

Education for Intercultural Understanding in Australian Schools: A Review of its Contribution to Education for a Sustainable Future

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Abstract Education for Intercultural Understanding seeks a better world. Its principal goal is education for change through addressing social issues with an intercultural perspective arising at the local, national and especially international levels. Underpinning this cross-curricular dimension is education for a sustainable future - a core concern of Environmental Education.

This article will review Australia's engagement with international and intercultural education within formal education with a specific focus on its contribution to a sustainable future. It identifies recent influences that have shaped school policy and practice in this area. Lost opportunities are discussed as well as the scope for future developments, in particular within the socially critical fields of Citizenship Education, Futures Education, Global Education and Anti-racism Education as well as Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development. This paper is an extract from a recent report commissioned by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre for Education for International Understanding (APCEIU).

Introduction

Education for Intercultural Understanding is an evolving concept. An analysis of thinking and practice in Education for Intercultural Understanding reveals how changes in the focus of this cross-curricular concern reflect shifting social concerns and educational priorities. Such trends seem to suggest that Education for Intercultural Understanding exists in a dialectical relationship with the current political, economic and social environment. It is clearly influenced by existing relationships and social conditions even though ultimately it seeks to transform these.

This paper seeks to explore the state of Education for Intercultural Understanding within Australian schools by reviewing documentation on policy, curriculum and practice across a number of areas of learning. Linkages and opportunities within

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Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development in particular will be discussed, as well as with other socially critical fields such as Global Education, Futures Education, Anti-racism Education and Citizenship Education.

Background – Intercultural Relations and Education in Australia

Australia is a multicultural society inextricably interconnected to the rest of the world. On the home front, Australia has come into the international spotlight more recently with alleged human rights violations concerning the Governments' action over the Tampa Crisis and the policy of mandatory detention of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. In addition, there have been concerns from a number of groups over the way in which the Australian Government addresses the injustices and inequalities experienced by indigenous Australians in the past and present. It is argued that the Government has failed to commit to a process of formal reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. This lack of commitment is interpreted by many as undermining Australia's potential to reach a cohesive and equitable, culturally diverse society.

At another level, orchestrated terrorist attacks, such as September 11 and the Bali Bombings, in particular, demonstrated to Australians that they could no longer be under any illusions of immunity to the threats of terrorism. The subsequent and resounding political rhetoric, stemming from the leaders of the Western world, implants the notion of a polarised world, divided between "good" and "evil". Dominant political discourses present the situation as black and white – with decisions regarding the future of Australia, a choice to either participate in "war against terrorism" or stand to lose the "Australian" quality of life.

