



Coexistence International at Brandeis University

Complementary Approaches to Coexistence Work

Key Issues in

Coexistence and Education

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Tony Gallagher

Coexistence International Staff

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John Lewis Moore, Program Manager
Shannon Taylor, Program Coordinator

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Paul van Tongeren


Coexistence International

Mailstop 086
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts
02454-9110

781-736-5017
781-736-5014 fax
www.coexistence.net
coexistenceintl@brandeis.edu

Education systems and institutions around the globe have undergone numerous transformations in the last five decades due to socio-political reforms prompted by demographic changes, social upheavals, and demands for equal rights. Today, in an increasingly interconnected world, schools are at the center of the on-going pursuit of coexistence¹ in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies. Policymakers, educators, and advocates are among the many players who have contributed to the changing landscape of education and coexistence in divided and post-conflict contexts. This paper offers an overview of key issues in the evolving relationship between coexistence and education systems across many societies, and highlights continuing dilemmas faced by schools in divided and post-conflict contexts.

Historically, the role of schooling has been antithetical to coexistence values. Over many hundreds of years formal education systems were developed to secure the position of social and political elites. Initially the position of elites was secured and reinforced by providing only very limited access to formal educational opportunities. This began to shift as mass education developed at the primary or elementary stages, and later at secondary or high school stages. Here too, however, some mass education systems developed a pattern which involved selective routes or pathways for different groups of pupils and many societies continued to pursue education models that were grounded in the belief that schools "prepare people for their appropriate station in life."² In the last half-century or so the patterns have shifted again, in part because traditional views had been based on fictive notions of cultural homogeneity, and it became increasingly less credible to deny the reality of diversity. It is within this context that we find the beginning of an engagement with the issue of coexistence.



Tony Gallagher is a Professor at Queen's University Belfast and Head of the School of Education. His main research interest lies in the role of education in divided societies. While the main focus of his work has been Northern Ireland, he has also worked in Israel/Palestine and South East Europe. He is currently leading a number of research and development projects promoting collaborative networks among schools (www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk).

Change has also been an outgrowth of the consequences of war: many attributed the First World War to a failure to deal with minority problems, and as a result many of the peace treaties of 1919-20 included protection for minorities and recognition of their right "to establish and manage at their own expense charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, as well as the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein."³ By contrast, after the Second World War the consensus was that the issue of minorities had been abused by the Nazis to justify aggression, so the balance shifted towards protecting individuals from the consequences of discrimination, rather than protecting groups qua groups. By the 1960s this liberal focus on individuals was itself criticized, on the basis that it ignored the implicit privileging of dominant identities and often amounted to little more than assimilation.

Debates among education experts, practitioners, and policymakers continue about educational models that result in sustainable and genuine coexistence in multi-ethnic societies. The problem lies in the balance between measures that seek to encourage social cohesion, while at the same time recognizing the reality of diversity and difference. Policy and practice often tends to emphasize one or the other of these elements. An approach based on coexistence principles seeks an appropriate balance between these demands, while recognizing that "appropriateness" is likely to be fluid in relation to time and context.

What, then, is distinctive about an approach to education founded on coexistence principles? First, in contrast to the fictive homogeneity assumed by assimilationist approaches, a coexistence approach recognizes and values difference and diversity; second, in contrast to versions of multiculturalism which promote difference, seemingly at all costs, a coexistence approach acknowledges the importance of social cohesion and the need to build a sense of common citizenship; and third, a coexistence approach recognises that this sense of commonality is not pre-ordained and immutable, but is constantly evolving and subject to critical reflection and dialogue. This also implies that the specific routes taken by particular societies will vary. In other words, in order to support socially cohesive societies, education systems should consider how best to engage with

notions of commonality and difference, while embracing processes of dialogue and change.

The Minority Rights Group has highlighted the way the international legal framework for minorities and indigenous peoples also seeks to hold this balance between the imperatives of cohesion and diversity, while maintaining the centrality of the child's best interest.⁴ The core principles of education were also captured well by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Katarina Tomaševski, when she said that education must meet the "four As": it must be available (free and government-funded), accessible (non-discriminatory and accessible to all), acceptable (culturally appropriate and with good quality teaching) and adaptable (evolving with the changing needs of society).⁵ Unfortunately, the reality is that minorities are too likely to lose out on most of these criteria.

Schooling Together, Schooling Separately

Around the world, schooling is provided in a variety of educational institutions and arrangements. In many societies the commitment to the notion of a common good or a common civic tradition has encouraged an approach based on unitary public schools. At first glance, operating common schools in a way that reflected the diversity of society may seem to have been the most obvious approach. However, the more predominant approach as mass education developed was that common schools did not so much reflect diversity as impose dominant cultures across society. Indeed, many mass education systems had assimilation as an overt aim and this, by definition, provided little space for the recognition of minority identities or cultural practices.

In other contexts, the historical recognition of difference, particularly based on the theory of denominationalism, has led to the development of separate schools. Several human rights conventions since the Second World War have recognized the rights of minorities to run their own schools. Thus, for example, Article 2 of the UN Convention against Discrimination in Education recognizes the right for separate schools on the basis of gender, religion, or language, provided that attendance at them is optional and that they conform to national standards of

educational provision.⁶ The distinction between segregated systems, in which minorities are obliged to use their own schools (such as apartheid South Africa, or the southern states of the U.S. prior to 1954), and separate systems, in which minorities run their own schools as a matter of choice, is important.⁷ When segregation is imposed, there is clearly little positive contribution to intercommunal coexistence.

