Some Current Intercultural Issues
In Multicultural Societies

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Introduction

UNESCO held a Seminar of Experts in March 2006 to explore concepts and issues which could form the basis for the field of intercultural education. Following this meeting, organised by Dr. Linda King and the Section of Education for Peace and Human Rights, it issued the publication: ‘UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education’ (2006). This document draws together standard-setting instruments and reflects UNESCO’s unique role as the major international organisation which can draw on diverse cultural, educational and ideological perspectives. This guide is of immense practical value to educators and learners. This paper however, does not provide any guidelines but intends to explore some of the complexities and ideas which have informed the development of this field.

Modern democratic and constitutional states confront a number of challenges within their education systems at the present time. In general terms, social exclusion and inequality on various indices presents a threat to social systems because of the ways in which such exclusion leads to injustice being institutionalised in many societies. Educators, along with other social and public policy makers and professionals, have to a role to play in turning social exclusions into social inclusions. Such professionals, however, confront a number of problems. For educators, these can include issues of difference and diversity and how to conceptualise these, especially in contexts where difference has become construed as a deficit. Some of the most intractable problems are found in unequal societies where racism, xenophobia and chauvinism can lead to brick walls which thwart ambitions of groups, communities and individuals who feel inter-generationally or permanently excluded. Hence issues of how to bring about equity, deal with dominant and exclusive ‘national’ knowledge systems requires serious consideration. With the failures of many modern states to provide equity many groups have reverted to more
reactive singular ethnic or religious identities and there is little clarity about how education systems can address these issues internationally. Educators need to consider how the failures of the Enlightenment to deal with issues of racism, xenophobia and equality have contributed to the disenchantment with modern democratic and constitutional states and international organisations. The reversion of groups to ethnic and religious identity in singular terms also necessitates a renaissance and enlightenment amongst all faiths. This is necessary so that they can be effective in equipping believers to function effectively in the modern world with all the complexities of the cultural, social and political realities.

Education systems can address some of the challenges and educators need to carefully consider these issues, and devise appropriate policies to deal with a range of problems confronted by social systems. This process needs to be part of much broader public policy measures to obviate some of the current crises, which have led societies to fragment as has happened in south east Europe and parts of central Africa.

From an intercultural perspective and within the field of education, a number of challenges will be discussed briefly in this paper. These include the liberalisation of the public education systems on the grounds of meeting the prospects and threats presented by economic globalisation. There will be a brief discussion on the inadequate concepts and frameworks used in the field of intercultural education, educational inequalities, knowledge centrisim, racism and religious intolerance, and the inadequacy of current teacher education (training) and media as they currently function in diverse societies.

1. The international context: globalisation, diversity and uniformity

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 26.1 provided for the right to education for everyone and is one of the building blocks of human rights more generally. Article 26.2 states:

Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

This constitutes a good definition for intercultural education but it remains far from a reality because at least one billion people have largely been by-passed by the positive aspects of globalisation. The right to education from the Universal Declaration is translated into a more precise form in the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In the 1980s and 1990s,
the human rights agenda has broadened with recognition of development rights, environmental rights and more precise formulation of children’s rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child devotes two articles, 28 and 29 to the rights to education and the aims of education.4

The Dakar Framework for Action committed signatories to ‘ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls and children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.’ In this sense, the challenge for UNESCO’s Education for All (EFA) is not just limited to the provision of basic and primary education in poor countries but also quality education to all, which, by definition, has to be intercultural in both the richer and poorer countries.

The UNESCO document ‘Education and Cultural Diversity’ establishes a principal priority for the year 2002-2003 and stresses:

UNESCO will encourage issues involving values education in multilingual and multicultural societies to be included within national EFA action plans.5

This focus would make the Dakar Framework for Action more intercultural by including provision for the nomadic, traveller and gypsy populations. In the Americas, it ought to include the Inuit, Maya and Quechua peoples. The importance of EFA for industrialised countries in many parts of the world is to ensure that the educational content is appropriate to the likely future international context. In this sense, unless education is intercultural it cannot provide equality and quality education for all. A provision of educational measures which is by definition intercultural and leads to greater levels of equality has been criticised as ‘watering down’ or lowering the quality of education. Such critiques need to be addressed to ensure that intercultural policies and practices do not lose credibility.

