

## ENCOUNTERING FAITHS AND BELIEFS

**The role of Intercultural Education in schools and communities**

Anna Trethewey and Loic Menzies





## About the Authors

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## Foreword by 3FF Director, Stephen Shashoua

As one of the UK's leading practitioners of inter-cultural education (IE), 3FF's aim is to educate, encourage and promote understanding between people of different faiths and non-religious beliefs. Much of this activity takes place in schools. We run the largest faith school linking programme in Europe and involve approximately 12,000 people through our UK linking, workshop and teacher training programme each year. Our approaches have been successfully piloted in Sweden and the United States and our models have received increasing recognition from international bodies including the United Nations, as well as from experts in both the religious education and interfaith/intercultural fields.

Our founding premise is that belief is something that is "lived". In other words, how individuals express their personal belief. We therefore focus less on textbooks and abstract theological debates and instead prioritise the simple act of bringing people of different faiths and beliefs together to create connections and enable learning and dialogue. Our belief is that, when properly implemented, this type of work can better interactions, improve skills, and increase confidence, which in turn creates shifts in perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours (an insight that is increasingly backed up by studies by social-psychologists and others).

Nevertheless, we know that there is still a long way to go. Prejudice is taking an increasingly religious turn with both anti-semitism and Islamophobia on the rise across Europe (hate crimes against Jews and Muslims are both at their highest level since records began). Policy approaches have become increasingly prescriptive as mainstream politicians seek to respond to the spectre of the populist movements that are spreading across Europe. This is particularly the case in education where dialogue-based approaches are being replaced by top-down initiatives that prioritise values and assimilation. IE offers a more sustainable, humane and, we believe, effective alternative.

This reports sets out a roadmap for how IE methods and practices could become more embedded in mainstream education and wider community policy. This report is aimed at decision-makers at different educational, communal, and policy levels locally, nationally and internationally. It firstly analyses the implications of recent reforms to community policies and schools for the future of inter-cultural education in the UK. Secondly, it sets out some principles that can help guide the implementation of good IE practice (and help avoid some of the pitfalls) gleaned from learning in both the UK and Sweden. And finally it proposes a series of principles which could make it possible to roll out IE across schools and communities.

This report builds on the report "Beyond RE: Engaging with lived Diversity – the role of Intercultural Education in schools" by Goldsmiths University of London (also commissioned by 3FF and funded by Culham St Gabriel's). We hope these two publications make the case for IE by setting out how it fits into wider development and profiling examples of good work across Europe. IE has many advocates and supporters – from leading scholars and law makers to teachers and faith and communal leaders and groups working on the ground. However, stated support has not translated into concrete policy, funding and widespread implementation. By setting out the methods and principles of IE we hope to ensure that it is not just grown as a practice more widely, but that this is done effectively.



## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the key principles of Intercultural Education (IE) and to offer insights into how these principles can be adapted to suit different settings' needs. The report is aimed at school leaders, those delivering intercultural education programmes and policymakers in the fields of integration, community relations and education.

This report's central argument is that approaches to IE need to be flexible enough to adapt to different settings; an IE programme linking schools in urban Leicester and rural Norfolk will look very different to a programme run by a community group in East London. For this reason, this report does not mandate any top down approaches to developing IE; instead, it outlines a set of principles for effective IE and illustrates these with examples drawn from the UK and abroad. The report concludes with five policy principles which would help high quality intercultural education to thrive.

## Part 1: The case for intercultural education

### 1.1 WHAT IS INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION?

'Intercultural Education' is a style of education which aims to support encounters between people with different beliefs and backgrounds and to promote interaction. IE can take place in schools or more informal community education and youth settings. UNESCO defines Intercultural Education as:

*"Equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect"*<sup>1</sup>

Many organisations in the field approach IE through the lens of faith and belief. The experts we spoke to therefore frequently commented on the 'blurred line' between cultural and faith based interactions with one explaining that one was 'part of the other.'

#### **PRACTICAL INSIGHT 1: INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

3FF runs an Encountering Faiths & Beliefs Workshop (EFBs) that uses a diverse panel of volunteer speakers to bring their experiences of faith, belief and identity into the classroom. An expert facilitator helps three speakers from different faith and non-faith backgrounds share their personal faith stories and answer pupils' questions.