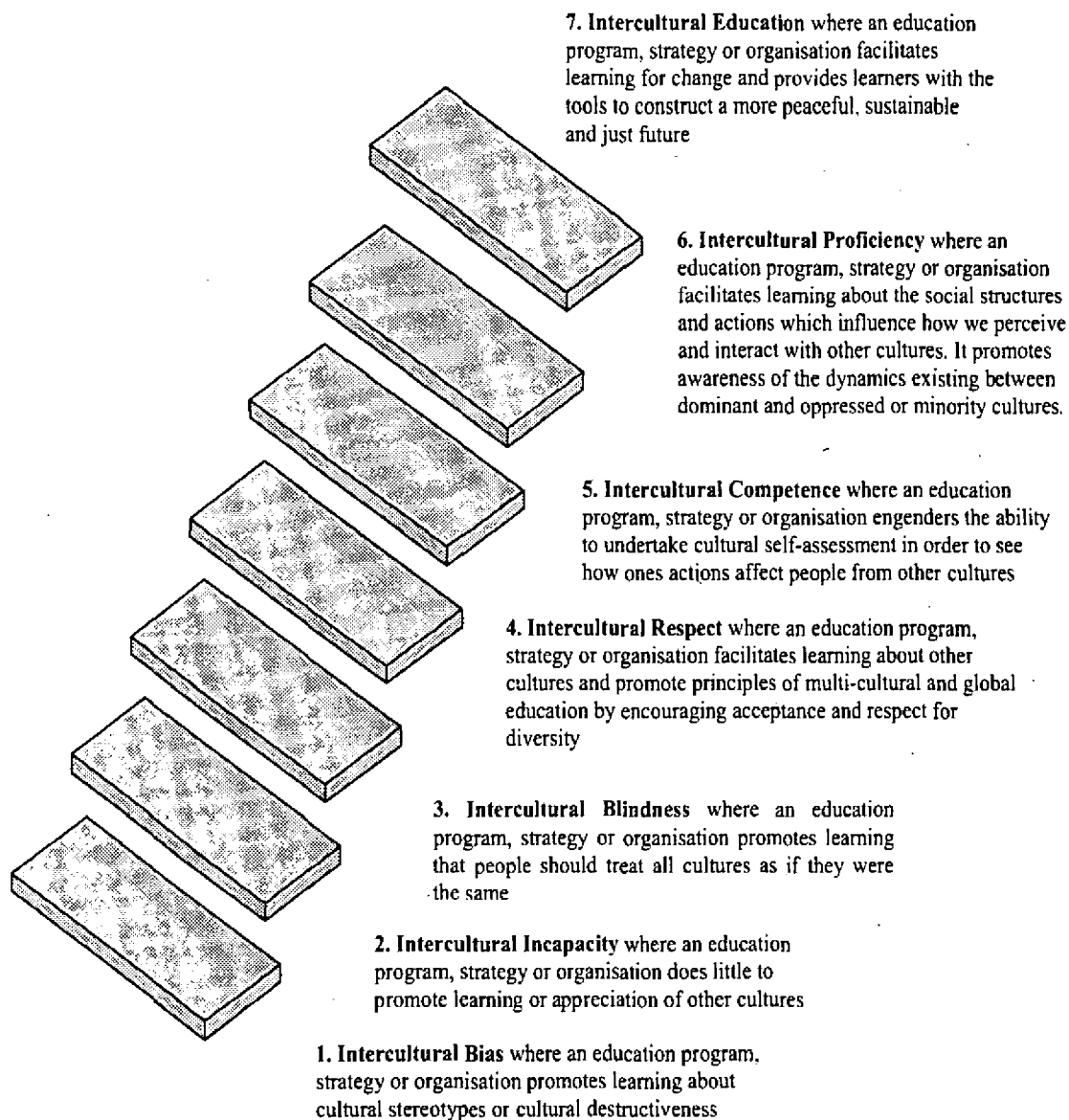
Conflict and terrorism has added another dimension to the complexity of the political, social, environmental and cultural relationships of the world. Thus, the need to educate for intercultural understanding is being recognised as vital to achieving peace and sustainable development in a world shaken by fear of exploitation, terrorism and anxiety of war.

Education for Intercultural Understanding plays a pivotal role in providing young people with the skills and capacity to deal with the challenges, conflicts and decisions they will face throughout their lives. The Intercultural Education ladder developed by a recent UNESCO study (Tilbury & Henderson, 2003, see Figure 1) identifies the steps as well as the approaches required to attain intercultural education and progress towards a more sustainable future. These approaches are also advocated by Environmental Education frameworks (New South Wales Council on Environmental Education (NSWCEE), 2002; National Environmental Education Council (NEEC), 2000) and are aligned with other socially critical dimensions such as Citizenship Education. This paper seeks to position Australian education within "this ladder" and highlight further opportunities to strengthen its contribution to a Sustainable Future.

The Review

This paper is an extract from a recent study commissioned by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre for International Education (APCEIU) which has sought documented evidence to address the questions: Does Education for Intercultural Understanding feature in Australian schooling? Where are the opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to learn Education for Intercultural Understanding?

This review was based on a construct analysis of policies, plans and documented experiences. Data sources include policy documents, statements and guidelines that have been compiled from a range of stakeholders including Commonwealth and State Governments, State Education Departments and other bodies such as the Curriculum



Tilbury & Henderson (2003) based on the ideas of Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Centre, Vol. 1. and Agyeman, J. (2001). Steps to becoming culturally competent communicators. *Human Nature*, 6(2), 1.

FIGURE 1: Intercultural Education Ladder

Corporation, AusAid and the Asia Education Foundation. Relevant curriculum materials and internet resources have also informed this study. A Key Informants Group composed of education experts from around Australia, currently working in this field, examined the review and validated the findings.

