

### Education is a powerful vehicle for change

One of the major challenges for society in the 21st century is how to come to grips with the challenges posed by culturally diverse societies. Virtually all societies are now multicultural. As migratory trends continue they will become more so. If States effectively fail to ensure respect for the human rights of all citizens within their borders, we will continue to be plagued by conflicts that turn neighbour against neighbour, conflicts in which civilian populations become the targets of war, and women and children are particularly brutalised.

The way in which we think about the world has changed. In the past nation states, albeit some more powerful than others, were the major players on the world scene. Increasingly, however, we see a world of micro-nationalities, while at the same time macro regional and interregional blocs develop in response to economic markets. This is the context for an understanding of how deeply embedded is the phenomenon of cultural identity. For each of us our culture provides the building blocks of our identity. It shapes our ethnic allegiance, moulds our attitudes, underlies our political behaviour and builds the values that can drive collective action in the new global context.

By using only economic models as the underlying basis for virtually all policy decisions, whole groups or populations have become excluded or marginalised economically. As opportunity is concentrated in certain regions, countries or economic sectors, migration is one of the most obvious responses for those threatened with exclusion or marginalisation. Migration has become a livelihood strategy for millions.

Many writers on cultural diversity recognise that the two main instruments to counteract discrimination, prejudice, xenophobia and intolerance on ethnic, religious or national grounds are education and law.

It is therefore critically important that the education sector take a lead in celebrating the richness of a society whose diversity is appreciated and valued. The content of our teaching (what we teach) and our teaching methods (how we teach) must have as their

basis: respect, acceptance and appreciation of the diversity of the world's cultures, of our forms of expression and of our different ways of being human. Teacher unions must work to eliminate institutional discrimination and racism and to ensure that the education sector itself is not a vehicle for discrimination. The makeup of the society within which the schools exist must be reflected in the personnel who work in education. Curricula must be examined to ensure that all ethnic groups are portrayed with the dignity due to all human beings. Stereotypes and practices which promote a reactionary vision of a society or of a particular ethnic group must be weeded out from learning materials. Examples used in teaching must be positive, not negative.

Language, literature, music, theatre and art can all be used to promote pleasure in the richness of diversity, or they can be used to promote nationalism, racism and incitement to hatred. Education alone does not have all of the answers. But when combined with public policy and legislation that promotes and protects the rights of all, education which respects and values cultural diversity is a powerful vehicle for change. ♦

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

### CONTENTS

INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION 12-13

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL 14-15

#### NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

GERMANY	16
USA	17
IRELAND	18
UK	19

UNESCO and MULTICULTURALISM 20-21

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RIGHTS 22



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# INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

**A growing awareness of the necessity for intercultural education is likely to become one of the main topics in the educational debate. Many schools are experiencing difficulties in implementing a truly intercultural approach, a phenomenon which may be explained by the traditional role which schools have played in respecting culture and language.**

Migration is an increasingly important phenomenon in current demographic development throughout the world. Major shifts in migration trends show that a growing proportion of immigration into industrialised countries comes from the Third World. Most countries are therefore having to accept that they are multicultural societies and that an increasingly large part of their populations have neither language, culture, nor religion in common with the majority of the population.

While many governments have recognised the effects of immigration, some have also rediscovered the national minorities which already existed in their country. In some cases, this change in perception has been due to immigration and the growing concern for a multicultural approach that it has created; in other cases, it is due to political changes within these countries.

The multicultural society - a challenge for the educational sector

Most societies have always been multicultural to a greater or lesser extent. Due to migration and interna-

Most countries have to accept that they are multicultural societies and that an increasing part of their populations have neither language, culture, nor religion in common with the majority of the population.  
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tional communication technologies, this is now more true than ever before and, even more important, governments seem to be much more aware of it. The multicultural society promises great potential for progress and the enrichment of developed societies. However, two risks have to be dealt with in order to make full use of this potential:

- 1) Increasing social inequality, where immigrants, and in some cases also national minorities, will have less wealth and education, lower incomes etc. than "mainstream" groups.
- 2) The risk of growing social tension in society related to ethnicity, culture, language, religion and race.

These two threats can only be dealt with through a series of different measures. No matter what measures are actually taken, it is obvious that education must be an integral part of the actions.

## Redefining the role of schools

Current education systems in most countries resulted in part from the consolidation of national States. Schools were expected to mould the future citizens of these States, where culture and language were viewed as monolithic. It is from this monolithic perspective that schools have been forced to redefine their role and tasks.

