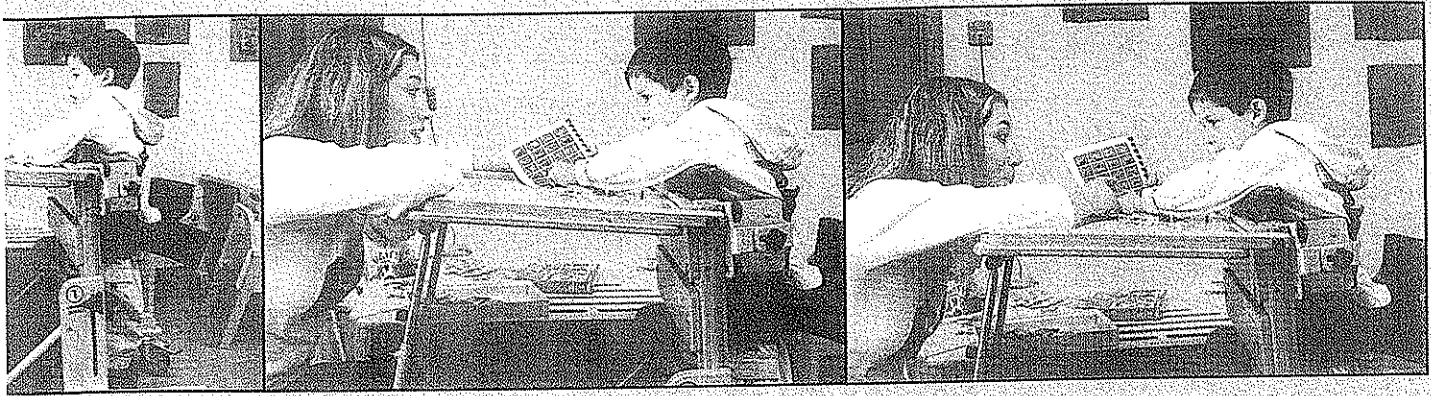
crimination in Ireland. These developments, although in their infancy, will, it is hoped, contribute to the elimination of racism and discrimination against individuals and communities on the basis of difference. All of these have an international precursor in the *UN Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969)*.

RECENT LEGISLATION AND INITIATIVES

In chronological order, these include:

	YEAR
The Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities	1993
The Refugee Act	1996
People with Disabilities Ireland	1997
The European Year Against Racism	1997
National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism	1998
Employment Equality Act	1998
Equality Authority	1999
Office of Director of Equality Investigation	1999
Equal Status Act 2000	2000
Human Rights Commission Act	2000
Ratification of the UN Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination	2000
The Disabilities Bill	2000
National Disability Authority	2000
Programme for Prosperity and Fairness	2000

The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of these developments though not in chronological order as in the table.

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) (1998)

The European Council designated 1997 as the *European Year Against Racism (EYAR)*. As part of the EU Resolution establishing the EYAR, the Council called on Member States to appoint national coordinating committees to oversee activities for the year. In Ireland a National Coordinating Committee was established to continue the work commenced during the EYAR. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform established the *National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism* in July 1998. The Committee is a partnership of non-governmental organisations, state agencies, social partners and government departments. Its objectives are to develop an integrated approach against racism and to act in a policy advisory role to the government on matters relating to racism and interculturalism. The committee is also endeavouring to promote a more participative and intercultural society.

The Equal Status Act 2000 (2000)

The *Equal Status Act 2000* was enacted on the 25th of October 2000. Recognised as a milestone in the development of effective equality legislation in Ireland, this very welcome legislation complements the already enacted *Employment Equality Act (1998) and Equality Authority (1999)*. The Act seeks to outlaw discrimination in the provision of goods and services on nine grounds: disability, marital status, race, family status, membership of the Traveller community, sexual orientation, religious belief, age and gender. The Equality Authority is complemented by the establishment of an *Office of Director of Equality Investigation (1999)*, both appointed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform which will provide the mechanism for the redress of equality cases arising under both
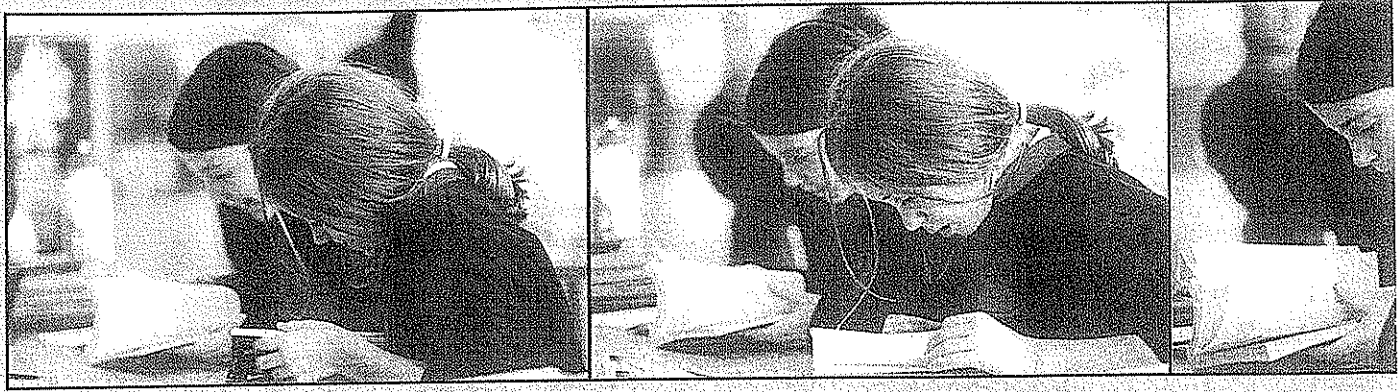
Employment Equality and Equal Status Legislation.

The Government signed up to the *UN Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination* in 1969 and it was ratified in December 2000. The Equal Status Act, (2000) facilitated the ratification of this Convention in Ireland.

The Refugee Act (1996)

The *Refugee Act (1996)* introduced a statutory obligation on the Irish state to consider applications (for refugee status in Ireland) from people fleeing persecution in their home countries. The 1996 Refugee Act must be fully implemented to establish a process for determining applications by asylum seekers for refugee status on a statutory basis.

Human Rights Commission (2000)

One of the outcomes of the Good Friday Peace Agreement was the decision to establish a *Human Rights Commission* in Ireland, North and South. These independent bodies will review the effectiveness of relevant legislation and practices and promote awareness of human rights. These Commissions have the potential to challenge discrimination and to develop a strong anti-racism/intercultural dimension to their roles. The first annual report of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was published in June 2000. In the South of Ireland, the Human Rights Commission Act, 2000 is expected to commence formally in July 2001 following an amendment to facilitate increased membership of the Commission.

People with Disabilities Ireland (1997)

People with Disabilities Ireland was formed in 1997 with the support of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. It is comprised of people with disabilities, representatives of parents, carers and partners, advocates, local groups of people with disabilities and representatives of national 'disability' organisations. It lobbies government and statutory authorities of the rights of people with disabilities. It promotes government action on the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities.

The Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities (1993)

The *Commission of the Status of People with Disabilities* was established 1993 and has since been engaged in a most comprehensive examination of the current status of people with disabilities within an historical context in Ireland. The report contains 402 recommendations including legislative solutions. It reported in 1996. A progress report on its implementation was published in 1999.

The Disabilities Bill (2000)

The *Disabilities Bill*, which is currently being prepared, is expected to be published in 2001. The Bill should provide specific measures to advance and secure more participation of people with disabilities in society, including the participation of children with disabilities. This legislation is being developed within the context of an equality infrastructure already in place which includes the Employment Equality Act, Equal Status Act, the National Disability Authority Act and the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities concerning future legislation.

National Disabilities Authority (2000)

The *National Disability Authority* is a state agency and was founded in 2000 to act as a central, national body to assist in the coordination and development of disability policy. The remit of the Authority includes initiating research, statistical analysis, advising on standards for programmes, monitoring codes of practice and liaising with service providers and others to support the development and implementation of appropriate standards for programmes and services for people with disabilities.

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000-2003)

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* is the result of negotiations involving all parties on a new national agreement. The core objective of the programme is to build a fair, inclusive society in Ireland. The programme consists of five operational frameworks, which include, living standards and workplace environment; prosperity and economic inclusion; social inclusion and equality; successful adaptation to continuing change and renewing partnerships. Under this Programme a number of actions have been proposed and some of these are outlined below[15].

2.2.2 The European Dimension

LEGISLATION AND INITIATIVES

In chronological order, these include:

	YEAR
European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities of Women and Men	1986

15 See section 2.3.5 below

The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance	1993
EU Resolution on Equality of Opportunity for People with Disabilities	1996
European Network Quality Targets for Young Children	1996
European Year Against Racism	1997
European Network Against Racism	1997
European Disability Forum	1997
Amsterdam Treaty	1998
European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia	1998
European Social Policy Agenda	2000
European Conference Against Racism	2001

The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of these developments though not in chronological order as in the table.

The Amsterdam Treaty (1998)[16]

The EU Commission recently adopted its anti-discrimination policy approach in response to the provisions of Article 13 of the *Amsterdam Treaty* as part of its Social Action Programme 1998-2000, the Commission announced the launching of a broad debate on the implementation of Article 13, including the possibility of a framework programme to combat all forms of discrimination and the adoption of a proposal for legislation to combat racial discrimination.

Prior to the Amsterdam Treaty, European institutions had no competence to act on racism, xenophobia and many other social issues. The

16 See Equality Commission for Northern Ireland & National Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (2000): *Developing a North / South Agenda for Anti-Racism and Racial Equality Strategies: an overview of recent developments in Ireland and Europe*. Dublin: National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism.

Treaty has now provided such competences. Article 13 states 'Without prejudice to the other provisions of this Treaty and within the limits of the powers conferred by it upon the Community, the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal for the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.'

Other policy and related infrastructure developments at EU level are outlined below:

◈ The publication of two draft Directives to implement Article 13. These comprise a Directive to combat discrimination in the labour market and a Directive to combat discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin.

◈ In March 1998 the European Commission adopted an Action Plan for combating racism across the European Union which placed emphasis on developing a partnership approach in support of the two Directives.

◈ The European Commission's Programme of Action is designed to complement the legislative proposals by supporting and supplementing member States' efforts to combat discrimination on all grounds covered by Article 13.

◈ The establishment of the *European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia* based in Vienna in 1998.

◈ The potential for the new round of EU Structural Funds, including community initiatives such as EQUAL, EMPLOYMENT and ADAPT, to impact on racism

and to promote the positive inclusion of minority ethnic groups.

◈ Following on the publication of a European Commission Communication on Equality of Opportunity for People with Disabilities, the Irish Presidency secured agreement at the December 1996 meeting on the adoption of an *EU Council Resolution on Equality of Opportunities (1996)*. Arising from this Resolution a high level group of experts for the member states on disability was established.

◈ The publication of the *'Barrier Free Europe'* document in 2000 and the commitment therein to have the year 2003 designated the European Year of Disabled Citizens.

◈ A Directive on Employment was adopted by the Council in November 2000. From a disability perspective it is strong in that the concept of reasonable accommodation without undue hardship is written into the Directive. This in effect means that the Irish Employment Equality Bill must come up to the standards set out in the Employment Directive within a period of three years.

The Council of Europe

The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (1993)

◈ The *European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance* was established in 1993 under the aegis of the Council of Europe. It comprises independent members with recognised expertise in dealing with questions of racism, xenophobia,

anti-semitism and intolerance. Its activities are multi-disciplinary and are based around terms of reference which allow it to examine and assess the effectiveness of the range of measures taken by member states to combat racism and to propose further action in this field at local, national and European levels. Their work ,is ongoing.

European Year Against Racism (EYAR) (1997)

◆ The EU Council of Ministers and members states formally designated 1997 *European Year Against Racism* and set out a number of specific objectives. National Coordinating Committees were established in each of the 15 member states of the European Union, and representatives from each committee met bimonthly for coordination purposes and to exchange information and good practice. *The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism* (NCCRI) continues the work commenced during this year.

European Conference Against Racism (2000)

◆ The Council of Europe organised a *European Conference Against Racism in* Strasburg (October 11-13, 2000). The conference was in preparation for the UN World Conference on Racism[17] in South Africa in August/September 2001[18].

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17 See section 2.2.4 below

18 National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (2000): *Addressing Racism and Promoting a More Inclusive, Intercultural Society.* Conference: Round Table on Childcare. Dublin: Author.

Similar conferences in Chile, Senegal and Iran have been held also in preparation for the world conference.

European Social Policy Agenda (2000)

◆ The *European Social Policy Agenda* was published in June 2000. The general aims of the new European Social Policy Agenda includes:

○ more and better jobs

○ new balance between flexibility and security in a changing work environment

○ fighting against poverty, exclusion and discrimination

○ the encouragement of social integration

○ modernisation of social protection systems

○ equality between men and women

○ reinforcing the social dimension of enlargement.

The Policy commits the Union to the full implementation of EU legislation to combat discrimination on grounds of gender, race, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation.

2.2.3   Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) (1997)

The European Network Against Racism was established as one of the outcomes of the European Year Against Racism. ENAR brings together more than fifty NGOs across Europe.

European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities of Women and Men. (1986)

The *European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities of Women and Men* was established in 1986 and concluded its work in 1996. The Network consisted of experts from most member states. The main focus of its work was to monitor developments, evaluate policy options, collect and disseminate information and establish criteria for the definition of quality in childcare services, alongside the reconciliation of employment with the upbringing of children. The Network published eighteen reports and has provided a strong foundation for future work. In their publication *Quality Targets in Services for Young Children (1996)*[19] the Network proposed a ten-year action programme with 40 targets to be achieved by 2006 to assist in the development and improvement of high quality childcare provision throughout the European Union member states. The Targets, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 34 and 36 concern access to services *"which positively assert the value of diversity i.e. language, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability and challenges stereotypes"* and provide for intercultural/anti-bias training and provision.

European Disability Forum (1997)

The *European Disability Forum* was originally set up under the Helios programme where Governments nominated umbrella dis-

ability groups to meet on a regular basis. At the end of the Helios programme in 1997 the commission funded a new independent *European Disability Forum* made up of National Councils of Disabled People in each of the fifteen European Union member states and The European Economic Area States of Norway and Iceland and over seventy five European non-governmental organisations, of whom only those managed by people with disabilities could be board members. The original board had thirty four members. The organisation has operated as a disability human rights organisation within the European Union and has representatives on many committees and commissions which the European Commission has set up.

2.2.4 The Global Dimension

In chronological order, these include:

	YEAR
Universal Declaration of Human Rights: United Nations	1948
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966
United Nations Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination	1969
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989
United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities	1994
UN World Conference on Racism	2001

Global initiatives inform and are vital for the improvement of the quality of life for all children in Ireland and also for the improvement of early years training and provision.

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19 European Commission Network on Childcare (1996): *Quality Targets in Services for Young Children*, Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.

These global initiatives include:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: United Nations (1948)

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of the territories under their jurisdiction.

Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (1969)

The *United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969)* set out the rights guaranteed to all human beings to live free of racial discrimination. Ireland ratified the Convention in January 2001. This is an important signal to the international community that Ireland is committed to tackling racism and it provides an important mechanism through which progress to address racism in Ireland can be monitored and reviewed at UN level.

Under the convention, States are pledged:

◈ to engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against individuals, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that public authorities and institutions do likewise.

◈ not to sponsor, defend or support racial discrimination by persons or organisations

◈ to review government, national and local policies and to amend or repeal laws and regulations which create or perpetuate racial discrimination to prohibit and put a stop to racial discrimination by persons, groups and organisations: and

◈ to encourage integrationist or multiracial organisations and movements and other means of eliminating barriers between 'races', as well as to discourage anything which tends to strengthen racial division.

Ireland will be required to submit a comprehensive report every four years to the CERD committee which monitors and reviews compliance of the Convention. Irelands' first report is due in 2003.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

This convention sets out the rights guaranteed to children and young people under 18 years in all areas of their lives and it imposes obligations on parents, the family, the community and the state in this regard. The Convention is based on four guiding principles (Articles 2, 3, 6, 12). Firstly, the Convention's rights must be guaranteed to all children without discrimination. Secondly, the child's best
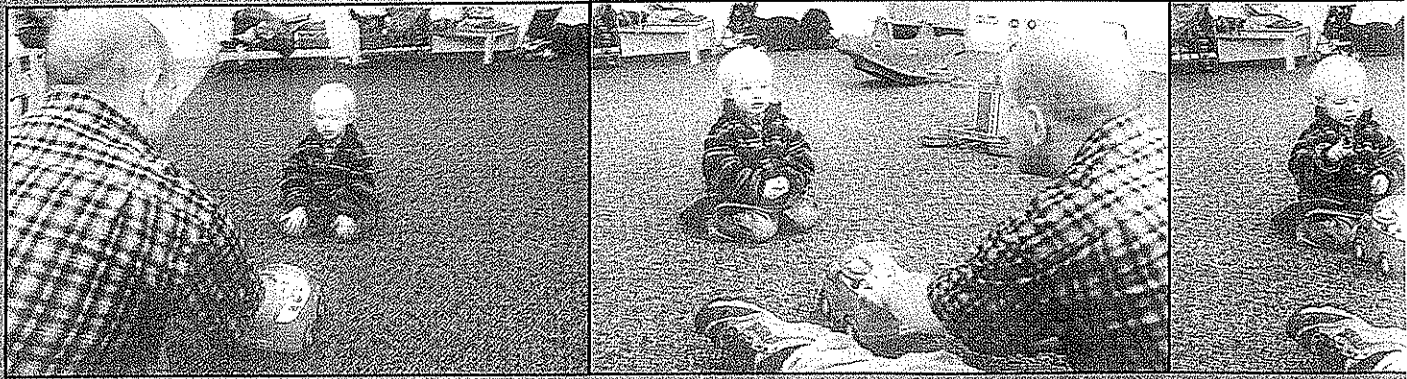
interests must govern all actions concerning the child. Thirdly, the child has the right to life, survival and development and fourthly, the child has the right to be consulted in all matters concerning him or her in accordance with age and maturity.

Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 30 September 1990 and ratified it without reservation on 21 September 1992. This binding treaty, which is the most highly ratified instrument in international law, came into force in Ireland one month later. Ireland still has much to do to achieve the full implementation of its obligations under the Convention. However the publication of the 'National Children's Strategy' by the Department of Health and Children is a very positive step in addressing these obligations.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

The *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Covenant* recognises that in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his/her economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his/her civil and political rights.

United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1994)

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*. This is not a legally binding instrument but represents a strong moral and political commitment on the part of Governments to achieve equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities.

The Standard Rules consists of 22 rules incorporating the human rights perspective and serves to inform policy covering all aspects of the life of disabled persons.

UN World Conference on Racism (2001)

The *World Conference Against Racism* in South Africa, August/September 2001 aims to chart progress in addressing racism, to strengthen the application of existing international human rights instruments and to make pragmatic proposals at national, regional and international levels.

2.2.5 Action on the Ground in Ireland

There are many groups, too numerous to mention here, working on the abolition of all forms of racism and discrimination in Ireland. A growing number of support groups and other interested parties have made progress through actions such as lobbying the government and providing training for organisations in a variety of work areas. The recent legislation listed above provides a platform and is evidence of the Government's commitment to combat racism and discrimination for all citizens in Ireland.

2.3 Early Years Childcare Provision

2.3.1 The State and Status of Early Years Services in Ireland

"Children in their first four years, develop at a pace unparalleled at any other stage in life....children's development is heavily dependent on the availability, resources and capacity of their caretakers."[20]

In Ireland 'childcare' has generally been taken to mean either the range of services for children in need of care and protection up to the age of 18 and/or non-parental care of young children under school-going age in services including child-minding, nursery and creche provision, pre-school playgroup services, drop in services and afterschool care. There continues to be an artificial division between care and education for the under-fives. Unfortunately this has served to obscure the fact that children's education is a continuum and that care of the young child has a critical educational function[21].

Childcare provision in Ireland is uncoordinated, variable in quality and in short supply[22].

State expenditure on childcare until recently has been largely targeted at children in need or in disadvantaged circumstances and much state expenditure arises as a by-product of other activities. While officially recognising both the need for childcare facilities as well its benefits to children, public provision of services in this area and the regulation of existing services remains inadequate.

The Irish childcare system has developed in an ad hoc fashion, and it is generally recognised that a clear, coordinated national policy for services needs to be established[23]. While this process has now begun, through the work of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's Childcare Section, it still presents a major challenge.

The *Child Care Act 1991*, which updates legislation in the area of child protection and welfare, was a welcome development and is now fully implemented. Since December 1996 providers of daycare services are subject to statutory regulations which were introduced under Part VII of the Childcare Act. These regulations are currently under review.

Childcare training has developed on an ad hoc basis resulting in a diversity of training courses and qualifications. Many childcare workers have gained skills and knowledge through experience rather than through formal training. Childcare as an occupation is neither well paid nor highly regarded. This low occupational status serves to deter newcomers from working in early childhood services and has

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20 Gilligan, Robbie (1991): *Irish Childcare Services: Policy, Practice and Provision*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration. p. 3.

21 Murray, Colette (1997): *Pavee Children*. Dublin: Pavee Point Publications. p. 7.

22 Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (1999): *National Childcare Strategy: Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

23 Hayes, Nóirín (1996): *The Case for a National Policy on Early Education. Poverty and Policy Discussion paper No.2*. Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency.
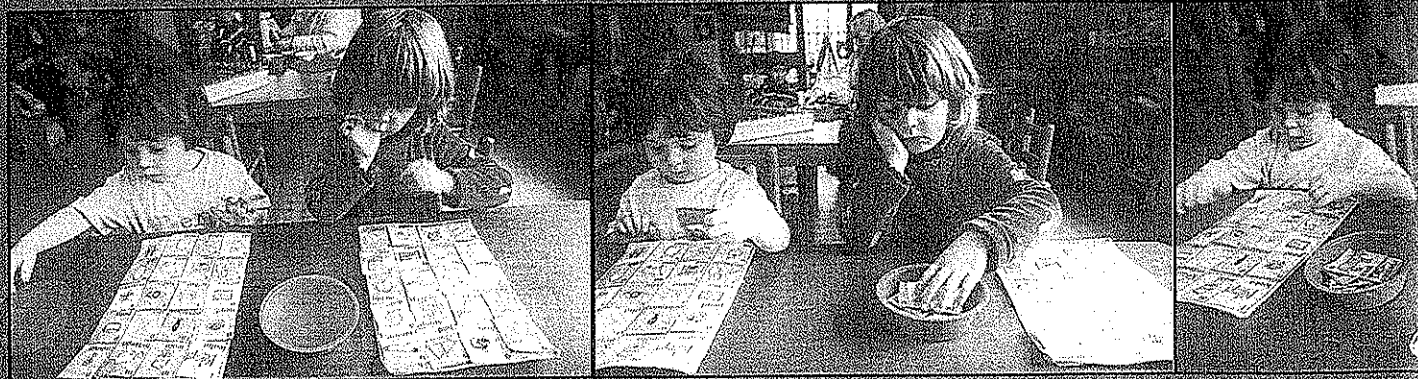
implications for the quality of provision generally. It may also explain to some extent the failure to attract male participation in the sector.