Conceptualising Education for Intercultural Understanding

Education for Intercultural Understanding seeks a better world. Its principal goal is education for change through addressing social issues with an intercultural perspective arising at the local, national and especially international levels and is closely aligned with that of Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development.

TABLE 1: Key concepts underpinning Education for Intercultural Understanding
 Education for Intercultural Understanding seeks to build a non-violent, just and sustainable world community. This requires a commitment to:

<i>Peace</i>
Developing a culture of peace; seeking goals of non-violence, cooperation, conflict resolution, disarmament, reconciliation, interdependence and affirming personal and global responsibility.
<i>Social justice</i>
Recognising the rights and responsibilities of all citizens including human rights, land rights and self-determination and affirming opportunities for empowerment, freedom, equality, spirituality, social and economic equity and freedom of expression. Rejecting discrimination and repression based on beliefs, gender, race, ethnicity and social class and enabling the participation of indigenous, minority and vulnerable groups.
<i>Sustainable Development</i>
Seeking change for a better future. Understanding and seeking the mutually dependent goals of participatory democracy, ecological sustainability, cultural diversity, intergenerational and social equity. Exploring local-global connections and addressing equity and equality in issues of power, politics, resource allocation, intercultural issues, poverty and wealth. Incorporating a strong focus of futures thinking.
<i>Vision / Futures</i>
Recognising the role of envisioning in creating, enhancing and sharing aspirations and goals to progress towards a better future. Providing a space for a holistic interpretation of sustainability and linking these elements into one direction. This provides the necessary motivation and plans for action to participate in achieving these visions for the future.
<i>Social critique</i>
Developing the ability to identify root causes and consequences of global issues. Deconstructing the social, cultural, political, economic and ecological influences that shape our lives and challenging personal and collective bias, assumptions, and values. Demonstrating the capacity to identify obstacles to and opportunities for change.
<i>Social change</i>
Affirming the desire to participate in and contribute to bringing about just, equitable and sustainable change in society. Recognising how social structures and institutions shape our world and why there is a need to challenge them for sustainable change.
<i>Globalisation</i>
Understanding the relationships and influences of the local-global dimensions in their own lives and the lives of others and questioning the power and inequalities that shape international order.

(Adapted from Calder & Smith, 1993; Fisher & Hicks, 1985; Gerber & Fien, 1988; Hicks & Holden, 1995; Kim, 2001; Lee, 2001; Toh, 2001)

TABLE 2: Transformative Learning Approaches

Education for Intercultural Understanding promotes transformative learning approaches to provide the participatory skills required to progress towards a better future:

<i>Critical reflective thinking</i>
The ability to interpret root causes of problems and issues, recognising and questioning the underlying prejudices, bias and assumptions. Providing the skills necessary to examine personal and political contributions to change and support rational decision-making.
<i>Holistic approach</i>
Enables students to understand and critically examine and question the complex web of interrelationships through a deeper, more integrated approach. With an understanding that no issue occurs in isolation and interactions that exist between people, places and issues need to be considered.
<i>Active learning</i>
Students assume an active role in the learning process, taking personal responsibility and ownership for the outcomes of learning.
<i>Values clarification and education</i>
Values Clarification provides people with the skills and knowledge required to uncover and deconstruct their own values and those of others. Developing skills to think critically and culturally involves an understanding that different people have different values based on a variety of influences, such as religion, culture, socio-economic class and gender. The process enables identification of values that support a commitment to goals of equality, equity, peace and sustainability.
<i>Experiential learning</i>
Experiential learning is a process that develops knowledge, skills and attitudes based on consciously thinking about an experience. It involves direct and active personal experience combined with reflection and feedback.
<i>Inquiry learning</i>
A student-directed inquiry process of higher order thinking skills such as questioning, suggesting and negotiating, researching and interpreting. Inquiry learning enhances the capacity of students to identify issues of relevance and ask key questions to be able to evaluate, reflect and act on issues.
<i>Dialogue</i>
The ability to engage in constructive dialogue in a multitude of settings (interpersonal, cross-cultural, negotiation, conflict resolution). To engender meaningful engagement exchange with a range of stakeholders.
<i>Critical empowerment</i>
Learners are empowered with the confidence and willingness to engage with personal and social action for transformation towards a better future. This aims to build the capacity of students to be able to bridge theory and practice, reflection and action, in which they can meaningfully contribute to decision-making and problem-solving.
<i>Intercultural communication</i>
The skills and ability to successfully interact with individuals of other cultures, utilising appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication and avoiding ethnocentrism, racism and stereotyping.