Moreover, there are several other hurdles on the way. Symbolic of such hurdles is the lack of action following the two major UN Conferences held in Durban on Racism and in Johannesburg on the Environment. Many member states of the UN marginalised the centrality of these issues and since the conferences little corrective action has been taken at national levels. The Commission for Racial Equality celebrated the 30TH Anniversary of the Race Relations Act in the United Kingdom with a conference in November 2006 but there was no discussion on the follow-up to the UN Durban Conference on Racism. This represents a lack of political will at various governmental levels. Certain thinkers have even become despondent about the human condition. For instance, John Gray in his pessimistic and depressing book Straw Dogs seems to be indicating that little can be done to change the state of the world. He forcefully makes the following point:
At present there are nearly two hundred sovereign states in the world. Most are unstable, oscillating between weak democracy and weak tyranny; many are rusted through with corruption, or controlled by organised crime, while regions of the world – much of Africa, Southern Asia, Russia, and the Balkans the Caucasus, and parts of South America – are strewn with corroded or collapsed states. At the same time, the world’s most powerful states – the United States, China and Japan – will not accept any fundamental limitation on their sovereignty. They are jealous of their freedom of action, if only because they have been enemies in the past and know they may become so in the future.\(^6\)

A contrasting optimistic view is that there are states, including some in Europe, which believe in multilateralism and would like to strengthen democratic legitimacy within international institutions. The attempts by the European Union to embed national sovereignties in multiple layers of rules, norms and regulations are an attempt to ‘obviate the violent history of the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century as the result of unbridled exercise of national sovereignty’.\(^7\) It is to be hoped that as a result of integrative processes intercultural relations in Europe will improve especially if notions of ‘fortress Europe’ in all areas of public and social policies including education are obviated. Reduction of inequality between and within richer and poorer countries can help reduce the likelihood of Europe being constructed as a fortress. Within Europe, high levels of inequalities between the immigrant and poorer communities has a potential for intercultural conflict and violence.

Some of the oppositional tendencies in the world referred to earlier are mirrored in the way in which intercultural relations are shaping both the impacts of globalisation but are also a result of historical legacies of nationalism and the empires of the nineteenth century. If international initiatives, especially those of the United Nations agencies, fail to succeed in bridging gaps then increasingly larger numbers of member states and their governments will have to deal the fragmentation of societies because of the inequalities, polarisations, conflicts and unregulated competition. The gaps between people remain because even though increased multiculturalism of polities creates possibilities of better intercultural relations, it also increases the prospects of intercultural conflicts.

2. Issues and concepts

One of the problems arising from the complex range of issues causing intercultural conflicts is that there is very little agreement about the use of terms or a framework of analysis.

In many English speaking countries, some academics argue that the term ‘multiculturalism’ has been racialised. There is some truth to this assertion; for example, activists and others used issues of discrimination and diversity to only tackle discrimination against them. The ways in which policies arising from such a political stance were devised tended to suggest that only certain groups faced exclusion and discrimination. Many anti-racist policies in education, for instance, tended to stress discrimination against those who were
immigrant minorities but ignored, for example, the poorer sections of the dominant community and other nationalities and minorities. Hence, there have been interminable debates about the ‘politically correct’ nature of such policies which seemingly favoured and privileged discrimination suffered only by selected groups.

The essentialist rhetoric of such policies has led to some communities being designated as ‘the other’ and furthered the creation of binary oppositions (e.g. majority/minority; immigrant/citizen; white/black; winner/loser; the belonger/ non-belonger). These oppositional definitions as well as the hierarchical positioning of groups within societies have detracted from the development of inclusive institutions based on intercultural policies. Measures to experience the educational process as part of the growing up and learning in a community need to be re-visited. This can be done along the lines of an African adage ‘it takes a whole village to educate a child’. At the present time however, the village itself may need re-educating thus necessitating the need for lifelong learning.

There is also another more complex issue of difference and diversity especially since it is sometimes suggested that we should celebrate diversity. This rather superficial notion of celebration does not take cognisance of the way in which difference is being seen as a deficit and as a way of stigmatising groups. For instance, celebrating linguistic diversity without developing multilingual policies can heighten the lack of access to the curriculum and widen educational inequalities. Hence, policies, practice and strategies for developing linguistic competences of students are important.