Over the past two decades numerous reports, initiatives and legislation have been published or enacted by various Departments and by voluntary agencies to address the issue of early years education and care in Ireland. The most significant of these was the implementation of the 1991 Child Care Act. However, over the past few years, three reports published by three Departments have pushed the issues of childcare to the forefront and highlighted once again the importance of childcare issues including pre-and in-service training, employment and daily practice and provision. These are highlighted in the table below and described along with other significant childcare developments in the text which follows.

2.3.2 Childcare Developments

Legislation and Initiatives

In chronological order, these include:	YEAR
Child Care Act, *Department of Health and Children*	1991
Report of the Commission on the Family *Department of Social and Family Affairs*	1998
National Forum for Early Childhood Education *Department of Education and Science*	1998
Children's Rights Our Responsibilities *Children's Rights Alliance*	1998
The Education Act, *Department of Education and Science*	1998
Review of the Commission Report on the	
Status of People with Disabilities *Towards Equal Citizenship, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform*	1999
The National Childcare Strategy Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare, *Department of Justice,Equality and Law Reform*	1999
Ready to Learn, White Paper on Early Childhood Education, *Department of Education and Science*	1999
National Coordinating Childcare Committee, *Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform*	1999-2006
Certifying Bodies Sub-Group Advisory Sub-Group to the National,Coordinating Childcare Committee, *Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform*	2000-2006
Advisory Sub-Group for Children with Special Requirements and Minority Ethnic Children including Travellers, *Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform*	2001-2006
Comprehensive Initiative for Assessment and Delivery of Special Needs Education, *Department of Education and Science*	2000
Special Task Forces on Autism and Dyslexia, *Department of Education and Science*	2000
National Disability Authority, *Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform*	2000
National Children's Strategy, Our Children – Their Lives, *Department of Health and Children*	2000

The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of these developments though not in chronological order as in the table.

Interdepartmental Committee on Childcare (1999)

In 1999 Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform, Mr. John O'Donoghue, established an *Interdepartmental Committee* to eval-

uate, cost and prioritise the childcare proposals and recommendations of three comprehensive reports. These are the: *Expert Working Group on Childcare (1999), the Report on the Commission of the Family (1998), and the Report on the National Forum for Early Childhood Education (1998).* Also included were relevant proposals in the *Government Action Programme for the Millennium.* The Government has supported the recommendations of the *Interdepartmental Committee on Childcare* in relation to supporting childcare service providers and to stimulate further supply. Finance was also made available for childcare in Budget 2000, to implement the interdepartmental recommendations. The budget allocation provided funding to the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Health and Children and Education and Science. The allocation of funding to these Departments will assist childcare service providers, stimulate further supply, develop out-of-school services through community groups, develop after school services through school management and develop an advisory service through the National Regional Health Authorities. Information on the new initiatives is available from the relevant departments.

National Coordinating Childcare Committee (1999-2006) (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform)

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has a large remit in terms of the coordination and development of childcare services over the coming seven years. This is now being done through various consultative committees and strands. The consultative process includes an *Interdepartmental Committee on*

Childcare, a National Coordination Childcare Committee, a Certifying Bodies Sub-Group and an *Advisory Sub-Group for Children with Special Requirements and Minority Ethnic Children Including Travellers* and *County Childcare Committees.* The strands will include the allocation of funds for capital infrastructure, staffing, development of the national voluntary childcare organisations, local networks, innovative projects and training.

Certifying Bodies Sub-Group to the National Coordinating Childcare Committee (2000-2006) (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform)

The primary responsibility of the *Certifying Bodies Sub-Group* is to develop a qualifications and training framework for the early childhood, care and education sector.

Advisory Sub-Group to the National Coordinating Childcare Committee for Children with Special Requirements and Minority Ethnic Children including Travellers (2001-2006) (Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform)

The primary function of the *Advisory Committee* is to proof the work of the National Coordinating Childcare Committee in relation to provision of services for children with special requirements and minority ethnic children including Travellers.

National Children's Strategy (2000) (Department of Health and Children)

The *National Children's Strategy: Our Children-Their Lives* was published in November 2000. This initiative is very welcome and has followed from the government report concerning Ireland's implementation of the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child. An Interdepartmental Committee was established by the government to oversee the preparation of the National Children's Strategy. Two advisory panels also assisted the Interdepartmental Group. One panel consisted of expert researchers who focused on children's needs and the other included representatives of voluntary organisations who work with, or are advocates for children. The National Children's Strategy maps out the strategic direction for the development of supports and services over the next ten years through a set of goals which will address all aspects of the lives of children and young people.

"Ready to Learn," White Paper on Early Childhood Education (1999) (Department of Education and Science)

In March 1998 the Department of Education and Science convened a Forum for all those involved in the early years to meet to engage in multi-lateral discussions on key issues involved in the education of young children. The Report on the Forum for Early Childhood Education was published in 1998. This was the foundation for the White Paper on Early Childhood Education.

The Forum Report states:

"Forum participants stressed the importance of including adult Travellers in the delivery of early childhood services. The Secretariat also supports the call for intercultural dimensions in the curriculum and in teacher education courses. Textbooks and teaching materials should respect the diversity of ethnic and cultural images. Attention is also paid to the needs of the young children of

immigrants whose home language is not English. The early years are critical with regard to language development on which so much subsequent educational attainment depends."[24]

The White Paper on Early Childhood Education is welcomed as an important contribution to setting out the aims and requirements of early childhood education. However, it falls short in its response to the recommendations presented in the Report on the Forum for Early Childhood Education. Most seriously the White Paper contains no explicit commitments to incorporate diversity education into early years pre-service or in-service training and practice. There is no mention of interculturalism, anti-bias, anti-discrimination or anti-racist policies in the White Paper. This omission is of major concern. It is essential for the White Paper to reflect and acknowledge the changing reality of Irish society. While certain important issues are not mentioned explicitly, the commitment to consult with existing providers, parents and Traveller organisations on "a range of issues affecting"[25] Traveller pre-school provision is very significant and welcome. In relation to children with 'special educational needs' a comprehensive structure is outlined in the document in relation to coordination and multi-disciplinary team-work. It is proposed that the Early Childhood Education Agency, to be established in 2001, will play a particular role in the implementation of ser-

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24 The Forum Secretariat, Coolahan, John (Ed) (1998): *Report on the National Forum for Early Childhood Education.* Dublin: The Stationery Office p. 143.

25 Dept. of Education and Science (1999): Ready To Learn: White Paper on Early Childhood Education. Dublin: The Stationery Office. p. 106.

vices for early special education services and for providers.

The Education Act (1998) (Department of Education and Science)

The *Education Act* provides for the right of equal access to and participation in education for children with special needs. Children with special needs are entitled to special assistance including resource teachers, special needs assistants, improved access to school and supportive technology.

Comprehensive Initiative for Assessment and Delivery of Special Needs Education (2000) (Department of Education and Science)

Micheál Martin, TD, former Minister for Education and Science established a *Comprehensive Initiative for Assessment and Delivery of Special Needs Education* in January 2000. A planning group was established and has reported on the structures and policies needed to put in place a more comprehensive support service for children with special needs. The planning group has to address issues such as, coordination of services, integration within schools, information on services, expert assessment of needs and the development and implementation of models of best practice. The planning group has reported however, the report is an internal document and is not available to the public.

Special Task Forces on Autism and Dyslexia (2000) Department of Education and Science)

Dr. Michael Woods, TD. Minister for Education and Science established two Task Forces to examine educational provision for children with *autism and dyslexia*. Their brief included reviewing the current range of provision, assessing the adequacy of that provision and making recommendations for the development or adjustment of existing policy approaches, education provision and support services. These reports will be available to the public.

Progress Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities (1999) 'Towards Equal Citizenship' (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform)

The progress report *'Towards Equal Citizenship'* was prepared by an interdepartmental task force. It charts the progress that has been made in a wide range of areas and the way forward to further enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities, their families and carers. Key recommendations on education are outlined. see 2.4.

National Disability Authority (NDA) (2000)(Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform)

The National Disability Authority was established in 2000 to research standards and monitor disability services, including services specific to children, and to advise on the development of disability policy and practice.

Children's Rights Alliance (1997)

The Children's Rights Alliance formally established in 1995, is an umbrella group representing a wide range of Irish non-government organisations. The Alliance aims to raise awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to seek its implementation in
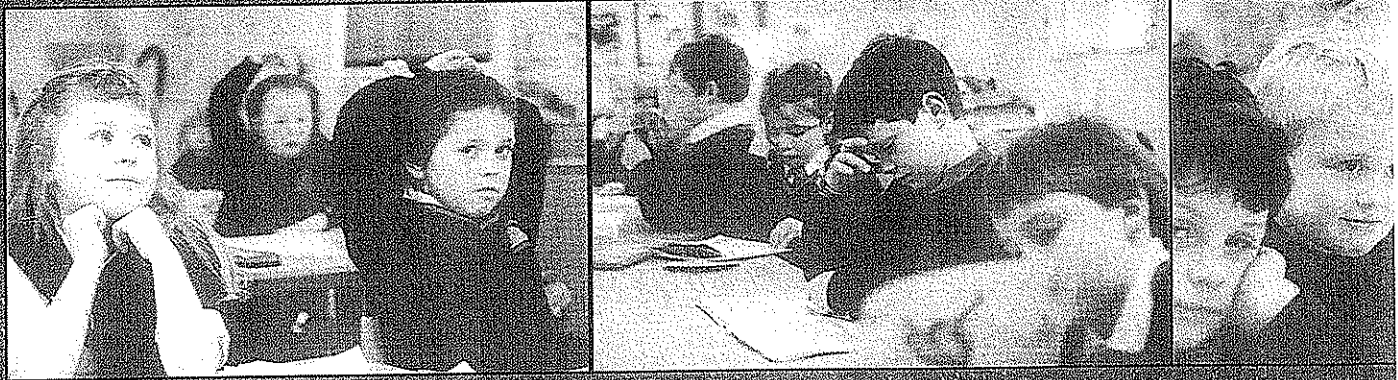
Ireland. Ireland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in September 1992 and submitted an initial report to the UN Committee in Geneva on its implementation in April 1996. The Alliance acts to monitor, advise and highlight areas of concern in relation to the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The publication *Children's Rights: Our Responsibilities 1998*[26] highlighted the gaps and the need for improvement in Ireland's policy, service provision, legislation and monitoring processes. The Alliance has campaigned for the establishment of an Office of Ombudsman for Children in Ireland. The Alliance seeks to work collaboratively with statutory authorities government departments and politicians

2.4 Specific References to Diversity Education in Recent Irish Publications

To date in Ireland the area of diversity in the early years has not been a focus of research. Most research into the development of pre-prejudice[27] and its effects on children's development comes from the United States, Great Britain and to a lesser extent Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

There is, however, a growing awareness of racism and discrimination in Ireland and a number of recent Irish and European reports now acknowledge the important issue of diversity in early years training and provision. The reports emphasise the necessity for an intercultural/anti-bias approach in pre-service and in-service training courses currently offered. A number of key reports are listed in the table below in chronological order, followed by brief illustrative excerpts from each.

	Year
The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community	1995
The European Commission Network on Childcare: Quality Targets in Services for Young Children	1996
The Challenge of Diversity Education: Support for Ethnic Minority Children	1998
The Report on the National Forum for Early Childhood Education	1998
The National Childcare Strategy Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare	1999
The Revised Primary School Curriculum	1999
Programme for Prosperity and Fairness	1999
National Children's Strategy: Our children Their Lives	2000
Progress Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities Towards Equal Citizenship	1999

The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995)

"In the context of European integration and the greater mobility of people, the curriculum in education and training institutes needs to be intercultural in its content and in its perspectives." [28]

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26 Children's Rights Alliance (1998): *Children's Rights Our Responsibilities*. Dublin: Author.

27 See Section 3.1.6 below.

28 Department of Justice and Equality (1995): *The Report on the Task Force for the Traveller Community*. Dublin: The Stationery office. p. 170.
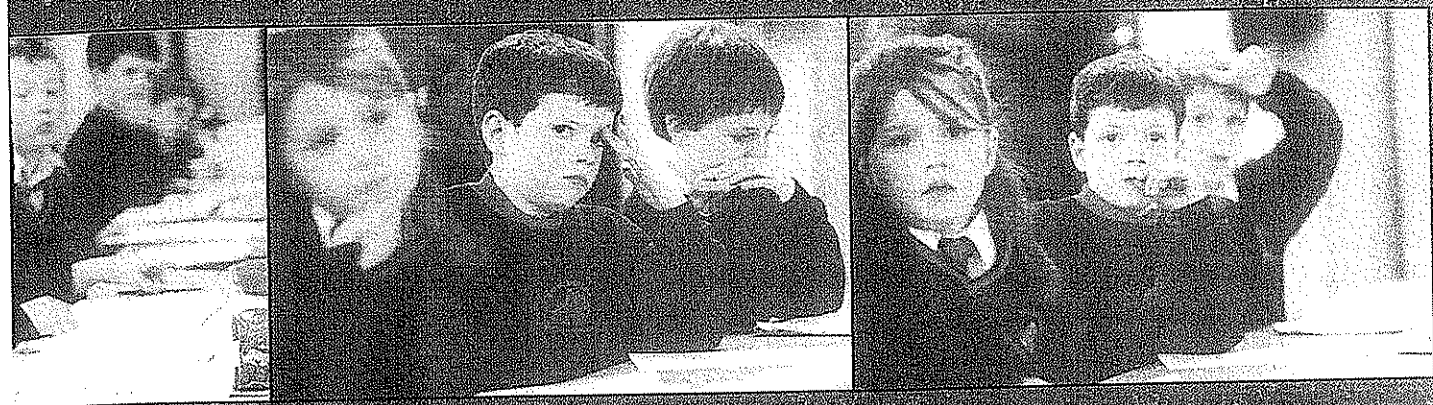
The European Commission Network on Childcare: Quality Targets in Services for Young Children (1996)

"*Target 14: All services should positively assert the value of diversity and make provision both for children and adults which acknowledges and supports diversity of language, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability and challenges stereotypes.*"[29]

The Challenge of Diversity: Education Support for Ethnic Minority Children (INTO publication, 1998)

"*The INTO believes that the integration of intercultural education into the curriculum is at the core of the development of all policy and practice regarding the integration of ethnic minority children in Irish primary schools.*"[30]

The Report on the National Forum for Early Childhood Education (1998)

"*The Secretariat also supports the call for an intercultural dimension in the curriculum and in teacher education courses*".

As there is no coherent policy on early years education of children with special needs the "*Secretariat considers it timely that a special task force be established with the specific brief of drawing up proposals for a comprehensive policy approach on early education provision for children with special needs.*" [31]

The National Childcare Strategy Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare (1999)

"*The Expert Working Group recognises that there is a growing diversity of family life in Ireland. Childcare services and training must recognise the different family structures to which children belong and provide for the needs of all families. The childcare environment must reflect a diverse, intercultural and anti-discriminatory approach.*"[32]

The Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999)

The section of the curriculum covering the social, personal and health education programme, 'Myself and the Wider World' states:

"*The third strand places the child in the context of the world in which he/she lives. It aims to develop a respect for cultural and human diversity in the world and in appreciation for the democratic way of life. The child is encouraged to become an active and responsible citizen who understands the interdependent nature of the world in which he/she lives . . . children explore the diversity of the world in which they live. They are encouraged to learn about their own traditions and culture and are given opportunities to compare and contrast these with other ethnic or cultural groups in society.*"[33]

29   European Commission Network on Childcare (1996): *Quality Targets in Services for Young Children*, Brussels: Commission of the European Communities. p. 17.

30   I.N.T.O. (1998): The Challenge of Diversity: *Education Support for Ethnic Minority Children*. Dublin : Author. p. 50.

31   Forum Secretariat, Coolahan, John (Editor) (1998): *Report on the National Forum for Early Education*. The National Forum Secretariat. Dublin: The Stationery Office. p. 143.

32   Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (1999): National Childcare Strategy (1999): *Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare*. Dublin: The Stationery Office. p. 47.

33   Department of Education and Science and NCCA (1999): *The Revised Primary School Curriculum*. Dublin: The Stationery Office. p. 17.
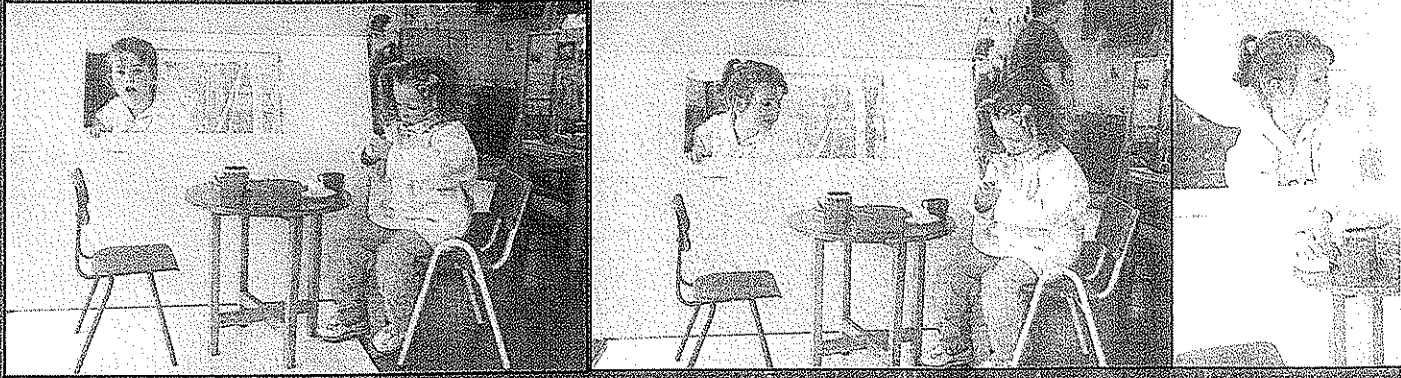
Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (1999) (see 2.2)

The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* includes several actions under *five Operational Frameworks* for inclusion and diversity education. Some are outlined below:

1. *Framework IV for Successful Adaptation to continuing Change:*

◈ **Special Needs Education**

No.7: *"Additional resources will be provided to develop a comprehensive support service for assessment for delivery of special needs education. A planning group has been established on the structures and policies needed for this purpose. The group will consult with the social partners and will be advised by the recommendations contained in the commission report on the status of people with disabilities".*

No.8: *"The Department of Education and Science will appoint a dedicated high level official to take a lead role in coordinating the development of a continuum of supports to facilitate Traveller participation in education at every level of the system".*

◈ **Education and Interculturalism**

No.14: *"Initiatives to promote interculturalism and anti-racism in all schools will be progressed through the Social, Personal and Health Education and Civic Social and Personal Education programmes. This issue will also be progressed in other formal and non-formal areas of the education system."*[34]

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34 Dept. of the Taoiseach (1999): *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.* Dublin:The Stationery Office. p. 109-110.

2. *Framework III for Social Inclusion and Equality:*

3.12 *Equality*

◈ **Disability**

Transition to New Structures:

No.22: *"Following the implementation of the structures outlined in the Report of the Establishment Group for the National Disability Authority and Disability Support Service, it is accepted that the year 2000 is a transition year. Health Boards and other relevant organisations will ensure that robust plans for the training, work and employment of people with disabilities are in place for implementation during the period 2001-2003. New employment and training arrangements will have, as a priority, clear progression routes for people with disabilities from sheltered work, supported work and sheltered employment to employment options in the open labour market.*

◈ **Refugees**

No. 35: *Adequate training will be provided for public sector workers, particularly those involved in the delivery of services to those from culturally diverse backgrounds*

No. 37: *The role and funding of NGOs and community organisations will be reviewed and any funding available will be allocated in a cohesive and coordinated manner with due regard to their role in supporting asylum seekers and refugees and promoting a tolerant inclusive society.*

◈ **Racism**

No. 38: *Increased funding is being provid-*
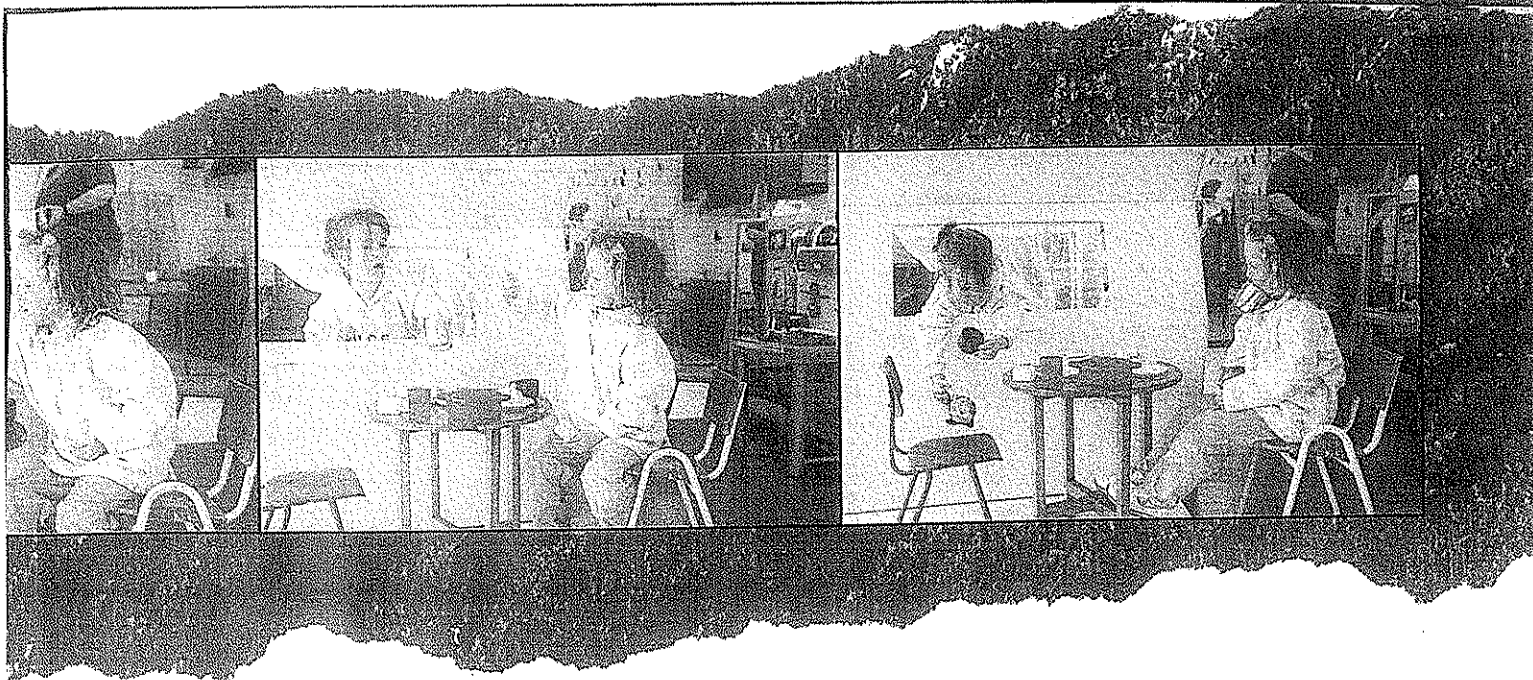
ed for the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism to enable it to undertake additional measures to address racism, to promote inclusion of minority ethnic groups, and to develop public awareness initiatives at both national and local level.[35]

The National Children's Strategy: Our Children–Their Lives (2000).
Objective J.
"Children with a disability will be entitled to the services they need to achieve their full potential."[36]

Objective K.
" Children will be educated and supported to value social and cultural diversity so that all children including Travellers and other marginalised groups achieve their full potential."[37]

Progress Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities Towards Equal Citizenship (1999).
This report makes three recommendations in relation to education for people with disabilities:

◈ *The need for an inclusive Education Act*

◈ *The need for appropriate curricula and flexibility in relation to curricula.*

◈ *The need for all people with disabilities to be offered an appropriate education in the environment of their choice.*[38]

2.5 Conclusions

Irish society is rapidly changing. Ireland is a young state, very prosperous and with an increasingly diverse population. The Government has addressed issues of equality and racism by providing new legislation on equality issues to assist all of us in ensuring Ireland will be a fair and equal society. It is clear however that legislation does not change attitudes. We know that children are aware of difference and are learning values from an early age. The early years and primary sectors have a responsibility to ensure that the issues of equality, racism and diversity are addressed in a holistic way within pre-service and in-service training courses and included on a daily basis in the approach provided for children. Recent childcare developments in Ireland and Europe include recommendations for the inclusion of a diversity approach for the early years and primary sectors. It is important that these clear and unambiguous recommendations do not remain as solely paper exercises. Policy makers must ensure that action is now taken to develop and incorporate diversity education into training courses and service provision.

