

Foreword

Julie Allan, Rapporteur of the project group

This publication is based on a series of papers presented at the conference that was held to mark the conclusion of the Council of Europe project Policies and Practices for Teaching Sociocultural Diversity and organised in co-operation with the Ministry of Education of Norway, Oslo University College and the Wergeland Centre on 26 and 28 October 2009. The conference brought together senior officials from member state governments with responsibilities for teacher education, teacher educationists, researchers and representatives from international non-governmental organisations. The aim of the conference was to give participants the opportunity to enlarge their vision of key issues concerning diversity and inclusion in the field of teacher education and to identify new perspectives for work at European level. The conference focused on the work and outcomes of the Council of Europe project and in particular on the conditions of implementation and adaptation to national contexts of the project's Framework of Teacher Competences for Engaging with Diversity.

The conference combined keynote speeches and plenary presentations with working groups. The working groups were structured in relation to the three clusters of competences in the framework (see appendix) and featured case studies presented by experts and illustrating particular competences:

- “Knowledge and understanding”, the first cluster of competences, and the case studies here have been presented by Mr John Hamer, Nottingham University, United Kingdom, Mr Michel Candelier, Université du Maine, France, and Mr Boncho Gospodinov, Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria. They deal with the teaching of history in conflict and post-conflict situations, pluralistic approaches to the teaching of languages in schools and perceptions of education in the light of diversity.
- “Communication and relationships” are presented by Professor Eva Simonsen, University Oslo, Norway,

Dr Ulrike Wolff-Jontofsohn, ZWA-teacher training department, Germany, and Mr Calin Rus, Intercultural Institute, Romania. These consider the problems of war children in post-war Norway, diversity education and inclusion in Germany and the education of Roma children.

- “Management and teaching” are presented by Professor Dr Hanna Komorowska, Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Poland, Professor Silvia Tsvetanska, Faculty of Education, Bulgaria, and Ms Luisa de Bivar-Black, Education Consultant, Portugal. These look at the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages, social stratification in the classroom and teaching history in multicultural classes.

The democratic management of diversity through education as a political aim of the Council of Europe and its member states

Ólöf Ólafsdóttir, Acting Director of the Directorate of Education and Languages, Council of Europe

This publication is the fourth and last in the publication series of the project Policies and Practices for Teaching Sociocultural Diversity, launched by the Steering Committee for Education in October 2005 as a response to the Action Plan adopted by the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, held in Warsaw in May 2005.

Indeed, in the last two decades there has been an increased focus on the question of diversity and managing diversity through education in the Council of Europe, and this for several reasons. First, there was the fall of the former regimes in central and eastern Europe and the reunification of Europe in the 1990s. The Council of Europe's membership increased from 22 countries in 1989 to 47 countries in 2008. The issues relating to the sustainability of democracy and respect for human rights in this new European democratic space reached a dimension never seen before. They were underpinned by increased migration flows and a stronger attention given to the rights of ethnic minorities. Second, the events of 11 September 2001 put into the spotlight the question of religious diversity and its crucial place within cultural diversity. Third, ever increasing globalisation, followed by mobility of populations, economic difficulties, unemployment and social exclusion, has had a strong impact and has led to a renewed focus on issues related to cultural and social diversity and to the need for policies for social inclusion through education.

The conceptual and political framework for the Council of Europe work on education for managing diversity and intercultural understanding has seen many interesting developments and has gained visibility since 2003. Many political texts have been adopted regarding this subject. The 21st session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, held

in Athens in November 2003, adopted a declaration which recognised the role of intercultural education and the major contribution of the Council of Europe in maintaining and developing the unity and diversity of European societies. The ministers encouraged member states to focus on preparing teachers to manage situations arising in schools as a result of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, sexism and marginalisation and to prepare them to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way.

The 3rd Summit explicitly endorsed intercultural dialogue, including inter-religious dialogue, in its Action Plan as a means of ensuring that the diversity of European cultures becomes a source of mutual enrichment, promoting unity in diversity.

The Faro Declaration, adopted by the European ministers of education and culture at the end of 2005, at the close of the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention, insists on respect for cultural rights and the right to education. It asks for the introduction of public policies that encourage cultural diversity and dialogue, developing knowledge of history, cultures, arts and religions and supporting cultural and artistic activities and exchanges as a vehicle for dialogue.

In 2006, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe launched the preparation of a major policy document that would lead the work of the Organisation in achieving what the 3rd Summit had so explicitly endorsed. As a result, the “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: Living together as equals in dignity” was adopted in 2008, after careful consultation and negotiation. It provides a set of principles for combating racism and intolerance, valuing cultural diversity and promoting mutual respect. The adoption of the White Paper has strengthened intercultural dialogue as a core value of the Council of Europe, together with democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Education professionals have become a main target group of the Council of Europe in any new educational projects the Organisation has launched. They have the task to prepare the new generations of Europeans for a future in which they will increasingly have to appreciate diversity and deal with differences. Education professionals are the major players in an education system which is expected to generate competences and capacities

for critical thinking, self-expression and innovation, respect for human rights and democracy. Our decision makers who adopted the above-mentioned political texts knew what they were doing by putting the teaching profession in focus. They are targeting new generations of Europeans and putting diversity on the scene as a resource for society as a whole.

