Diversity in the Workplace

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Diversity in the Workplace

Fionnuala Darby

School of Business & Humanities, Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown

Fionnuala.Darby@itb.ie

1 Introduction

According to the preliminary report from the central statistics office concerning the Census 2002[1] net immigration continues to rise. Net immigration (the balance between inward and outward migration) is estimated to have reached 28,800 in the year to April 2002. The number of immigrants is estimated to have increased to 47,500 in the year to April 2002. The main features of these figures are:

- Nearly half of all immigrants originated from outside the EU and USA.

- 50% of the immigrants were aged 25-44 years.

- Returning Irish immigrants continue to be the largest immigrant group, though this share has been declining steadily from its 1999 level of 55 per cent.

- 35% are nationals of countries other than the EU and USA. This compares with over 26% in the previous year.

- UK nationals represent 11% of immigrants compared with 13% for the rest of the EU.

- All counties benefited from the combined effect of inward and internal migration flows during 1996-2002. The greatest gains were recorded in Meath, Kildare, Westmeath, Wexford and Laois.

Immigrant workers, the traveling community, single parent households, older workers, women in the workplace, workers of colour, workers with limited educational experience, persons with disabilities and dual career families all represent in real terms how diverse the Irish workplace has become. Workplace diversity is a multifaceted issue as outlined above. It is a hope and aspiration that most people hold the belief that every human being is of equal worth, entitled to the same privileges and opportunities, without regard to race, gender, disability or age. This fundamental belief has led to changes in management practices primarily relating to the recruitment, training and retention of employees who reflect the changing face of the Irish workforce.

In the broadest sense, the management of diversity is a business's reaction to rapid cultural and sociological changes. "Internally, diversity management means providing a climate where

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[1] www.cso.ie/census/pressrelease.htm

all employees feel that they are valued by and contributing to an organisation. Externally, it means that organisations are flexible and astute about changes occurring in world markets.'[2] The hard truth, however, is that inequalities exist for employees within organisations due to stereotyping and preconceived ideas about a person based on race, gender, religious or cultural origins, age, physical or mental limitations and more. Racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., can not be managed away. It is precisely these beliefs and perceptions that necessitate managing diversity.

Being an employer of choice requires respects for the talents of all individuals regardless of gender, race, disability, age, religion etc. It means being fair to all in recruitment, promotion and the development of the workplace thereby capitalizing on the added value that diversity brings. So there is a clear business case for doing this thus warranting the subject to be included on third level programmes of education.

Companies who want to be aware and contribute to their community make a commitment to continually improve their impact on society. How they recruit, employ, train and develop their employees is central to how a company translates this commitment into action. "Every business has an interest in becoming an employer of choice and increasingly people are choosing which company to work for on the basis of how a company demonstrates its social responsibility."[3] A commitment to managing diversity in the sphere of corporate social responsibility draws in new sources of talent from beyond the traditional pools – from neighbourhoods where post codes can reduce job opportunities, from sectors of society subject to prejudice. The increased diversity that results also brings innovation and puts a business in closer touch with its wider marketplace.

This paper proposes to examine fundamental issues facing employers in Ireland with regard to managing diversity. The following sections of the paper highlight the Irish experience to date in two organisations namely, Dublin Bus and Beaumont Hospital. An attempt is then made to define diversity based on academic readings and included in defining diversity is an explanation of what diversity is and what diversity certainly is not which the author feels aids to give a more precise definition of what is meant by diversity in the workplace. The paper then goes on to discuss the national Irish identity and suggests arguments that if others do not measure up to the current national identity that they are somehow different. These differences in a majority of cases have negative connotations. Finally the paper concludes with an insight into research

that has been conducted by an external partner to an Equal project of which the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown is also a partner.

The author feels that a brief introduction and explanation to Equal is important as it was a direct result of being involved in this project that this paper was created;

2 What is EQUAL?

Tánaiste and Minister for Entreprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Harney launched the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme on Wednesday June 6th last, 2001.[4] The EQUAL Community Initiative Programme seeks to improve access to employment for people who are disadvantaged.