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35   Ibid p. 101-103.

36   The Department of Health and Children (2000): National Children's Strategy: *Our Children – Their Lives. Dublin:* The Stationery Office. p. 68.

37   Ibid, p. 70.

38   Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (1999): *Progress Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities – Towards Equal Citizenship.* Dublin: The Stationery Office. p. 131-154.
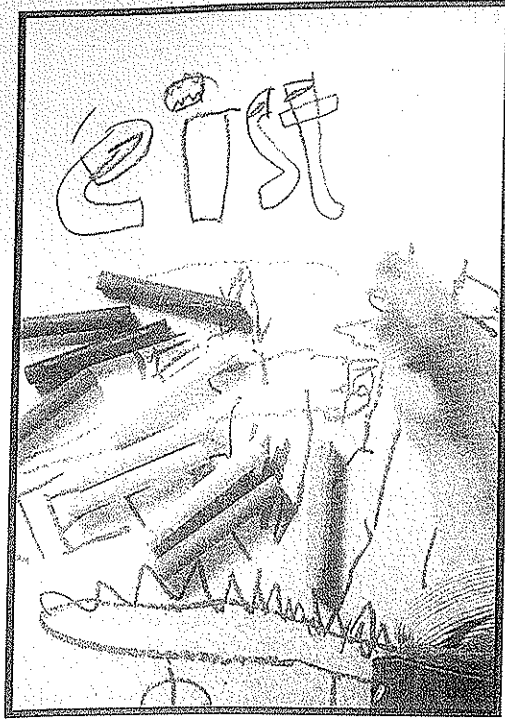
Diversity Training:
why it is needed and how it
can be implemented

Diversity Training

3.0   Introduction

HAVING SET OUT THE context in the proceeding chapters the task now is to examine the implications of diversity education for the early years and primary sectors for policy makers, managers, trainers and practitioners and, of course, for the children themselves. This section is divided into two parts: the first explores in some detail the reasons *why* diversity education is an important issue and the second examines *how* diversity training might be implemented into early years education in the Irish context.

3.1.   Why Should We Address the Issue of Diversity?

3.1.1   Terminology Matters

It is impossible to discuss diversity education without using specific terms. Knowing and under-

standing the terminology is an important step towards becoming aware of equality issues, racism, discrimination and diversity education.
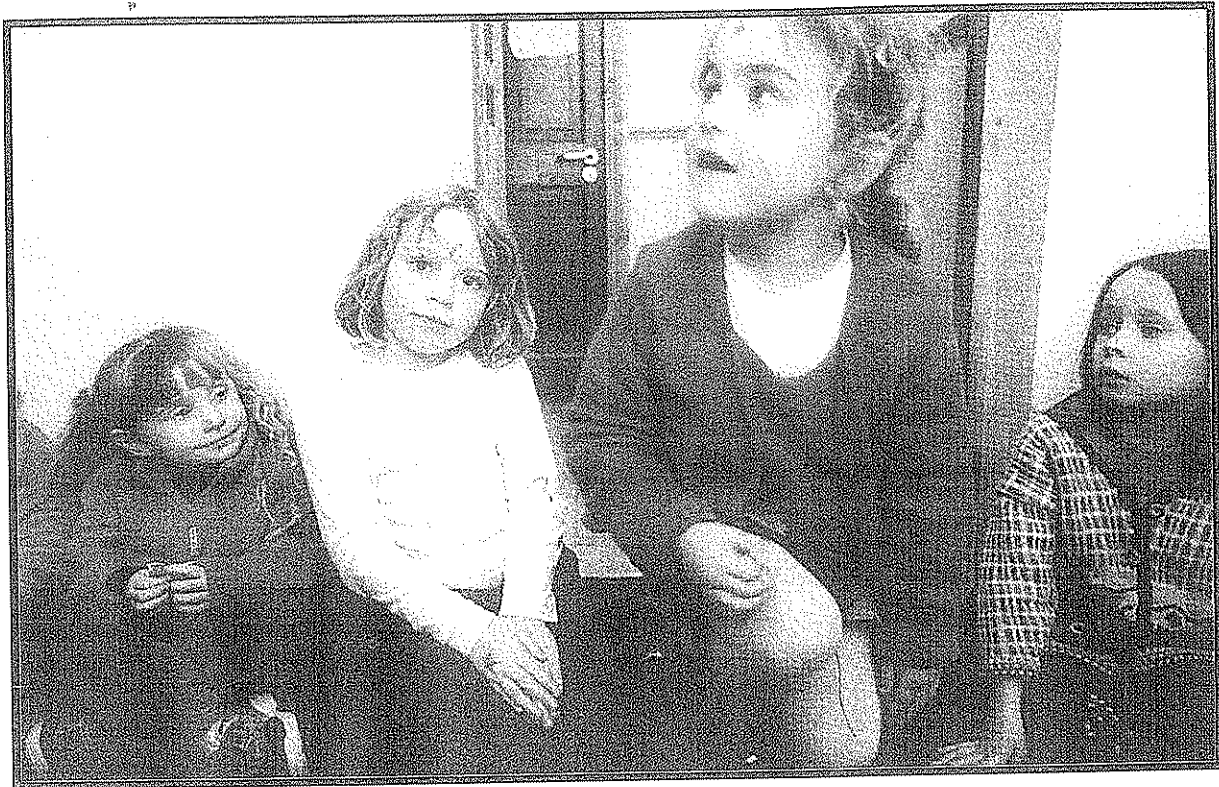
Below are some definitions of terms.

Glossary of Terms[39]

◈ **Anti-bias:** An active/activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias and the "isms". It actively intervenes, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviours that perpetuate oppression.

◈ **Anti-discrimination:** Acting positively to counter the effects of discrimination

◈ **Anti-racist:** Means a person or policy that actively works and campaigns to eliminate racism, both institutional and attitudinal.

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39 See: York, Stacey (1991): *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs.* Minnesota: Redleaf Press. See also: Derman-Sparks, Louise and the ABC Task Force (1989): *Anti-Bias Curriculum Tools for Empowering Young Children.* Washington D.C.: N.A.E.Y.C. See Also VBJK et al (1997) CD ROM: *Respect for Diversity in Early Childhood Care And Education,* Belgium: Giffo. O'Connell John, (1997): *Glossary: Platform Against Racism.* Pavee Point. Dublin. Davies Wendy and Ohri Ashok(1996):*Race, Equality, Manual a Practical Guide for Decision Makers,* Sheffield: Strathclyde Regional Council.

◈ **Bias:** Any attitude, belief or feeling that results in and helps to justify unfair treatment of an individual because of his or her identity.

◈ **Black:** A word chosen by many African, African-Caribbean, African-American and some Asian and other non-white people to describe themselves and their situation in society, not merely a description of skin colour.

◈ **Culture:** Everybody has a culture. It is the package of customs, traditions, symbols, values, phrases and other forms of communication by which we can belong to a community. The belonging is in understanding the meanings of these cultural forms and in sharing values and identity. Culture is the way we learn to think, behave and do things.

◈ **Discrimination:** Policies, practices or behaviour which lead to the unfair treatment of individuals or groups because of their identity or their perceived identity; discrimination may be direct or indirect.

◈ **Equality:** The concept of equality between individuals involves respect for identity, both personal and cultural. Equitable treatment such that all individuals can participate in society to the best

of their ability, is the outcome to be achieved. It recognises that all individuals are *not* the same and may require *unequal* measures in order to achieve equity.

◆ **Equal opportunities:** Ensuring that no one job applicant, employee or client receives less favourable or unsuitable treatment than another by virtue of any non-relevant factor such as skin colour, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability etc, thereby enabling all adults and children to have equal access, participation and outcomes in relation to jobs and services.

◆ **Equity:** Fairness

◆ **Ethnic group:** A group people belong to because of nationality, 'race', culture, values, religion etc. Members share a common ancestry, culture, history, traditions and sense of belonging.

Everybody belongs to an ethnic group: Irish, Welsh, Jewish, French, Traveller etc. 'Ethnic' does not mean 'Black' or 'foreign'.

◆ **Institutional racism:** Is concerned with racial discrimination which has been incorporated into the structures, processes or procedures of organisations, either because of racial prejudice or because of a failure to take into account the particular needs of black and ethnic minority people. Institutions have power to sustain and promote racial injustice by providing opportunities for some people and not others, by providing career opportunities,

training influence, self-respect etc. Institutional racism occurs where the activities, practices, policies or laws of an institution lead, intentionally or unintentionally, to less favourable outcomes for minority ethnic groups.

◆ **Interculturalism:** The interaction, understanding and integration among and between different cultures and ethnic groups without glossing over issues such as racism. The development of an intercultural approach implies policies which further these aims.

◆ **Marginalised groups:** Minority groups within society, such as Travellers, differently abled, or refugees.

◆ **Multiculturalism:** Celebrates difference but focuses on minority cultures and specifically on the exotic aspects of these cultures glossing over issues of racism and unequal power relations.

◆ **Non-racist:** Is a position that does not recognise or counter the ways in which racism affects all people in society. People who maintain this position are essentially taking a neutral stance on racism and often adopt a 'colour-blind' approach.

◆ **Positive discrimination:** Occurs where a person receives preferential treatment or, where a person is appointed to a job solely on the basis of their ethnic origin or sex. In many jurisdictions this is contrary to equal opportunities policies and is unlawful.
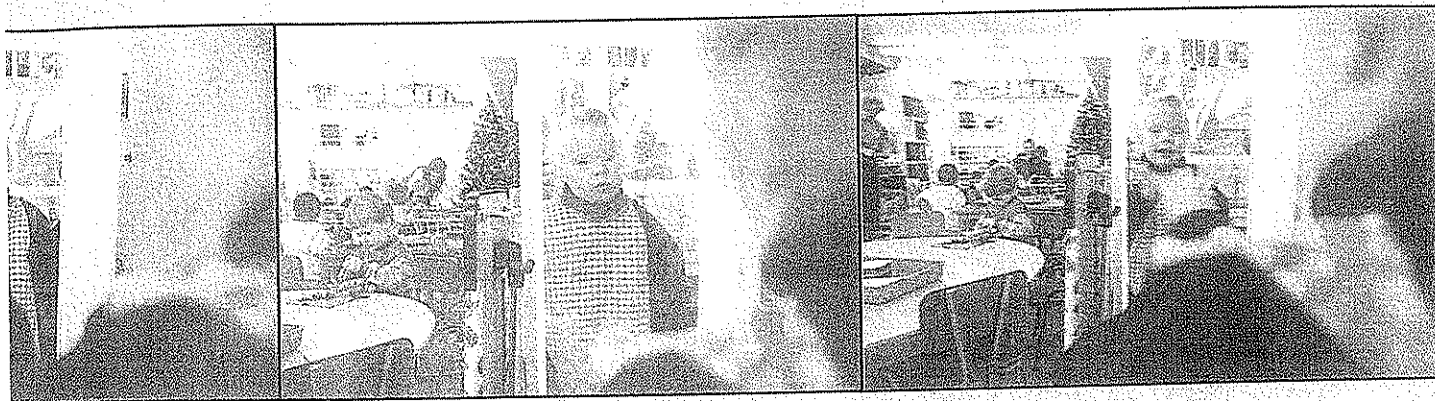
◈ **Prejudice:** A preconceived idea. An attitude, opinion, or a feeling formed without adequate prior knowledge, thought, or reason. Prejudice can be prejudgment for or against any person, group, or sex.

◈ **Pre-prejudice:** Early ideas and feelings in very young children which may develop into real prejudice through reinforcement by prevailing societal bias. Pre-prejudice may be a misconception based on young children's limited experience and developmental level, or may reflect adult behaviour to which they have been exposed. More serious forms of pre-prejudice are behaviours that indicate discomfort, fear, or rejection of difference.

◈ **Race:** A political concept which categorises people into biologically distinct, superior or inferior species or 'races'. It has been used to justify cruelty, exploitation and discrimination, but in fact has no scientific basis.

Race is a social construct rather than a biological phenomenon based on dividing up the single human race on the basis of biological or cultural differences and creating hierarchies on the basis of this difference. It came into usage in the English language during the 16th century, a major period of colonisation, to justify the destruction and domination of other cultures by claiming that they were inferior, savage, uncivilised or even sub-human. Irish people were also categorised in this way.

"As a way of categorising people race is based upon a delusion because popular ideas about racial classification lack scientific validity and are moulded by political pressures rather than by the evidence from biology."[40]

◈ **Racial prejudice:** Means pre-judging on the basis of the misguided notion of 'race' and leads to irrational preferences.

◈ **Racism:** Racism is oppression based on power relations between groups of people built on the use and abuse of skin colour, cultural difference or imagined physical difference. The UNESCO Declaration (1978) states:

'Any theory involving the claim that racial or ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior, thus implying that some would be entitled to dominate or eliminate others presumed to be inferior; or which places a value judgement on racial differentiation, has no scientific foundation and is contrary to the moral and ethical principles of humanity.'[41]

◈ **Stereotype:** An over-simplified generalisation about a particular group, race, or sex, which usually carries derogatory implications.

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40 Banton M. and Harwood J.(1978): *The Race Concept.* David and Charles p. 8.

41 The UNESCO Declaration (1978): *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice.* General Conference 27, Nov 1978.

3.1.2 Diversity: An Important Issue in Early Years Work

Understanding why awareness of diversity issues is so important in early years work is a critical first step for managers, trainers and trainees alike. All adults working with young children need to be keenly aware of the difficulties involved for children from marginalised groups. This includes children from different language backgrounds, minority ethnic groups including Travellers, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children with disabilities and others. It is important for early years professionals to recognise and understand the effects of direct and indirect discrimination and how it can impede children's educational progress. They will need to know how to deal with and challenge prejudiced ideas and values or discriminating practices as they arise, often within unexpected, surprising everyday contexts.

Both the hidden and the overt messages that pervade society are brought into early years settings. Educators need be equipped to recognise and deal with any false generalisations or stereotypes which the staff members, parents or children may voice.

Children exposed to negative messages about their home culture, language, background or ability, however subtle or unintentional, will be affected to the detriment of their self-image and group identity, with resulting conflicts of loyalty between home and the education setting. It is also vital to assist children from the dominant group to develop a positive self-identity without feeling superior to others.

It is of course important to recognise that early years educators from childminders to teachers also bring their own prejudices, expectations, misinformation and lack of information relating to diversity and equality issues into the education setting.

The role of adults is imperative in equal opportunities provision and diversity education. It includes challenging myths, stereotypes and misconceptions held by children and adults as well as by society itself. It is important to positively reflect all children's backgrounds in the childcare environment and to have the same expectation for each child and treat each child as an individual with his or her own set of attitudes, beliefs, experiences and background circumstances. Adults often feel inadequate when faced with sexist and racist attitudes or remarks from children, their parents or work colleagues. Being unprepared for such incidents, they fail to perceive those 'teachable moments' at times when their intervention can make a difference. Adults' understanding of their wider role, beyond day-to day early years settings, will need to be explored in terms of social responsibility and the importance of a pro-active approach.

Diversity is therefore an important issue for pre-service and in-service training of early years educators. Awareness about the importance of this issue on the part of college tutors, trainers and managers is a priority. A range of problems can arise in practice in relation to diversity issues (relating to language, gender culture or class differences or being differently abled) in early education settings. When diversity issues are not addressed they can create

barriers to learning for children and adults and can contribute to personal difficulties for children on both a daily and on a long-term basis. Early years educators need to be adequately equipped to deal with practical issues and incidents, and to be aware of policy and legislative implications. Consideration needs to be given also to ethos, educational philosophy and overall program quality in terms of working with diversity education.

3.1.3. Diversity is a Majority Issue

We all have a culture. Cultural difference should not therefore be judged as exotic, superior or inferior. The dominant group is rarely asked to define its culture and generally takes its culture for granted. However minority groups are often asked to define their culture, to explain what is different about themselves both individually and as a group. The dominant group in society needs to recognise that all cultures carry equal status and needs to be careful not to portray the dominant culture as the norm. This is particularly relevant for those working with young children; culturally appropriate provision means that all children are equally represented and can feel they belong.

"Everybody has a culture. It is the package of customs, tradition, symbols, values, phrases and other forms of communication by which we can belong to a community. The belonging is in understanding the meanings of these cultural forms and in sharing values and identity. Culture is the way we learn to think,

behave and do things"[42]

Diversity is a majority issue because all children are socialised within a cultural context. The process of socialisation concerns all children and is not only relevant for minority ethnic children. The issue of gender bias consistently arises in all early education settings. An understanding of the relevance of a prejudice-free, diversity approach for adults working in early years settings that currently have no minority ethnic children in attendance is important as the issues involved *"concern the early socialisation of both the oppressed and the oppressors".*[43]

Culturally appropriate provision needs to take into consideration both the tangible and intangible dimensions of culture. It must accommodate not only what people do, but also their values or what they think and perceive.

All children attending Irish early education settings are people who will encounter minority ethnic groups including Travellers, differently abled people etc. in their future lives. They will also encounter sexism, homophobia, ableism and racism as realities during their lives and need to be equipped to deal with these realities. Awareness of these issues is best supported at the earliest stages of education by giving children an environment in which they can begin to learn positively about differences,

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42   The Department of Equality and Law Reform (1995): *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community.* Dublin: The Stationery Office p. 74.

43   Siraj-Blatchford, Iram (1996): in Nutbrown, Cathy (ed): *Respectful Educators –Capable Learners: Young Children's Rights and Early Education.* London: Paul Chapman. p. 23.

build confident identities and develop their ability to stand up for others.[44]

Early years professionals need to be clear about why diversity is an important issue for *all* early education programmes. They need to have explored their own cultural identities and their personal attitude to diversity and equality issues. They also need to have reflected on and discussed possible approaches, guidelines and practices for recognising and responding appropriately to sometimes uncomfortable situations as they arise in the early years setting.

The development of all children is affected by the prevailing biases in any society. Irish society is no exception to this reality. The specific tasks to assist all children to achieve their full potential vary according to how each child is affected by this. Traveller children and minority ethnic children need to develop both a strong self-identity and a proud group identity to withstand the attacks of racism. In contrast, the task for children from the dominant group in society is to develop a positive identity and to avoid developing ethnocentric attitudes of superiority. Girls need to learn that they can be competent in all areas and can make choices about their lives. Boys need to learn competence without also learning to feel and act superior to girls. The developmental tasks of children with disabilities include learning to use alternative abilities and to gain skills for countering societal practices that sabotage their opportunities for growth. Able-bodied children's tasks include learning to be comfortable with and to respect differently abled peo-

ple. All children need to learn how to respect each other and work with each other to resist stereotyping and discrimination.

3.1.4 Diversity and the Irish Context

In Ireland, the argument is often used that the problem of discrimination does not arise since Ireland is a predominately homogeneous society. A common view in the past has been that 'there is no racism in Ireland because there are no Black people' and more recently that 'there was no racism in Ireland until Black people came'.

However, as stated in Section One, racial discrimination has existed in Ireland for a long time and has affected the Traveller population, Jewish community, Black Irish and others. Discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, class and other issues of diversity have also had a long-standing place in Irish society. One could argue that Irish early years educators, have a particularly urgent requirement for training to meet previously unacknowledged as well as emerging needs.

In fairness, many educators have recognised that prejudice and discrimination are not new phenomena in Ireland. While in the past levels of prejudice both at individual and institutional levels have been discernible, these dynamics have been highlighted further by the recent arrival of increased numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. Micheal MacGreil has documented changes in his book 'Prejudice in Ireland Revisited', a study first carried out

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44 ibid

in 1972-73 in Dublin only and then replicated throughout Ireland in 1988-89[45]. The findings show worrying signs of an increase in ethnocentrism, and a level of homophobia in the Irish population which is still very high. Across many categories MacGreil found that attitudes of intolerance with prejudice had hardened since 1972-73. This included attitudes towards, alcoholics, drug addicts and Travellers. Likewise the level of prejudice in relation to people with physical and mental disabilities had worsened[46].

Hennessy and Delaney (1999)[47] studied the cultural validity of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) for use in an Irish context and came to the conclusion that Irish providers considered 'cultural awareness' to be of relatively little importance. While 94% of Irish providers were aware of the need to provide non-sexist materials, only 38% felt that provision of diversity materials was important or relevant in the Irish context (although the majority had had an experience of a minority ethnic child attending their setting). The reality of prejudice taken together with these low levels of awareness, highlights the urgent need for diversity training in Ireland.

3.1.5 Diversity: Common Misconceptions

It is a common misconception that there is no need for specialist early years training in diversity education because of the widespread view that early years educators 'naturally treat all children equally'. Research findings do however contradict this assumption. An observational study of teacher behaviour revealed that discriminatory practices exist and often go unnoticed. Ogilvy et al (1992)[48] documented how staff in a multi-ethnic nursery setting *inadvertently* related to children in an inequitable way, depending on their ethnic origin. The staff were shown to be less responsive and to exhibit a more controlling style of interaction towards Asian children (to whom they spoke 'Pidgin' english) as against Scottish children in their bi-ethnic setting. This study revealed how staff may be quite oblivious to their own lack of knowledge or training, and demonstrates the need to raise awareness amongst early years workers about the subtleties of racism and the implications for minority ethnic children's educational, language, social and emotional development.

There were similar findings from a study carried out in Canada by Murphy-Kilbride[49], however here it also found that where staff were from mixed cultures and abilities all chil-

45   McGreil, Michael (1996): *Prejudice in Ireland Revisited*. Kildare: The Survey and Research Unit, Dept. of Social Studies, Maynooth College.

46   Ibid p. 449.

47   Hennessy E & Delaney, P. (1999): *Using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale in Ireland: Do parents and service providers share its values?* Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development Vol.19 No. 2.