The UNESCO collaboration on the B@bel Initiative to promote multilingualism on the Internet as well as preventing linguistic segregation and protection of languages which may disappear, is an important development. Initiatives in the fields of interculturalism and multiculturalism in the UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education mirror some of the developments discussed in UNESCO’s paper ‘Education in a Multilingual World.’ Both these documents provide a very important basis for developing intercultural bilingual education to ensure that linguistic diversity can be used to enhance first language competencies to effectively learn second and other languages. Such initiatives would not only enhance linguistic but also cultural understandings.

Many states especially mono-lingual English speaking countries have not taken issues of linguistic or cultural diversity seriously. They have colluded with the racialisation of multiculturalism because it was viewed as a way of ensuring that social and cultural diversity was seen as merely a result of post-World War II migration,
particularly for people who were coming from countries which had been previously colonised. For instance, in Britain statements like the ones made by the Department of Education and Science in 1965, in the ‘School Curriculum’ document that ‘our society has become multicultural’, could only be explained as a way of camouflaging the more complex issues. No one, however, asked the question: what was it before? If one uses the taxonomy of linguistic, religious, social class and territorial indices of diversity, then British society has historically been multicultural. The situation is now different because after the devolution of power to Scotland and Wales, through democratic means, we can no longer throw a cloak of monoculturalism or monolingualism over the British state.

English speaking states (excluding Ireland) do not generally use the term ‘intercultural’ as a concept to develop policies. This has led to convoluted arguments about ‘multicultural policies being divisive because they only stress differences and diversities. There are two possible ways in which these dilemmas can be resolved. Firstly, the current policies and initiatives on multicultural education are used to create understandings about the existence of different groups in societies. These can then be collated to develop ‘intercultural’ policies and practices which enable the negation of racism and xenophobia and lead to the nurturing of intercultural understandings. The second possibility is that the term multicultural is used as a descriptive term, which describes the existence of ethnic, linguistic, religious, social class and other differences. These diversities and differences present social and public policy institutions with challenges to develop intercultural policies.

In another context for instance the Netherlands, the parallel and vertical religiously oriented schools have not reduced socio-cultural difference between different groups. The riots in 2006 in French cities and demonstrations in nearly half of the 88 French universities a few weeks’ later, are indicative of the underlying barriers to equality and the 21.7% rate of unemployment for the under 25s. This rate is higher for those who are black or wear head scarves. Intercultural educational perspectives till recently have been informed by a century old history of international and local perspectives. Within this diachronic dimension, the dominant cultures of Britain and other European states are themselves the products of centuries of past and present interactions between peoples, their cultures and the state. The colonial empires and subordinated nationalities of the European states are an important part of these interactions. Thus, contemporary patterns of social and cultural inequality are underpinned by the historical legacies of nationalism, imperialism and colonialism.
One hundred years ago, after their near defeat in the Boer War, the British government set up the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration to enquire into the causes of this failure. Almost inevitably, their message was eugenicist, in that the lower orders were ‘breeding’ and would swamp the so-called ‘polite society’. Indeed, the genesis of the social class classification, copied world-wide, was the 1911 Registrar-General’s attempt to combat this position. But education was only seen as a means of minimum social inclusiveness. On a positive note the provision of school meals for all was recommended by this committee and vindicated the work of the MacMillan sisters.

Deficit and disadvantage models have continued to inform intercultural educational measures. In Britain, this meant that those from social classes 4 and 5, using the Registrar-General’s classification were considered ‘culturally deprived’ or ‘culturally disadvantaged’. The conservatives in this debate have continued to postulate inferiority based on genetic factors. The liberals have tended to stress that the disadvantaged were the result of past discrimination on sex, race or social class group. The IQ debate on both sides of the Atlantic has further continued to generate controversy. In the central and east European contexts, the legacy of defectology continues to inform the ways in which the education of children from minority communities, especially from the Roma communities continues to be undertaken. These constructions of differences as deficits have negated the possibility of developing intercultural policies which enhance inter-group understandings.