> *"The EQUAL programme will look at new ways of tackling disadvantage and discrimination affecting women, older persons, lone parents, long-term unemployed, travelers, and people without basic skills including literacy, numeric and IT, ex-offenders, people with disabilities or those suffering from other disadvantages such as drug misuse." (Harney, M – Press Release 06/06/02).*

EQUAL is one of four Community Initiatives co-financed by the European Union 2000-2006. EQUAL seeks to identify and address fundamental forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market. A total of 21 projects were approved by the EQUAL Community Initiative in Ireland. ITB is a partner on one of these projects called the DAWN DP[5]. All projects have a Development Partnership, DP, which has the responsibility for the strategic management of the project.

This paper is primarily an exploratory piece of research in an attempt to fuel discussion and debate on a topic that is very much coming to the fore for Irish employers and employees.

3 The Irish Experience

The following short case studies on Dublin Bus and Beaumont Hospital highlight issues occurring in the Irish workplace with regard to diversity at present. They provide an interesting insight into the challenges that employers face, some for the first time in the organisation's existence. The case studies below were written as an adaptation of noted speakers attending a recent seminar. For details, see footnote below.

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[4] Press Release (06/06/2001) delivered by Mary Harney, TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Entreprise Trade and Employment.
[5] DAWN DP – **D**iversity **A**t **W**ork **N**etwork **D**evelopment **P**artnership

"The Reality of Multiculturalism in the Workplace"[6]

3.1 Dublin Bus – Ms. Patricia Normanly, Equality Officer

Historically Dublin Bus would have been considered a very traditional workplace. Almost all of the employees were men but not only that more often than not they were related to each other. Dublin Bus in the past tended to be made up of a workforce of fathers and sons, uncles and nephews or employees related through marriage. The majority of the employees were Dublin based and working on bus routes that were close to home. Therefore working in Dublin Bus was very much like working for a family since the employees, assigned to a particular depot, lived in the same areas of the city and also socialised together.

Today Dublin Bus has a workforce of 3,400 people. 70% of this number is represented by bus drivers. The remainder is made up of operations staff, maintenance staff and administrative and management staff. Four and half per cent of bus drivers are females.

Significant changes took place in Dublin Bus in 1997 when a major recruitment initiative was launched due to retention issues and the fleet of Dublin Bus had also increased, therefore more drivers were needed. Dublin Bus needed to plan ahead.

An equality programme exists in Dublin Bus today addressing issues such as recruitment and selection, training, discrimination, bullying, harassment and equal status. The aforementioned issues gained importance in Dublin Bus as the profile of Dublin Bus staff changed. As of April 2002 there are 46 different countries represented on the Dublin Bus staff. The country most highly represented is Romania. The percentage of bus drivers from outside the EU is 6%. For the first time in Dublin Bus' history it had to deal with issues like a driver requesting to get off the bus five times during the day to pray or a request for Fridays off to visit a mosque. One of the major issues for the drivers from outside the EU was the language barriers and in understanding different Irish accents of customers and other staff.

Due to the changes occurring in their staff profiles Dublin Bus needed to establish an awareness programme to deal with many issues relating to the background of their staff one being to quell the urban legends among the staff that all foreign workers at Dublin Bus received free mobile phones and did not have to pay tax.

Presently a training needs analysis for Dublin Bus could be summarized as follows:

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[6] Adapted from speeches at a seminar entitled "The Reality of Multiculturalism in the Workplace" hosted by the Eastern Chapter of Irish Institute of Training and Development, (IITD), 30/10/02.

- Cultural Awareness and Equality

- Improved Driving

- Customer Service

- Improving the command of the English language among staff

Changes were also made in the following areas:

- Recruitment – changes to the job application, educational standards and criteria set for jobs and assessing qualifications.

- Training for recruitment and selection – legal implications, work permits, visas and training the interviewers.

- Company Image – PR, advertising, AGM and any reports of Dublin Bus all had to reflect the new image.

- Internal Initiatives – newsletters, articles etc.

