This paper is taken from

*Citizenship Education: Europe and the World Proceedings of the eighth Conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2006

**edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe,   ISBN 1 899764 66 6**

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder)

- only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only

- multiple copies may be made only by
  - members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
  - a official of the European Commission
  - a member of the European parliament

# Citizenship and Identity Education in Ireland in the Post-Celtic Tiger era: impacts and possibilities.

*Justin Rami and John Lalor*
*Dublin City University (Ireland)*

## Introduction

The Republic of Ireland has undergone a dramatic transformation in economic and social terms in the last ten to fifteen years. This transformation, popularly characterised as the Celtic Tiger, has had many beneficial impacts on many parts of Irish life. A consequence of this phenomenon has been a considerable increase in inward migration from a range of countries within and beyond Europe whose populations see Ireland as a place of continuing growth and opportunity. This inward migration has partly been fuelled by the Irish Government's decision to allow free movement of labour into Ireland from the ten new EU accession states. Key areas of Irish life such as *transport and communication infrastructure*, *health service provision,* and *education* have been slow to accommodate to the ensuing rise in the rate of inward migration which resulted from the Government's decision. This paper will focus particularly on Citizenship and Identity Education in the context of these changes.

The paper will begin by exploring the impact of the recent social and demographic changes which have occurred within the Irish population and economy. The paper then takes a timely look at the role and experience of Citizenship and Identity Education in Ireland up to recent times by outlining the history and context within which the teaching of the subject took place. The paper will conclude with an exploration of Citizenship Education provision and will suggest a number of new developments in this increasingly important and relevant Educational area drawn from current practice and recent research.

## Irish Society – Past and Present

### Geographic and Demographic

Ireland is an island of 32,595 square miles and is situated on the western edges of Europe. The island of Ireland is divided in two parts with six of the thirty-two Irish counties governed by the United Kingdom and which are referred to as *Northern Ireland*. The remaining twenty-six counties currently make up the Republic of Ireland These six northern counties (Northern Ireland) fall under British law and thus are part of the British education system. Based on CSO (Central Statistics Office) figures released in September 2005 the current population of Ireland is said to be 4.13 million. In the year ending April 2005 the Irish population reached its highest level since the 1891 census which recorded the population for that year as 4.4 million.

Despite the decline in the birth rate in the early 1990s, Ireland continues to have a favourable demographic structure, when compared with other European countries. Eurostat population statistics (2002) show that Ireland has the highest proportion (45.6%) of persons less than 30 years of age; the highest proportion (16.3%) of persons

aged 20-29; the second highest proportion (13.9%) of persons aged 0-9; the third highest proportion (15.4%) of persons aged 10-19 (Patterson, V. and Behan, J. 2006; p13).

*Irish Demographics and in-migration*

As well as rapid economic growth and coupled with a predicted population decline Ireland has also witnessed major growth in the net flow of migrants over recent years. In fact Ireland has transformed itself from a net exporter of people to a net importer. In the 1980's, following the post-EC restructuring, a lot of traditional Irish industry suffered due to a shift from a relatively small market place and protectionist environment to wider pan European economies of scale. During this period of Irish history there was a dramatic rise in unemployment and increasing emigration rates. For decades dating back to the famine in the 1840s, emigration has been a significant feature of Irish life. It has varied in terms of intensity from decade to decade, but has always persisted as a necessary safety valve for a country that was incapable of creating enough economically viable jobs to absorb the natural growth in the labour force. In Ireland's more recent history, the decade of the 1950s saw a sharp fall in total employment and a substantial rise in net outward migration. This resulted in a situation where the Irish population fell to its lowest ever level in 1961. From 1988-89, 70,600 people (approx. 2% of the population) left the country as economic migrants. Below, in figure 1, the chart shows the net migration from 1972 to 2004 in Ireland.