The project helps young people:

- develop knowledge of different religious and non-religious communities and traditions;
- feel comfortable and confident interacting with people of faiths and beliefs different to their own;
- recognise the value of diversity in British society and to make the most of its opportunities'
- develop a desire to create and sustain meaningful relationships and collaboration with people who are different;
- understand and promote shared values of respect and appreciation for others;
- and have a willingness to identify and challenge discrimination, prejudice or bullying (in themselves and in others)

By using speakers who give nuanced and specific details of their own lived experience and practice, the programme makes high quality intercultural education possible - even in schools that lack specialist staff. The aim is to encourage deep conversations that give lessons real-world significance.



This report, uses the term ‘Intercultural Education’ (IE) rather than ‘interfaith education’ in order to highlight ‘the complex and multi-layered nature of identity – incorporating culture broadly, as well as faiths and beliefs’<sup>2</sup>. By focusing on people’s lived experience of culture and belief programmes like ‘Encountering Faiths and Beliefs’ (described in Practical Insight 1) helps challenge ‘simplistic labels’<sup>3</sup> that compartmentalise people into distinct groups and instead help communities discover common ground. As one Huddersfield Headteacher explained in the 2014 Demos paper “Mapping Integration”:

*‘Some of our children live their lives without meeting someone from another culture until they go to high school or even the workplace. They can grow up with such a lot of misconceptions and prejudices... Our pupils think it’s amazing that they [white kids] like pizza too.’<sup>4</sup>*

## 1.2 Segregation and Intercultural education

In 2005 Cattle argued that:

*“Segregated’ communities are so dominated by particular groups that the possibility of contact with the majority population or another minority group is limited. These ‘parallel lives’ do not meet, leaving little or no opportunity to explore differences and build mutual respect.”<sup>5</sup>*

However since then, this view has been thrown into question. Burgess (2008) suggests that between 1997 and 2003, segregation in UK schools was “considerable but not growing.”<sup>6</sup> More recent work by Harris (2014) suggests that this continues to be the case<sup>7</sup>. However, as Laurence (2013) explains, segregation can exist even in racially diverse settings with groups living side-by-side but separately - limiting their interactions to a superficial level<sup>8</sup>. This point is further emphasised by the findings of the Social Integration Commission which found that people living in London in fact had the least friendships with people from a different age, social grade or ethnicity<sup>9</sup>. Segregation can therefore be a problem both in ethnically homogenous areas and those that appear more diverse.

According to Hewstone and Schmid “positive contact is the essential glue of integration”<sup>10</sup> and studies from the field of social-psychology confirm that contact with people who do not share the same ethnicity or culture is one of the most effective ways of tackling prejudice.

### PRACTICAL INSIGHT 2

The ‘Think Project’ in Wales supports encounters between young people considered vulnerable to far-right ideologies and people from different faith communities.

*“Rather than simply teaching someone about migration and about the reality of an asylum seeker’s life in Britain etc. you create experiences that can shape their world view.”*

Vidhya Ramalingam

These experiences might include:

- visiting a Polish shop in the neighbourhood to talk to the shopkeeper and learn about their experience coming to the UK.
- bringing an asylum seeker in to talk to young people and break misconceptions.
- involving a youth worker from a Muslim background who has been trained to talk about their identity

*“It’s all about relationship building in order to undermine myths rather than simply teaching someone about it from a book. Our research has very much shown that experiential learning is much more effective in changing people’s minds”*

Vidhya Ramalingam



Al Ramiah and Hewstone summarise the views of contact theorists as follows:

*“People who engage in intergroup contact... are likely to be less prejudiced toward outgroup members than are those who do not have such contact experiences”<sup>11</sup>.*

Expert practitioners interviewed for this report also agreed that positive exposure to difference is the best way of broadening horizons and increasing levels of trust. However, they argued that it is not just the quantity of interactions that matters; effective intercultural education also depends on quality and in particular, on skilled delivery. This report therefore focuses on bringing together expert practitioners’ insights in order to set out principles for high quality IE.

### 1.3 The current context for intercultural education

National context plays an important role in a country’s understanding of IE and what might be deemed appropriate differs between countries according to national culture and immigration histories. For example, the so-called Swedish ‘culture of consensus’ creates a different context for IE compared to French ‘laic’ secularism which excludes religious education from the curriculum. Meanwhile, countries that have only recently experienced large scale immigration face different challenges compared to those with longer histories of immigration like the UK. It is therefore important to place intercultural education within a national context in order to understand the agendas that shape it.

#### INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS

Intercultural Education in English schools can be driven by a range of priorities and curricula including Religious Education, ‘community cohesion’, British Values and ‘preventing extremism’.

Many schools provide some form of intercultural education as part of Religious Education (RE). However although intercultural education and RE have much in common, they are not necessarily synonymous and where IE takes place through RE it places significant emphasis on religious doctrine and the comparative study of religions. Furthermore, the extent to which IE is addressed in RE differs between schools because there is no single national RE curriculum; instead it is decided locally by the Standing Advisory Council on RE (SACRE). Meanwhile academies and free schools do not have to follow the locally prescribed RE curriculum and schools of religious character have different regulations, the situation is also different for independent schools.

Under the 2006 Education and Inspections Act, schools were given a duty to promote community cohesion. This required “Every school – whatever its intake and wherever it is located... (to educate) children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of cultures, religions, beliefs and social backgrounds.”<sup>12</sup> Community cohesion was therefore included in the Ofsted framework and schools had to review how they addressed the area whilst inspectors reported on schools’ practice. However, following the 2010 general election, the coalition government announced a drive towards ‘autonomy’ for schools and introduced a slimmed down Ofsted framework which no longer included community cohesion. Instead, the new framework included “spiritual moral, social and cultural education” (SMSC). This might have been fertile ground for IE but Peterson<sup>13</sup> argues that the concurrent shift in focus towards achievement in ‘core’ subjects like literacy and numeracy took place to the detriment of areas like SMSC: *‘Many head teachers and others we talked to were resigned to a feeling that while SMSC development was important in the aims of the school, it was not an everyday concern; or that SMSC provision would never have a more substantial place in schools unless it could somehow be measured and set alongside data on curriculum levels and exam results. This was often despite school leaders doing their very best to hold a space open for promoting pupils’ SMSC development’.*

In 2014, the government introduced a new duty to promote “British Values” in response to concerns about segregation in British schools as well as controversial and contested reports of illiberal practices in a handful of schools with large Muslim populations (the so-called Trojan Horse episode). The new duty aims to make pupils





“into citizens who respect difference, who welcome disagreement and who challenge intolerance.”<sup>14</sup> It requires pupils to accept and engage with “mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”<sup>15</sup>. While the language used is different, schools are once-again being required to foster understanding and tolerance. The response to ‘British Values’ from teachers and school leaders’ has been mixed: Research by The Key suggests that over 70% of school leaders feel that promoting British values is an appropriate role for schools<sup>16</sup> and this view was echoed by teachers interviewed as part of this report. However, concerns have also been raised that Ofsted’s approach to inspecting British values has ‘moved the goalposts and caused confusion amongst school leaders’<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, whilst many teachers we spoke to welcomed the opportunity to explore identity and values in schools, many are concerned that the title ‘British values’ implies these values are uniquely British. They fear that this could exclude other nationalities or those with more complex heritage.

The government’s Prevent strategy also has implications for IE in schools and recommends that schools should provide a ‘safe environment for discussing controversial issues’. However, this too has been greeted with concern in some corners with the National Union of Teachers’ 2015 Annual Conference passing a motion stating that “many school staff are now unwilling to allow discussions in their classroom for fear of the consequences.”<sup>18</sup> This reflects a fear that ‘British Values’ and Prevent may in fact close down spaces for discussion.

Given these concerns, IE’s potential to create safe spaces in which to explore Britain’s values and diversity should be welcomed as a way of strengthening pupils’ sense of identity and their ability to relate to others in a sensitive and nuanced way.

## Part 2: Effective Intercultural Education

Intercultural education is not without risk. Poor IE can confirm negative stereotypes and assumptions about belief and culture. For example, deliverers of IE have recounted visits from speakers who preached to the audience and simply reinforced stereotypes instead of fostering discussion. In other cases, a faith group had opened up its place of worship to another group only to be refused entry to the reciprocal place of worship and in one episode, parents refused to let their children participate in a visit to a mosque.

### PRACTICAL INSIGHT 3

In one Encountering Faiths and Beliefs session in Sweden a young Muslim woman shared her experience of putting on the Hijab.

The young woman began her story by describing her previous prejudices against the Hijab and how her attitudes changed as a result of interactions with friends. She then recounted her experience when she decided to put on the Hijab and others’ reactions to her.

