

**INTERACT: *Intercultural Active Citizenship Education*  
EC Framework VI Research Project**

**Short Evaluation Report**

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**Overview of Evaluation:**

The purpose of this evaluation report is to highlight some of the key strengths of INTERACT from the standpoint of a Canadian educator. Some of these include:

- (i) The empirical study of teachers: providing thoughtful analysis of teachers' multiple identities to connect insight, experiences and visions of educating for citizenship.
- (ii) Providing a comparative analysis and framework of 'perceptions' of multicultural and intercultural education among the four participating countries.
- (iii) Illustrating an apparent disconnect between 'European' educational policy, national educational policies and teacher pedagogy within the realm of interculturalism.
- (iv) Illuminating teachers' reflections on the impact of citizenship education on societal change.

The format of the evaluation is as follows:

- (i) Evaluator – Professional Context
- (ii) Methodology of Evaluation
- (iii) Intercultural Education in Europe
- (iv) INTERACT in a Canadian Context
- (v) Recommendations for Future Research
- (vi) Summary: INTERACT Strengths

## (i) EVALUATOR – PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

As a trained secondary school teacher<sup>1</sup> and university lecturer I am drawn to INTERACT to understand teachers' characterizations of what it means to 'educate for citizenship' within the broad concepts of human rights and democracy. As in many parts of the world 'citizenship' in Canada is a contested concept. Given that schools are seen as natural settlement sites for the vast majority of the 250,000 immigrants permitted to live in Canada annually, the classroom has fast become a place where the world meets. Similar to Europe, classrooms in Canada are likely to comprise of students with multiple identities and loyalties and so the concept of a 'national' citizenship in education has become less rigid to allow a more inclusive, participatory approach to teaching and learning. As 'teacher' I am compelled through agency to move from a content-centred curriculum based on conformity and mastery to a student-centred curriculum based on inquiry and critique. As a Canadian teacher-educator I am not necessarily interested in INTERACT to confirm the importance of multicultural education but rather to access the 'good practices' that have been forecasted to emerge from the project's empirical research study.

INTERACT has the potential to provide 'teacher voice' and guidance to educational policy and guidelines for teacher education. As a researcher I am interested to learn new ways we can evaluate the impact of citizenship education on society. Teachers may be the first critical indicator to assist in this area of research. This project is of particular interest for its empirical approach exploring how teachers' identities inform their professional practice as citizens, cultural workers and as transformative agents. Within my own professional practice I find that these roles are constantly in flux and dependent on a number of mutually dependent variables ranging from the structural organization of schools, teacher knowledge, training and support. Throughout my research I have found that there are few national and international empirical studies available that consider teacher's identity and their personal depictions of citizenship education pedagogy. Those that do exist tend to describe what Davies refers to as a 'confusing and confused situation'.<sup>2</sup> Given the overall deficiency of empirical studies on pedagogy in this area several comparativists tend to view pedagogy as an essential and critical theme of future research. Alexander contends that 'comparativists have largely ignored school and classroom processes and have tended to concentrate on national systems and policies.'<sup>3</sup> This may be so, but the research and analysis carried out through INTERACT addresses the interplay of (trans)-national policies and identities for which there is currently modest critical investigation. INTERACT is a necessary step that will hopefully lead to more substantive pedagogical research in the near future.

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<sup>1</sup> Specialty subject areas (referred to in Canada as 'teachables') include Geography and Civics/Politics.

<sup>2</sup> I. Davies, "Implementing citizenship education: Can it be done?" In *The School Field*, XI(3/4) (2000), p93.

<sup>3</sup> R. Alexander. (1999) "Comparing classrooms and schools" in *Learning from comparing: New directions in comparative international research: Volume 1. Contexts, classrooms, and outcomes*. (Wallingford, Oxford: Symposium Books), p109.

## **(ii) METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION**

This evaluation was composed at the University of Leeds during a research visit in May 2007. Summaries of the reports for Work Packages 2-11 were accessed online from the project website. At the time of writing Work Packages 12 and 13 were available from England and Denmark and Work Package 14 was unavailable in its entirety as it was still in the review stage by all participants. For this reason the evaluation is only partially complete.