Whether schooling systems are segregated or separate, there is evidence that such systems can have a detrimental impact on social cohesion. The decision in Israel in the 1950s to formally divide schools has, over time, reinforced the disadvantaged position of Arab-Israelis (see case of Israel).

Israel⁸

In the 1950s, soon after its founding, Israel shifted the perspective of its education policy from a “melting pot” ideology to one of cultural pluralism. Rather than combining all children into one uniform school system, the Israel State Education Law of 1953 created a system that divided schools into four groups, which are still present today—secular, religious, private, and Arab and Druze. Teachers are only allowed to use materials in the classroom that have been previously approved by the Ministry of Education, which effectively limits what is taught in Arab schools. Numerous independent organizations are working to address this issue by promoting equality within Israel’s education system. One of these is The Abraham Fund’s Mirkam initiative, which utilizes education to promote inter-dependence and collaboration among communities of Arabs and Jews throughout Israel.⁹ Another organization, Hand in Hand,¹⁰ builds elementary schools throughout Israel, with permission from the Ministry of Education, that both Arab and Jewish students attend. Each school is led by an Arab and a Jewish principal who work side by side. All classes are taught in both Arabic and Hebrew and emphasize diversity and tolerance. PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East)¹¹ is a team of Israeli and Palestinian teachers and researchers who are designing a program called “Learning Each Other’s Historical Narratives.” Since there is much tension surrounding the differing perspectives on the history of the Middle East, PRIME historians are creating two distinct historical narratives, one written from the perspective of the Jewish Israelis and the other from Palestinian Arabs.

For many years the Netherlands had the reputation as the most liberal society in Western Europe. This was, in part, built on an impressive historical track record of dealing with religious pluralism by a political arrangement called “consociationalism” which encouraged institutional pluralism, including the public funding of denominational and other private schools. More recently, however, the inability to adapt to changing circumstances has resulted in marked shifts in Dutch society and politics, and a perception of growing intolerance between Christians and Muslims (see case of The Netherlands).

The Netherlands

Historically, the Netherlands addressed religious pluralism by a system known as “pillarization” or consociationalism, in which mass segmentation is combined with elite accommodation. Thus, society is characterised by a series of separate pillars of institutions belonging to each of the different communities, while government involves coalitions between the leaders of the communities. In education, mass segmentation means that there exist a wide variety of separate school systems for different communities. The constitution permits any community to seek public funding for a school as long as it meets defined viability criteria and offers a distinctive educational or ethical philosophy. In consequence this means that most schools are privately owned, but publicly funded. The Ministry of Education which oversees the entire system will be part of a coalition government involving members of many different political parties, each of which is rooted in one or other of the communities. Since the 1960s, however, the system of pillarization has weakened and become increasingly incapable of dealing with the tensions emerging from the arrival of migrants from former colonial territories. Within the past decade this has led to the emergence of a popular far-right political party. After the leader of this party, Pim Fortuyn, was assassinated by an individual who claimed he did so in order to stop him exploiting Muslims as ‘scapegoats’ and targeting ‘the weak parts of society to score points’ to try to gain political power¹², and the subsequent assassination of a polemic film-maker, Theo Van Gogh, by a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim¹³, anti-Muslim feeling heightened and the long-standing image of the Netherlands as the most tolerant of European societies seemed to have been consigned to the past.¹⁴

The negative consequences of legally enforced segregation in the U.S. are well understood.¹⁵ However, while the northern states of the U.S. never adopted the “Jim Crow” laws that imposed segregation, patterns of residential segregation allied with small school districts created significant levels of de facto segregation. Indeed, the recent fiftieth anniversary of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision outlawing segregation highlighted the fact that the period of active desegregation in the U.S. lasted for little more than a decade, and that recent decades have been characterized by a growing pattern of re-segregation.¹⁶ A similar pattern became evident in northern cities of Britain after rioting in 2001: a “race-blind” approach to housing and school admissions policy had led to widespread, if informal, segregation between communities and is seen by many to have contributed to the breakdown of community relations (see case of Britain).

In contexts where education is characterized by separate schooling, the key issue lies in the nature of the relationship between schools and between groups of schools. Schools are not institutional isolates, but rather operate within interdependent systems, so the practical question is whether interdependence acts to promote or challenge cohesion in the wider society. When systems of separate schools operate like discrete silos,

they may act to reinforce social divisions and leave societies more at risk during times of ethnic tensions.¹⁸

Britain

In the two decades following the Second World War Britain received an influx of migrants from the Commonwealth seeking job opportunities. The initial approach of the government was avowedly assimilationist in that the migrants were expected to adapt to the assumed common norms and culture of British society. To aid this process the children from migrant families were dispersed across schools in order to ensure that the proportion in any one school did not rise above a designated level. Later this approach was abandoned in favor of a recognition, within schools and classrooms, of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity, in turn, came to be criticized for abstracting cultural artifacts from political analysis and was replaced by a more critical anti-racist approach. The anti-racist approach received a level of official sanction after the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence led to claims that institutional racism was pervasive throughout British society. More recently, however, the discovery of widespread de facto segregation in schools in northern cities after riots in 2001 prompted concern that Britain was “sleep-walking towards segregation.”¹⁷ This has led to a reappraisal of multiculturalism and a shift towards greater emphasis on aspects of common British identity, rather than on allowing difference to flower.

