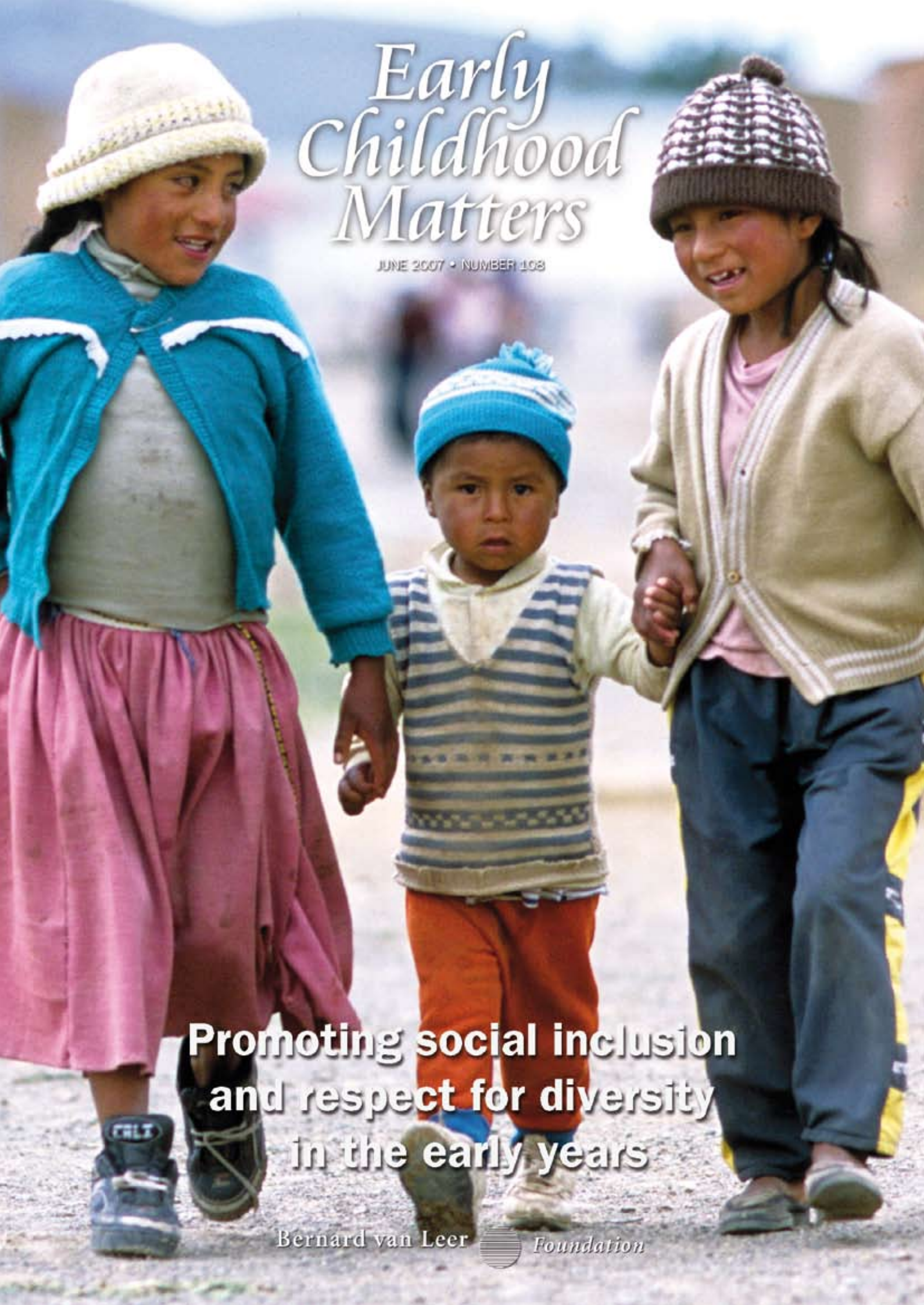
Early Childhood Matters

JUNE 2007 • NUMBER 108



Promoting social inclusion and respect for diversity in the early years

Bernard van Leer Foundation

Early Childhood Matters is a journal about early childhood. It looks at specific issues regarding the development of young children, in particular from a psychosocial perspective. It is published twice per year by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

The views expressed on *Early Childhood Matters* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Work featured in *Early Childhood Matters* is not necessarily funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

ISSN 1387-9553

Cover photo: Children on a village street in Patacamaya, Bolivia. ACHIM POHL, Lineair

Early Childhood Matters is also published in Spanish: *Espacio para la Infancia* (ISSN 1566-6476). Both publications are available from our website, where articles can be downloaded, and hard single copies can be requested free of charge.

Bernard van Leer Foundation
PO Box 82334
2508 EH The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)70 331 2200
Fax: +31 (0)70 350 2373
email: registry@bvleerf.nl
<www.bernardvanleer.org>

Series editors: Teresa Moreno, Jan van Dongen
Design & production: Homemade Cookies Graphic Design bv
Copy editing: Green Ink Publishing Services, UK

Contents

Editorial

After introducing to our readers the first of the Foundation's new areas of work in *Early Childhood Matters* 107, this issue takes a close look at the second of three new programme areas which guide our work: 'Social inclusion and respect for diversity'. This is not a completely new area for the Foundation. We started working on respect for diversity in the late 1990s and have supported the development of many school and childcare-centre curricula that promote respect for diversity and positive social identities, with strong emphasis placed on parental involvement.

In recognition of the fact that lasting social change can only be brought about through a socially inclusive society, this area has been expanded under the Foundation's current Statement of Strategic Intent to encompass the field of social inclusion. We understand social inclusion to be about providing equality of chances, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability, as well as opportunities for development of capabilities and for participation.

The Foundation's framework document, "Promoting inclusion and respect for diversity in young children's environments" (see page 5) unites both strands as the twin foci of our interventions. As Michel Vandenbroeck says in his contribution to this issue, "any framework based on social inclusion and diversity should acknowledge that the two are inextricably linked and avoid the pitfall of making structural discrimination an issue of cultural diversity" (page 7).

The goals of the Foundation interventions in this area will be accomplished by having early childhood as an entry point. As Martha Friendly goes on to add later in her article, "under the right conditions, early childhood education and care can be primary means to support and strengthen social inclusion in a meaningful way by playing multiple vital roles for both children and adults in creating social inclusion in diverse societies" (page 11).

For this edition, we had the privilege of interviewing the American philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, who laid out the issue in a nutshell (see page 15): "I think that children as young as 3 or 4 can be engaged in at least some conversations about how their behaviour affects others and why it is bad to do things that hurt others."

Early childhood programmes cannot be expected to contribute to social inclusion effectively without the implementation of effective public policy. For example, according to Kishor Shrestha, social inclusion is high on the political agenda of Nepal. Some of the major programmes and strategies implemented to increase the access of marginalised groups to education are discussed on page 20.

Service delivery for early childhood across the board is a prerequisite of social inclusion. By way of illustration, a local organisation from northeast Albania presents its experience in setting up community-based early childhood education and care centres open to all children, regardless of underlying factors such as poverty, gender and ethnicity (see page 25).

As said above, it is essential to seek the involvement of parents in early childhood programmes with a social inclusion angle. As the research project 'Crossing borders' advocates on page 34, it is essential for a dialogue to take place among parents, practitioners, scholars and policy makers.

Most of the Foundation's work in respect for diversity is concentrated in Europe and Israel. The article on page 43 presents a comparison between the findings of a study carried out in Northern Ireland and projects in Israel supported by the Foundation, on how inclusiveness and openness can be encouraged in the early years despite major social divisions.

In Europe, our support to networking has been an important component of the Foundation's strategy with regard to respect for diversity. The article on

Photo: Courtesy Institut für den Situationsansatz (ISTA)

If young children are to be given the chance to grow up in equality and free from any form of discrimination, then all parts of society must contribute to building up such environments for them

DECET is an example of how this kind of partnership can lead to knowledge generation and influencing practice at European level (page 29). In Central America, the network Grupo de Trabajo Infancia Indígena y Educación is working to generate common understandings about children growing up in indigenous societies and to influence public policy in the region (page 39).

In addition to the above examples that, we hope, illustrate different ways and approaches of what socially inclusive early childhood programmes look like 'on the ground', an overview of what diversity means from an academic point of view is presented on page 47. We also take a look at how research can help promote positive attitudes to ethnic diversity among young children (page 50).

An introduction of this nature can only shed light on what is, intrinsically, a complex issue. If young children's rights are to be fulfilled, in other words if they are to be given the chance of a spirit of growing up in equality and free from any form of discrimination, then all parts of society must contribute to building up such environments for them. As a recent OECD report states (Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care, 2006):

"Early Childhood Education and Care programmes not only address the care, nurturing and education of young children but also contribute to the resolution of complex social issues […]. Early childhood services do much to alleviate the negative effects of disadvantage by educating young children and facilitating the access of families to basic services and social participation. […] Governments need to employ upstream fiscal, social and labour policies to reduce family poverty and give young children a fair start in life."

Editors: *Teresa Moreno and Jan van Dongen*

The framework for the Foundation

Promoting social inclusion and respect for diversity in young children's environments

The values of social inclusion and respect for diversity have always been central to the Bernard van Leer Foundation's mission, with its focus on socially and economically disadvantaged young children. These values also play an important role in our other two 'issue areas' ("Strengthening the care environment" and "Successful transitions: the continuum from home to school"). So why have we felt the need to devote to these values an issue area of their own?

The answer comes in two parts. First, the pace of social change is intensifying: all around the world today, societies are changing ever more rapidly and becoming increasingly diversified. Social change often has the capacity to seem threatening to those attached to the status quo; it can lead to resentment and fear of perceived outsiders, resulting in attitudes that range from mild prejudice to acute stigma. Even when it stops short of violence, the discrimination that results can easily become entrenched within social structures.

Second, there is growing evidence that the values of social inclusion and respect for diversity are more applicable to young children than has previously been appreciated. We now understand more about how young children make meaning from experiences of stigma and discrimination – and how the attitudes which underlie prejudice and bias are formed in the early years of life. Targeted interventions during the early years have been shown to deflect the development of bias and prejudice in very young children.

The two strands of social inclusion and respect for diversity are closely intertwined. Social inclusion is about citizenship, status and rights. Respect for diversity is about belonging and mutual acceptance. The two strands have a symbiotic relationship, reinforcing each other and, together reflecting the ideal that all citizens contribute to and participate meaningfully in their environments, enjoy full citizenship and develop a secure sense of belonging.

The two strands have different angles of approach. Social inclusion programmes tackle structural discrimination. This often involves barriers based on socio-economic standing, political beliefs, ethnicity and other characteristics. which prevent young children from having equal and fair access to resources, services and facilities.

Respect for diversity programmes are aimed at promoting positive attitudes and recognising the needs of those who are different. This goes beyond legal rights. It refers to the way that children and adults interact on a daily basis. Through a focus on respect for diversity, we aim to promote pro-social behaviours; open and responsive interactions and social awareness – including awareness of the effects of prejudice and discrimination. Respect for diversity incorporates imaginative engagement with other people's realities (through, for example, story-telling, pictures and theatre). Other components include the development of the skills involved in perspective taking, negotiation, anger management and conflict resolution.

Our work on social inclusion and respect for diversity fits within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which supports the right of all children to grow up in surroundings characterized by equality, free from

Exposing children to respectful environments early in life facilitates the development of positive long-term outcomes

any form of discrimination due to their "race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (Article 2).

Despite the risks of inequality and discrimination, the increasing heterogeneity of societies can also provide young children with positive opportunities for cultural exploration and exchange. We believe that exposing children to inclusive and respectful environments early in life facilitates the development of positive and potentially long-term outcomes.

By working with community leaders, childcare professionals, parents, and children, we can create 'meeting places' and 'common spaces' where equal participation and respect for diversity are reflected and valued. This can help counteract the immediate effects of discrimination and stigma against young children and their families, and in the longer term can contribute to more integrated and socially cohesive societies. As well as having a positive effect on young children's development, such 'meeting places' and 'common spaces' can serve as models of social inclusion and provide a basis from which structural barriers can be addressed.

As with all the Foundation's work, we operate on a continuum that spans practice, knowledge and policy. We focus on supporting the development of positive early childhood environments; targeted training for adults within these environments; awareness raising about the needs of young children; promoting the meaningful participation of families in decision-making and service delivery; and integrating projects and programmers within community networks.

We recognise that early childhood policies are related to political, economic and social reforms – and must be anchored within their social context. It is only through engagement with parents, families and communities that effective social transformation can be achieved.

We will be gathering and documenting experiences and lessons learned from our grantmaking to further our understanding about how this issue area impacts upon the well-being of young children. Knowledge generation includes analyses of programs to reduce discrimination and enhance mutual esteem. The issue area has incorporated a Joint Learning Initiative on Children and Ethnic Divisions (JLI) as a strategy for mapping how the goals of social inclusion and respect for diversity plays out in early childhood programs and services. The JLI will assess current early childhood interventions and will develop and test innovative approaches for promoting inclusiveness and positive attitudes towards diversity in very young children and those who influence their near and far environments.

The knowledge generated through our work will be used to advocate and influence policy makers and decision makers about the potential of early childhood programmes to contribute to cohesive and respectful societies.

In the long term, our guiding vision is the promotion of more equitable societies where all citizens have opportunities for meaningful participation and inclusion, and where all children enjoy and contribute to positive interactions, empathy and respect.

Policy matters

De-culturalising social inclusion and re-culturalising outcomes

Michel Vandenbroeck, Department of Social Welfare Studies, Ghent University, Belgium

Authors promoting respect for diversity in childcare often assign a broad definition to the topic, to include gender, ability, ethnic background or race, family composition and beliefs, amongst other things. The definition is inspired by Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind). Yet, when it comes to putting such general mission statements into practice or into concrete curricula, the different aspects of diversity and the way they affect social inclusion/exclusion are sometimes analysed as distinct categories, requiring distinct approaches. This article argues that such distinctions should be avoided since they carry the risk that social inequalities are masked behind a discourse on cultural diversity.

What determines a child's opportunities?

Many studies have shown that opportunities for children to achieve their full potential are distributed unequally and that the inequalities are embedded deeply in socio-economic factors (or class, if one wishes to use this term). For example, the Starting Strong II report (OECD 2006) makes it clear that a nation's health is not related simply to its wealth. Some countries (e.g., Ireland and the USA) combine high economic achievement with a high percentage of children living in poverty and with little early childhood care and education. Others (e.g., in southern and eastern Europe) have less robust economies, but also fewer children living in poverty. And the Nordic countries appear to combine strong economies with low proportions of disadvantaged children.

Other factors are related to government policy and include family leave allowances, taxes that influence child poverty, and provision of good-quality early childhood care and education or early years provisions. Studies show that policy matters; the extent to which economic inequalities affect family life and children's opportunities is influenced largely by social policy including the welfare state. This has been documented in education and in many other aspects of daily life. For example, the number of individuals from certain ethnic groups in the penal system in the USA, Europe and Latin America cannot be explained simply by the occurrence of crime, but concurs with differences in welfare policies (Wacquant 2002, 2003).

Addressing the equality gap

Projects promoting respect for diversity through education should also address the structural aspects of social inclusion/exclusion. If they do not, they may contribute to the problem they wish to resolve. Indeed, programmes that address biased attitudes towards the 'Other'[1], but that fail to uncover the mechanisms that construct the 'Other' as significantly different, may simply reinforce – or 'pedagogise' (Popkewtiz 2003) – and therefore perpetuate current structural inequalities. Researchers should therefore acknowledge that respect for diversity is linked inextricably to issues of social inclusion. As the Bernard van Leer Foundation framework document (see p. 5 of this ECM) states, early childhood policies cannot be viewed in isolation from economic and social reforms, while interaction with different groups (respect for diversity) must be accompanied by real change in access to quality services.

It is well documented that poverty and social exclusion affect children's development and that lack of access to quality early childcare is a contributing factor (e.g., Duncan and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Phillips and Adams 2001; Pungello and Kurtz-Costes 1999). Most of the research comes from the USA, but there is some documentation on how inequalities occur in traditional social welfare states in Europe (e.g., Vandenbroeck 2003; Wall and Jose 2004). The ongoing Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study in the UK (Siraj-Blatchford 2006) shows that children's academic achievement is influenced by family ethnicity, but also that variations in ethnicity tend to become less important in the face of socio-economic variation. More importantly, the study shows that such variations may be reduced significantly by early childhood education, provided this is of high quality, having well-qualified staff who respect diversity.

Since the late 1960s, different policies have been developed to enhance the participation of 'at risk' children. In some cases, this has entailed introducing new services targeted at specific sub-groups in society, which unintentionally contribute to covert mechanisms of segregation in these societies. However, early childhood institutions do not simply foster children's development and compensate for social or cultural discrimination. They may also function as places where family life meets the public environment, and they should be perceived as a transition between the private and the public (Vandenbroeck 2001). Many children take their first steps into society there and such institutions therefore contribute significantly to the socialisation of children. In some French *crèches parentales* (Cadart 2006), the neighbourhood childcare centres in Flanders (De Kimpe and Eeckhout 2004), and the Italian *spazio insieme* (Musatti, in preparation), such transitional spaces are also important for the socialisation of parents. In present-day post-industrial societies marked by individualisation they bring diverse groups together and have potential for building bridges across socio-economic and cultural divides, thereby contributing to more socially cohesive societies (Vandenbroeck 2006). However, to fulfil this function, early childhood services need to represent the diversity of the society in which they are embedded.

Efficiency and effectiveness of projects

One of the most difficult challenges is to improve assessment and accountability in projects and initiatives that seek to address diversity. Internationally, focus on efficiency, efficacy and evidence-based policies in matters of education and family support is growing. For example, the European Scientific Association for Residential and Foster Care for Children and Adolescents (EUSARF) 2008 conference theme is *Assessing the 'Evidence-base' of Intervention for Vulnerable Children and their Families*. However, although project managers, policy makers and donors need to determine what works if they are to make the most of the limited funds available, there are some pitfalls in the present-day emphasis on evidence-based policies.

One central issue is the question of what is a desirable outcome? Scholars in childhood sociology (e.g., Cunningham 1995; Hendrick 1997) or in ethnography in early childhood education (Brougère, Guénif-Souilamas and Rayna, in preparation; Tobin, Wu and Davidson 1989) have demonstrated that concepts of a good life for children are embedded deeply in (dominant) cultural, historical and political contexts. Universal concepts such as child needs and child development should be used with extreme caution (Woodhead 1997). The recurring question seems to be who defines the 'desirable outcome'? All too often, parents (especially socially marginalised parents) have no voice in the debate. Other problems are associated with the long-term focus of many experts, which tends to neglect the immediate well-being of parents and children. Another is the pressure on accountability, which focuses discussion on measurable outcomes. As a consequence, outcomes that are not (or hardly) measurable tend to be excluded, even when they are relevant to the families concerned.

Measurement of efficiency and effectiveness of intervention programmes also relies on the perception of the problem (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie 2006). For example, a project might be based on the premise that children from ethnic minorities tend to fail in school. The data might show that academic achievement is linked to parental attitudes in specific minority communities. As a result, a programme for parental support may be set up. Outcomes may be measured easily with

Early childhood institutions also function as places where family life meets the public environment, and they should be perceived as a transition between the private and the public

pre- and post-course tests, experimental and control groups, and other empirical methods. It is to be expected, however, that the project will also see the problem of school failure as linked to parental attitudes and conceive parental attitudes as bound to culture. The project will therefore not look at social inequalities (poverty) or at constructing school curricula to take into account the diversity of family backgrounds. There is also a problem associated with retaining a representative sample. Programmes always have a certain percentage of dropouts (people belonging to the target group who prefer not to participate). The more successful a programme is in achieving measurable outcomes for its participants, the more non-participants tend to be blamed for their absence in the programme. All too often, this leads to a coercive approach to non-participants, with little attention paid to the reasons for their choice not to participate.