48   Ogilvy, CM; Boath, EH; Cheyne, WM; Jahoda G; Schaffer HR (1992): *Staff child interactions Styles in Multiethnic Nursery Schools*. British Journal of Developmental Psychology Vol.10: 85-97 Mar.1992

49   Murphy-Kilbride, Kenise (1997): *A Canadian Perspective on Educating for Diversity*: Roundtable discussion. National Committee For Development Education, Dublin.
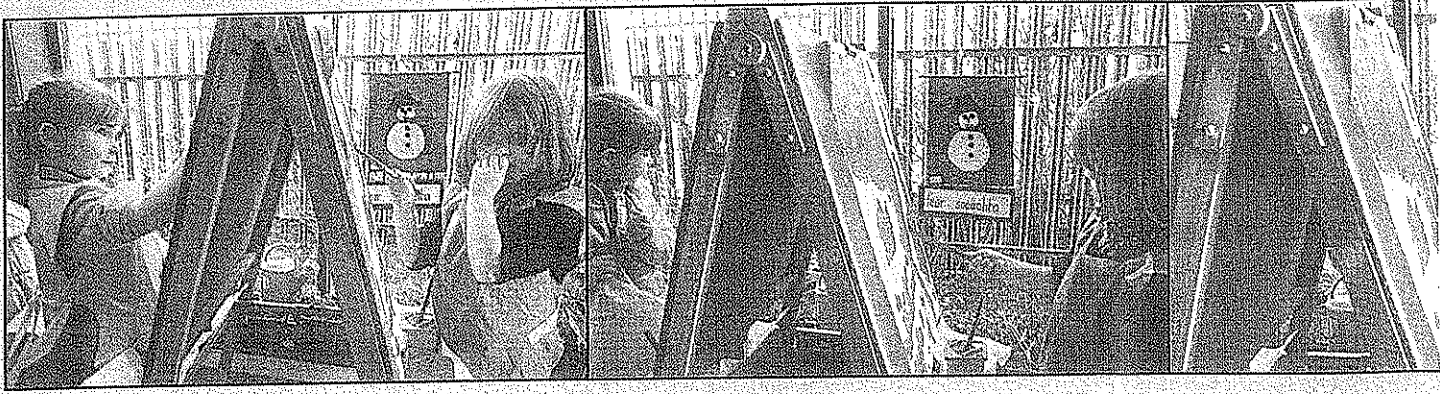
dren received more positive attention and achieved on an equal footing.

Common misconceptions amongst practitioners which reflect a lack of training in relation to diversity issues include the notion that differences, such as cultural and ethnic backgrounds, are insignificant. This is exemplified in statements such as:

" I treat all children the same".

"A child is a child, there are no differences here".

"Children don't notice differences and so there's no problem"

This difference denial philosophy fails to allow equity and can create real barriers to enjoyment or learning for children in early years settings. Such a 'difference-blind' approach has been highlighted recently in child development research generally and is based on false assumptions that all children share common developmental contexts. There is now broad agreement that cultural appropriateness should be a prime concern in the assessment of young children, and that while individual differences can be celebrated, activities should be designed in such a way that supports the integrity of all cultures and backgrounds. It is important to note, however, that although adults may be well intentioned in wanting to acknowledge our shared humanity, the value of diversity is effectively denied by a philosophy that is 'blind' to difference.[50]

50 Derman Sparks, Louise (1989): Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children. Washington D.C. : NAEYC.

3.1.6 The Development of Pre-Prejudice

Children are social and cultural beings, actively learning to make sense of their world. They assimilate information from experiences in various contexts: their own immediate family, their wider community and society generally. There are many different kinds of influences at each of these levels (print, television and other media) as well as children's own personal and interpersonal experiences.

Children construct an image of themselves, an image that may be compared and contrasted to others within their immediate social group. This image will be affected by values and beliefs held by people around them. Children's ethnic identity, how they see themselves and how others perceive them, affects their whole development[51].

Research suggests that the status of children's reference group orientation will influence the level of resilience they will have in the face of experiences of racism[52]. Children can develop positive and negative feelings about racial groups at an early age, and it has been suggested that children as young as three can demonstrate an awareness of racial hierarchy

51 Cross, W.E (1985): Black Identity: Rediscovering the distinctions between personal identity and reference group orientations. In M.B. Spencer, G.K. Brookins, & W.R. Allen (Eds), Beginnings: The social and affective development of Black children p. 155-172. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

52 Derman Sparks, Louise (1989): Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children. Washington D.C. NAEYC.
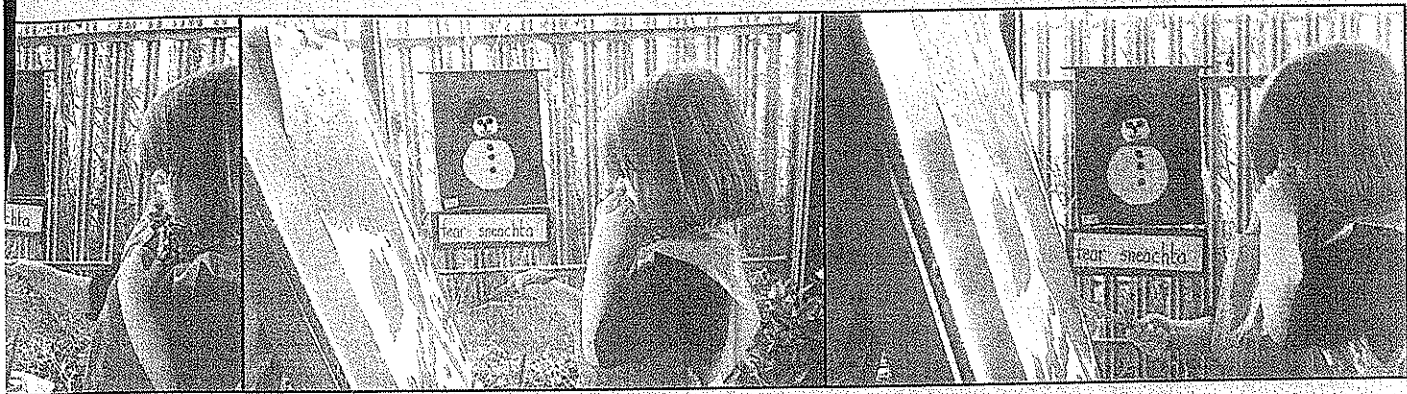
in line with current adult prejudices[53]. The view that a child is an active participant in this socialisation process is now widely accepted.

Two-year-olds are not only acute observers, they also make generalisations based on the cognitive tools and experiences available to them. During this time children begin to notice gender and racial differences. They actively interpret what it means to be male, to be black, to be poor, to be a refugee or to be disabled etc. If for example, women don't drive trucks in a child's experience of life to date, then this becomes assimilated into their worldview that women don't drive trucks.

As children develop their awareness and understanding about gender and race during the pre-school years, they construct "theories" about diversity congruent with their general cognitive stages of development as well as their life experiences[54]. Adult's reactions to children's questions may fail to give them the help they need to form positive ideas about themselves or positive dispositions toward others who are different. Negative stereotypes may be formed during these early years[55]. Louise Derman-Sparks writes:

"By three years of age (and sometimes even earlier) children show signs of being influenced by societal norms and biases and may exhibit "pre-prejudice" towards others on the basis of gender or race or being differently abled"[56]

Derman-Sparks defines pre-prejudice as early thoughts and feelings (developed largely as a result of limited cognitive understanding, a desire to please adults, or inaccurate information) that can become prejudice. During this time children also develop a rudimentary understanding of the concept of justice as well as attitudes of acceptance, co-operation and sensitivity towards others.

York[57] outlines five steps in children's development of prejudice

◈ **Awareness:** being alert to, seeing and noticing difference among people

◈ **Identification:** naming, labeling and classifying people, based on physical characteristics that children notice. Identification through verbal comments, is the child's attempt to break the silence of the adult and make sense of the world.

◈ **Attitude:** thoughts and feelings that become an inclination or opinion toward another person and their way of living in the world.

◈ **Preference:** valuing, favouring and giving priority to a physical attribute a per-

53 Milner, D. (1983): *Children and Race: Ten Years On.* London: Ward Lock Educational.

54 Derman-Sparks, Louise (1992): Reaching Potentials Through Anti-bias, Multicultural Curriculum. Chapter 8 in *Reaching Potentials: Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment for Young Children.* Volume 1. Bredekamp, Sue & Rosegrant, Teresa (editors). Washington, D.C. : National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

55 Katz, Lilian G. (1984): The Professional Early Childhood Teacher. Young Children. July p. 3-10.

56 Derman Sparks, Louise (1989): *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children.* Washington D.C. NAEYC. p 2.

57 York, Stacey (1991): *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs.* Minnesota: Redleaf Press.
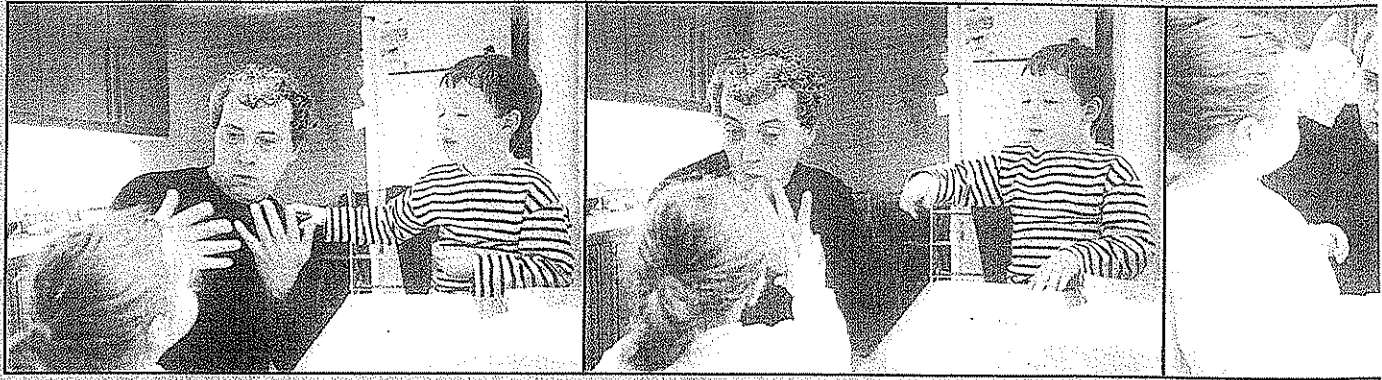
son, or lifestyle over another, usually based on similarities and differences.

◆ **Prejudice:** preconceived hostile attitude, opinion, feeling or action against a person, race or their way of being in the world without knowing them.

3.1.7 The Adult's Role in Facilitating the Development of Social Understanding

Adults play a crucial role in the behaviour they model to children.

"If we want children to listen, for instance, we must model appropriate listening behaviour. If we want children to speak quietly we must not shout our wishes across a room but we must model appropriate behaviour by speaking quietly"[58].

How we model ourselves through our behaviour and how we express ourselves in the company of children is being observed and learned. *"Children learn not only from what we intend to teach but from all of their experiences"*[59]. If individual children are treated differently because of their ethnicity, disability etc., children will assimilate the differences as part of their world view. To deny this effect is to deny that children are influenced by their socialisation[60].

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58 Hayes, Nóirín (1995): *Childcare: An Introductory Text.* Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. p. 30.

59 ibid p. 30.

60 Siraj-Blatchford, Iram (1994): *The Early Years: Laying the Foundations for Racial Equality.* Staffordshire: Trentham Books.

Attitudes and values are thus formed and children's social understanding develops as they 'make meaning' of their world. As adults we can sometimes catch a glimpse of this process when children explore cultural and social concepts as they re-enact and test out roles and meanings about culture or gender etc., in their play. An appropriate response on the part of the adult in this process is important, as children's 'novice' attitudes and values may be affirmed or challenged.

For example, if we provide one towel for hand drying for Traveller children and another for settled children, or if we only provide food for Traveller children coming to the early years education setting, what messages are being communicated in this context? These examples reflect reality in some Traveller children's lives.

One of the primary developmental themes for young children is classification. This involves noticing, examining and thinking about differences. We know that this process is happening within and beyond the formal curriculum, and by recognising and acknowledging what children are internalising, we can help to dispel any negative associations, fears or biased notions that children may acquire along the way. We can play a role in supporting minority group children in developing both their personal and group identities.

Adults must ensure that whatever activities and interaction are planned or occur in relation to diversity education in the early years setting must be developmentally appropriate and meaningful for their particular level.
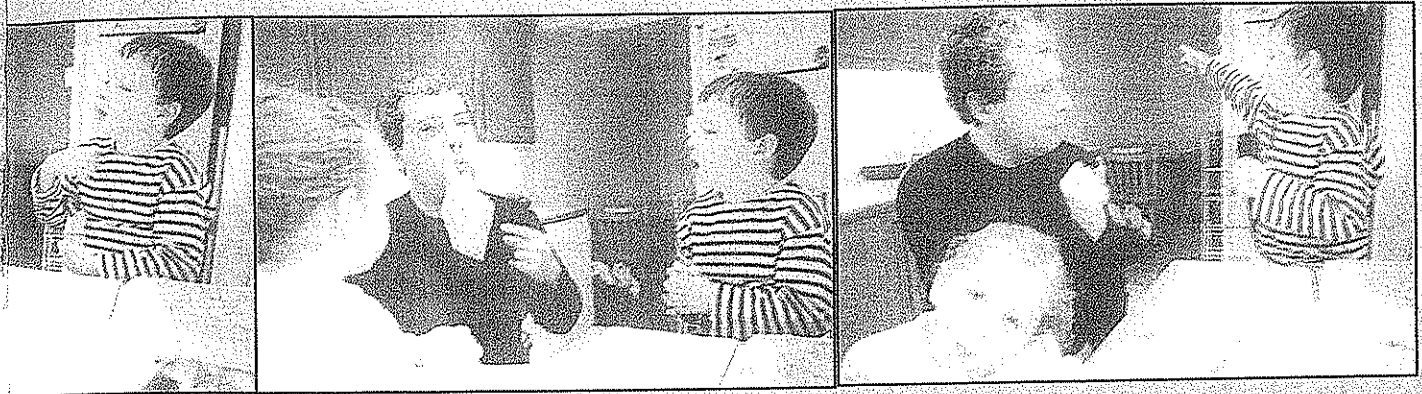
Adults working with young children need to be aware of the myriad of ways diversity practices can be integrated throughout daily activities, giving careful consideration to the design and layout of the environment, the language we use, gestures, eye contact, the materials available, and the messages we convey about the wider community.

3.1.8 The Consequences of Ignoring Diversity and Cultural Context

All children are raised in a cultural context. We can identify some typical outcomes that arise when practitioners ignore the cultural context in which children are raised and diversity and power issues.

◆ Dominant cultural practices are accepted as normal, positive and universally applicable.

◆ Children may under-achieve.

◆ Children may attempt to deny or conceal their identity.

◆ Children's concept of self-identity may be damaged and or they may believe that others see them as inferior outside their home or community.

◆ Children's behaviour, motivation and confidence can be affected.

◆ Majority children may believe that black people or people with a disability are somehow less human or intelligent than they are.

◆ Children may fail to learn concepts of empathy towards others, concepts that are fundamental to respecting and valuing one another.

◆ Carers and families may not share cultural experiences and the expected milestones for development may be different.

◆ Carers and families may not hold common beliefs about the meaning of experiences and may misunderstand culturally encoded interchanges.

◆ Carers may have their own personal issues evoked by particular children, due to personal past experience (or lack of experience), and may lack awareness about their own personal attitudes, and feel discomfort or perhaps dislike for a child.

◆ Carers may fail to accurately 'read' non-verbal gestures on the part of parents or children, misinterpreting attitudes and communications as a result.

◆ Carers may not consider it appropriate to address issues of concern (such as racism or sexism) with colleagues or parents of children in their care, or may not even consider this possibility at all.

◆ Childcare settings are organised around dominant cultural practices and can be out of synchrony with some children's acquired styles of learning and interacting.

◆ Carers cling to their old theories, despite discrepancies, forcing contrary evidence to fit old beliefs.
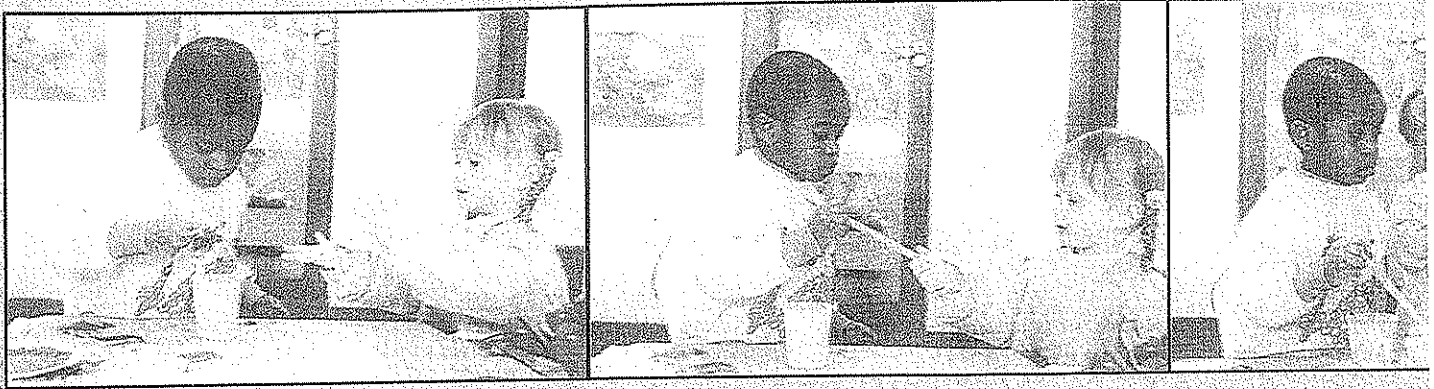
◈ Behaviour that does not fit pre-conceived notions is interpreted to fit the carer's 'sense-making' hypotheses.

◈ Carers may believe that some cultural practices and traditions are valid and preferable and others less desirable.

◈ Carers fail to appreciate the validity of unfamiliar child-rearing practices and may upset a family's cherished beliefs or traditions.

◈ Cultural dissonance is experienced by children.

◈ The child is helped to 'fit' the setting or school, rather than the school adapt to the child's needs[61].

Clearly specialist training is required to avoid such problems. Supporting all children to develop a positive self-concept and a strong sense of belonging, together with an understanding and respect for cultural diversity, should represent strong themes in training programmes for early years practitioners.

3.1.9 Levels of Implementation

Some early years educators have a personal interest and understanding of diversity issues and may initiate excellent practice on diversity in individual settings. However, many educators and managers working in the education field may lack awareness, or experience of diversity work, especially when it comes to dealing with racism and racist incidents. This should not surprise us, as educators have not traditionally been trained in diversity approaches or in anti-discriminatory practices. There is a limited knowledge-base as a result of this training gap on issues of racism and equality[62]. To be fully inclusive of all children in our settings we need to understand and confront the issues of diversity, equality and racism both in training and in practice.

We can identify five levels for working to implement diversity education:

◈ At management level where a commitment to implementing equality policies which address racism and discrimination is required throughout early education settings or colleges.

◈ At the level of the teacher/carer where educators need to take a reflective approach to ensure cultural relevance and sensitivity, to be aware and not gloss over issues of racism, to continue the process of mutual exchange, learning and unlearning across diversity.

◈ At the level of education of childcare trainees who will be empowered to influence practice on the ground: A process will be required to assist staff to unlearn their own acquired biases and to gain a deeper understanding of racism and discrimination. This includes coming to recognise personal expectations and sensi-

61 York, Stacey (1991): *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs*. Minnesota: Redleaf Press. See also Lane, Jane (1999): *Action for Racial Equality in the Early Years*. London: Early Years Trainers Anti-Racist Network (EYTARN).

62 Siraj-Blatchford, Iram (1994): *The Early Years: Laying the Foundations for Racial Equality*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books.

tivities, and gaining a more global understanding of developmental norms and cultural traditions.

◇ At the level of curriculum content which instead of being blind to difference will offer an approach to instill in all children a sense of belonging, empowerment and justice.

◇ At the level of meaningful consultation and partnership with parents in relation to children's individual and cultural needs. This will create continuity for children between the home and the early years setting.

Individuals at all levels need to construct their own understanding about the need for an approach to diversity work within the community as a whole, as an unlearning and re-learning process.

3.2. Diversity Training:

How should we address the issue of Diversity Training?

3.2.1 Diversity: Integration into Training:

The Expert Working Group on Childcare[63] acknowledges the

"growing diversity of family life in Ireland today"

and the need to

"recognise the different family structures to which children belong" particularly the needs of one parent families.[64]

It also states:

"The childcare environment must reflect a diverse intercultural and anti-discriminatory approach. There should be a wide range of appropriate equipment and images reflecting the background of all children including Travellers and children from other ethnic minority groups. Practices should reflect an approach which does not distinguish between children on the basis of gender. It should also provide an accessible and safe environment for children who could experience discrimination. In this regard, linguistic diversity should also be recognised and respected by facilitating the use of the child's language and that of the child's community in childcare."[65]

In relation to diversity training the report states that:

"Presentation of curriculum should be flexible, practical and tailored to meet the needs of the participants. Furthermore, in the light of the changing nature of Irish society, it is essential that all training has intercultural and equal opportunity policies built into programmes."[66]

63   Dept. of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (1999):
      National Childcare Strategy, Report of the
      Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on
      Childcare. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

64   Ibid p. 47

65   Ibid p. 28

66   Ibid p. 28

To address the basic principle of 'respect for diversity' in a holistic manner within the early years training sector it is necessary to integrate an approach to diversity which not only encourages mutual respect and understanding regardless of a group's cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious or other background but which in tandem addresses the issues of racism and discrimination.

Training courses tend to deal with subject areas as individual modules. This report advocates a widely accepted view that diversity education should be integrated within each module[67]. However, while advocating a strategy of 'permeation', we recognise that diversity education is innovative and will need specialist support in becoming successfully incorporated into the range of subject areas. Therefore it is recommended that a module on diversity should be developed to address the area as a whole, and that this module be mandatory as opposed to elective.

Early years training courses must prepare all early education graduates to accept that diversity is a majority and not merely a minority issue, that the principle of equal opportunities goes beyond the formal curriculum, and belongs equally in the informal or 'hidden curriculum' where it becomes the responsibility of all adults working in early years settings. Training institutions must recognise the importance of working together to meet the

challenges offered by a rapidly changing and increasingly multicultural society

Diversity education does not gloss over the issues of racism and discrimination and should be seen as a fundamental dimension of all early years training courses.

3.2.2 Training Pathways in Ireland

There is a diverse range of training pathways in early childhood care and education (ECCE) in Ireland, both pre-service and in-service. ECCE trainees may follow a one, two or three year training course on a full-time basis, and most courses include work-experience in an early years setting as an integral part of training as a professional qualification.

Some training institutions offer a part-time 'in-service' option for those working in childcare, to further their training level. Two third-level institutions offer a 3-year degree: University College Cork (UCC) offers a degree programme in 'Early Childhood Studies', and the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) offers a degree programme in 'Early Childhood Care and Education'.

A large number of VEC colleges offer pre-service post Leaving Certificate (PLC) one or two year training courses, accredited by the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA).