There are, however, examples where states have acted in progressive ways to promote positive interdependencies between separate schools. In Malaysia separate schools have traditionally been provided on the basis of language and national origin, but there have been recent attempts to develop common campuses in which separate schools can share facilities and, where it is hoped, students will engage in sustained interaction (see case of Malaysia). Interestingly, following nearly three decades of educational interventions in Northern Ireland, including the development of a small, but significant sector of integrated schools, there have been moves recently towards sharing and networking between separate schools (see case of Northern Ireland).

In some European countries, there is an alternative model based on ideas of civic republicanism. In this model, schools, as civic institutions, are seen as public places where core aspects of citizenship are inculcated. Beyond this, however, communities are free to maintain their distinctive cultural practices and there is no expectation that these practices have to be abandoned. This does, however, leave little space for the recognition of diversity within public space generally, and within schools in particular. France provides the clearest example of this approach, where there is a commitment to maintaining the secular republicanism of public space. Out of this commitment, for example, grew the decision to ban conspicuous religious symbols, including the hijab, in all state-run schools with students up to age 18 years on the grounds that, in this public

space, all pupils should be free from proselytism and the imposition of community norms.

Educating an Increasingly Diverse Citizenry: Assimilation and Integration Models

The post-war economic boom in many Western European countries encouraged the arrival of large numbers of migrants from other parts of Europe and former colonial territories. In many countries special provisions were made for supplementary teaching of the children of migrants in their home language or culture, sometimes by bringing teachers from their home country. However, while this acted to preserve identity among migrant families, there was rarely any consideration given to providing education in the migrants’ language or culture to children of the host community. This was because it was often assumed that the migrants were a transient population who would neither settle nor receive citizenship rights; on this basis, the provision of supplementary education to the children of migrant families was at least partly informed by a desire to maintain their capacity to return home.

Malaysia¹⁹

While Malay remains the language of instruction at the majority of primary schools, the Ministry of Education has begun to introduce Chinese and Tamil languages as elective courses in some national schools. This decision came in response to the increasing trend of Chinese- and Tamil-speaking students overwhelmingly choosing to attend National-type and private schools, where they are taught in their native language. This trend has sparked a number of debates in the media and in education-policy circles, with concerns being voiced that separate schooling results in greater polarization in the society later on. The Ministry of Education has also recently established several “vision schools” across the country. These schools combine an existing National school (using Malay as the medium of instruction) with a National-type Chinese school (with Mandarin as the medium of instruction) and a National-type Tamil school (using Tamil as the medium of instruction) on the same campus. While the classes take place within each respective small school community, all students share common facilities, such as the school canteen and the sports grounds. The schools are currently under a separate administration but are being observed with great interest by many educators and politicians, some of whom have expressed hopes that the close proximity of students of different ethnic groups and the organized activities between the schools will encourage greater interaction between students and will foster national unity.

During the 1960s there was a marked political and policy shift in many countries towards a positive engagement with difference. This took many different forms, including the development of multicultural curriculums, the recognition and legitimization of

different identities, and a more critical engagement with the effects of racism, ethnocentrism, and sexism in education. The United States public schooling system in the post-segregation era provides one such example. In line with the American Constitution's 'wall of separation' between church and state²⁰ denominational schools could not receive government funding and public schools were required to act above particular interest while serving as the key mechanism of the melting pot. The U.S. public schooling system, at least officially, was envisioned as the vehicle for creating a common sense of citizenship among probably the most diverse society on the planet.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland suffered a period of political violence from the 1960s until the end of the 1990s, when the duelling parties reached a political agreement. Throughout this period many looked to education as a path towards reconciliation, although many were also critical of the de facto religious segregation that has always characterized the schools system. A number of interventions have been tried over the years; and a particularly important and enduring approach has been through the curriculum. Curricular approaches include the development of common programs and textbooks for the teaching of history or religious education, the development of entirely new programs such as Education for Mutual Understanding and, most recently, a citizenship program involving a focus on the themes of democracy, equality, rights, and inclusion. A second approach has involved contact programs providing opportunities for young Protestants and Catholics to work together, although evidence backing up the impact of this work is limited.²¹ A third approach has involved the creation of an entirely new integrated school system, characterized by planned mixing of Protestants and Catholics among both students and teachers. Created in 1981, the integrated sector has grown to over 65 schools and about 6 percent of the student population.²² The fourth, and most recent, approach seeks to develop collaborative networks between groups of schools: rather than working towards integrated schools, this approach aims for an integrated system in which the institutional boundaries between young people are rendered porous.²³

Many education models in existence today have been greatly impacted by these shifting societal mores. Thus, for example, whereas British schools had an overtly assimilationist approach in the early 1960s, by the 1990s public policy had shifted towards accepting and dealing with the existence of institutional racism (see case of Britain). This change in discourse and policy has resulted in a number of practical iterations, and British schools continue to undergo further change. Evidence of change in progressive directions can also be seen in Canada (see case of Canada) after policy change in the 1970s, and in Brazil (see case of Brazil), where the momentum came from the first World Conference on Racism.

Curriculum Considerations

An additional key issue for coexistence is school curriculum. Many countries provide a statutory curriculum in which central prescription of what is taught is common. This also means that debates on the content of the curriculum tend to occur in the sphere of public policy. Perhaps the most significant exception to the pattern of a national curriculum is the United States, where education is decentralized not just to the state level, but even further to the school district level (see case of the United States of America). Even in the U.S., however, the debate over standards has focused attention on the content of the curriculum provided to pupils, and in the case of proposed new history standards in the 1990s, the content provoked significant national controversy (see case of The History Standards Debate in the U.S.)