In conclusion, any framework based on social inclusion and diversity should acknowledge that the two are inextricably linked and avoid the pitfall of making structural discriminations into issues of cultural diversity. The concept can be understood as a plea for de-culturalising social inclusion. Conversely, when focusing on evidence-based policies, researchers should be careful to include the views of the target families. This includes taking account of what they consider to be desirable outcomes and their motivation for participation or non-participation. This may be understood as a re-culturalisation of outcomes.

Notes

1 The term 'Other' is used in a generic sense, meaning all persons that are labelled as 'different' by dominant groups. This may include indigenous people, ethnic minorities, the poor, etc. The term is inspired by Edward Saïd's studies about how people in former colonies were labelled as 'Others', and consequently stigmatised and constructed as fundamentally different. The term also makes indirect reference to that used by Levinas, who points at another pitfall, namely the attempts to 'grasp' the other and make him into 'the

same', e.g. by using one's own references to interpret the other (Dahlberg and Moss 2005).

References

Brougère, G., Guénif-Souilamas, N., and Rayna, S. (in preparation). De l'usage de l'altérité pour comprendre le préscolaire. In: Brougère, G. and Vandenbroeck, M. (eds). Nouveaux paradigmes pour repenser l'éducation préscolaire. Brussels, Belgium: Peter Lang.

Cadart, M.L. (2006). Des parents dans les crèches, utopie ou réalité? Ramonville Saint-Agne, France: Erès.

Cunningham, H. (1995). Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500. London, UK and New York, USA: Longman.

Dahlberg, G. and Moss, P. (2005). Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

De Kimpe, C., and Eeckhout, K. (2004). Handleiding buurtgerichte kinderopvang. Gent, Belgium: VBJK.

Duncan, G., and Brooks-Gunn, J. (2000). Family poverty, welfare reform, and child development. Child Development 71(1): 188–196.

Hendrick, H. (1997). Constructions and reconstructions of British childhood: an interpretative survey, 1800 to present. In: James, A. and Prout, A. (eds). Constructing and Reconstructing childhood. London, UK: Falmer Press.

Musatti, T. (in preparation). La signification des lieux d'accueil pour la petite enfance aujourd'hui. In: Brougère, G. and Vandenbroeck, M. (eds). Nouveaux paradigmes pour repenser l'éducation préscolaire. Brussels, Belgium: Peter Lang.

OECD (2006). Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Phillips, D., and Adams, G. (2001). Child care and our youngest children. Future of Children 11(1): 35–51.

Popkewitz, T. (2003). Governing the child and pedagogicalization of the parent: a historical excursus into the present. In: Bloch, M., Holmlund, K., Moqvist, L. and Popkewitz, T. (eds). Governing Children, Families and Education. Restructuring the Welfare State New York, USA: Palgrave.

Pungello, E., and Kurtz-Costes, B. (1999). Why and how working women choose child care: a review with a focus on infancy. Developmental Review 19: 31–96.

Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2006). The impact of early childhood settings and families on children's development. Paper presented at 'Promoting diversity through education' conference, Bratislava, Slovakia, October 26–28, 2006.

Tobin, J., Wu, D., and Davidson, D. (1989). Preschool in Three Cultures. Japan, China and the United States. New Haven, USA and London, UK: Yale University Press.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2001). The View of the Yeti. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2003). From crèches to childcare: constructions of motherhood and inclusion/exclusion in the history of Belgian infant care. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood 4(3): 137–148.

Vandenbroeck, M. (2006). Globalisation and Privatisation: The Impact on Childcare Policy and Practice (vol. 38). The Hague, TheNetherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Vandenbroeck, M., and Bouverne-De Bie, M. (2006). Children's agency and educational norms. A tensed negotiation. Childhood 13(1): 127–143.

Wacquant, L. (2002). Punir les pauvres. Le nouveau gouvernement de l'insécurité sociale. Marseille, France: Agone.

Wacquant, L. (2003). Toward a dictatorship over the poor? Punishment and Society 5(2): 197–205.

Wall, K., and Jose, J.S. (2004). Managing work and care: a difficult challenge for immigrant families. Social Policy and Administration 38(6): 591–621.

Woodhead, M. (1997). Psychology and the cultural construction of children's needs. In: James, A. and Prout, A. (eds). Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood. London, UK: Falmer Press.

How ECEC programmes contribute to social inclusion in diverse societies

Martha Friendly, Coordinator, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Canada

The more we get together, together, together
The more we get together, the happier we'll be

Diversity: Part of the landscape

The Canadian children's song is sometimes used by early childhood educators as a metaphor for social inclusion in a practical sense – welcoming all children into the group, respecting and celebrating differences or learning to live together. For most Canadian children, 'getting together' with peers from diverse backgrounds happens every day from an early age. In an ordinary public school kindergarten or childcare centre in Toronto, a 3- or 4-year-old is likely to make friends with children who speak any of 40 languages at home; in some kindergarten classes in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, more than 50% of the children were born outside Canada or are from recently immigrated families (Larose et al. 2001).

Today cultural and racial diversity is part of the landscape in many – even previously homogeneous – countries. Canada is an especially diverse country; the most recent census data show that in-migration is among the highest in the world and the primary source of population growth (Statistics Canada 2007). While Canada is not conflict-ridden and overt discrimination is not rampant, the reality for immigrants and refugees to Canada is that, in spite of an official policy of multi-culturalism that dates back to 1971, many must struggle for recognition and respect, suitable employment and decent living conditions. At the same time, Canada's own indigenous populations – First Nations, Métis and Inuit – experience poverty and social exclusion on a continuing, severe and daily basis.

Early childhood education and care: Central in diverse societies

Today cultural and racial diversity is a reality in many countries and there is growing recognition that ensuring that modern diverse societies function is about more than 'the more we get together'. Instead, real recognition and respect for diversity requires thoughtful public policy that begins with a well-woven safety net of settlement, employment, training and education, health and economic and social programmes; all of which are important. But among these, it is recognised that early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a key link – a central connection in the safety net. ECEC can be a primary means of supporting and strengthening social inclusion in a meaningful way by playing multiple vital roles for both children and adults in creating social inclusion in diverse societies.

Drawing on the ideas of Amartya Sen (1999, 2000) Friendly and Lero (2002) developed a conception of how ECEC can strengthen social inclusion. In this analysis, socially inclusive societies are those in which members can: participate meaningfully and actively; have opportunities to join in collective experiences; enjoy equality; share social experiences and attain fundamental well-being. That is, a socially inclusive society provides equality of life chances and offers all members a basic level of well-being. Under the right conditions, ECEC is a primary means for enhancing this kind of social inclusion.

One reason that ECEC programmes are especially valuable is that they are multi-purpose, playing key roles for more than one group of people simultaneously. Well-designed, well-supported ECEC programmes can enhance children's development while – at the same time – supporting families' economic and social well-being, and they can ensure equity for women and for children with special needs while enhancing community solidarity. From this perspective, childcare centres, kindergartens and nursery schools together with family resource or support programmes are all intended to enhance children's well-being and learning, to support parents in a variety of ways and to help societies achieve collective goals.

ECEC programmes as a means to social inclusion: Key concepts and goals

Four concepts inspire this idea that ECEC is a valuable means to social inclusion. The first is that development of talents, skills and capabilities in the early years affects both a child's well-being and its future prospects with an impact on the social, educational, financial and personal domains as the child matures into adulthood. A second concept is that the family and its environment – shaped by culture, ethnicity and race, class and income – have a significant impact on the developing child in early and throughout later childhood. Third, from a non-stigmatising perspective social inclusion is not only about reducing risk but is also about ensuring that opportunities are not missed. And a fourth concept takes a children's rights perspective in proposing that children are not merely adults-in-training but must be valued as children, not simply for what they may become later on.

In concert with these four concepts are four goals – all social inclusion goals in the broadest sense – for ECEC programmes. The first is to enhance children's well-being, development and prospects for lifelong learning. Contemporary research informs the implementation of this goal with two evidence-based pieces of information: firstly, ECEC programmes can benefit all children (although children from low-income or poorly resourced homes may benefit most) whether or not the mother is in the paid workforce, and regardless of the family's origin or social class. Particularly for a child from a low-income family, good-quality ECEC may make the difference between educational marginalisation and success. Secondly, the research shows that it is the quality of ECEC that makes the critical difference; good-quality ECEC programmes positively support children's development, while poor-quality programmes may even be harmful (Shonkoff and Phillips 2001).

The second social inclusion goal for ECEC programmes is to support parents in education, training and employment. Reliable, affordable ECEC programmes help reduce social exclusion that is linked to poverty, unemployment and marginal employment, disempowerment and social isolation, all of which have effects not only on the adult family members but are mediated through the family to the child. The absence of reliable, affordable ECEC may make the difference between employment and precarious employment, or training and no training and – ultimately – poverty or solvency, especially for socially excluded families,.

Third, while all four goals are connected to equity either through development of capabilities or access to resources, for two groups – women and children with disabilities – ECEC is especially fundamental to equity and social justice. That "child care is the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers" (Abella 1984) is not a new idea, but it is central to proposals for improving children's lives by strengthening the status of women (UNICEF 2007). However, the idea that access to mainstream social and educational programmes for disabled children is a social justice issue may be a newer idea in some countries that have not fully accepted the idea that all individuals have the right to full participation in their communities – regardless of ability.

The fourth social inclusion goal – strengthening social solidarity and social cohesion – is especially pertinent in diverse societies. Early childhood is a critical period for learning about difference and diversity and establishing a basis for tolerance; research shows that children recognise racial differences and hold opinions about race by the age of three. Consequently, inclusive childhood education programmes can enhance respect for diversity through their impact on children as future adults. However, as MacNaughton (2006) notes, "mere exposure to diversity may be insufficient",

Early childhood programmes that include parents and that demonstrate respect for diversity can promote solidarity and equity among classes, racial and ethnic groups, and generations

suggesting the importance of programme content and the value of proactive pedagogies and practices. But ECEC programmes have the capacity to have a significant impact on adults too. Community-based programmes can support neighbourhood, community and interpersonal co-operation and social solidarity in the sense that they can be 'forums located in civil society' through which parents can participate in common activities related to the well-being of their children. ECEC programmes that include parents, are connected with community resources and that demonstrate respect for diversity can promote solidarity and equity among classes, racial and ethnic groups, and generations.

In these ways, ECEC programmes can strengthen solidarity within a geographic community, across class, ethnic and racial boundaries and can demonstrate that co-operation among racial and ethnic groups and social classes is possible and valued.

What is needed if ECEC is to contribute to social inclusion in diverse societies?

Well-designed, thoughtful public policy is fundamental if ECEC is to enhance child development; support parents; provide equity and strengthen social solidarity. Comparative research such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Thematic Review of ECEC shows how certain elements of public policy including:

- universal, non-stigmatised access and participation rather than targeting to selected segments of the society or leaving out those who cannot afford market fees;
- a coherent policy approach that integrates care and early childhood education to ensure quality for children and access to the labour force;
- sensitive services for parents;
- substantial, well-directed public funding;
- community-based services that involve parents and are connected to community resources;
- high-quality programming developed through

a participatory process including a curriculum framework;
- staffing policies that integrate respect for diversity as a continuing programme element.

All these factors enable ECEC services to play a powerful role in strengthening social inclusion (OECD 2001; 2006; Friendly and Lero 2002).

These elements can build the system that is required to ensure that equity of access and quality are a reality for all, not just the lucky few. If ECEC programmes are to make a contribution to social inclusion by helping make equality of life chances and a basic level of well-being possible for all children, first and foremost children and families must have access to the right kinds of high-quality programmes.

For this to happen, governments must play a meaningful role in setting policy and providing funds. In 2000, UNICEF called on world government leaders to:

> "Make children – the youngest most especially – the priority at all policy tables…and to ensure [that this has] the necessary financial and political support." (UNICEF 2000)

Indeed, ECEC is considered by many to be an important child's right. The 2000 United Nations' Dakar Framework for Action, approved by 160 countries, made 'expanding ECEC' the first of six goals set out in UNESCO's *Global Monitoring Report 2007. Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education* (UNESCO 2007).

Today, as many countries are increasingly culturally, racially and ethnically diverse, examples are available from countries with a variety of histories, cultures, fiscal capacities and political arrangements to show how the enabling public policy for socially inclusive ECEC programmes can be activated. These examples show that closing the inclusion gap requires vision, commitment, knowledge and the political will to turn aspirations into reality through transformative processes of policy and programme development.

References

Abella, R. S. (1984). Equality in Employment: A Royal Commission Report. Ottawa, Canada: Government of Canada. Royal Commission on Equality in Employment.

Friendly, M. and Lero, D.S. (2002). Social Inclusion through ECEC. Perspectives on Social Inclusion Series. Toronto, Canada: Laidlaw Foundation.

Larose, F., Terrisse, B., Bédard, J. and Karsenti, T. (2001). Preschool education training: skills for adapting to a changing society. Paper prepared for the 2001 Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda Symposium: Teacher and Educator Training, Current Trends and Future Directions. Université Laval, Québec City, May 22-23, 2001. Available online, retrieved April 21, 2007 at www.educ.usherb.ca/crie/membres/reguliers/flarose.asp

MacNaughton, G. (2006). Respect for Diversity: An International Overview. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2001). Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care. Paris: Education and Training Policy, Education Division.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006). Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care. . Paris: Education and Training Policy, Education Division.

Sen, A. (1999). Investing in early childhood: Its role in development. Keynote speech at Breaking the Poverty Cycle: Investing in Early Childhood. , Inter-American Development Bank. Sustainable Development Department, Social Development Division. Available online, retrieved April 21 2007 at http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=353123

Sen, A. (2000). Development as Freedom. New York, USA: Anchor Books.

Shonkoff, J., and Phillips, D. (2001). From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. Washington DC, USA: National Academy Press.

Statistics Canada. (2007). Population and dwelling counts, 2006 Census. The Daily, 13 March 2007. Ottawa, Canada.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). (2000). The State of the World's Children 2001. New York, USA: UNICEF.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). (2007). Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality: The State of the World's Children 2007. New York, USA: UNICEF.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). (2007). The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007. Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education. Paris, France: UNESCO.

Education for world citizenship needs to begin early

An interview with Martha Nussbaum

Martha Nussbaum is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, USA. She is the author of numerous influential works including Upheavals of thought: The intelligence of emotions***, which includes an account of how young children develop, and*** Cultivating humanity: A classical defence of reform in liberal education***, in which she champions the Greek philosoper Diogenes's idea of thinking of all people as 'citizens of the world' – that is, not being defined by their local origins and group memberships.***

As one of the highest-profile philosophers writing today, Professor Nussbaum is noted for grappling with contemporary issues – including her work with Nobel Prize-winning economist Armatya Sen on international development. Her most recent book is *Frontiers of justice: Disability, nationality, species membership*, to be followed in the spring by *The clash within: Democracy, religious violence, and India's future* and in 2008 by *Liberty of conscience: In defense of America's tradition of religious equality.*

In *Cultivating humanity*, Professor Nussbaum writes: "Education for world citizenship needs to begin early. As soon as children engage in storytelling, they can tell stories about other lands and other peoples." With her ideas clearly having so much relevance to the Foundation's agenda on respect for diversity, ECM was keen to explore further Professor Nussbaum's thinking on issues related to young children.

ECM: In Cultivating humanity*, you discuss how children's moral faculties develop when their parents start telling them stories, as their narrative imagination leads them to wonder what it's like to be someone else. As they grow older, they draw the lesson of compassion: "That might have been me, and that is how I should want to be treated." This chimes with the way in which many of the Foundation's diversity projects use techniques such as story-telling, theatre and 'persona dolls' among young children growing up in socially diverse environments. Is it ever too soon for the lesson of compassion to be made explicit following a story? To put it another way, at what age might we realistically engage children in moral philosophy?*

Martha Nussbaum: I think that this varies with the child, and so it is those who know the child best who will make the best judgment about it. But it should not be assumed that young children are simply not interested in talking about compassion, and it should especially not be assumed that little girls have more interest in it than little boys. There's some research showing that when girls ask their mothers questions about feelings, they get longer and fuller answers than the boys do, because there is an assumption that girls are interested in feelings and boys not.

I think that children as young as 3 or 4 can be engaged in at least some conversations about how their behavior affects others and why it is bad to do things that hurt others. As time goes on, those conversations can become more general, and children can begin to understand why teasing children because of certain traits they have is very hurtful, and why mockery based on race or disability inflicts great harm.

So many good books for children stress these things, so discussion can easily begin with a story. Because I love elephants and read everything about them that I can, I've recently been reading a fine book for children around ages 4 or 5 about a baby elephant who is teased by the other animals because he is so large and clumsy, and how hurt he feels,

and how his parents and teachers work to solve the problem. (The other children learn that it is quite advantageous to have a long trunk, which can do quite a lot of things, and they start not focusing on his bulk.) Well, this story has an obvious moral, but it is very charming and the pictures are extremely well done, so small children begin to learn things about ostracism and inclusion.

The Foundation's diversity work with young children includes elements of all three things you touch on: introducing new curricula, training educators and reaching out to parents. What do you think that the balance between these three should be?

In undergraduate college or university education, it is wise to focus most on curriculum, since faculty resent any imposition of teacher training programs, and would rather approach teaching issues as the autonomous creators of a curriculum. But of course release time needs to be given for faculty to do this kind of creative planning. Parents can be expected to go along with anything that is working well, because higher education has such prestige in our country at present. With younger children, all three assume, I'd think, a more or less equal importance.

One part of training teachers is getting them ready to approach the school's particular curriculum, and if they are well trained they will be creative agents in the curricular process. So there's a lot of synergy between the first two approaches. Anything that shows respect for teachers as imaginative and creative people is to be applauded, since our country has done such a bad job of showing teachers the respect they deserve. But of course at this level parents need to be very much a part of the process, and it is important to talk with them and get them involved all along the way. I don't think I have anything to say about this that you haven't thoroughly worked through already.

In Upheavals of thought*, you note that human infants cultivate from early on capacities for curiosity, cognitive interest, wonder and joy at stimuli around them. You also identify disgust, developed through toilet raining later in childhood, as a root cause of hatred for other groups: a 'ubiquitous reaction' to the realisation that one's own body produces substances that are disgusting is, later in life, a 'magical projection' of this outwards onto some other group who appear different. You suggest some countermeasures: "a type of toilet training that does not encourage a hypertrophy of disgust", and teaching children "that it is wrong to single out a group as the disgusting ones, because we are all equally moral and animal".*

Can you expand on the practical implications for parenting and early childhood programmes of recognising the power of disgust and both the necessity and difficulty of attempting to discourage children from projecting it onto an out-group?

I don't think we ought to try to get rid of disgust utterly. It would be quite difficult to do, and probably rather counter-productive. Although disgust does not perfectly track what is dangerous, it is a pretty useful heuristic for the dangerous in daily life, when we don't have time to check things out more thoroughly. If the milk smells disgusting, throw it out! So I don't think that parents should discourage their children's disgust at bad smells and at feces, although they should not reinforce it greatly either. Parents who encourage children to play with their feces are not helping them lead healthy lives, but parents who focus obsessively on disgust in the toilet training process are inculcating pathologies that may eventually cause deep problems.