## Second language acquisition

Having recognised the multicultural reality of modern societies, governments have experimented with a number of different approaches. The most common response of governments was to offer supplementary teaching in the majority language, in much the same way that remedial teaching was offered to children with learning difficulties. The lack of knowledge in the majority language among immigrant children was seen





EL APRIL

as resulting from a learning deficit or even a handicap. The aim was to teach immigrant populations the majority language as soon as possible, to the detriment of their mother tongue. The basic idea behind this approach was the assimilation of the immigrants, converting them into "normal" citizens of the host country. Over time, this approach has been elaborated and become more sensitive. A whole new area of methodology regarding what is often called second language acquisition has been developed.

### Mother tongue education

Other countries, like some German Länder, adopted a totally different approach. The main rationale behind this approach was that the immigrants were only temporary workers in the host country and were supposed to return to their country of origin after a certain time. Little importance or value was therefore accorded to teaching immigrant children the majority language. Instead, emphasis was placed on the children's' mother tongue, with little or no instruction being provided in the majority language. In many cases, educational arrangements were made with the embassies of the countries of origin, which contributed, in one way or another, funds and teachers from the home country.

Another approach, implemented, among others, in Scandinavian countries, focused on using the mother tongue to facilitate the acquisition of the second language. This method was built on the assumption that a premature loss of the mother tongue was an obstacle to the learning of a second language. From this perspective, it was important to provide immigrant children with mother tongue education, and it was recognised that the mother tongue could be a tool in helping to learn the majority language. The goal was to achieve a language transition, but with the help of the mother tongue. Immigrant children become bilingual with an equal level of proficiency in two languages. In this context, concepts such as mother tongue teaching, home language teaching and bilingual education are widely used.

### Human rights education and foreign language

The different approaches mentioned so far have dealt exclusively with immigrant children - the minority. Many governments have gradually come to understand that the multicultural society is not only something to which the minority has to adapt, but something which also requires an effort on the part of the majority. In order to establish a multicultural society based on cohesion, tolerance and democracy, all children have to learn what this means. Key concepts in this approach are human rights education, education for tolerance and democracy education.

A further aspect related to the multicultural society and

the internationalisation of national societies is the acquisition of foreign languages. In order to communicate with people from other nations and other cultures, one needs to know languages. The ability to really understand other cultures is closely related in many ways to language. In a world where it is easier to move around, more and more people wish to live and work in another country, at least for a short period. This requires the learning of foreign languages.

### What is intercultural education?

Based on this overview of the various approaches relating to education within multicultural societies, a definition of intercultural education can be suggested. There are four elements to this definition:

- 1) Everyone has to be able to understand, speak, read and write the majority language used in a particular society in order to be able to work and participate in the cultural, social and political life of that society. This underlines the right of every child to learn the majority language of the society where he or she grows up.
- 2) Everyone has the right to maintain his or her cultural identity. Language is a crucial part of every culture. This underlines the right of every child to learn his or her mother tongue, including when the mother tongue is not the majority language of the society in which he or she lives.
- 3) Everyone must learn to respect other cultures and have a basic knowledge of different cultures. It is also important to learn to appreciate the diverse nature of a multicultural society. Another crucial task is learning to settle conflicts without violence and in a spirit of mutual respect. This underlines the need for education based on tolerance, human rights and democracy.
- 4) Everyone must have the right to acquire at least a basic knowledge of a foreign language. Such knowledge is essential to meeting and communicating with people from other countries and cultures, to travelling to and working and living in another country. This underlines the need for foreign language teaching.

Seen from this perspective, intercultural education is an education for both the minority and majority groups in society. For the majority, it is mainly a matter of learning to live in a multicultural society and respecting cultural diversities. For the minority, it is also important to learn the skills and knowledge required to achieve success in a majority culture, whilst at the same time preserving their distinctive linguistic and cultural identity. ♦

This article is a short summary of a report in Swedish by Ulf Fredriksson "Interculturell undervisning, språk och läsning" (in English: "Intercultural Education, Language and Reading") that will be published in spring 1999 in the Report Series of the Institute of International Education at Stockholm University, Sweden.

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It is important to learn to appreciate the diverse nature of a multicultural society.

It is of crucial importance that topics relating to intercultural education are brought into teacher education, both in initial teacher education and in-service training.

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## Quality, equality and rights

**Education must help children understand the social diversity which surrounds them. However, the full responsibility of cultural integration cannot be left to schools and teachers. Success lies in the ability of governments to involve society as a whole and all civic bodies.**

Societies in the 1990s have become increasingly multicultural. As global and regional economic integration becomes reality, so the movement of people across borders has escalated. There has also been a significant jump in the numbers of refugees and immigrants. It is essential that governments recognise the new make-up of the societies they manage and develop appropriate policies to ensure that each community and group is able to build up its own citizenship and sense of belonging.

The issues of racism and xenophobia must be put at the top of governments' political agendas. The impact of these issues on education is vitally important and must not be considered of marginal significance. Attempts to eliminate racism and xenophobia are key to the health and well-being of the state. They lie at the heart of modern society and therefore deserve significant attention and resources.