Looking to the future Dublin Bus sees its next challenge when coloured and ethnic workers are promoted to inspectors or higher positions and the impact that this will have on staff and customers of Dublin Bus. The benefits of having a policy on diversity have been numerous for Dublin Bus:

- Good business practice

- Improved customer service

- Positive company image

- Compliance with legal obligations

- Cost Saving

- An enriched workplace

- Motivated staff

- Learning from differences

- Working as equals

3.2 Beaumont Hospital - Ms. Carmel Fox, Nurse Tutor

The nursing sector in Ireland experienced great shortages of nurses, particularly in the 1990s, that were suitably educated, trained and qualified in order to take up positions in Irish Hospitals. Beaumont Hospital in Dublin did not escape this problem either. As a result they began to recruit nurses from abroad. Beaumont Hospital targeted in particular the Philippines because the education and training that the Philippine nurses received was very similar to the education and training the nurses received in Beaumont Hospital.

Recruitment of the Philippine nurses took place through an external agency that went to The Philippines in order to carry out its work. During the recruitment initiative with prospective candidates the agency were looking for the following; English language skills, a comprehensive medical screening and security clearance that the candidates were able to leave The Philippines in order to take up employment in Ireland. The successful candidates were also informed that they needed a licence to practice nursing in Ireland which was awarded by the Irish nursing board, An Bord Altranais. In order to receive this licence their first six weeks of employment at Beaumont Hospital were on probation at the end of which they are assessed. A successful assessment means that you receive your licence but an unsuccessful assessment means that you are returning home. Irish nurses are subject to the same procedure in order to receive their licence from An Bord Altranais. At home in Ireland Beaumont Hospital also needed to prepare and orient its own staff of the new comers.

The Philippine nurses receive much training and orientation in their first couple of weeks in Ireland. Issues addressed in the training and orientation sessions include the following:

- Introduction to Irish Culture
- HR policies in Beaumont Hospital
- Banking Procedures
- Security/Identity issues
- Social information – canteen, Internet facilities, local services etc.
- Occupational Health and Safety at Beaumont Hospital
- Computer Training
- Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics
- Salary and tax information
- INO and SIPTU information sessions

This trend in recruitment is set to continue for Beaumont Hospital thereby necessitating review and revision of its work practices in order to accommodate its evolving diverse workplace.

In the broadest sense, the management of diversity is a business's reaction to rapid cultural and sociological changes. "Internally, diversity management means providing a climate where all employees feel that they are valued by and contributing to an organisation. Externally, it means that organisations are flexible and astute about changes occurring in world markets."[7] The hard truth, however, is that inequalities exist for employees within organisations due to stereotyping and preconceived ideas about a person based on race, gender, religious or cultural

[7] Managing Workplace Diversity – www.alexia.lis.uici.edu (Becker, Erviti & Shelley)

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origins, age, physical or mental limitations and more. Racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., can not be managed away. It is precisely these beliefs and perceptions that necessitate managing diversity.

Being an employer of choice requires respects for the talents of all individuals regardless of gender, race, disability, age, religion etc. It means being fair to all in recruitment, promotion and the development of the workplace thereby capitalizing on the added value that diversity brings. So there is a clear business case for doing this thus warranting the subject to be included on third level programmes of education at ITB.

Companies who want to be aware and contribute to their community make a commitment to continually improve their impact on society. How they recruit, employ, train and develop their employees is central to how a company translates this commitment into action. "Every business has an interest in becoming an employer of choice and increasingly people are choosing which company to work for on the basis of how a company demonstrates its social responsibility."[8] A commitment to managing diversity in the sphere of corporate social responsibility draws in new sources of talent from beyond the traditional pools – from neighbourhoods where post codes can reduce job opportunities, from sectors of society subject to prejudice. The increased diversity that results also brings innovation and puts a business in closer touch with its wider marketplace.

4 Defining Diversity

a. Rasmussen Definition

"The mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values, and beliefs as assets to the groups and organisations with which they interact."

(Rasmussen, 1996)

Rasmussen's definition requires analysis. He refers to diversity as a mosaic and not a melting pot! A mosaic by definition depicts a design, a decoration, a model made up of different sizes forming a composite larger picture. So Rasmussen suggests an integration to form something new or put another way – maintaining individuality while contributing to a collectively larger picture. Diversity is not a melting pot where many races, ideas etc. are mixed but not necessarily forming a composite inclusive picture. Rasmussen also posits the view that diversity includes everyone. No one is excluded, we are all diverse and no one section of people "should" have superiority over another. The reality of this view can be entirely different! Rasmussen also views diversity as an "asset", something that is desirable and beneficial.