**Figure 1: Net Migration in Ireland from 1972-2004**
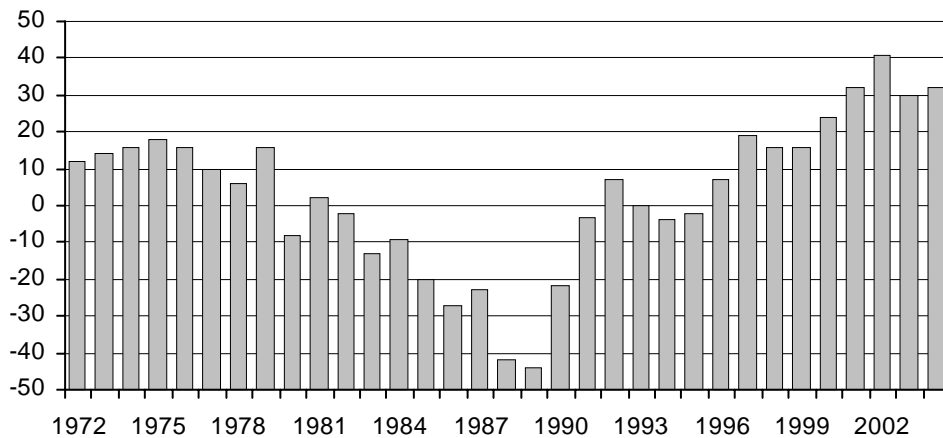


Source: Central Statistics Office CSO (2005)

Figure 2 illustrates that although emigration continues to have a significant impact on Irish demographics total immigration has increased greatly over the past ten to fifteen years. To illustrate this trend, from April 2004 to April 2005 a total of 70,000 migrants entered Ireland (EGFSN/Forfás 2005). This was the highest annual figure since migration estimates began in 1987.

**Figure 2: Immigration, emigration and net migration in Ireland, 1987-2005**
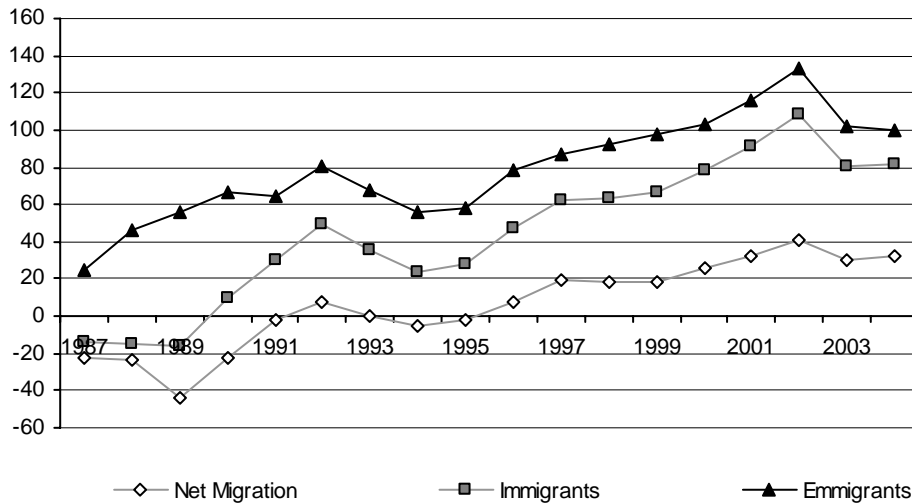


Source: CSO (2005)

In relation to the demographic overhaul it is important to note that the changes in demographics now make Ireland a country with one of the youngest populations in Europe. Almost 20% of all immigrants into Ireland were between 15 to 24 years of age (CSO, 2005). Secondly it is also important to acknowledge that over one third of all immigrants (38%) into the State were nationals of the ten new EU accession states which joined the EU on 1st May 2004 (CSO, 2005). The debates within Ireland regarding migration are often unfocussed and misleading. There can be confusion between migration in the form of asylum seekers, refugees and highly skilled migrants from the EU and the EEA (European Economic Area).

The context presented here in relation to in-migration in Ireland may be a reason for looking towards an integrated approach to educational policy in relation to the current Irish demographic and the possible future Irish population made up from the other EU, EEA and other non-EU populations. The debate continues to draw media attention and is often used as a political tool by politicians from across the various political parties whose members tend to be drawn from the traditional mono-culture, referred to as *'White-Irish'* by the recent 2006 Census (CSO 2006). In a recent Irish Times article (2nd May 2006) politicians commented on this demographic and cultural shift in population structure.

