

New Perspectives for Learning - Briefing Paper 1

Immigration and Cross-Cultural Teacher Training

Context of the Research

During the 1990s many countries of Europe have experienced voluntary and involuntary inward migration that has resulted in pressures and raised issues concerning integration and educational policies for immigrants. Education is strategically important for integrating foreign newcomers into the society of their new residence.

This research has been conducted in the context of the on-going political debate within the European Community about drawing up common European immigration policies. This search for a common European approach is timely as the mobility of people within the EU countries is being encouraged.

Key Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on research into immigration settlement policies and cross-cultural teacher training conducted in six countries – Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, and the United Kingdom: -

1. Teacher-training institutions do provide the students with the competencies required to function effectively in relation to the goals expressed in the national policy programmes and curricula. However, since national policies and curricula vary widely, so does the nature and content of the training courses across the countries.
2. With the increase in trans-national mobility, European higher education institutions need to review their current policies and practices and to support the recognition and acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity.
3. Efforts need to be made to develop teacher training that can provide students with cognitive powers, attitudes and operative competencies required to function effectively in multi-cultural environments.
4. There is a need for educational research in order to provide empirically validated knowledge needed to improve “culturally responsive education” and, thus, the academic performance of immigrant pupils.
5. There is a need for international comparative studies in order to clarify and compare educational goals and practices in different countries.

The project also drew conclusions specific to each country.

6. In Finland, the project results suggest that the biggest challenge is the improvement of the *behavioural* teaching competence of teachers working in a culturally diverse environment.
7. In France there is an urgent need to integrate intercultural education in a more systematic manner within the teacher training structure.
8. In Germany, within an ongoing debate about whether Germany is an “immigration country” or not, this project showed that teacher trainees prefer a pluralistic society as they are confronted with lots of pupils who come from other countries. Policy-makers should no longer deny this fact.
9. The Greek educational system ought to turn from its “introvert” orientation to a more “extravert” one.
10. In Israel the long-range intentions of the government to provide a homeland for Jews from any place in the world, who are in need of asylum, is undermined by misleading interpretations of officials at different levels of the hierarchy and by confusing implementation in the Ministry of Education. The research also noted that students do not acquire a clear view of the implications of multiculturalism from simple exposure. Clear formulations of the policy and its publication are necessary as basic information to students.
11. In the United Kingdom the project robustly considered that cross-cultural teacher training can provide students with cognitive powers; can appropriately modify their attitudes towards people of other ethnic groups and can equip them with the operative competencies required to function effectively in multi-cultural classrooms. However, it revealed that, even among a highly educated sample of trainee teachers, there was a disturbing lack of knowledge about the major ethnic minority groups in Britain, for example. This lack of knowledge extended to such fundamental matters as the legislative framework erected by successive governments to control entry and to encourage good race relations.

Key Recommendations

The project made the following recommendations relevant across the European Community: -

1. A concerted effort needs to be made to ensure that the regulations governing the training of *all* teachers should be amended to include knowledge and skills in multicultural teaching.
2. Concerted efforts need to be made within the European Community to search for commonly acceptable standards for teacher training, in order to equip teachers with the multicultural competencies required to function effectively in culturally diverse environment.

Further Information

The full title of the project and final report is: "Immigration as a Challenge for Settlement Policies and Education: Evaluation Studies for Cross-Cultural Teacher Training." (November 1998)

[Full report](#), [Abstract](#), [Summary](#) [Partner details](#) [Final Country Reports](#)

Pitkänen, P, Kalekin-Fishman , D. & Verma, G. (eds.), *Education and Immigration: Settlement Policies and Current Challenges*, Routledge Falmer, (London-New York), 2002.

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