The following Work Packages were particularly compelling for illuminating citizenship education and intercultural education in Europe as a Canadian reader:

- WP2 – The Intercultural Dimension of Official European Documents
- WP3 – The Intercultural Dimension of Policies at the National Level
- WP4 – Comparative Analyses of the Intercultural Dimensions of Citizenship Education
- WP6 – Analyses of Interviews with Institutional Actors
- WP9 – Comparative Analyses of Various Citizenship and Intercultural Teacher Education Programmes
- WP12 – Teachers as Citizens (England and Denmark available)
- WP13 – Teachers as Cultural Workers (England and Denmark drafts available)

This evaluation will address the intercultural dimension of European documents, intercultural policies at national levels and teachers' identities in general detail.

## **(iii) INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN EUROPE**

### ***European Education Policies***

Prior to the project's assessment this Canadian evaluator admittedly had limited or no knowledge of educational policy within a European context. From this perspective INTERACT has provided basic details concerning the intercultural educational component in European policy pertaining to citizenship and human rights education. Thus there is value in this project for both European and non-European researchers alike for accessing a broad framework in these areas from the late 1970s to 2004.

It becomes apparent that human rights, democratic learning and citizenship education are the key concepts outlined in the European documents whereas intercultural concerns are awarded a lesser significance. The focus on intercultural education in European policy shifts from the 'integration' of migrant populations into school environments to a more inclusive approach that sees the elimination or reduction of inequities while promoting social cohesion and preserving cultural diversity among individuals and groups. Education for citizenship in Europe has emerged within the context of 'preparing' young people to learn about and practice democratic citizenship; youth are portrayed as 'citizens in waiting'<sup>4</sup> rather than citizens of today.

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<sup>4</sup> E. Verhellen. (2000) Children's rights and education, in A. Osler (Ed.) *Citizenship and democracy in schools: diversity, identity, equality* (Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham), 33-43.

### *National Education Policies*

While the individual country profiles (WP3) identify and summarize policy documents at the national level, the comparative papers provided in WP4 are compelling for highlighting key differences and similarities concerning citizenship and intercultural education in schools among the participants.

Significant research findings that help to expose the European context:

- The concept of ‘intercultural education’ is not generally referred to in any of the national documents, only ‘related’ concepts.
- Racism, anti-semitism and islamophobia education is conspicuously absent from all participant countries’ national policy documents.
- There is no apparent consensus in England concerning the ‘meaning’ of multicultural education.
- The national documents of Spain and Portugal emphasize a European identity, however this dimension is absent from both Danish and English documents.
- Denmark places explicit emphasis on education for democracy and democratic participation in both the taught and informal curriculum (ie. human rights are to be experienced rather than learned).
- Denmark does not yet identify publicly or officially as a multicultural nation. Educational documents continue to identify a monocultural and homogeneous understanding of ‘Danish culture’.
- There appears to be a significant disconnect between intercultural educational documents overall in England and Denmark with those of the European level.
- Since 2002 England remains the only country where citizenship is a formally approved subject area located within the national curricula (Spain to follow in September 2007 – citizenship and human rights) but has not been adequately reviewed to ensure it ‘meets the needs’ of a multicultural Britain.
- A significant gap exists in England’s national policies concerning education for democracy, human rights and children’s rights.
- Spain and Portugal’s democratization of their education systems should be considered in light of the countries’ previous histories of centralized and undemocratic governance. For this reason their educational policies affectionately recognize the existence of a pluralistic and democratic society.

It is clear that many of these observations stand in stark opposition to European level formulations where intercultural education and citizenship education are linked. There appears to be great controversy in Europe to develop multicultural democracies. The reports reveal that citizenship within a European concept is keenly contested and remains a site of struggle to locate its meaning. The use of concepts pertaining to intercultural dimensions and citizenship education generally tends to reflect contrasting national perspectives and histories.

### *Teachers’ as Citizens (England and Denmark)*

This empirical study is the critical piece of the report linking the experience of teachers to official documents and curriculum design. The strongest element of the

project from this evaluator's perspective is located here: the focus on teachers' identity and teachers as agents for change.