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[8] Business in the Community; www.bitc.org.uk

b. Cox Definition

"Diversity is the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting."

(Cox, 2001)

Cox in his definition suggests that diversity includes any difference so that the definition is not so narrow as to be limited to differences of gender and "race". He rightly, the author believes refers to "social and cultural identity" as affiliation with groups have significant influence on peoples' major life experiences.

4.1 WHAT DIVERSITY *"IS"*

- Diversity is about demographics. E.g. In US in 1965 the average worker was a married white male, 29 years old with 12 years of education, a wife and children at home.

  Homogeneous --------------------------------Heterogeneous
                                  Women
                                  Minorities
                                  Age 40+ years old
                                  Variety of lifestyles
                                  12+ years of education

- Diversity is about Profitability – seen as an attractive employer, corporate social responsibility (CSR), identify customer needs, innovation, better/productive teamwork (avoid groupthink!)

- Diversity is about behaviour – once employees leave a workshop/anti-racism training/awareness day how do we get them to hold diversity as value? It is what people do afterwards that counts!

- Diversity is a long term process – requires long term commitment, it is a strategic issue and diversity is woven into values, vision, plans, budgets, TQM, training etc.

- Diversity is about values – it is not strictly a business issue. It also has to do with human rights, civil rights and people's deeply held beliefs. It forces people to question 30,40,50 or more years of social conditioning that they have been subjected to since they were born.

4.2 WHAT DIVERSITY *"IS NOT"*

- Diversity is not just a buzz word – yes it is a hot topic but it is not something that will ever go away.

- Diversity is not culture – diversity training is not about teaching about "what Asians are like", "characteristics of Hispanics" or "women in the workplace", i.e. diversity is not about reinforcing stereotypes but overcoming them to value diversity.

- We are all similar and different on a number of dimensions and culture is only one of them.

- Diversity is not affirmative action – i.e.quota filling (women, coloured people, persons with disability). The insinuation that we have to help protected classes because they are not really qualified enough to succeed based on their own merits only adds to conflict and reinforces stereotypes.

- Diversity is not an absence of standards – "valuing diversity" is not a case of anything goes! The thought that you would give up standards in relation to hiring and promoting people is ludicrous. Just because we are removing our preconceived ideas about who is qualified for a job we must create clearer definitions of actual job requirements. (Lack of a focus on gender, race, age and increased focus of individuals' capabilities.)

- Diversity is not "white male bashing" – blaming the white male for past injustices only intensifies separation between groups, rather than bringing them together.

5 Importance of Managing Diversity

1. As a marketing strategy – to better understand our customers, e.g., Quarter of the world's population is Chinese. Immigration to the US from mostly Asian and Latin American countries is occurring at the rate of more than one million people per year. Marketing success can depend on the ability of companies to understand and respond effectively to the cultural nuances of the diverse marketplace.

2. Human Talent – by attracting, retraining and using the skills diverse workers will enjoy a <u>competitive advantage</u>. Effective employees from a variety of backgrounds are a major raw material in all organisations. This in turn fosters innovation and well rounded perspectives on decisions.

3. Reduce legal costs/actions.

4. Enriched Workforce/Company Image (Equal Opportunities Employer)

5. Learn from differences – organizational flexibility.

6 THE PLATINUM RULE

A good starting point for valuing diversity is to view everyone as different from us and to view them as people about whom we cannot make assumptions. The most important principle for valuing diversity is THE PLATINUM RULE – an expansion of the Golden Rule! The Golden

Rule – a time honoured practice and foundation of many religious disciplines: *"Treat others as you want to be treated."* There is a need to expand the Golden Rule because it does not account for peoples' different and unique needs. We cannot assume that others want to be treated exactly the way we do. By assuming that everyone else wants what we do, we perpetuate the values and beliefs of the dominant culture. The **Platinum Rule** gives others permission to be different from me/us and reminds us to honour that difference. **"TREAT OTHERS AS THEY WANT TO BE TREATED."** By removing the "taboo" of discussing differences is the first step toward valuing them.

7 An Irish National Identity

Ireland has a culture that is based on a construction of Ireland as a homogeneous society. The national ideal was further reinforced by different institutions in society. The Church was perhaps the most influential and powerful of all the institutions. It had a role on every sphere – social, economic and political.

