GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

CROSS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide policy makers and head teachers with some ideas and options to assist them in meeting the challenges of inclusion and diversity in education today.

Specifically, these guidelines make suggestions as to how schools can:

- respect and welcome diversity
- raise achievements of all learners
- promote learner voice and encourage responsibility among pupils
- incorporate good practice into the processes of improvement and self-evaluation of schools.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

These guidelines are based on international evidence and are thus applicable at a general level across a range of country contexts. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the specifics of what works in relation to each aspect of the guidelines may differ from one country or school or classroom to the next.

Rather than offering a simple list of suggestions or a detailed plan, the guidelines are intended as a starting point for discussion and debate.

THE CROSS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROJECT

The guidelines arise from the Cross Community Schools Project, designed and implemented by Fondazione Casa di Carità Arti e Mestieri within the framework of the European Union's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme.

The project, carried out between 2011 and 2012, involved four countries (Italy, France, Germany and Spain) and six different project partners (in addition to the project coordinator, Casa di Carità Arti e Mestieri, these were Il Nostro Pianeta and Società Ricerca e Formazione, two associations based in Turin, Actions, Perspectives et Prospectives Nord-Sud-Sud, Appui Conseil et formation in Lyon, Escola Tecnica Professional del Clot in Barcelona, and Berufsförderungswerk Nürnberg gGmbH in Nuremburg).

The idea for the project stemmed from the desire, shared by all the partners, to study innovative approaches within their respective countries to curb racist behaviour among adolescents (aged 15-18 years) attending schools and vocational training centres.

Throughout Europe, schools are among the first places that need to be reorganised as a consequence of migration and the "children" of this phenomenon, whose presence has dictated the need to address some of the most important issues of our time: how to combat inequality, protect fundamental rights and foster cultural exchange.

On one hand, teachers and educators working in multicultural contexts are required to "accommodate" a range of linguistic and learning needs, as well as the needs of adolescents who have been uprooted and for whom migration has made the difficult process of identity development even harder. On the other hand, learners have to make their way in a scenario of unprecedented pluralism and globalisation. In addition to the ordinary challenges of learning, becoming independent, growing up, making a place for oneself in the world

and developing a sense of identity, this puts additional strain on immigrant adolescents, often deriving from the temporary nature of their circumstances and a multiple sense of belonging.

Mechanisms such as ethnocentrism are far more evident in schools than in other contexts. The prejudices, opinions and preconceived judgments shared by the members of one group about those of another prevent any form of contact between the two, making it difficult to contradict those beliefs and ideas. These mechanisms are most apparent among adolescents. Several studies have shown that bullying among adolescents (aged 15-18 years) is closely associated with group identity and conflict between the various groups within the class, giving rise to the phenomenon of "racist bullying".

Schools need to address these problems, not overlook or underestimate them.

THE MODEL OF A CULTURALLY AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

Staff learning for inclusion and diversity

Engaging parents, families and communities

Culturally inclusive curriculum

Ethos of respect

Learner voice and participation

Responding positively to diversity

High expectations and achievement for all

Developing leadership for diversity and inclusion

Regional/local support and challenge

National policy and funding

Legal framework that protects equal opportunities

Community engagement and support

ENSURING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR SCHOOLS THROUGH AN ADEQUATE LEGAL FRAMEWORK, ACTIVE POLICIES, FUNDING TO SUPPORT INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Schools do not operate in isolation from the wider society and need to be supported by the communities they serve and by an enabling legal, policy and financial environment. Schools can only address issues of inclusion, diversity and integration if there is an adequate legal framework to ensure equal opportunities, implemented and supported through concrete national policies and targeted funding.

Support at regional/local level plays a crucial role in challenging and supporting schools to become more inclusive in their outlook and practices. For example, support at regional/local level can assist the schools through processes of monitoring, advising and evaluation; targeting interventions to schools in which children are at risk of underachieving; supporting innovation and disseminating successful practice; facilitating partnerships between schools and between schools and their communities; facilitating and encour-

aging in-school training on inclusion and diversity; providing opportunities for young people to get involved in local forms of governance and in developing policies and programmes.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum is at the heart of developing a culturally inclusive school. Although many countries make a commitment to inclusion and diversity, there is often a gap between policy and practice and there are relatively few examples of efforts to effectively monitor the progress and achievements of different groups of learners, or to provide an inspection and assessment framework that also includes aspects of inclusion and diversity.

An understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity should be embedded in the whole school curriculum and developed through teaching and learning. Schools often promote cultural diversity through extra-curricular activities, such as assemblies, festivals, school partnerships and student exchange programmes, but this is not enough.

The curriculum should reflect the contribution of different cultures throughout history to our understanding of the modern world. Teaching and learning materials should reflect diversity and present positive models from different cultures.

To guarantee equal opportunities and that all students benefit from the curriculum it is also important to put systems of assessment in place, to track and monitor inclusion. Inspection systems have an important role in ensuring that schools implement equality and equal opportunity policies and raise standards for all learners.

PROVISION OF TEACHER AND HEAD TEACHER TRAINING IN INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has identified the training of teachers in the area of diversity as a key priority for all Member States.[1]

However, it has emerged that many schools do not have teachers or head teachers with specialist expertise in intercultural education and it is relatively infrequent for issues related to inclusion and diversity to feature in initial or continuing professional training.