Indeed, the teaching of history arguably provides a crucial test of coexistence on at least two levels. First, the idea of the nation-state is based on the idea that a national community not only shares a common cultural pattern, but also that it shares a common history that is often linked to a 'national' territory.²⁴ In many contexts the history curriculum represents this common narrative, despite its historical fragility. In this situation the test of coexistence may be taken from the extent to which the history curriculum represents a more complex and dynamic set of narratives. A second test of coexistence relates to communities which are experiencing ethnic conflict or division, as the teaching of history may reflect the contemporary pursuit of legitimacy or justification. Here again a test of coexistence may be derived from the extent to which the teaching of history represents alternative perspectives or narratives.

Canada²⁵

An early attempt at making educational institutions more inclusive in Canada was introduced as part of a 1971 policy calling for "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework." The policy officially declared Canada to be a multicultural "mosaic" society where minority members could participate in government-funded heritage language programs to maintain their ethnic identity while still maintaining an overarching Canadian identity and equal rights. All subsequent multicultural policies at the federal and provincial levels, such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988, typically conveyed a commitment to a middle ground between total assimilation and the creation of cultural "ghettos." Multicultural education policies and school programs were designed to prepare citizens for participation in Canadian democratic society and to instill shared values that underpin the national identity while accepting the cultural and linguistic differences that enrich the society.

There are extant examples that offer approaches to the teaching of history that reflect a coexistence approach. The Joint History Project (JHP) run by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation

in Southeast Europe²⁶ has produced textbooks that try to chart a path through the often-fractious relationships between the peoples of Southeast Europe. This project is based on

Brazil²⁷

In 2001, after attending the World Conference on Racism hosted in South Africa, the Brazilian government increased its efforts to give black Brazilians more equitable access to higher education and government jobs. The policy is one of affirmative action, implemented in the form of racial quotas. It mirrors that of the United States and has been controversial among the Brazilian population. After the policy was first enacted at the university in Rio de Janeiro, over 300 lawsuits were filed against the state university, some from white students who argued that their applications had been denied in favor of a less qualified minority.²⁸

participatory methodologies of history education “in order to encourage, support and bring about democratic change in Southeast Europe by working through democratic values and fostering the emergence of citizens who are empowered to defend and promote these values.”²⁹ The approach adopted in this project has been to encourage the participation of as wide a network of scholars and educators as possible in order to produce new textbooks that offer multiple perspectives on the history of the region. They hope to provide people in the region with materials that will allow them to discuss and become reconciled with their recent history, and develop a sense of a shared past and shared future. Given the terrible violence of the Yugoslav succession wars it is hardly surprising that there are still significant recriminations about atrocities. A project such as the JHP offers hope that, even in the most difficult circumstances, educators can play a leading role in the construction of new and better ways for communities to reconcile the past and move towards a democratic future.

A further example is provided by the U.S.-based organization Facing History and Ourselves,³⁰ which emerged from a desire to design materials that would help educators teach about the Holocaust. Over time this has grown into an organization with international ties, an extraordinary set of curriculum resources, and pedagogy for dealing with controversial issues in the past and linking them to moral choices in the present. Materials and methods for addressing issues related to difference in ways that promote positive approaches to coexistence are available from a host of other organizations. Perhaps one of the best known is Teaching Tolerance,³¹ the educational website associated with the Southern Poverty Law Center in the United States.

All discussion of a curriculum’s content, however, needs to be preceded by decisions on how extensively that curriculum should recognize different cultural identities and perspectives. One of the consequences of an approach based on assimilation is an assumption that the majority group has a common cultural framework that provides the basis for the school curriculum. As the need for multiple cultural frameworks was acknowledged,

claims for recognition in the curriculum were also advanced. Recognition can take the form of removing stereotypical representations, or including reference to alternate identities for the first time. But the process of recognition raises the issue of how far that recognition should go: few will deny that stereotypes should be excised but, as it is impractical to recognize all identities, some criteria need to be set in order to decide which alternates can find a place. This is not unproblematic, as the dispute over the Afrocentric curriculum in the United States some years ago illustrated.³²

United States of America³³

Over the years, several prominent approaches to multicultural education have been developed; the following are just a selection from the currently available curricula.³⁴ Many secondary school educators choose to use more than one approach in their classroom.

- Advocates of the *Teaching the Culturally Different* approach attempt to raise the academic achievement of students of color through culturally relevant instruction.
- In the *Human Relations* approach students are taught about commonalities of all people through study of their social and cultural differences but not their differences in institutional and economic power.
- The *Single Group Studies* approach is about the histories and contemporary issues of oppression of people of color, women, low socioeconomic groups, and gays and lesbians.
- The *Multicultural Education* approach promotes the transformation of the educational process to reflect the ideals of democracy in a pluralistic society. Students are taught content using instructional methods that value cultural knowledge and differences.
- Educators who use the *Social Reconstructionist* approach to multicultural education go a step further to teach students about oppression and discrimination. Students learn about their roles as social change agents so that they may participate in the generation of a more equitable society.