**Figure 3: Accession State members who applied for PPS (social security) numbers within Ireland between April 2004 and May 2005**
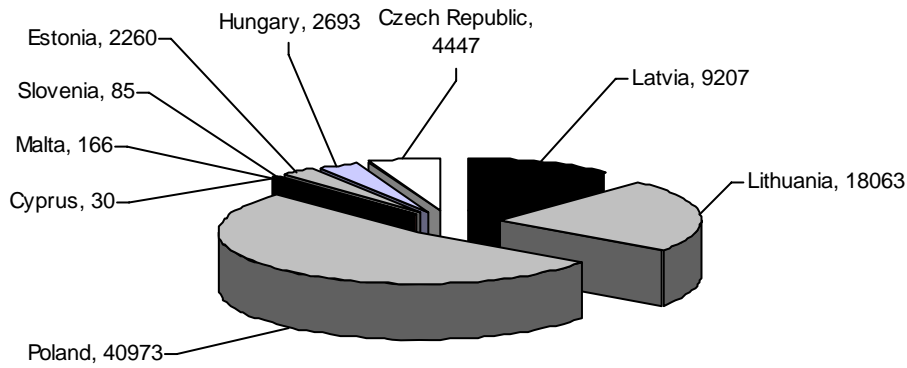


Source: CSO (2005)

Paul Bradford (FG[1]) said that according to a newspaper report the latest census might show that up to 10 per cent of people resident in this country were from other states:

> I think that is great diversity, providing that we put the structures in place to facilitate the presence of new people in Ireland and to facilitate Irish people to deal with it in a progressive fashion.

Joe O'Toole (Ind[2]) said that myths about immigrants which were circulating in pubs and clubs must be dispelled:

> The reality, and I think we have failed to get this message out, is that this economy would die on its feet if the hundreds of thousands of immigrant, or non-national, workers were to leave.

Joe Dardis (PD[3]) deputy Government leader in the House, said his party looked forward to the day, very soon, when representatives of the immigrant communities were elected to seats in our parliament.

Furthermore, the economic link to this mass migration should not be underestimated. The driving force behind the acceptance of citizens of the EU and EEA is primarily a self-serving one, namely that of furthering economic growth in the cause of national

---

[1] FG = **Fine Gael**: Founded in 1933 following the merger of Cumann na nGaedheal, the Centre Party and the Army Comrades Association Since it was founded Fine Gael has remained the second largest party in the Dáil.
[2] Ind.= **Independent**
[3] PD = **Progressive Democrats:** Currently the fourth largest party in the Dáil. The PDs would be regarded economically and socially liberal and right of centre.

development. Fine Gael politician Jim Deasy clashed with his fellow TDs[4] in Dáil Éireann[5] when he stated that

> It is possible that one million immigrants will come to this country over the next 10 years. The social aspect of such arrivals has been stressed repeatedly...The members of the joint committee have stressed that if we do not deal with the social issues facing immigrants, we will encounter major problems down the road.
> (Irish Times newspaper 11th May 2006)

### *Economic*

Since 1987 the Irish economy has been managed by means of national partnership agreements between social partners. In addition to the Government there are three main parties to the first agreement – *business and industry*; *the trade unions*; and the *farming sector*. These have since been joined by the *community and voluntary sector* which now constitutes the forth pillar of the social partnership strategy. As a result of these partnerships, inward international investment and significant support from the ESF and ERDF, Irelands GDP rose at an average of 4.9% a year compared to and OECD average of 2.4% during 1986-1996. Employment also grew by 1.8% per year compared to the OECD average of 0.3%.

Each of the five partnership programmes negotiated to date has included a commitment to focusing resources on the disadvantaged, and providing a range of education and training programmes suited to their abilities and aptitude, although most of the emphasis has been on pre-vocational education and training in school and non-formal education settings.