The social implication of differences and inequalities which continue to entrench socio-economic disadvantages can negate the security of different communities. One example of this legacy of social inequalities formed the backdrop of the riots in 2000 in the northern British cities of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley. The riots involved both poor whites as well as the blacks, and the inequalities were graphically pointed out in the Cantle, Ritchie and Ouseley Reports.13

The British and French riots ought to represent a watershed warning to ensure that integrative public and social policies, including education, are essential if social and educational inequalities are to be reversed. Additionally, issues of institutional racism are now very high on the agenda with the implementation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) which requires both public and private institutions not to discriminate. What are other states doing in initiating legislation as a first step to reduce discrimination?

3. Future for Intercultural Studies
The largely peaceful and democratic transition to devolution in Wales and Scotland suggests that there is a positive role for inter-culturalism. Of course, one cannot be sanguine that in devolved polities like Scotland there is no racism. A report commissioned by the Scottish Executive indicated that 25% of Scots were racists and about half of them did not consider the use of terms like ‘Paki’ to be racist.\textsuperscript{14} There are also lessons to be learned from the conflict in Northern Ireland, which still has the potential of jeopardising both the British and Irish polities. There are, however, currently developments which indicate that the Northern Irish Assembly has now become functional. In the field of education a number of initiatives in the fields of mutual and intercultural understandings have a great deal of relevance in other zones of conflict.

Concepts and analyses which draw upon the historical and contemporary aspects of diversity need to be developed. In educational terms, these would be relevant in developing an inclusive curriculum, and integrate intercultural citizenship education. Within complex socially diverse societies where technological changes may be leading to high levels of unemployment, greater stress needs to be placed on democratic institutions. The need to deepen democracy entails a critical appraisal of issues of societal concern and the development of community participation as well as curricular and pedagogic changes to enhance such collaboration.

Also, it is not only what children are taught and what they learn but also their actual experiences at school, which contribute to their understanding of their rights and responsibilities as future citizens. So, a democratic school ethos is important and this needs to be experienced through active citizenship and engagement in the context of the wider community. The role of youth work, further and other formal and non-formal life-long learning are all important to enhance not only learning about citizenship but also active citizenship in schools and their communities.

4. Barriers to equity

In many societies, another dilemma needs to be dealt with, because the old solidarities based on social class as antecedents of a class divided society have been eroded. Now that there is no pre-ordained class basis to solidarity, the younger generation is faced with much clearer patterns of polarisation by being divided into winners and losers without any class referent. This poses a new challenge for intercultural education because of the exclusivity of identities. Of course the reverse is also true if the winners refuse to acknowledge any debt to society especially as groups from different backgrounds do not share solidarities or a set of resemblances.
Intercultural education, therefore, has a complex role of addressing the sense of exclusions and loss amongst all young people. The previous policies, which privileged one or the other group, will prove to be counterproductive by exacerbating differences and reducing features of commonality amongst different groups. This therefore presents a challenge for the re-thinking of policies like affirmative action or positive discrimination so that they do not exacerbate differences and have divisive implications. These policies need to include the disadvantaged from all communities so that divisive tendencies in diverse communities are obviated.

If some groups are excluded from or marginalised within the education system and schools due to lack of social cohesion, should the state stay neutral or should it intervene? In other words, should the state be fair or impartial? Rawls, using the difference principle, argues that the better off should not have more special advantages than the worst off. So, to accord equity, the state is ‘fair’ but not impartial. In a democratic state, citizens should have access to education and knowledge in order to equalise their life chances. If the state remains impartial, it cannot create level playing fields in educational terms. It can only do so by intervening.

One of the challenges for education systems which intervene in institutions is to build inclusive policies, which can accommodate notions of differences. This can be achieved by:

- Creating conditions for equity and belongingness of diverse groups from an educational perspective.
- Developing integrative mentalities based on difference and lessening levels of inequalities which provide multiple options.
- Education systems building mutuality amongst multi-divided groups in society so they can have ‘ownership’ of these affinities.
- Policies to bridge gaps between groups at different levels and nurture notions of human rights and citizenship for the disenfranchised and excluded groups.
- Inclusive affirmative and positive action policies.
- The development of universally inclusive feminism especially to ensure equity in public life and public institutions.