### The role of the school

There are numerous factors that affect a child's development, but perhaps none so critical as the involvement of parents. Unless schools have well-established links with the different communities, then uninformed parents and adults can undo the work of schools and reinforce racism and ethnic divisions. Education systems should therefore be designed to broaden the choices for young people in such a way as to transcend dominant, ethnic or narrow nationalist identities.

Education needs to offer learning opportunities to those who may not have benefited from intercultural education in their adolescence. The concept of lifelong learning for all must be widely introduced in the new millennium.

It is also important that systems target young people in poor rural and inner-city areas. If intercultural policies are integrated into mainstream education and social policy provisions, children can then acquire the following four basic principles in the course of their development: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.

Intercultural policies at national, local and school levels must ensure that they include all groups in society and that their impact will lead to practices that can be monitored.

It is essential that students and, in particular, teachers are not only seen to belong, but do in fact share a sense of belonging to a school.



### Xenophobia

There is a trend current in many parts of the world to build nations on the basis of a single ethnic identity, for example, in the republics of the former Yugoslavia. Some societies fear that their national identities are being smothered by others, including immigrants, refugees, nomads, gypsies, travellers, and so on. If left unchecked, this fear can give rise to violent acts of racism and xenophobia. It destroys the basis necessary for humankind to coexist in all its forms. Education must be the instrument to encourage better interaction and greater understanding between the majority and minority groups in society.

Problems will occur as long as the feeling of "them and us" or "other" is allowed to develop. Often, intercultural education is seen as being relevant only when minority groups are present within society, so that what is in fact a fundamental and widespread need becomes a marginal issue. One of the major challenges for schools, therefore, is to ensure the integration of intercultural education practices.

### Multilingual education

The rapid expansion of the multicultural society has brought with it a rich resource of different languages. However, for various reasons, this resource is being largely ignored in favour of monolingual education. Languages are being allowed to disappear.

Obviously, schools cannot teach all the languages that are spoken in the surrounding community and a certain amount of responsibility must fall to the communities themselves. However, society would benefit enormously if it could find a way to foster the use of a variety of languages to enrich its culture and literature and perhaps even serve the economy itself. Classroom use of the major languages spoken in the community would be one way to harness this potential.



be developed to address these problems at their root cause, refraining from resorting to exclusion from school which is often the case today. Policies should monitor excessive levels of exclusion of children from various communities and take measures to minimise problems which may arise.

The framework of good intercultural school practices ought to include high-quality training in intercultural education for teachers. Without such training, it is likely that the process of exclusion will continue to alienate children and create inequalities.

Intercultural education is one of the greatest challenges many countries face. As a matter of professional competence, teachers should be well equipped to deal with xenophobic and racist behaviour. The issue of appropriate intercultural training for teachers also relates to their status in relation to other professions. Policies without effective classroom and school-based intercultural practices are not sufficient. Governments, NGOs and educational bodies should also develop strategies which target influential youth peer group cultures and ensure their full integration and participation in all environments. These groups have a significant impact on youth attitudes to education. Negative attitudes are often due to a feeling of exclusion from school, the community and society. Reductions in school exclusion is likely to lead to reductions in social exclusion in later life and therefore create greater social and economic stability worldwide.

**Education must be the instrument for encouraging better interaction and greater understanding between the majority and minority groups in society.**

Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) enables minority groups to participate as citizens of the country in which they live and to give a voice to their community within society. At the same time it helps these groups to challenge exploitation and racial and cultural oppression.

IBE develops and enhances linguistic diversity and content. Loss of a language means a loss of a perception of the world, a way of life and a knowledge system. IBE can therefore assist the intercultural process. However, it also requires the training of multilingual teachers to be able to function in linguistically diverse schools.

### School environment

The fundamental right of all children to quality education should receive full government protection. This will require the establishment of a safe environment in which teachers and students may work and learn. Quality intercultural education should draw upon the positive values of all communities involved.

In this respect, it is essential that students and, in particular, teachers are not only seen to belong, but do in fact share a sense of belonging to a school. Each person and group in the school should have their own rights and responsibilities, and it will encourage young people to subscribe to their responsibilities if schools and communities develop shared and common value systems. Children can only do this if teachers believe it themselves.

### Exclusion and teacher training

Poor school achievement is often linked to impoverished socio-economic origins compounded by the cultural distance between a child and the country of origin. Immigrant children in a particular country may perform badly due to the wide differences between the school and their domestic cultures. Strategies should

### Educational research

The development of appropriate curricula is important to the success of intercultural education policies. The curricula of tomorrow's schools must draw on the vast wealth of knowledge of all communities and groups participating in a country's education system.

