‘It’s not what you know, it’s who you know’
Listening to Immigrant Internationally Educated Teachers (in Ireland)

Dr Emer Nowlan
Marino Institute of Education, Dublin
Setting the Scene for the R/EQUAL project

1. What is the context?
2. What are we trying to do in this context, and why?
3. What (and how) can we learn with and from immigrant teachers?

(Immigrant Internationally Educated Teachers, IIEs)
The Global and European Context

• Increasing labour mobility globally and across Europe

Portes 2015, Data from European Commission 2014

• Teacher mobility and migration increasing globally (Bense 2016)
The European Context

- Recent increases in migration of refugees and people seeking asylum

1.8 million refugees have arrived in Europe since 2014, more than 1 million of them in 2015 alone.
The European Context

• Changing patterns of origin and receiving countries
The European Context

- **Changing** patterns of origin and receiving countries

Diverse countries of origin

Asylum Applications in the EU/EFTA by Country, Annual Total, 2008-2017*

Total asylum applications from all countries in EU/EFTA in 2017: 727,805

Top 10 Countries of Origin in All in 2017

- All countries: 727,805
- Syria: 108,000
- Iraq: 52,560
- Afghanistan: 49,055
- Nigeria: 41,675
- Pakistan: 31,975
- Eritrea: 29,290
- Albania: 26,025
- Bangladesh: 20,765
- Guinea: 19,015
- Iran: 18,840

Migration Policy Institute
Data Hub
www.migrationpolicy.org
The European Context

- Discourses of ‘crisis’, ‘influx’ circulate in traditional and social media
- Increase in right wing nationalism in some European countries
The Global Context

• Europe receives only a small percentage of displaced people (around 15%)

• Children make up around half of those forced to migrate
The Global and European Context

• ‘Immigrants’ are diverse and migrate for diverse reasons
• Many positive experiences of immigration and integration

‘I hadn’t been in real school until I came to Ireland. It’s nice being normal’

New to the Parish: Ismail Ahmed arrived from Sudan, via Libya and France, in 2017

© about 16 hours ago

Sorcha Pollak

‘I love spending the day in the nursing home. It’s bringing me back to life’

New to the Parish: Yekash Manzoor Khokhar arrived from Pakistan in 2015

‘As foreigners in Ireland we are so touched by the people around us’

Judy Li arrived from China in 2004. Her husband died in 2015 and she is grateful for the support she has received

‘It’s tough getting into competitive Scrabble here. The Irish scene is small’

New to the Parish: Lukman Owolabi arrived from Nigeria via UK and Sweden in 2015

What are we trying to do in this context?

Why are we here?
What is our ultimate objective?

Was ist unser oberstes Ziel?

Vad är vårt ultimata mål?
GOAL: Professional teachers developing their careers with confidence

Why are we doing this?

1. It’s good for immigrant teachers
2. It’s good for all teachers and schools
3. It’s good for immigrant students
4. It’s good for all students
5. It’s European (and government) policy (It’s good for society)
1. It’s good for immigrant teachers

• Immigrants face barriers accessing labour markets (some more than others)

THE IRISH TIMES
Black Irish citizens twice as likely to experience discrimination
New research focused on experiences in the labour market

• Problems: recognition of qualifications, preference for ‘local’ workers, underemployment ...
1. It’s good for immigrant teachers

• Immigrant teachers face particular challenges

• Not just ‘leaky / filtered pipelines, bottlenecks or glass ceilings’ – complex, systemic problems (Ryan et al 2009)

• Little progress despite ‘Herculean’ effort (Clea Schmidt 2016)
  “..neoliberalism and the myth of meritocracy obscure the pervasive systemic barriers characterizing their (immigrant teachers’) professional experiences”
2. – 5. It’s good for students, schools, society

Potential benefits of teacher diversity identified:

• Positive effects for immigrant / minority ethnic students:
  - achievement
  - inclusion, belonging, relationships
  - role models
  - home-school communication, etc.

• Better intercultural awareness and education for all

• Innovation in curriculum and pedagogy

CAUTION – avoid assumptions and narrow positioning

(e.g. Bense, Goldhaber, Santoro, Schmidt & Schneider, Mantel & Leutwyler ...)

CAUTION – avoid assumptions and narrow positioning
The Irish Context – history and migration
(Context matters - Schneider and Schmidt, 2016)

• Post-colonial
  • Narrow discourses of ‘Irishness’ (white, Catholic...)
  • Teachers responsible for ‘establishment of Irish nationhood’
  • Primary teachers: must prove competence to teach Irish language

• Religious control of education system – state-funded private institutions.
  • Most schools recruit and employ own teachers (paid by government)
  • 90% of primary schools Catholic – teachers as religious instructors

• Inward migration increasing and diversifying
  • Long history of emigration. Slow official response to immigration.
  • 12.2% foreign nationals (Central Statistics Office, April 2018)
The Irish Context – teaching profession

• Teaching profession dominated by W.H.I.S.C.s (Tracy 2000)
  • WHITE HETEROSEXUAL IRISH SETTLED* CATHOLICS
    * not from Ireland’s indigenous Traveller minority

• Ethnic homogeneity not changing through Initial Teacher Education (Keane & Heinz 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children aged 5 - 19</th>
<th>Applicants to ITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82.5% ‘white Irish’ (Census 2016)</td>
<td>98% / 99% ‘white Irish’ (2014 data)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Irish Context – teaching profession (2)

- Low numbers of foreign qualified teachers registered with Teaching Council (despite European Council Directive 2005/36/EC being applied to all applicants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most recent qualification (origin)</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2,583</td>
<td>2,975</td>
<td>2,968</td>
<td>3,958</td>
<td>2,825</td>
<td>2,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of EU</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of world</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location not identified</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total primary registrants</td>
<td>2,987</td>
<td>3,517</td>
<td>3,383</td>
<td>4,393</td>
<td>3,186</td>
<td>2,280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Current shortage of teachers at primary and secondary levels.
What is the Migrant Teacher Project

**AIM:** To increase the participation of Immigrant Internationally Educated Teachers (IIETs) in the teaching workforce.

**Funding:** Department of Justice and Equality. To address Action 27 of the Migration Integration Strategy:

> Proactive efforts will be made to attract migrants into teaching positions, including raising awareness of the Irish language aptitude test and adaptation period for primary teaching.