(Adapted from Calder & Smith, 1993; Hicks & Holden, 1995; Pike & Selby, 1998; Tilbury, 1995; Agyeman, 2001; Toh, 2001; UNESCO, 2002)

At its core is the need to educate for a culture of peace, justice and democracy and the transformation of social conditions causing human suffering and exploitation. It goes beyond simply recognising and appreciating cultural diversity in society (Verma 1997) and ultimately aims to promote a global culture of peace through sustainable development (Commission on Education of the Universal Forum of Cultures (CEUFC), 2000).

Education for Intercultural Understanding aims to equip students with the skills necessary to actively and meaningfully participate as a member of the global community. It sees international and intercultural dialogue as vital to building a "non-violent, just and sustainable world community" (Kim, 2001). A review of the literature permits an identification of key concepts underpinning Education for Intercultural Understanding which include: peace, social justice, sustainable development, vision, social critique, social change, futures, participation and globalisation (refer Table 1).

Active and transformative learning approaches, associated with the socially critical paradigm and often linked with Environmental Education (Fien, 1993; Tilbury, 1993; 2003) also characterise this cross-curricular concern (refer Table 2). These pedagogical approaches promoted by Education for Intercultural Understanding aim to develop reflective and critical judgement as well as the skills to transform our way of life for a better future. Education for Intercultural Understanding recognises that culture is constantly in flux and that students need the skills to cope with and contribute positively to these changes (Woodrow, Verma, Richa-Trinidad & Bagley, 1997).

International Agencies such as the European Union and UNESCO have been influential in promoting this educational area. Since the historic 1974 "Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" was adopted at the 18th UN Session, UNESCO has expanded and intensified its efforts in this area (Toh, 2001, p. 9).

Education for Intercultural Understanding in Australia: Locating Key Influences in Policies and Practice

It is difficult to provide an authoritative definition or interpretation of intercultural understanding within education in Australia, as Education for Intercultural Understanding is not formally recognised as cross-curricular concern or explicitly featured within educational policy. However, the key concepts that underpin it still feature within education policy and practice in Australia. This next section identifies the curriculum influences which have informed the development of key concepts aligned with Education for Intercultural Understanding and will highlight the factors that have limited learning in this area.

As Hicks and Holden (1995) recognise, Australia has been the scene of many exciting curriculum innovations in the last fifteen years, especially in socially critical education. The fields of Global Education, Futures Education, Citizenship Education and more recently Education for Sustainable Development have offered a new socially critical paradigm which has influenced social studies thinking and practice in Australia and ultimately played a significant role in promoting the key concepts underpinning international and intercultural education (Tilbury & Henderson, 2003).

Education for Sustainable Development as a Key Influence

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has been gaining ground in Australia since the early 1990s. The principal aim of ESD, namely that of improving quality of life and making changes towards a more sustainable and just future (Tilbury, 2002), is very closely aligned with that of Education for Intercultural Understanding. This

cross-curricular concern is firmly rooted within the socially critical education paradigm and involves pedagogical approaches that link the goals of conservation, social justice, sustainable consumption, appropriate development and democracy into a vision for personal and social change (Fien, 2001).

However, the impact of ESD in Australian schools and its contribution to intercultural understanding is yet to be fully realised. In part this may be attributed to the Australian emphasis on ecologically sustainable development (Environment Australia (EA), 1992). This may explain why ESD is primarily focused on issues of biodiversity, salinity, drought, waste and pollution (see New South Wales Environment Protection Authority (NSW EPA, 1999)) as well as on the implementation of school environmental management plans (see Department of Education and Training, NSW (DET), 2001).

