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Equality, Diversity and Inclusive Education

We live in an interdependent world, in which we have to work and interact with nations of different races, cultures, ethnicities *beyond* our borders, and with people of varying cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic groups *within* our borders - the one affecting the other. In such a world of increasing interdependence - economically, socially and politically - inclusive education can play an important role in challenging stereotypes, prejudices and ethnocentric perspectives of both individuals and groups. It might be useful at this point to consider a couple of recent definitions of globalization, which seem to be of particular relevance to this discussion:

Globalization results from the abolition of borders for all kinds of economic, financial and cultural activities. It affects not only the economic and financial sphere but also national cultures and services, including education. In education it leads to increased concern for quality (Caillods, 2003, p.1).

On the whole, globalization confronts societies and individuals with new learning challenges that educational planners do not really know how to tackle. With globalization comes increased localization. Decentralizing educational administration is the second major issue which has profoundly transformed planning practices in recent years (Caillods, 2003, p.1).

The above 'definitions' of globalization were feature in the introduction to a paper on 'The Changing Role of the State: New Competencies for Planners', published in a IIEP Newsletter (International Institute for Educational Planning 2003). However, they serve as a useful starting point for the present theme, not least through the issues that they touch on. Some of these appear to be of particular relevance to the issues and concepts that I wish to discuss.

The first 'definition' reminds us of the rapid changes which our world is undergoing and which we, as members of it, are experiencing. It also draws attention to the global economic and cultural forces that impact on our lives and to the challenges facing education. The phrase 'abolition of borders' apart from its literal meaning also serves as a *symbolic* reminder of the ethnic diversity to be found within modern societies, often one that is the product of immigration, especially that of the last 50 years or so.

The second 'definition' indicates two important parts of the equation, namely, that it impacts not just on societies as a whole, but also on individuals. Furthermore, the reference to 'increased decentralization' occurring hand-in-hand with globalization also provides an indication of the intricacies of serving needs at both societal and individual levels, through localised provision. Finally, the 'learning challenges' posed by globalization represent ones facing policy makers and planners, teacher educators and, crucially, young people.

Diversity

Cultural Diversity is reflected in differences arising from cultural and religious values and traditions which influence the behaviour, attitudes and values of groups of people in a given society (Verma, 1989). Cultural diversity is not a new phenomenon, even though it has become more evident in modern world. It is something that would seem to be accentuated by a greater political consciousness among groups, wishing to retain or emphasise their identity within the country in which they live (Gollnick, 1992, Verma, 1989).

Differences in socio-economic status and tensions between ethnic groups have been the product of minority groups finding themselves subject to discrimination and prejudice, and even violence, and finding their life chances impaired by gross inequalities in the system (Verma, 1999).

Grant (1995, p. 4) offers this view on *diversity*, separating it into two inter-linked dimensions:

Diversity ... demands the awareness, acceptance and affirmation of cultural and ethnic differences. In addition, it promotes both the appreciation of human differences and the belief that, in order for students to think critically - especially about life circumstances and opportunities that directly or indirectly impact their lives and the lives of their family members, community and country - they must affirm both *social* diversity (cultural pluralism) and *human* diversity.

It is interesting that Grant makes the distinction between the *social* and the *human* dimensions of diversity. He does so, it would appear, because of a legitimate concern about the individual, especially in an ethnically diverse society.

Rivlin and Fraser (1995) also remind us of the importance of approaching people on an *individual* basis. Individual differences are not simply a matter of one's ethnicity:

Regardless of ethnic origins, every individual reflects in his or her life-style, the socio-economic class of which the person is a part. This is not to say that all lower-class, upper-class or middle-class persons are carbon copies of one another - but it is to recognise the influence of social class on the individual (Rivlin and Fraser, 1995, p.375).

The social class element is a factor of increasing relevance in the multiracial and multicultural societies, in which ethnic groups are well-established, that is to say, with an ever-increasing proportion of members of working age, born and educated in the country of settlement, rather than born overseas.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural Education should not be considered simply as something that ought to permeate the education of young people. It is vitally important that provision reflects a commitment on the part of the wider society, not just as another requirement that we place on schools and further and higher education institutions:

Key to the implementation of multicultural education are the recognition and acceptance of the right of different cultural groups to exist and share equally in the differential rewards of our institutions (Gollnick, 1992, p. 219).