5. Centric knowledge

At an even broader level these issues raise problems of centric knowledge, which according to COD 1990 is defined as ‘having a (specified) centre’. This is especially the case because a curriculum centred on
knowledge of dominant groups does not serve the needs of socially diverse polities. A non-centric curriculum is needed in most civilisational, national, regional and local contexts in the new era of globalisation.

One of the problems in the implementation of intercultural education is that the languages, histories and cultures of subordinated groups in Europe are not seen as having equal value with those of dominant European nationalities. Such an entitlement to a non-centric or inclusive curriculum is perhaps one of the greatest challenges to actualising the development of an intercultural education. This exercise would entail a major intellectual challenge, as was the case when UNESCO undertook to write the History of Africa in an eight volume series. Yet, overall, the series has not been integrated within the main body of universal historical knowledge. There are also other important UNESCO projects on the Slave Trade, The Silk Route, The Culture of Peace and Education for International Understanding which have implications for developing intercultural education within the mainstream of national educational systems.

It is important that UNESCO proposes over the next biennium to:

- Contribute to the improvement of curricula and textbooks for the teaching of history.
- Promote dialogue on the role of language and culture as key factors in the development through education of understanding among people within and between Member States.
- Support the educational activities of the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People.
- Disseminate new approaches to language education.
- Support the production of guidelines on mother tongue and multilingual education.
- Encourage the preparation of culturally appropriate materials in local languages and cultures.

This UNESCO agenda should enable countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas to address issues of societal diversity through intercultural education policies. To maintain safety and security within their diverse polities, states in these continents need to develop curricula that avoid centrisms of their own. Devising the necessary basis of knowledge in a national and civilisational context presents curriculum planners with a difficult but essential challenge. Shared knowledge and habits can assist in the process of the development of shared and common value systems in the public domain and public institutions.
A non-centric curriculum would enable teachers, students and other learners to develop the inclusive and shared value systems which are necessary for the development of democratic societies. For instance, in certain countries of the region, the democratic culture and the education system are able to withstand pressures of not teaching the superficial notions of Asian values. As Amartya Sen states:

An attempt to choke off participatory freedom on grounds of traditional values (such as religious fundamentalism, or political custom, or the so-called Asian values) simply misses the issue of legitimacy and the need for the people affected to participate in deciding what they want and what they have reason to accept.12

6. Intercultural learning societies

One aspect of the curriculum, which illustrates the issue of knowledge centrism, is the teaching of the history curriculum. The teaching of history from a non-militaristic perspective needs to be developed at a much wider level internationally. In Europe, one model is the Tbilisi initiative of the Council of Europe in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Such curricular developments (if they become politically acceptable) should not only be part of mainstream education, but also build on the basic education and the acquisition of languages and literacies. Such an integrated system would enhance the intercultural competencies of active African, American, and Asian citizenship within multicultural democracies. Subjects like history and social sciences particularly need to be appraised for their relevance to the contemporary needs of societies.

This is especially the case because 130 to 145 million people, at least, live outside their countries of origin. These figures would be higher if undocumented migrants were included. Over 21 million refugees live in other developing countries. Many subsist in twilight zones and border areas of state boundaries and continue to remain ignored. Hence, the development of an inclusive curriculum is necessary for the maintenance of inclusivity in stable and democratic processes of national integration, modernisation and development. Such issues ought therefore to include relevant consideration of participatory pedagogies. In marginalised communities learning and teaching should be progressive and not constrained by a reactively traditional African, Asian and American-centric curriculum, which tends to inhibit questioning. This in turn allows Euro-centrism in knowledge to prevail at the global level.

To install the ‘voice’ of the disenfranchised in the curriculum will require a great deal of delicacy, diplomacy, persistence and sophistication, particularly if the desired changes are not to be relegated to the margins of academic life. Reactive, rhetorical and rebellious responses in curricular terms are not only
inadequate but also counter-productive. While action is needed across all European, American, African and Asian societies, those in the poorer parts of these continents have greater levels of difficulties, and may require support from international agencies. Hence, the more affluent and experienced educational agencies like the European Commission and UNESCO, and its regional centres, can also be helpful in lending them non-directive support for educational change and development.