At present, notions of development promoted support what Thaman (2002) describes as "western, scientific, linear and financially driven notion of time rather than a circular perception more characteristic of Oceanic cultures" (p. 12). Thus, there are limited opportunities for culturally inclusive interpretation of "sustainable development". Fien (2001) argues that while ESD builds upon many innovative Australian education programs, it also calls into question many of the ways in which we have sought to educate. However, ESD offers the potential to challenge the ways of thinking and knowing as well as bring together the other "subjectival" strands in education under the goal of achieving a sustainable future (Tilbury, Stevenson, Fien, & Schrueder, 2002; Thaman, 2002).

Environmental Education as a Key Influence

Environmental Education is a growing educational priority for many states and this is reflected in policies such as "*Environmental Education for Victorian Schools*" (Education Victoria, 1998) and *The "Environmental Education Policy for Schools"* in NSW (DET, 2001) which require environmental education to be implemented at all school levels. This outcome of schooling seeks to instil students with an understanding of, and a sense of responsibility for, the environment through participatory and inquiry-based approaches.

The Environmental Education movement in Australia is informed by Australia's National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (Environment Australia, 1992), which interprets Sustainable Development as primarily an ecological concern. Thus, although sustainability discourses are slowly appearing within policy documents such as "Learning for Sustainability" the NSW Environmental Education Plan (NSWCEE, 2002) and Australia's National Action Plan "Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future" (Environment Australia (EA), 2000) the focus in practice is mostly limited to environmental change.

Australian initiatives often recognise the internationally developed goals of Environmental Education but, as with other educational initiatives, often ignore indigenous or alternative cultural worldviews as a means of achieving a more holistic and interdisciplinary way of thinking about physical and social environments. In 1993, Fien argued the need to integrate a socially critical element to current work undertaken in Environmental Education, which reflects critical education *for* the environment. This learning paradigm seeks to uncover the structural causes of real-world problems by promoting moral and political literacy skills and active and informed decision-making and problem-solving proficiency.

Although in 2003 Environmental Education has gained significant recognition as an important tool for change (UNESCO, 2002), its contribution to the socially critical paradigm and thus to Education for Intercultural Understanding has been limited

to promoting constructivist and participative pedagogical approaches (Tilbury & Henderson, 2003). The international dimension and concepts of political literacy, social justice and critique still remain absent from policy documents and curriculum materials which focus on environmental improvement of the local area through waste reduction, planting trees and the improvement of school grounds (e.g. see NSWCEE, 2002).

Global Education

The shift from International Education to Global Education in the 1970s marked a time when the world was turning its attention to global issues, such as poverty, human rights and environmental degradation. In Australia, it prompted discussions regarding the need to educate beyond the scope of its shores and to link Australian curriculum to current affairs (Holt, 2001).

Since then, Global Education has been a significant curriculum influence, which has introduced innovative and controversial concepts such as empowerment and social critique. It has also made a significant contribution to how teaching and learning was conceptualised. These influences provided a new focus to what was taught about other countries and cultures in the curriculum and served to problematise existing content. It also encouraged the questioning of power and inequalities that shape the international order.

This work found its way into classrooms through resources such as "New Wave Geography" (Geography Teachers Association of Victoria, 1988) and "A Better World for All" (Calder & Smith, 1993). These resources not only reflect a new content focus but also promote a new pedagogy of learning more focused on co-operative, issue and inquiry-based learning approaches. These innovative teaching and learning styles have proved to be a major contribution to the Australian curriculum (Tilbury & Henderson, 2003) and Dyer (2002) notes they are also consistent with the outcomes-based approaches now embedded within the curriculum.

Building on this work, the Curriculum Corporation, Asia Education Foundation and AusAid's Global Education Project recently collaborated to release "Global Perspectives: A Statement on Global Education for Australian Schools, 2002". This Statement aims to support the integration and delivery of Global Education in schools and complement existing "global series" curriculum materials. *Global Perspectives* is futures focused, emphasising core themes such as unity and interdependence, empowerment, social progress and sustainable development. It aims to instil an international dimension into the whole school experience and promotes this learning across the curriculum and from preschool to Year 12. The Statement also views critical literacy skills as vital to enable students to identify and challenge bias, stereotyping, racism, sexism, discrimination and prejudice in the media and literature (Bliss, 2002).