Curriculum development must therefore become a major focus for educational research and the important position of sports and games in consolidating the intercultural process should not be underestimated. Properly managed they can be used to protect children's fundamental rights.

The bottom line is that teachers face the front-line task of dealing with xenophobia and racism in society. The role of teachers and their organisations is pivotal. Their task demands appropriate training in new intercultural practices and the establishment of a code of ethics to ensure high professional standards and adequate protection as professionals. ♦

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## Education unions confronting intolerance



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**Educators and their organisations are prominent among those responsible for the political climate of society, particularly with respect to human rights. Following the period in power of the Nazis in Germany from 1933-45, the German teachers' union GEW took up the challenge of analysing these events and ensuring that they would never be repeated.**

The Nazis drew their strength from anti-democratic and racist attitudes. Following their disbandment in 1933, the German trade unions regrouped in 1945 under a unified umbrella organisation, the DGB, whose creation was anchored in support for democracy and the fight against racism and fascism.

### Coming to terms with the past

Prior to 1933, the German teachers' associations had remained outside the union movement. However, after 1945, Heinrich Rodenstein (Chairman of the GEW from 1960-68), who fled to Holland and France during the Nazi era, was instrumental in bringing teachers together in the GEW and within the DGB.

In spite of such developments, it took some time before politicians began to come to terms with the past and seek explanations for the wave of racism and anti-Semitism that gripped the country. Anti-Semitism is at the heart of Germany's examination of Nazism and racism the persecution of Jews having begun in Germany itself.

Yet in the 1950s, it was still considered socially unacceptable to examine the history of Jews in Germany. Today, thanks primarily to the work of teachers and students growing up in the post-war period, people have been made aware of the

German-Jewish past. Many individuals became active in this work, making a lasting commitment to the protection of human rights.

Following the war, Germany realised that its future also depended on reconciliation with neighbouring countries. France, Poland, Denmark, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Russia were at the forefront of such initiatives for reconciliation.

Schools have played a vital role in rebuilding bridges through visits and student exchange programmes. Teachers, too, have established close ties with their counterparts in other countries, often with the support of the GEW. At the instigation of one of the union's founding fathers, George Eckert, the School Book Institute was established to examine school textbooks for racist tendencies.

### New challenges of immigration

In recent times, Germany has been beset by problems caused by the mishandling of migrant workers and other foreigners, particularly those seeking political asylum. Due to the absence of a coherent immigration policy, schools are often placed in difficult situations. While schools and teachers do their utmost to ensure that foreign children receive a good education, these children face further obstacles in Germany's labour market.

The GEW has played a leading role in looking at the problem of immigration in schools. In particular, it supports bilingual education efforts to help children maintain their national identity and contact within their community. It also demands the equal participation of immigrant teachers in both the union and educational establishments.

Given the recent acts of violence perpetrated against foreigners in Germany, the need for an appropriate immigration policy is extremely pressing. Addressing this issue requires the resources and co-operation of all political, social and economic institutions. The government also needs to address other related socio-economic problems, such as unemployment.

### Role models

Educators and their national and international union organisations bear a special responsibility for promoting democracy and human rights. Teachers must act as role models both inside and outside the school. All educational environments should contribute to the development of democratic behaviour that respects the individual's rights. ♦

Dr Dieter Wunder  
Past EI Vice-President



**The rise of the multicultural society demands the close attention of governments world-wide. With it comes an ever-increasing need for the teaching and exercise of tolerance among all groups of society. One of the most effective means of doing this is through the public education system.**

The United States is composed of hundreds of different nationalities and the promotion of tolerance and celebration of diversity is essential to the creation of a peaceful community. The survival and well-being of the country depends upon mutual acceptance.

In the past, American society has been described as a "melting pot" of nationalities and communities assimilated into one American culture. More recently, it has been referred to as a "salad bowl" where different nationalities are mixed together, yet remain distinct. Perhaps a more pertinent analogy is that of a "stew" where ingredients, while distinct, also blend together and flavour each other.

It has fallen to public schools and teachers to face the challenge of multicultural education. Various efforts are already under way through multicultural curricula, and bilingual education has also been introduced. However, these moves are the subject of heated debate, with no easy answers.

### Cultural diversity

In teaching tolerance, the teaching force itself must diversify. The make-up of the teaching force remains unaffected by the rapid growth of the minority student population. While the level of competence and professionalism of a teacher does not depend on gender or skin colour, it is a matter of precedent and it is important that students witness first-hand that people from all backgrounds can become teachers. Children are taught tolerance through example.

In practical terms, it is important to have teachers who are able to relate to children and parents from different backgrounds. A diverse teaching force means that schools are likely to be more tolerant and have more insights at their disposal. The National Education Association (NEA), as an employer and a union, has a long-standing commitment to affirmative action, particularly in terms of hiring qualified minority workers and women to create a more balanced work-force.

