Socio-Economic Discrimination in Schools: International and Irish Issues

INTO Equality Meeting - Discrimination on socio-economic grounds

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EQUALITY AND NONDISCRIMINATION: A Key Principle for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools (Downes, Nairz-Wirth and Rusinaite 2017)

Article 20 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights establishes equality of persons before the law,

Article 21 prohibits discrimination on the basis of 'sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation'.

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is a part of binding primary EU law, which always has priority.

- Authoritarian teaching with detrimental impact in DEIS contexts affecting early school leaving and wellbeing

- Discriminatory bullying

- Positive Discrimination as Prioritising Resources

In the EU Commission public consultation 'Schools for the 21st century', classroom management strategies were raised as an issue needing to be better addressed by teacher initial education.

WHO (2012) Modifications that appear to have merit include:
• establishing a caring atmosphere that promotes autonomy;
• providing positive feedback;
• not publicly humiliating students who perform poorly;
• identifying and promoting young people's special interests and skills to acknowledge that schools value the diversity they bring

Pyhältö et al. (2010) Finland, 518 students, 9th grade, 6 schools: 'unjustified and authoritarian behaviour that undermined pupil's agency was considered as a source of burden, anxiety, and anger'

In Poland (CBOS 2006), a national survey of 3,085 students, 900 teachers and 554 parents, across 150 schools

-Concerning conflict with teachers, a clear difference between primary and postprimary students emerged. 33% of students had at least one conflict with a teacher in a school year in primary school, 52% in gymnasium and 54% post-gymnasium.

-Experience of school violence from teachers towards students was reported directly as being hit or knocked over by 6% of students with 13% reporting having observed this occur for others. Teachers' use of offensive language towards students was reported by 16% as having been experienced directly individually and 28% as observed towards other students.

Percentage of socio-economically 'disadvantaged' students who agree/disagree with the following statements (PISA 2012)

Countries	I feel like I belong at school % S.E	I feel like an outsider (or left out of things at school) % S.E.
Austria	82 (1.6)	89.9 (1.1)
Belgium	63.5 (1.6)	88.4 (1.0)
Czech Republic	73.6 (1.9)	80.5 (1.6)
Denmark	69.3 (1.6)	90.3 (1.0)
Estonia	78.2 (1.8)	90.0 (1.3)
Finland	80.5 (1.1)	89.2 (1.0)
France	38 (1.7)	73.2 (1.8)
Germany	83.8 (1.6)	89.7 (1.4)
Greece	87.8 (1.2)	83.9 (1.4)
Hungary	83.5 (1.1)	85.6 (1.6)
Ireland	**76.7 (1.5)**	**91.6 (1.0)**
Italy	75 (0.9)	89.3 (0.6)
Luxembourg	71.9 (1.7)	85.9 (1.2)
Netherlands	82.4 (1.7)	89.8 (1.3)
Norway	83.5 (1.5)	89.1 (1.0)
Poland	73.2 (1.8)	88.2 (1.3)
Portugal	87.9 (1.2)	87.4 (1.5)
SERBIA	**86.4 (1.2)**	**83.1 (1.5)**
Slovak Republic	75.4 (1.8)	74.0 (2.3)
Slovenia	83.7 (1.7)	89.0 (1.2)
Spain	92.1 (0.7)	90.1 (1.0)
Sweden	74.8 (1.9)	87.0 (1.3)
United Kingdom	74.9 (1.5)	86.9 (1.1)
OECD Average	**78.1 (0.3)**	**86.2 (0.2)**

Cefai & Cooper (2010), Malta review of qualitative research: 'the autocratic and rigid behaviour management approach adopted by many teachers in their response to misbehaviour. Their blaming and punitive approach was seen in many cases as leading to an exacerbation of the problem...It looks...that perceived victimisation by teachers was more prevalent and had more impact than victimisation and bullying by peers'

A number of US longitudinal studies provide evidence that a teacher's report of a supportive relationship with a student has positive effects on elementary students' behavioral and academic adjustment (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Ponitz, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008).