By their nature, culturally inclusive schools are learning communities where inclusion and diversity strategies should form part of teachers' initial and subsequent in-service training. Training programmes for head teachers should also include aspects of inclusion and diversity. Providing a range of learning opportunities for teachers, including participation in active, and reflective research processes, involvement in debate and in peer group reviews, all contribute to improving professional skills. The development of initial teacher education and further staff development opportunities for head teachers, governors and auxiliary staff is recognised as a priority for future policy.

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1   See ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education

Specifically, training should aim to:

- teach innovative methods for managing diversity at school
- implement school development processes that ensure the rights of all learners, regardless of their origin or background
- encourage multiple cultural perspectives when planning lessons
- gather, process and disseminate information about intercultural education
- develop new materials and tools in areas and subjects where particular needs have been identified
- encourage innovation and research in the field of attention to diversity in education
- provide educational institutions with advice and training for them to develop intercultural skills.

LEARNER VOICE

Learners contribute positively to the culture of the school. For schools to welcome and respond positively to diversity they are increasingly called upon to understand and take seriously the views and aspirations of their pupils.

Culturally inclusive schools have effective and democratic school councils with real responsibilities, and learner voice plays an important role in decision making.

A key lesson learnt from the Cross Community Schools project is that initiatives aimed at supporting learner voice can be a powerful mechanism for promoting issues of inclusion and diversity.

ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

A culturally inclusive school is committed to engaging with families.

Engaging parents and communities in the life of the school is important for many reasons. Above all to provide families with a formal means whereby they can be included in the school's policy making processes (for instance by including parents from migrant communities in school councils); to give them the opportunity to support their children's learning and, in turn, to educate them about inclusion and diversity. Involving parents from migrant communities is extremely important because they are often unfamiliar with the education system and feel socially distant from their children's schools.

Involving parents and the local community can often be a means for enriching the school curriculum, mobilising community resources and raising awareness about the importance of inclusion and diversity.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP FOR INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

If issues of inclusion and diversity are to be taken seriously by the school community, it must develop leadership on these issues.

The first step is to create a shared vision for a culturally inclusive school, actively involving all members of the school community through continuous consultation and dialogue. This shared vision must form the basis for implementing plans and actions, the efficiency of which must be constantly monitored and evaluated.

Inclusion and diversity must be an integral part of school planning, policies and processes.

As well as having a committed school leadership, it is also important to strengthen and develop networks around the school to sustain the best practice achieved.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

A culturally inclusive school has high expectations of all of its pupils.

Many schools have introduced innovative teaching and learning practices.

Some have adopted peer education schemes as a means of guiding and supporting pupils, helping them to settle at school and meet new people.

Others have adopted a Problem Base Learning (PBL) approach, which allows greater flexibility in the curriculum and increased participation of students focused on their interests.

Others employ a group of specialists who work closely with students with learning difficulties, providing additional assistance to support their integration.

Some schools specifically target underachieving groups. Pupils who are underachieving work under the supervision of a mentor teacher who supports them by dedicating more time to difficult subjects, organising study plans and guiding them during exams. In other cases the school provides additional learning experiences for groups of pupils, such as homework clubs or extra lessons.

Many schools employ teachers or tutors from other countries (in Italy, for instance, intercultural mediators) and to support and help pupils according to their different needs.

A key issue is the lack of systematic monitoring of achievement data in many schools.

Raising expectations and achievement also relies on regular, consistent and comprehensive data monitoring. Data are used to set targets for achievement at school and for individual pupils. In this way it is possible to develop an accurate view of the progress of pupils from different ethnic or linguistic backgrounds across different subjects to identify areas and strategies for intervention.

RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO DIVERSITY

Culturally inclusive schools respect and reflect the cultural, religious and linguistic differences in the local community and the city.

Wall displays reflect diversity, and learners' achievements are celebrated.

The school is a welcoming place, a point of reference for pupils and their families from different backgrounds.

There are numerous examples of how diversity can be celebrated at school: multicultural festivals, cookery sessions, visits to mosques and other places of religious worship, traditional music shows.

ENCOURAGING INNO-VATION AND CHANGE

Culturally inclusive schools respond positively to new policies and initiatives to promote inclusion and diversity. They demonstrate a "can do" culture in relation to change. They encourage innovation, led by teachers and pupils alike.

ETHOS OF RESPECT

Positive relations are a mark of respect in a culturally inclusive school. There is a safe learning environment, without any bullying. All bullying incidents are monitored and dealt with efficiently and immediately. The school has a shared behaviour management policy, defined in consultation with teachers, parents and pupils. The policy is implemented impartially and consistently by all members of staff.

In summary, the areas on which policy makers and education communities as a whole must focus in order to promote inclusion and diversity in school are:

Development of a legal framework to ensure equal opportunities

- **The need for targeted funding for initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion and improving performance of groups at most risk**
- **Ensuring that greater emphasis is placed on the issues of inclusion and diversity in training programmes for teachers, head teachers and all staff**
- **Development of policies and spaces to allow learners to take part in life at school and make their voice heard**
- **Making aspects of inclusion and diversity an integral part of the process of improving the school**
- **More widespread and systematic use of data, by the school, to monitor changes in pupils' performance and inclusion**
- **Increasing the presence of specialised staff at all levels**
- **Encouraging initiatives that foster the involvement of pupils' families in school governing boards and the education of their children**
- **Development of a school curriculum in which inclusion and diversity are embedded**

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