Two broad strategies are required in the planning and provision of multicultural education if it is to achieve the objective of preparing all young people for life in a plural society. By 'plural society' I mean a society that respects and accommodates ethnic differences and in which there is equality of opportunity, regardless of an individual's origins. The first strategy relates to the philosophy that should underpin the work in *all* schools and institutions. The second relates to particular the educational provision made to meet any particular educational needs of children and young people from ethnic minority groups. Neither strategy can be effective without the other (Verma, 1993).

This second type of strategy is one employed in schools where a significant proportion of the student population is of ethnic minority origins. Such schools, all too often sadly, are located in the most socially-economically disadvantaged urban areas, especially, the inner city ones. Very often too, teachers face the greatest challenges, not just because of ethnic diversity among their students, but also because of the hardships and prejudice experienced by their families, and because of poorly resourced schools. Furthermore, apart from poor physical resources, such schools may face real staff recruitment problems, with a high staff turnover, and a high proportion of newly-qualified and relatively inexperienced teachers.

The *Education for All* recommended by the Swann Report (DES, 1985) was the product of a widely recognised need for social justice and for equality of opportunity. In the UK context, this meant finding a way to prepare *all* children and adolescents for life in a multicultural society. Although this provided the broad philosophical framework for addressing equality of opportunity and social justice, the Committee proposed a number of more specific measures designed to alleviate the disadvantages experienced in school by students from minority groups. There were also elements in the Education for All philosophy propounded by the Swann Report that were closely related to inclusiveness, and one which was also part of philosophy of the Warnock Report into provision for children with special needs.

There is no doubt in my mind that elements of such a philosophy ought to underpin formal education provision in any civilised country.

Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusion has moved away from earlier notions simply meaning the integration of children with disabilities and special educational needs (Warnock Report, 1978), to refer to the enrolment and successful participation of all groups of children in mainstream education, and a corresponding change in the pedagogies, curriculum, organisational structures, policy making, and cultural understandings within education systems and the wider society. Inclusive education is now an international movement, and journals such as *The International Journal of Inclusive Education* provide a forum for researchers, practitioners and policy makers, to share ideas for promotion of educational practices which will prevent individuals being marginalised on the basis of their race, ethnicity, culture, gender or disability. There are numerous definitions of inclusion but most are along the lines of Armstrong (1999) statement:

Inclusive education refers to a system of education which recognises the rights of all children and young people to share a common education environment in

which all are valued equally regardless of difference in perceived ability, gender, class ethnicity or learning styles.

Five organising principles of inclusive education were set out in the 1980's in the State of Victoria, Australia. These were as follows:

- Every child has a right to be educated in a regular school;
- Categorisation is personally and educationally unhelpful;
- Mainstream school based services serve pupils better than segregated facilities and resources;
- Collaborative decision making (between teachers, parents and other professionals) must be encouraged;
- All children can learn and be taught (Semmens, 1993).

Whole School Approaches

- Changing traditional assessment practices;
- Evaluating current classroom practices, curriculum, organisation and pedagogies;
- Planning to change practice;
- Planning for support in the mainstream;
- Recording and evaluating new practice;
- Involving parents;
- Providing initial and in service training;
- Improving relations between professionals.

Assessment

The instrument most commonly associated with assessment has been the intelligence test. Psychologists have usually been regarded as crucial figures in the assessment process because they work within a scientific model of mental testing. However, in England by the 1970's psychologists themselves were becoming anxious that IQ tests were being used in a political context.

Evaluating Practice

Classroom teachers are usually subject to much advice from experts. Those schools that have adopted whole school approaches have put the classroom teacher at the centre to observe and evaluate current classroom practices, the suitability of the curriculum,

classroom and school organisation, and the teaching methods used. This leads to what Thomas and Feiler (1988) called the ecological perspective. Teachers are able to locate a failure to match the teaching and learning environment to the individual child. Rather than asking for children to be taken out of the classroom, strategies and methods were developed which allowed the child to stay in mainstream classes (Clark et al., 1995).

Support

Schools which adopted whole school approaches quickly realised that this does mean extra staff in the classroom. In Britain peripatetic teachers, welfare assistants, parents and student teachers have all been deployed to assist in classrooms. This needs careful planning and organisation, using extra staff as individual helpers, whole group teachers, and activity managers. It also means that the head teacher and senior staff must be committed to supporting all their teachers in inclusive education.

