



KROSSS- Kick Racism Out of Sports, Schools and Society

Addressing Racism: In-service teacher training needs and approaches

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Addressing Racism: In-service teacher training needs and approaches

Education is widely accepted as a vital tool in the fight against racism and discrimination. At the European level a number of policy and legal measures have been adopted over the years in support of this, including the 1995 Resolution of the Council and of Representatives of member states' governments meeting within the Council on *'The response of educational systems to the problems of racism and xenophobia'*. This highlighted the necessity for educational systems to encourage equality of opportunity and promote respect for all by helping improve awareness and knowledge of European cultural diversity.

The 2000 Race Equality Directive also states that *'specific action in the field of discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin should go beyond access to employed and self-employed activities and cover areas such as education'*. The requirements of the Directive are also reinforced at the European level through the 2005 framework strategy on Non discrimination and Equal Opportunities for All, that places a continued focus on mainstreaming non discrimination in all relevant policies, including education.

Education can play three broad roles in anti racism efforts:

- *Knowledge*: by providing individuals, including students, teachers, schools and the schools community with knowledge and understanding of racism, how it works in modern society, its impacts and its ramifications.
- *Skills*: to enable individuals and institutions to understand and address racism through personal perspectives, in their teaching practices, and in their capacity to reform organisational practice.
- *Values*: education and school systems are also the most fundamental and effective tool that individuals and societies have to shape the values of contemporary and future society for equality of opportunity and outcomes for all of its citizens regardless of race.

Anti racism education differs from multicultural education in that it moves beyond the management of diversity that is often characteristic of multicultural education, and instead seeks to bring about a more holistic reform of education systems based on an understanding that racism can be structural and institutional rather than just personal and attitudinal. Hence in relation to education provision, it seeks to understand in greater detail the discriminatory impacts of racism within school systems and on student outcomes. It places a

particular emphasis on the training of teachers and on the reform of school policy and practice as the main drivers of change.

Teachers are the central to the development and promotion of anti racism strategies, and hence adequate knowledge and understanding of racism is vital in enabling them to play this role. Moreover, unless aware of their own racial perspectives and practices, teachers can unwittingly transmit racially biased perspectives in the class room and through their educational practices critically undermining anti racism efforts.

However, research findings from across Europe suggest that many teachers are not equipped to meet the challenges posed by the different ethnicities, cultures, religions and beliefs in their classrooms, and that current teacher education programmes are not adequate for providing the level of knowledge, competencies and attitudes that teachers require in order to challenge racism and work effectively with diverse student bodies.

In the UK the Anti Racist Teacher Education Network (ARTEN) has long argued that teachers should be consciously prepared to teach in a multicultural society and develop culturally sensitive practice, respect the religious and cultural sensitivities of all pupils and enable pupils to understand issues of racial equality. It recommends that all teachers should be able to demonstrate that:

- They are aware of, and prepared to identify and challenge racial bias and stereotyping in the curriculum and teaching materials
- They are committed to avoiding racial stereotypes and bias in their own teaching and are equipped to do so
- They recognise and value the common elements of human experience and the diversity embodied in different cultures, and seek to reflect both in their teaching
- They are able to recognise, and prepared to deal with, manifestations of racism in schools and classrooms
- They have high pupil expectations and an understanding of how racism impacts on learning

Building on the influence of teachers in the class room and their role in shaping school ethos, local education authorities and managers also play a vital role in proving additional support towards developing and maintaining good practice in the face of competing educational priorities. Education managers hold the keys for resources for developmental support for teachers, as well as setting curricula priorities and evaluating school and teacher effectiveness. Therefore, whilst not working in class rooms with children, managers and policy makers have a significant role in facilitating and supporting anti racism practice in schools.

Key areas of relevance for developing anti racism training for educators

There are wide differences of opinion over what the objectives of anti racism education are or should be, as racism itself is a highly complex social phenomenon that is encountered from many different perspectives including the personal, cultural, institutional and structural levels. It is important for educators to understand how racial inequalities at all these levels are maintained, and the role that they can play in challenging them. Additionally, ideas of race, as well as the societies in which they are set, are continually evolving, with new boundaries, fault lines and relationships of identity and power continually emerging. The terms of racial debate and discrimination can move to new grounds and of particular note in current European debates on migration and racism is the prominent focus on Islam, the Roma and refugees/asylum seekers.