Although the themes of *Global Perspectives* are closely aligned to the concepts and processes promoted in Education for Intercultural Understanding, the Statement is not prescriptive or mandated by Australian Curriculum bodies and the Commonwealth Government. Therefore, the implementation of Global Education into the curriculum ultimately rests with curriculum developers, schools and teachers. The potential of this learning paradigm to contribute to the objectives of Education for Intercultural Understanding is significant, yet progress at a national level in this area remains constrained by the lack of co-ordination and support amongst the key education decision-makers.

Futures Education

It was not until the 1990s that attention in Australia turned to the need for a much clearer futures dimension in the curriculum. In part, this was encouraged by the setting up of a Commission for the Future, which promoted wider consideration of this dimension in Australia (Hicks & Holden, 1995). The futures dimension in the curriculum involves appreciation of the fact that we have a choice of alternative futures before us. Educating about and for the future involves the generation of new ways of thinking and requires that we examine the values and assumptions behind different views of future (Gough, 1988). It engages the individual in mapping probable and possible futures, encouraging people to take responsibility for enacting their preferred scenario. These techniques are seen as critical in addressing "dominant current trends in the world [that] hold no hope whatsoever for a transition to a peaceful and sustainable world" (Slaughter 1999, p. ix).

Perhaps some of the clearest indicators of the presence of the Futures dimension within education in Australia can be found in the New South Wales Futures Project, initiated in 1998 by the NSW Secondary Principals Council in collaboration with Department of Education and Training (NSWSPC, 1999), and the Queensland Government's Report on Secondary School Curriculum: Shaping the Future (Wiltshire, McMeniman & Tolhurst, 1994). The latter resulted in the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) producing four Position Papers in 2001, which documented the key cross-curricular priorities of literacy, numeracy, lifeskills and a futures perspective for the State (QSCC, 2001).

The *Futures Perspective* paper aims to involve learners in "developing and demonstrating knowledge, practices and dispositions that lead to the identification of possible, probable and preferred individual and shared futures" (QSCC, 2001, p. 2). In this sense, incorporating a "futures perspective" should equip students to understand, examine, reflect upon and take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions and actions.

In Australia, documents such as "Shaping the Future" and "Futures Perspective" have reinforced concepts of social change, peace, justice, participative decision-making and sustainable development within education. The futures movement also supported active learning strategies, values clarification, critical thinking and creative pedagogical techniques such as trends analysis, scenario mapping and Delphi studies, building on the work of Global Education. This trend also strengthens possibilities in Education for Intercultural Understanding, as it can play a critical role in contributing to a learning environment in which intercultural issues can be deconstructed, questioned and reflected upon.

Multicultural Education and Anti-Racism Education

Another emerging influence in Australian education has been an emphasis on multiculturalism. This movement reflects the cultural shifts that occurred in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, which moved away from policies and attitudes of cultural "assimilation" and "integration" towards multiculturalism (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), 2003).

Multicultural Education, as an interdisciplinary area of learning, is primarily concerned with promoting social cohesion, tolerance and understanding and ensuring that students are equipped with the skills and values to successfully participate in a culturally and linguistically diverse society. It, therefore, has the potential to strengthen core concepts aligned with Education for Intercultural Education such as equality, participation, peace, respect, reconciliation and co-operation.

However, many point to its failure to effectively promote genuine intercultural and international understanding and argue that it has not gone far enough to incorporate linguistic and cultural diversity. Donohue-Clyne (1998), for example, argues that Muslim students are still marginalised because their culture is largely unacknowledged in the curriculum. She calls for the inclusion of Islamic perspectives in history, literature and science to confront what she interprets as cultural bias in the curriculum.

Perhaps the problem is that Multicultural Education in Australia, as represented in government policy and school curricula, largely focuses on celebrating cultural diversity and recognising the "English as a Second Language" (ESL) needs of students from ethnic minorities through specific programs (Racism No Way, 2002). Whilst initiatives in this area promote valuable work in schools by addressing needs, many fail to address the underlying dichotomy: that a society can be multicultural and racist concurrently. This model of multicultural education in Australian schools does not incorporate Anti-racism Education, which is necessary to examine exploitation and injustice within our society. The lack of Anti-racism Education in Australian schools has restricted further developments in, and the scope of, Education for Intercultural Understanding.