Dublin, Ireland survey (Downes et al., 2006) of students in 4 primary (n=230) and 2 secondary schools (n=162):

*Approximately 74% of pupils at primary level (6th class) and 55% of students at secondary level (first year) stated that they are treated fairly by teachers in school.

*Approximately 15% of pupils at primary level (6th class) state that they are not treated fairly by teachers in school, whereas 25% of students at secondary level (first year) state that they are not treated fairly by teachers in school.

*These differences between 6th class primary and 1st year secondary are statistically significant.

A school principal from the Estonian national report:

"schools can create circumstances where unwanted students feel that they have to leave… and they do…" (Tamm & Saar 2010, in Downes 2011).

The secondary education system in Lithuania according to a school management representative:*"The attitudes towards students have to change and then they will feel better at schools. […] at the moment students are selected under the criteria „good" and „bad" and those who get the „bad" label do not want to stay at such school – they leave it"* (Taljunaite et al 2010, in Downes 2011)

No sunlight ! (Downes & Maunsell 2007)

"I can't wait to leave, I would leave tomorrow if I had the choice because I get picked on by a teacher"

"No some[teachers] think they own the school"

Downes' (2004) student centered research in Ballyfermot, Dublin, 12 focus groups and 173 questionnaire responses from secondary students:

"Have anger management courses for teachers" (female, focus group):

"The teachers shouting at you. That makes me really, really down" (Age 13, F)

"If the teachers didn't roar at you" (Age 13, F)

"Have an equal teaching system and sack ignorant snobby teachers…very harsh teachers usually make me stay out of school" (Age 16, M)

Magri's (2009) study of girls aged 12-16 in the Inner Harbour of Valetta and Northern regions of Malta illustrates this theme of alienation through authoritarian teaching:

"I remember very clearly phrases from my teacher such as; 'you should really be in the B class', or 'this is above your level'. I felt incompetent compared to the other students and was very much aware of how happier I was in my previous class."

"Disastrous, because they expect everything the way they want it. I cannot take it when they start shouting. They start shouting as soon as you utter a word".

"It's not the subject that I don't like, it's the teacher... she starts shouting in your face"

Acknowledged subsequently in the Council Recommendation (2011), the Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation in relation to early school leaving further highlighted this issue of teacher professional development:

Targeted teacher training helps them to deal with diversity in the classroom, to support pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and to solve difficult teaching situations (p. 12).

Downes (2013): "There is an emerging European and international consensus – not only that teachers need more support regarding conflict resolution skills, classroom management techniques and assistance in fostering a positive classroom and school climate – but that these are key protective factors in prevention of early school leaving".

Downnes (2013): "The danger exists that it is precisely those teachers who may be most resistant to professional development for conflict resolution skills who need them most; this applies a fortiori if there is no specific requirement or incentive provided to do so".

*"It is important to emphasise that it is not a matter of shifting blame from student to teacher; it is about going beyond an individual blame type of focus to a systemic one".

Bullying, Student Voices and the Role of the Teacher: Bullying as Authoritarian Teaching

Downes & Maunsell (2007)
- Perceived snobbery of individual teachers:
- - "Snobby teachers in secondary"
- - "Teachers so snobby"
- - "Teacher hates the JCSP class, she says we are all incapable of being able to learn, she is a little snob, she walks past us on the corridor"
- "Teachers posh, we're common…you feel that"
- - "Teachers need to come down off their high horse"
- - "Need more Dublin teachers, teachers from the area, they would have a totally different attitude"

- - "Snobby teachers in secondary, ask them a question and they ignore you"
- - "Am leaving after 3rd year cos don't like school, need more things to do in school, teachers so snobby, plan to go to
- Youthreach cos teachers have more time for you"
- - "they all think they're stuck up and better than you"
- "Teachers stuck up, look down on us, treat us like dirt"
- - "Teachers put selves above us"

Being publicly embarrassed by individual teachers:
- "Make a show of you"
- "Traveller child in Crumlin teased about features by teacher"
- "Teacher in School Y used to call pupils "dopey c****" "
- (Downes & Maunsell 2007)

Classroom Climate and Bullying: Discriminatory Bullying

Elamé's (2013) 10 country European study regarding 'the fundamental importance' of teacher influence on discriminatory bullying
-Those immigrant and Roma students who think the teacher exhibits similar behaviour towards 'native' and immigrant and Roma children in the class are those bullied least in the last 3 months.