This example highlights the difference between sharing ‘lived faith and culture’ – an approach that focuses on complexity and empathy, as compared to learning about religious doctrines.

*“It is a powerful story, there are Muslim women wearing a Hijab and the question is how are you curious, how do you get in touch and how can you start asking these questions? In this session their world views and their ideas about some Islamic traditions were really crushed just from this simple encounter and meeting.”*

Anneli Radestad





3FF's experience delivering Intercultural programmes in the UK and abroad over the last ten years suggests that training and preparation around the following five key principles can help prevent these problems:

1. Teach the tools
2. Focus on personal experience as an individual not as a 'representative'
3. Foster dialogue not debate
4. Tailor the approach to the context and the challenges the community is overcoming
5. Support participants to reflect on learning and take it into the wider world

## 2.1 TEACH THE TOOLS

People who aren't used to encountering or discussing difference frequently lack the skills to do so in a positive, constructive and safe way. They therefore need to be taught the linguistic and behavioural tools to ask questions and to help participants learn from each other in a non-threatening way. For example, participants should reflect on their existing assumptions about other cultures before the 'encounter' so that they are ready to compare their expectations to the reality they experience.

'The Space' (in which an encounter takes place) is also a key tool in the 3FF methodology. Participants take ownership of the space, maintaining it and ensuring its effective use. Agreeing the terms of engagement in the space ensures everyone is on the journey together and this can happen through a 'Safe Space' agreement. This sets out how dialogue will be conducted and what values people will uphold. It can include:

*"Principles for dialogue and principles for the language that you use when you're sharing a story, when you're answering a difficult question or a common question... Participants have the chance to really think about the effective language and the impact of their prior assumptions on that encounter so that the way has been cleared and awareness has been raised before that encounter happens"*

Tamanda Walker, 3FF

Participants in IE training in Stockholm said that tools like this helped them feel better equipped to 'use personal stories to illustrate aspects of their faith' and more confident about their ability to 'ask questions around faith sensitively and effectively.'

## 2.2 FOCUS ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS AN INDIVIDUAL NOT AS A 'REPRESENTATIVE'

Understanding individuals' and communities' cultures and identities involves discovering the stories that have shaped them.

*"We all have a story whether you have lived in this county for 150 years or whether you just got off the train. And knowing that story will make us less suspicious of each other"*

Anneli Radestad, Swedish IE practitioner

### PRACTICAL INSIGHT 4

The 3FF workshop, "The Art of Asking" involves students' approaching controversial questions which they may find personally offensive or hurtful. It requires careful facilitation to deal with students' emotional reactions so that they can critically unpack the meaning behind questions. Similarly, in another workshop, "The Art of Empathy", students consider assumptions people make about them and their classmates based on how they look.



Effective Intercultural Education differs from doctrinal religious education because it happens from a personal perspective with speakers sharing their individual experiences rather than representing a faith or culture as a whole. This ensures speakers are not seen as preaching or proselytising and emphasises the diversity within a faith or culture and the tensions and complexities that come with it. For example, in one of 3FF's schools programme, "Encountering Faiths and Beliefs", speakers share stories which are intentionally personal as in the case of Practical Insight 3, where a Muslim speaker shared how her own faith had developed. This helps emphasise the individual and personal side of people's faith and belief journeys and prompts students to share personal reflections.

*"Speakers have been trained, they create these stories in a way that is both pedagogical and personal but which shows diversity within their own faith... just speaking from your own personal story but at the same time giving an example of someone else close to you, a sibling or friend who might practice the same religion in a different way or interpret it in a different way."*

Anneli Radestad

Many speakers frame their faith stories amongst their many identities, in one case a speaker described herself as 'a mother of two, from north London, working as a nurse, Hindu, and a huge Manchester United fan.' By showcasing the complexity of identity speakers break down the illusion of a single identity.

### 2.3. FOSTER DIALOGUE OVER DEBATE.

Focusing on the personal distinguishes discussing controversial issues from debating them. By opening up a space for curiosity and "putting the spotlight on the diversity in the room" participants are encouraged to inquire rather than debate.

*"Part of the oral storytelling is that it is hard to argue with I suppose. You can argue about ideas but here you have a person who is in a real and vulnerable situation sharing their story."*

Anneli Radestad

#### PRACTICAL INSIGHT 5

3FF's ParliaMentors programme brings together students from different faiths and non-religious beliefs who then work together on a social action project. Participants receive support from NGOs and mentorship from an MP or Peer.