Recognition of Minority Rights

The principle of recognition relates to the extent to which alternative identities should be formally and publicly acknowledged: in the classic sense this relates to the degree of tolerance that can be allowed within society, meaning, how far can we push the recognition of diversity before threatening the very existence of society itself? But whereas in a mechanical system identifying the limits of tolerance is a largely technical exercise (go beyond a certain tolerance level and the system simply fails to function), identifying the limits of tolerance in social systems is much harder. One obvious basis for

establishing appropriate tolerance levels may be found in the international conventions on human rights, as these provide a set of standards according to which people within a society ought to be treated. However, even here we find variation in practice across societies operating within the same framework of rights.

One example of this is provided by debates in Europe over the claimed right to wear headscarves (hijab) in schools. In France headscarves and other conspicuous religious symbols were banned in schools in 2004. However, once young people have attained the age of majority they are free to wear headscarves if they wish, including in the universities. In Germany the situation is slightly different. As civil servants, teachers are banned from promoting particular perspectives, and as a result many German states banned teachers from wearing headscarves. But pupils are allowed to wear them. In Turkey the government banned headscarves throughout universities in defense of the secular state, but this decision was later overturned after an Islamic party was elected to government; both actions, the ban and the lifting of the ban, were defended on the grounds of promoting tolerance and reconciliation. In Britain there is no formal government policy on the wearing of headscarves, and they are generally accepted in schools, but court action did move to ban the niqab (a face veil covering the lower part of the face up to the eyes worn by observant Muslim women) as a more obtrusive form of veiling.

The History Standards Debate in the U.S.

In 1994, the National Council on History Standards in the U.S. completed two years of work on a set of national standards that recommended what every schoolchild should learn about United States history. The group involved about 200 historians and educators from every part of the country and from a wide range of perspectives. Yet within the year the documents had become intensely controversial. They were attacked by Lynne Cheney, who had helped fund the project when she headed the National Endowment for the Humanities; U.S. senators voted to condemn the standards; and media commentators on radio and TV lampooned them. The critics' concern was that the standards denigrated American heroes, played down Western civilization and democratic values, and over-emphasized the role of minorities.

Most of these examples came before their respective national courts and all would have been considered, and permitted, in light of the European Convention on Human Rights.³⁵ Thus, the international framework of rights provides some guidelines, but few detailed prescriptions. In part this is so because the judgement on any specific case requires a national court to seek a resolution between competing rights. And, as Dominic McGoldrick points out, while many of those who oppose bans on wearing the hijab do so on the grounds of defending the right of expression of religious groups, most international conventions,

as we have noted above, do not accord group rights, but rather focus on individual rights.

This ongoing debate over the priority of the individual versus the group takes us right back to the core political argument over recognition, and it's a debate that has recently resurfaced in a critique of multiculturalism. A multiculturalist view would stress that the preservation of group identity is a sufficiently high priority that some degree of community rights should be recognized by society, as illustrated by the Amish example considered below. Traditional liberals, of course, reject this view and argue instead that rights belong to individuals, not groups. The traditional liberal view, however, fails to engage with the reality that individuals face discrimination not because of their individual qualities, but because of their group membership – to use Martin Luther King's words, they face discrimination "not due to the content of their character, but the color of their skin." Indeed, it was because of the claimed inadequacy of individual-focused, or "color-blind" solutions to the problem of discrimination that group-based solutions came to the fore. Thus, if the legal starting point was to outlaw discrimination against individuals on the basis of arbitrary and irrelevant criteria, later measures relied on racial or ethnic monitoring to examine patterns of participation, followed by proactive affirmative measures aimed at increasing participation rates of under-represented minorities.³⁶ There was, in other words, a drift from solutions focused on individuals to solutions focused on groups.³⁷ A particularly good example of the evolving character of this issue can be seen in the debates over race-based admissions criteria to U.S. universities.³⁸

While traditional liberals have always railed against this trend, in the recent debate over multiculturalism some liberal egalitarians have also joined the fray, arguing that the balance may have swung too far in favor of groups, at a significant cost to the right of individual members of those groups to autonomy or, more particularly, the right to decide for themselves whether they wish to remain group members. At one level it is easy to identify when group domination becomes unacceptable: for example, one could defend the principle of the right of minorities to core cultural practices in order to preserve group identity, but at the same time support a law banning female genital mutilation, or oppose a law requiring mandatory racial segregation in schools. In other cases, however, the dilemma is more acute. The U.S. Supreme Court allowed the Amish to withdraw their children early from public schools in order to contribute to domestic labor. To a multiculturalist, such as Amy Gutmann,³⁹ this is a small compromise which helps maintain the integrity of the community: Gutmann accepts that when democracies permit such exemptions "they should recognize that they are effectively placing the value of a particular communal way of life above the value of a democratic education,"⁴⁰ but argues that this may constitute an acceptable compromise, unlike, for example, "capitulation to the demands of a violent separatist group." But to a liberal egalitarian, such as John Barry,⁴¹ this decision violates

the rights of the children involved as it restricts their capacity to decide later whether they wish to remain in their parents' community or opt to leave. Both perspectives are rooted in a positive view of coexistence and a commitment to social justice, but the delineation of the "correct" approach remains contested.