The main thing that parents need to focus on, though, is the ubiquitous tendency of children to move from disgust at 'primary object' (feces, corpses, etc.) to what I call 'projective disgust', in which an out-group is held to be disgusting (smelly, vile, and so forth). Children love to do this: hence the widespread game of the 'cootie catcher', in which children make paper devices that allegedly catch 'cooties', disgusting bugs, off other children who belong to some out-group. Teachers and parents really need to be on the lookout for this sort of thing, and they need to step in immediately, saying that there is nothing disgusting about that child or those children, and that this game is profoundly hurtful. If it happens in a race or gender context, then it is even worse, and teachers and parents really need to be vigilant lest disgust-stereotypes enter into the conceptions children form of the female, or the African-American, or the Jew, or whatever. In addition to being vigilant, they can also convey

positive images of these groups in the classroom, to counter the disgust images that are out there.

One general problem is the spirit of narcissism that characterises so much of American society. So long as children are brought up to think that the ideal life is one in which they have everything they want, they will continue to see other people merely as agents of their own satisfactions, and they will never learn a form of mutual dependency that is essential for a compassionate culture. Narcissism is an unstable position, because the self is very vulnerable and never has all it needs. So, if the expectation is that narcissistic desires will be gratified, that expectation will constantly be frustrated by reality, and then a kind of reactive aggression takes place, as people try to blame someone else for what they lack.

The demonisation of 'out-groups' has a lot to do with this. People surround themselves with others who make them feel good and they project disgust onto the outsiders. The remedy for this must lie in learning that a good life is not one in which you have everything you want, it is a life in which you are interdependent with others, giving and receiving, acknowledging both shared needs and shared abilities.

You reject the notion of cultural relativism and argue that world citizens can and should criticise, as long as they have first made the effort to respect and understand. We're interested in exploring to what extent you believe compromises should be made with respect to raising young children. For example, an academic who is currently studying children of immigrant families in a five-country study sponsored by the foundation recently reported to us that "some immigrant parents are not comfortable with the way gender difference and modesty issues are handled in their children's preschools. Preschool staff members tend to view the immigrant parents' positions as being backwards and not in the best interest of children." He believes there should be a 'cultural negotiation' over girls' equal right to education.

Another example is where you tell the story in Cultivating humanity *of Anna, an American woman who went to work in Beijing: she adopted a Chinese baby and was appalled by how the Chinese nurse she employed deprived the baby of mental or physical stimulation. You attribute Anna's initial negative reaction to the failure of the American education system to expose her to alternative norms of childrearing, and relate with approval how she came to realise that this was a cultural difference over which she should compromise with the nurse.*

These are wonderful examples. In addressing the first, I want to begin by making a distinction between goal and strategy. Even if our goal is to get people to accept the fully equal rights of girls, we won't achieve this result unless we begin by listening to people and engaging them in dialogue. Confronting people over gender roles produces defensiveness, and usually entrenches resistance.

So, one should have an open dialogue – but, even more effectively, one may want to bypass the issue altogether and focus on incentives that will move people to change their attitudes. I've done a lot of work with women's development programs in India, and the most successful are not ideological, they are economic. They set up something desirable, whether a loan or an education program or a work program, preferably all three, that focuses on the role of women and girls, and that gives the women and girls both more power and more prestige in their community. I've seen men sitting around the edges of a women's group that some NGO has established, looking curiously on, as their wives or daughters are drawn into greater control over their daily lives. The men find this interesting, not threatening, because it seems to make the whole village richer than it was before. If those same NGO people had walked into the village saying, "We are here to change your gender roles," they would have had massive resistance. Through the sort of work I describe with the rural poor, India has now reached a point, according to recent surveys, where parents support equal education for girls.

So that is strategy, and I believe very strongly in strategies that do not confront and threaten, but that provide economic incentives and reinforce female agency. This really works, and the Nobel Prize to Mohammed Yunus was extremely well justified. Where goal is concerned, however, I don't think there should be any compromise in the area of education, which is such a key to life opportunities

"Anything that shows respect for teachers as imaginative and creative people is to be applauded." (Martha Nussbaum)

across the board. In general I believe that adults should be free to decline opportunities and to live a traditional life, if they have first been given fully equal education and political and employment opportunities. But that point is not reached unless education is free, mandatory, and equal for boys and girls.

About Anna, I can only say that I was treating the example as one involving a neutral difference, one that would not have a profound impact on the person's ability to lead a meaningful life. But I agree that this is not clear. There is too little information contained in the example. I think that American parents probably go to excess in the direction of encouraging agency and autonomy, in the sense that they tend to encourage the perception that a real adult lacks need and dependency on others. Children then learn to be ashamed of their needs for others, and to denigrate people who are obviously needy. And it may be that Chinese parents can err in the direction of reinforcing passivity and the type of narcissism associated with being catered to in a passive way. We need good studies that compare child-rearing practices across cultures for their effect on personality development, but so little work has been done in this area.

Your chapter in Cultivating humanity *entitled "Socrates in the religious university" discusses the tension that can exist in higher educational institutions between a religious remit and encouraging a Socratic determination to question. A report in the uk last year expressed concerns from the viewpoint of future social cohesiveness about a dramatic growth in faith-based preschools, notably Jewish and Muslim. In* The end of faith, *Sam Harris argues: "Once a person believes – really believes – that certain ideas can lead to eternal happiness, or its antithesis, he cannot tolerate the possibility that the people he loves might be led astray by the blandishments of unbelievers. Certainty about the next life is simply incompatible with tolerance in this one."*

Can faith-based preschools realistically be expected to set children on the path towards becoming world citizens? How can they be encouraged to do so?

I don't know Sam Harris's book, but if I didn't know that he was a contemporary writer I would think that that sentence was written in the early seventeenth century. That was indeed the standard belief then, both in Europe and in America, and on this basis horrible religious repression was defended. But what happened next was that people argued against this sort of view, showing that it was possible to live on terms of mutual respect and reciprocity with people whom one believed to be religiously in error. In Britain, John Locke made this argument forcefully in 1689, but in America Roger Williams made it earlier and even more forcefully, in two books that he wrote in 1644 and 1652 as counterblasts to John Cotton of Massachusetts, who took the Sam Harris position about religion.

Roger Williams not only published one thousand excellent pages on these topics, he also founded a colony, Rhode Island, that put these beliefs to the test, and he proved that Puritans and Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Quakers, Baptists and Native Americans, could all live peacefully together, although they all thought that the others were wrong. (Indeed only about fifteen percent of Americans at the time of the Revolution belonged to any recognized church, religious though most of them were, so you can see that there were very many who, like Williams himself, thought that everyone they saw around them was wrong.) The spirit of Rhode Island and, later, the similar spirit of Pennsylvania impressed people from more repressive states: James Madison's best friend at Princeton was from Pennsylvania, and he is constantly observing how much better life is in Pennsylvania, compared to the orthodox and repressive Virginia. The spirit of Rhode Island is the spirit in which this nation was founded, and we have had lots of problems, but on the whole I think it has been clearly shown that people of different religious convictions can live well together. India is another case of this, despite religious violence fomented by an angry Hindu minority who prefer to be top dog in everything.

When Roman Catholics immigrated in large numbers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this made Americans panic: for this was the first time that faith-based schools were widespread, and many Americans believed that these schools would undermine democracy. In 1949, Paul Blanshard's enormously popular book *American freedom and Catholic power* said that Catholic schools were as big a threat to our country as global communism. But that alarm has proven utterly groundless, and now it is often the parochial schools who pick up the tough job of educating children in the inner city when the public schools have collapsed and the suburban public schools want no part of the problem.

So yes, faith-based schools can do very well in training citizens. The government is fully empowered to set curricular requirements for faith-based schools as well as public schools, and they ought to do so, including world history, the history of minorities in the USA, a robust understanding of the nation's different religious traditions, and the practice of critical thinking. About all of this you won't have complaint from Catholics, though you may from some evangelical parents. Those parents should be told (as they were told by the Tennessee Supreme Court in Mozert v. Hawkins) that their children live in a pluralistic nation and that it is the job of the schools to prepare citizens to function effectively, and respectfully, in such a nation.

The Foundation's diversity work is part of an emerging Joint Learning Initiative on Children and Ethnic Divisions. Its working hypothesis is that "Interventions in early childhood make an important contribution to addressing ethnic divisions and creating more integrated and socially cohesive societies." Would you agree?

Absolutely!

Nepal

Respecting diversity and social inclusion in relation to care and education of young children

Kishor Shrestha, Associate Professor at the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, Kathmandu, Nepal

This article describes the forms and issues of diversity and social exclusion pertaining to care and education of young children in Nepal. It gives an account of the efforts made to deal with these issues and the impact of affirmative programmes outlined in some recent studies.

Forms and issues of diversity and social exclusion

Diversity based on geographical location/region

Nepal's geography is a factor of exclusion. There are urban/rural differences in access to markets, services and information (Bennett 2005). Basic infrastructure and such services as roads, electricity, water, health and education, including early childhood care and education (ECCE) were available mainly in urban areas only. For many years development efforts were concentrated in the Central Development Region, which includes the capital and the two adjoining Eastern and Western regions, while the Mid- and Far-Western Regions were neglected, if not forgotten. As a result, the socio-economic status and living standards of people living in these areas remained comparatively low. Literacy and school enrollment rates, available health services and the nutritional status of children and women fell short of the national averages. For several years early childhood development services were only available to children living in urban areas. One of the pioneers of ECCE services, the Nepal Children's Organization (NCO), established centres as early as 1970 and now has established a childcare centre (CCC) in the headquarters of each of Nepal's 75 districts, where they primarily cater for children of urban or suburban residents and government officials working within district headquarters areas (Joshi 1991).

From the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, many international NGOs, including Plan International, Save the Children–US and –Norway and Action Aid, only provided ECCE services in the Central Development Region and surrounding areas, mainly due to the lack of basic infrastructure in other places. Even now, ECCE services provided by the private sector are concentrated in urban areas.

Social exclusion based on caste, ethnicity, language and gender

Socio-cultural diversity is one of the important features of Nepalese society, which is categorised into a number of caste groups and ethnic communities. Power was consolidated by links to the Hindu caste system, which, though diluted, does somehow remain active even today. The Brahmans were at the top of the caste tree with the Kshatriyas (king and warriors) just beneath them; next came the Vaishyas (merchants) and the Shudras (peasants and labourers). Beneath everyone were occupational groups of Dalits, considered 'impure' and untouchable (Bennett 2005). Nepal's Hindu-dominated society has generally excluded three groups from the development process: Dalits or lower-caste people, indigenous people or Janajatis and women.

The Dalits, as victims of discrimination, are prohibited from intermingling with all other

categories of the population. It is not possible for them to be involved in social activities including educational activities for young children. The Hindu caste system considers Dalits to be unholy and polluting, and denies them access to education, wealth and governance. Such norms and values guide social ethics in formative early childhood (Vishwakarma 2006).

In Nepal over 200 forms of commonly practiced caste-based discrimination have been recorded. These include limiting the so-called lower castes to socially sanctioned roles, refusing to share water sources and avoiding any direct bodily contact with them (Bennett 2005). This discriminatory system has a direct negative implication in the school enrollment of the Dalit children and their involvement in other activities.

Language plays a major role in the enrollment, retention and achievement of children in school. The Nepalese government's one-language policy, in practice until 1990, debarred children from early education in their mother tongues. According to the Census Report of 1991, around 52 percent of the population did not speak the national language Nepali as their mother tongue. This meant that Janajati children and children from other linguistic minorities were introduced in school to a less- or unfamiliar language. Studies revealed that children in early grades dropped out because of differences between the languages they spoke at home and the language their teachers used in school. Students who came from Nepali-speaking families achieved more than students from non-Nepali speaking families, not only in Nepali but also in all primary school subjects (CERID 1997).

The legal provisions relating to property rights, employment procedures, nationality and citizenship, right to reproductive health, marriage and family rights discriminate against women (DFID–World Bank 2005). Only very recently have Nepali women obtained the right to sign for citizenship for their children. Gender-based discrimination against women and girls exists from their early years, and it is interesting to note that even in lower-caste families for social, cultural and economic reasons boys are preferred to girls.

Efforts made to deal with the issues of diversity and social exclusion

Social inclusion is a political agenda, requiring state transformation (Gurung 2006). The re-advent of democracy in Nepal in 1990 provided diverse groups with space to exert their identities and rights as citizens. Various social movements – mainly the women's movement – succeeded in placing questions of gender equality and justice on the national agenda and Dalits began challenging Nepal's caste-bound society. The Janajati movement raised fundamental issues of fair ethnic representation and of rights to languages other than Nepali and to cultures and religions other than Hinduism (Bennett 2005). Similarly, people of Terai origin raised their voices for equal rights.

Since 1990 efforts have been made to increase the access of marginalised segments of the population to education. Some of the major programmes and strategies implemented to deal with the problem of social discrimination are discussed below.

Commitment to provide basic and primary education for all

In response to commitments made in such international forums as the World Summit for Children, World Conference on Education for All (EFA) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Nepal is committed to extending basic and primary education to all citizens irrespective of region, caste, ethnicity or gender. In compliance with this commitment the Government has prepared a National Plan of Action to implement EFA programmes. This has, to a large extent, changed the traditional practice of exclusion from educational participation. Almost all the components of EFA aim to eliminate discrimination. Moreover, Nepal has included one more component: providing basic and primary education in the mother tongue.

Provision of special incentive programmes

The Ministry of Education has launched various incentive programmes to promote education for girls and disadvantaged children.

Primary school scholarship for all girls

Conducted by the Department of Education to increase girls' participation in primary education,

this programme was first implemented in 1997 in 12 districts where girls' participation in education was deplorably low. It is now being implemented in all 75 districts. Under this scheme 50 percent of girls from socio-economically disadvantaged families that are enrolled in primary grades are provided with Rs. 250 (about USD 3.90) per head per year. However, in five selected districts in the Mid-Development Region, where girls' enrollment is very low, the scholarship is given to all girls enrolled in both primary and secondary levels.

Dalit scholarship
All Dalit students enrolled in school in all 75 districts receive annual scholarships, each worth Rs. 250.

Upgrading scholarships for girls
The government is rehabilitating 18 hostels, each accommodating 20 girls. This is expected to have a positive impact on girls' enrolment, as girls from remote areas who are staying in such hostels receive scholarships of Rs. 1050 per month, while those from accessible districts each receive Rs. 850 per month.

Scholarships for disabled children
In each district where the Special Education Programme is conducted, a quota of 50 places, supported by scholarships of Rs. 50 per child is provided to physically disabled children.

Educational incentive programme for girls
Since 2002 a pilot programme has been in progress targeted at economically, linguistically and educationally disadvantaged girls from two Village Development Committees (VDCs) in each of 17 districts. The aim is to provide opportunities for girls to participate in primary education. Schoolgirls annually receive Rs. 300 for educational materials and each new enrollee receives Rs. 500 for a school uniform.

Education for special focus groups
Under a pilot scheme operational since 2002 in ethnic and religious communities, six ethnic groups (Rai/Lepcha, Musahar, Tamang, Muslim, Chamar and Kamaiya Tharu) have been identified as social or community groups with low participation in education, have been provided with annual scholarships in three VDCs in each district.

The scholarships are intended for children of economically, linguistically and educationally disadvantaged special focus groups. The main objective is to encourage such children to enroll in school, attend regularly and complete the primary course cycle. Special focus group children already in school receive Rs. 300 for educational materials and new enrollees receive Rs. 500 for school uniforms.

Formulation of decentralised policy
The 1990 Constitution of Nepal described the country as multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and democratic, and stated that all citizens were equal irrespective of religion, race, gender, caste, tribe or ideology. The Statute also gave all communities the right to preserve and promote their languages, scripts and cultures, to educate children in their mother tongues and to practice their own religion.

The Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) (1999) gave the rights to local government bodies – VDCs and municipalities – to establish pre-primary schools/centres with their own resources and to grant permission to establish, implement and manage such schools/centres. It also introduced mandatory representation of women in local government.

In order to attract women to teaching jobs and with the intention of increasing girls' enrolment and retention in school, the government has provided places for at least one female teacher in every school.

The EFA National Plan of Action has devised a strategy to provide full government support with required facilities to establish and run early childhood development centres in areas with deprived and disadvantaged communities.

Provision of education in mother tongue
The 1990 Constitution of Nepal guaranteed rights to primary education in a student's mother tongue. Various efforts are now being made to implement the Constitution. Primary school textbooks have already been translated into 14 local languages and many more are in the process of translation. Teachers are being prepared to use local languages as the medium of teaching–learning activities.

Implementation of the Inclusive Education Programme
Inclusive education is a comparatively recent trend

The Government of Nepal has launched various incentive programmes to promote education for girls and disadvantaged children

in Nepal. It is a reorganised form of education, which comprehends all groups (deprived and marginalised) and categories (disabled and emotionally disturbed) and treats them without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or impairment. It aims to bring all types of children, into the same educational environment. Under its EFA programme the Government of Nepal has been implementing the Inclusive Education Programme since 2004 (CERID 2006). The strategy comprised establishment of integration structure, teacher training, human resource development, community involvement and provision of residential facilities. The programme is conducted with the cooperation of all stakeholders including community members, parents and local organisations, it emphasises student-centred activities, the creation of a learning environment and an appropriate self-learning environment for children.

Inclusive education teacher training concentrates on preparing teachers to teach children who are mildly disabled, have learning and/or language difficulties, are ethnically disadvantaged, live in remote areas, are psychologically affected, child labourers and street children and children who need special help.

Efforts of donor agencies and international NGOs
Since 2001 donor agencies have shown interest in educational programmes and projects that seek to empower the disadvantaged and marginalised (Gurung 2006). Most of these agencies have laid stress on funds for the promotion of women, children and people living in disadvantaged situations. International NGOs like Save the Children–US and –Norway, Action Aid and Plan International have been involved in providing ECCE services since the early 1980s, but their coverage has been limited. As the target populations of these organisations are the poorest of the poor, they are playing a crucial role in dealing with the problem of including traditionally excluded groups.

Affirmative programme impact

In the context of recent changes in Nepal, respect for diversity and social inclusion is directly linked to the political system and democratic values of the government and civil society. Studies conducted in recent years have revealed encouraging results:

- In one of its studies Save the Children–US found that Dalit children were outperforming non-Dalit children in child-friendly schools as well as non-child-friendly schools (Save the Children–US 2005).
- Of all the children enrolled in early childhood projects jointly launched by Save the Children–US and –Norway from 1999 to 2002, 90 percent were Dalits. Of those who participated in the ECD program more than 95 percent joined formal school, and attended regularly.
- There has been a decrease in discriminatory practices against Dalit students and girls. Children eat and drink together, and teachers give equal, if not extra, attention to marginalised students (Arnold 2003).
- The enrollment, attendance and retention of girls and Dalits have increased (Save the Children–US 2005).
- Almost all of the boys and girls who had attended ECD centres were enrolled in Grade 1 – as opposed to a 61:39 (boys:girls) ratio for children with no ECD centre experience (Save the Children–US–Norway 2003).
- The formative research and documentation of the inclusive education process in Nepal (November 2001 – July 2004) have observed that the Inclusive Education programme brought about important changes in the pilot schools (CERID 2004; Formative Research Project, 2003).
- There has been an increase in school enrollment, even among the children of Dalit and Janajati communities and of poor families were enrolled in pilot schools
- More physically disabled, blind, deaf and mentally disabled students have been enrolled and admitted to regular teaching–learning processes
- Teachers have been highly motivated towards the new inclusion-based teaching methods and materials
- The school–community linkage is gradually being developed and strengthened (CERID 2004).