As they collaborate to achieve shared goals, participants progress from encounter and knowledge of each other, to acceptance and mutual respect.

As a result of the project, over 80 % of participants reported increased confidence in their ability to manage challenging or controversial discussions around faith in a positive way, and over 80 % felt their ability to work with people from different faiths and backgrounds increased. Participants talked compellingly about the complexity of identity and difference:

*"Whether it's a religious identity or a cultural identity or a national identity, people will have different identities and I think that's what's great certainly about this country in that so many people from different religions have worked together and come together and that's something I think we need to respect... I think as a society slowly we are moving more towards people being open about their identity whatever that might be. And I think it always is an essential part of any person to understand really who they are"*

Programme Participant



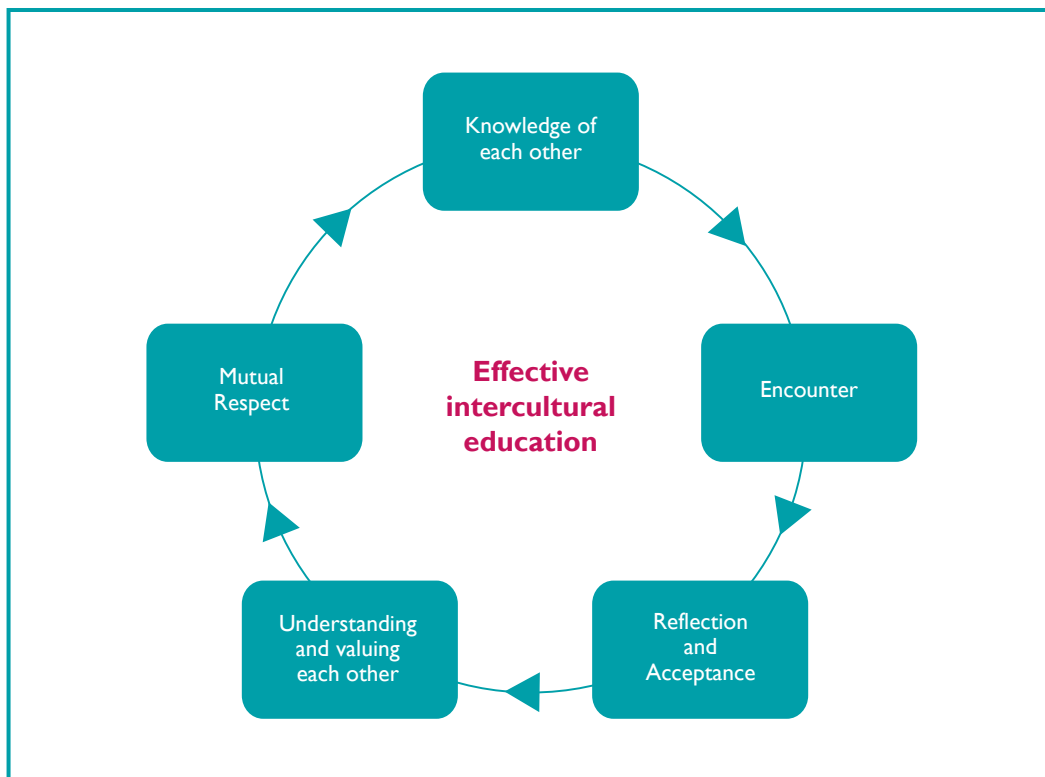
None of this means avoiding controversial issues, indeed 83 % of participants in 3FF’s ‘Parliamentors’ leadership programme felt that their ‘ability to manage, in a positive way, controversial or challenging discussions about differences between people of different faiths/beliefs’ increased as a result of the program. Challenging yet sensitive discussion about difficult or personal topics can then “bring people together across difference”.

On the other hand, some experts’ approach comes closer to the debate end of the spectrum. For example, Vidhya Ramalingam of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue/IPPR argues that IE involves:

*“Acknowledging and addressing both real and perceived grievances and kind of tackling them head-on rather than letting them simmer” and “taking on the hard debates about current affairs which I think often times people may be hesitant to deal with.”*

Vidhya Ramalingam

Ultimately if such conversations are to be constructive rather than threatening and damaging they need to be founded on strong relationships and high levels of trust. Longer term projects can therefore move towards the ‘debate’ end of the continuum over time. Given this, although short-term programmes present opportunities for encounter and dialogue, IE should ideally be treated as a long-term intervention.