Significant research findings that help to expose the European context:

- Some teachers in England make connections between their profession and a personal belief in empowering students to create a more inclusive and just society.
- More experienced teachers in England are keen to make the distinction between the 'private' and 'professional' role of the teacher, favouring the latter.
- Teachers working in schools that invest in citizenship education resources tend not to make critical distinctions between their role as 'citizen' and 'teacher' in England. *However, do these 'investments' necessarily translate into more multicultural- and democratic-minded students?*
- A common theme among several teachers from both countries is the concern that by exposing their own personal views in the classroom they may manipulate or indoctrinate the beliefs of their students.
- Danish teachers appear to exercise distinct hesitation concerning the meaning of 'citizenship' in general, let alone citizenship education. Democratization is understood as a 'natural', almost inherent element of education.
- Classroom practices in Denmark focus on raising awareness through inclusivity and discussing multiple perspectives. There are no institutional structures in place to support intercultural education in Denmark nor does it appear in demand.
- Teachers generally have little or no knowledge of EU or CoE documents relating to intercultural citizenship education.

### ***Teachers as Cultural Workers (England and Denmark)***

Much of the research in England strongly supports the notion that teachers' identity as cultural workers is highly dependent on their own cultural identity and personal experience rather than policy and curriculum initiatives, or teacher training programs. Students from minority communities may therefore suffer from teachers' lack of cultural knowledge and experience.

In Denmark it is surprising to note that teachers do not recognize a need for intercultural education because they do not perceive a 'problem' in the development of students' multiple identities in schools. The interviewers' suggestion that teachers are in fact reinforcing stereotypes in their practice because they do not have a 'language' (or medium, ie. citizenship education?) to dispel them is problematic and distressing to the observer.

Significant research findings that help to expose the European context:

- The cultural makeup of the student population and the cultural identity of teachers in England may influence their pedagogy and role as cultural worker.

- Teachers in multicultural and multiethnic schools tend to express greater confidence and effective methods in addressing multiculturalism in their work; this is the case in England but not specified in Denmark.
- Citizenship education in England is partly understood as the deconstruction of socially constructed cultural barriers.
- Schools with White student populations in England are provided with cultural info-bits rather than active engagement with cultural ‘other’.
- European identity and citizenship is not addressed in either English or Danish classrooms.
- Danish teachers appear to express a binary of ‘us’ and ‘them’ to address linguistic, religious, ethnic and national differences. Teachers see themselves as ‘mediators’ between ‘differences’.
- Danish teachers can be seen to ‘construct cultures’; culture is something ‘carried’ by their students and creates difference (which may be emphasized by the teacher through classroom discussion).

#### **(iv) INTERACT AND THE CANADIAN CONTEXT**

Similar to England the term *intercultural* education is seldom used in the Canadian context and *multicultural* education is the preferred term. In contrast to Europe’s emphasis on civic integration, multiculturalism as a policy has failed to come under serious pressure in Canada and continues to be viewed as a fundamental ingredient of the national ethos. In fact Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy entrenched in its constitution and one of the few countries to legally recognize and actively endorse polyethnicity and multinationality.<sup>5</sup> Canada is unique in that it has formally recognized multiple ‘nations within a nation’, referring explicitly to Quebec and First Nations communities. Yet are Canadian teachers equipped with the skills and necessary experiences and identities to enter into increasingly culturally diverse classrooms? There is a call for school systems in Canada to effectively address the fact that by 2017 twenty percent of all Canadians will be visible minorities.<sup>6</sup> This requires educators to critically reflect upon new approaches to multicultural education that are desperately required to address the multitude of economic, linguistic and cultural needs of students.

Schools in Canada have consistently struggled to propose and implement inclusive approaches for students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds despite the federal policy on multiculturalism. INTERACT confirms that although intercultural and multicultural education may find a prominent place in national (and ‘European’) policies it remains a significant challenge to implement in schools everywhere as it trickles down to classroom level. The project itself incites us to ask some of the more difficult questions about teaching and learning, teacher identity and teacher education. More specifically, is teacher identity a potentially transformative pedagogical resource? A link can be made thus far between INTERACT’s research in England concerning the influence of teachers’ cultural identity and effective classroom practice, and current conversations concerning teacher training in Canada.

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<sup>5</sup> Multiculturalism Policy of Canada, 1971

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada (2005).

Many argue that while there has been a dramatic increase in cultural and linguistic diversity in Canada owing to increased immigration, the cultural and ethnic make-up of Canadian teachers is not keeping pace (Dlamini & Martinovic, 2007). Why should this be an important consideration? INTERACT indicates that teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds in England tend to express greater confidence and effective methods in addressing multiculturalism in their work. In effect, these teachers may be considered to be more *transformative* than mainstream and culturally inexperienced teachers in their approach to multicultural and intercultural education.