References

Arnold, C. (2003). Impact of Early Childhood Education Program. In Social Sector Economic Discussion Group Information Bulletin. July 2003. Kathmamndu, Nepal: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Nepal Country Office (NCO) and Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) Office).

Bennett, L. (2005). Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal: Following the Policy Process from Analysis to Action. Kathmandu, Nepal: The World Bank.

CERID (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development). (1997). Enhancement of Learning through Language Enrichment. Kathmandu, Nepal: CERID.

CERID (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development). (2003). Effectiveness ofIncentive/ Scholarship Programs for Girls and Disadvantaged Children. Kathmandu, Nepal: CERID.

CERID (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development). (2004). Situation analysis of special needs education for the expansion of inclusive education. Kathmandu, Nepal: CERID.

CERID (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development). (2006). Situation of Inclusive Classroom in Nepal. Kathmandu, Nepal: CERID.

DFID (Department for International Development)–World Bank. (2005). Unequal Citizens. Kathmandu, Nepal: World Bank.

Formative Research Project. (2003). School case study reports from Banke, Udaypur, Kavre and Sindhupalchowk districts (Inclusive education process documentation series of the first research cycle). Retrieved 18 April, 2007, from www.esat.org.np/r_ inclusive.php

Gurung, H. (2006). Social inclusion and national building in Nepal. In: The Organization: Social Inclusion and Nation Building in Nepal. Kathmandu, Nepal: Social Exclusion Research Fund Secretariat.

Joshi, R.K. (1991). Developing a curriculum for early childhood education in Nepal Canada: University of Alberta. (Unpublished research report).

Nepal Tamang Ghedung. (2006). Nepal Statistics and Indigenous Peoples. Kathmandu, Nepal: Nepal Tamang Ghedung Central Secretariat.

Save the Children–US –Norway. (2003). What's the Difference? The Impact of Early Childhood Development Programs. Kathmandu, Nepal: Save the Children–US and United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF).

Save the Children–US. (2005). The Child-Friendly School Iinitiative: A Strategy to Improve the Quality of Schools. Kathmandu, Nepal: Save the Children–US, Himalayan Field Office.

Vishwakarma, H. (2006). Social justice and peace in the context of Dalits. In: The Organization. Social Inclusion and Nation Building in Nepal. Kathmandu, Nepal: Social Exclusion Research Fund Secretariat.

Social inclusion and diversity through ECCE in northeastern Albania

Aida Orgocka, Deputy Director, and Ingrid Jones, Director, Partnerë për Fëmijët, Albania

It is well known that early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes can compensate for disadvantage, regardless of underlying factors such as poverty, gender and ethnicity. In Albania, ECCE happens primarily through state kindergartens, although private enterprises have mushroomed in the past 15 years. While there is no information on the percentage of children entering primary education with pre-school experience, we know that attendance in formal pre-school increases with age. For example, in 2002–03 the enrolment rate by age 3 was 30%, by age 4, 46% and by age 5, 63% (UNESCO 2007). The question is, how can we improve these attendance figures?

We try to answer this question by offering the experience of Partnerë për Fëmijët[1] ("Partners for Children"), an NGO in Albania, in setting up community-based ECCE centres called the Gardens of Mothers and Children Centre (hereafter called the Gardens) in the rural northeast areas of Albania, in the districts of Tropojë, Kukës and Dibër. These areas have the largest proportion of young children in the country, and also deep poverty, poor infrastructure and limited or no ECCE services. The Gardens project started in this area in 2003 with a post-conflict grant from the World Bank through the UNICEF Early Childhood Programme in Albania.

Who are the excluded children?

There are some groups of children particularly at risk of not being able to access any kind of ECCE services:

1. Children whose families are involved in a blood feud, where male members of the family are at risk of being killed. These children are therefore isolated in their homes.
2. Children with disabilities. These children are kept at home because of parental embarrassment related to the disability.
3. Children of Roma or Balkan Egyptian origin. There are no legal restrictions on these children having access to ECCE, but they are sometimes excluded on the excuse that the quota for a certain ECCE facility has been reached and they cannot be accommodated.
4. Children who are being raised by their grandparents because their parents have divorced. (By customary law, when parents divorce children live with the paternal lineage and mothers are not allowed to see their children again.) In these cases, concern over the added expense of raising the child may be greater than concern over giving the child social and educational opportunities.
5. Children whose parent, usually a father, has migrated and children who have lost one or both parents. By tradition, mothers are not allowed to leave their homes and socialise in the community, and therefore children being primarily cared for by mothers have difficulty accessing ECCE facilities.

Strategies to bring excluded children into the Gardens

Respecting the local culture

The northeast had not previously received much attention from international donors or the NGO community. The process of setting up the Gardens involved assessing the villages and communes; holding open meetings for communities, local government representatives, teachers, elders and families to explain ECCE and the aims of setting up the centres; and returning to see if a community wanted to work together to set up a Garden. As a

community-based centre it was essential that the elderly and respected in the village supported the Garden. An administrative mother was selected to manage the Garden and its activities. Criteria for selection were that she was well respected in the community, chosen by the community members and elder, motivated and suitable to work with young children and that she had adequate space in her home to set up the Garden. In many of the centres community members provided their labour and commitment to the centre by cleaning, redecorating and providing pieces of equipment for the use and enjoyment of the children.

Bringing mothers, grandmothers and young women to the Gardens

The administrative mothers, lead advocacy mothers and the mothers of children attending the Gardens are the best publicity and advocates for raising the profile of the centres with isolated mothers and children. The choice of administrative mother and her home for the Garden is crucial in enabling many mothers and their children to come to the centre. The centre needs to be accessible and acceptable to the families who use the Garden. Administrative and lead mothers visited the homes of isolated children and families and explained the activities that were provided in the Garden. Mothers were invited to come to the centres with their children, their husbands and grandparents. Once the elder generation and the men saw the types of activities in which their children and women would take part, their fear and concerns were reduced and slowly the numbers of isolated children attending increased.

Making the Gardens a safe haven for all children

The Gardens are open to all children aged between 3 and the mandatory school age of 6 years. In some cases, where a child is assessed as not ready for mandatory schooling (due to intellectual or physical impairment), the child can remain for a further year in the Garden to enhance his/her skills and confidence. Children and their mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers and elder sisters are encouraged to attend the Garden five mornings a week. The Gardens have introduced a new way of thinking. Children are no longer expected to sit quietly behind desks for hours and be taught by rote, but to learn through experiential activities, for example using water, sand, natural resources from the countryside in which they live, painting, drawing and team games. Reading, writing and mathematics are taught as part of the daily activities. Children themselves pressure their parents and grandparents to bring them to the Gardens and are sometimes unhappy at weekends when the centres are closed. Children whose families are affected by blood feuds are helped to attend by administrative mothers, who accompany them and female family members to and from their homes. Counselling and advice on how to address the children's fears and anxieties is also provided.

Fathers are also important

Initially three district Boards of Fathers were set up in Dibër, Kukës and Tropojë, and each Garden then developed its own Board of Fathers. The programme reinstated the tradition of the *oda e burrave* (men's meeting room), where men gather together to take decisions on issues that concern the community. This also gives them the opportunity to talk about issues related to ECCE and the role of fathers. Board members were trained on child rights, stages of child development, non-physical forms of discipline, the importance of fathers to young children, conflict resolution and mediation. Members of the Boards of Fathers visited families involved in blood feuds and mediated between them to ensure the safety of the children. They also worked with the in-laws when the father of the child was deceased to allow the mother to take the child to the centre.

What unites us is greater than what separates us

The activities in the Gardens are based around play. Administrative and lead mothers were trained by staff of Partnerë për Fëmijët to use play as a learning experience. Further advice and training was provided by senior specialists of NIPPA, the largest early years organisation in Northern Ireland. (NIPPA and its specialists have developed their practice and worked through 30 years of conflict and sectarian violence, so are experienced in addressing diversity.) Children with different abilities and skills or from families involved in blood feuds and other social situations all play together. When children fight over the same toy or want to do the same activity, the administrative mothers speak with the children to teach them to share. Children unable to attend the Garden can still benefit, as the administrative or lead mother visits isolated children and mothers in their

homes. These isolated mothers are taught how to develop their child's skills and abilities.

Individual work
Although the activities have an emphasis on non-directional play, individual work is undertaken with each child. One often hears parents explain how their child has changed and developed: "My child says 'thank you' and 'please' more often now", "He can count" or "She can write her name". Nevertheless, they still ask for a more formalised means of demonstrating their new skills. We began with training from NIPPA in observing individual children and how to document their observations. This has been extended to assessing each child in their physical, intellectual, social, behavioural and psychological development, and developing individual action plans for each child. These action plans concentrate on the areas that the child needs to improve, and plan the activities that will meet the child's needs within the wider context of the Garden's daily activities. The administrative mother provides the child's parents or carers with a report on what the child can do well and what needs attention. Parents are asked to assist in this development by doing activities with their child in the home.

Health information
As well as education, children and mothers (both at the Gardens and those isolated in their homes) also receive health information and monthly check-ups from a paediatrician and a gynaecologist. In an isolated community these health consultations provide crucial information on respiratory illnesses, diarrhoea, waterborne diseases and infectious disease and their treatment, which is not otherwise readily available. Additionally, children and mothers who are ill can be swiftly referred to health services that usually they would not contact.

The main challenges

The mentality that a child with disabilities is a challenge
In Albania there are no laws or policies about the integration of children with disabilities, and there is limited integration of children with any form of disability into mainstream education. There is also little or no provision of rehabilitation or support services to families with a disabled child.


Photo: Courtesy CGF Albania

Making the Gardens a safe haven for all children is a strategy to bring the excluded into the programme

Many parents and communities believe that the presence of a disabled child in the group or class will negatively influence the already poorly resourced education, and that the behaviour of their own children may deteriorate. Parents and families with disabled children feel embarrassed about the child's situation, and are concerned that the child will ridiculed and therefore will be caused anxiety.

Attitudes to NGOs
NGOs in Albania are not always welcomed because it is assumed that they operate only to get money. Parents and communities often believe that NGOs are more concerned with building their reputation with a donor than with addressing a pressing issue for the community. Some parents thought that in bringing their children to the Garden, they were doing Partnerë për Fëmijët a favour. There is also the belief that the State should provide services related to education or health, and that NGO projects have limited stability.

Women's work overload
Women overburdened with agricultural and household work do not have much time to take their children to the Garden, interact with the administrative mothers or support the daily activities of the Gardens by helping as a volunteer.

Lack of specialised help
There are no specialised services within the local communities or regional cities for children who have experienced traumatic situations within their families. Although administrative mothers are trained and given information on how to work and interact with isolated children, the

services of psychologists to help rehabilitate and support traumatised children and to advocate for their inclusion into society and educational establishments are needed.

The way forward

Despite the challenges, the 28 Gardens continue to be an essential part of their communities. Although core operational funding from a donor has ceased for most of the centres, the parents, communities, local government and/or regional Directorates of Education have stepped in to contribute to their regular functioning. This confirms that the Gardens were not just a project to satisfy a donor, but provided for a real need in the communities. Marginalised children continue to attend the Gardens and many have shown marked achievements. For example, Mira could not speak two years ago but has now learned to communicate. Her parents believed that her delayed speaking was associated with mental disabilities and had given up on her. Agim experienced the trauma of seeing his grandfather killed in his own home, but now actively socialises with other children. Linda has Down Syndrome, but she uses her toy telephone to 'reach' her migrant father and 'talk' to him.

Recognising its success, the National Strategy of Early Childhood Education for Albania has recommended the Gardens as an alternative programme for communities where state ECCE service is limited or not available. At the request of the local government and communities in three areas, Partnerë për Fëmijët, supported also by the Early Childhood Programme of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Albania, has entered into new partnerships set up new centres and train more local staff. But more work needs to be done, especially to help educators increase their access to information, so they can update their knowledge and skills.

Note

1 Partnerë për Fëmijët is the successor organisation to the Christian Children's Fund Albania which started work in Albania in 1999. The organisation is well noted for its community-based early childhood development programme implemented in northeastern Albania that won it a 2004 Best Practice Award from the MedChild Institute. We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of other staff members of Partnerë për Fëmijët: Sanie Batku, Ermira Kurti and Ermonela Myrtezani, to this article.

Reference

UNESCO (2007). The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007. Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education. Paris, France: UNESCO.

Networking for respect for diversity

Experiences in the Diversity in Early Childhood and Training European network

Peter Lee, Director, Childhood and Families Research and Development Centre, Glasgow, Scotland, and Anke van Keulen, Developer and Partner, MUTANT Change Agents – Respect for Diversity, Utrecht, The Netherlands

"It is important that wider societal interests are reflected in early childhood systems, including respect for children's rights, diversity and ... to extend the agency of the child and to support the basic right of parents to be involved in the education of their children.

Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care (OECD 2006)

The early years are logically and practically a good place to start fostering and strengthening children's identities, and to raise positive awareness of diversities. It is a time when children are learning about their world from everything that is around them – their families, their peers, other people they meet, the media, their toys, books and other resources that they play with or encounter. Practitioners will need to 'look, listen and note' in fostering these aspects of children's diverse identities in order to offer experiences that effectively support them in their development of positive knowledge and understanding of the world. Early years and childcare settings that positively include children from a range of different social backgrounds, cultures and religions and embrace diversity as a part of life, help children to grow in understanding, respect and appreciation of the diverse society in which we all live.

In many countries throughout Europe, governments, policy makers, decision makers and service-provider managers are seeking to give emphasis and priority to respecting diversity and valuing the multiple identities of children, families and communities. As a result, many stakeholders are interested in developing policy and strategy documents that support and promote more holistic views of a child within a family, a family within a community and a community as part of a national strategy.

As part of the drive towards achieving respect for diversity and social inclusion, the Bernard van Leer Foundation funds a European network which promotes equity, celebrates diversity in early childhood education services and responds to the deep interest in increasing the knowledge base, acquiring practice-based help, developing training developments and elaborating policies and strategies. Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training (DECET), is a European network of networks. It has existed since 1998 and has grown to have an active membership from Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland and Spain.

In DECET there is recognition that research evidence is clearly indicating that racial, gender and class inequalities are institutionalised within our structures and that national policies need to be created to inform and influence practice on the ground (MacNaughton 2000). Across Europe, poorer families and children from minority ethnic groupings (especially recent immigrants) are

suffering from low self-esteem, prejudice, racism and sexism (Bernstein 1996). DECET contributes to creating more integrated and socially cohesive societies by advocating that within member countries and transnationally all relevant people take 'real steps' towards achieving specific goals. These steps are aimed at national policy makers, managers, childcare providers, trainers, college teachers and practitioners, as well as students in universities and training colleges. DECET achieves this by bringing together academic, research, policy making and service-provider organisations and projects, all of whom have established a set of common goals for valuing diversity in early childhood education and training. The network aims to promote democratic childcare and acknowledges that children within their families and within their communities have multiple identities.

Shared vision

All partners in DECET view the core of early childhood education and care services as one that is sensitive to meeting the needs of all children and families, irrespective of background. Centres for children and families are viewed as dynamic meeting places where diverse people can learn positively from each other. They are also places where we should challenge and address all forms of prejudice and discrimination. In this sense early childhood education and care establishments make a clear contribution to the construction of European citizenship.

> "The staff of the daycare centre where I'm working reflects the diversity of our city. There is: Enna, who is Tunisian; Badella, Moroccan; Annie, Lebanese; Santie, Spanish and Dominique and me, French. We share aspects of our culture through communication with parents and children. As a professional this is a real help to fight against bias and to respect each person, both service users and staff." – Karine, Educator.
>
> *Making sense of good practice (DECET 2007)*

All DECET members have agreed a mission statement and set of principles, which guide Europe-wide programmes. Any activities for children and parents, promoted by staff under the banner of DECET follow these principles. The mission statement is informed by Article 2 of the United Nations' Convention of the Rights of the Child and includes the statement that "all children and adults have the right to evolve and to develop in a context where there is equity and respect for diversity". This mission statement is elaborated through objectives which include the promotion of activities on respecting diversity that aim to ensure all children and families feel that they belong/are empowered to develop the diverse aspects of their identities.

The DECET approach emerged from debates on multi- and inter-culturalism. The term 'multi-cultural society' became popular in the 1980s and 1990s in early childhood education and other fields (Vandenbroeck 2004). Critics of multicultural ideology highlighted the concepts of 'culture' and the depiction of ethnic groups as homogenous. This is a static view of culture that lacks focus on economic and social contexts in general and on power relations in particular. Because of these criticisms many DECET partners started to focus on the anti-bias approach that was developed by Louise Derman-Sparks (1989) in the USA, and inspired DECET to develop a unique contextual European approach to diversity and equity.

Network of networks

In developing new frameworks for diversity and equity in early childhood education, many national and trans-national networks were formed, among them DECET. These networks – a recent product of globalisation (Vandenbroeck 2004) – broke with the tradition of formal European organisations to form flexible, dynamic networks with loose organisational structures. They can be viewed as examples of what Beck (1994) calls sub-politics: they involve political decision making; are outside the institutions they formally represent; work through informal organisations; and are often devoid of legal framework.

Networking and developing local and networks are central to DECET's programme, whose overall aim is to mainstream its principles into the infrastructure of each member country. Each partner commits to actions appropriate to implementing the mission and goals of the network in their country. Partners benefiting from working in the network are those who clearly see the added value they gain from the work they do on a national level. They define

the cooperation as a reinforcement of capacities at individual and institutional levels. This network structure clearly does not benefit non-committed partners (Krause 2004).

A network should be clearly distinguished from an organisation, both in its structure and in its flexibility and capacity to react quickly to the demands of change and new situations. Networks are associated with the potential to bring forces from different areas together and to develop and achieve common aims in a synergy, which is impossible to achieve as individual organisations. A feeling of 'common sense' is linked to bringing together projects and organisations working in similar fields with similar targets. Stimulating the exchange of knowledge, experience and resources and using potential to work together to promote a common quest are perceived as connecting factors.

Practitioners should 'look, listen and note' in fostering the aspects of children's diverse identities in order to offer experiences that effectively support them in their development of positive knowledge and understanding of the world

Constructing knowledge together

The construction of new knowledge is an important objective of DECET. Most of the DECET partners have direct or indirect connections to universities and are involved in research on all aspects of diversity. Partners link with one another to produce material for dissemination across Europe. A group of partners (from Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Scotland and Spain) have produced *Diversity and equity in early childhood training in Europe* (DECET 2004). This manual gives insights, ideas and guidelines for managers, trainers, consultants and college teachers and gives examples on the training practices and approaches on:

- initial training (France);
- in-service training (Belgium, France, Ireland);
- post-academic training (Belgium);
- training of trainers courses (the Netherlands);
- training tools and packs on families, art and drama, 'persona dolls' and intercultural communication.

Transnationally, a group of partners undertook a major research programme covering Belgium, England, Germany, Greece and Scotland, to gather information on 'making sense of good practice in equity and respect for diversity.' The results have already produced documentation on developing good practice and will lead to a self-evaluation toolkit (DECET 2007).