## 2.4 TAILOR THE APPROACH TO THE CONTEXT AND THE CHALLENGES THE COMMUNITY IS OVERCOMING

Practitioners of IE speak of the importance of tailoring the approach to a local context. For example, 3FF facilitators emphasised that when working in Malmö, Sweden they had to take into account the fact that a local mosque had recently been subject to several arson attacks. In this context, it was important to select ‘safer’ topics to start with before moving onto open discussion around belief and identity. Given the need to respond to context, an ‘off the shelf approach’ to Intercultural Education is inappropriate. Instead, the key principles set out in this section should be applied differently in each setting in a way that is informed by local context, cultural norms and context specific interpretations of language.

Levels of diversity in a community also affect how IE should be delivered: whilst areas with diverse pupil intake but low levels of intercultural contact may need to focus on supporting and encouraging interaction, more monocultural areas need projects like cross-school linking if contact is even to be possible.

## 2.5. SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS TO REFLECT ON LEARNING AND TAKE IT INTO THE WIDER WORLD

Following an encounter, participants in IE need to be given space to reflect on what they have learnt. This gives them the opportunity to internalise ideas and new behaviours and to decide how they will apply them in the future. For example, one interviewee argued that conversations between young people frequently get ‘shut down’ “by pigeonholing [a young person] into their attitudes’ and labelling them as racist”. IE should instead equip young people with the skills to challenge misinformation and prejudice through dialogue.

Ultimately, reflection lays the ground for participants to sustain their interactions in every-day, unmoderated settings. This is particularly important given that research shows that even when people have contact with each other in certain public spheres, this less frequently translates into the private or social sphere.<sup>19,20</sup> As Radestad explains:

*“If people were more curious and got these tools to communicate around sensitive topics in a respectful way, these conversations wouldn’t just take place in the intercultural workshop. They would take place between students themselves. [We need to reduce] the barriers to just ask that first question of ‘Hi, where are you from?’ In Sweden if you start doing that people think you are crazy”.*

Anneli Radestad

### PRACTICAL INSIGHT 6

The Coopers’ Company and Coborn School won the 2013 TES Humanities prize for its RS department’s work on inter-faith dialogue.

Students participate in video conferences with students around the world and explore intercultural issues in their Philosophy for Children lessons. The school has also worked with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and the school holds a monthly Inter Faith Forums at which philosophical, ethical and theological questions are discussed. The RS department also organises trips to different communities and places of worship as well as welcoming visitors from different faith backgrounds.



### Part 3: Four Principles to Guide Policy

Policymakers should act in four areas in order to support effective IE:

1. Move beyond multiculturalism towards interculturalism
2. Develop a ‘tight but loose’ approach that sets goals nationally but supports local solutions backed up by specialist expertise
3. Promote IE in schools as a way to explore difference and broaden horizons
4. Make IE’s goals explicit and support the development of evaluation frameworks that can be used in research and good practice sharing.

#### 3.1 MOVE BEYOND MULTICULTURALISM AND TOWARDS INTERCULTURALISM

Policy should shift from a multiculturalist emphasis on accommodating difference towards intercultural exchange, learning and mutual-respect. This would shift the agenda away from responding to or protecting specific religions and towards contact, interaction and understanding. IE can then achieve its potential as a powerful tool in fighting prejudice and religiously fuelled hatred.

*“We live in a multicultural society or a multi-faith society, but not necessarily an intercultural or an interfaith society, so we have potentially communities living together side by side, but how much and the nature and the quality of the interaction that happens, can be really varied.”*

Tamanda Walker

#### 3.2 DEVELOP A ‘TIGHT BUT LOOSE’ APPROACH THAT SETS GOALS NATIONALLY BUT SUPPORTS LOCAL SOLUTIONS BACKED UP BY SPECIALIST EXPERTISE

A top-down prescriptive approach to intercultural education is inappropriate because it does not secure local buy-in and makes it harder to tailor the approach to local context. Therefore, whilst countries should set priorities centrally and knowledge should be mobilised nationally, local areas should have responsibility for finding solutions. This would have a number of benefits:

- Although recent education policy has in many ways sidelined local authorities, Vidhya Ramalingham of IPPR/ Institute for Strategic Dialogue argues they still retain a “place-shaping function” and a role in creating a local “sense of belonging”. They are also well placed to bring stakeholders together and to use their local knowledge to broker partnerships between schools and local delivery organisations that have a proven track record.
- Locally driven solutions can focus on building community interaction in the long term which is a more effective way of reducing prejudice and the perception of threat than one off events like the Olympics<sup>21,22</sup> and the “nationally sponsored ‘Community Week’” proposed by the 2007 Commission on Integration and Cohesion<sup>23</sup>

#### PRACTICAL INSIGHT 7

International exchanges are already playing a role in sharing good practice in the sector.

