British society is infused with institutional racism, according to the 1999 Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report. The report’s findings and recommendations, which place considerable emphasis on the role which education can play in preventing and addressing racism, were acknowledged and largely accepted by the British Government. Schools face a number of challenges if they are to address institutional racism and meet the needs of all children as citizens in a multicultural society. This paper draws on a human rights framework to consider the potential of citizenship education for enabling race equality internationally. It reflects on the importance of leadership in achieving human rights and racial justice in and through education. In particular, it considers the role of headteachers and other key education professionals in enabling greater race equality and proposes a way forward in which schools can respond positively to external inspection and develop tools for self-evaluation.

Introduction

In this paper, I address education for human rights and citizenship within a multicultural society, considering how such an education might make a difference to our experiences of citizenship in our local communities and how it might contribute to the broader international project of living together in peace. This theme fits very well with the commitment to children’s social education and to education for international understanding shown by the Association’s first chair, Dorothy J. Skeel. Professor Skeel recognised how important it is that children are active participants in the processes of learning, and that this learning needs to address content and issues which are important to them as citizens.

In an increasingly globalized society it is easier today to recognise the importance of international perspectives than when Dorothy Skeel first advocated an international approach. Education for international understanding implies a set of principles and values. Human rights provide us with an internationally agreed framework and shared values base. This framework is particularly important when planning for and working in multicultural contexts.

This paper examines human rights and racial justice in education. The theme broadly coincides with that of the 2001 UNESCO-International Bureau of Education Conference in Geneva: Learning To Live Together. Evidence from around the world, and recent examples of genocide in Europe and Africa, remind us that this remains a key topic for us all. All governments declare their commitment to human rights and therefore will not, in principle, deny the importance of human rights education as a key aspect of learning to live together. However, in many countries, and certainly here in England, race equality in education remains a sensitive subject. It is not necessarily seen in all quarters as an essential feature of the human rights project, and is not always at the forefront of education policy agendas, even when the theme is ‘learning to live together’.
As an educator, if you choose to focus on it, you may find yourself out of the mainstream and on the fringes of your academic discipline - in the position of outsider. As a senior female academic, especially as one arguing passionately for an approach to education which emphasised international understanding and children's active participation - an approach which others were not yet ready to accept - Professor Skeel must have found herself in situations where she was sometimes at the periphery. Yet she persisted in her work. In taking forward the project of human rights and citizenship in education - which is, I believe, an essential foundation of learning to live together in increasingly diverse communities and a globalised world - we can take comfort, inspiration and strength from pioneers such as Dorothy J. Skeel.

**Education for human rights and citizenship**

Education for human rights and citizenship implies making a difference. Neither the human rights project, nor that of citizenship, is complete. Both are on-going struggles. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was developed immediately after the Second World War in response to the abuses perpetrated by the regimes in Japan and Nazi Germany. Human rights are a key part of an international project to promote and maintain world peace. The first paragraph of the preamble to the Universal Declaration affirms this:

> Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. (UDHR, 1948: preamble)

It is an on-going project, in which education has a central role as the Declaration also highlights:

> The General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every in dividual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance. (UDHR, 1948: preamble)

Some ten years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a Declaration of Children's Rights was adopted in 1959. 1979 marked the International Year of the Child in which children's rights received much needed publicity and attention. During 1979 a Working Group was set up by the UN Commission on Children's Rights to draft a Convention on the Rights of the Child, in response to a formal proposal from Poland. Non-governmental organisations made a significant contribution to the drafting process, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child was finally adopted in 1989.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC) is the most widely accepted human rights instrument to date. The Convention, which is legally binding on all States which choose to ratify it, has in fact been ratified by all but two States world-wide, Somalia and USA. It reaffirms the key role of education in the human rights project. Among the aims of education, stated in the Convention, are:
the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations

the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin. (CRC, Article 29)

Thus we see that education for human rights is not only central to the human rights project but that education for human rights is explicitly education for racial justice and equality.