To recognise diversity is to recognise the individual's cultural and social rights and the right of all to quality education. What does this mean in practice? It means that every human being should have the right to education, not only in terms of equal access, but also in terms of equal opportunities and equal outcomes. The project on Policies and Practices for Teaching Sociocultural Diversity has put forward many ideas which may help to put the right to quality education into practice. One of these ideas is that valuing diversity is crucial to the educational success of children. On another level, the recognition that the special needs of each and every person should be taken into account through education has a clear reference to respect for and promotion of the human rights of all individuals. It represents a departure from the thinking that everybody should have equal treatment, which has often resulted in the marginalisation and hierarchisation of social and cultural groups. It implies that questions of discrimination and inequality have to be made visible and dealt with both by authorities and individuals.

The 22nd Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, held in Istanbul in May 2007 on the subject of "Intercultural education: managing diversity, strengthening democracy", gave a specific mandate to the Council of Europe to reflect on new aspects of cultural and social rights in today's European context. Follow-up discussions on this issue took place in Prague in November 2008, at the 5th Prague Forum of the Council of Europe. One of the outcomes of the Prague Forum worth mentioning here is that it is very likely that the Council of Europe will in the future deal with how to ensure the right to education of the socially excluded, including the "drop-outs" whose number is increasing due to the deteriorating economic situation in many parts of Europe. Learning difficulties that arise because of economic recession and increased poverty among our populations should be acknowledged. The question of the role

of the state in providing education of quality for all will also be studied.

If diversity in education is enhanced, does it mean the improvement of its quality? Key issues for the successful management of diversity in education involve, first and foremost, a holistic approach. Respecting diversity means the respect of pluralism and provision of open, accessible and appropriate learning opportunities and differentiated treatment whenever needed. From this point of view, enhancing and managing diversity in education should improve its quality. It is based on at least the following: access to education and learning activities for all, and special attention to people and groups with specific learning needs. It also means flexible educational provision, democratic governance of schools and – at the level of the community, where people live, work and learn – partnerships with parents, between the school and the local community. The Council of Europe, through its many projects, has extensive experience in designing and implementing activities which take this into account. Of course, I would like to speak about this project, but also the other projects concerning in particular education of democratic citizenship and human rights education, education of Roma and Travellers, and intercultural education, which are subjects we will be dealing with in the coming four years.

This publication offers a great opportunity to share some experience gained from the project on Policies and Practices for Teaching Sociocultural Diversity and also from other Council of Europe projects in the fields of history teaching, language policy, education for Roma and Travellers, and education for democratic citizenship. It can contribute further to the European debate on the main challenges that European teachers may face when dealing with social and cultural diversity.

Diversity and inclusion – Challenges for teacher education

Tora Aasland, Minister for Education and Research of Norway

We live in societies where we are exposed to considerable pressures to conform. As voters, in the way we dress, as consumers, in the colours and materials we select for our houses – we are expected to “fit in” or to be “normal”. At the same time we all recognise that the freedom to be diverse – to make choices and develop our own taste, look different and eat different foods – is part of what we generally define as “a good society”. It could be said that the ability – or inability – to strike that balance is an essential national quality.

School is, and always has been, expected to help solve that dilemma. The old national plan for basic education in Norway, dating from 1959, and aptly known as the “normal plan”, said that a central purpose of basic education was to make the pupils (*gagns menneske*) decent or proper people. In those days common norms were fairly obvious and uniformly accepted. Today our set of norms has to accommodate a much wider variety. Not only have we as individuals become more broad-minded, we have also been enriched through a steady inflow of language, culture, costumes, hair-dos, religions and customs from the far corners of the world. What now of normality and decency?

Not long ago “integration” was the political buzzword. Those outside mainstream society were to be helped to enter it. That meant becoming more like those inside, at least changing your language, culture and customs. I like to think that we are more concerned with inclusion today. In an inclusive society nobody is outside. If we are all insider members of society we must all find ways to accommodate diversity; and that goes for schools, too. The European ideal is an inclusive school – a school for all.

So, what makes a school inclusive? Every pupil in an inclusive school belongs to a class or a group that allows them to feel that they are part of a social context. Such a school, in other words, has room for individuals as well as for the community, appreciates

differences and diversity and is able to adapt, to adjust subject content, requirements and methods to the individual learner. It includes learners and parents in discussions, choices and evaluations of diversity issues.

The challenge for teacher education is to produce teachers for such a school. As you know, we are in the middle of a transformation of teacher education in Norway, and the White Paper that was introduced in parliament last spring contains many ambitions in this direction:

Teaching ... must be in compliance with the aims set out in the National Curriculum for Basic Education, but also adapted to the different abilities and needs of pupils. Pupils should have a sense of mastering the subject-related challenges they face and feel included in a social community.

A clear value base and broad cultural understanding are fundamental to an inclusive social community and to a learning environment where diversity and differences are respected.

I am pleased and proud to say that I believe the new teacher education – the first students under the new system will be admitted next autumn – is on the right track in this respect. We need teachers to enjoy diversity as much as handle it, and I think there are signs that we will be able to move towards such a teaching profession.

The approach to diversity should be evident in all subjects and activities, but such a shift in education mindset also requires a direct approach. We have redesigned the general education theory subject and included in it a new element – knowledge of pupils. It sounds a good deal more awkward in English than in Norwegian, but what it reflects is that it takes professional studies to face the diversity of our classrooms and the challenge of meeting each learner's needs on his or her terms in a professional manner. This is our aim – to develop the teaching profession – and the new subject is to be one tool to effect those changes.

I should like to mention especially one important resource in this ambition. The European Wergeland Centre is a European resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship. It has been established in co-operation between Norway and the Council of Europe,

and was inaugurated in Oslo in February 2009. One of its main mandates is to conduct research and training on human rights, democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue in the field of teacher education. It is early days yet, but we have high hopes for the catalytic role of the centre.