In 1993, legislation in England introduced the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), that is, a named teacher for every school to be responsible for all children with special needs, and central government policy demonstrated support for the principles of inclusion and whole school approaches. A Code of Practice for all schools was introduced from 1994, and schools are expected to try to retain all children before calling in outside professionals. A Government paper: *Excellence for all Children* (UK, DfEE, 1997) asserted that..... *we are determined to show that all children with SEN are capable of excellence.*

Evaluating New Practice

All schools are expected to record individual progress, whether or not children take the nationally standardised Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) at 7, 11 and 14, and General Certificate of Education examinations (GCSE's) at 16. Teachers are also expected to evaluate the success of their new practices.

Involving Parents

Traditionally, parents have been ignored or uninvolved in decisions made on and treatment of children regarded as having special educational needs. Often professionals have assumed superior attitudes to parents, many of whom are from lower socioeconomic groups and not knowledgeable about education. Whole school approaches require that parents are regarded as part of a team, and close partnerships developed if possible. In Britain, parents now have more rights of access to information, and are more closely involved in schools and classrooms.

Training

It is now well accepted that all teachers need initial and in service training, and those that have special responsibilities need to have particular skills. In England, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has developed national standards for young beginning teachers,

SENCOs, Head teachers and subject leaders in secondary school. The national standards set out the professional knowledge, skills and understanding expected when dealing with children with learning difficulties.

The Salamanca UNESCO FORUM (1994) called for inclusive principles to operate in education, and recognised that no matter how dedicated the teachers, there are serious risks in segregating schooling even for pupils with significant learning difficulties (UNESCO, 1994). In 2000, the Dacca Forum called for national education systems to take account of the poor and most disadvantaged including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children and young people affected by conflicts, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health and those with special learning needs (UNESCO, 2000). The issue of satisfactory schooling for severely socio-culturally disadvantaged pupils unites several of these concerns.

Effective education must facilitate in younger pupils the skills for simple exploration of information and use of evidence - whether verbal, graphic, personal or artefact. This implies a movement away from memorising putative 'facts' and it underlines the satisfactory education of all pupils. It must have direct relevance to the education of pupils from severely disadvantaged and/or excluded groups.

Apart from the human right of all children to develop to their full potential (UNESCO, 1989), governments and international bodies have pragmatic reasons for anxiety when severe disadvantage is blatantly linked to one socio-cultural group. This is partly because of risk of social disorder between the more and less privileged, especially when the disadvantaged group is easily, visibly distinguished as when there is an ethnic element.

The strategy required is one aimed at preparing people to cope with diversity, so that they do not feel challenged by or feel 'under threat' from ethnic/cultural diversity, and so that the dominant groups come to respect value systems that differ from their own. The objective is to bring about an increased understanding in society, and in the world.

Another strategy offers measures that are responsive to the needs of groups/individuals who are experiencing disadvantages in the education system, as a result of being brought up in a culture that is some way distant from the mainstream culture. Within the school system, the objective is to provide children from different cultural backgrounds to be in a position to exercise the same personal opportunities as those from main cultural group backgrounds. This may necessitate some bilingual support in key transition phases in the system. The goal of multicultural education should not simply be to recognise and appreciate cultural diversity as practised in most western democratic societies, for this can amount to mere tokenism. People must understand the significance of a culture's history and tradition as part of the dynamic and multifaceted culture of any contemporary society. The education system therefore ought to develop curricula and pedagogies that integrate and understand cultural process and cultural continuity, and changes within a framework of national identity.

Teacher Education

Research evidence, various reports and the findings of the Swann Report clearly show that the factors contributing to under-achievement of ethnic minority pupils are consequently inequality of outcome are:

- Stereotyped attitudes in teachers;
- Low expectations among teachers;
- A Eurocentric \ Anglo centric curriculum;
- biased assessment and testing procedures;
- poor communications between school and home;
- racism in the educational system;
- racial prejudice and discrimination in society at large (Pumfrey and Verma, 1993).

Teacher education needs not only to focus on the classroom, that is, on the 'mechanics' of teaching and learning, but also on the impact of these on classroom interaction. Teaching-learning processes are not culturally neutral. They are heavily value-laden (Verma, 1993). This has an important bearing not only on *what is taught* and on *how effectively it is taught*, but it also has an important bearing on how students perceive themselves, their fellow students and others around them. It is important that teachers understand more about how the cultural messages, implicit in their teaching processes, affect students from diverse backgrounds. This can help them to improve the focus of their teaching.

There is some evidence to suggest that many, if not most, trainee teachers have quite well-formed ambitions of the kinds of schools they wish to teach in, the priorities they have in seeking to develop young minds, and the kinds of youngsters they intend to work with. However, as maturing young adults undergoing a course of professional preparation, it is reasonable to expect these intentions to be subject to change and refinement.