The Irish National Identity is according to Tracy, (2000) being: WHITE, HETEROSEXUAL, IRISH, SETTLED and CATHOLIC or WHISC. These identifiable traits of "Irishness", (WHISC) engenders certain connotations. It represents an ideology, an ethic, a culture! It is important to look at each trait in turn.

WHITE – "Historically the Irish were simianized, (resembling a monkey or ape) by the English. An English scientist maintained that the post famine jaw structure was Negroid. Charles Kingsley wrote after his first trip to Ireland:

> "I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country….But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours."

It was this stereotyping that justified the British colonization of the Irish. The Irish were subordinate to the British as an ethnicity but privileged in relation to indigenous peoples around the world because of their white skin. The church also contributed to the white identity. This is illustrated by the collections for 'Black Babies' which were, until recently, a ubiquitous feature of Irish church propaganda. Through Irish catholic missionaries there was a construction of Black people as helpless increasing the white identification of 'Irishness'. When the Irish were constructed by the English, the English in turn were constructing themselves. The same may be said for the Irish in their construction of the 'black baby' and in the context of multi-ethnic issues.

HETEROSEXUAL – Gender identity; women as the mothers and men as the breadwinners. The constitution outlawed homosexuality, as well as abortion, distribution of contraceptives, divorce and constructed women in a domestic role. Heterosexuality being demonstrated as the norm.

IRISH – The Irish language revival was used as a tool by the State to define how Irish once was. Explosion of GAA, nationalism etc.

SETTLED – Being Irish means being settled and not a Traveller. The social system in Ireland produced a greater tie to the land, since the hereditary and marital systems reinforced the importance of land ownership. If one wished to get married, one had to own land. In addition, the land was the means of production in an Ireland devoid of a significant industrial base. The consequences of not owning land were simple and clear; permanent celibacy or emigration. Is this like the need to own one's own property today?

CATHOLIC CHURCH – The role of the Church is undeniable in Irish society – born catholic in a Catholic hospital, educated at Catholic schools, married in a Catholic church, counseled by Catholic marriage advisors when there were problems in the marriage, treated for alcoholism in Catholic clinics, buried by Catholic rites. Cradle to grave attention of the Catholic Church.

The imagined homogeneity of the WHISC is a powerful way of understanding "Irishness", since it connotes not only an identity but also a cosmology, a politics, an ethic and an ideology.

8 Research Detail and Findings[9]

The local platform for the Equal DAWN project is the South-Dublin Chamber of Commerce. "The purpose of the local platform will be to provide a bottom-up interface for the DAWN project in local sites by an action-based research and activity programme led by the Chamber of Commerce."[10] This research programme is specifically aimed at increasing awareness and understanding among employers of the needs of a diverse workplace and also to become aware and understand the needs of employees especially ethnic minority workers and their families in the workplace.

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[9] The research was undertaken by the Chambers of Commerce, Ireland under the South Dublin Chamber of Commerce led by Sarah O'Callaghan, (sarah.ocallaghan@southdublinchamber.com), for the DAWN project. Above is a summary and adaptation of the research and its findings.
[10] The DAWN Project Action Plan 2002-2005, compiled by Ed Carroll, (ed.carroll@ireland.com)

8.1 Research Question

What innovative responses have been taken by the local business community to promote diversity, particularly in relation to non-Irish national workers?

8.2 Research Aims

- Identification of responses, initiatives and attempts to manage diversity, particularly in relation to non-Irish national workers.

- Identification of good business practices in the South Dublin business community in relation to managing diversity in the workplace.

- Identification of attitudes and commitment about diversity issues.

8.3 Research Methodology

A structured questionnaire was used covering eighteen questions to identify responses.

8.4 Sample Size

The sample size was four. For confidentiality reasons the company names cannot be disclosed. The sectors that the sample size came from were as follows: health, hospitality, construction and education.

8.5 Findings

Local Business Community top needs related to non-Irish national workers:

- Information/advice on work permit and visa issues

- Information/advice on changes in Irish immigration legislation

- Information/advice on international policies and trends in diversity management

- Information/advice on setting up bank accounts

- Information/advice on getting driving licence

- Orientation pack to facilitate integration

- Development and management of diversity workplace training

- Information/training on cultural issues

- Irish Equality legislation training

- Anti-discrimination training

- Information on developing company's social activities involving non-Irish nationals

- Information/advice on dietary requirements and religious requirements of ethnic groups.