Equity and Access

Issues relating to equitable distribution of resources in the education sphere remain central to current political debates in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Brazil, to name just a few. Whether education is provided in common or separate schools, patterns of funding and access to quality education provide a crucial basis for assessing the quality of coexistence. In many contexts minorities face disadvantages in educational outcomes, whether due to less favorable treatment generally, or because of an indirect impact through, for example, structural inequities and higher levels of social disadvantage. Educational performance, of course, provides access to options at more advanced levels, so less favorable outcomes at the secondary school level serve to compound disadvantage. A common response to this, particularly at the college level, has been affirmative action, which seeks to take prior disadvantage into account when admissions decisions are made. Not surprisingly, affirmative action measures are often highly controversial, not least because they are sometimes seen as forcing people in the present to pay for wrongs committed in the past. In the United States legal disputes over affirmative action have been around for as long as the concept itself.⁴² In the education world, legal disputes have tended to focus either on the use of bussing as a means of desegregating schools, or on special entry procedures that enhance minority admissions to higher education.

But affirmative action, particularly through the use of quotas for entry to educational opportunities, is widely used in other jurisdictions.⁴³ In post-independence India the reservation of places in education for members of "lower castes" was credited by some as contributing significantly to social mobility and the development of new political leadership.⁴⁴ By 1990, however, a government commission's recommendation to extend the program proved to be politically highly contentious.⁴⁵ Affirmative action measures have also been used in African states to promote gender equity in entry to higher education, although the evidence highlights the importance of multi-faceted, rather than piecemeal, approaches to the problem.⁴⁶ The position the U.S. has settled on is that affirmative action can be applied to mitigate past discrimination and to promote diversity, but confusion remains on the mechanisms that can be used to promote minority entry into schools (see also case of Brazil).⁴⁷

An alternative is to obviate the need for affirmative action by seeking to address problems earlier in the education system, thereby dissipating some of the conditions that create disadvantage. In the U.S. this is sometimes referred to as

"widening the pipeline." In some countries, this includes special support earlier in the system to overcome the effects of disadvantage, whether through additional funding for schools that take higher than average numbers of socially disadvantaged children, or through the provision of individualized support for children with special educational needs. Others have argued for a social inclusion approach encouraging all schools to examine critically the barriers that limit the participation of some children and to seek ways to remove those barriers;⁴⁸ this philosophy sees the problem in terms of institutional constraints, not individual deficits. As with the issue of recognition, however, debates on the best way forward in this area remain intense and unresolved.

Conclusion

As noted by Coexistence International, "coexistence is evidenced in relationships across differences that are built on mutual trust, respect, and recognition, and is widely understood as related to social inclusion and integration."⁴⁹ In practice the way in which societies have dealt with diversity, and the extent to which this has incorporated coexistence principles, has changed over time; furthermore, at any particular point in time there have been differences in approach largely as a consequence of contextual factors: in other words, experience suggests there is no simple solution, and there is no single solution. Thus, while there are clear examples of educational arrangements or practices that are antithetical to coexistence values, it is less clear if there are simple templates that guarantee positive outcomes. Given the dynamic nature of education and our developing understanding of the interdependencies that exist between communities, perhaps our best aspiration is that coexistence principles will be taken into account when decisions for the future are being made. Likewise, when policies are designed and implemented we hope their impact will be evaluated through the lens of coexistence values to identify any necessary changes.

The examples considered in this paper have focused on three key elements of education: the structure of schools, the content of the curriculum, and the routes and opportunities available to young people. Schools may operate as unitary systems or allow (or require) separate schools for distinct groups; the curriculum may cast a view of society that acknowledges or denies difference; and the routes and opportunities available to young people may be mediated, formally or informally, by arbitrary barriers such as race, gender, language, religion, sexuality, or disability.

A coexistence lens does not provide simple prescriptive answers, but it would imply that schools, whether unitary or separate, encourage processes of interaction between communities that promote cross-cutting connections; it would encourage the development of curricula that value the richness and intrigue of diversity, while promoting a sense of a common good; and it

would privilege the principle of social justice, while ensuring the rigorous removal of arbitrary barriers to opportunity and progress. An education system working towards these aims would promote the best of democratic practice and encourage intercultural dialogue;⁵⁰ and it would recognize that the achievement of this task is a journey, rather than a destination.

Key Terms

Anti-racist and critical multiculturalist approaches offer critiques of power structures that are believed to maintain inequities between groups. This approach normally advocates radical change in existing institutions.

Assimilationist models of education promote a cultural framework and language practiced by the majority of the population within unitary school systems. This approach serves as a mechanism for socializing minorities or immigrants into a perceived existing set of common cultural norms and places greatest emphasis on the commonality of people. Unitary school systems are public institutions that serve student populations from diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds and utilize a standard curriculum.

Integrationist models of education require some accommodation of cultural differences and mutual tolerance, usually involving some level of recognition of minority cultural norms and values. This approach sometimes is described as leading to a melting pot in which the coming together of different groups should lead to something new. This approach also tends to favor unitary school systems.

Multicultural education is fundamentally guided by a respect for cultural diversity and often includes a commitment to anti-racist educational goals. This approach tends to place more emphasis on the recognition of difference, either explicitly in the curriculum or through support for separate schools.

Separate schools allow ethnic and religious minorities to run their own educational institutions and, usually, involve some level of distinctive, culturally appropriate policies and curricula.

Unitary school systems are public institutions that serve student populations from diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds and utilize a standard curriculum.

Additional Resources on this Topic

Coexistence International Reports and Publications

Available at www.coexistence.net

- Education Policy in Multi-Ethnic Societies: A Review of National Policies that Promote Coexistence and Social Inclusion.

- What is Coexistence and Why a Complementary Approach?
- Insiders and Outsiders: A Review of Policies that Recognize Diversity and Promote Inclusion and Coexistence.