Teachers from Slovakia recently came to visit 3FF in the UK for a week long study visit. The exchange included school visits, training sessions and good-practice workshops. The trip helped practitioners from both countries understand how IE might need to be adapted in different settings. Slovakian teachers explored how IE is delivered in more culturally diverse settings whilst 3FF considered how their tools might be adapted to more mono-cultural environments.



- A locally driven approach can be more responsive in times of crisis. Local Authorities can identify emerging tensions and respond so that communities are not driven apart when flashpoints occur.
- IE needs to be delivered sensitively and skillfully. Drawing on specialist expertise means that local initiatives can tap into best practice.

### 3.3 PROMOTE IE IN SCHOOLS AS A WAY TO EXPLORE DIFFERENCE AND BROADEN HORIZONS

All schoolchildren should have the opportunity to experience intercultural education because it has the potential to 'reduce prejudice, counter perceptions of threat and raise levels of tolerance in society'<sup>24</sup>.

As we have seen, IE should not just be seen as an element of good RE. As set out in Practical Insight 6; it should instead be addressed across the school through a mixture of off-timetable activities, cross curricula learning and community engagement.

### 3.4 MAKE IE'S GOALS EXPLICIT AND SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS THAT CAN BE USED IN RESEARCH AND GOOD PRACTICE SHARING

Effective evaluation requires explicit goals and whilst there are numerous indicators for integration in terms of socio-economic outcomes, there are fewer for socio-cultural outcomes.

Vidhya Ramalingam describes a "need for concrete indicators and outcomes (since) this is the only way that governments are going to be willing to fund methodologies in this area".

Similarly, Broadwood notes that:

*'Measuring the impact of a service on local good relations is more problematic; it can be difficult to demonstrate the impact of a specific intervention in complex community situations. Many people said they would welcome guidance and would like easy-to-use accessible tools with clear indicators to help develop a greater understanding of the effects their work is having at a neighbourhood level.'*<sup>25</sup>

Indicators and frameworks for evaluation are therefore urgently needed in order to build the evidence base. Central government should therefore articulate a goal for IE and fund or commission an outcome framework which could be used to compare delivery organisations' work. This would facilitate value for money judgements and sharing of good practice. Whilst funding is limited in the current climate, better evaluation would ensure money was spent efficiently and impact maximised.

*"There isn't a massive evidence base for specific methodologies. We need to allow some space for innovation in this space - for testing of new methods with a strong evaluation feature that's built in"*

Vidhya Ramalingam



## Afterword

As this report has argued, there is an urgent need to promote and embed effective Intercultural Education. Using the lens of faith and belief in order to educate has great benefits, especially as the “visibility” of belief becomes increasingly apparent. There is a pressing need to promote public understanding, however an effective approach will reveal the complexity of both collective and personal identity.

The key to doing this is for government and policy professionals to work more closely with academia, schools, communities and third sector organisations in the UK and across Europe. Doing so would mean better informed decisions around religion and belief in education. We also strongly believe that there should be a focus on demonstrating the impact and effectiveness of Intercultural Education in preparing young people to thrive in a diverse society and increasingly diverse working environments.

To this end, 3FF will maintain its longstanding commitment to creating connections between individuals and organisations from different faiths, beliefs and cultures as well as by enabling learning and dialogue about lived diversity and intercultural communication. While 3FF will focus primarily on developing and delivering its workshops and training in the UK and across Europe, it will look to work further through a collective partnership approach in order to help shift perceptions, behaviours and attitudes working towards a vision of a vibrant connected and cohesive society.

The promise of effective Intercultural Education is of a more literate public where people have strong, productive, and positive relations and are better positioned to counter ignorance and hate. The perils of ignoring religion and belief, or worse, engaging with it in an unproductive and ineffective manner, are much too great. The merits of a society that is informed, as well as appreciates and learns to manage its diversity well, is one that prospers.





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