There are some exceptions, however, which demonstrate a recent trend towards recognising the need for Anti-racism Education in school policy and curriculum. The *Victorian Guidelines for Managing Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Schools*, demonstrate the Department's commitment to countering racism in schools by promoting the need for learner skills for cooperation and understanding in cross-cultural settings (Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria (DEET), 2001).

A recent national initiative, the "Racism No Way" project, also signifies a re-orientation away from Multicultural Education. This project was initiated from a partnership between the Commonwealth Government's "Living in Harmony" Initiative and the National Anti-racism in Education Taskforce and utilises a central website to disseminate Anti-racism resources and practical strategies. These materials include: a review of international approaches to countering racism, a planning and evaluation framework for Australian schools to develop and implement strategies to counter racism, Government legislation and International law relating to racial discrimination and access to Australian cases of best practice in Anti-racism Education (Racism No Way, 2002).

Overall, the promotion of Anti-racism Education is in its early days in Australia and is yet to have a significant impact on policy and practice in schools. It is closely aligned with several of the key themes underlying Education for Intercultural Understanding as learning in this area necessitates that students have the ability to identify, explore and understand racism and build their capacity to develop cross-cultural skills. Anti-racism Education symbolises a deeper, more inclusive education, which can uncover and examine the influences and inequalities of politics and power in intercultural issues (Racism No Way, 2002).

Civics and Citizenship

Civics and Citizenship Education re-emerged in the mid-1990s as a key government educational priority after thirty years of neglect in schools (Print, 1999; Holt, 2001). This resurgence was initiated after a 1994 report from the Civics Expert Group demonstrated a decline in democratic citizenship education and experience in Australian schools (O'Brien & Parry, 2002). O'Brien and Parry (2002) claim that Citizenship Education recognises the need to balance diversity and unity amidst an

intensifying plurality of culture. In principle, Citizenship Education is committed to democracy, social justice, responsibility, futures and respect and tolerance for diversity and difference. Its framework for understanding is also consistent with learning for intercultural understanding as participatory and reflective learning techniques are promoted.

One of the most prominent influences in this learning field has been the Commonwealth Government's eight-year "Discovering Democracy: Civics and Citizenship Education" curriculum development program for Australian schools (Holt, 2001). In practice, the Discovering Democracy program has a prominent Australian History component, which tends to focus on information and awareness raising activities regarding the nation's cultural and civic past. However, the program does little to address intercultural education needs, as it rarely engages students in issues of globalisation. This limiting focus fails to adequately address the skills, values and tools students require for active global citizenship and ultimately serves to hinder progress towards a more peaceful and equitable future (O'Brien & Parry, 2002).

Overall, the learning fields of Education for Sustainable Development, critical Environmental Education, Global Education, Futures education, Anti-racism Education and Citizenship Education all fall within the socially critical education paradigm and have a genuine contribution to make towards Education for Intercultural Understanding in Australia. All these cross-curricular concerns share common goals and pedagogical approaches which are aligned with sustainable futures. To date, there has not been a common framework or statement to guide and inform educators working across these socially critical learning fields. It could be argued that this fragmented approach has watered down their transformative education potential.

Future Trends and Key Opportunities for Policy and Practice in Australian Schools

This paper has highlighted a number of curriculum opportunities for the advancement of Education for Intercultural Understanding in Australian schools. Some of these opportunities, particularly in the area of Education for Sustainable Development, Citizenship Education as well as Anti-Racist Education, are yet to contribute towards socially critical education in a way which will lead to a just, peaceful and sustainable future. However, there are existing trends in Australian education which are securing substantial resources and efforts and offer significant potential for developing Education for Intercultural Understanding. The following section is an attempt to outline these future trends and key opportunities:

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD is receiving significant attention in Australian education as a means to contribute to the goals of ecological sustainability, economic development and social justice. As this cross curricular concerns begins to mature, the issues of intercultural understanding are likely to play a more prominent role in visions of a sustainable future. Despite limited references to international or intercultural understanding in the NSW EE Plan (DET, 2001), recent initiatives, for example, in New South Wales, are beginning to grapple with the social and cultural dimensions of sustainable development, which has previously been neglected in curriculum practice. Two key initiatives, the New South Wales Government "Education for Sustainable Development professional development program" and the New South Wales Department of Education, Resource NSW and Environment Australia "Sustainable Schools Program" offer significant potential for advancing Education for Intercultural Understanding concepts and goals.