Hence it is important to note at the outset that, as with all education initiatives, anti racism efforts need to be relevant to local, contemporary and shifting contexts, as well as linked to the needs of local students and patterns of racial inequality in local education systems. The following is therefore not a comprehensive manual for anti racism education, but based on a review of research, interviews with practitioners, and observation of anti racism training undertaken with teachers in London in September 2010 as part of this project, it is intended as an introductory guide to the field.

Setting the context: why anti racism education is needed, including the national and legal bases for action to eliminate racism and discrimination on racial grounds.

Concepts and definitions: exploration of definitions, terminology and language associated with issues of race, racism and cultural diversity, as well as of different approaches to issues of race including assimilation, integration, multiculturalism, managing diversity and anti racism.

Exploration of racism and its history: whilst recognising the specific contexts of different European countries, the broader shared history of racism in Europe includes among other things links to empire and colonialism, biological sciences/scientific racism, and the effects on contemporary society of post war migration politics. It also includes the history of anti racism and the various struggles and protest movements that have been central to challenging racism and xenophobia. Another key feature of anti racism education is the airing of alternative histories, perspectives and stories that challenge the dominant narratives of society and assumptions of equality and meritocracy. Alternate stories may be through statistics, research, history or personal accounts that present a challenge to 'received' wisdom that maintains inequality and discrimination in society.

Practical impacts of racial inequalities: in contemporary European societies these can range from education and employment inequalities, unfair treatment in policing and criminal justice systems, provision and access to public services such as health and housing, through to the stance of the media and politics in relation to minorities. An analysis of racial inequalities needs to include ways in which advantage and disadvantage is normalised into society and maintained through public and social institutions.

Racial inequalities in education: of particular relevance to educators is the ways in which racism and racial inequalities manifest themselves in schools and the broader education system, including: differences in educational outcomes, segregation in schooling, under-representation and/or lack of progression of ethnic minority teachers and education professionals, bullying and harassment, biases in pupil assessments etc. Awareness of issues of race in education also needs to include an understanding among teachers about ways in which children and young people develop, and how the well-being of learners is affected by a range of developmental, social, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences.

Understanding of racial identities: ways in which identity is formed, and an analysis of what it means to be white or black in European countries is particularly important. An essential component of critical engagement with racism is self reflection on the privileges and disadvantages that a student receives from membership of a particular racial group and the role one may play in maintaining inequality. There is rarely any focus on what it is to be white, but this is vital in enabling white students to understand racial identity and the hidden advantages that accrue from being white in European society. Such analysis needs to include an understanding of how 'in group' and 'out groups' are formed, and how minorities can be excluded on the basis of generalisations and narrow racial cues. It is also important to develop understanding about the impacts that racism and exclusion may have on the self identity of minority groups.

Prejudice and stereotyping: racism feeds on ignorance, and teaching about racism needs to address prejudices and make use of factual information and evidence to 'clear up' myths, half-truths, stereotypes, misinformation and generalisations about different racial or religious minorities. It is also important to focus on the use of language and communication styles in context of anti racism, and to develop the ability of trainees to reflect on the role of language and communication in perpetuating racial bias and discrimination.

Intercultural competence: this denotes the capacity of individuals to adjust to others, negotiate common meaning, the capacity of the self to change between different positions, to cope with the consequences of negative emotions arising from misunderstandings, conflicts and uncertainty inherent in intercultural encounters. Intercultural competence is a core competence for all learners within the European Education and Training agenda and hence it is of vital importance that teachers themselves develop high levels of intercultural competence if they are to effectively transmit this competence amongst their learners.

Conflict resolution: knowledge and understanding of conflict is a key component of learning to deal with racially diverse and conflictual situations. Conflict resolution skills and competencies are important in managing emotional reactions to racial situations and empowering teachers to challenge conflict and discrimination. Training in conflict resolution also enhances knowledge of how values may differ across cultures, how people may react to

conflict, how conflict escalates up a conflict ladder, and how people can be aware of these processes and take steps to address conflict effectively.