7. Secularism and religious Armageddon

Near the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, in the Place Joffre, there is a monument to peace. In Tavistock Square, London there is a monument for Mahatma Gandhi and the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs. These are two of the many symbols in Paris and London and other cities around the world of developing democratic, non-violent, peaceful and secular states. These are presently under grave threat, because neither national nor globalised systems have delivered political, economic, social or educational equity.

The tensions between secular and religious ideologies perhaps raise the gravest warning to multicultural and multi-faith polities and need to be addressed by educators and curriculum planners in a non-nationalistic and creative manner. While religion and personal beliefs may belong to the private domain, there are issues from religious systems and knowledge, which can impinge on the national and global minds and the development of critical and democratic citizens of the future. It is a matter of basic importance that the role of religion in multi-faith, constitutional and democratic states is clearly defined to avoid being led to a societal abyss by fundamentalist and dogmatic notions of ‘truth’ fuelled by faith.

The importance of Gandhi and his protégé Nehru is that they had a genuine intercultural understanding of western and Indian civilisations. They personified a creativity and determination which is currently lacking in many political and educational leaders. The ex-President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, preferred to be called Mwalimu (teacher) which emphasised the role of teaching in developing a unified multicultural Tanzanian society. Given these examples, how can the disenchanted be enchanted with inclusive, democratic and active engagements in other societies?

At the underlying level a question has to be asked about the educational implications of President Mbeki’s ‘African Renaissance’ and what role the academic institutions will play in it. Unless it is able to build a more equitable and inclusive South Africa the Renaissance will remain a chimera. There is also a
question about how much the rise of fundamentalism is also a result of the failures of governments to modernise societies and provide equity in public and social policy generally. If governments are failing in this role, there is not much that the education systems can do in muting religious conflict.

In Nigeria, Wole Soyinka regrets the way in which the proselytising religions are eroding local traditions and faiths like the Orissa, but also disrupting education within schools and universities.\textsuperscript{14} In the West African context, the implementation of intercultural policies and practices may be one way of avoiding religious strife in educational institutions.

At the academic level, scholars such as Inayatullah in Pakistan and others argue for an alternative social science, which is not based on the nation-state as a model of analysis but on notions of a ‘layered sovereignty’.\textsuperscript{15} Inevitably this poses complex issues not just for educational policy but also for curricular reform in deepening and raising the quality of education.

\textbf{8. The role of media and intercultural relations}

The media have an important role to play in enhancing intercultural relations because of their power to educate. However, during the current period of globalisation, the media have been constrained by market forces as far as programming is concerned. For many people in the world, the media may be a more influential source of information than the classroom. When not concerned with redecorating or tidying the garden, their focus has shifted to the exotic, travel and wildlife programmes instead of programming about development, poverty, intercultural issues, politics, history, economics or the environment.\textsuperscript{16} These issues only receive perfunctory treatment as part of news and current affairs programmes. However, such programming cannot be paternalistic as it was in the past and ought to address issues which concern ordinary citizens.

Television audiences are largely committed to entertainment and do not watch documentary programmes, which either lecture or hector them. Viewers prefer a story, a good narrative and strong characters. At least two sets of actions may be necessitated. Firstly, the media and communication industries need to adopt a strategic and integrated approach, which are discourse and content strengthened. How can various forms of new media be used in teaching and learning? On issues of intercultural understandings, educators at all levels have a major role to play in not only using the media but also in
educating viewers to become visually literate and also to acquire a critical understanding to distinguish between hype, rhetoric and productive or progressive discourse.

9. The Role of Intercultural Teacher Education

Teacher education institutions have a major role to play in enhancing intercultural education because as multipliers, the teachers educated by them affect the lives of many generations of those they teach.

In many countries around the world teacher educators need to revisit the Carnegie Foundation’s Report of 1986, which recommended making teaching a high status profession and on a par with other professions. Most higher education institutions both educate and train doctors, architects and lawyers but only train teachers. This is an important issue because there is a difference between ‘training’ and ‘education’. Higher education institutions cannot ignore the same broadly based rigorous education for teachers. If the Harvard Business School educates barracudas, as was pointed out by Professor Colin Power, a former Assistant Director for Education, UNESCO, in a lecture at the Institute of Education University of London, then teacher education institutions should not merely train teachers as social workers to pick up the pieces that the barracudas leave behind.

