

# INTERACT

## WP 9 Comparative/Contrastive Analysis

**Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights Education, University of Leeds**  
**Institute of Education, University of London**

The aim of WP9 is to compare the content and aims of Teacher Training and Higher Education courses that have an explicit intercultural dimension across the four partner countries.

The UK team focused on ways that these courses address the twin goals of education for unity (social cohesion) and diversity (ethnic, religious and cultural) and any perceived tensions between these goals. This report draws on data from our partners (WP7 and WP8). This data provides a snapshot of selected courses rather than a comprehensive analysis. Our findings are therefore indicative and tentative.

Diversity and intercultural communication are addressed in different ways in the four countries. In Spain and Portugal they appear to focus largely on the integration of new citizens. In Denmark the priority seems to be on intercultural understanding and communication. In England the expectation is that citizenship education should enable and promote social cohesion.

In most countries, diversity is presented as a challenge requiring special measures. Teacher training focuses on the resolution of perceived problems in contexts of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. For instance, the Spanish report (WP7) provides an example of a teacher training programme which offers 'intercultural mediation training with the gypsy (sic) population' It aims to train 'intercultural mediators' who to work with Roma communities.

Other courses in Spain focus on language learning (*Aulas Europeas*) and on the preparation of the majority population in 'receiving of foreign students in [the] country'. Although these programmes incorporate an intercultural perspective and the teaching of values, the focus of intercultural learning appears limited. Multicultural understanding seems to focus on 'respect for and tolerance of foreign students' rather than on mutual learning and engagement between communities.

Most of the Danish programmes address cultural interaction. Thus, like the Spanish courses, the model is one which places greater emphasis on diversity than on social cohesion. The underpinning social model is that of a homogeneous national culture into which migrants need to integrate or possibly even assimilate. The courses appear to problematise diversity. By contrast, the programmes in England do not appear to subscribe to a perspective which presents diversity itself as the problem. Some course providers in England examine inequalities and address racism as a barrier to participation and social cohesion.

Across the four countries, we identified just one programme that makes an explicit reference to the relationship between unity and between diversity. This programme, the postgraduate programme 'Interculturality, Education and Social Cohesion' at the Philology University in Andalucía, Spain, appears is an exception to the general trend. According to the data available in the national reports, issues of diversity and unity and potential tensions between these educational goals are not explicitly

explored within other teacher training and higher education programmes. Consequently we focus our attention on implicit ways that these issues are addressed. We suggest that attempts to link multicultural education and citizenship are themselves an acknowledgement of the relationship between these educational goals.

In England there are a number of courses that attempt a parallel examination of citizenship and diversity. However, we identified just two citizenship education courses that make explicit mention of intercultural education and which refer to the multicultural context as a positive feature of the course. Furthermore, and despite the declared support of British government for the promotion of citizenship education as a site for teaching about diversity and race equality, half of the citizenship courses reviewed were reported as adopting a somewhat 'superficial approach' to diversity.

Efforts to link multiculturalism and citizenship also occur in some Portuguese undergraduate programmes. These programmes address concepts such as equality, pluralism and democracy, incorporating them into debates about cultural diversity. However, Portugal's WP8 report notes this approach lacks consistency and is applied in a way that seems to imply a reduced significance of their relevance to inter/multiculturalism and globalisation. Inter/multiculturalism, cultural diversity and citizenship are addressed at Masters' level in Portugal and in teachers' continuing professional development programmes. It is not clear, however, whether the unity/diversity question is addressed explicitly in these courses.

The Danish reports note that the link between multiculturalism and citizenship is not apparent in initial teacher training. In Denmark, the reported courses dealing with culture and multiculturalism tend to overlook questions of citizenship and democratic education. Links were only found in one undergraduate programme at Aalborg University and in a few MA programmes. Denmark's WP8 report states that despite the fact that several programmes focus on either intercultural issues or democratic education 'with a few exceptions, these two perspectives do not meet'.

In Spain, references to social cohesion and links between multiculturalism and citizenship are only reported in the postgraduate programmes in Andalucía and Barcelona. Spain's WP8 report states that among the aims of these programmes is 'the promotion of personal fulfilment, active citizenship and social and professional inclusion in the multicultural workplace'.

Overall, our examination of the WP7 and WP8 reports reveals a striking absence of teacher training programmes addressing unity and diversity as twin educational goals. Many courses make no reference to the benefits of multiculturalism. There is a strong tendency to construct multicultural societies as problematic.

Issues of intercultural understanding and political integration (citizenship) are largely addressed at postgraduate level. They are not embedded in initial and in-service teacher education, suggesting perhaps that they are taken only by an elite group with access to higher degrees. One contribution that universities could make to ending discrimination in Europe would be to mainstream issues of human rights and equalities within courses for both new and experienced teachers. Then theoretical issues within masters' programmes might confront teachers' classroom realities.