### The role of the union

The NEA is an inclusive and tolerant organisation. The channels created to facilitate the participation of women and minority groups within the organisation have helped increase its membership. However, this

# UNITED STATES

## Children are taught tolerance through example

reputation has also occasionally impeded work in the political arena where opponents claim it does not focus enough on education: an allegation firmly rejected by the union.

Efforts have also been made over the years to diversify its membership and to ensure their equal treatment. This included merging with the all-black American Teacher's Association in 1966 and founding a wide range of minority caucuses in 1970.

In addition, the NEA has a by-law encouraging representation at its annual assembly proportionate to the ethnic-minority population within each state. The union has drawn up a Bill of Rights for Educational Employees and uses its influence and resources to advocate social justice in the political arena.



Nevertheless, the USA is not without its problems in terms of racial and ethnic tensions. Education for tolerance still has a long way to go throughout the country. Groups of minority citizens are shut out of mainstream society, preventing them from getting ahead socially, politically and economically. In turn, this has created an underclass plagued by social ills. Teachers and schools struggle with this situation on a daily basis.

Encouraging people to work together would be a step forward. Intolerance lies in people's hearts and it is there that change has to be encouraged. Therefore, it is important to create situations that expose people to each other's humanity and give them mutual interests. Only then can the educating process begin ♦

**Reg Weaver**  
Vice-President  
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# Teaching tolerance



**Teachers and their unions should focus their attention on cultural diversity in education. They must advocate change. This is the case for the Irish teachers' organisations ASTI and INTO, which have campaigned to accommodate the Traveller community within the education system. Travellers represent the largest indigenous ethnic group in Ireland.**

Irish Travellers (about 30,000 people) are an ethnic minority which constitute one percent of the national population. The vast majority are not of Romany background or what is called "Gypsies". It is generally accepted that they are of ethnic Irish origin whose cultural traits had much in common with dispossessed peasants. Because of the waves of colonialisation and plantations and famines in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, whole communities had to take to the roads and adopt a nomadic lifestyle.

## Policy of assimilation

Government policy in respect of Travellers can be traced through three major reports drafted in 1963, 1983 and 1994. Initially, this group was considered a problem, social misfits, for which a solution had to be found. The response was a policy of assimilation; a viewpoint still held by some people.

The 1963 report found that very few Traveller children attended school and, as Ireland's economic fortunes changed in the late '70s and '80s, the divide between Travellers and other children became more pronounced.

In 1983, a new government report recommended integration between Travellers and the settled community. As divisions in society grew, charity welfare through religious schools took over. The children were washed, clothed and fed, without parental consent, and taught in separate classes. This encouraged further discrimination.

A number of factors influenced the evolution of educational provision for Travellers. Investment in education was increased and a new primary curriculum was launched in the early '70s. In addition, a growing awareness of the issue of equality also affected access to education.

The social partnership between the government and the union movement over the last decade included consideration of marginalised social groups. The treatment of Travellers has also been affected by Ireland's membership of the European Union and its work on racism and discrimination.

Other significant factors were the 1994 report of the Task Force on Travellers, debate on anti-racist legislation and the government's Action Programme for the New Millennium, which calls for a new deal for the Traveller community.

**Annette Dolan**  
Official to the General Secretary  
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## Union influence

Trade unions have had a major impact on the government's position on these issues and INTO has played a crucial role in influencing policy. Its local and nationwide surveys in the '80s and '90s found that very few Traveller children were attending school.

Following discussions with the Department of Education, greater efforts were made to enrol children and to make special social and educational provisions for Travellers. Union recommendations were also made on equality of access, integration and support services and in-service education for teachers of Travellers.

INTO members were also called upon to give full support to the campaign for the educational rights of the Traveller community.

## Education of Travellers

A significant number of Traveller children now attend primary school and current educational provision for this community includes :

- government-funded pre-schools;
- a pre-school scheme for children in disadvantaged areas;
- special teachers;
- visiting teachers who liaise with parents and schools, advise and encourage participation in education;
- special schools;
- a National Education Officer;
- government-funded school transport.

However, there are very few Traveller children in second-level education and the next challenge will be to improve this situation.

## Intercultural education

The numbers of refugees and immigrants in European countries, including Ireland, has increased, as have racially motivated attacks. These developments are a global concern. Education has an important role to play to ensure that all cultures and ethnic origins are accommodated in society. Cultural diversity in education has to become a reality if society is to challenge prejudice and teach tolerance.

These issues challenge teachers themselves as individuals to analyse their own attitudes and beliefs critically. Teacher unions, too, should evaluate rules, policies and procedures. They should campaign for minority rights and convince their membership of the importance of pluralism and inclusiveness.