From a multicultural education perspective, teacher training programmes need to achieve the following:

1. To raise the awareness of the students and encourage a critical approach to cultural bias, prejudice, racism and stereotyping in teaching schemes, school texts and other teaching materials, and the ways they are used.
2. to adopt an approach to all subjects in the school curriculum which avoids an ethnocentric view of the world;
3. to recognise the values of teaching which identifies and acknowledges effectively the aspirations of all students and which seeks to enhance their changes of maximising their potential;
4. To prepare all elements of the course with multicultural and anti-racist considerations, in both theoretical and practical components.

5. To identify and use effective strategies for working with students whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction.

Objectives such as these derive their legitimacy from the ideals of a true Education for All. All students should arrive at an awareness of the cultural identity and belief systems of different ethnic groups and a respect for their values. This should be regarded as being of personal benefit to them as individuals and as essential for a humane and just society. Without this awareness, and without an understanding of how racism operates to their disadvantage, young people intending to be teachers are not adequately equipped to guide and help form the attitudes of children and adolescents as they prepare them for life in the society in which they are growing up.

Moreover, in this age of globalization, with its implications for ethnic diversity in most societies, it is important to recognise that multicultural education embraces not only a local perspective, but also the worldwide implications.

Such issues place very heavy demands on teachers:

Among the complex tasks teachers face, they must be able to recognize racism and ethno-centrism, counter it in their teaching, and design new curricula that deal creatively with the controversies between shared values and plural ways of seeing the world. Furthermore, educators cannot operate effectively without multiple partnerships. These enable them to draw on the skills of parents and the community to assist in diversifying the curriculum, affirming diversity rather than ignoring or devaluing it, and improving social relations between students (Hickling-Hudson, 2003, p.5).

Teaching Education and Technology

Research studies supported by the European Union have investigated the effectiveness of Web-based learning and tuition in helping trainee and qualified teachers enhance their intercultural understanding and their teaching strategies for working in culturally diverse classrooms. Quite apart from being able to access materials from the web, those following such programmes have also been encouraged to engage in dialogue with fellow trainees in other European countries.

The *Immigration as a Challenge for Settlement Policies and Education: Evaluation Studies for Cross-Cultural Teacher Training* (ECT) project involved a partnership between teacher training institutions in Finland, France, Germany, Greece, and the UK (Pitkanen, Verma, and Kalekin-Fishman, 2002; Pitkanen, Verma, and Kalekin-Fishman, 2004). A partnership between Finland, Germany and the UK completed an experimental programme (August 2003) building on the lessons learnt from evaluation for cross-cultural teacher training (ECT) project. It too has made extensive use of the Web. It is hoped that this project, funded by the EU will be ongoing and become self-sustaining.

The overriding lesson to be learnt from such projects, it seems to me, is the fact that, in our globalized world, it is now possible to offer new opportunities in teacher education for culturally diverse societies. Technology makes it possible to bring together trainee and practising teachers and to encourage them to engage in dialogue with others in other

parts of the world, from their very own homes, while offering support materials and tutorial help and support through the same electronic medium. Use of Web creates new learning opportunities with a multi-faceted interface: access to tutors, as well as other trainees on the same programme, but working in a different cultural context, seeking to enhance their intercultural understanding. This work is generating new dialogues, and facilitating understanding, across cultures.

It is apparent from the discussion so far that Ethnic Diversity and Inclusive Education are not challenges that face particular areas of the world, but are ones that need to be recognised as *global* ones. While we may accept that challenges may vary in intensity from area to area (both nationally and regionally), partly because of local politico-cultural circumstances but the impact is global.

Whatever the society in which we live, globalization present us with opportunities for dialogue that are greater than ever before, not least among policy makers, and those of us who are educational practitioners. Educationists have the opportunity to have dialogue with one another, either face-to-face as in this conference, or through the increasingly ubiquitous email and the World Wide Web. Through the exchange of experiences and ideas, they have the chance to reflect on their professional practice and to help promote good practice.

Ethnic Diversity and Inclusive Education are closely inter-linked and face the challenges posed by racism, social injustice and inequalities in education, in the world of work, and in the wider society. The theatres in the world where these challenges enact themselves may be different. However, all, whatever their local and national characteristics, reflect a quest for the same thing. Viewed at the global level, inequality has both social and political implications.