> "We offer focus group discussions to our parents, to encourage a dialogue with staff to identify any specific needs and to ensure that our environment, ethos, resources and day-to-day practice reflect the local community."
> – Jenny, Senior Educator
>
> *Making sense of good practice (DECET 2007).*

Members of DECET

Belgium:	Expertisecentrum voor Opvoeding & Kinderopvang (VBJK), Ghent
France:	Ecole Santé Social Sud Est (ESSSE), Lyon;
	Association Collectif Enfants Parents et Professionnels (ACEPP), Paris
Germany:	Institut für den Situationsansatz der Internationalen Akademie (INA) an der Freien Universität Berlin
Greece:	Schedia ('raft'), Athens
Ireland:	Pavee Point Travellers' Centre, Dublin
Netherlands:	MUTANT Change Agents – Respect for Diversity, Utrecht
Spain:	Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, Barcelona
UK:	Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), Birmingham, England;
	Childhood and Families (CAF): Research and Development Centre, Glasgow, Scotland

Training professionals

DECET's comprehensive training and development approach of has enabled early years practitioners to understand their roles. First, in dealing with their own biases and prejudices through self-reflection, and second, in recognising that parents may have differing values that can be transmitted to children. The multiple identities of children are recognised and celebrated, enhancing their self-esteem and well-being and their sense of belonging. These perspectives are embraced as a means for developing such pedagogic activities as 'persona dolls' and 'family walls'.

Three member countries (Germany, France and the Netherlands) chose the theme 'Documentation of Families' and produced a series of training programmes, piloted them in their own countries and documented results for dissemination to all members. In each country this training programme resulted in parents, professionals and trainers from six childcare centres developing innovative work on the development and use of 'family walls' in early years establishments. The aim is not only to alter practice through increased knowledge, but also to really respect diversity by challenging different notions of what should be valued and which values should be transmitted.

> "What of a girl of 11 who plays a major role in raising her younger brother and who comes and fetches the baby herself from the crèche? However unacceptable some practices may seem to us, we always try to create a climate in which each parent can talk in confidence about the meaning of his or her actions. This often results in our views being broadened and enables us to place each parent in context. In other words, working with parents from different cultures is also working on yourself."
>
> *(Van Keulen 2004)*

Impact

All the above activities mean nothing if they do not have impact on the staff, parents and children in early childhood education and care centres. All work by partners within DECET is geared towards informing and influencing either: the policy makers who create the frameworks for services for children and families, or the trainers who develop courses for staff working with children and families, or work with children and families directly.

An example of major impact was when DECET organised a conference in Barcelona in 2006 at which policy makers, researchers, service providers and trainers from throughout Europe (and beyond) met to exchange and share information on all aspects of promoting respect for diversity.

One major future challenge for the network is to balance inclusivity with exclusivity, i.e., to continue to grow and develop while sustaining the aims and principles of the current membership. As with any network group, it is accepted that there will be movement of people. However, DECET has been organised to ensure that members are aware of what is expected of them before full membership

is agreed. In addition, to guard against exclusivity, DECET organises open seminars and national and international conferences. It also links to other networks, e.g.,:

- Men in Childcare (members include: Great Britain, Hungary, Norway, Poland and Sweden)
- International Step by Step Association (an international association of 30 early childhood NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Asia, and the Americas)
- Early Childhood Education Research Association (ECERA)
- Grupo de Trabajo Infancia Indígena y Educación (a network in Latin America)
- Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (Australia).

DECET has had substantial impact across Europe by:

- bringing depth and quality to debates at national and international levels;
- launching its website;
- presentations at numerous seminars and conferences;
- forging links with new strategic partners;
- developing informal and formal training programmes supported by high-quality manuals.

Internally, members have been able to reflect on their work with children and families and have generated many local innovative programmes, which have been documented and disseminated. It is these children and parent programmes that illuminate best practice and give 'real' examples of the types of environments that provide positive approaches to respecting diversity. It is also on these examples that DECET members continually rely to drive towards extensive economic and social reforms coupled to structural and cultural changes in our society.

The DECET journey has been an exciting and unique form of networking. To start a network based on the foundation of challenging the existing perceptions of multicultural approaches was difficult. To continue the network by aiming to replace those approaches with new perspectives was stimulating. The future challenge is to ensure those new approaches and perspectives are mainstreamed into all services for children and families.

References and further reading

Beck, U. (1994). The reinvention of politics. In: U. Beck, A. Giddens en S. Lash (Ed.) Reflexive modernization: politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bernstein, B. (1996). Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique. London, UK: Taylor and Francis.

DECET/ VBJK (Diversity in Early Childhood and Training/ Resource and Training Centre for Child Care). (2003). Lullabye for Hamza. Childcare as a meeting place. Gent, Belgium: DECET/ VBJK.

DECET. (2006). Presentations at a seminar. Barcelona, Spain, May 2006. Available at www.decet.org. (Available in English and French)

DECET/ ACEPP, ISTA, MUTANT. (2007). Documentation of families; Training toolkit including CD-ROM, poster and game.

DECET/ Schedia, VBJK, ACEPP, CAF, MUTANT. (2007). Artistic activities and diversity. DVD.

DECET, ISTA, Schedia, CAF, CREC. (2007). Making Sense of Good Practice.

DECET Newsletter www.decet.org

Derman-Sparks, L. (1989). Anti Bias Curriculum : Tools for Empowering Young Children. Washington DC, USA: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Krause, A. (2004). Presentation of the decet network. In: Diversity and Equity in Early Childhood Training in Europe. Examples of Training Practices in the DECET Network. The Hague, The Netherlands: Diversity in Early Childhood and Training (DECET).

MacNaughton, G. (2000). Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen and Unwin.

OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2006). Starting Strong II. Early Education and Care. Paris, France: OECD.

Van Keulen, A., Malleval, D., Mony, M., Murray, C. (2004) Diversity and Equity in Early Childhood Training in Europe: Examples of training practices in the DECET network. Available at www.decet.org.

Van Keulen, A. (ed.). (2004). Young Children Aren't Biased, Are They? How to Handle Diversity and Equity in Early Childhood Education. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: SWP

Vandenbroeck, M. (2004). Diversity and Equity in Early Childhood Training in Europe. Examples of training practices in the DECET network. Available at www.decet.org..

Vandenbroeck, M. (2004), Diverse aspects of diversity. A European perspective, in: International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2004

Entering into dialogue with immigrant parents

Joseph Tobin, Angela Arzubiaga and Susanna Mantovani, The Children Crossing Borders Project

Three years ago a group of researchers from five countries (England, France, Germany, Italy and the USA) came together in the 'Children Crossing Borders' research project to study approaches to working with children of recent immigrants in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. At the heart of this Bernard van Leer Foundation-funded study is a comparison of the ideas about ECEC held by practitioners and immigrant parents. A basic assumption is that ECEC programmes can better serve immigrants when parents, teachers and other stakeholders talk to each other. The project aims to serve as a catalyst for dialogue among all those involved about the problems and possibilities of creating ECEC programmes that reflect the values and beliefs of both immigrant communities and of the societies into which they have immigrated.

'The hundred languages of parents'

For ECEC programmes to promote diversity and social inclusion, they need greater understanding of the cultural backgrounds and social worlds of the families of the children they serve, and greater communication between practitioners and parents. Too often, reform programmes for young children are initiated without input from parents, and this is particularly true when the parents are recent immigrants. Our research points to the need for parents and programme staff to engage in dialogue about the means and objectives of ECEC.

In Italy *Reggio Emilia* pre-schools have made a paradigm-shifting contribution to the field of early childhood education by focusing on the importance of listening to young children and appreciating the sophistication of what they are saying, an approach captured in Loris Malaguzzi's phrase, "The hundred languages of childhood" (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 1998, p. 3). We suggest that a parallel argument needs to be made about the importance of ECEC programmes and about policy makers listening to parents in general, and to poor and minority parents in particular, and appreciating the sophistication of what parents say. This approach can be captured by the phrase 'the hundred languages of parents' because parents do not speak with one voice, or have just one thing to say, even when they come from the same community and cultural background.

Cultural negotiation

Parent involvement is generally conceived as focusing on the school giving information to parents, rather than on a more reciprocal, symmetrical dialogic relationship between parents and practitioners, or on building a sense of community among parents. Other studies have demonstrated the value of parent participation in ECEC programmes and pointed to the need for better communication between practitioners and parents who do not share a common cultural background or language (for example, Hayden et al. 2003; OECD 2006). Our project builds on this work, but adds more explicit attention to the need not only for more parent participation and an open exchange of information between practitioners and parents, and among immigrant and non-immigrant parents, but also for a process of cultural negotiation. Such a dialogue would include discussion about the problems and possibilities of creating ECEC programmes that reflect the values and beliefs of both immigrant communities and of the societies into which they have immigrated.

Method

The core method of our study is straightforward and follows and extends the approach taken by Tobin et al. in *Pre-schools in three cultures* (1989). Teams in each of the five countries made 20-minute videotapes of typical days for 4-year olds in ECEC

centres serving children of recent immigrants. These videotapes were then used as an interviewing cue to draw out the beliefs and concerns of both immigrant and non-immigrant parents and of teachers and administrators. By showing the same set of videotapes to parents and practitioners in each of the five countries, it is possible to highlight similarities and differences in how each nation approaches the challenge of integrating immigrant children and their families into the larger society, and differences and tensions among parents and practitioners and among parents themselves in each country.

Differences between the perspectives of practitioners and parents

Two examples are presented of two areas of tension and difference between parents and practitioners and among parents from different backgrounds. The first example comes from discussions held with parents and with teachers in a New York City *Head Start* programme serving mostly children whose parents had immigrated recently from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Here, as in many other locations in the USA where research was conducted, parents expressed appreciation for the quality of the education and care their children were receiving, together with some dissatisfaction with aspects of the curriculum. In a discussion conducted in Spanish, parents at this *Head Start* expressed support for the programme's emphasis on social and emotional development, and an understanding of the programme's philosophy that children learn best through play. But many of the parents also told us that they wanted more academics and less play:

> "The most important thing is get them ready for kindergarten."
>
> "They should know how to write their names and they should know their numbers."
>
> "The teachers are very nice and the playtime is good. But I wish they would work more on their letters."

In one of the focus groups, some parents suggested that the emphasis on play rather than on lessons at the *Head Start* centre was carrying over to home:

> Interviewer: "Would you feel more comfortable with a different way of teaching?"
>
> Mrs Sanchez: "I think more lessons..."
>
> Mr Cruz: "You know, I want to see more structure, of lessons, and less playing... [At home] my daughter wants to watch television and stuff like that, and not sit and read books."
>
> Mrs Duran: "I have the same problem."
>
> Interviewer: "They don't want to sit and read a book?"
>
> Mrs Gomez: "Yeah, you know, because they're playing."

When the discussion was concluded by asking these parents if there was anything they wanted us to communicate to their children's teachers, Mrs. Cruz said, "Just ask them, 'Would it kill you to teach my child to write her name before she enters kindergarten?'"

We did ask this question of the teachers, whose answer was that to give in to such pressures from parents would mean to go against their professional beliefs and knowledge. In an interview conducted in Spanish with five of the teachers, most of whom are themselves immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Mexico, they explained their core beliefs:

> Ms Guzman: "One belief that has prevailed here in our programme is that we do not teach the ABC's."
>
> Ms Duran: "We do teach it but not formally like "Sit here, this is an A, this is a B", but rather through play".
>
> Mr Alba: "Many parents bring their children here with the hope that they will learn to read and write."
>
> Ms Guzman: "With the same methods that they learned as children."
>
> Ms Duran: "But we use different methods, because times have changed."

Ms Guzman: "For example, back in our country, when they go to school for the first time, most children did not go *Head Start* at 3 or 4, they went to kindergarten. And in kindergarten in a place like Santo Domingo [the Dominican Republic], once you take the child, they would seat you [at a desk], and it's like, "Let's go." They would even hold your hand, you know. That was really something. The parents, like us, who come from another country, think that when they come here..."

Ms Duran: "... It should be that way."

Ms Guzman: "And they don't understand that through playing they are learning, you understand, they are sharing."

These teachers suggest that parents' perspectives reflect antiquated methods from the old county, which they describe as simplistic, mechanistic and prescriptive. A teacher states that in the old system teachers would guide the child's hand to show her how to write. Nowadays pedagogy has developed more sophisticated ways of working with children. It would, in a metaphorical sense, kill these *Head Start* teachers to teach the alphabet because it would force them to go against their understanding of themselves as professionals. The cost of positioning themselves in this way is that they position parents' wishes as deficits, as misunderstandings needing correcting rather than as ideological differences needing negotiation.

The second example, from Italy, is about discussions held with parents and teachers in a *Scuola Materna* in a working-class neighborhood of Milan, this time looking at immigrant parents' concerns about relationships with other parents and at tensions between parents and teachers (not about the curriculum, but about the nature of their interaction with each other). Most of the immigrant parents at this pre-school expressed appreciation for the warmth and skill of the teachers and general satisfaction with the programme. But many also expressed some frustration with their difficulty in communicating and connecting with other parents and with their children's teachers and in feeling part of the life of the school and more, generally, part of Italian society. For example, an Egyptian mother said: "It is difficult being a Muslim and a North African today in Italy." She went on to describe how difficult it is for her to connect with the Italian parents and how the Italian parents avoid eye contact with her in the streets and on the bus. The teachers, who do not seem to be aware of these difficulties and tensions, seem unable or unwilling to mediate.

When we talked with the teachers they expressed sympathy for the immigrant mothers, mixed with some frustration and awkwardness about their ways of relating:

Anna: "We call them [parents] by their family name. But since Arab mothers call you by your first name, so we use the same modality, we call they by their first name, because we have understood that they really can't do it the other way."

Antonella: "Yes, I simply do it because I feel it is easier. Because you see they have enormous difficulty. There are few foreign women who come and already know our language, so especially at the beginning it is normal for you to help them. So you call her "Mrs Rupert" and then you call her by her first name because you see that they receive it in a different way. It makes the relationship easier. You don't do it with all the mothers, only with these, because I understand it is a struggle to have more direct communication."

Anna: "In those I have had, maybe you've had more, there are the famous three kisses you have to give. Arab women look to you for this greeting, because there is this hug."

Antonella: "It is common with the Arab mothers. They have this way of having this quite strong physical contact; they tend to put their hand, to hug you. So, at least I do it, and a lot of my colleagues do it, anyways."

This is a complex section of transcript that reveals the confusion and ambivalence teachers experience in trying to connect with parents who come from a cultural background very different from their own. We see sympathy in the phrases "they have enormous difficulty" and "it is normal for you to

In absence of dialogue between parents and practitioners, young children of immigrant parents end up caught in the middle between the cultures of home and school and between the expectations of their parents and their teachers

help them" and frustration in the phrase "it is a struggle to have more direct communication." The comments about "those three famous kisses," "this hug," and "this quite strong physical contact" are of concern because they seem to suggest a discomfort and distancing and a feeling that the immigrant mothers' attempts to physically embrace them is excessive and inappropriate. But on a deeper level, we see in these comments something hopeful, as well. Beneath the discomfort with cultural difference there is a desire to connect. Antonella states that she exchanges hugs and kisses with these Muslim mothers begrudgingly, as a favour to them. But can't we see in this begrudging acceptance of a strange cultural gesture the potential for pleasure in connecting across cultural differences? Beneath or alongside these teachers' discomfort in being confronted with difference, we see expressions of empathy and the potential for connection between the Italian teachers and immigrant mothers as women, as mothers and as people.

Conclusions

When there is an absence of dialogue, understanding and empathy between parents and practitioners, young children of immigrant parents end up caught in the middle between the cultures of home and school and between the expectations of their parents and their teachers. In the first stage of our research, we gathered examples of the differences in belief and perspective that separates immigrant parents and practitioners. In the next stage we will pilot a solution to this problem, as we develop and evaluate strategies for bringing immigrant parents and practitioners together in dialogue about what they believe should happen in ECEC settings.

We know that this dialogue will not be easy. The goal is 'to give voice' to immigrant parents. But power asymmetries between researchers, immigrant parents, and ECEC practitioners make it difficult for everyone's voices to be heard. The problem of communication between ECEC staff and immigrant parents is a particular example of a more general problem of dialogue across cultural and class divides. It is also a particular instance of a problem of dialogue across power differentials, a problem the post-colonial scholar Gayatri Spivak (1988) poses as the question: "Can the subalterns speak? And when they do, can their voices be heard?"

When immigrant parents and the staff who teach and care for their children attempt to engage in dialogue, there are many barriers that need to be overcome. Mechanisms are needed that will allow this dialogue to take place and, when it does take place, to acknowledge and address the power asymmetries and other obstacles that can block understanding and connection on both sides. This calls for a process not just of dialogue, but also of negotiation between practitioners and parents able and willing to compromise. Negotiation does not mean that practitioners need to do whatever parents ask, but it does mean putting one's own beliefs about best practice on the bargaining table. The process of cross-cultural dialogue and negotiation will produce

hybrid forms of practice that combine the beliefs and values of the immigrant and host cultures.

Some of these dialogues are and will be difficult. For some immigrant parents, an invitation to come to their child's school for a meeting with other parents or with the school staff may seem odd, confusing or even threatening. For example, in a focus group discussion among parents at a pre-school in Milan, a Chinese mother arrived with her father and an elder daughter and then left, shortly after the discussion began, as it became clear she had not understood the purpose of the meeting. The first challenge, therefore, is to develop a shared understanding of the sense and the goals of joint dialogue. Once the dialogues begin, tensions may at first rise as immigrant and non-immigrant parents and immigrant parents and practitioners become aware of their differences. Yet there is reason to believe that such dialogue can lead to positive outcomes.

Research to date shows that immigrant parents are generally appreciative of their children's ECEC programmes and willing to accommodate (not just as parents vis-a-vis professional educators but also as immigrants learning to adapt to a new society). They fear being rejected, but they welcome closer connection with non-immigrant parents. They would like to be understood and heard by teachers, but they do not expect or want to tell their children's teachers what to do. Teachers often end up feeling caught between two prime directives – on one hand to follow what they believe to be the best curricular and pedagogical practices and on the other to be culturally responsive. In our experience most ECEC practitioners are pragmatists rather than ideologues and they care deeply about the children for whom they care and educate. Given the shared concerns of parents and practitioners in the well-being of the young children they have in common, there is reason to be optimistic.

References

Hayden, J., K. de Goia, and F. Hadley (2003). Enhancing Partnerships and Networks with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families in Early Childhood Settings. University of Western Sydney: Australia.

Edwards, C., L. Gandini, & G. Forman, (1998). The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach—Advanced Reflections. Ablex: Westport, CT.

OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2006). Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care. OECD: Paris.

Spivak, G. (1988): "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In: C. Nelson / L. Grossberg (Ed.): Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. University of Illinois Press: Champaign, IL. 271-313.

Tobin, J., D. Wu & D. Davidson. (1989). Pre-schools in Three Cultures. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT.

A shared challenge

Indigenous childhood and education

Kathia Loyzaga Dávila Madrid, with Patricia Figueroa Fuentes[1]

Indigenous children living in the Mesoamerican region (Mexico–Guatemala) share a common element: they grow up in multi-cultural societies stigmatised by marginalisation and exclusion. In central, southern and south-eastern Mexico and Guatemala, indigenous boys and girls grow up in a social environment where discrimination and violence are a part of daily life: in the home, school or health centres, at work and on the street.

Although both countries ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, the current conditions of life for indigenous children in these countries is far removed from the optimum for their development. There are many similarities in the living conditions of indigenous children in Mexico and Guatemala, a situation that results in major challenges in terms of upholding children's rights, especially in terms of health, education and culture.