Statistical data below highlight aspects concerning the management of diversity from the research conducted by the local platform.

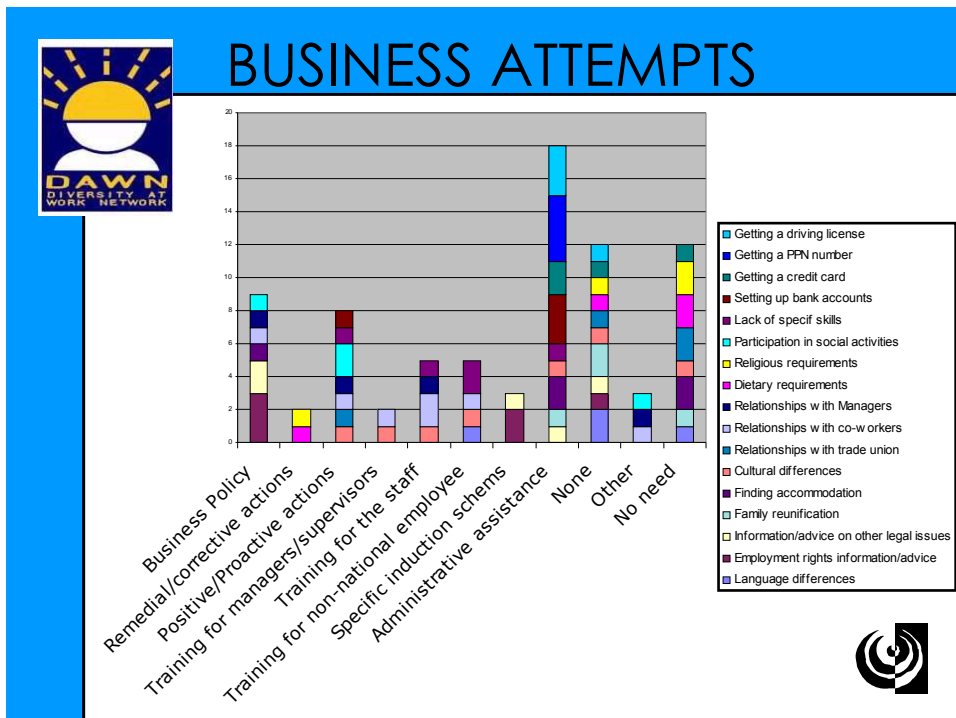## Representation of Non-Nationals in the Organisation's Hierarchy
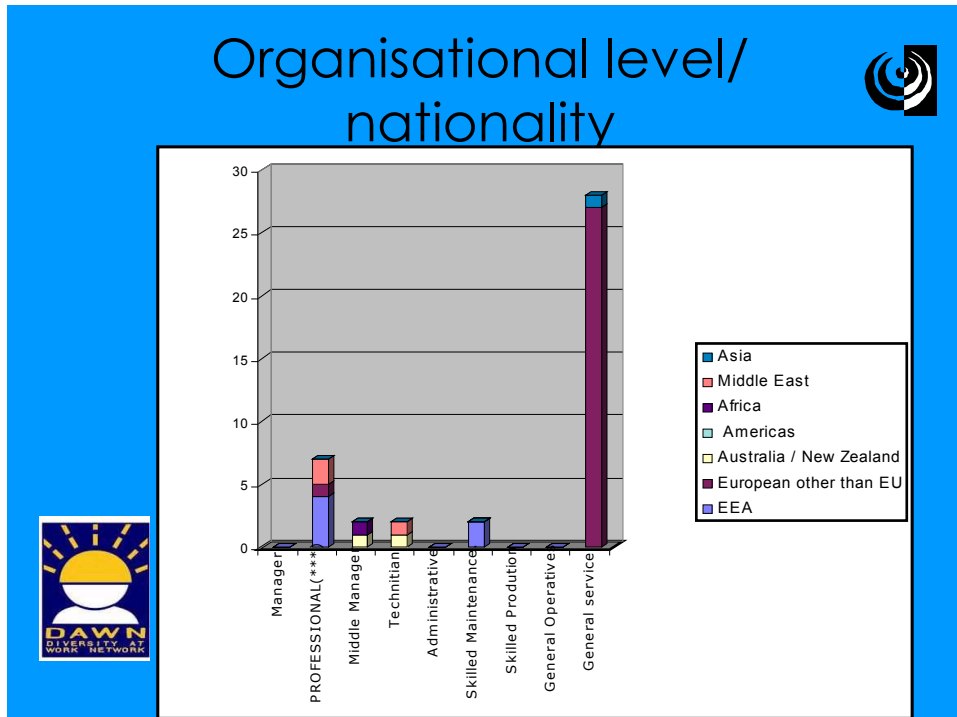
Methods of Recruitment of Non-Irish Nationals
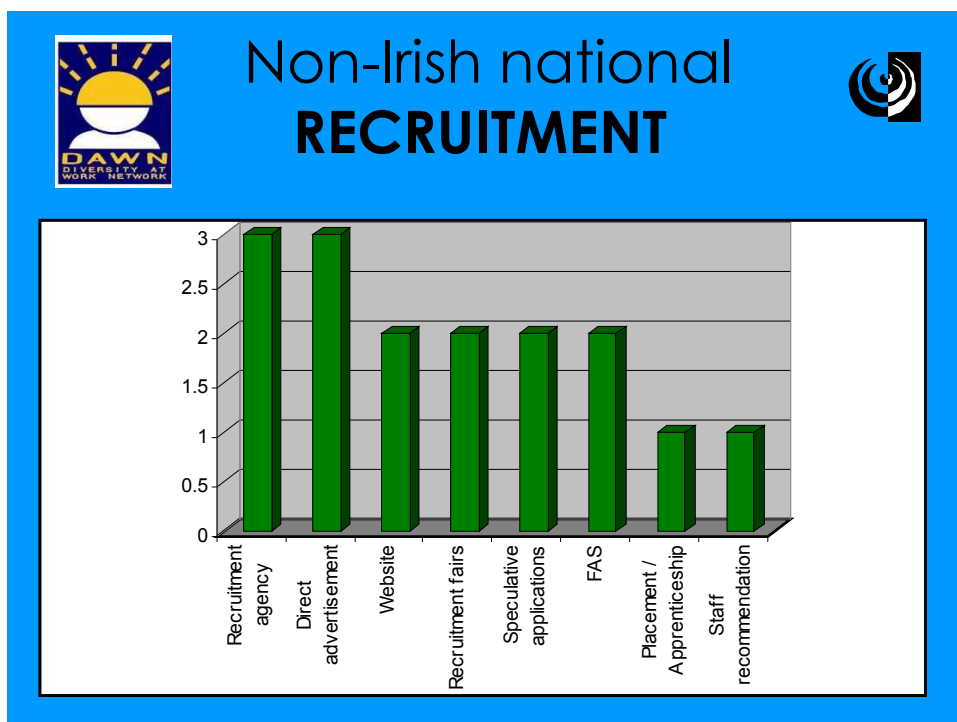
Concerns/Issues of Non-Irish National Workers

Attempts by Businesses in Facilitating the Non-National Worker

It is interesting to note the relatively few numbers of non-nationals that have made it to management positions. A trend surely that is set to change with increased integration in the Irish workforce and one which will pose a challenge to manage for higher executives as the Dublin Bus case study also points out. It is encouraging to see that recruitment agencies appear to be keeping pace with the rate of change as the candidates on their books reflect the shifting profile of workers in Ireland. A plethora of concerns arose with regard to issues that the non national has in relation to their working environment. Some of these are bureaucratic in nature and easily rectified, e.g. obtaining a PPS number but others like religious and dietary requirements and relationships with co-workers for example require much deeper changes like increasing awareness, understanding and respect for the human race.

The demographics of the workplace are changing and will continue to change rapidly. Workforce diversity is not a matter for debate. It's a fact. It presents one of the greatest challenges facing organisations today. Through hard work and committed leadership will the potential benefit for diversity in the workplace be realised.

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Web Resources

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www.equality.ie

www.equal-ci.ie

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www.justice.ie

www.knowracism.ie