Other Papers and Publications

- Bush, K.D. and Saltarelli, D. (2000) "The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peace-Building Education for Children." Florence: Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF.
<http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/insight4.pdf>
- Tawil, S. and Harley, A. (Eds) (2004) Education, conflict and social cohesion, Geneva: Unesco International Bureau of Education
- Dupuy, K. "Education for Peace: Building Peace and Transforming Armed Conflict Through Education Systems." Oslo: International Peace Research Institute.
http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/Education_for_Peace_Building_peace__transforming_conflict_thru_ed_systems.pdf
- Gallagher, T. (2004) Education in Divided Societies. London, Palgrave/Macmillan.

Organizations & Web sites

- Right to Education Project
<http://www.right-to-education.org>
- Fahamu
<http://www.fahamu.org>
- Facing History and Ourselves
<http://www.facinghistory.org>
- Human Rights Education Associates
<http://www.hrea.org>

Endnotes

- 1 Coexistence International understands coexistence work to cover the range of initiatives necessary to ensure that communities and societies can live more equitably and peacefully together, including conflict prevention and management, post-conflict and conflict transformation work, conflict-sensitivity, peacebuilding, reconciliation, multicultural, and pluralism work. Other language that seeks to describe a similar vision includes social cohesion, social inclusion, and social integration. (www.coexistence.net)
- 2 Heater, Derek. "The History of Citizenship Education in England," *The Curriculum Journal*, 12-1 (2001): 103-123. Heater suggests that, in England, this type of thinking persisted at least until the 1930s.

- 3 Sedletzki, Vanessa. "Fulfilling the Right to Education for Minority and Indigenous Children: Where are We in International Legal Standards?" in *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2009*, edited by Preti Tanje (London: Minority Rights Group, 2009), 2-53.
- 4 Sedletzki, p53. "The purpose of culturally sensitive education should remain to increase the child's opportunities, self-confidence and ability to develop in a harmonious environment, as well as build his or her own evolving capacities to define his or her best interests."
- 5 Curtis, Mark. "A World of Discrimination: Minorities, Indigenous Peoples and Education," in *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2009*, edited by Preti Taneja (London: Minority Rights Group, 2009), 12-23.
- 6 http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/DISCRI_E.PDF
- 7 Minority Rights Group, *Education Rights and Minorities* (London, 2004).
- 8 Excerpted from Coexistence International Report, "Education Policy in Multi-Ethnic Societies: A Review of National Policies that Promote Coexistence and Social Inclusion." Available at: http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/linked%20documents/Coex%20and%20Edu%20Policy_FINAL.pdf.
- 9 "Strategy & Initiatives: Mirkam," Abraham Fund. www.abrahamfund.org.
- 10 Hand in Hand. www.handinhandk12.org.
- 11 "Learning Each Others' Historical Narrative in Israeli and Palestinian Schools," PRIME. <http://www.vispo.com/PRIME/leohn.htm>
- 12 The Daily Telegraph (www.telegraph.co.uk), March 28, 2003.
- 13 Buruma, Ian, *Murder in Amsterdam: the Murder of Theo Van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).
- 14 Paul Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and Its Discontents in the Netherlands* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- 15 Kluger, Richard. *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage, 2004).
- 16 Clotfelter, Charles T. *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 17 The quote comes from Trevor Phillips, the first Chair of Britain's Equality Commission, although the claim has been contested, cf. Finney, Nissa and Simpson, Ludi, *Sleepwalking Towards Segregation? Challenging Myths about Race and Migration* (London: Polity Press, 2009).
- 18 Varshney, Ashutosh. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
- 19 Excerpted from Coexistence International Report, *Education Policy in Multi-Ethnic Societies: A Review of National Policies that Promote Coexistence and Social Inclusion*. Available at: http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/linked%20documents/Coex%20and%20Edu%20Policy_FINAL.pdf.
- 20 US Constitution Online, http://www.usconstitution.net/conststop_reli.html#wall
- 21 O'Connor, Una, Hartop, Brendan and McCully, Alan, *A Review of the Schools Community Relations Programme* (Bangor, Northern Ireland: Department of Education in Northern Ireland, 2002).
- 22 See Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (www.nicie.org) and Integrated Education Fund (www.ief.org.uk).
- 23 See www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk
- 24 Anderson, B. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
- 25 Excerpted from Coexistence International Report, *Education Policy in Multi-Ethnic Societies: A Review of National Policies that Promote Coexistence and Social Inclusion*. Available at: http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/linked%20documents/Coex%20and%20Edu%20Policy_FINAL.pdf.
- 26 <http://www.cdsee.org/jhp/index.html>
- 27 Excerpted from Coexistence International Report, *Education Policy in Multi-Ethnic Societies: A Review of National Policies that Promote Coexistence and Social Inclusion*. Available at: http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/linked%20documents/Coex%20and%20Edu%20Policy_FINAL.pdf.
- 28 Jeter, Jon. "Affirmative Action Debate Forces Brazil to Take a Look in the Mirror," *The Washington Post*, June 16, 2003. www.washingtonpost.com.
- 29 <http://www.cdsee.org/jhp/aims.html>
- 30 <http://www.facinghistory.org/>
- 31 <http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp>
- 32 See, for example, Schlesinger, Arthur M. *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Whittle Books, 1991); Berube, Maurice R. *American School Reform: Progressive, Equity and Excellence Movements, 1883-1993* (Westport: Praeger, 1994); Glazar, Nathan. *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