It has been suggested that recruiting more ethnic and cultural minorities into teacher roles may help diverse groups of students learn better (Au & Blake, 2003; Johnson & Miller, 2002). However, we are not yet at the point in Canada where we can say that this kind of recruitment will necessarily help diverse students, both mainstream and non-mainstream, learn better *together*. Perhaps we need to take a harder look at how teacher education programs can ‘create environments that allow candidates to engage each other across racial and cultural boundaries’<sup>7</sup> and encourage teacher candidates to explore their ‘own identity formation and its potential impact on the pedagogical process.’<sup>8</sup>

#### (v) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- *Theory and practice.* There still remains a significant gap in empirical research to illustrate pedagogical approaches to citizenship education. There is a logical and necessary link between ‘what teachers say’ during the interview process and ‘what teachers do’ in their classrooms.<sup>9</sup> Teachers may identify outside of their classrooms as transformative actors but in the classroom exercise only activities focused on the transmission of knowledge. Therefore, a logical extension of the project may be to consider whether (and how) teachers translate their intentions and beliefs into transformative classroom practice.
- *Students’ perspectives.* While outside the scope of this project but related to the recommendation above, it is imperative that students’ perspectives also be accessed in order to gauge the success of intercultural/multicultural citizenship education. WP12/13 (England) concludes that:
  - ‘*where genuine alignment between personal and professional roles occurs, it also reflects high quality training opportunities, significant investment in curriculum and whole school development with the explicit goal of fostering citizenship learning in an inclusive school environment.*’ (WP12)
  - ‘*teachers understanding of their role as cultural workers is affected by two major factors: the cultural diversity of student populations they teach and their own cultural backgrounds.*’ (WP13)

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<sup>7</sup> S. Nombuso Dlamini and D. Martinovic, “In pursuit of being Canadian: examining the challenges of culturally relevant education in teacher education programs” in *Race Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. 10, No. 2, July 2007, p156.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon, in Dlamini and Martinovic, p156.

<sup>9</sup> See the work of M. Evans, “Educating for citizenship: what teachers say and what teachers do” in *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29, 2 (2006):410-435.

To what extent do these observations necessarily translate into effective *transformative* practice? To gauge teacher claims in these areas we need to consult their students. Do they feel their multiple identities are provided meaningful recognition in the classroom? Are students influenced by the cultural (or other) identity of the teacher?

- *Schools as hierarchical institutions.* INTERACT has demonstrated that a number of factors appear to influence teachers' favoured goals and practices. If we are to understand what informs teachers' pedagogy we must be attentive to the multiple and complex factors teachers face in their everyday practice. There is one particular aspect located within the schools that deserves greater attention. Schools as institutions tend to reinforce organizational norms of hierarchical control which may serve to undermine and limit policy and curriculum reforms that encourage democratic and multicultural citizenship.<sup>10</sup> To what extent do the stated goals and ethos of schools conflict with the expected objectives and practices in citizenship education in general?

#### **(vi) SUMMARY: INTERACT STRENGTHS**

INTERACT provides a solid base of research to begin an exchange of ideas concerning how Europe can contend with a changing climate in the face of growing political and social integration. The following points summarize the main strengths of the project discussed in this evaluation:

- The project exposes distinct gaps in education policy between European transnational and the project participants' national official documents concerning the intercultural dimension of citizenship education. These highlight a critical need for further dialogue between policy-makers, teacher educators and the academic community.
- Greater consensus is needed among participants regarding the meaning of key concepts in intercultural and citizenship education. Clarification is critical if a discussion about the larger goals of intercultural education in Europe is to follow.
- INTERACT provides a glimpse of the varied insights and characterizations of the intercultural/multicultural dimensions of citizenship education held by teachers as citizens and educators in Europe.
- The project is highly innovative as it provides a necessary first step towards identifying new ways we can evaluate the impact of citizenship education on society. The experiences of teachers feature prominently in this theme of research.
- From this work there is a clear opportunity for further substantive research in the area of teacher identity and citizenship education pedagogy.

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<sup>10</sup> Evans, 429.



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