To be truly effective, intercultural education must celebrate cultural diversity, develop an incisive and pluralist school ethos, and uphold anti-racist education. ♦

## From Rhetoric to Reality

**The time has now come for all partners in education to take up the intellectual challenge - and to have the moral courage – to take action on the fact that equality is an integral part of quality and standards in education.**

In Britain, much of the debate about standards is conducted in general terms and fails to address the position of minorities. It assumes that what is good education for most children is good education for all children. However, research evidence shows that schools can be differentially successful with different groups of pupils. Unless the specific needs of different groups are identified and addressed, inequality will persist. For example, there is much debate in Britain about grouping pupils by ability. International research shows that pupil grouping by ability often works to the disadvantage of minority pupils and can create racial division and tensions in the schools.

### Central issues to the concerns of trade unions

In the National Union of Teachers (NUT), we believe that tackling racism and xenophobia should permeate the union's education policies. Understandably, our main concern is to tackle discrimination in the educational system. But we recognise the need to take a stand against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance in whatever context they appear - in housing, in immigration policies or in society generally.

Unions also have to make sure that they provide a just and equitable service to their minority members. The NUT provides training for full time and lay officials to equip them with the skills to recognise cases of racial discrimination and to support minority members in seeking redress. We ensure that the bargaining agenda includes the needs of minority teachers. We managed to negotiate with employers paid religious leave for teachers from different faiths and have encouraged education authorities and schools to adopt policies and procedures for dealing with racial bullying in schools. The NUT also holds an Annual Conference for minority members to provide an opportunity for them to raise their concerns and to bring them to the attention of the union more widely.

### Ten-point action plan

- Leadership.** Leadership is necessary to translate good intentions into reality. Our role as trade unionists is to press governments to provide leadership and to make explicit commitments to promoting tolerance, and respect for cultural diversity. Of course, the leadership challenge applies to us too. Commitments have to be backed up by a clear, developmental programme of action.
- Partnership.** Unions need to develop new and imaginative ways of working with governments, other teacher organisations, parents, local communities and others at local, national and international level.
- Legislation.** It is important that minorities have recourse to national law, since international law is often beyond the reach of individuals. Legislation also sends a strong message to society as a whole that racial discrimination is unacceptable. The law is complementary to collective bargaining and negotiating.
- Promoting anti-racism in schools and through the curriculum.** As teachers, it is our professional responsibility to educate against prejudice and discrimination. As unions, we should campaign for whole school approaches. We should campaign to ensure that staffing in schools reflects the diversity in society. We should campaign for a curriculum which reflects multicultural societies. As teachers, we should provide young people with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to prepare them for life in diverse societies.
- Resources.** Unions should press governments to provide funding to meet the needs arising from cultural or linguistic factors, which are obstacles to achievement. In Britain, funding is available from central government for pupils who speak English as a second language and for Traveller and Gypsy pupils who experience interrupted education.
- Monitoring.** There is a real need for comprehensive information on how different ethnic groups perform in the education system.
- Teacher Training,** including in-service training, must provide teachers with the knowledge and skills to enable them to play their proper role in tackling intolerance at school level.
- Explicitness.** It is vitally important that race equality outcomes are explicit in policy initiatives at all levels.
- Teacher Recruitment.** Staffing in schools should reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of society. In societies where minorities have been discriminated against and are disadvantaged it is likely to be necessary to take specific positive action to support training for minorities to enter teaching.
- Involvement and Representation of minority members.**

Finally, I think that there is a tremendous challenge ahead for unions in tackling racism. To be successful, we will need to forge alliances outside the traditional trade union structures, for example, with community groups and the anti-racist movement more generally and we will need to look outwards to join the struggle in and with the communities.

El would be interested in receiving policy statements of member organisations and materials produced by education unions on the issues of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

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## Education can make a difference

**Living together with our differences means that we have to live with conflicts. Education can contribute towards providing the necessary values, knowledge and skills to deal with these conflicts.**

Human tendency seems to reject easily that which is different, people tend to be close to those who share the same culture, language or religion, belong to the same age group, social group or come from the same region. The reality however is that different ethnic groups and cultural identities have to face the necessity of living together with their different ethnic backgrounds, interests, beliefs and habits. Peace and democracy are very fragile and can never be taken for granted. Hence it is of utmost importance to nurture and systematically develop values, attitudes, knowledge and skills in keeping with the ideals of peace,

human rights, democracy, international understanding and tolerance which are the basis of UNESCO and the United Nations.



### Different policy options

It is obvious that each country has to find its own solutions which correspond to the particular reality and cultural and historical background. At one extreme are policies based on an *assimilation* model, intended to absorb ethnic minorities fully into the dominant society. At the other extreme, policies are based on a *differential* model which seeks to eliminate or minimise contacts with ethnic minorities. Sometimes these policies lead to indirect exclusion, implicit in social, economic, cultural and institutional practices. At other times, they can lead to active exclusion, which may go as far as apartheid and even genocide.