2. Develop and deliver a Bridging Programme (2019)
3. Provide training for employers (2019)
4. Establish network of IIETs (2019)
Who are the Immigrant Internationally Educated Teachers in Ireland?

- 650+ teachers from 71 countries reached through Migrant Teacher Project activities since Nov 2017
- Most are not teaching in state-funded schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No. of teachers reporting this nationality</th>
<th>No. reporting qualifications obtained in this country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of Study

• **Needs Analysis** for Bridging Programme
  - Main aim to identify *perceived gaps* in knowledge or skills of IIETs
  - Also to sketch **profile of IIETs** in Ireland and identify any barriers to employment (no previous research)

**Instruments:**

• **Survey** of IIETs (online, 55 questions – c.20 minutes. **225 valid responses**)

• **Focus Groups** with IIETs (2) and employers (2)

• Also: informed by ongoing engagement with teachers, principals, officials (Teaching Council, Teacher Unions, management bodies, etc)
In which country were you born?

50 countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethnicities: predominance of ‘other white’
Nationalities: Similarly diverse. (21% Irish nationality)
In which country did you receive your Qualified Teacher Status / teacher certification / license?

47 countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
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<td>39</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
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<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age ranges: primary (47%), secondary (60%), other (21%)

Employment status: 33 (15%) teaching in publicly funded schools, 12% in special schools
Barriers identified

1. Teaching Council Registration

• Negative discourse (many don’t apply)

• Mismatch: qualifications held vs. qualifications required
  • Age range, subjects, specialisms..

• Difficulties with registration process:
  • Obtaining detailed information from qualifying country
  • Costs: translation, addressing ‘shortfalls’, etc.

• Lack of clear information:
  • Misunderstandings common
  • No clear route to addressing ‘shortfalls’ (requalification)
Addressing ‘shortfalls’

Survey response:  
primary school teacher with dual European / Middle Eastern nationality)  

...financial burden to learn Gaeilge (Irish) from scratch. It probably cost me about €8,000 in total including grinds, classes, exams, Gaeltacht. I would have preferred to study at masters level in an area that the school could benefit from, intercultural education or special needs education, counselling etc. There are enough teachers who can teach Gaeilge already, foreigners shouldn't be forced to do so but acquire other skills instead to address shortfalls.
Barriers identified

2. Employment

• 49% of teachers surveyed had not sought employment as a teacher in Ireland – lack of confidence, English language skills, registration process.

• Working visas – e.g. need full-time offer of employment to activate spouse visa.

• Lack of social capital – personal / community contacts in schools.

• ‘I gave up.’ Lack of resources to persist – cost (money / time) of addressing shortfalls, emotional cost of refusals, etc.
Social capital

For me personally I’ve not experienced racism... but it’s just a sense that... if you’re talking about employment, whether it be teaching, or applying for things... it’s who you know, not what you know. And if you’re still on the outside of that circle, no matter how many qualifications you’ve got, how much experience you’ve got, if you don’t know the right person to connect you in a particular field, you’re not going to get very far.

(Marco, technology teacher, UK / African background, emphasis added)

How can we address: Lack of local contacts, social capital?
Or should we be addressing: The (racist) system

Focus group
Emma, White Irish, principal of large secondary school (emphasis added):

*It is very narrow* because you learn by bad experiences that you just chip away all the chances and the creativity goes because you are *not willing to take the risk*. And so you will go with somebody who is down the road and says, listen they are not terribly exciting but they can control the class. *...it comes down to knowing who to trust* and I don't think principals fully trust the colleges of education. You can get references and you see PME teachers coming in with references and this isn't really what we needed so you need a principal. *The principals are the key to getting this to work I would say.*
There is a big... wall there that we are trying and trying to break, but it is very difficult. We are lucky in some way, because some principals believe in us, and they are trying to help us to do the whole registration, because the schools need us, at least for foreign languages ....

(Maria, Spanish teacher from Spain, emphasis added)

How can we address: Feelings of frustration, loss of confidence

ALSO how can we address: The ‘wall’ of bureaucracy

You get second class jobs always. We are trying our best but it is like we are called to cover maternity leave, sick leave..

How can we address: Perceptions of IIETs as ‘second class’
‘You get second-class jobs always’

*Maybe with the shortages of teachers it may actually force schools and force the department and the Teaching Council to free up and allow people into the system because at the moment there are .. too many barriers for those teachers to get into the Irish system.*

Peter, White Irish principal, large post-primary school.

Immigrant teachers narrowly positioned, reduced to filling gaps:
- Addressing shortage, covering leave
- Making up for inadequate intercultural skills of majority teachers
‘It’s who you know, not what you know’

Implications?
Where should our efforts be focused?

Helping people get over the wall?
(introducing *some* to schools..)

Breaking the wall down?
(and how?)
Summing up

• Context matters
• Provide local knowledge, information (and contacts), but support teachers to maintain professional identity
• Break down walls as well as helping people over them
• Don’t leave it to IIETs to fill the gaps
• Listen to teachers, but change the system
• It’s hard, so let’s help each other

Stronger Together