In Mexico, according to the Index of Mexican Children's Rights (for children between 0 and 5 years of age), published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in May 2006, the States of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero have the lowest scores on the Children's Rights Index particularly on the rights to life, healthy upbringing and access to education. At national level, out of every 1000 children born, 18.8 die before they are 1 year old. This statistic becomes worse in states with larger indigenous populations, such as Oaxaca and Chiapas, where the figure rises to 25 (Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México 2006). In the area of childhood nutrition, Mexico is within the average for Latin American countries, better than such countries as Ecuador, Honduras and Guatemala, but worse than Chile, Argentina and Costa Rica (UNICEF 2005). Additionally, in those states with the highest indigenous populations, two or three out of every 10 children are shorter in stature than average.
The figures for Guatemala are very similar. Out of every 1000 children born, 39 die before reaching their first birthday, while the level of chronic malnutrition in the country is the highest in Latin America (ENSMI 2002). The rural areas, where the majority of the indigenous population live, receive the lowest levels of public investment and have the worst social indications.

In both countries, indigenous children have few possibilities of finding help with schooling. The principal reason is the limited economic expenditure on schooling coupled with the low income of indigenous families. This is also why many children start working at a very early age. Of the children who manage to register with a school, a considerable percentage drops out, because in many cases they feel that schooling does not meet their needs. In Mexico, the retention rate in indigenous primary schools is 3.1 percent, while the non-passing rate is 9.2 percent (La Infancia Cuenta en México 2006). The equivalent figures for Guatemala are 7.71 percent for dropout and 16.93 percent for non-passing (INE 2002).

A common focus

The situation of indigenous children in the Mesoamerican region is more complicated than the well-organised official statistics implies. The data gives us a glimpse of the general panorama; however, in order to adequately understand the complexity of the situation and what the figures really mean, we need to delve into the lives of indigenous children and their families.

Over time, social and non-governmental organisations such as ours working to uphold and

The Grupo de Trabajo Infancia Indígena y Educación aims to provide a joint response to shared issues, such as influencing public policy in favour of supporting and watching over the rights of indigenous children

oversee the rights of indigenous children have improved our knowledge of the history of these regions, communities, districts and families. We have also acquired in-depth knowledge of the social context and the relationships that they establish with parents, relatives, teachers and the relevant communication media. In this way, we have been able to collect a large amount of information and have contributed to its understanding. However, it is quite common that understanding gained by organisations involved in education is used within their immediate sphere but is not shared and communicated more widely. Because of this and in order to address the observed similarities in the life styles of indigenous children in the region, we have formed the Grupo de Trabajo Infancia Indígena y Educación (Working Group for Indigenous Children and Education) composed of various organisations and social investigators working for children's rights and the improvement of their social conditions.

The proposal to form a working group on the subject arose during the Encuentro Construyendo Ciudadanía: Convivencia y Participación Infantil en Contextos Multiculturales (Meeting to Build Citizenship: Children's Lives and Participation in Multi-cultural Contexts), organised by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and held in February 2004 in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Various partner organisations of the Bernard van Leer Foundation and others from the European network Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training (DECET) met to exchange experiences and to devise and implement new cooperative action plans with shared agendas.

Currently, the Group is composed of five organisations and three individuals who share their interest in using the knowledge acquired in the education of the region's indigenous children. We also share a desire to construct a common conceptual framework that will enable us to take part in the debate on the subject from a regional perspective and to influence public policy in favour of supporting and watching over the rights of indigenous children, thus providing a joint response to shared issues.

Sharing and building

One of the biggest challenges in the first and second years of the Group's work has been that of collective building. By 'collective' we mean not only to the organisations and individuals participating in the Group, but also the indigenous children and their families.

As a first step in the task of building a common conceptual framework, we started to debate one of the basic perceptions (i.e., infancy, boy, girl, childhood) that figures most highly in the practice of all the organisations working with indigenous communities. Each organisation organised a consultation event and/or an internal think tank in order to understand the different perceptions of infancy that underpin their educational practice and operational team. However, after an initial results-sharing session, which revealed our diverse and almost contradictory ideas, we realised that reflection on this concept had to be carried out with the children themselves. The results of that experience were unexpected and very enriching, taking into consideration that for some of the organisations, this was the first time they had ever involved the population in this type of activity. It is important to mention that this is still a work in progress and currently the Group is making an in-depth analysis of the results obtained.

Currently, it is common practice for organisations to establish fundamental concepts that support their work from a theoretical perspective, but which are often far removed from reality, or the perceptions and needs of the population with whom they work. It is for this reason that as a Group we chose to work by systemising and investigating current practice, involving the children and families who participate in our projects in the construction of a common framework. This is our principal strength.

During the first and second years, we have been developing our own method of working, founded on the recovery of experience, openness to criticism and placing a high value on work in learning groups (Mtra in Melel Xojobal 2004). In this model, which is still being built, the work carried out during various meetings of the Group in the headquarters of the participating organisations has been very valuable. It has enabled us to gain in-depth knowledge and give feedback on the work of each organisation and has also encouraged the organisations to stand back and reflect on their educational practice; identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In this way, the initiatives of the Group have become opportunities for reflection and training, not only for the children and their families, but also for the staff who work in the organisations, thus contributing to their professional development.

Challenges

One of the main challenges that we have faced as a Group is constructing a common agenda, finding equilibrium between local features and regional similarities, and aiming to ensure that the initiatives of the Group are integrated into the work plans of participating organisations and are not perceived as additional activities.

It should also be remembered that during the second half of 2006 and the first months of 2007, social tension grew considerably in both countries, which for us meant undergoing a considerable learning curve. Principally, this enabled us to understand the importance of constructing a regional perspective that overcomes local situations and allows us to continue working both as a Group and a region. We have identified the opportunity to make regional generalisations starting from local experiences and to construct replicable models that enable us to consolidate regional strength and vision.

Finally, we have been able to confirm that the work of this Group has contributed considerably to institutional life and development, as well as to the professional development of each participating organisation and individual. It elicited the following comments:

- "This additional effort has been of great interest for all the team and we consider that it can bring benefits resulting in the improvement of daily practice. We are committed to continuing this process of enrichment and strengthening of our role as social agents." (Member of Unidad de Capacitación e Investigación Educativa para la Participación A.C.).
- "The development of this activity is very interesting for us as participants in the organisation. However, it was a little difficult to

understand the concepts, given that we are not accustomed to analysis and reflection about the work we are doing." (Member of an organisation in the Foro Oaxaqueño de la Niñez).

We have also identified a number of opportunities for improvement, including:

- ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the processes of reflection and knowledge-generation within the organisations and with the benefiting population
- optimising our communication processes, breaking down the physical distances separating us by effective use of information and communication technologies.

In this way we aim to consolidate our position at a regional level in the fight to watch over and uphold children's rights, as well as to start the Group's second stage that will focus on developing intervention policies in the region at both social and political levels.

Note

1 The author is Coordinator of of Institutional Development of Melel Xojobal A.C. and coordinator of the *Grupo de Trabajo Infancia Indígena y Educación (Working Group for Indigenous Childhood and Education).* Patricia Figueroa is Director of Melel Xojobal A.C.

2 Which, together with the states of Hidalgo, Puebla, Veracruz and Yucatán contains 77.3% of the total national population of indigenous girls and boys aged between 0 and 14 years, according to *La Infancia Cuenta 2006* (Childhood Counts 2006), a web-based publication by the Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México.

3 The Group is composed of: *Asociación para la Educación Integral Bilingüe Intercultural Maya Ixil* (APEDIBIMI), based in the Ixil region of Guatemala; Integración y Atención a Niños y Adolescentes Trabajadores A.C. (INTEGRANAT), Cintalapa de Figueroa, Chiapas, Mexico; *Melel Xojobal* A.C., San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico; *Unidad de Capacitación e Investigación Educativa para la Participación* A.C. (UCIEP), Oaxaca and Mexico State; and the *Foro Oaxaqueño de la Niñez* (FONI), Oaxaca, Mexico. The individuals are: Krisjon Olson, Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley and Professor in Colgate University; Dra. Ileana Seda Santana, Full Professor, Postgraduate and Research Division, Psychology Faculty, National Autonomous University of Mexico and Lair Espinosa, Phd in Public Health.

4 Some of the responses of the girls and boys who took part in the think tank on behalf of INTEGRANAT A.C. were: "A child is a human being, not an animal, he/she is a helper, obedient, a student, a playful child, intelligent, speaks *tsotsil*" (a Mayan family language). "A child is a man, a person, he is big, someone important".

5 The approaching presidential elections in Guatemala and the social conflicts that arose in Mexico, especially in Oaxaca State.

References

INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Guatemala). (2002). IV Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil, ENSMI (IV Guatemala National Survey of Maternal and Child Health). Retrieved from website April 19, 2007. www.ine.gob.gt/descargas/ind_edu/Principales_Indicadores.pdf

Melel Xojobal (2004) Reflexiones para la Sistematización (Reflections for Systemisation). San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico: Melel Xojobal

MINUGUA (United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala), (2002). Report of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala for the Consultative Group meeting for Guatemala, Guatemala. Retrieved from website April 19, 2007. www.iadb.org/regions/re2/consultative_group/gu/minugua_eng.pdf

Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México (2006). La Infancia Cuenta en México 2006 (Childhood counts in Mexico 2006). Retrieved from website April 19, 2007. www.infanciacuenta.org/Documentos/ICM06/La_Infancia_Cuenta_2006.pdf

UNICEF (2005). State of the World's Children Report, 2006. New York: The United Nations Children's Fund

Freeing young children from the shadows of history

Early childhood programmes in two divided societies: Northern Ireland and Israel

Bernard van Leer Foundation Programme Staff

Children do not choose to be born into societies with a tragic history that undermines social cohesion. Where there is such a history, children grow up in an atmosphere in which they learn suspicion and fear of other communities within the borders of their own country. This includes fear of their peers who belong to these communities, children they may have never met because of social and political distances. This article focuses on experiences in Northern Ireland and Israel, and demonstrates that lessons can be learned across contexts.

Lessons from Northern Ireland

Five key elements have been identified that encourage inclusiveness and openness in young children's environments despite major social divisions, based on the Media Initiative for Children in Northern Ireland (Connolly et al. 2006).

1. *Partnerships forged between different organisations around a common vision.* In Northern Ireland, the partners were the national Early Years Organization (NIPPA), which adopts a non-sectarian position, a range of voluntary and statutory agencies and the USA-based Peace Initiatives Institute.
2. *Curricular materials and resources developed for use by pre-school educators.* The curricular materials developed in connection with the media initiative fitted well into the Northern Ireland pre-school curriculum on personal, social and emotional development.
3. *Alliances with parents and links to children's homes.* Letters sent to parents and guardians suggested how families could support the programme through activities and conversations. The letters also addressed parental concern about raising sensitive issues with young children.
4. *A media initiative that addressed diversity in its broadest sense*, with a focus beyond that of the Catholic–Protestant divide. Three one-minute cartoons featured four children in a park setting. Positive messages were communicated about playing well together despite disability (represented by one child's corrective eye patch), race (exemplified by a child from the Chinese community in Northern Ireland), and sectarian divisions (symbolised by two children wearing the soccer shirts of rival football teams associated with the religious divide).
5. *Evaluative research to investigate the effects of the programme on young children.* 'Before and after' comparisons in five settings demonstrated that the children exposed to the media initiative registered a significant increase in their ability to recognise instances of exclusion and to empathise with exclusion, whereas children in the control group who had not been exposed to the programme showed no such increase.

Relating the Northern Ireland experience to Israel

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has been working for several decades in Israel and is interested in relating this experience to findings from elsewhere. The five lessons learned in Northern Ireland are strongly supported by the Foundation's experience in Israel and could prove useful elsewhere as well.

Children do take messages home about activities at school, and these can help engage their parents and influence social change

Partnerships around a common vision
In the Foundation's experience, despite what may seem like a macro-political deadlock in the Middle East, there is a readiness for positive change at the grassroots that arises out of a yearning for peace and stability. People fervently wish that the youngest members of society might benefit from such stability. "We do not want our children to suffer these troubles," as one father put it when he explained why he sent his child to one of the few Jewish–Arab schools rather than the more usual segregated schools. Partnerships that support Jewish–Arab schools bring together parents from both communities who would like a different future for their children, teachers who are keen to use education for social change, the civil society organisation Hand in Hand that has built up expertise in bilingual and multicultural education, municipalities that are prepared to support an integrated school, and funding agencies.

Comprehensive pre-school training programmes that support openness to diversity
Positive change in young children's environments can be initiated in pre-schools, where children and parents can be approached in groups and teachers are motivated as well as formally trained to influence young pupils' lives for the better. Schools and pre-schools can also influence educational authorities and policy makers.

In a divided society, asking educators of young children to raise issues around diversity in a constructive manner is not a simple conversation. The Northern Ireland experience suggests that teachers feel more comfortable discussing issues surrounding differences and the past with parents and children if they have already been given the opportunity to explore their own attitudes and beliefs.

In Northern Ireland, "asking the early years educators to address this issue was inviting them to break through what had developed into a societal norm of silence and avoidance" (Connolly et al. 2006). 'Breaking the silence' is also a vital first step in working with pre-school educators in Israel. One of the Foundation's partner organisations has found drama techniques to be useful in encouraging educators to confront their fears and address stereotypes about other communities. Skilled facilitators working with relatively small heterogeneous groups of educators have proved effective, although it may take a few sessions before the ice of denial begins to thaw within individuals and between them.

The availability of appropriate materials helped to prepare teachers in Northern Ireland to talk about diversity with young children. These included hand puppets, jigsaws, feelings cubes, lotto games and posters. Similarly, projects in Israel have generated imaginative materials to help teachers talk about emotions, attitudes and behaviour with young children. Four-year-olds have been given 'feelings drawers' – paper-covered matchboxes holding drawings that record their feelings (since they cannot yet write). They can share these drawings and feelings with others or keep them private.

In Israel and Northern Ireland, teachers express relief and appreciation when they receive training and materials that help them with difficult subjects. A project evaluation in Israel revealed, however,

that although teachers feel strengthened by these enhanced capacities, they are unsure about whether and to what extent they can draw on support from parents and from the educational authorities. Consequently, the current phase of the project is addressing this uncertainty by holding persuasive workshops for parents and lobbying the Ministry of Education to recognise the teacher training conducted by the project.

Engaging meaningfully with parents
"How can we talk to our children about prejudice and discrimination?" asks a booklet specially prepared to help parents in Northern Ireland (Connolly 2002). Some answers are to "be open and relaxed" "ask questions and listen rather than give lectures" and "encourage our children to think through the consequences of prejudice and discrimination."

Experience shows that although pre-schools and schools are good places to initiate change, parental involvement is crucial for positive outcomes. Projects that focus on educators in the pilot phase generally learn from evaluations that they need to engage more directly with parents, for example by holding regular workshops with them. In Northern Ireland, NIPPA has engaged parents in interactive workshops (similar to those held for teachers) at which they explore the issues of openness to diversity that are addressed in the pre-school.

Children do take messages home about activities at school, and these can help to engage their parents and influence social change. In one case, a Bedouin father made the long trek to school from his unrecognised village in the Negev desert to substantiate what his daughter had reported to him about the 'democracy education' sessions.

Parents can act as prime movers of change. A book of oral histories from families who choose to send their children to Jewish–Arab schools illustrates parents' motivations to act as agents of change. For example:

> "I carry this difficult history. But there is another people here that we must co-exist with. On the one hand, it is important to me that my daughters know their true history. We visit our destroyed villages – al-Mansura, Iqrit, Suhmata. We hold on to the keys that their grandfather has kept for over 60 years. On the other hand, we look for ways to live alongside Jews respectfully and equally. I chose a bilingual school because I am for Arab–Jewish harmony. I also want my daughters to demand their rights and hold their heads high." (Mendelson and Khalaf 2006)

Use of the mass media to raise sensitive issues in a positive and appealing way
In Israel, it is unusual for Arab and Jewish children to mix. They tend to live separate lives and are fearful and suspicious of each other. The television series *Sesame Stories* was a bold initiative to create a common electronic space for children from polarized communities.

> "Sesame Stories is designed to help 4- to 7-year-olds in Israel, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza to appreciate diversity and develop mutual respect… [through] animated versions of children's stories drawn from the ethnic and religious traditions of each respective society, illustrating core themes of acceptance, friendship, and appreciation of similarities and differences between individuals." (Michael Cohen Group 2005)

The Bernard van Leer Foundation supported outreach activities to link this shared electronic space to the realities of children in Israel through structured activities with their teachers and parents. Materials were developed in Hebrew and Arabic, including an educational CD-ROM, an interactive poster, activity pages and teachers' kits, all underpinned by training and workshops for teachers.

The effects of viewing *Sesame Stories* were evaluated using a pre-test, post-test design that included children in Israeli pre-schools, both Jewish and Arab. Children were divided into experimental and control groups, and the former viewed *Sesame Stories* three times a week for eight consecutive weeks. Children who viewed the shows developed a more extensive awareness of the importance of friendship and interpersonal obligation than those who did not (Sesame Workshop 2005).

Of special interest is the influence of *Sesame Stories* on children's moral reasoning, a concept that relates

children's judgements (e.g. is a specific behaviour right or wrong?) to their justifications (why is it right or wrong?). The evaluation involved "comprehensive measurements of children's understanding of the characters as well as story comprehension, social goals, moral concepts and conflict resolution judgements" (Sesame Workshop 2005).

Here are two key insights:

> "These findings demonstrate that Israeli-Jewish children generally understood the wrongfulness of exclusion, and gave appropriate moral reasons, such as appeals to the *inclusion* of others to ensure equal access and *pro-social behaviour* of the majority towards the minority, for why exclusion is wrong. While these findings are similar to findings reported for US samples… these were unexpected given the level of conflict and intergroup tension that many children in Israel are exposed to as a function of the societal conflict. Researchers… have shown that children exposed to violence often justify exclusion on the basis of retaliation and retribution. These reasons were not used in this sample." (p. 25–26)

> "The findings for the sample of Arab children in Israel were compelling. Children's pro-social reasons for justifications increased after viewing the show. This is important because peer relations and friendships are key factors in the developmental processes of moral development. Children who recognize the necessity of treating friends in a fair and just manner have acquired the fundamental principles of morality, that is mutual respect and fairness. It is particularly poignant that Arab children's pro-social justifications for friendship increased as a function of viewing the show. Arab children in Israel generally experience higher levels of exposure to violence and discrimination. Thus, the findings that these children had pro-social judgements and that their justifications increased as a function of the show was rather dramatic. Rather than rely on strategies of retribution or retaliation, children referred to friendship and fairness concepts to evaluate peer conflict." (p. 40)

Evaluative research

The example of evaluation research from Israel given above is similar both in method and findings to that of the Northern Ireland study. Evaluation is important to improve project performance and to enhance general understanding of how children's social and emotional development can be influenced. The evaluations described in this paper both used the pre-test, post-test design. However, other approaches can be complementary. For example, an ongoing ethnographic study of Jewish–Arab schools (Bekerman, in progress) is yielding valuable insights through close observation of young children in class and the playground. The findings suggest that children aged 6 or so from polarised groups can unlearn the discrimination that their environments have scripted into them. They are well aware of differences but can relate to each other beyond these differences.

Conclusion

The five lessons learned in Northern Ireland are strongly supported by the Foundation's experience in Israel. The findings from the Media Initiative for Children in Northern Ireland were based on four one-minute messages to children delivered frontally through the media. These findings have been validated with reference to diffuse messages directed towards young children more obliquely in Israel where, sadly, the troubles are not yet in the past.