Conclusions

One of the effects of globalization is what would seem to be a form of 'cultural reductionism'. This appears to be a product of an increasingly global media (especially advertising and the pop culture) that increasingly penetrates our homes and lives. This, it seems to me, may present a challenge to the existing cultural frames within which modern societies operate and to the values we hold. If, perhaps, members of the younger generation are more susceptible to the pressures of a superficial international popular culture, then this would be disappointing. While the opportunities offered by new technology to see more of the world and societies around us are generally welcome, there remains that downside. Over 40 years ago, in a book calling on French academics to fight to preserve the French language and culture in the face of the pressures of the English-speaking world, Gobard (1976, p. 122) pointed to the risk of:

peoples in their infinite diversity (becoming transformed) into a horde of customers in the same international supermarket. [translated from the French].

It seems unmistakable that globalization poses very considerable challenges, not least as far as education in ethnically diverse societies is concerned. In this, technological progress would seem to be a *two-edged* sword. The one edge offers new opportunities for peoples to meet and interact on a scale that previously might have been considered *impossible*. This is so, whether we sit at our computers and explore the Internet, a minor cultural revolution in itself, or whether through the opportunities for travel now avail-

able to more people than ever before. Today, it is possible to visit parts of the world previously inaccessible to the vast majority of people, because of the cost of travel and the immediate demands of simply earning enough to sustain one's family. These opportunities are welcome. However, it must not be forgotten that there are people in many parts of the world, especially in the developing world, for whom there is seemingly little or no possibility in the foreseeable future for enjoying opportunities which many of us almost take for granted in our personal lives.

Such a view might suggest that the future is bright as far as the breaking down of cultural barriers and the removal of stumbling blocks is concerned. One might feel tempted to argue that the breaking down of these walls can only be for the good! However, we should not lose sight of the other potentially socially damaging consequences of globalization.

Also attendant on globalization is the rise of multi-national companies. Whatever the rights and wrongs of there being such companies and the ways in which they conduct themselves, it would seem reasonable to suggest that they can (and do) take investment decisions that best suit their commercial and political interests. Such investment decisions have the potential to affect national economies adversely and the societies that are dependent on them. The politico-economic power that such companies wield puts a high premium on commercial competitiveness, with company investment decisions seemingly overriding local and national needs. In a European context, one could point to the holiday industry. When the package holiday concept was first getting underway, relatively underdeveloped countries like Spain and Portugal held an advantage over more traditional holiday resort countries, such as France and Italy, let alone resorts in holidaymakers' own 'home' countries. Such developments have had important implications for the livelihoods of those in the hotel industry. Apart from other local businesses on holidaymakers for their livelihood, there were also those employed in those businesses. Today, the focus has moved on from Spain and Portugal to areas in Eastern Europe, where those services can be provided at cheaper cost. Changes in the economic balance globally can have important consequences on local economies and those dependent on them for their livelihoods.

Ever-increasing globalization will inevitably contribute to inequalities in the treatment and life chances of different sectors of the population in any modern society. Increasingly there will be additional pressures on national education systems to provide transferable skills training for young people, and to deliver those opportunities even-handedly. In ethnically diverse societies, those tensions seem likely to be more acute. Hence it is all the more important that the education system plays its full part in tackling inequalities:

... education has both the potential of either easing or exacerbating ethnic conflict through the way that it is organized and delivered to different ethnic groups. School is where life's chances are distributed - often unequally - and thus may either favour or hamper the social mobility of different ethnic groups. School is also the place where 'socially constructed' attitudes towards other ethnic groups may be formed or reassessed and its functioning thus determines the rules of ethnic interaction (Hernes and Martin, 2003, p.1).

Otherwise, there is the very grave risk of internal unrest, which may further jeopardise the capacity of national governments to attract the inward investment needed to remain competitive and to offer good standards of living to the local population to ensure poli-

tico-socio-economic stability. Thus there is an *economic imperative* that stands alongside the *moral one*. Educators must ensure that they offer the very best education possible for *all* young people regardless of their ethnic background, and wherever they live. It is easy to argue that education should not be held responsible for inequality of various forms in society since this is beyond its direct control, particularly in socio-economic structure of society. Nonetheless, it is unalterably true that education can play an important role in leading the battle against inequality (Verma, 1993).

Despite the note of caution that is evident in this concluding section, I retain optimism about the future. This is evident in a conviction that I have expressed elsewhere:

Education in the twentieth-first century can become an essential contributor to integration, to a culture of peace, and to international understanding. Through this we can assure respect for diversity, whether diversity of behaviour, or diversity of philosophical or religious belief (Verma, 1997, p.337).

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