

## Seminar

### *Linguistic Diversity in Education – Benefits and Challenges*

**Date:** Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2016

**Time:** 9.30 – 14.00

**Venue:** Gresham Hotel, Dublin

To register for this seminar please contact

[jdonegan.ifut@gmail.com](mailto:jdonegan.ifut@gmail.com)

on or before Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March

## Seminar Agenda

**Chairperson: Michael Delargey, President IFUT**

- 9.30           **Registration**
- 10.00           **Welcome:** Mike Jennings, General Secretary, IFUT
- 10.10           **Keynote Address:** Prof. David Little, Trinity College Dublin  
  
*Language, identity and human rights: some reflections on the linguistic integration of refugees and other migrants.*
- 10.50           **Guest Speaker:** Dr. Déirdre Kirwan, Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní)  
  
*From English language support to plurilingual awareness: the response of one primary school to the challenge of linguistic diversity among its pupils.*
- 11.20           **Coffee**
- 11.40           **Guest Speaker:** Dr. Bríd Ní Chonail, Blanchardstown Institute of Technology  
  
*Language as a barrier to higher education in Ireland: the impact of English language competency on the performance of migrants and the higher education sector's response.*
- 12.10           **Guest Speaker:** Egidie Dhala, Director, National Co-ordinator, International Organisation for Migration and co-founder and Director Wezesha Africa.  
  
*The refugee and migrant experience in education in Ireland.*
- 12.40           **Questions to Panel and Discussion**
- 13.10           Joan Donegan, Deputy General Secretary IFUT:  
  
*Lessons and Challenges for IFUT*
- 13.40           **Concluding Remarks:** Michael Delargey, President, IFUT.
- 14.00           **Buffet Lunch**

## Speaker Profiles and Abstracts

**David Little**  
Trinity College Dublin

### **Language, identity and human rights: some reflections on the linguistic integration of refugees and other immigrants**

This presentation will begin by offering some reflections on language from the perspectives of individual human identity and human rights; go on to summarise the linguistic prejudices that commonly underlie immigration-and-integration policies; and conclude by considering how the three levels of the Irish education system can best respond to the linguistic challenges posed by the current refugee crisis.

**David Little** retired in 2008 as head of the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences and Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at Trinity College Dublin. From 2001 to 2008 he was director of Integrate Ireland Language and Training, a not-for-profit campus company of Trinity College that was funded by the Irish government to provide intensive English language programmes for adult refugees and support the teaching of English as a second language in primary and post-primary schools. From 2007 to 2010 he directed the Trinity Immigration Initiative's English Language Support Programme, which created the bank of learning materials for post-primary students available at <http://www.elsp.ie>. He is a member of the Council of Europe's ad hoc Working Group on the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (<http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants>).

**Déirdre Kirwan**  
Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní)

### **From English language support to plurilingual awareness: the response of one primary school to the challenge of linguistic diversity among its pupils**

The linguistic map of Ireland has changed dramatically in recent years. This poses questions for those who shape, deliver and partake of the education process - policy makers, those involved in initial teacher education, CPD providers, teachers, pupils and their parents. This presentation will consider the central part played by language in the process of teaching and learning; explore the concept of plurilingualism, and its place in the classroom; describe the approach used in Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní) to help immigrant pupils become proficient in the language of schooling, while exploiting linguistic diversity to the benefit of all pupils.

**Déirdre Kirwan** was Principal of Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní) for over 20 years. 80% of this primary school's enrolment is comprised of pupils from more than 50 different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In 2008, Déirdre was awarded *European Ambassador for Languages* (Léargas) for her active promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity within the school. In summer 2015, she was invited to make presentations in Washington, Iceland and Denmark on the school's approach to language education.

Déirdre is currently exploring, with teachers, parents and pupils, the benefits of an integrated approach to language teaching and learning.

**Bríd Ní Chonail**

**Blanchardstown Institute of Technology**

**Language as a barrier to higher education in Ireland: the impact of English language competency on the performance of migrants and the higher education sector's response**

The impact of migration in all of its diverse forms on Irish society is a permanent phenomenon. Irish society is fundamentally and irrevocably a multicultural society with the repercussions from migration reverberating across the different sectors of the education system, including higher education. In its previous *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013*, the HEA recognised migration as a 'key emerging challenge in the context of equality of education', a challenge it defined as 'immediate' at primary and secondary level and sure to become a significant issue in higher education 'in the near future' (2008, p.37). Far more research and resources have been dedicated to the English language issue at school level in Ireland, as opposed to higher education, the focus of this presentation. The presentation will address the issue of the impact of English language competency on the performance of migrants since language constitutes one of the complex barriers to providing higher education opportunities to migrants (Linehan and Hogan 2008). The findings of a case study conducted on a group of first year social studies students at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, located in Dublin 15, an area home to one of the highest proportion of migrants nationwide, will be discussed including access to higher education, identification of non-native speakers of English and factors impacting performance. The focus will then shift to the higher education sector's response to increased diversity among students. Some of the emerging issues around English language support provision will be considered, namely language as a factor in terms of entry requirements, the question of assigning responsibility and challenges to providing English language support in higher education.

*Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2008) National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, Dublin: HEA.*

*Linehan, M. and Hogan, E. (eds.) (2008) Migrants and Higher Education in Ireland, Cork: EINE.*

**Bríd Ní Chonail** is a lecturer at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown in Dublin where she delivers modules on Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Competency, Irish Culture and Society and 'Race', Racism and Ethnicity in the Department of Humanities. She completed an IRCHSS funded project entitled 'Perceptions of Migrants in the Blanchardstown Area: Local Views' in 2009 and finished a two year Dormant Account funded project regarding migrant parents and the transition to third level education in Ireland in 2011. She conducted research regarding integration for the Corduff Task Group in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 in 2014 and is currently completing a study on racism in social housing with the Immigrant Council of Ireland.

**Egide Dhala**

**Director, National Co-ordinator, International Organisation for Migration and co-founder and Director Wezesha Africa**

**Refugee and migrant experience in education in Ireland**

(English language as barrier to Education)

Language is paramount and an essential requirement for accessing Education. Even though researches reveal that in general immigrants in Ireland perform well in Education due perhaps to their social backgrounds, majority of them however lack competence in English language that would have boost their performance to an excellent level. If the refugee experience can be considered as a factor affecting the learning ability, the acquisition of proficient English language as a requirement for access to formal Education would particularly be a challenging experience for refugees. In embracing diversity, contemporary Ireland must also sustain the cultural diversity approach in Education in order to assist migrant's social inclusion and integration.

**Egide Dhala** is originally from the D.R.Congo and has been living in Ireland since 1998. He worked as a Lecturer in the Catholic University of Congo and in Kimmage Mission Institute of Theology and Culture as well as in NUI Maynooth. Since his arrival in Ireland, Egide has been involved with voluntary organisations working with Asylum seekers and Refugees. He managed the Centre for Education and integration of Migrants at Spirasi and trained range of service providers on migrant issues in Ireland. He is a Co-Founder and director of Wezesha, an African Diaspora led development organisation supporting African women and children who are affected or are likely to be affected by conflicts, war and violence. He is currently working as the national Outreach Coordinator with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

