

Civic Engagement, Empowerment and Respect for Diversity (CEERD)
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EDUCATION AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY GROUP

Report on Progress to date, upcoming year quote s program, content of piloting: Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospective Partnerships

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Program Recommendations:

In bringing the advisory group together and creating the networks around the six strands, it would be helpful: 1) to have a more thorough analysis of the expertise and experience that is available among the members of the Advisory Committee. This would facilitate networking and fostering of a cadre of practitioners grounded in context specific activities. 2) It would also be helpful to edit and publish the papers from the initial meeting of practitioners-experts. 3) If the piloting is to be a success, additional funds will be required in the form of additional donor support from regional management within the Bank. 4) We also need to focus on the earlier respect for diversity workshop in March where we discussed the current state of knowledge around issues of education for diversity particularly as they apply to features of World Bank loans: a) curriculum (formal and informal), b) teaching resources, texts, and c) teacher methods and teacher education.

We need to revisit the World Bank Millennium Development Goals and Education for All declarations. Models of quality education need to include diversity sensitive education. We welcome the fact that the Bank is preparing brief guidelines (a repertoire of questions about diversity that could form part of the dialogue between Bank staff and in country education authorities). This should affect the World Bank staff as much as the loan recipients. Considerations to be addressed include: a) social economic, and political climate that is, readiness to accept interventions; b) political commitment, c) management and administration of education, d) structural qualities (integrated education), e) equality measures, and f) implementation practice issues within curriculum, textbooks, and teacher education.

Where possible, pilots need to be linked or embedded into World Bank projects and should be extended through additional funding. The Bank also needs to document and use what has been learned from pilot and demonstration projects. Finally, there must be connections between guidance and practice issues. World Bank project loans should support positive change and need to be monitored to promote diversity sensitive curriculum, strengthen teacher education, and raise questions that extend the impact of each pilot effort. The importance of doing this lies in influencing conceptual frameworks and loan recipients. We welcome the fact that the Bank is preparing a respect for diversity checklist to be used on a pilot basis. Such a checklist can be used to ensure that key issues related to diversity will be fully discussed in meetings between education authorities and bank task managers. The checklist should cover key issues in curriculum development, textbooks, and teacher training.

Several caveats should also be considered:

Curriculum has many meanings within country contexts, and making such meanings apparent at the national and local levels is critical.

Instructional materials are difficult to produce and not always cost effective in that they require piloting, revision, and final production. Creative ways of developing templates for teachers to develop their own materials might be considered.

Issues of diversity, while commonplace in the rhetoric of country documents and even World Bank initiatives, need to be unpacked as to their ultimate meaning and interpretation within diverse contexts. Diversity is not only about acknowledging and identifying differences, but more importantly, the commonalities that link us as human beings.

Purpose and Process of the Education and Respect for Diversity Advisory Team

The Education and Respect for Diversity group reviewed the following country reports based on the contexts in which education takes place, the characterization of the issues that are present, the potential pilots to be considered, the partners that are either already functioning in these countries or that should be identified. The group sets forth recommendations and suggested next steps emerging from the presentations and ensuing discussions.

The group recognized that pilot funds are very limited and in order for efforts to be effective, they must be leveraged with linkages with other projects and donors. Increases in available pilot funds should be a high priority.

Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka can be described as a society emerging from a period of civil strife around separatist issues between Tamil and Sinhalese communities. There has been a 16-month period of ceasefire. The government has established text materials review procedures aimed at ensuring cultural sensitivity. Even after review and approval, concerns are being expressed about the new materials and their contributions to social cohesion.

Two possible pilots discussed were:

The first links into the last two years of an extended 7-year World Bank funded project and involves a review of educational initiatives in terms of their contribution to social cohesion. This is not only a descriptive, but more fundamentally, an analytical process that needs to incorporate a critical analysis of the empowering effect of these processes. The pilot should concentrate on developing these critical analysis capacities among indigenous personnel.

The second pilot is linked more specifically to the textbook review and improvement process. Such a pilot would include technical support to build capacity and to foster textbook development skills, critical thinking, and associated methodologies that are inclusive and respectful of all communities.

The recommendations identified by the group include leveraging existing project resources and expanding projects to include teacher educators and administrators and teachers as leaders and learners. In addition, the group recommends that language and cultural issues be directly addressed. We suggest that teacher education needs to break out of its traditional model of direct delivery to more teacher ownership and student participation. This should be done in a way that

fosters critical thinking and the strategic engagement of diverse points of view. The pilot could draw on technical support from groups such as the George Eckert Institute and the International Reading Association to provide training for textbook authors and for teacher educators. This would expand the pilot to include sensitizing teacher educators, teachers and administrators to issues of diversity. Additional funding might be secured from donor groups such as DFID.