Primary School Teachers complete a three year programme leading to a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) at one of the five Teacher

67 Gaine, Brendah & van Keulen, Anke (1997): *Anti-bias Training Approaches in the Early Years: A Guide for Trainers and Teaches.* Netherlands: European Cultural Foundation supported by Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Training Colleges, which award a university degree (associated with NUI or TCD) on successful completion of studies. There are short in-service training courses specialising in early education for teachers involved in the Early Start Scheme, which caters for 3-year-olds in designated disadvantaged areas. An eighteen-month post-graduate course is also available in four of the five colleges, to supplement the supply of teachers. A national review of teacher training is now underway, which will take into account new demands including special educational needs and early childhood education.

A number of private colleges offer a wide range of training courses, part-time and full-time, including Montessori, at levels ranging from foundation to degree level.

Some of the voluntary organisations involved in childcare offer a range of part-time courses to members: the Irish Pre-school Playgroups Association (IPPA) offers a range of courses from foundation level, and the National Children's Nurseries Association offers a Nursery Management course on a part-time basis. Barnardos likewise offers in-service and outreach courses tailored to meet a variety of needs.

Some training institutions import training programmes that are accredited abroad, for example, National Council for Further Education (NCFE) and Nursery Nursing Examination Board (NNEB) (eg. High/Scope from the UAS). These and other non-nationally accredited courses designed for the English and US markets generally reflect a respect for diversity within their training courses.

Amongst many recent Irish innovations, the 'Omna' project, spearheaded by Dublin Institute of Technology, has developed a system of accreditation for prior learning (APL) for experienced childcare personnel /trainees. The project has also explored work-based training as a route to qualification. FÁS has developed a similar 'Traineeship' approach as part of its childcare training programme in Ireland. Innovations such as these offer opportunities to reassess curriculum content and incorporate a diversity education approach for future training courses.

A subgroup of the National Coordinating Childcare Committee (established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Working Group report (1999) under the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform) was established in 2000 (see 2.4.2) with representatives from all national certifying bodies. The brief for this subgroup is to develop a *National Framework for Training and Qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education*. This process offers an opportunity for significant review of the content of training courses which brings the issue of diversity into sharp focus. This review process involves the publication of core standards for training and qualifications at all levels within the profession and the possibility of examining diversity education and its integration into training curricula.

A further subgroup of the National Coordinating Childcare Committee is the *Advisory Committee for Children with Special Requirements and Minority Ethnic Groups including Travellers*. Part of their brief is to

advise on pre and in-service training in relation to diversity education.

3.2.3 Identification of Training Needs

Early years workers are beginning to find their political voice in Ireland with childcare as an issue finding its place on the political agenda. However, there are many identifiable training gaps emerging. The concept of diversity training is new on the Irish agenda. Many managers, trainers and practitioners are only becoming aware of the need for diversity training and equality policies for early years settings. Many practitioners are also unaware of the many different educational approaches to diversity work. These include the multicultural, intercultural and anti-bias approaches described below. There is a general lack of knowledge about how each approach works in practice and the effects of these approaches on the well-being of all children. *The National Forum For Early Childhood Education* which reported in 1998 and the *National Strategy Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group* in 1999, to mention just two, make statements relating to diversity, prejudice and discrimination (see chapter 2) and function to support the reconstruction of our understanding of this important issue.

Another identifiable requirement for childcare practitioners is the need for increased awareness of the political climate in which we live. All childcare trainees need to be made aware of recent legislative advances or policy innovations relevant to these matters such as equal status, anti-discrimination legislation and children's rights in order to adequately support the needs of all children in their care. This is highlighted by Nutbrown's comments on the level of ignorance that exists in the UK context:

> "Remarkably few early childhood educators know of, and fewer still are conversant with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child"[68]

We have no reason to believe the situation is any different in Ireland.

3.2.4 Training Areas Identified

The first step to an inclusive early years system for all children is the development of policies and guidelines for early education training settings in relation to diversity issues. These need to be formulated both at a management and at a practical level. Training will be required for students in early years education in order for them to develop written and working policies on equal opportunities and diversity in the work place.

Having a written 'Equal Opportunities' policy statement is common amongst many Irish training institutions and voluntary organisations involved in training. However, these statements commonly focus on *tutor/trainers as employees*, or pertain to non-discriminatory practices towards student trainees, as opposed to a policy about the training itself, the imple-

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68   Nutbrown, Cathy (1996): *Respectful Educators
     –Capable Learners: Young Children's Rights and
     Early Education*. London: Paul Chapman. p. xiii.

mentation of a diversity approach and practices in early education in general. Although written policy statements as 'paper exercises' are not enough on their own to withstand the forces of prejudice[69], they are an important first step in the process of attitude change and can be used to support other minor changes made in working practice. Training for development of policy including, equal opportunities and anti-racism, tailored to meet the needs of a particular setting should be included in early years courses.

As part of an early years education course incorporating a diversity approach, time is necessary to allow trainees the opportunity to examine attitudes and assumptions in relation to their own personal development. All students need to understand their own personal and cultural identities as a first step in order to gain an understanding about the development of group and individual identities in young children.

Trainees also need to explore their own personal expectations and assumptions about the learning potential of all children. Understanding the serious implications of failing to incorporate a diversity approach into their programme, and the longer-term consequences for educational attainment for children, is essential for inclusive early years settings.

As early years educators they will need to recognise and appreciate the need for diversity training, be aware of the factors that contribute to the development of attitudes and values in young children and their own important roles as non-parental carers and educators in this process.

In summary, early years training should incorporate and accomplish the following:

◆ Examine trainees attitudes and assumptions concerning diversity issues

◆ Explore trainees own personal and cultural identities, within an historical context.

◆ Examine anti-racism and anti-discrimination practice.

◆ Have an awareness and understanding of current and appropriate legislation and policies.

◆ Have an knowledge on how to develop policy and guidelines for practice.

◆ Develop individual and group identities in young children.

◆ Develop positive attitudes and values in young children.

◆ Examine personal expectations and assumptions about learning potentials.

◆ Understand stereotyping, the ideology of racism and other social inequalities.

◆ Understand the consequences for educational attainment and personal development of diversity training.

◆ Develop knowledge about diverse child-

69   Suschitzky, Wendy (1995): It's not fair! Equal opportunities in practice. Chapter 13 in *Beginning Teaching: Beginning Learning In Primary Education* ed. Janet Moyles. Buckingham: Open University Press.

rearing practices, cultural values, interpersonal relations and languages.

that may arise in practice in relation to individual or family background factors.

3.2.5 Self-Reflection – The First Step

Raising awareness about the issues involved in diversity education, and allowing time for ongoing reflection, is essential for adequate preparation for the kinds of unpredictable and often difficult contexts in which these issues tend to arise in practice. Early years educators need to understand their pro-active role in helping children to construct their own understandings of individual differences. Training ought to encourage and enable adults to ensure that the diverse backgrounds of children and their families are affirmed, that beliefs and practices are valued, and that minority languages are supported and sustained, drawing on the cultural heritage of the children and their families.

Training for self awareness of 'hidden' prejudices includes the process of examining our expectations for children's learning progression and development, given the wide-range of background factors and experiences which may influence our expectations.

As individuals, adults working with young children must reflect and examine their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour, as they encounter diversity in their work. This process will also involve parents of the children, which is a further challenge. Early years educators should be trained to demonstrate respect, understanding and acceptance in all situations

3.2.6 Exploring Assumptions

An important starting point is to examine the assumptions we all carry beneath surface attitudes, both at a personal and at group levels. Difficulties are to be expected in relation to training where personal or culturally sensitive issues are addressed. These issues, previously often ignored in training (either deliberately or otherwise), will need to be explored and discussed openly. This is an important process for trainees in breaking down barriers and raising their awareness of diversity issues. There may also be difficulties for tutors. They may not have fully explored their own assumptions and the prejudices which they bring with them to the training arena. Any group of tutors or trainees will have a diverse range of past experiences with people from different backgrounds (e.g. colour, class, religion, gender or disability etc). This may include professional as well as informal contacts, and in some cases may involve little or no personal contact. They will draw on these experiences, as well as being influenced by the attitudes of others.

The issue of confidentiality within training groups is crucial, and group size is another important consideration for creating conditions conducive to full discussion. Reflection and self-awareness precede the level of understanding necessary to achieve a level of acceptance on the part of those working with children and families and with responsibility for young children's education and development. Donohoe

and Gaynor (1999) have a number of useful suggestions for this aspect of the training process. For example, group work discussion relating to the diversity issue should involve self-reflection where:

"No one should be expected to reveal personal information about themselves unless they feel comfortable doing so when working in a group. All participants must observe the rules of confidentiality."[70]

Early years training courses need to allow adequate time to discuss and reflect on these experiences and to explore underlying assumptions in order to tease out values and attitudes around these important issues.

3.2.7 Examining the Options

In Ireland diversity education has not been high on the agenda in the development of quality early childhood training and practice. Many practitioners have an awareness at some level of the need for sensitivity to difference, and of the discomfort they feel on recognising that they are ill equipped or unprepared to deal with certain situations that arise.

However, progressing from general awareness to effective methods of addressing diversity requires a critical examination of the ideological and theoretical frameworks of possible approaches and on an assessment of the practical implications and possible outcomes for children.

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70   Donohoe, J & Gaynor, F (1999): *Education and Care in the Early Years*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. p. 89

European Countries (including Britain) and the United States have an ongoing discourse on diversity education. The models and approaches developed have evolved and include assimilation, integration, cultural pluralism, multiculturalism, intercultural and anti–bias approaches.

A theoretical basis to guide an early years curriculum approach will be determined by the underlying belief system of the individual and the particular ideological approach promoted by given training institutions or early years settings.
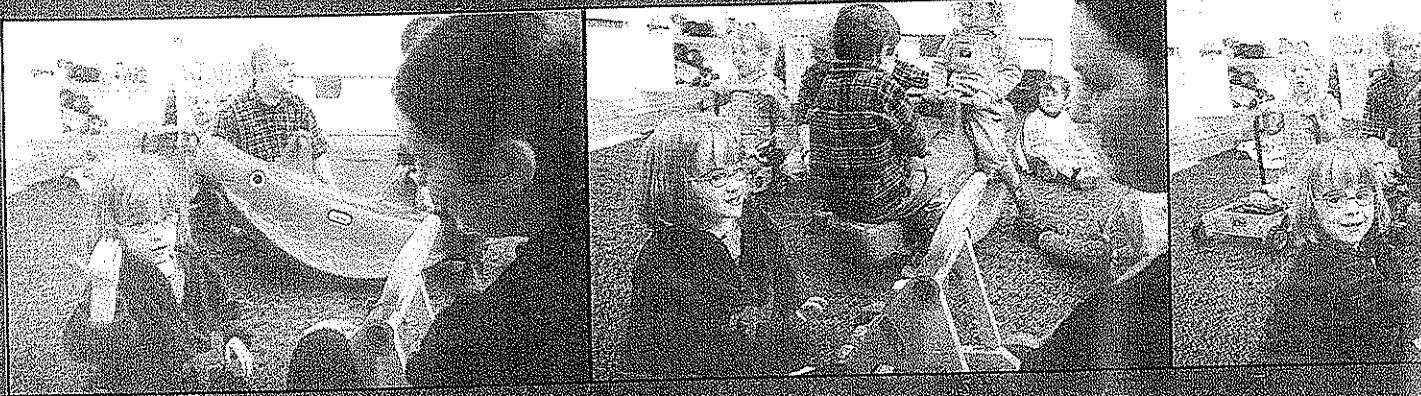
Outlined below are some typical beliefs systems and theoretical approaches:

The *'assimilation'* approach would hold that Western traditional child-rearing practices are superior and should therefore be adopted by all. This approach, which is now largely discredited, views ethnic diversity as divisive, and tends to assume that minority groups are deficient, deprived and lacking in cultural capital. To 'assimilationists' the absorption of minorities into the dominant culture was believed to be necessary for the socialisation of all into a shared value system was essential for progress.

The *'integration'* approach acknowledges the need for economic and social support for minorities in order for these to integrate into society. However the emphasis is still on the integration of minorities within the dominant culture in order to create a homogeneous society. The expectation of educators and managers

in schools is that it is up to minorities to change and adapt in order to succeed, without any real demand for change in the education system itself, apart from the need for more awareness and tolerance.

The above approaches have been criticised for being patronising and dismissive of other cultures and for being racist.

In education the terms multicultural and intercultural are sometimes interchangeable. In Europe 'intercultural' is more common whereas in Britain and the United States 'multicultural' is better known. The term multicultural in the United States is similar to the definition of 'interculturalism' in Europe. The term multicultural has a somewhat different meaning in Europe.

The European **"cultural pluralism or multicultural"** approach celebrates difference but focuses on the minority cultures and specifically on the exotic aspects of these cultures, glossing over issues of racism and unequal power relations. It does, however, acknowledge the need for broadening the content of the curriculum and for addressing the specific needs of minorities. It sets out to change the negative attitudes and practices of the majority population and holds the belief that if children are exposed to other cultures at an early stage they are unlikely to develop prejudiced ideas, because prejudice is often based on ignorance.

Multicultural education has made a contribution to diversity education, it has however been criticised for ignoring pupils in schools where there are no minorities and for failing to adequately address issues of power and discrimination.

"intercultural education" holds the belief that culture and equity are not just minority issues but clearly majority issues. It sees the importance of assisting all people to become aware of their own culture, and to remove the blinkers which hinder their ability to reflect on diversity issues. Most importantly it includes acknowledging the need for critiquing racism and power relations and challenging stereotyping and racism.

The **"anti-bias approach"** has similarities with the intercultural approach. Its focus is on addressing inequalities and the sources of stereotypes. It, like the intercultural approach, also focuses on the dominant culture. However, the approach embraces all minority groups along with cultural issues. Its goals are to enable every child to have a confident self-identity, to develop comfortable, empathic interaction with diversity, to develop critical thinking and the skills to stand up for oneself and others in difficult situations. It is aimed at empowering all children and assisting them in their paths towards self-determination.

Anti-bias teaching is challenging and requires critical thinking and problem solving by both children and adults. By embracing this approach teachers can empower each child to achieve her/his full potential which should be the central aim of early childhood education.

3.2.8 Approaches to Diversity Education: Examining the Options

The assimilation and integration approaches described above are now widely regarded to be both inappropriate and unworkable. The last three approaches, i.e. intercultural, multicultural and anti-bias, all have merits and the conceptual basis of each is assessed in more detail below. This is followed by a recommendation for the preferred approach for diversity education in the early years sector in Ireland.

The Multicultural Approach:

Multicultural education is best understood as an overview and framework for creating an educational environment where opportunity is equal for people from diverse backgrounds. Despite its progressive approach there are a number of shortcomings that can be identified.

The multicultural approach focuses on cultural differences and acknowledges the need to reduce prejudice and overcome discrimination. It fails, however, to recognise that racism and power are often more significant in inter-group relations than are cultural differences. The approach tends to be seen as relevant only to settings which are multi-ethnic, i.e. not relevant to "white/settled" settings. The subtle message is that issues of racism are located only where there are minorities or, to take this line of argument to its logical conclusion, that the existence of minorities in a community creates racism.

It recognises the need to celebrate difference and encourages this through activities which highlight different lifestyles and customs. It is based on the premise that prejudice is based on ignorance and that factual knowledge will alleviate the ignorance. The approach is focused on reflecting minority cultural practices in such a way as to raise self-esteem for minority children and so encourage academic success[71]. It entails providing resources that reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children attending, involving parents in introducing nursery children to food from home cultures, and celebrating all festivals, not just those of the dominant culture. Thus there is a focus on the need for the children from the minority cultures to develop a positive sense of identity, the assumption being that members of the dominant group already have a positive sense of self. At its best multiculturalism could be a genuine sharing and celebration of difference. But all too often, it focuses solely on points of difference and can have the effect of portraying the differences as 'exotic', 'quaint' or 'backward'.

This approach has been criticised[72] as being tokenistic, or 'touristic', by bringing home 'exotic' cultural snippets to enchant the children, rather than supporting individual cultural identities.

The multicultural approach was introduced

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71 Brown, Babette (1998): *Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years.* Staffordshire: Trentham Books. p. 42.

72 Derman-Sparks, Louise (1989): *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children.* Washington D.C.:NAEYC; Brown, Babette (1998): *Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years.* Staffordshire: Trentham Books.

'in good faith' to counteract the failure of previous educational approaches that alienated minorities by attempting to ignore differences between cultures. It continues to be implemented in many multi-ethnic early years settings. The implication is that racism and awareness-raising about differences are only relevant in settings where there are ethnic groups. It ignores the critical issue that children of the dominant ethnic group also need to develop an awareness about themselves in relation to people from different cultural and other backgrounds.

As professionals in training many of us have a streak of inquisitiveness and we enjoy glimpses into other people's lives. However this insight does not necessarily change attitudes or make us more sensitive to the needs of others[73].

This does not assist us to question the inequalities present as a result of being from a minority ethnic or other minority group. While it is clear that we do need to have some information about the cultural background of the people we work with, that understanding is more important for the achievement of equality and counteracting the impact of racism, both at an institutional and an individual level.

The intercultural approach:

"The development of an intercultural approach implies the development of policy that promotes interaction, understanding and integration among and between different cultures and ethnic groups without glossing over issues such as racism."[74]

Intercultural education is relevant in all education settings. It aims to develop understanding among children and adults from different cultural and ethnic origins. The goals are to foster awareness and insight into cultural difference and to encourage mutual respect and a sympathetic and critical understanding of diversity[75]. This takes a more active approach by raising children's awareness of their own and other's cultures. It actively confronts racism and emphasises the integrity of all cultures while celebrating difference. Intercultural education seeks to promote understanding about difference accepting that ethnic diversity enriches our society. Following this approach, children from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to fully participate while educators remain appropriately sensitive to individual cultural traditions, language backgrounds, etc. It involves substantial reform of the existing curricula with a broader focus on equality and human rights dimensions than merely presenting multicultural information on customs and traditions.
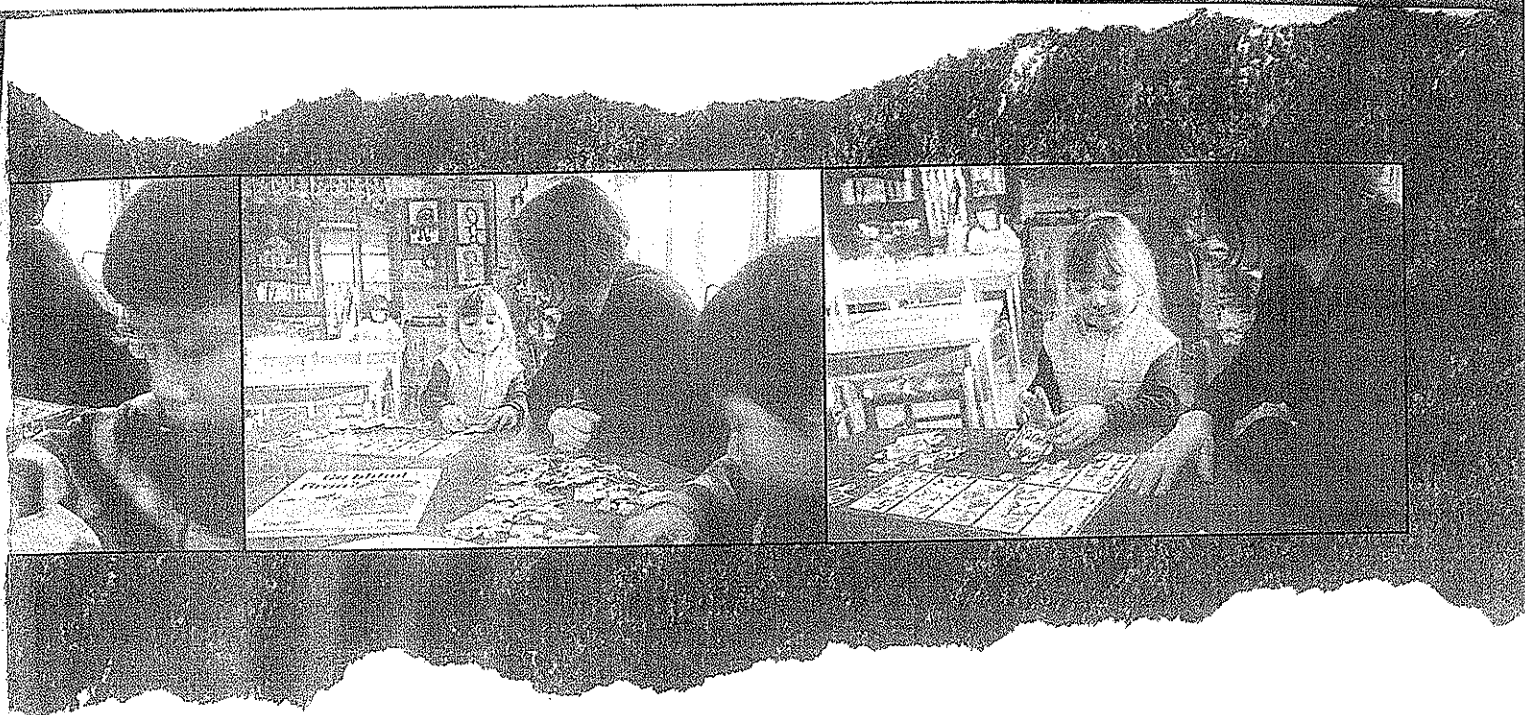
The shortcoming of the intercultural approach is the perception of it as a discrete subject, rather than being integrated throughout the whole curriculum. It may also be perceived by management as being relevant

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73 Davies Wendy and Ohri Ashok (1996): *Race, Equality Manual, A Practical Guide for Decision Makers.* Sheffield: Strathclyde, Regional Council.

74 National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (1999): *Introductory pack, Addressing Racism and Promoting a More Inclusive, Intercultural Society.* Dublin: Author.

75 Department of Equality and Law Reform (1995): *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community.* Dublin: The Stationery Office.

only to the curriculum and not to the overall ethos of the setting.

The intercultural approach in education is relevant to all settings and not just those with children from minority cultures. It encompasses:

- focusing on each child's own culture, including that of the majority community.

- acknowledging and highlighting the contribution made by diverse cultures to the body of human knowledge and achievement.

- recognising that the approach should permeate the whole education setting including structures, administration and the full curriculum.

- celebrating diversity.

- acknowledging and critiquing racism and power relations.

- challenging stereotyping and racism.

As trainees and professionals in training, the approach challenges our own attitudes and thinking in relation to diversity. It recognises the necessity and positive benefits of a diverse early years service. It develops skills in providing an inclusive, rights-based programme for the early years and on how to deal with difficult issues as they arise in practice. The essential difference between the intercultural and anti-bias approach is that the intercultural approach focuses on cultural issues and the anti-bias approach deals with all areas of diversity as set out below.

The anti-bias approach:

The anti-bias approach seeks to nurture the development of every child to her/his fullest potential by actively addressing issues of diversity and equity in the early years setting.

Four specific goals of the anti-bias curriculum are to:[76]

- **Nurture each child's construction of a knowledgeable, confident self-concept and group identity.**

  This goal means creating the educational conditions in which all children are able to like who they are without needing to feel superior to anyone else. It also means enabling children to develop bi-culturally, in order to effectively interact within their home culture and within the dominant culture.

- **Promote each child's comfortable, empathic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds.**

  This goal means guiding children's development toward the cognitive awareness, emotional disposition and behavioural skills needed to respectfully and effectively learn about differences, comfortably negotiate and adapt to differences, and understand and emotionally accept the common humanity that all people share.