The "It's a Living Thing" professional development program, funded by the New South Wales Government, aims to build capacity to assist with the shift from Environmental Education to Education for Sustainability (www.gse.mq.edu.au/ILT_Flier_1.pdf). The project was developed in partnership with the Australian Association for Environmental Education (NSW), Macquarie University and the Nature Conservation Council. The program's focus is on sustainable futures and strongly promotes learning approaches such as critical thinking and values clarification. This is the first government-endorsed initiative which takes a holistic view of sustainable development and recognises the role of community groups in forming visions for sustainability. Once again the engagement of stakeholders offers potential for links to be made between Education for Intercultural Understanding and Education for Sustainable Development.

A recent initiative of the New South Wales Department of Education is looking to accredit "Sustainable Schools" throughout the state. The Sustainable Schools Program commenced as a pilot project in 2003, and reflects partnerships between NSW DET, Resource NSW and Environment Australia. Schools can participate on a voluntary basis in order to be supported in developing and implementing School Environmental Management Plans (SEMP) (Resource NSW, 2002). It is an attempt to link school development to curriculum development under the focus of sustainability. The project is still in its initial phase and the scope for advancing Education for Intercultural Understanding concepts under the banner of sustainable development is still unclear. Potentially, however, this well resourced program could provide an effective vehicle for furthering the goals of Education for Intercultural Education.

United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005- 2015

The United Nations passed a resolution in December 2002 to adopt the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development as endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. UNESCO will act as the lead agency and although Australia has not co-sponsored the Decade, all countries have been invited to participate. If the internationally defined goals of Education for Sustainable Development are recognised and integrated into Australia's work program for the decade, this could prove invaluable to advancing intercultural education. The next three years will prove critical for this movement, as plans for the United Nations Decade are drawn.

Civics and Citizenship

The work undertaken in Civics and Citizenship Education in Australia has instigated a new and complementary focus for educational research, which seeks to examine and promote the role of values education in schools. The Commonwealth Government has recently announced a research program into Values Education, which aims to "provide an informed basis for promoting improved values education in Australian schools" (Curriculum Corporation 2003, p. 1). This project clearly recognises stakeholder input into curriculum development, which is a shift away from the traditional expert-driven models. Given Australia's intercultural background, the stakeholder consultation process is likely to increase the international dimension within Citizenship Education.

Anti Racism Education

Our research suggests that the shift from Multi-cultural Education towards Anti-Racism Education has begun. The work of the "Racism No Way" project presents a significant opportunity for consolidating partnerships between Commonwealth Departments and State Education bodies, of both the public and independent schools

sector, as well as providing a critical contribution for tackling the deeper issues of exploitation, racism and prejudice and advancing the principles of Education for Intercultural Understanding.

Conclusion

Education for Intercultural Understanding is not formally recognised as a cross-curricular concern within the Australian Education system. However, this paper has documented how the key concepts underpinning it have been identified within some Commonwealth and State Policies, frameworks and practice. Whilst many of the examples reveal innovative and progressive pedagogical developments, few have demonstrated an adequate coverage of socially critical issues with an international and intercultural focus.

The evidence presented in this paper suggests that education policy and practice remains primarily focused on multiculturalism and promoting cultural cohesion and respect rather than building student capacity and proficiency towards the goals of intercultural education. A recent report commissioned by UNESCO developed an Intercultural Education Ladder (see Figure 1) and documented the steps required to advance from a focus on “intercultural respect” towards “intercultural education” and thereby facilitating learning for social change. Key opportunities for progress have been identified for policy and curriculum development, which could help address these needs and develop the skills and capacities that students require to work towards a more peaceful, democratic, equitable and sustainable future.

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