Equally, citizenship is an on-going project. Much of the political history of the twentieth century focused on struggles to extend, defend or claim citizenship rights. Some of these struggles focused on the right to vote, others on social citizenship rights. Women fought for an extension of the franchise, they also played a significant role in Independence struggles. Other key citizenship struggles in which women played a key role in achieving political rights were the civil rights movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. The constitution of South Africa now emphasises human rights and the equal citizenship of women and men as well as people of all races. But in South Africa and elsewhere, equal constitutional and legal rights are only part of the picture. There is often a gap between formal rights and the ability of all citizens to claim their rights.

In 1999, the results of an official Inquiry into the police investigation into the racist murder of a black London teenager, Stephen Lawrence, were published (Macpherson et al., 1999). The Inquiry took place largely as a result of a campaign in which Stephen’s parents and other members of the black community fought to bring an injustice to the attention of the British Government and the media. Stephen enjoyed full political rights. But he was not safe from racist killers on the streets of London. The police failed to carry out their duties in a professional way and to bring his killers to justice. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry concluded that the police service, and British society more broadly, are infused with institutional racism. The Lawrence Inquiry report defined institutional racism as:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without recognition and action to eliminate such racism, it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation. It is a corrosive disease. (Macpherson, et al., 1999: para. 6.34)

Institutional racism amounts, therefore, to more than individual discrimination or prejudice. It operates, through the justice system, the police force, public services and government itself, to restrict the citizenship rights and participation of minorities. It illustrates how the struggle for equal citizenship rights is an on-going one. It is not,
however, a struggle which is restricted to those groups whose rights are denied but is the responsibility of each of us. The British Government, in setting up the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and accepting its finding of institutional racism, acknowledged the importance of political leadership in challenging racism and in creating a climate in which race equality is seen as the responsibility of all (Home Office, 1999). As then Home Secretary Jack Straw stated, when presenting the report to the House of Commons:

The report does not place a responsibility on someone else; it places a responsibility on each of us. We must make racial equality a reality. The vision is clear: we must create a society in which every individual, regardless of colour, creed or race, has the same opportunities and respect as his or her neighbour. (Hansard, 24 February 1999)

Schools and the education system are not immune from institutional racism. Nevertheless, they are seen as part of the solution. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry recommended that schools play a key role in preventing and addressing racism.

**Schools, racism and antiracism**

International human rights instruments highlight the role of education in promoting human rights and racial justice. Schools have a key role to play in this project. School leaders and managers have a vital contribution to make. I draw on research findings to consider how headteachers have responded to this challenge. In Spring 2000, a year after the publication of the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, we undertook research on behalf of the UK Commission for Racial Equality to establish how the school inspection agency for England, Ofsted, reports on race equality issues in schools (Osler & Morrison, 2000). In response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the Government accepted in 1999 a number of recommendations relating to education. Ofsted is required to monitor how schools are preventing and addressing racism (Home Office, 1999).

As part of this project we interviewed members of Ofsted, school inspectors contracted to Ofsted, school advisers and headteachers in three contrasting local education authorities (LEAs). These included a London borough with a multicultural population (LEA1), an authority in the South of England where the proportion of ethnic minority children in the school population is close to the national average (LEA2), and a shire county in the English Midlands, where school population is predominantly white (LEA3).

It was clear from their responses that neither school inspectors nor headteachers had been informed by Ofsted or by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) of Ofsted's Government-designated role to monitor how schools are preventing and addressing racism. As one headteacher expressed it:

If race equality is a Government priority in education no one has made it clear to me. (Secondary headteacher, LEA2)

Nevertheless, this headteacher was not alone among the headteachers we interviewed in identifying racial inequalities in his school. Headteachers reported a number of inequalities which are documented in the research literature, including the underachievement of certain ethnic groups (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Richardson & Wood, 1999); inequalities in the use of exclusion from school as a disciplinary measure (Osler, 1997b; Osler & Hill, 1999); teacher stereotyping (Gillborn,
Richardson and Wood (1999) have provided a useful working definition of institutional racism in education:

In the education system there are laws, customs and practices which systematically reflect and reproduce racial inequalities ... If racist consequences accrue to institutional laws, customs and practices, a school or a local education authority or a national education system is racist whether or not individual teachers, inspectors, officers, civil servants and elected politicians have racist intentions... Educational institutions may systematically treat or tend to treat pupils and students differently in respect of race, ethnicity or religion. The differential treatment lies within an institution's ethos and organisation rather than in the attitudes, beliefs and intentions of individual members of staff. The production of differential treatment is 'institutionalised' in the way the institution operates, (p.33)

Although schools have been identified as a key means by which racism in society might be addressed and prevented, they remain part of the problem. Human rights and race equality are not simply the responsibility of individual teachers; they are key school management issues (Osler & Starkey, 1998). Indeed the Ofsted school inspection framework recognises them as such (Ofsted, 1995; 1999).

A number of headteachers in our study saw race equality issues as central to their work, but felt that they were not necessarily recognised as such by the inspectors who visited their school:

We had identified where there were English as a second language needs and that they were being met and that we had a sense of the ability potential of those children ... [but] it [race equality] was not central to the OFSTED process. (Secondary headteacher, LEA2)

It didn't come across as a particular concern of theirs. It wasn't something that was raised much during the inspection. I suppose, without being complacent, it was one of the areas where we felt reasonably confident that we were doing a number of things that perhaps other schools were not doing. (Secondary headteacher, LEA1)

Another headteacher was concerned about the over-representation of certain groups of students amongst those excluded from his school, and about inequalities in achievement between ethnic groups and was aware that this needed to be addressed. However, the inspection team appeared to overlook the issue:

We were very conscious there would be comments on exclusions, exclusion [of students] from the ethnic communities, exam results, whether they were better or worse. So in that sense we were aware, but no one was specifically raising these issues with us. (Secondary headteacher, LEA2)

In one case the headteacher admitted that he had no idea whether the students from ethnic minority communities, whom he estimated to form 'around three per cent' of the school population, were achieving as well as other students in the school. He had not thought of monitoring achievement by ethnicity:
But if we wanted to from the database we could find out who they were. I wouldn't have a clue, with one or two exceptions, but it is not something which is kept separately. If you asked me to list or name our pupils I think I would know most of them, but I would have to think really long and hard about any pupils with ethnic origin. They are just pupils at [the school] like anyone else. (Secondary headteacher, LEA3)

In attempting not to distinguish between students and treating everyone alike this headteacher believes he is practising equality. But he is not aware of any differentials in achievement that might need to be addressed, nor he is aware of any differences in need between pupils. Little thought has been given to any needs that particular pupils may have. For example, no resources are allocated to students who have English as an additional language and no thought has been given as to whether the curriculum is culturally sensitive and inclusive.

One headteacher reported that at her school 'some of our staff do have a racist approach'. It appeared that these teachers were, at best, dismissive of the cultural backgrounds of some children. Her response was not to offer training or consider disciplinary action but to try to act in a compensatory way towards those children who were adversely affected and to be 'supportive' towards them:

One of the things is monitoring... And being very supportive when students want to have an Eid party or, you know, when groups of students want to do something very much, making sure they are respected and valued for doing it. And that's got to come from us [the senior management team] and you give that leadership and then that should percolate down. (Secondary headteacher, LEA2)

This headteacher is willing to monitor the individual achievement of her students but is not aware of any differentials in achievement since she is reluctant to monitor by ethnicity. She seems to believe that her responsibility as a leader is to be nice to those children who are the victims of racism rather than to challenge the 'racist approach' of her teachers. She does not suggest what she will do if her attempt to lead by example has no impact on those teachers who 'have a racist approach'. Although she accepts the principle of race equality, her well-meaning response is unlikely to be effective or to promote a more inclusive school.