### *National Plans*

The central objective of the National Development Plan: 1994-1999 was 'to ensure the best long-term return for the economy, by increasing output, economic potential and long-term jobs'. The current Irish National Development Plan: 2000-2006, proposes five key strategies to implement its revised objectives, including the promotion of education and training policies attuned to the needs of the labour market, and a special focus on those most at risk of unemployment. The Plan contains a long chapter devoted to the 'Employment and Human Resource Development Operational Programme', where addressing skill shortages in the economy and the promotion of lifelong learning are listed as key objectives.

A footnote to the success of these national plans draws us back again into Ireland's often troubled history. In the period from 1932 to 1958 Ireland had shaken off the governmental and economic grip of its neighbour Britain. Led by the Taoiseach[6] of the

---

[4] **TD = Teachta Dála** (Irish for *Dáil Deputy*, plural:Teachtaí Dála) is a member of Dáil Éireann, the lower chamber of the Oireachtas ('National Parliament') of the Republic of Ireland.
[5] **Dáil Éireann** is the lower house of the Oireachtas (parliament) of the Republic of Ireland.
[6] **Taoiseach** (plural: *Taoisigh*) or, more formally, **An Taoiseach**, is the head of government of the Republic of Ireland and the leader of the Irish cabinet

day Éamon de Valera, the Fianna Fail[7] leader, the State made an explicit commitment to *national development* and the indispensable fulfilment to political independence. (Harrington, 2005, p430). Furthermore Jacobsen (1994) suggests that 'economic sovereignty was couched in the language of anti-imperialism' (p.56).

**Education in a time of change**

Just as economic policy at the time could in some senses be seen as an instrument to foster and develop independence the Government's attitude to education in the new State from 1922 on could be viewed in a similar light. The Irish Government of that time was faced with key questions regarding the direction and ownership of the education system. The State's primary objective was to re-establish Irish culture after years of British colonial rule. It sought to restore Irish culture to prominence through the education system. According to Coolahan (1981, p40) 'inspired by the ideology of cultural nationalism it was held that the schools ought to be the prime agents in the revival of the Irish Language and native tradition which it was held were the hallmarks of nationhood and the basis for independent statehood'. It was felt at the time that the State needed to intervene to reverse the decline of the language which had occurred during the nineteenth century and which fault was attributed to the school system operating during that century. Coolahan (ibid) goes on to suggest that 'for many nationalists the main purpose of education in a free Ireland was the re-establishment of Gaelic civilisation. Just as the British administration, during its time in Ireland during the nineteenth century, had regarded the school system as a vehicle to 'serve politicising and socialising goals, cultivating attitudes of political loyalty and cultural assimilation' (Coolahan, 1981, p4), so too did the new State intend to use the education system to promote its idea of what constituted identity and citizenship. In tandem with its intention to restore the language and culture through the school system the Government was also wrestling with the problems regarding the ownership of schools and the State's responsibilities in this regard.

The Catholic Church had long played a significant role in providing resources to maintain educational provision. The Church's role was consistent with its pastoral mission and it saw its role in education in this light. The Church had amassed a considerable amount of physical and intellectual resources in the field of education and the government was reluctant to challenge this dominance for a number of reasons. To begin with the Catholic Church enjoyed the support of the vast majority of the people. It was a major force in the life of the people and exerted enormous influence and power. 'By this stage Irish politicians had learned the lesson that the church viewed the control of schooling as its prerogative' (Coolahan, 1981, p73) and that 'even if any of the new leaders had other ideas it was very prudent in the context of an Ireland divided by civil war not to antagonise such a powerful entity as the Catholic Church' (ibid). The new state was beset with political and economic problems and had 'neither the political will nor the financial resources to challenge the power of the churches in education (Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p74) which resulted in what Dale, (1982) describes as the development

---

[7] **Fianna Fáil - The Republican Party** English translation: *Soldiers of Ireland*, but traditionally translated as *Soldiers of Destiny*) is currently the largest political party in Ireland.

of a 'symbiotic relationship (i.e. a mutually beneficial one) between the churches and the state' (cited in Drudy and Lynch, 1993)

So Irish identity was to some extent bound up in the promotion of a view of Irish culture defined largely by its language, arts and sporting traditions within a mainly Church controlled education system. This situation prevailed almost intact up until the mid 1960's. This period was another important time in recent Irish history. The notion of Irish identity and what it meant to be Irish were subjects which were debated and reflected on at this time. 1966 saw the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, the event that is regarded as the beginnings of the journey towards independence. The country was also undergoing a degree of economic and social change during this time and described by the Taoiseach of the day, Sean Lemass, who, commenting on the 1960's forerunner of today's Celtic Tiger, offered the hope that 'a rising tide will lift all boats'. Changes in technology (the national television service, RTE, began broadcasting in 1961) and a rise in visitors to the country resulted in a newfound sense of national curiosity and debate.