The key question is whether the issues are about teacher training or teacher education. ‘Training’ implies a lower order of knowledge and skill.

In order to get the best educated and professionally qualified teachers, their education should be undertaken at universities or institutions with comparable standards. Teachers, therefore, as autonomous professionals should join a teacher education institution after an undergraduate degree, and have a professional education similar to those in other professions. Of course, the circumstances will vary in different countries.

A high level of professionally and rigorously educated teachers who have a postgraduate accredited qualification is essential to raise the competences of the teaching profession. As a part of this accreditation, there is a need for intercultural dimensions of courses to be built into the teacher education process. This, in itself, raises some complex issues. Students from minority communities who have done well at university tend to choose other careers and not the teaching profession. Yet, to make intercultural teacher education effective, both teacher education institutions and schools need to have a diverse student
body and teaching members of staff. Not only does teaching have to be made an attractive profession but also education of the underclass, minority and smaller nationalities needs to be improved, and measures instituted to ensure that a number of them do join the teaching profession. One of the advantages of a multicultural teaching force is not only that it enables the negotiation of complex social values in higher education institutions but also provides multilingual skills and knowledge for new teachers.

In intercultural terms, teacher skills ought to include expertise in interpersonal relations, the conduct of conversations, moderation of difficult discussions, dealing with conflicts and working with parents. Teachers confront the most complex task of tackling student racism and autonomous peer cultures. The need for communicative skills can only be met if teachers have the necessary experience, skills and understanding which cut across student-teacher and school-community divides.

Teachers can acquire knowledge, skills and understandings to deal with racism during their initial teacher education, which needs to be further refined on a continuing basis as part of their professional development. The complexity of the processes of racism and class-based exclusions, as well as the lethal mixture of these with religious divides, demands a high level of skills and professionalism. It also demands institutional policies and support within schools. Teacher education institutions have a fundamental role to play in analysing these complex issues and enabling all teachers to deal with them competently.

10. Communities of development and hope

One of the main reasons for developing an inclusive democratic framework is the fact that 10,000 distinct societies live in 200 states and may be denied equity and protection. The International Commission on Education for the 21st Century set up by UNESCO in the 1990s placed the issue of learning to live together not only as one of the four pillars of education for the future but as the greatest challenge facing education in the coming years.

The importance of this issue internationally can be illustrated from an example in Britain. This is the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Scarman Report after the Brixton Riots in 1981. In the year 2000 there were riots in northern British cities mainly between Asian and white youth. Civil society organisations like the Scarman Trust have a major role to play in trying to connect communities through citizens who are active with public and private institutions.
However, unless there are concerted efforts to develop democratic engagements and build ‘communities of development and hope’ intercultural conflicts are bound to increase. The creation of active citizens in poorer communities can only take place if there are deeper intercultural engagements both within and outside educational institutions. Some thinking ought to be devoted to old educational concepts like ‘Peidea’ or ‘Bildung’ and how these can acquire a contemporary relevance in intercultural terms both within schools and communities.

Democratic and shared political cultures go hand in hand with greater levels of legitimate economic activities for all communities. Income inequalities are associated with increases in education and social inequality. From amongst the OECD countries, Britain has the largest income gaps and the highest proportion (19.4%) of young people aged 16-19 who are neither attending school nor are employed. Many of these young people are not only functionally illiterate and manifest anti-social behaviour but are also a threat to the security and lives of others. The thwarted ambitions of these young people form the basis of grave intercultural conflicts. A massive effort is necessary to create the pre-conditions for safer and securer communities in Britain as well as most other countries of the world.

In many of the crises referred to in this paper, there is an essential role for education as part of public policy provision to pro-actively and reactively deal with inequalities of educational opportunities and outcomes in multicultural societies. Educational initiatives can also help in creating a new society which not only recognises differences but helps in developing shared values in confederal democratic communities.
1. See interview with Stuart Hall, New Humanist, 8-3-2006.
15. C.N. Power op. cit.

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