There are also responses which accept and nurture *multiculturalism* which can be seen as a democratic policy response for coping with cultural and social diversity in society.

The view of the United Nations system underlines the right of individuals and groups to equitable access to society. It acknowledges the legitimacy of and need for equality of ethnic groups in the expression of their diverse cultures.

Legal measures and procedures are important in implementing human rights in education and society. However, they are not enough. The entire process of education and our behaviour should be guided by principles of peace, human rights, international understanding and democracy and tolerance. Since its inception, UNESCO has devoted itself to promoting these principles in education.

Kaisa Savolainen  
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One may wish to discuss which kind of society or community one desires to live in. Would it be possible to have only uniformity? Would it then be a totalitarian system? Or if there is only diversity in its extreme form so that everybody has his/her own rules, then chaos would result, making it impossible for anybody to act? It is always very difficult to define within the precise context of a given country where the balance lies and how it is to be achieved.

### Role of education

With a view to dealing with differences, one important issue in education is the question of how it prepares young people for living together and for dealing with conflicts. What values, knowledge and skills or competencies are necessary to achieve this goal? Other major policy issues are those dealing with languages (teaching in an ethnic language and its use as a medium of instruction in schools), and equality in educational attainment.

The best known policies in multiculturalism are those of Australia, Canada and Sweden. Although they do not have similar programmes, these countries have sought to develop programmes which ensure that children have opportunities to learn up to a reasonable level of competence in both the national language(s) and their mother tongue.

It is interesting that the experience of policies of multiculturalism in Australia, Canada and Sweden show that neither special languages services nor educational courses themselves are sufficient to ensure equality in participation and access to social services. An emphasis is now laid on the necessity to change the way in which the structure and staff relate to client/patient student/citizen in order to achieve greater social justice and equity. Such a thorough reconsideration of the operation of service delivery organisations has much broader implications than ethnic minorities, and is very interesting from the point of view of democracy and egalitarianism.

From the point of view of the individual, it is important that a person is neither relegated to isolated or marginal sectors of society, nor forced to assimilate into mainstream society. Both strategies may marginalise individuals and create preconditions for the emergence of ethnic conflict and violence. In the three countries mentioned, the opportunity for ethnic minorities, or population groups, to participate fully in society without having to reject their ethnic identity, has been a factor encouraging a high level of commitment to these societies and States. From the perspective of the dominant group, there has been a high level of tolerance and acceptance, not only of diversity, but also of advantages which all members of society can gain from.

Some national minorities or population groups may wish to have distinct societal structures alongside



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Since tolerance is a quality and attitude that has to be learned, UNESCO devoted much effort to the UN Year of Tolerance in 1996. The General Conference adopted the Declaration on Principles of Tolerance which states that special attention should be placed on teacher training, curricula, the content of textbooks and lessons, and other educational materials, including new educational technologies, with a view to educating caring and responsible citizens open to other cultures, able to appreciate the

value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non-violent means.

It is up to us to visualise our future. Do we wish to build it on a willingness to learn to live together, nurturing the creative diversity of our common humanity, of which we are a part ... or on something else ? The United Nations and UNESCO are offering elements based on peace, human rights, democracy, international understanding and tolerance, convinced that they benefit all, that is to say, individually and as members of a group. ♦

the majority culture, and demand various forms of autonomy or self-government to ensure their survival as distinct entities. Particularly difficult are the situations where there have been deep and intense conflicts between different groups of people for centuries.

### Achieve the aims of education for peace, human rights and democracy

The citizens of a pluralist society and multicultural world should be able to accept that their interpretation of situations and problems is rooted in their personal lives, in the history of their society and in their cultural traditions; that consequently no individual or group holds the only answer to problems; and that for each problem there may be more than one solution.

In the light of this, education systems will clearly need to be modified in order to achieve the aims of education for peace, human rights and democracy. This integrated framework should be applicable to all types, levels and forms of education. It is important that it involves all educational partners and various agents of socialisation, including the non-governmental organisations and community organisations.

The content of education should therefore strengthen the formation of values and abilities such as solidarity, creativity, civic responsibility and the ability to resolve conflicts by non-violent means. It is not only specialised subjects and knowledge which matter, but rather the entire system must transmit this message, and the atmosphere of the institutions must be in harmony with the application of democratic standards.

Teachers, according to the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, have a crucial role to play in both protecting and developing cultures while at the same time systematically educating for social cohesion and intercultural understanding.

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** made provision, for the first time ever, for the respect of cultural rights. Article 22 states that everyone is entitled to the realisation of those cultural rights indispensable for dignity and the free development of one's personality.