References

Bekerman, Z. An ethnographic study of the Jewish Arab schools in Israel (in progress).

Connolly, P. (2002) *Fairplay: Talking with children about prejudice and discrimination.* Belfast, N. Ireland: Barnardos and Save the Children. www.paulconnolly.net/publications/pdf_files/stc_fairplay_2002.pdf

Connolly, P., Fitzpatrick, S., Gallagher, T. and Harris, P. (2006) Addressing diversitynd inclusion in the early years in conflict-affected societies: a case study of the Media Initiative for Children – Northern Ireland. *International Journal of Early Years Education* 14(3): 263–278.

Mendelson, J., and A. Khalaf (2006) *Hand in Hand: Jewish and Arab Families in Israel.* Jerusalem: Centre for Jewish Arab Education.

Michael Cohen Group (2005) *Sesame Stories* integrated final reach report. New York: Sesame Workshop.

Sesame Workshop (2005) *An Evaluation of the Educational Impact of Sesame Stories*, New York: Sesame Workshop.

Reading 'diversity'

Implications for early childhood professionals

Jeanette Rhedding-Jones, Professor, Early Childhood Education, Oslo University College, Norway

This article aims to share some complex ideas and give useful insight into the field of social inclusion and diversity in employment in early childhood education. Diversity can be seen as a positive, providing employing institutions with a range of potential. Diversity can also be regarded as another word for difference, which implies marginalisation. In examining these two discourses the article focuses on those who work in bureaucracies and administration, and on those employed in early childhood education and care and in the training sector. Information about employees' religions, races, home and heritage languages, social classes, abilities and sexual preferences is commonly viewed as private. However, it could be argued that ignoring diversity leads to continued dominance by majorities and further silencing of the marginalised.

Unfortunately, the positive potential of diversity in early childhood education is often lost through assimilation and cultural normalisation. However, some countries are taking steps to retain it. In Norway, for example, there is increasing emphasis on recruiting diversity, including minority groups, to the early childhood professions. Nevertheless, simply putting minorities into a workplace will not be enough to change entrenched practices. The question of who (which gender, language, ethnic group and religion?) to employ in early childhood education is becoming a crucial one. We currently have little information about differences in pay and which groups have the greater voice in decision making. In addition, we have little data on the diversity of the individuals who work with children, those in higher education, those in policy making, or the parents.

Different views of diversity

There are many different definitions of diversity. The following section presents those of five different authors.

Acknowledging difference: benign variation or conflict and struggle?

Mohanty (1990) warns that: "The central issues... is not one of merely acknowledging difference; rather, the more difficult question concerns the kind of difference that is acknowledged and engaged. Difference seen as a benign variation (diversity)… rather than as conflict, struggle, or the threat of disruption, bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious, empty pluralism" (p. 181).

Mohanty is saying that diversity must remain as a conflict, a struggle with threats of disruption. This is not what happens when diversity is supposedly happy harmony. She advocates the creation of discourses of difference, not just the acceptance of them. One way to achieve this could be through training institutions for early childhood education and care setting up centres of multicultural excellence. The problem is that managers and administrators might have other priorities. In addition, they tend to 'manage diversity' by recruiting diverse people and introducing different curriculum units while engaging in teaching as usual. This, she says, "is not shifting the normative culture versus subcultures paradigm."

Culturally sensitive learning environments

Bernhard (2001), in a review of Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (1998), takes a different approach: "[This book] has as its goal the promotion of respect for diversity... There are diverse pathways

to development... A rating scale on diversity goes beyond respecting others, to active anti-bias efforts at including minority people in the programme" (p. 117). She goes on to say that "[w]hile it is useful to appeal to educators' moral sense in respecting differences, it is equally important that people generally understand the diversity of human living in the various cultures, through first hand information, particularly about diverse ways to learning" (p. 118).

Bernhard appears to be an author positioned very differently from Mohanty regarding diversity. She seems to see 'information' as what matters, and does not acknowledge that all information is discursively constructed. For Bernhard, diversity appears to imply what Mohanty describes and then critiques as 'harmony' and 'individualism'. The diverse ways to learning that she writes about contrast with Mohanty's views. From the perspective of developmental psychology espoused by Bernhard, diversity is seen as a discourse of 'individual differences'. But the perspective of liberal humanism is at odds with one which acknowledges other kinds of difference such as race or minority religion or language.

Problems of terminology in relation to capitalism

Some radicals in education (e.g., McLaren and Farahmandpur 2001) do not mention diversity at all, perhaps because of the problems associated with its definition. "Educational policies grounded on the ideology of economic rationalism engineer a view of democratic schooling as premised upon the harmonization of differences among ethnic groups and social classes, thereby mistaking the phenomenon needing explanation for the explanation itself. Racism is a symptom of capitalist exploitation, not the cause of social affliction. Hence teachers are deflected from examining the interrelationship among race, class and gender oppression within the context of global capitalist relations" (p. 363).

They seem to be saying that, despite the fact that teachers see before them children from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, they do not always acknowledge the impact of racism stemming from capitalism. In adopting 'multicultural' approaches to diversity, therefore, they work on the basis of assuming a harmonious pedagogical practice which denies the inlfuence of race, class and gender.

Managing diversity for effective outcomes

Le Roux (2001) presents a very conservative view of diversity. He claims that reason supports his version of 'culturally responsive or culturally reflective education' as "the most effective educational strategy or approach to address the educational needs of a culturally diverse classroom population successfully" (p. 49). He appears to view diversity in the simple terms of a culturally diverse classroom, although he says: "an accommodative, appreciative and responsive approach to the reality of cultural diversity is of the utmost importance."

Capturing complexity

Beck (2001) appears to consider diversity as a variable that should be researched, captured and then managed. Beck discusses "education issues in a diverse society" (p. 299) but the focus is not on who might comprise the diversity and why, but on the functionality of a descriptor and the 'offering' of research data. Beck gives the example of a teacher–researcher who apprenticed her African-American students into the practices of formal literary scholarship. This "illustrates how Vygotsky's distinction between spontaneous concepts and scientific concepts... can illuminate ways of helping students from a non-mainstream cultural background to develop the academic skills that they need to succeed in schools" (p. 300). There is no mention of cultural capital, class differences, or the historical construction of race affecting African Americans. However, Vygotsky's writings (1962, in Rhedding-Jones 2005a, p. 156–162) are dated and have been translated into English, and it should be remembered that concepts and words may be misleading.

Implications and conclusions

Diversity is a term that should not be used lightly. It is a loaded concept with many complexities and innuendos. The views presented above are very different and there are other ways to conceptualise ideas about diversity. The important point is to take a critical perspective, to explore implications and to challenge relationships between concepts and approaches.

Fieldwork in India prompted Viruru (2002) to say: "the concept of the 'Relation' sees the Other as equal, and as a presence that is necessary because

Diversity is a loaded concept with many complexities and innuendos

it is different... Another important aspect of the concept of Relation is that it is opposed to the idea of 'essence'... To exist in Relation, is to be part of an ever-changing and diversifying process, whereas to be reduced to an essence is to be fixed with permanent attributes" (p. 37).

Here, diversity is not defined as categories, as visible results of race and what we wear. Viruru's diversity is an 'ever-changing and diversifying process' that exists because of our relations with other people, other discourses and other positions. In the same vein, regarding research and our work as readers, Gallop (2000) tells us: "Genuine openness to diversity needs more than diversely representative authors. As much as who we read – even more, I would say – it matters how we read... If we do not pay close attention to what we read, our reading for diversity will only end up projecting... stereotypes" (p. 15).

The same applies to the reading and writing of field notes for research projects. It is not enough to say who is differently bodied. What matters is how we read the events and the sites of institutionalised practice in relation to our own concept of diversity, and that includes our own selves. We have to question diversity and be open to changing our own previously held ideas. It is only when we keep to an agenda of social justice that the effects of ethnic, linguistic, religious and racial diversity become ethical.

References

Beck, S. (2001). Editors' Reviews of Lee, C. and Smagorinsky, P. (2000) (eds). *Vygotskian Perspectives on Literacy Research: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; and Freedman, S., Simons, E., Shalhope, J., Casareno, A. and the M-CLASS teams (2000). *Inside City Schools: Investigating literacy in multicultural classrooms.* New York, USA: Teachers College Press (1999). In *Harvard Educational Review* 71(2): 296–309.

Bernhard, J. (2001). Book Review of Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Clarke, P. (1998). *Supporting Identity, Diversity and Language in the Early Years.* Philadelphia, USA: Open University Press. In *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 2(1): 117–119.

Gallop, J. (2000). The ethics of reading: close encounters. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 14(3): 7–17.

Le Roux, J. (2001). Effective schooling is being culturally responsive. *Intercultural Education* 12(1): 41–50.

McLaren, P. and Farahmandpur, R. (2001). *Educational policy* and socialist imagination: revolutionary citizenship as a pedagogy of resistance. Educational Policy 15(3): 343–378.

Mohanty, C.T. (1990). On race and voice: challenges for liberal education in the 1990s. *Cultural Critique*, No. 14, Winter 1989–1990, p. 179–208.

Rhedding-Jones, J. (2005) Decentering Anglo-American curricular power in Early Childhood Education: Learning, culture and 'child development' in higher education coursework. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 27(3): 143-165.

Viruru, R. (2002). Colonized through language: the case of early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 2(1): 31–47.

The role of research

Promoting positive attitudes to ethnic diversity among young children

Paul Connolly, Professor of Education, Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Young children's awareness of ethnic diversity

A major concern that has taxed the minds of social psychologists for nearly a century now is when young children first become aware of ethnic differences and how their attitudes develop in relation to these. There are now hundreds of experimental studies, dating back to the 1920s, that have shown consistently that children can become aware of racial differences from about the age of 2 and that they are capable of developing negative attitudes and prejudices about these from about the age of 3 onwards (Aboud 1988).

Interestingly, much less attention has been paid to young children's awareness of and attitudes towards other forms of ethnic diversity; particularly those where there are no physical differences between groups, such as found between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, for example. While young children often tend to be firsthand witnesses to and victims of the violence associated with such ethnic divisions (Machel 1996, 2000; Connolly and Hayden 2007), it is commonly believed that they will have little appreciation of the existence or nature of the divisions that underpin this violence. This is because such divisions tend to be based on non-visible and more abstract factors such as nationality, language and/or religion and it is believed that young children are simply not capable developmentally of recognising or understanding such things.

However, research is beginning to emerge now showing that young children are not only demonstrating an awareness of ethnic divisions that are based on non-visible differences but are also developing negative attitudes in relation to these. In a study of Israeli children, for example, Bar-Tal (1996) found that many were becoming aware of the category of 'Arabs' from around the age of 2 and that from around the age of 3 some were beginning to ascribe negative evaluations of this category (e.g., Arabs are 'nasty' or 'dangerous'). Perhaps the most interesting point to emerge from this was that when asked to draw Israelis and Arabs, the children showed no awareness of any physical distinction between them. In other words, they had an awareness of another ethnic group and some had developed negative attitudes towards them even though they showed no understanding of the nature of the ethnic divisions that existed (see also Bar-Tal and Teichman 2006).

A similar picture has emerged more recently in relation to research in Northern Ireland. In our own study of the cultural and political awareness of 3–6-year olds (see Connolly et al., 2002) there was little evidence that the children understood the nature of the divisions that existed between Catholics and Protestants in terms of religion and nationality. In fact very few young children were even aware of the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant'. However, what we did find was a strong tendency for very young children to begin to develop a preference for the cultural events and symbols of their own group and negative attitudes towards those associated with the 'other side'. Moreover, while they did not tend to use the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant', a third of all 6-year olds were found to be aware that there was a division and that they belonged to one side of it. Also, one in six children made openly prejudiced comments about those from the other side.

Developing programmes to promote positive attitudes towards ethnic diversity among young children

Recognising that very young children are not only able to recognise ethnic differences but that some are also beginning to develop negative attitudes and prejudices in relation to these raises questions about how we might best begin to address this with young children. What types of approaches and programmes might be most effective in helping children to develop their awareness of and respect for ethnic diversity and thus to reduce any prejudices they might have?

There is a growing body of rich, ethnographic research that has attempted to provide insights into young children's social worlds and the salience of ethnicity within this (see Troyna and Hatcher 1992; Wright 1992; Connolly 1998; Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001; Lewis 2003; Connolly and Healy 2004). What this body of work has shown is that ethnicity is not a fixed and static entity but a highly complex and contradictory phenomena that changes in terms of its nature and significance from one context to the next.

Such work has been important in challenging the commonly held belief that young children simply passively absorb and repeat the attitudes of their parents and older siblings. Rather, this body of research has shown quite clearly that young children play an active role in appropriating, re-working and reproducing attitudes towards ethnicity. In many cases, the attitudes that young children have towards ethnicity are not free-floating but are grounded in their day-to-day experiences and thus play an important role in helping them make sense of their social worlds.

There are certainly some important lessons to draw out from this body of work in relation to developing effective programmes for addressing young children's attitudes towards ethnic diversity. First, it makes little sense to attempt to devise a single approach or curriculum that can be used with young children. The nature and forms that ethnic relations take vary enormously from one context to the next as does their impact on children's lives. To be effective, each programme needs to be sensitive to and attempt to recognise and engage with the specific ways in which ethnicity manifests itself locally; both in relation to local neighbourhoods and also in terms of the children's home environment as well as at nursery and/or school.

Second, any approach needs to begin with a recognition of the social competence of young children and the active role that they themselves have played in the formation of their attitudes towards ethnic differences. This, in turn, requires the use of innovative and imaginative ways of engaging with young children and providing them with the space and support necessary to help them articulate and reflect upon their attitudes and experiences as well as to begin to develop new and inclusive ways of thinking about issues of ethnicity.

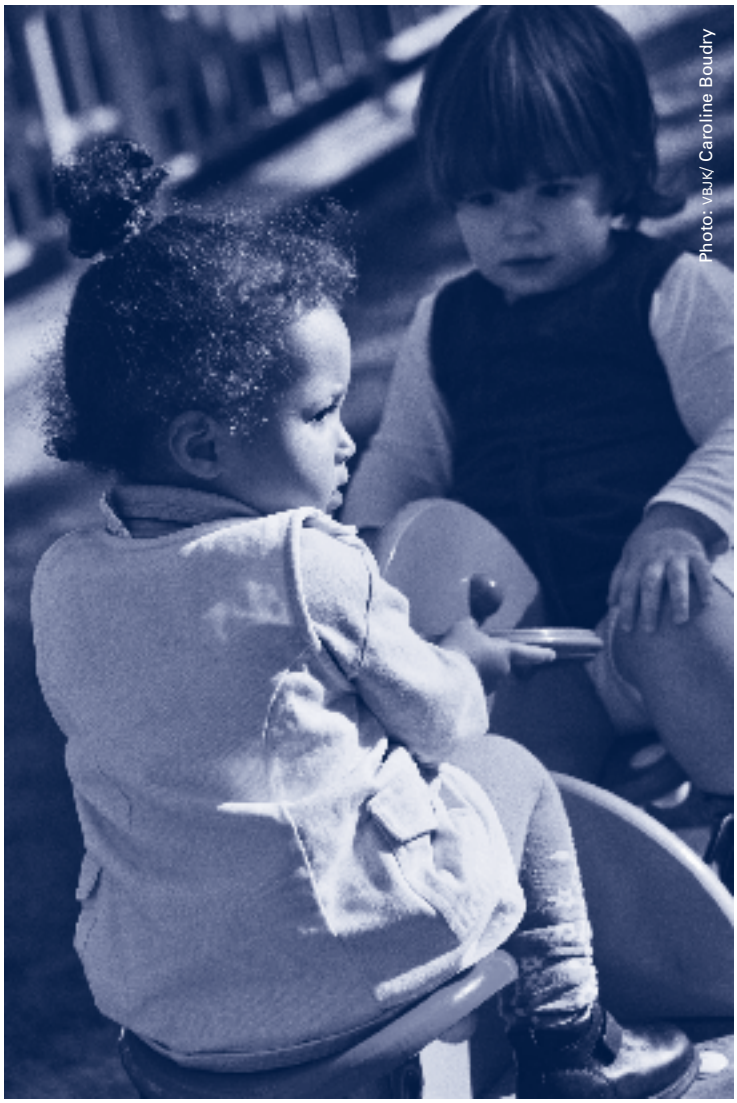
Third, it is clear that whatever approach is used it is going to have only a limited effect unless there is a real and meaningful engagement with parents and the local community. In this sense there is a need to see such work with children as part of a broader community development approach that can also link into wider programmes and initiatives within the community.

But how do we know any of this works?

There is certainly a lot of good work going on internationally with young children around issues of ethnicity that have taken seriously and begun to address some of the challenges outlined above. There are also a number of important books and resources that are now available to help support work in this area (see, for example, Creaser and Dau 1996; Brown 1998; Grieshaber and Cannella 2001; Prott and Preissing 2004; Keulen 2004; Robinson and Diaz 2006).

However, one of the areas where research could play a much greater role is in the actual evaluation of specific programmes and interventions. Indeed it is interesting that there are so few studies that have set out to ask the fundamental question of whether a particular approach has actually worked or not? In other words, has it had any real effect in terms of increasing young children's levels of awareness and also their positive attitudes towards and acceptance of ethnic diversity?

Of course, attempting to answer such questions isn't easy. Ideally it requires the testing of children's



Imaginative ways of engaging with young children are necessary for them to develop inclusive attitudes about ethnicity

attitudes before and then again after their involvement in a particular programme to see if any change has taken place. Moreover, there is also the need to do the same with another group of children who did not participate in the programme (what we call a control group) so that we can be sure that any change that may have taken place in relation to the children's awareness and attitudes is due to the programme rather than the influence of other external factors. All of this is not to mention the problems associated with trying to find valid and reliable indicators for the types of awareness and attitudes among young children that we need to measure in order to see whether change has taken place or not.

However, without this type of experimental research methodology as it is called we will never know whether particular interventions are actually effective or not. Moreover, when such studies are combined with indepth qualitative research it is possible not only to identify where particularly programmes have been effective or ineffective but also to then focus on attempting to understand why this is the case.

One example of the potential of adopting such methods can be seen in an evaluation of a general diversity programme in England for 6–7-year olds (see Connolly and Hosken 2006). The evaluation involved an experimental design and also qualitative interviews. The programme itself took a very broad approach to issues of diversity, mentioning ethnic differences only briefly and within the context of a wide range of other ways in which children are similar and different.

When focusing on the actual effects of the programme it was evident that while it had some positive outcomes in relation to increasing children's awareness and acceptance of diversity in general, it had no impact whatsoever on the children's existing ethnic attitudes. The reasons for this soon became clear in interviews with the teachers who explained that they tended to avoid dealing with issues of ethnicity directly. For some this was due to a belief that it was neither appropriate nor necessary with children as young as this while for others they simply did not feel that they had the skills nor confidence to deal with the issue appropriately.

There were two important lessons therefore to emerge from this particular study. First, in

order to deal effectively with issues of ethnicity it is important to engage with these directly and specifically. Certainly, the evidence from this study suggests that the use of broadly defined and general approaches to diversity are likely to be ineffective. Second, identifying this lack of effect also helped draw attention to the need for meaningful and effective training and support for teachers, not only in terms of raising their awareness of issues of ethnicity but also in terms of providing them with the skills and confidence needed to deal with these issues effectively.

