

Community Cohesion: Issues Practice and Teaching Languages

Sir Keith Ajegbo

The duty to promote community cohesion (Inspected by Ofsted from Sept 08)

- By community cohesion we mean working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community.
- **What part does a school's languages policy play in cohesion?**

Review for the Secretary of State

- Should British modern, social and cultural history be the 4th pillar of citizenship?
- How is ethnic, religious and cultural diversity addressed in the school curriculum?

Response: while schools should celebrate difference they must also explore what brings us together, what we share and how we create communities. **What part does sharing languages and intercultural dialogue play in both?**

Why Community Cohesion now?

1) 7/7 and the fear of terrorism and extremism related to religion
(The Global becomes local)

Trevor Phillips: 'Sleepwalking to segregation'

2) Changing patterns of immigration-immigration as a major political issue – fears around the BNP and local council elections (**Turning inwards – definitions of Britishness**)

3) Fears around teenage gang killings, teenage pregnancy, binge drinking and community relationship (**Young people making their world smaller**)

Concerns about the achievement gap of pupils on free school meals including white underachievement. (**the restrictions of poverty and underachievement**)

Why Community Cohesion now (2)

- In 1965 75 million people lived outside the home country, now 180 m
- 600,000 Britons live in Spain, more in other countries (200,000) in NZ; 3m with second homes
- 25m tourists to the UK, 70m from UK to global destinations
- Globalisation in many forms: internet, international students, brands etc
- **Languages are everywhere**

Pulling policy strands together

- **Has a school's languages policy played a part in the ever widening definition in England of what schools are for?**

Every child matters

Personalised learning

Extended schooling

Citizenship

Community cohesion

- **Has languages remained an academic subject for the few?**

What are the implications of community?

- School community
- Community in which school is located
- UK community
- Global community

How does the school operate in relation to local communities?

How does it deal with issues of national identity? How does this link with ideas of global citizenship?

In this context what does learning a Modern Foreign language mean?

Is it French / Spanish or languages from Pakistan and Bangladesh?

Which languages have status?

Why learn languages?

- Learning language really does broaden your awareness of other cultures – you learn things you would never otherwise come across.
- Viewing the mother culture through the eyes of the target culture can be an enlightening experience.
- Part of the reason for having second or foreign languages in the curriculum is the signal which the provision sends regarding the room which a school visibly makes for the study of other cultures.
- ---confront other cultures---- to understand the arrogance of the monolingual provision
- Ignorance of the other leads to fear and confirms primaeval notions of absolute difference

The Big Themes of Cohesion

- Religion and non religion
- Ethnicity and culture
- Socio economic status

Aspects of religion divide us. Comparing texts of the great religions in translation reveal remarkable similarities. **The language might be strange, the sentiment might not.**

Is learning a language a middle class thing? **Class language divides sometimes as much as a foreign language. Can languages pick up these themes?**

Teaching, learning and the curriculum (an aspect of inspection)

DEA survey: 76% of black student and 66% of Asian students were positive about different kinds of people living together while only 47% of white students were.

Recent articles on immigration suggest a hardening of attitudes against difference.

Perspectives of some students

They see Africa as poor, Asia as flooded and England as snobby whites and poor blacks'

'I'm black I live in London-that's my home. My parents are from the Caribbean but I'm really African. I'm a Christian, but I'm E7 - that's where I hang they're my people. That's who I am.'

'I do feel sometimes that there is no white history. There's either black history month or they do Muslims and Sikhs.'

What is the role of languages teaching in creating a world view?

Challenges: Leadership

- The conclusion in our report was that issues of race and identity are often not high on schools' agendas. Need to be regardless of location and intake
- The values that the head creates in the school are crucial in creating an ethos and curriculum that combats both personal and institutional racism and religious intolerance, celebrates diversity and practices inclusion.
- **In moving this agenda on since 2007 how a school develops its languages policy hasn't been at the forefront of the debate. There has been a decline in languages in secondary schools.**

Challenges: teachers

- 36% of teachers felt well equipped to teach in multi cultural schools following their Teacher Training.
- **Are languages teachers naturally equipped to teach in multi cultural schools because of the depth of their cultural immersion?**
- **Are schools able to take advantage of the freedom to teach a wide range of languages. To what extent does French remain the staple? Enfield looking to teach Greek and Turkish in relation to their communities.**

Challenges: the curriculum

Who in the school ensures coherence across the curriculum, picking up issues from local to global

Keystage 3 concepts:

- **Languages:** appreciating the richness and diversity of other cultures. Recognising there are different ways of seeing the world.
- **History:** understanding the diverse experiences and ideas and beliefs and attitudes---
- **Geography:** appreciating the differences and similarities between people, places ---
- **English:** Literature in English---reflecting the experiences of people from many different countries
- **RE:** encouraging pupils to develop their sense of identity and belonging
- **Citizenship**

Citizenship education as a driver for change

- Citizenship education is about understanding community and active participation in the community.
- It is about pupil voice and pupil involvement in issues and ideas that affect their lives.

**What part should languages play in the relationship between local, national and global citizenship?
What is the relationship between languages and pupil voice?**

Identity and Diversity: Living together in the UK

- Rationale: Britain has committed itself to certain values- respect for the law, democratic political structures, values of mutual tolerance, equal rights. These should be subject to discussion and debate through looking at aspects of modern British history.

The aspects of modern British history:

- The UK as a multi national state. (**Why is the Welsh language so important to identity?**)
- Immigration, Commonwealth and the legacy of Empire (**the relationship of English to other languages?**)
- **The European Union**

Equity and Excellence (an aspect of inspection)

- African Caribbean students underachieve in our academic system. (Black boys three times more likely to be excluded from school and .3 as likely to be included in Gifted and Talented cohorts)
- Worst underachievement, however, is white working class boys
- The likelihood in our system is that both groups will not have progressed far with languages
- **The acquisition of languages will open up the world for some while closing it for others, often determined by social class.**

Engagement and Extended Services (an aspect of inspection)

- In the current 'Children's Plan' schools are expected to be at the hub of their community.
- All schools will become extended schools offering services to their community.
- **Where is language learning and intercultural dialogue in these opportunities for community engagement. (At a recent conference saw 2 examples of schools who had turned around the achievement of Somali boys by engaging their parents and their community.)**

Challenges ahead

- A recent document by reform, a think tank, endorsed by Michael Gove, the shadow minister for education appears to place languages back as a core, compulsory academic subject.

BUT

- Surely more should be done to see languages applied in the real world and connected to a more holistic view of ourselves and our identities.