- **Foster each child's critical thinking about bias.**

  This goal means guiding children's devel-

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76 Derman-Sparks Louise (1989): *Anti-Bias Curriculum Tools for Empowering Young Children.* Washington D.C.: NAEYC.
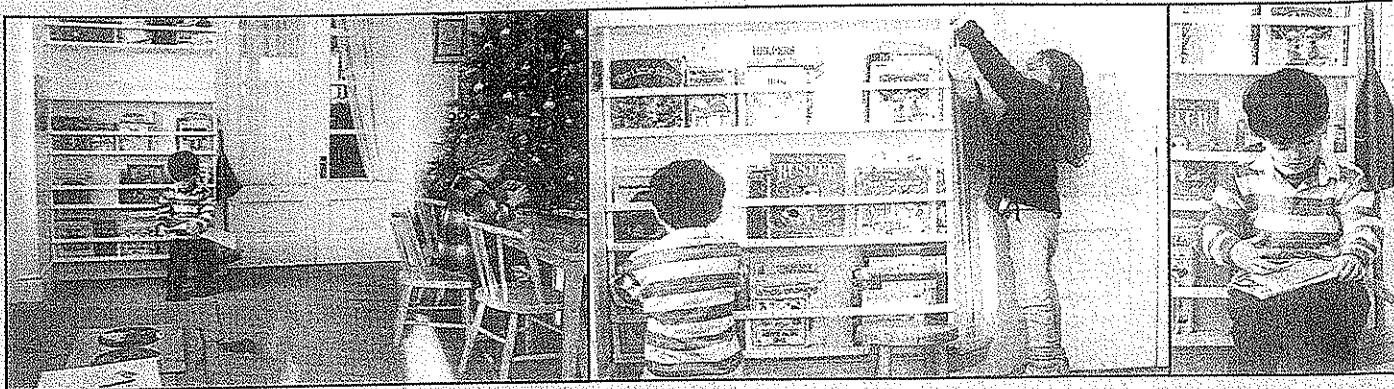
opment of the cognitive skills to identify 'unfair' and 'untrue' images (stereotypes), comments (teasing, name calling) and behaviours (discrimination) directed at one's own or other's identities (with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, disability, class, age, etc.) This includes developing the emotional empathy to know that bias hurts.

◆ **Cultivate each child's ability to stand up for her/himself and for others in the face of bias.**

This goal includes helping every child to learn and practice a variety of ways to act when, for instance:

o   another child acts in a biased manner towards her/him.

◎   a child acts in a biased manner towards another child.

◎   an adult acts in a biased manner.

Critical thinking and empathy are necessary components of acting for oneself or others in the face of bias. Anti-bias activism is a natural outgrowth of children's awareness of what is *fair* and *not fair*, and a natural response to their readiness to act for fairness.

The four goals build on each other and all are necessary to implement the approach in a thorough and consistent way. The goals are relevant to all children and all early years settings.

A belief in the value of human diversity and the fair treatment of all people is a prerequisite for doing anti-bias work. The anti-bias approach is rooted in the belief that all people have a right to their human rights, equality, liberty and justice. The truth is that while many people would claim to share this belief it is not always evident in practice.
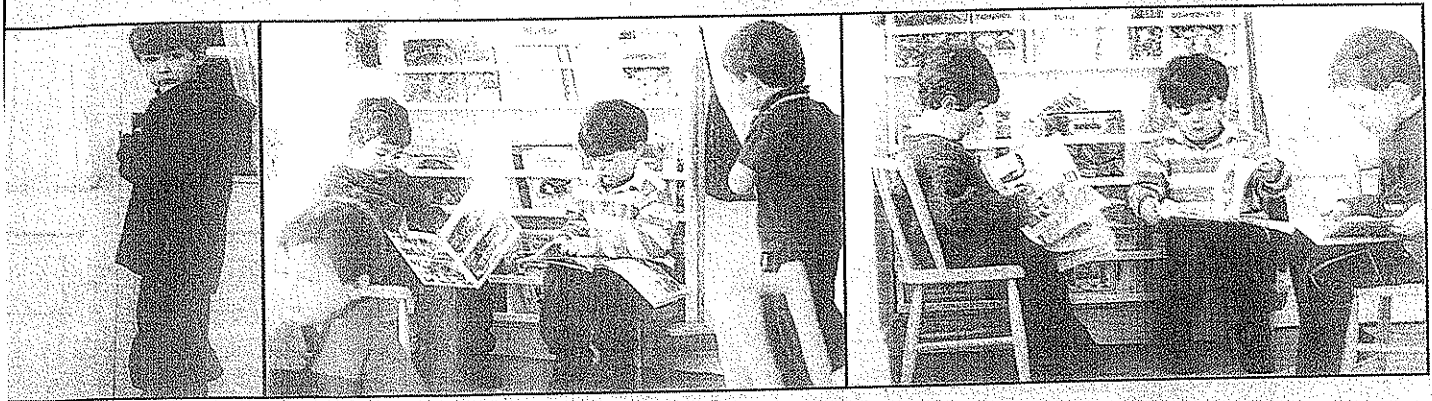
The anti-bias approach developed out of research on how young children develop their identity and attitudes and how early experience of racism affect how young children feel about themselves and others.

The approach asserts that diversity education needs to be embedded in an anti-discriminatory framework. It addresses power differentials, and children are introduced by example to skills necessary for dealing with unfair or prejudiced situations as they arise. Racist and prejudicial attitudes and practices are actively challenged. This is eminently relevant for white or dominant culture children in whom power and authority are likely to be vested. The approach therefore ought to be implemented whatever the cultural composition of the setting.

Anti-bias education embraces an educational philosophy as well as specific techniques and content. It is value based: Differences are good, oppressive ideas and behaviour are not. It sets up a creative tension between respecting differences and not accepting unfair attitude and behaviours. It asks teachers and children to confront troublesome issues rather than cover them up. An anti-bias approach is integral to all aspects of daily life in early years settings.

The anti-bias approach functions at a number of levels: at management level to review and revise policy and ethos, power sharing and provision of materials; in recruitment and pro-

motion of staff; and in admission policies relating to children and families. At the practice level, the approach is concerned with implementing clear equality policies and negotiating ways of achieving anti-bias goals in consultation with parents. The anti-bias approach offers the opportunity to value and support families from all backgrounds to maintain their cultural integrity while gaining the skills and knowledge needed in the wider society.

An anti-bias approach for children will avoid the limitations of a 'tourist curriculum', which teaches about cultures, generally through celebrations and through such 'artefacts' as for example, food, traditional clothing and household implements. Multicultural activities are special events in the children's week, separate from the ongoing daily curriculum. The 'tourist' approach to daily activities can be patronising and trivialising because it fails to deal with people's real-life daily experiences and problems, emphasising instead the 'exotic' differences and surface aspects of ethnic minority cultures. It is important to recognise that learning about another culture is a very complex, long-term effort. By trying to teach about another's culture simplistically, teachers often end up unintentionally insulting the very cultures about which they are trying to educate the children. The anti-bias approach recognises the positive contribution that the multicultural approach has made while also realising its shortcomings.

The anti-bias approach incorporates the positive intent of the multicultural approach and uses some similar activities, while seeking to avoid the dangers of a tourist approach. At the same time the anti-bias approach provides a more inclusive education in the following ways:

◈ It addresses more than cultural diversity by including gender and differences in physical abilities, class, language etc.

◈ It is based on children's developmental tasks as they construct identity and attitudes and

◈ It directly addresses the impact of stereotyping, bias and discriminatory behaviour in young children's development and interactions.[77]

In an anti-bias approach, teaching about diversity is integrated within everyday activities, and children from all backgrounds can come to appreciate the connections and comparisons between their own daily lives and those of people from other cultures and backgrounds.

3.2.9 Training: The Recommended Approach

While the earlier mentioned assimilationist approach which would have been generally followed several decades ago is no longer defensible, the more modern approaches (multicultural, intercultural and anti-bias) outlined above present more realistic options for an increasingly pluralist modern Ireland. They represent varying degrees of awareness of the underlying philosophies and beliefs about how principles of equality translate into practice.

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77   Ibid.

The focus of a well-intentioned multicultural approach is to introduce students to unfamiliar cultures, recognising the important role that culture plays in children's lives. However the multicultural approaches have been justly criticised on a number of grounds:

◇ Failure to apply to all children i.e. those of the dominant culture too.

◇ The existence of unequal power relationships is ignored.

◇ Failure to challenge children's forming or already held negative views.

◇ The actual intended purpose of the multicultural activities is often lost on the children.

◇ Unintended results can emerge such as failing to encourage respect or fostering / reinforcing stereotyped views of exotic cultures.

◇ Failure to consider the needs or wants of families of minority-group children.

◇ Tendency to focus on a limited number of cultures which have an 'exotic' flavour, ignoring many others, most notably including the dominant culture.[78]

While the anti-bias approach has much in common with the intercultural approach, having similar views of the dominant culture in terms of needs and relevance, anti-bias takes a critical further step by challenging all forms of bias, and bringing the reality of difference into daily practice. Adopting an anti-bias approach

requires that stereotyped notions or behaviours be continuously challenged at all levels, from management ethos to daily activities in the early years setting.

Adopting an anti-bias approach is not merely a matter of 'imparting knowledge' to children, but adhering to anti-bias principles at every level of practice including assessment, recruitment, management, admission procedures as well as work with children and parents and monitoring of peer relations amongst the children. Any aspect of practice requires to be challenged if it suggests discrimination or bias. There are a clear set of goals (see above) which build on each other, and these goals are not only applicable to practice with the children, but also apply to the professional staff themselves, who need to have worked systematically through these goals as part of their training.

The anti-bias approach was originally developed by Louise Derman-Sparks to meet the needs of a pluralist North American culture but the principles underlying her pro-active methods are universal and hold good in any society. Ireland is no exception. Many European countries recognising the considerable merits of anti-bias education are presently engaged in adapting the approach to meet their own specific requirements.

The anti-bias approach presents considerable challenges to providers on an ongoing basis, and requires that policy, language, behaviour, curriculum activities, communication, relationships and decisions all be closely monitored in terms of equal opportunities for all involved. The rewards are also considerable.

78 Brown, Babette (1998): *Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years.* Staffordshire: Trentham Books.

The anti-bias approach is strongly advocated in this document as the most appropriate, most comprehensive and most effective means of addressing the root causes of prejudice, discrimination and racism, the foundations of which are laid down very early in life.

3.3. Conclusions

Some carers typically choose to ignore differences, marginalising those who are not of the dominant culture. This denial philosophy ensures that aspects of individual children's identities remain invisible. We need to learn new attitudes and behaviours as we unlearn acquired biases. Childcare workers continually make decisions and choices about developmentally appropriate curriculum activities in their work and need to be able to recognise bias and respond to cultural sensitivities. Difficulties may arise where definitions of 'appropriate' are recognised as culture-bound, and we can conclude that cultural domination is woven into our definitions of 'appropriate'.

A willingness to be reflective is a key disposition in understanding and working with diversity issues. Training strategies that encourage reflection are as important as strategies specific to intercultural topics[79]. If early education practitioners in Ireland are to offer appropriate environments to foster children's personal and group identities, they require an understanding of the roots and causes of racism and discrimination. How racism and discrimination operates in society and its potential negative effect on the lives of children. A re-examination of present assumptions and practice is an essential prerequisite and can be unsettling. Childcare trainees need to develop their own understanding about the need for anti-bias work, and this reflective re-learning should be a continual process.

Having examined all the major contending methods in diversity education, this report strongly advocates the adoption and implementation of the anti-bias approach. It is identified as the most comprehensive and beneficial for all children and their families, and is well-suited to the Irish context. Training for anti-bias education should include a specialist module as well as integration throughout the various modules offered in early childhood care and education training. The challenges of implementing the anti-bias approach for practitioners across all levels should not be underestimated, but neither should the benefits.

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79   Carter, Margie and Curtis, Beb (1994): *Training Teachers A Harvest of Theory And Practice.* Minnesota: Readleaf Press.
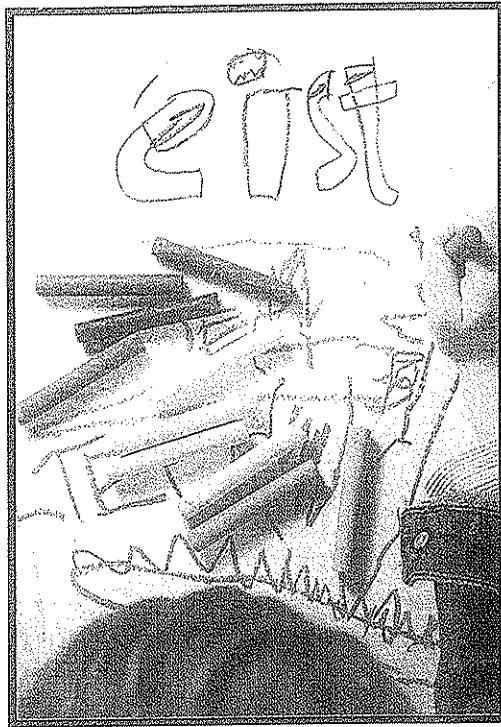
Section 4

Framework for the
# Development of Policy and
Guidelines for Implementation

4.0 Introduction

AS OUTLINED IN PREVIOUS sections, there continues to be a growth in racism and its manifestations in Irish society as it becomes more multicultural. Profound hurt is experienced by minority ethnic groups including the Traveller community and other minority groups and inequalities against these groups involve both individual actions and institutional practices. Discrimination can be deliberate or unintentional and is not always visible.

These issues are very complex and require commitment, flexibility and a willingness to consider and adopt new ideas. From an early years perspective, countering racism and discrimination must be based on a sensitive understanding of children who are hurt, ridiculed or harassed because they are different.

It would be a mistake however to think that early years practitioners can eliminate bias and racism in society through their programmes alone. Government Departments, early years organisations, training colleges and
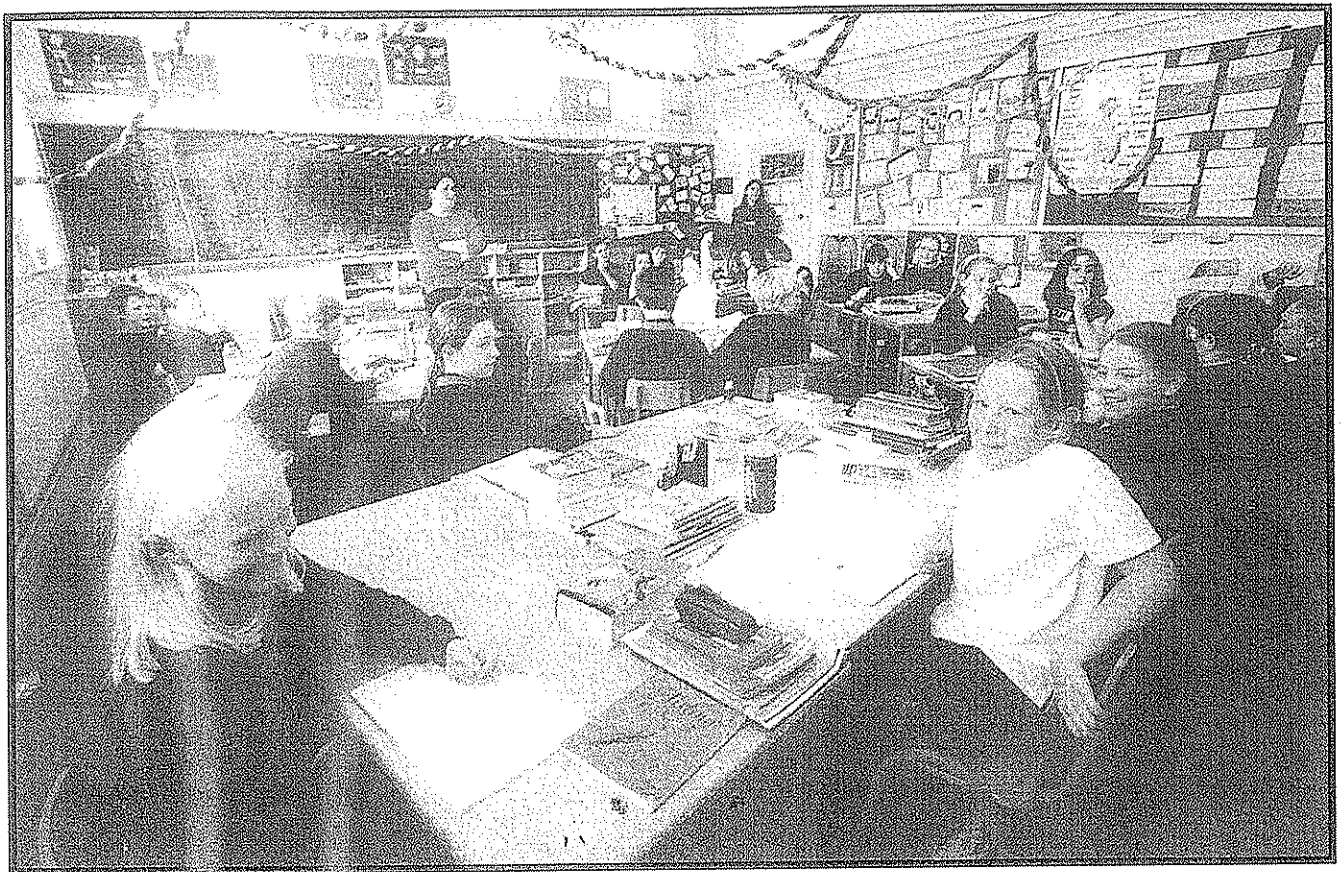
practitioners all have an opportunity and a social responsibility to take the lead in this area. All early years trainers and educators accept that good, appropriate, high quality practice is about giving children the best possible start in life. We owe it to our children to embrace the changes that are evident in our society and to introduce policies and practice to enhance equality of outcomes for all our children.

In this chapter we discuss why change is difficult but necessary and why we need this change. We offer examples of how to implement change through policy and guidelines on a variety of levels. We continue with a framework for training organisations which prepares policy guidelines for management, staff and students and guidelines for trainers implementing an anti-bias programme. A further framework is set out for those providing services to children which includes policy guidelines for management and staff and guidelines for parents and children using the service. Guidelines for staff implementing an anti-bias programme are also outlined. The essential need for the develop-

ment of appropriate resources to assist in the implementation of this process is also highlighted.

4.1   The Process of Change

Change is not easy and acknowledging the changes required in our society can be a challenge when it comes to our own practice. The recent legislation in the form of the *Equal Status Act 2000* and the *Employment Equality Act* (1998) (outlined in section 2) places a responsibility on all service providers to ensure that their policies meet the statutory requirements. All services both in terms of training and provision, will have to take account of the new legislation and revise policy documents to ensure equality of access and outcomes for all trainees, families and children.

Acknowledgement of the necessity for change in childcare polices and practice and opposition to discrimination on all grounds can be expressed through anti-racist and equal opportunities policies within all services and through establishing guidelines to ensure the
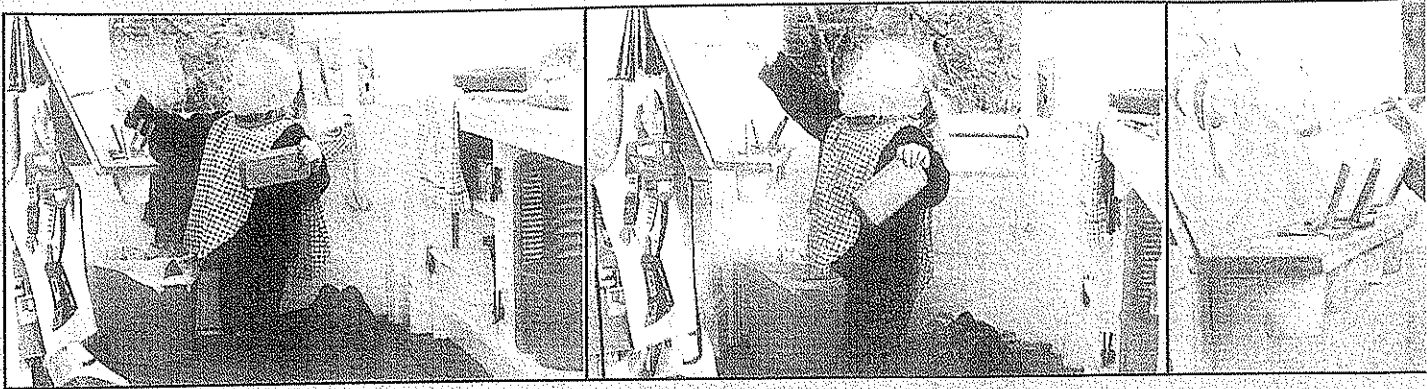
policies are put into practice and regularly monitored. However, the initial commitment has to come through the recognition that Irish society has changed and the acknowledgement that revision of policies and practice is necessary. All institutions and services need to draw up their own policy statements with the participation of all stake holders. Change in work practices can be challenging and difficult for staff. Creating the climate for change through policy, appropriate training and support can help initiate a commitment from staff to learn how to implement an anti-bias approach in their setting.

4.1.1   Why is Policy Important?

It is important for all institutions and services to develop appropriate policy statements. This process should involve all employees and also parents. This inclusion begins the process of change and the opening up of discussions on various issues. The process can produce an excellent document, however it should be translated into practice through specific actions and these will need to be monitored. If the process fails to bring about practical changes in procedures, attitudes, training and in daily practice with the children, it remains a mere paper exercise[81]. A policy statement provides a public statement of commitment and a framework for the development of practice; it does not automatically change attitudes or

81   Siraj-Blatchford, Iram (1994): *The Early Years: Laying the Foundations For Racial Equality*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books.

practice. The process of change is a slow one which will develop if nurtured.

4.1.2   Beginning the Process of Implementation

This report recommends the development of the anti-bias approach to be incorporated in training institutions and early years practice. The approach seeks to nurture the development of every child's fullest potential by actively addressing issues of diversity and equity in the early years setting.

Anti-Bias Approach:

Goals for Adults:

◆ Consciousness of ones own culture.

◆ Effectively and comfortably engage with families.

◆ Critically think about bias and discrimination.

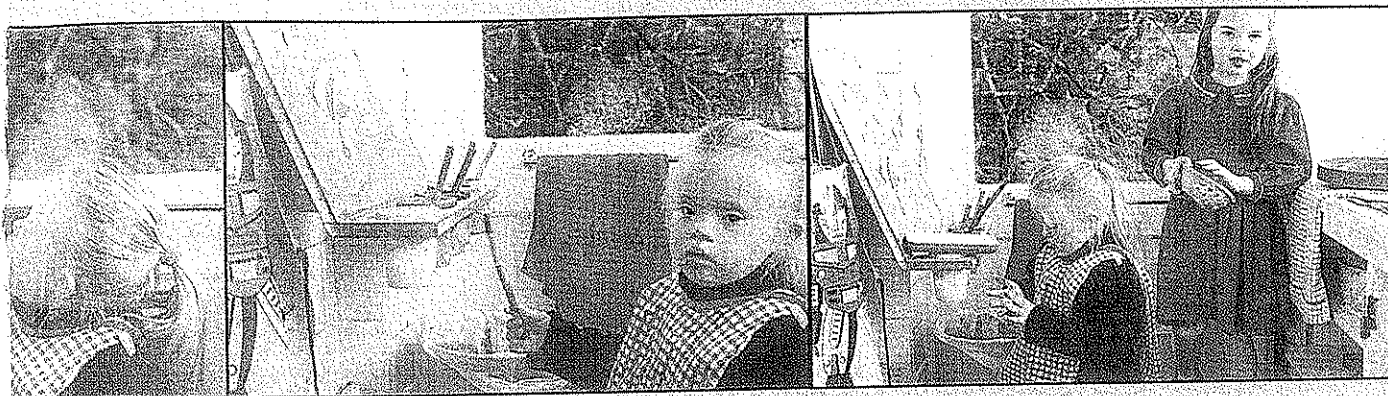◆ Confidently engage in dialogue around issues of bias and discrimination.