Anti racist action: The purpose of anti racism education is ultimately to enable individual teachers to become activists for change and to help them challenge racism in their personal, professional and social lives. Their continuous professional development needs to include legal updates on diversity and equal opportunities, ways in which they can improve/diversify their curriculum content and teaching practice, practical ways in which they can promote inclusion and equality in the classroom, way in which they can deal sensitively with incidents of racism, as well as enabling the sharing of 'good practice' from a range of teacher perspectives. Policy and actions to promote race equality also need to encompass the wider institutional ethos and additional support or special educational needs of minority learners in order to ensure that they have equal access to the curriculum and wider educational opportunities.

Pedagogical principles

The following are some principles that should be taken into consideration in the development of an appropriate course methodology:

- *Critical engagement* – anti racism education should enable teachers to critically reflect on race and manifestations of racism in their own contemporary societies.
- *Self reflection* – anti racism education should encourage teachers to reflect on their own racial identity and assumptions and the advantages and disadvantages that they receive from this.
- *Discomfort* – anti racism education should challenge teachers to assess how they have internalised racial logics and the role that they play in maintaining institutions of race.
- *Equality* – anti racism education is a political project focused on promoting racial equality and justice and the teaching of anti racism should reflect these principles.
- *Empowering* – anti racism education is about empowering people to change themselves and the world around them based on knowledge and understanding of how racism works in the personal, professional and public spheres and the measures that can take to address the issue within their own particular spheres of influence.

Pedagogical approaches

Racism is an uncomfortable subject and the discomfort it can cause needs to be handled carefully and sensitively. However, ultimately it needs to be understood that racism is a highly charged and emotional subject, and that some level of discomfort is unavoidable in

understanding and engaging with racism. A key challenge for teacher trainers therefore is to create a safe environment for critical self reflection in which all participants feel able to learn, open up and contribute.

- An effective way of doing this and helping participants to think constructively about issues raised is through establishing norms or ground rules that encourage open discussion. Getting participants to draw up their own ground rules at the beginning of the course can be particularly effective as the group is then able to regulate its own learning process. These can include:
 - Only one person to talk at a time – with no interrupting by others
 - Show respect for the views of others
 - Challenge the ideas not the people
 - Use of appropriate language – no racist or sexist comments
 - Allow everyone to express his/her view to ensure that everyone is heard and respected
 - Participants should give good reasons for the views they express
- Group work and facilitated class room exercises are all highly prominent throughout the literature as effective training methods. There are many exercises that do not set out a 'doctrine' of what racism is but develop a map of what racism and a racist society looks like. In addition such approaches allow a group to develop a picture of racism that they themselves own and are able to explore, as opposed to being given a static pre determined framework to reflect on.
- Methods of encouraging self reflection frequently focus on promoting understanding of identity through boundaries activities through role play or encouraging students to empathise with other racial view points and experiences within exercises.
- The concept of immersion is also used frequently whereby individuals or groups are taken out of their racial and cultural 'comfort' zone and into a minority racial situation. Encouraging students to share or reflect on instances where they may have found themselves as part of a racial minority and any negative or positive experiences, for example when travelling outside of Europe, or through more structured scenarios constructed through role play are also used.
- Stories are an essential aspect of anti racism: both historical stories and the testimony of those living in contemporary societies who are affected by racial issues and discrimination. The use of class based testimony is also important in order to continue to encourage ownership of the issue in a way that connects racism with real lives.

- Finally, as with all good teaching principles, education and learning should not stop at the class room door. The aim and objective of anti racism education is to enable people to develop a continual understanding the racial environment around them and to be equipped with strategies for ongoing action and change. Many of the lessons of anti racism education may not be internalised during the course but discovered and explored in the days, weeks or months after an effective class. Hence 'one off' short course are rarely a solution, and longer term education and learning opportunities are required to promote and support the development of critical capacities for anti-racism practice.