### Citizenship and Identity in Education: A brief subject history

It was during this time that the subject of Civics, which incorporated elements of Citizenship and Identity Education, was introduced. This was a non-examined subject and one which concerned itself with 'teaching the young citizen to recognise and obey lawful authority, to help preserve law, order and discipline, to respect private and public right to property and to be ready to defend the national territory should the need arise' (Rules and Programme for Teachers, Department of Education, 1967 cited in Gleeson and Munnelly, 2003). From the outset this subject encountered difficulties. Hyland (1993) concluded that 'there was an ambivalence within the Department on the approach to civics' (cited in Gleeson and Munnelly, 2003 p4). This resulted in 'the common practice whereby Civics and Religious Education were normally timetabled as one subject, taught by the same teacher' (ibid). Over the following years the subject of Civics went into decline due to a lack of resources, identity and subject competitiveness owing to the absence of an assessment element (Gleeson and Munnelly, 2003 p4.) After a period of political debate, in 1993 the Minister for Education introduced a Pilot Project on what was called Civil Social Political Education (CSPE). In 1997 CSPE was introduced as a mandatory, assessable subject at junior cycle in the secondary school programme. At the time the Department of Education and Science saw the subject as one which would find the student developing into an active, meaningful participant in a civic society with the subject providing a set of experiences and activities that would enhance and develop this dimension in the child. The student would be someone who develops 'a sense of belonging, an ability and confidence to participate in democratic society and a capacity to access information and structures relating to the society in which they live' (DES, 2005).

### Citizenship and Identity Education: Current Influences

Citizenship and Identity Education, in the curriculum generally and in the form of CSPE, currently takes place in an education system which is an integral element of a society undergoing another period of intense change. One of the key indicators of such change is

the rise in inward migration adverted to earlier in the text. One of the areas most keenly affected by this change is the education system in general and Citizenship and Identity Education in particular. Thus 'in a society undergoing rapid change as we are currently experiencing in Ireland we experience a clash of cultures between old and new, national and international, traditionalism and modernity and our sense of identity can appear to be under threat' (Holland and McKenna, 2005). Research carried out by the Dublin Archdiocese in December 2004 would seem to bear this out. The survey looked to determine the numbers of international students who were attending school in 92 schools in parts of Dublin City and the Greater Dublin area. The research showed that within these schools there were people from 104 different nationalities practicing 28 different religions. In just under 12% of these schools international students made up 20% of the total number of pupils.

The research above was conducted in one part of Ireland. Migration has become a factor in Irish life throughout the whole country and the findings outlined in the research would be mirrored to a greater or lesser extent here also.

All of the schools contacted in the survey operate under the control of the Irish Catholic church. The Catholic ethos still prevails in the vast majority of Irish primary schools and to a lesser extent in post-primary and the school system is still a major force in creating and developing models of Identity and Citizenship. The areas of school ethos, curriculum focus and teaching approaches will need to be looked at in the light of the new cultural, religious and demographic realities. The impact of these societal changes on what has been up until recent times a traditional, mono-cultural and mono-denominational education system needs to occupy the thinking of legislators and education providers alike.