Goals for Children

Nurture and promote each child's:

◆ Construction of a confident self-concept and group identity.

◆ Comfortable, empathic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds.

◆ Critical thinking about bias.

◈ Ability to stand up for her/himself and for others in the face of bias /discrimination.

These goals are for all children. However the specific issues and kinds of activities and the tasks required for working towards them will vary depending on the ages, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences of the children each centre is working with. Consequently the challenge this presents for the adults working with the children will vary. This means that the way in which the goals are put into practice will not and should not look the same in every early years setting.[82]

With this in mind the framework for change initiated by early years organisations and settings should be firmly grounded in the anti-bias goals identified within a developmentally appropriate context. From this starting point, flexible and inclusive policies and guidelines can be developed, implemented and monitored. Appropriate training and support are essential for the implementation of an anti-bias approach.

The framework and guidelines outlined below are neither comprehensive nor written in stone. They are guidelines to assist the beginning of a process of inclusion and implementation.

Below is an outline of the areas covered in this section under two main headings. These guidelines have been drawn together from a variety of sources (see references below[83]).

Training Institutions and Organisations:

◈ Management Policy Framework

◈ Staff Policy Framework

◈ Student Policy Framework

◈ Guidelines for Trainers in Implementing an Anti-bias/Equality Programme to Students.

Early Years Organisations and Services

◈ Management and Staff Policy Framework

◈ Principal Guidelines for working with Children

◈ Guidelines for Parents and Guardians

◈ Staff Guidelines for Implementation of an Anti-Bias Approach

◈ Curriculum Development and Resources

4.2. Training Institutions and Organisations

All members of staff embarking on policy planning days should, as an essential prerequisite to meaningful consultation, have an initial induction session on equality and

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82 Derman-Sparks Louise (1989): *Anti-Bias Curriculum Tools for Empowering Young Children.* Washington D.C.: NAEYC.

83 Brendah Gaine, Anke van Keulen (1997): Blatchford Siraj Iram (1994): York, Stacey (1991): Derman-Sparks, Louise (1989): Carter, Margie and Curtis, Beb (1994): Jane Lane (1999): French Geraldine (2000): Early years Trainers Anti-racist Network (1997): See bibliography for details of these publications.
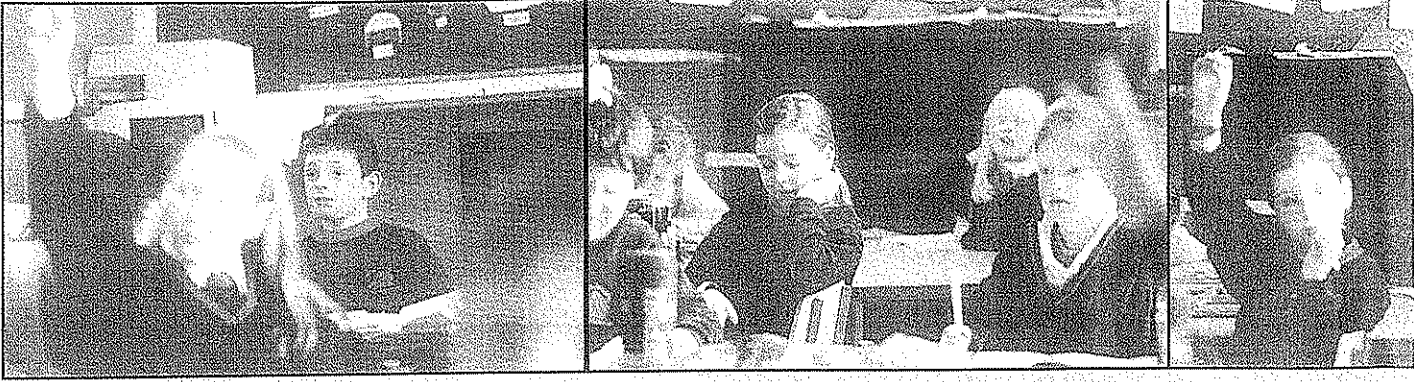
anti-bias practices in order to engage thoroughly with the process.

The framework for policy development and implementation guidelines for training institutions are set out below. These can be adapted to meet the needs of individual institutions.

All staff members involved in management and direct work with trainees need to be involved in the development and implementation of policies.

4.2.1   Management Policy Framework

This will be required to:

◈   develop a policy statement which commits the organisation to anti-racism and equality principles.

◈   build a mechanism for the policy to be developed by all those working and availing of the service.

◈   build in mechanisms for ongoing discussion and reflection on racism and equality issues.

◈   communicate the anti-racist equality ethos of the organisation through the symbols, images and materials used.

◈   build contacts with anti-racist education networks nationally and internationally.

◈   ensure that materials produced or used are anti-racist and equality proofed.

◈   ensure that arrangements for employment (ie recruitment, promotion and access to benefits) are transparent and that procedures are equitable.

◈   devise a policy for dealing with harassment of staff or students in relation to racism or equality.

◈   ensure all members of staff from management down are aware of relevant legislation and organisational policies.

◈   ensure procedures are devised for dealing effectively with racial or other forms of discrimination identified.

◈   review and monitor implementation of policies on a regular basis.

◈   consider and plan for any training needed to implement the strategy, including staff recruitment, access to childcare services and admission procedures.

◈   budget for and commit resources to implement policies.

4.2.2.   Staff Policy Framework

This will be required to:

◈   ensure that all new staff are made aware of, understand and are committed to the equality and anti-racism policies and implementation programme which has been devised by management.

◈   ensure in the recruitment documentation that new members of staff are required to

have a knowledge and a commitment to the policies outlined.

◈ ensure staff are made aware of and familiar with the equality and race related legislation and other national policy initiatives in relation to childcare.

◈ identify any training of trainers necessary in order to implement the policy into direct training practice.

◈ ensure a budget for initial training needs of staff in anti-racism training and in training for the inclusion of an anti-bias approach to be implemented in training for students throughout the training programme.

◈ ensure sufficient provision for discussion in staff meetings to deal with diversity issues as they arise, and to monitor implementation of diversity/equality policies.

4.2.3. Student Policy Framework

This is required to:

◈ ensure students are aware of all the organisation's policies, including equality and diversity.

◈ develop clear routes for dealing with discrimination issues for students.

◈ ensure students know that diversity and equality training are essential aspects of the training course.

4.2.4. Guidelines for Trainers in Implementing an Anti-bias/Equality Programme for Students

Trainers need to impart to early years trainees an understanding and awareness that/of:

◈ people come from a range of backgrounds and cultures.

◈ children need a secure environment in which to explore their culture, background and ability.

◈ children need opportunities to explore and understand that no one culture, language, religion, background or ability is superior to others.

◈ the need to depict the diversity of family structures within the daily environment, showing people from a range of family backgrounds including ethnic backgrounds doing everyday things in the park, at meal times, on a family outing, or shopping etc.

◈ the benefits of working from the child's interests in planning and extending their learning.

◈ the importance of obtaining appropriate resources and materials from or about a range of cultures for each subject area over and above the everyday multicultural toys, posters etc.
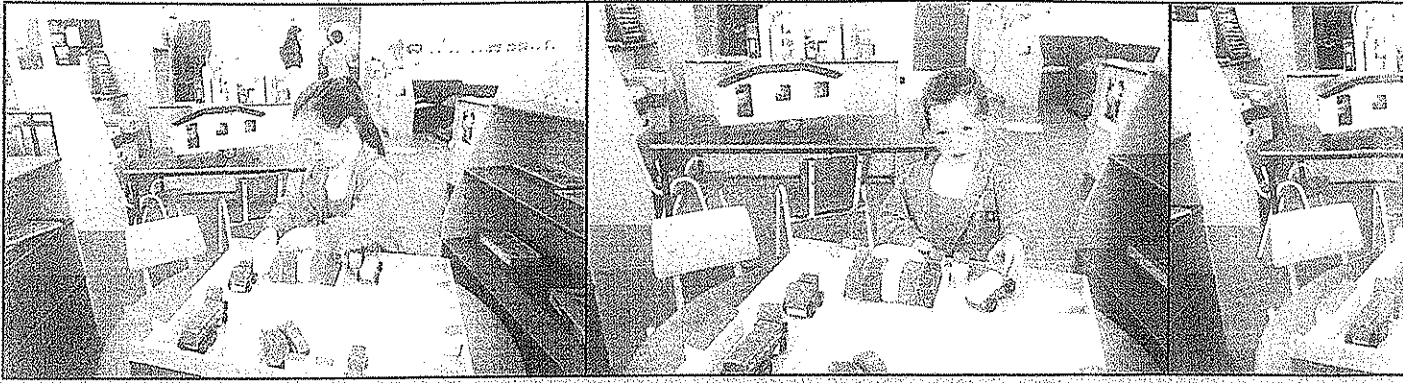
- the diverse range of child rearing practices from different cultures.

- the importance of supporting children in talking about and challenging stereotypes.

- promoting social and emotional development, and teaching about caring and sharing.

- the importance of involving parents through visits, sharing ideas, talking and working with the children.

- adults working in childcare must expect high standards of achievement from all the children.

- a global perspective on developmentally appropriate practice is preferable to a limited western outlook.

- the concept of culture by looking at the history, values and achievements of their own culture and recognising its distinctive features.

- the background of children with whom they work and support the child's family, culture, ability, values, beliefs and language.

- the need to have accurate up to date information about some of the customs, values and beliefs of cultural groups in Irish society

- the effects of discrimination on young children.

- the importance of assisting children to develop empathy.

- the importance of empowering children to stand up for themselves and others in the face of bias.

- institutional forms of discrimination and their impact on settings that serve children and families.

- the need to have accurate information on government policy on immigration and current equal status legislation.

- the ability to evaluate one's own and other cultures objectively.

- the ability to identify unfair and untrue images, comments and behaviours, and other forms of discrimination or bias.

- a true understanding of racism and discrimination and how it operates in society.

- an awareness of the 'hidden curriculum' that adults bring with them into a setting and how it manifests itself and affects the learning environment.

- attitudes and expectations can affect the attainment of individual children in the setting.
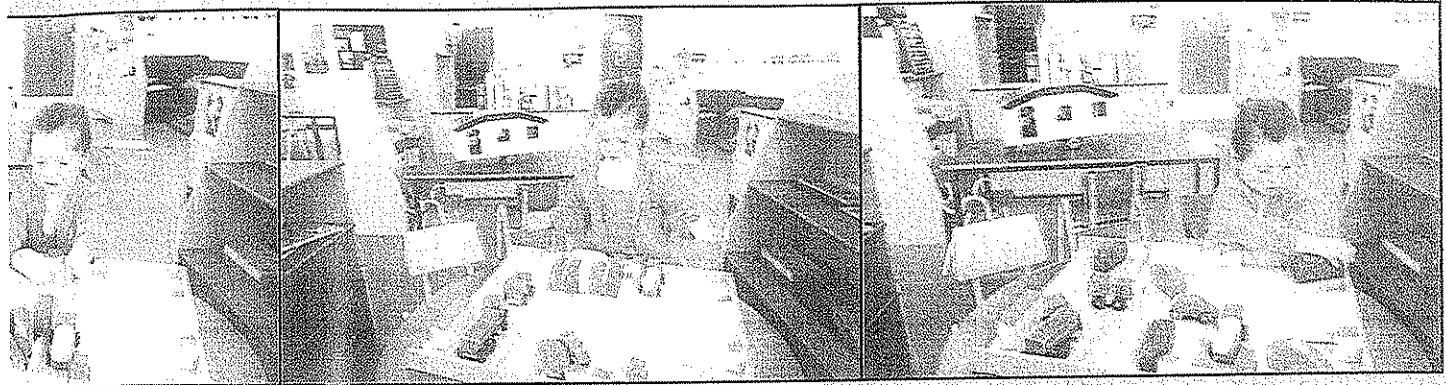
4.3 Early Years Settings, Organisations and Services

Below is a framework for the development of an equality policy and guidelines for implementation of an anti-bias approach in early years programmes. The policy framework and guidelines are applicable to all early years settings including private creches or pre-schools, primary schools, out of school care, community based programmes, partnership initiatives, county childcare committees, voluntary organisations and Traveller pre-schools.

It is important to note that these guidelines may be adapted to meet the needs of individual service providers.

All members of staff and parents embarking on policy planning days should as an essential prerequisite to meaningful consultation have an initial induction session on equality and anti-bias practice in order to engage thoroughly with the process

4.3.1. Management and Staff Policy Framework

All staff members involved in management, direct work with children and the parents need to be involved in the development and implementation of policies.

Strategies need to be developed to support all children and adults in fostering positive attitudes and behaviour towards those different from themselves. Similarly, strategies should be developed to counter any negative attitudes or behaviour to differences which may already have been learned.

Management and staff must have knowledge of how to set up monitoring mechanisms this means how to collect monitor, analyse and evaluate data to ensure that equality polices are being implemented in practice particularly regarding children and staff, employment applications and offers of jobs, applications for admission and offers of places. In evaluating the data, they must be able to identify any discrimination or potential discrimination, how to avoid or remove it, and to develop equality and anti-racist policies for the service.

This requires management and staff to:

◈ be committed to the implementation of equality and anti–bias principles.

◈ be part of an active consultative process to devise policies for an equal and anti-bias approach.

◈ develop policies which address areas of employment, involvement of volunteers, admissions, assessment, translation and interpreting, the curriculum approach that promotes a strategy for countering the learning of racist and biased attitudes.

◈ draw up a programme for implementing the policy including timescale, allocation of responsibilities and details of the action for change in practice.

- assess the need for staff training and outline a planned schedule for that training. Training may include anti-racism, legislation and policy development, dealing with change and programme review.

- put in place ongoing monitoring and analysis mechanisms to ensure policies are being implemented in practice at all levels.

- ensure procedures for rectifying any discrimination found.

- ensure that there are mechanisms for raising issues of concern at staff meetings with those working with the children, their family members and local communities.

- initiate programme meetings of management workers and families to review, address and consider policy and the implementation programme on a regular and continuing basis.

- ensure that everyone working with children is able to describe, justify and communicate the setting's approach to equality issues and anti-bias practices with parents, family members, children, management committee members and members of the local community.

- be as comprehensive as possible in including relevant information on personal and family names, ethnicity, home languages and important requirements for the individual child in registration forms.

- develop a strategy to ensure that new par-

ents and families understand the polices that are in place and are given an opportunity to discuss and understand the implications for themselves.

4.3.2. Principal Guidelines for Children

It is essential that:

- all children are respected and valued equally in the group.

- all children's positive identities are fostered.

- all families are respected and valued in the group.

- all children are assisted to respectfully and effectively learn about differences within the group and learn to interact comfortably with each other.

- all children's home languages and traditions are acknowledged and respected.

- all children's abilities are positively affirmed.

- children are helped to understand that acting in a biased way towards others is unfair.

- children should know that they can comfortably stand up for themselves and others in the group.
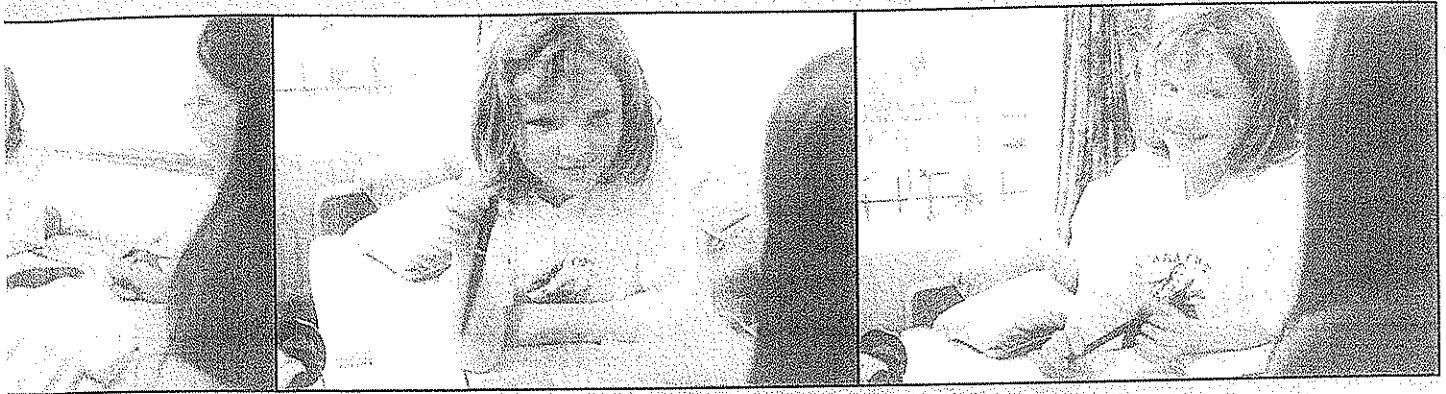
4.3.3. Guidelines for Parents and Guardians

It is important to ensure that:

◈ families know, understand, use and contribute to all the policies developed by the service.

◈ all families are treated equally by the service.

◈ families are welcomed in becoming involved and contributing to the programme.

◈ ongoing communication with families is encouraged and valued by staff.

◈ difference is recognised, respected and accepted within the programme.

◈ staff welcome information on the child-rearing practices of each family.

◈ families are aware of the equality programme that is in operation and that the programme is applicable to all children.

◈ courses are offered to families to inform and discuss the principles of the programme.

4.3.4. Staff Guidelines for Implementation of an Anti-Bias Approach

Strategies need to be developed to support all adults and children in learning positive attitudes and behaviour toward those different from themselves. This includes countering any learned negative attitudes and behaviour with respect to differences. To begin the journey of change, staff themselves need to be empowered to implement an anti-bias programme through appropriate training and support. Below are a number of goals and strategies necessary to implement such practice.

Staff need to:

◈ increase their awareness of their own personal assumptions and attitudes towards diversity.

◈ know and understand the goals of the anti-bias approach and the strategies to implement such an approach.

◈ know and understand anti-racism and anti-discrimination theory and practice.

◈ increase their understanding of terminology including stereotypes, 'isms' and prejudice.

◈ increase their awareness of prevailing social values and how these can be implicit in education particularly through the 'hidden curriculum'.

◈ notice, identify and remove stereotypic materials from the early years setting.

◈ display and set out non-stereotypic intercultural materials in the early years setting.

◈ plan and carry out developmentally appropriate anti-bias activities with the children.

- initiate and participate in conversations with the children about topics related to anti-bias education and diversity.
- respond to children's biased remarks and actions.
- empower children to resist discrimination.
- know how to deal with and support all children involved when difficult issues arise between two or more children.
- initiate and carry out activities with children which question and take action against injustice.
- be able to support the home culture of each child including his/her dominant language.
- interact with the children's families through meaningful consultation in authentic, respectful ways.
- help children to develop skills to be critically aware, to empathise and reflect so that they have a basis on which to make up their own minds about concepts of fairness and justice.
- know how to create an environment in which every child feels that she/he is a valued member of the group.
- know how to build trust and real partnerships with parents when staff are from the dominant culture and parents are not.
- know the effects of discrimination on young children.
- learn how to challenge bias with other adults in a respectful way.

4.4. Curriculum Development and Resources

Issues of equality and diversity must be included in all curriculum development for the future as outlined in section three. Appropriate materials for training and for the early years setting are essential. This area has been neglected and needs immediate attention. Materials are not available to depict the variety of backgrounds or cultures present in Ireland. To ensure all children are represented throughout early years settings funding is urgently required to develop materials to address this imbalance.

4.5. Conclusions

The first step to the inclusion of an anti-bias approach in training and early years environments begins with the recognition that early years educators are not objective, value free beings. The awakening of our own consciousness and awareness of racial equality issues can be a difficult challenge for most of us. As carers and educators we often want to take the softly, softy approach, and can view the racial equality and diversity issues as antagonistic. However the best place to start is with the opening up of this awareness within ourselves and then to move towards change through a clear strategic route. This includes policy development, training and most importantly meaningful discussion with all involved from

management, administration, maintenance staff and early years educators to parents and children. There is no single way to go through this process of change. The framework and guidelines offered in this chapter are put forward as a stimulus for change and can be amended to suit any individual organisation or service.

We are surrounded by bias, every statement, action and discussion is biased. In tackling bias through an anti-bias approach doesn't mean we are anti everything, it means we are trying to weed out the biases which are harmful or counter-productive to the well-being of young children and to our society both locally and globally.[84]

It is through awareness-raising in ourselves and others, and through policy development, strategic planning and good quality appropriate training in an anti-bias approach that we can hope to effect real change and create a society which is inclusive at all levels for all children, families and communities.

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84 Siraj-Blatchford, Iram (1994): *The Early Years: Laying the Foundations For Racial Equality.* Staffordshire: Trentham Books p. 150.
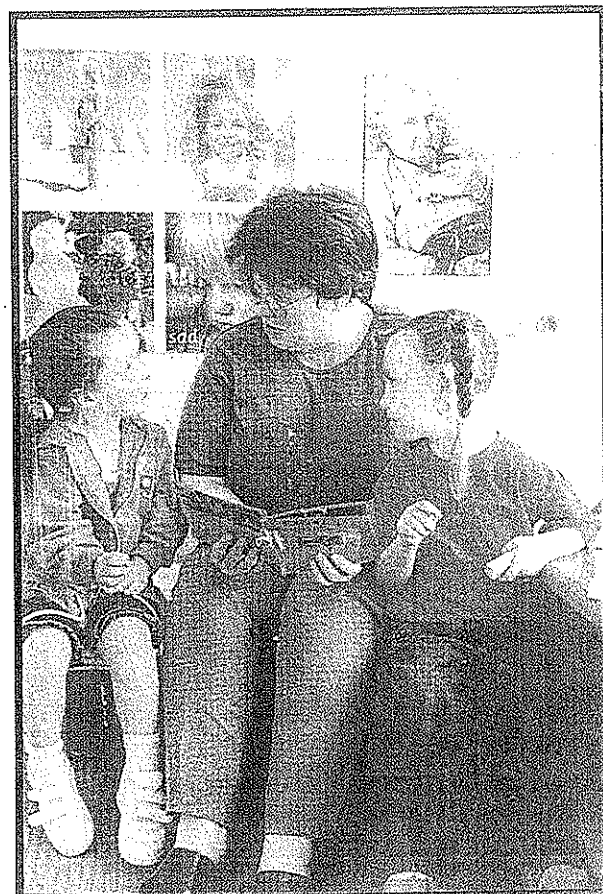
Recommendations for the implementation of "An Anti-Bias Approach" for Early Years Training and Practice

5.0   Introduction

THIS REPORT CONCLUDES that the anti-bias approach is the best suited to meet the needs of all children attending early years services in Ireland. The arguments have been made in support of inclusive diversity training for early years education. Guidelines and possible strategies to ensure optimum success in implementing an anti-bias approach in early years training and settings for management, staff, children, and parents are considered in this chapter.