- 33 Excerpted from Coexistence International Report, *Education Policy in Multi-Ethnic Societies: A Review of National Policies that Promote Coexistence and Social Inclusion*.
- 34 Mary Stone Hanley summarizes these approaches in her online article "The Scope of Multicultural Education" at <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/multicultural/hanley.htm>. See also, Sleeter, Christine E. *Multicultural Education as Social Activism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).
- 35 McGoldrick, Dominic. *Human Rights and Religion: the Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe*, (Oxford/Oregon: Hart Publishing: 2006).
- 36 For contrasting views on this debate see Edwards, John. *Affirmative Action in a Sectarian Society: Fair Employment Policy in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995); Glazar, Nathan. *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); and Orfield, Gary and Miller, Edward. *Chilling Admissions: the Affirmative Action Crisis and the Search for Alternatives* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Publishing Group, 1998).
- 37 Beckwith, Francis J. and Jones, Todd E., eds. *Affirmative Action: Social Justice or Reverse Discrimination?* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997).
- 38 Bowen, William G. and Bok, Derek *The Shape of the River: Long-term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- 39 See, for example, Gutmann, Amy. "Unity and Diversity in Democratic Multicultural Education: Creative and Destructive Tensions," in *Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global Perspectives*, edited by James Banks (California: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 71-98.
- 40 Gutmann, p92.
- 41 Barry, Brian. *Culture and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001). For a range of views on the debate, see also Kelly, Paul, ed., *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*, Cambridge: Polity Press (2002); Parekh, Bhikhu. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000); Kincheoloe, Joe L. and Steinberg, Shirley R. *Changing Multiculturalism: New Times, New Curriculum* (England: Open University Press, 1997); McLaren, Peter. Wayward Multiculturalists: "A Reply to Gregor McLennan," *Ethnicities*, 1-3 (2001): 408-420; McLennan, Gregor "Can There Be a 'Critical' Multiculturalism?," *Ethnicities*, 1-3 (2001): 389-408; and McLennan, Gregor "Not Multiculturalism: A Rejoinder to Peter McLaren," *Ethnicities*, 1-3 (2001): 420-422.
- 42 Beckwith, Francis J. and Jones, Todd E.
- 43 The use of quotas was not always for positive reasons: one of the leading mathematicians of the 20th century, Alfréd Rényi, was subject to the *numerous clauses* law in pre-war Hungary which limited the number of Jews admitted to University. See Barabási, Albert-László, *Linked: The New Science of Networks* (Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 2002), 20.
- 44 Guha, Ramachandra. *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 378-9.
- 45 Guha, Ramachandra. 602-6. See also, Chauhan, Chandra Pal Singh. "Education and Caste in India," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 28-3 (2008), 217-234.
- 46 Onsongo, Jane. "Affirmative Action, Gender Equity and University Admissions: Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania," *London Review of Education* 7-1 (2009), 71-81.
- 47 See Glazer, Nathan. "Thirty Years With Affirmative Action, Du Bois Review 2-1 (2005), 5-15, for a reflective piece by an erstwhile opponent of affirmative action: "[I oppose] government's effort to engineer a distribution of minorities in key institutions of society that approximates their demographic distribution in society. ... But to overcome a great national wrong, we should accept, for some time, voluntary action to expand the opportunities available to Blacks." 13-14.
- 48 See, for example, Ainscow, Mel, Booth, Tony, and Dyson, Alan. *Improving Schools, Developing Inclusion*. (England: Routledge, 2006); Dyson, Alan, Howes, Andy and Roberts, Barbara "A Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of School-Level Actions for Promoting Participation by All Students (EPPI-Centre Review, version 1.1, 2002), Research Evidence in Education Library. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.
- 49 Coexistence International Focus Paper, "What is Coexistence and Why a Complimentary Approach?" Available at: <http://www.coexistence.net/>.
- 50 Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2008). See also <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/>

About Coexistence International

CI's mission is to strengthen and expand the resources available to people and organizations promoting, or capable of promoting, coexistence and social inclusion at local, national and international levels. This includes, among others, policymakers, practitioners, researchers, advocates, non-governmental organizations, and networks working in the coexistence field and related areas such as governance, social and economic development, and human rights. CI engages with these actors to introduce a coexistence lens to their work.

In collaboration with local partners, CI achieves its mission through convening workshops and trainings, disseminating original research and publications, introducing an international and comparative perspective, and facilitating the creation of coexistence networks. Through these outlets, CI promotes socially inclusive practices and policies among key stakeholders that can be used to build shared societies.

What is Coexistence?

Coexistence describes societies in which diversity is embraced for its positive potential, equality is actively pursued, interdependence between different groups is recognized, and the use of weapons to address conflicts is increasingly obsolete. Coexistence work covers the range of initiatives necessary to ensure that communities and societies can live more equitably and peacefully together.

About the Series

Fragmentation within the coexistence field, as well as divisions between coexistence and related areas, impede the achievement of effective, sustainable peace. Without cooperation and a recognition of complementarity, key players often work in isolation from one another—a situation that leads to missed opportunities or incomplete responses to conflicts.

With this publication series, Coexistence International examines where and how certain fields intersect with coexistence work. What challenges and opportunities exist when disciplines work together toward the common goal of a more peaceful, just world? This series illustrates the possibilities of effecting positive coexistence through cooperation among related fields.

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Coexistence International

Mailstop 086

Brandeis University

Waltham, Massachusetts

02454-9110