### Citizenship and Identity Education: Initiatives and directions

> Multicultural societies are faced with the problem of creating nation-states that recognize and incorporate the diversity of their citizens and embrace an overarching set of shared values, ideals, and goals to which all citizens are committed. Only when a nation-state is unified around a set of democratic values such as human rights, justice, and equality can it secure the liberties of cultural, ethnic, language, and religious groups and enable them to experience freedom, justice, and peace. Citizens who understand this unit -diversity tension and act accordingly do not materialize from thin air; they are educated for it.
> (Banks et al., 2005)

Efforts have been made in recent times to create educational environments that recognise and embrace the opportunities presented by a culturally and denominationally diverse school population. Educate Together is one such initiative. Its mission is to provide schooling for parents who wish to send their children to be educated in multi-denominational educational environments. Established in part because 'Ireland is one of the few countries in the western world where children have no choice but to be segregated by religion during their primary schooling' (Hyland, 1993), Educate Together's ethos focuses on providing an educational experience that is:

- Multi-denominational i.e. all children having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected;
- Co-educational and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities;
- Child centred in their approach to education;
- Democratically run with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.

(Educate Together Charter, 2004)

Another recent development in Citizenship and Identity education has been the proposal for the development of a curriculum for Social and Political Education which was researched by Dr. Ellis Ward (2002). This curriculum would address the lack of a dedicated Citizenship and Identity subject at senior level in secondary education provision in Ireland, a situation which ensures that the country is out of line with its European neighbours. The absence of such a subject assumes greater significance in terms of the recent developments in Irish society.

## Conclusion

Ireland is in the midst of a series of profound changes in all areas of life. Economic development has occurred in a way that few anticipated and fewer prepared for. This growth has been fuelled in no small part by a dynamic work force which has benefited from a level of education not enjoyed by previous generations. The country has embraced membership of the EU and has reaped the rewards of this association. These factors make Ireland a place that more people are looking towards to find employment and educational opportunities. The profound changes in Irish life have called into question the exact nature of what it means to be Irish and how the notions of Citizenship and Identity are fostered and promulgated. This paper has attempted to throw some light on how the education system deals with this phenomenon.

## References

Banks, J.A., Banks, C.A.M., Cortes, C.E., Hahn, C., Merryfield, M., Moodley, K.A.,

Murphy-Shigematsu, S., Osler, A., Park, C. and Parker, W.C. (2005) *Democracy and Diversity: principles and concepts for educating citizens in a global age*, Seattle, WA, Centre for Multicultural Education, University of Washington.

Holland,C and McKenna, P (2005) *The Citizenship and Science Exchange (CaSE) Schools Project: A Report for the Centre for Cross Border Studies and Dublin City University*  Dublin: Dublin City University

Coolahan, J (1981) *Irish Education: History and Structure,* Dublin: Institute of Public Administration

Dale, R. (1982) 'Education and the capitalist state: contributions and contradictions' in M. Apple (ed.), *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Dublin Archdiocese Survey, (2004) *International Children In Primary Schools: Fingal North, Finglas, Maynooth,* Dublin, Dublin Archdiocese

Drudy, S., and Lynch, K. (1993) *Schools and Society in Ireland,* Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

EGFSN/ Forfás (2005*) Skills needs in the Irish economy: The role of migration:* A submission by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and Forfás to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Government of Ireland, Dublin

Gleeson J with Munnelly, J., 'Developments in citizenship education in Ireland: context, rhetoric and reality', paper read at International Conference on Civic Education, New Orleans, November 2003

Harrington, J.A. (2005) *Citizenship and the Biopolitics of Post-nationalist Ireland*, Journal of Law and Society. Vol.32 No.3 pp424-49, Cardiff University Law School.

Hyland A (1993) Address to the first meeting of the teachers involved in the Pilot Scheme for the Introduction of Civic, Social and Political Education at Junior Cycle level, unpublished paper presented to DES/NCCA In-service course participants, Dublin Castle

Irish Times (2006) *TDs clash over immigration*: Michael O'Regan, Irish Times Newspapers PLC, Dublin - Thursday 11th May 2006

Irish Times (2006) *Seanad report*: Irish Times Newspapers PLC Dublin – Friday 12th May 2006

Jacobsen, J.K. (1994) *Chasing progress in the Irish Republic. Ideology, Democracy and Dependent Development,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Patterson, V. and Behan, J. (2006) *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education / Training Outputs* report by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in FÁS for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs SLMRU, Dublin

Ward, E. (2002) 'Citizenship Studies' a curricular proposal for Social and PoliticalEducation in the Leaving Certificate (Established). Dublin: CDVEC CDU