Recommendations are grouped according to the principal concerns of the report with respect to each of the stakeholders. This comprises recommendations to Government, accrediting bodies and certifying bodies, early years training colleges and early years educators. They are prefaced by a number of general overarching considerations:

5.1   General Recommendations

◆   The importance and necessity of developing a national approach to 'diversity edu-

cation' for early years provision grounded in anti-bias principles, should be acknowledged and resourced, developed and implemented without delay.

◈ Policy makers and early years education services should be informed by Articles 2, 29 and 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when drawing up and implementing policy and training, or devising education programmes which relate to quality, equality, human rights and respect for diversity.

◈ In accordance with the principles of quality in early years provision, all services for children need to put equality policies in place which protect children against discrimination in accordance with the grounds identified in the new equal status legislation.

◈ The implementation of diversity education as recommended in a number of recently published government reports must be addressed immediately (see section 2).

◈ Funding for the development of resource materials needs to be made available to enable trainers and providers to implement an anti-bias approach and offer appropriate representation of all children within early years settings.

◈ All service providers working with children should have anti-racism training imbedded into their pre-service and in-service training courses.

5.2 Recommendations for Government

◈ Ireland needs a clear co-ordinated national policy for early years provision that incorporates diversity and anti-racism principles. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should take the lead in resourcing the development and incorporation of an anti-bias approach nationally.

◈ The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should insure that any anti-racism public awareness campaigns include a focus on children.
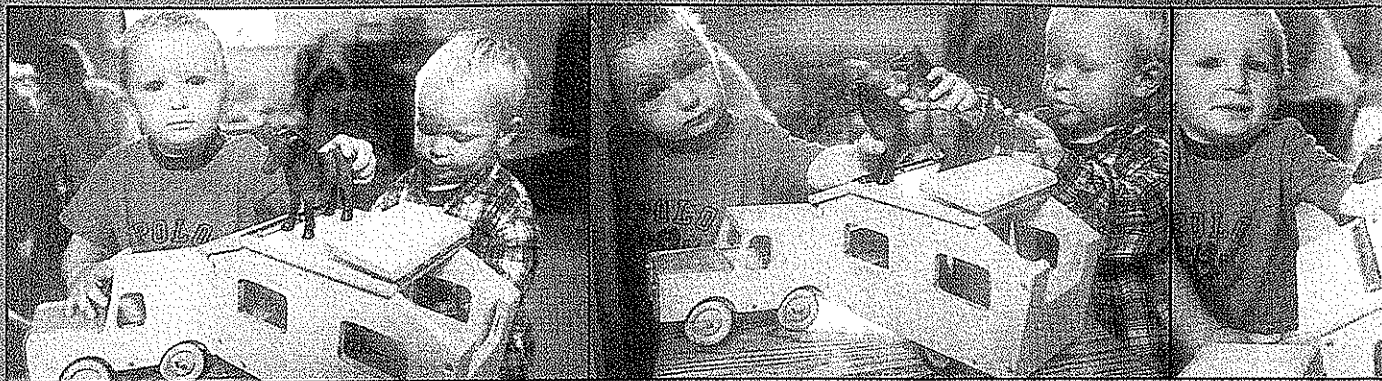
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and/or the Department of Education and Science should initiate research to identify the nature and extent of discriminatory and racist incidents that arise and how these are handled in early education settings, and assess baseline attitudes throughout the profession.

- Any forthcoming policy initiatives including curriculum development by the Department of Education and Science should seek to adopt an anti-bias approach which includes anti-racism training as key principles underpinning and informing such policy.

- The Department of Education and Science should implement all recommendations in the Task Force Report on the Traveller Community (1995), in relation to Traveller pre-schools and intercultural education.

- The Department of Health and Children should amend the Irish Pre-School Regulations and Guidelines (1996/7) under Part VII of the Childcare Act (1991) to ensure that diversity and equality policies and practices are included as criteria for inspection approval.

- Pre-school inspectors employed by the Department of Health and Children under part VII of the Childcare Act (1991) should be required to have an understanding and knowledge of how the process of discrimination and racism operates in practice in the early years context and to have a commitment to principles of equality and inclusion.

- Training and information on diversity principles and practice should be made available for inspectors of early years services

- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should ensure that statutory guidelines for school-age/after-school programmes require all services to have written equality and anti-racist policies in place and that programmes provided are culturally appropriate.

5.3 Recommendations for Training, Accreditation and Certification Bodies

All training institutions should embrace the need for an anti-bias approach within all training courses and encourage the development of this approach to be incorporated into training henceforth.

It is recommended that:

- All early years training courses adopt the anti-bias approach in their delivery of diversity education and training.

- The principles of anti-bias education be integrated throughout the curriculum both as core principles and throughout individual modules as well as forming the content of one specialised 'add-on' module. One module or (part module) alone is not sufficient, as the principles need to be applied throughout all subjects on the course.

sufficient, as the principles need to be applied throughout all subjects on the course.

◆ The anti-bias module should be a mandatory subject on all courses.

◆ Institutions involved in the delivery 'of training and education should develop written statements of ethos and policy in relation to respect, equality and diversity.

◆ A clear commitment to equality diversity and anti-racism principles must be evident in all early childhood care and education courses as a prerequisite for validation, accreditation or certification.

◆ Accreditation and certification bodies must have stated policies which address equality, diversity and anti-racism issues.

◆ Organisations and individuals with recognised expertise in the areas of equality, diversity and anti-racism need to be included in the consultation process for developing or revising training standards or curricula for the early years.

5.4 Recommendations for Early Years Providers and Voluntary Childcare Organisations

Early years providers and practitioners need to take account of, provide for and respect the spe-cific needs of children from minority ethnic groups including Travellers and other minority groups.

It is recommended that:

◆ All early years settings develop a written policy on diversity, equality and anti-racism together with a framework for implementation and ongoing evaluation.

◆ Extensive in-service training be undertaken in order to ensure that early years practitioners gain an understanding of the anti-bias approach in order to implement an inclusive programme. Training should include development of equality/anti-bias policies and how to implement them.

◆ Early years practitioners receive training and support in accessing and using resources for working with the anti-bias approach at the level of daily practice within and beyond the formal curriculum.

◆ Voluntary organisations working with community and private early years providers put in place criteria and a framework to evaluate and proof equality diversity and anti-racist policies and practice in early years settings.

Pavee Point will work in partnership and support the implementation of all the above recommendations.

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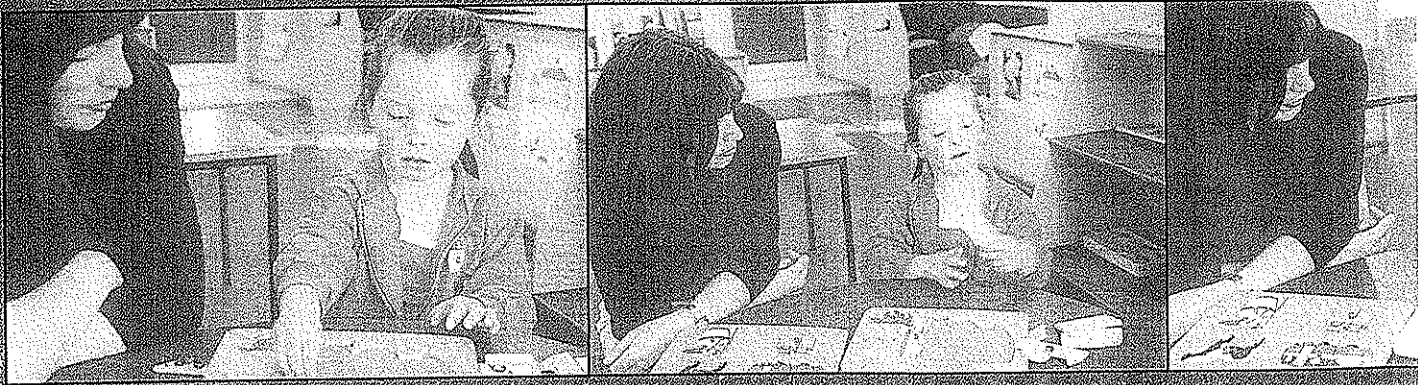
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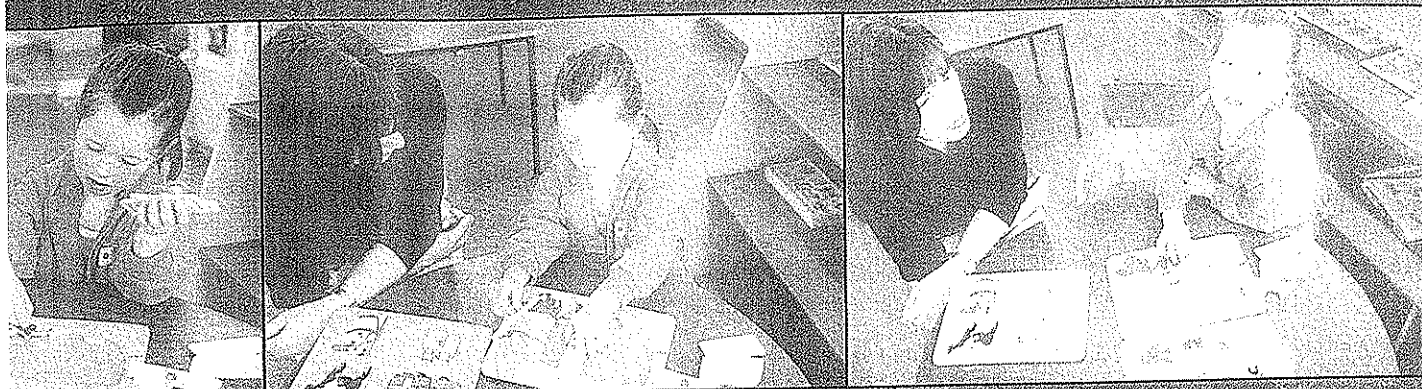
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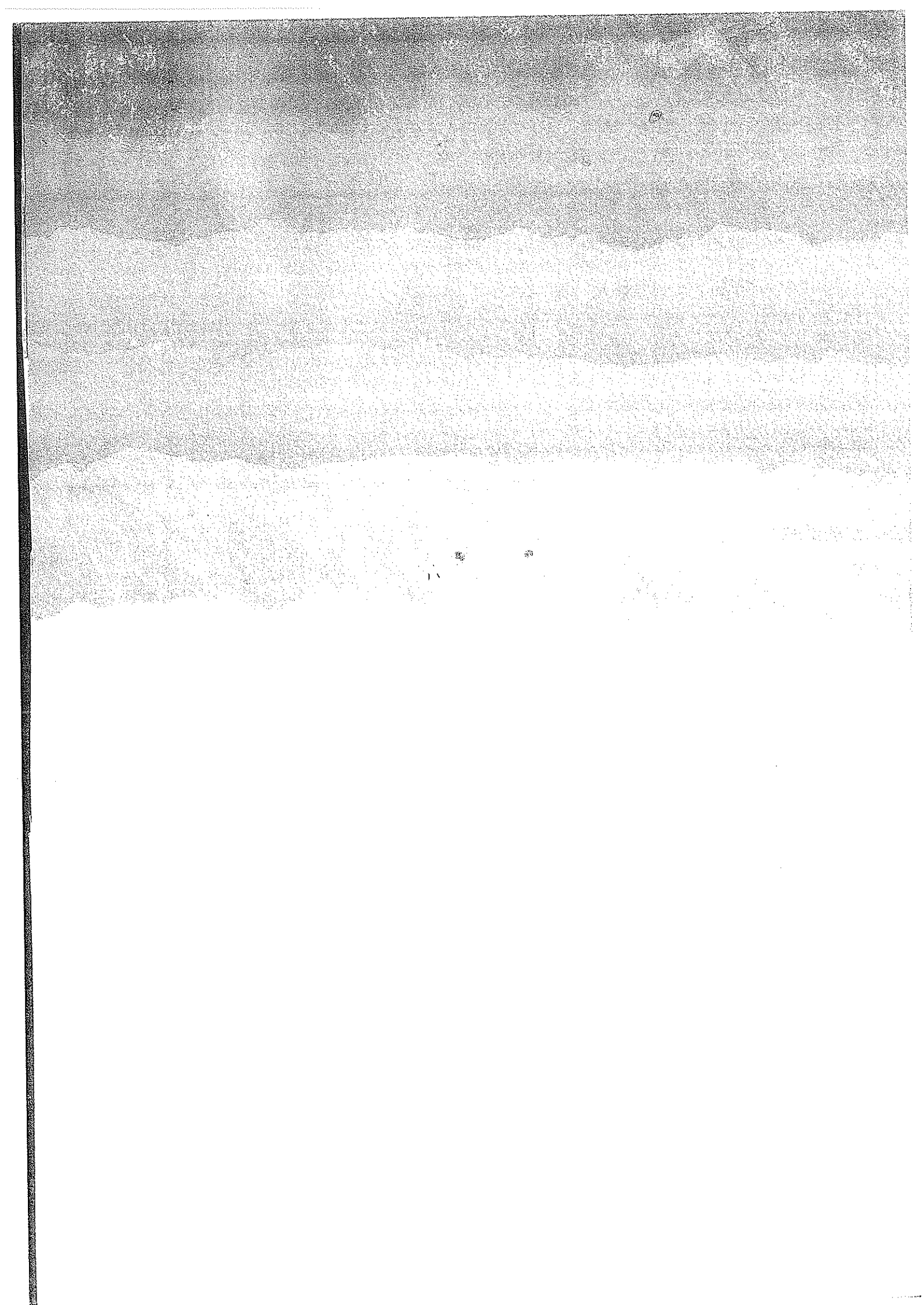
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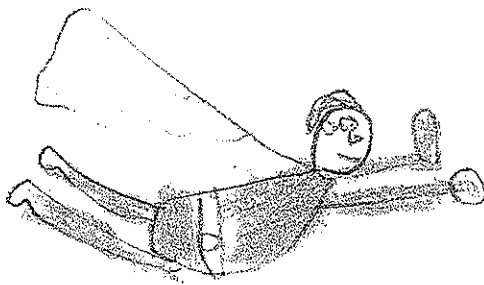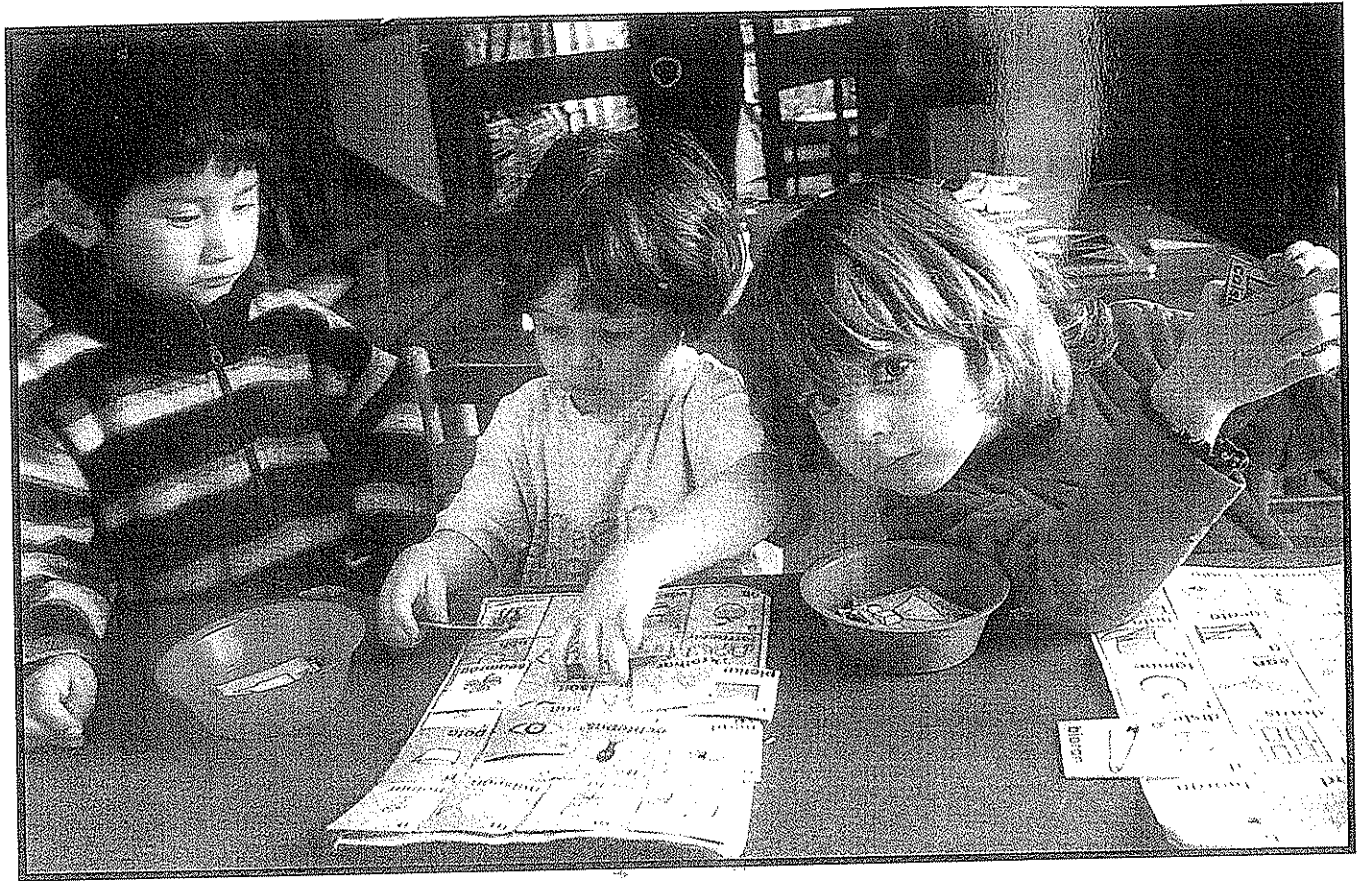
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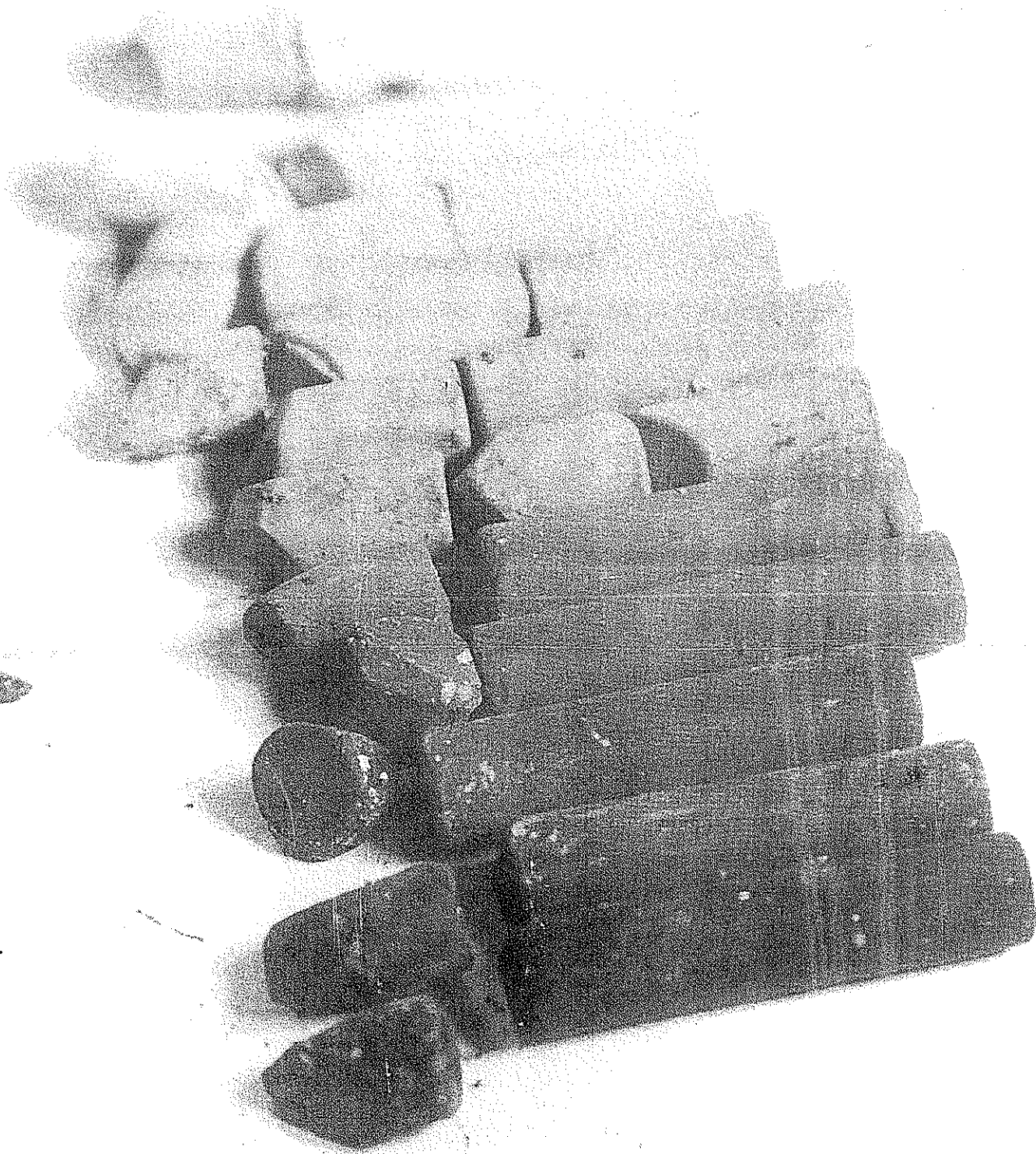
WHILE IRELAND HAS ALWAYS HAD A VARIETY OF MINORITY GROUPS SUCH as Traveller, Jewish, Chinese and Black Irish, it is increasingly developing as a multicultural society. This brings with it major challenges and opportunities. Racism and discrimination, while they are not new to Ireland, are becoming more visible now due to these rapid changes.

Children are influenced by the prevailing biases in society and are receptive to both positive and negative attitudes and behaviours including stereotyping and misinformation about certain groups. It is incumbent on policy makers, managers, parents, those working with young children and those who train adults for working with young children to acknowledge diversity and challenge bias, prejudice and racism within early years training and practice. These issues are of equal importance to both majority and minority groups.

This report argues strongly in favour of diversity education in early childhood care, education and training. Examining possible strategies, it concludes that the 'anti-bias' approach is most suited to meet the needs of all children. This is an approach introduced successfully in other countries and suitable for adaptation to the Irish context. It can be applied effectively to all areas of potential discrimination such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, religion, 'race' and membership of the Traveller community.

The 'anti-bias' approach will be of benefit to all children and to Irish society as a whole.
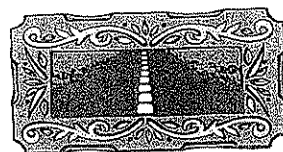
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Bernard van Lee ● Foundation