Another example relates to the evaluations undertaken to date of the Media Initiative for Children – Northern Ireland (see Connolly et al. 2006). This has been an innovative and highly successful programme developed jointly by NIPPA –the Early Years Organisation and PII (the Peace Initiatives Institute) and has been based around media messages and curricular resources aimed at increasing preschool children's awareness of and respect for physical, cultural and racial differences.

Part of the programme has attempted to deal directly with the deep divisions that exist between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland through encouraging young children's awareness of and positive attitudes towards the cultures and traditions associated with their own as well as the other main community. It is undoubtedly the case that one of the reasons for the programme's success to date has been the ability of the experimental research to allay people's fears that it might be having a harmful impact on young children by providing clear evidence that it is actually having a positive effect on the children's levels of awareness and attitudes towards others.

The experimental research has also played an important role in helping to develop and refine the programme by identifying areas where it was tending to have only a limited effect, if any. For example, when looking at children's levels of awareness it was found that the programme was having positive effects in terms of raising their awareness of a range of cultural events and symbols. Within this, however, it was found that very little change had taken place in relation to the children's specific levels of awareness associated with the culture and traditions of the other (i.e., Protestant or Catholic) community to themselves. Once this problem was highlighted, focus-group discussions with the playgroup leaders uncovered a high level of anxiety and fear associated with attempting to deal with this. This, in turn, provided the impetus required to develop more detailed training and support for the playgroup leaders around these issues.

The Joint Learning Initiative on Children and Ethnic Diversity

The above two examples only represent initial and exploratory attempts to begin to develop a more evidence-based approach to the development and evaluation of early childhood programmes aimed at addressing issues of ethnicity among young children. Much more work is required not only in relation to developing better ways of undertaking evaluations based upon experimental designs, but also in terms of making much more extensive use of in-depth qualitative research to inform and compliment these.

However, both examples do clearly illustrate the power of researchers and early childhood professionals working together in partnership to develop more appropriate and effective programmes for young children. It is precisely this approach that underpins the new Joint Learning Initiative on Children and Ethnic Diversity that is being supported and part-funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

By drawing together some of the most influential researchers, policy makers and practitioners in early childhood the aim will be to make a major international contribution to our understanding of the impact of ethnicity on young children's lives and also to the development of appropriate and effective programmes aimed at addressing this.

At the time of writing (April 2007) we are undertaking an initial scoping exercise aimed at identifying what research currently exists internationally with regard to early childhood programmes dealing specifically with issues of ethnicity and also what organizations currently support work in this area. This information will be used to help guide the specific direction and development of the Joint Learning Initiative. Not only will the Joint Learning Initiative aim to

draw together and disseminate what is already known in this area from research and practice but will also aim to build capacity among researchers and early childhood organisations in areas characterized by ethnic divisions to develop innovative and effective programmes. Ultimately, the goal will be to build a vibrant international network of researchers, policy makers and practitioners able to build and share knowledge and good practice and also to use research evidence to advocate for the development of effective early childhood diversity programmes.

References

Aboud, F. (1988) Children and Prejudice, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bar-Tal, D. (1996) 'Development of social categories and stereotypes in early childhood: the case of "the Arab" concept formation, stereotype and attitudes by Jewish children in Israel', International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 20 (2/4): 341-70.

Bar-Tal, D. and Teichman, Y. (2005) Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, B. (1998) Unlearning Discrimination in the Early Years (Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham Books).

Connolly, P. and Healy, J. (2004) *Children and the Conflict in Northern Ireland: The Experiences and Perspectives of 3-11 Year Olds*. Belfast: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Connolly, P. & Hosken, K. (2006) The general and specific effects of educational programmes aimed at promoting awareness of and respect for diversity among young children, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14(2): 107-126.

Connolly, P., Smith, A. and Kelly, B. (2002) *Too Young to Notice? The Cultural and Political Awareness of 3-6 Year Olds in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Community Relations Council.

Connolly, P., Fitzpatrick, S., Gallagher, T. and Harris, P. (2006) Addressing diversity and inclusion in the early years in conflict-affected societies: A case study of the Media Initiative for Children – Northern Ireland, *International Journal for Early Years Education*, 14(3): 263-278.

Connolly, P. and Hayden, J. with Levin, D. (2007) *From Conflict to Prace Building: The Power of Early Childhood Initiatives - Lessons from Around the World*. Redmond, WA: World Forum Foundation.

Creaser, B. & Dau, E. (eds.) (1996) The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (Sydney, Harper Educational).

Grieshaber, S. & Cannella, G. (eds.) (2001) Embracing Identities in Early Childhood Education: Diversity and Possibilities (New York, Teachers College Press).

Keulen, van A. (ed.) (2004) Young Children Aren't Biased, Are They? Amsterdam: SWP.

Lewis, A. (2003) Race in the Schoolyard: Negotiating the Color Line in Classrooms and Communities (Rutgers University Press).

Machel, G. (1996). Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Report of the Expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Grac'a Machel, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157: United Nations.

Machel, G. (2000). The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: A Critical Review of Progress Made and Obstacles Encountered in Increasing Protection for War-Affected Children. Paper presented at the International Conference on War affected Children Sept 2000, Winnipeg, Canada.

Prott, R. and Preissing, C. (eds) (2004) Bridging Diversity – an Early Childhood Curriculum, Berlin: Verlag Das Netz.

Robinson, K. and Diaz, C. (2006) Diversity and Difference in Early Childhood Education, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Troyna, B. & Hatcher R. (1992) Racism in Children's Lives (London, Routledge).

Van Ausdale, D. & Feagin, J. (2001) The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism (Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield).

Wright C. (1992) Race Relations in the Primary School (London, David Fulton Publishers).

Further reading

Websites

DECET, Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training

This is a network of European organisations and projects with common goals about valuing diversity in early childhood education and training. The network aims at promoting and studying democratic child care, acknowledging the multiple (cultural and other) identities of children and families.

www.decet.org

Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood

The Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) was established in November 1991 at the University of Melbourne. Since it began, the Centre has developed a strong research culture and international reputation for its work in equity and change research, professional development and teaching.

www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec

Publications

Social inclusion through early childhood education and care

Martha Friendly and Dona S. Lero
Working Paper Series on Social inclusion
Laidlaw Foundation, 2002

The basic premise of this paper is that early childhood education and care (ECEC) services can be an important means to strengthen social inclusion for children and families and to help create socially inclusive societies. A second premise is that whether, and to what extent, ECEC services contribute to social inclusion depends on how they are designed, supported and delivered.

www.laidlawfdn.org/cms/index.cfm?group_id=1448

The cultural diversity programming lens toolkit

UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, 2005

The cultural diversity programming lens is an interdisciplinary tool to systematically analyse and evaluate whether programmes, policies, and practices promote the concept and principles of cultural diversity. Like a lens that serves as an aid to improve vision, the cultural diversity programming lens provides a new way of seeing and thinking about cultural diversity issues. Designed to be used by policy makers, programme managers and community leaders who work in non-culture and culture-related sectors, the lens helps them make more informed and effective decisions about their projects, policies and programmes.

www.unescobkk.org/lens

Participation and belonging in early years settings. Inclusion: working towards equality

National Children's Bureau
Early Childhood Forum

By defining inclusion as "a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging", this leaflet considers each of the five stages in the inclusion process in turn, defining them and raising questions about their implication for practice.

www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?originx6494ry_193299 15696410p89x5021139600

The challenge of indigenous education: Practice and perspectives

Linda King and Sabine Schielmann
Education on the Move series
UNESCO, 2004

This publication is focused on indigenous peoples and their lack of access to an education that

respects their diverse cultures and languages. It develops a set of criteria for identifying successful, quality education for indigenous peoples, illustrated by relevant case studies and experiences. This book is published within the framework of the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1994–2004). It offers insights for policy makers, researchers and all those concerned with educational provision for indigenous peoples.

http://publishing.unesco.org

Child-context relationships and developmental outcomes: Some perspectives on poverty and culture

Andrew Dawes and David Donald
Children and Poverty Working Paper 3
Christian Children's Fund, USA, 2005

The paper points out that programmes must be sensitive to the several contexts that simultaneously influence the child's development – the ecology that surrounds the child, the developmental period he or she is in, and the developmental domain (social, emotional, cognitive, physical). It also seeks to provide a more thorough discussion of some of the complexities of child-context interactions in poverty contexts. Cultural practices form a central component of the child's context. The second half of the paper explores the ways in which cultures structure the experience of childhood.

www.christianchildrensfund.org

Children as economic and social factors in the development process

Jo Boyden and Deborah Levison
Expert Group on Development Issues
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, 2000

This report aims to explore present thinking and experience on childhood and children, and to identify the most constructive future directions for policy. The report maintains that childhood is best understood as a culturally and situationally diverse social construction. The variations in the way that children are perceived and treated reflect cultural differences in priorities in child development and beliefs pertaining to childhood and account for major differences in both children's social and economic roles and child development outcomes. This report focuses on children all over the world and on children of all ages. Section 3 focuses on diversity in the early childhood years.

www.egdi.gov.se/pdf/workpaper.pdf

Gender equity in the early years

Naima Browne
Open University Press, 2004

Gender equity in the early years critically evaluates the extent to which current early years policies, provision and practice promote and foster gender equity. Taking into consideration recent research, this book considers the validity of the 'scientific' conclusions being drawn about the biological basis for gender differences. Children's perceptions of 'masculinities' and 'femininities' are also under scrutiny as the author analyses their imaginative role play and storytelling in early years settings. The author also looks at the principles behind the pre-school provision in Reggio Emilia and focuses on the extent to which this approach fosters gender equity.

Children's places: Cross-cultural perspectives

Edited by Karen Fog Olwig and Eva Gullov
Routledge, 2003

Children's Places examines the ways in which children and adults, from their different vantage-points in society, negotiate the 'proper place' of children in both social and spatial terms. It looks at some of the recognised constructions of children, including perspectives from cultures that do not distinguish children as a distinct category of people, as well as examining contexts for them, from schools and kindergartens to inner cities and war-zones. The result is a much-needed insight into the notions of inclusion and exclusion, the placement and displacement of children within generational ranks and orders, and the kinds of places that children construct for themselves.

www.routledge.com

Bridging diversity: An early childhood curriculum
Roger Prott, Christa Preissing (Ed.)
Verlag das netz, 2006

Bridging diversity has been conceived as a curriculum that is based on the social pedagogical unterstanding of education but also creates points of common ground with the schoolish unterstanding of education. It has been designed as an orientation aid for people who are engaged in pre-primary education. The curriculum counts on the responsibility, actions and abilities of the professional personnel. They are the ones who make the kindergarten reality, in cooperation with the parents who remain the most significant people in the lives of the children, even if they attend kindergarten all day.

www.verlagdasnetz.de/NewShop/MainShop/show.php?rb=2

Understanding early childhood: Issues and controversies
Helen Penn
Open University Press, 2005

Drawing on research evidence from across the world, this book offers a wide-ranging perspective on the ways in which we understand and study young children. The book summarises current debates in child development, and looks at different ways of understanding early childhood and the various methods used to gain understanding. The book concludes with an analysis of everyday practices in working with young children from across the world. It is key reading for early childhood students and practitioners working with young children.

http://mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup

Starting school: Young children learning cultures
Liz Brooker
Open University Press, 2002

How does the home experience of children from poor and ethnic minority communities influence their adaptation to school? How does the traditional 'child-centred' and progressive pedagogy of early years classrooms meet the needs of children from culturally diverse backgrounds? Starting school seeks to address these key questions by tracing the learning experiences of individual children from a poor inner-urban neighbourhood – half of them from Bangladeshi families – as they acquire the knowledge appropriate to their home culture and then take this knowledge to their reception class. The book highlights the small differences in family life – in parenting practices, in perspectives on childhood, and in beliefs about work and play – which make a big difference to children's adaptations to school.

http://mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup

Multicultural issues in child care
Janet Gonzalez-Mena
Mayfield Publishing Company, 2001

This volume focuses on cultural differences relevant to all childcare-giving settings, including day care, nursery and preschool programmes. Based on respect for cultural pluralism, this concise supplementary text is designed to increase caregiver sensitivity to different cultural childcare practices and values and to improve communication and understanding between the caregiver and parents.

Culture and child protection: Reflexive responses
Marie Connolly, Yvonne Crichton-Hill and Tony Ward
Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005

This book is a concise exploration of the close links between social service practices and cultural values which offers a culturally sensitive model of child protection practice. In a context where children from ethnic minorities dominate the welfare statistics of the Western economies, the authors argue against a reliance on rigid approaches to working with particular ethnic groups. They propose effective alternative strategies that will assist social workers in responding appropriately to diverse cultural needs and circumstances. Implications of cultural difference are also considered with respect to class, socio-economic group, gender and age, reinforcing the need to recognise broader interpretations of difference within practice.

www.jkp.com

Project documentation

Young children aren't biased, are they?!: How to handle diversity in early childhood education and school

Anke van Keulen
SWP Publishers, 2004

This collection aims at informing the readers about developments on diversity and equity and also about theoretical concepts, practical examples and projects. The book is meant for teachers, trainers, students and professionals (staff and coaches) in childcare and early childhood education. The eleven authors are from various European countries, from the USA and from Australia. Each chapter can be read separately and can be put to practical use by educationalists.

www.swpbook.com/index.php?action=view&book=473&mcat=7

Lullaby for Hamza: Child care as a meeting place

Mark de Bree
VBJK & DECET, 2003

Travel journalist Mark Gielen reflects on those days when his own daughter went to a childcare centre twenty years ago. Since then, diversity in society has increased enormously. That is why he decided to find out how European childcare centres handle this diversity. In his quest he stops in four European cities: Ghent (Belgium), Auby (France), Berlin (Germany) and Birmingham (UK). Each city is briefly presented and the context of how early childhood care and education came to be is summarised. Available in English, French, German and Spanish.

www.decet.org

By a pool, eating plums…: Exploring the learning needs of Muslim families living in Metaxourghio, Athens

Anastasia Houndoumandi
Schedia, 2002

This book describes the research conducted during the development phase of an intervention project aiming at integrating children – mostly working children – from Romany- and Turkish-speaking Muslim families into the educational system. This book is about the rationale behind the intervention project; the planning of the research; the findings; the designing of the intervention; the overall conclusions and evaluation. The book is a significant resource for practitioners and researchers in working with marginalised children.

www.schedia-art.gr/en/educational

The 'Eist' manual 'Ar an mBealach' – 'On the way' diversity and equality training manual for early childhood trainers

Pavee Point Publications, 2004

There is an increasing agreement among educators in many countries that best practice in early childhood education includes implementing principles of diversity and equality. However, learning to do this is not easy nor is there a 'quick fix'. The systems of prejudice and discrimination that shape teachers' personal attitudes and behaviours continue to cause inequality in all educational institutions have a long history. This training manual provides the methodology and tools that can begin to prepare early childhood educators to walk the talk in their programmes. It recognises that doing meaningful training also requires the facilitators to carefully prepare themselves.

www.paveepoint.ie

Relevant Bernard van Leer Foundation publications (available from: www.bernardvanleer.org)

Respect for diversity: An international overview

Glenda M MacNaughton
Working Paper 40
Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006

An overview on ways of thinking about young children's respect for diversity – cultural and racial, developmental, gender diversity and socio-economic. It looks at theory, research and methodologies, including regional nuances, and identifies and maps out five broad schools of thought – the "laissez-faire" school; the "special provisions" school; the "cultural understandings"

school; the "equal opportunities" school; and the "anti-discrimination" school.

Globalisation and privatisation: The impact on childcare policy and practice
Michel Vandenbroeck
Working Paper 38
Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006

This paper concentrates on the impact of globalisation on childcare since the late 1970s, particularly in the last two decades. It looks at how our views about children, parents and public services have changed as a result. In particular, the paper examines the case in Belgium, where the consequences of globalisation are also analysed in terms of quality and accessibility of services and the shifting power relations between the state, childcare providers, parents and experts in the field of early childhood education.

From car park to children's park
G. Wunschel
Working Paper 30
Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2003

This Working Paper describes the development process of a childcare centre established in 1989 in a former parking garage in Berlin, Germany. The description of how the centre became what it is now is of interest to anyone concerned with issues of diversity and multiculturalism, as well as to anyone interested in examples of how to open the doors of childcare institution to parents and the surrounding community.

The view of the Yeti: Bringing up children in the spirit of self-awareness and kindership
Michel Vandenbroeck
Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2001

Using the mythical creature of the Himalayas, the Yeti, as a symbol for the prejudices and assumptions that people prematurely make about each other, this book discusses bringing up children to accept and cherish diversity and helping them to thrive in an increasingly diverse world. Directed to educators and caregivers of toddlers and preschoolers, the book takes insights from Dutch-, French-, and English-language literature and provides practical examples based on European issues and context.

Remembering Subhachari Dasgupta

Professor Subhachari Dasgupta passed away unexpectedly in February at the age of 78. A 'pragmatic visionary', Prof. Dasgupta advocated translating practical ideas into action in particular in the poorer parts of India. Driven by the ideals and values of Mahatma Gandhi and Paulo Friere, he helped young people develop a love and commitment for working with the poorest and under-privileged, in particular low caste communities and tribal villages.

In 1976, he was instrumental in developing the Rural Action Project, which was established to investigate why poor villagers were unable to apply for loans. This work led to intensive social action at various locations across North India and resulted in farmers getting better access to credit.

The Rural Action Project grew into the People's Institute for Development and Training (PIDT), which also works to build bridges between indigenous peoples at home and the school environment by developing culturally sensitive and appropriate parent support mechanisms, and it works in non-formal education, with increasing attention to children aged 0–6. The Foundation has supported this work since 2004. At the news of his passing, rural women walked long distances to pay their respect to Professor Dasgupta and his family. He is survived by the vibrant organisation he set up, dedicated to the ongoing education of marginalized people.

Bernard van Leer Foundation

Investing in the development of young children

The Bernard van Leer Foundation funds and shares knowledge about work in early childhood development. The foundation was established in 1949 and is based in the Netherlands. Our income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958.

Our mission is to improve opportunities for children up to age 8 who are growing up in socially and economically difficult circumstances. We see this both as a valuable end in itself and as a long-term means to promoting more cohesive, considerate and creative societies with equality of opportunity and rights for all.

We work primarily by supporting programmes implemented by partners in the field. These include public, private and community-based organisations. Our strategy of working through partnerships is intended to build local capacity, promote innovation and flexibility, and help to ensure that the work we fund is culturally and contextually appropriate.

We currently support about 140 major projects. We focus our grantmaking on 21 countries in which we have built up experience over the years. These include both developing and industrialised countries and represent a geographical range that encompasses Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

We work in three issue areas:

- Through "Strengthening the Care Environment" we aim to build the capacity of vulnerable parents, families and communities to care for their children.
- Through "Successful Transitions" we aim to help young children make the transition from their home environment to daycare, preschool and school.
- Through "Social Inclusion and Respect for Diversity" we aim to promote equal opportunities and skills that will help children to live in diverse societies.

Also central to our work is the ongoing effort to document and analyse the projects we support, with the twin aims of learning lessons for our future grantmaking activities and generating knowledge we can share. Through our evidence-based advocacy and publications, we aim to inform and influence policy and practice both in the countries where we operate and beyond.

Bernard van Leer Foundation

PO Box 82334, 2508 EH The Hague, The Netherlands tel: +31 (0)70 331 2200, fax: +31 (0)70 350 2373

email: registry@bvleerf.nl, internet: <www.bernardvanleer.org>