### UNESCO POLICIES

UNESCO's normative instruments concerning human rights in education are the Convention and the Recommendation against discrimination in education (1960). They not only further the respect for human rights, but also equality in educational opportunity and treatment for all in the educational system.

Consultations organised by UNESCO on the implementation of these instruments show that countries do not have legal provisions in support of discrimination in education. However, this does not necessarily assure the absence of discrimination in practice or the avoidance of situations which might lead to unequal treatment of one kind or another.

UNESCO has focused its sixth consultation on four population groups 1. Women and girls; 2. Persons belonging to minorities; 3. Refugees; and 4. Indigenous people. Considering these groups as valuable, UNESCO is therefore seeking information from the Member States on general and specific measures taken or encouraged in favour of these population groups.

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## Women's rights



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Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Campaigner for human rights, especially for Indigenous peoples, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 and succeeded in bringing the attention of the world to the fate of Indigenous peoples. Born very poor to Quiche Indians in Guatemala, Rigoberta Menchu started working at the age of eight with no opportunity to attend school. Two of her siblings died from malnutrition and pesticides. In Guatemala, Indians had no rights as citizens. Rigoberta Menchu's father fought as a leader against the government which was taking the Indians' land by force. One of her brothers was tortured and killed in front of her and her family because of her father's actions. Her mother and father were killed soon after this. Nearly 50,000 other Indians have been killed or have disappeared in Guatemala during its 30-year civil war.

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**Explanations range from laws and practices prevailing in the States to the traditions of their own communities, but indigenous girls and women in almost every part of the world are typically amongst the most discriminated against when it comes to basic human rights such as education, health and decent, well-paid work.**

Recent studies arising from the work of feminist researchers in many parts of the world, but particularly Latin America and the Caribbean, identify the arduous paths that women must follow to fully realise their multiple identities. It is common for them to suffer segregation within their communities and exclusion in a mixed-race, westernised society. These studies refer to "layers of negligence" that are reflected in the failure to provide educational opportunities, jobs (except as itinerant traders and domestic servants) and opportunities for personal development to facilitate incorporation into new, more mature and independent citizenship.

However, it is their invisible educational work in the home that helps to preserve and reproduce cultural traditions. This is equally true in rural, urban and commercial settings where a broad-based social fabric, in which women play a central role, allows homes to survive and identity, language, traditions and customs to be preserved.

The responsibility to preserve and maintain culture and traditions is largely placed on women's shoulders. It is one more task done by women and now is often added to all other family-related tasks plus income generating activities. It is only by developing relationships with other women and the establishment of solidarity networks that it is possible for women to continue with the traditional and new roles they have been assigned. The role of these networks is rarely fully recognised and women are often condemned for wasting time when in

effect they are building support systems. The women's networks are usually seen as "complementary" to work performed by men.

Many of these women have had no access to education, or have attended school for only a brief period. Sometimes they do not speak the majority language well; sometimes, they do not know it at all. Yet they make extraordinary efforts to ensure that their children receive an education. We know who they are. They are our pupils' mothers, aunts and grandmothers or sometimes it is the kind, obliging women who will take on the responsibility to help get a child to school. They arrive at school holding their children by the hand, and leave them there as if paying a huge fortune into a bank account – and trust that we think just as highly of them.

There are some women who have overcome enormous obstacles and problems and have gone on to study. They are now colleagues of ours. They work as indigenous instructors in the most remote parts, usually in rural areas. They are on the lowest rates of the pay scale and they have to make do with the most unsatisfactory resources. Nor are they very visible in our trade unions. There are some honourable exceptions, however, and we now have such a representative on our Executive Board in Laures Park from New Zealand.

At both EI Congresses, EI has called on affiliated organisations, particularly those in countries with large indigenous populations, to ensure that the rights of girls and women in the various ethnic groups are included in educational activities focusing on human rights. We increasingly need teachers who are aware of the wealth that cultural diversity brings, and are also enthusiastic spokespersons for the rights of all.

EI also urges member organisations not to forget girls and women in the context of *"the importance of Indigenous Peoples having indigenous education provided in their communities with a curriculum based on Indigenous knowledge and values and taught in the Indigenous language of the area."*

We must review the mechanisms we use for recruitment to make sure that they respect cultural diversity, and attract more indigenous teachers of both genders into our organisations. We will all benefit, women and men alike. ♦

"Education International shall encourage member organisations, where appropriate, to establish Indigenous Education Committees, to ensure representation of Indigenous teachers and educational workers in their union structures and to include Indigenous members within their delegations."

Resolution on the rights of Indigenous peoples  
2nd World Congress, Washington, July 1998

Marta Scarpato  
Coordinator Equality