Gaza and the West Bank

Key issues are being addressed within the context of the current Israeli and Palestinian conflict. The Palestinian Ministry of Education, established in 1994, faced a significant challenge to establish a Palestinian curriculum

to supersede use of the Jordanian curriculum in the West Bank and the Egyptian in the Gaza. Despite school disruption through school closures, physical and human losses, progress has been made in developing new curriculum through the 8th grade in math and science. Sixty eight percent of the schools are government run, twenty six percent are UN refugee schools and the remaining six percent are private. There is significant energy, notably by USAID, going into processes of reviewing curriculum for cultural

sensitivity and insensitivity. The current atmosphere of conflict makes it difficult for progress that has been achieved to be recognized. Although UNESCO previously initiated a process of reviewing Israeli and Palestinian resources, this process has been halted. The level of mistrust on both sides is high making it difficult for both sides to accept many of each other's versions to be represented in educational texts.

Recommendations for the pilot include a focus on capacity building for culturally sensitive textbook and curriculum development. For example, the case study approach could be used to examine the popular education of Palestinian children and young people. This would capitalize on the resilience and creativity of the community in support of more effective curricula and teacher training. Pilots could be embedded within the World Bank Education Action Project to support the implementation of Palestinian Authority 5 year Development Plan for Education. With additional funding from partners such as UNESCO, the World Bank, and national development aid programs, experience gained from the pilots and case studies could be extended and brought to a larger scale.

As a large and complex society with over 300 ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, Nigeria is experiencing fragmentation of efforts and failure of governance in maintaining security and cohesion. While the country is a federation of states, there is a sharp distinction between the North and South. Gender issues are significant since women and girls do not have access to educational and social resources that advance their role and status. Moreover, a least 40% of teachers fail to meet minimum qualifications.

The proposed pilot would focus on improving the quality of teacher education with an emphasis on respect for diversity and gender sensitivity. By ignoring women as a resource, progress is impeded. The pilot project should be small in scale and focused on three provinces so that the pilot lessons learned can be used in large-scale efforts. One recommendation was to work with established groups such as the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN).

Laos: Peoples Republic

A Communist government has existed since 1975; Laos has a population of five million. The government has been resistant to acknowledging the existence of ethnic and linguistic diversity among its various groups. Efforts are underway to build a knowledge base for developing educational policy. There has been extensive forced resettlement by the government and a hierarchy of discrimination exists amongst the four main ethno-linguistic groups.

Four possible areas for piloting might include: 1) Support for development of a language of instruction policy that goes beyond information gathering about multiple language literacies. SIDA is supporting a symposium on language of instruction issues and the pilot could provide specific support for key individuals to have out of country experiences in areas such as Eastern and Central Europe. The potential models for inclusion and respect for diversity are those developed by the Open Society Institute in partnership with the International Reading Association. 2) Studies of different ethnic groups expectations and experiences about education. 3) Using and expanding upon the data gleaned from the Laos National Assessment for Student Learning Outcomes as a basis to inform policy-making processes. 4) A review of instructional materials external to Laos in terms of acknowledgement of respect for diversity. Rosemary Belle suggested that having policy makers see and experience relevant policy making in other countries would be a high priority.

Peru

This is a country that has experienced some success in non-formal community based education programs such as early childhood education programs modeled on the U.S. Headstart project, despite the political turmoil experienced in recent years. It is a youth oriented society with 65% under age 25. Schools have traditionally relied on recitation and memorization as a primary

means of instruction. There is no tradition or habit of reading in the society and poor quality teaching is widespread. Much of the national education budget is devoted to salaries with little remaining for innovation. The curriculum is weak and is not supported by up to date materials. There is very little attention to critical thinking skills.

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\par A possible pilot would focus on education for democracy through an inquiry and critical thinking based curriculum that would explore issues of national identity, equality, multi-lingualism, and the nature of democracy in contemporary Peru. The pilot could be coordinated through the Ministry for Social Development as well as existing departments for rural and bilingual education. Many donors, including the

UAID Rural Education project, operate in the country and any pilot project should leverage their resources. Technical support might be provided through organizations such as CIVITAS, Street Law, and the IRA Reading/Writing for Critical Thinking/Soros Foundation projects. The EU was also discussed as a potential partner. The pilot would complement and be supported by new World Bank projects.

(Draft Report, June 19, 2003\emdash Alan E. Farstrup)