In contrast, 'those who declare that their teacher favours native children over immigrant/Roma students are more vulnerable to suffer some form of bullying. Specifically less than half (48 %) of the 123 [immigrant/Roma] children [across the 10 countries] who sense bias in the teachers' attitudes towards native classmates declare to have never been subjected to violence' (Elamé, 2013).

Backdrop of increased poverty rates for children

- The AROPE indicator is defined as the share of the population in at least one of the following three conditions: 1) at risk of poverty, meaning below the poverty threshold, 2) in a situation of severe material deprivation, 3) living in a household with a very low work intensity. From 2008 to 2011, the AROPE for children rose in 21 EU Member States

- Eurostat: The largest increases in the AROPE since 2008 were in Ireland (+11.0 percentage points (pp) up to 2010) and Latvia (+10.4pp). They were closely followed by Bulgaria (+7.6pp), Hungary (+6.2pp) and Estonia (+5.4pp).

Positive Discrimination: Remarkable Success against the backdrop of Child Poverty Increases

ESRI 2015:
Attendance rates have improved in urban Band 1 primary schools

The gap in retention rates between DEIS and non DEIS has narrowed significantly over time; from 22 per cent at senior cycle for the 1995 school entrant cohort to 10.5 per cent for the 2008 cohort.

DEIS urban primary – further improvements in reading and maths scores between 2010 and 2013 (Weir & Denner 2013)

OECD 10 steps to equity in education (2007, 2010) – target resources to areas of higher poverty/need
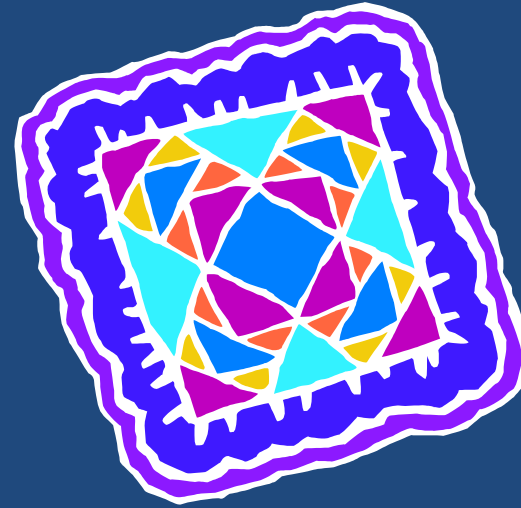
DEIS – Needs to be firmly stated as a priority area for government investment through positive discrimination

Highest priority at EU2020 targets level – Early School Leaving *headline* target the only one directly affecting children and young people in education and health for EU2020

Recognise government commitment to early school leaving as EU2020 *headline* target (8% Ireland, 10% across EU)

Early School Leaving national rates: Ireland
11.6 % 2009
9.7 % 2012

Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools (Downes, Nairz-Wirth and Rusinaite 2017) – yes/no

Professional Development in class and school for conflict resolution skills, relationship building and bullying prevention approaches, including discriminatory bullying prevention YES/NO

ITE compulsory practical placements in DEIS schools YES/NO

Promoting CPD for School Governance and Leadership	• Supports in place for your school leader to develop skills in diversity management strategies, relationship building, conflict resolution, bullying prevention approaches, students and parents voices, distributed leadership YES/NO

Supports in place in your school for teachers' to develop their cultural diversity competences for working with minorities and migrants to prevent stereotyping prejudice, labelling, other forms of discrimination and promoting high expectations in marginalised groups YES/NO

Downes, Nairz-Wirth and Rusinaite 2017 – School committees in every school to promote inclusive systems

Role of teachers' unions, teaching council and ITE providers

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