Headteachers in this study were committed to race equality as a principle and a number reported how they had been personally touched by the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. They were all broadly sympathetic to the notion that external inspection should address race equality:

If race equality is an important moral issue in this country then I think the Ofsted inspection framework could be explicit about this. … It can't be quantified in the hard-nosed way that some data can be. But if it's an issue for society then schools could be asked how they are responding to society's agenda. (Primary headteacher, LEA2)

These headteachers are looking for political leadership on questions of race equality. They are asking for reassurance and commitment from government that race equality in education is, indeed, a government priority.
Yet there are other headteachers and education advisers who have taken a lead on these issues, even when there has been little political support. The following quote is from a headteacher speaking during the early 1990s, during a period when race equality was not prominent on the government's agenda and when antiracism was under attack from prominent politicians and sections of the media:

Teaching I consider to be a real mission, education does matter. And it matters for young black and white kids in inner-city Manchester, inner-city Birmingham, inner-city London. ...When I went into the classroom, the first thing I said was: 'I am not here to play, I am here to work and you are here to learn, so if you are going to play you can go outside. Your parents are working hard in shit houses for you to be her, they are working anti-social hours and you are not going to mess about' Now that sort of understanding has stayed with me... I understand that education is potentially liberating and useful. (Secondary headteacher, quoted in Osler, 1997a: 136-7)

This headteacher has a clear vision of education, which she has acquired through her personal and professional experiences as a black woman living and working in multicultural schools and communities. Her vision is inclusive; it recognises how education has the potential to change the lives of disadvantaged children - black and white. Although she does not use the language of human rights, she is conscious of the equal rights of all children. Her approach is inclusive: she does not restrict her concern to black children but extends it to all children who are living in disadvantaged circumstances. She is aware of the transforming potential of education and aware that the rights of these children can be secured through education.

Her struggle is not one which is restricted to black and ethnic minority teachers. It cannot be left to them alone. As another senior teacher points out, if the burden is left to black teachers they will simply be worn down by it:

Sometimes I feel I have an enormous weight on my shoulders because: 'Gosh, you are a black person who has made it to senior management. Right, forge ahead!' As if this is the only banner you have got to carry. I mean, one of my responsibilities is equal opportunities, but by God, that is not my only responsibility. I find that an enormous burden sometimes that people are saying: Senior position in the school, we can really get things done (Deputy headteacher, quoted in Osier, 1997a: 141).

Antiracism is a central part of the struggle for human rights. It is not an optional extra in education but the responsibility of all.

**Human rights, citizenship and racial justice**

Human rights form the basis of justice and peace in the world. It is this to which all democratic societies aspire. Human rights underpin the basis of living and citizenship. It is the responsibility of citizens to live and work within a framework of human rights and to defend the human rights of all. Political democracy and human rights are in a reciprocal relationship. Human rights must therefore underpin education for citizenship. Nevertheless, many human rights educators have, in practice, given low priority to questions of race equality. In order for race equality to be on the agenda it may be
necessary to engage in what has been called the politics of conjunctions and to talk about education for 'human rights and race equality' (Richardson, 2001).

The responsibilities of schools in tackling these issues are beginning to be acknowledged in many different cultural contexts throughout the world. At a seminar organised by the International Bureau of Education (IBE) for the Africa region held in Nairobi in June 2001, participants from 11 African countries considered the need for curriculum reform which addressed questions of ethnic and linguistic diversity and which tackled the problem of violence in schools. In Rwanda, where genocide took place in 1994, schools are identified, by the present government, as having contributed to the violence (Woodward, 2000). The education system, based on a colonial model, prepared a small minority to run the country. The massacre of Tutsis by Hutus was based on total dehumanisation of the Other (Prunier, 1995). The violence in schools was not limited to separate schooling and indoctrination. During the genocide:

Schools could not be places of refuge either and Hutu teachers commonly denounced their Tutsi pupils to the militia or even directly killed them themselves, (p. 254)

A number of writers have questioned how well-educated people, in various contexts during the twentieth century, have been involved in acts of genocide and in crimes against humanity:

The role of well-educated persons in the conception, planning and execution of the genocide requires explanation; any attempt at explanation must consider how it was possible that their education did not render genocide unthinkable. The active involvement of children and young people in carrying out acts of violence, sometimes against their teachers and fellow pupils, raises further questions about the kind of education they had received. (Retamal & Aedo-Richmond, 1998:16)

As a recent report observes:

Racism, in short, involves (a) stereotypes about difference and inferiority and (b) the use of power to exclude, discriminate or subjugate. It has existed and continues to exist in all societies. (Parekh, 2000: 63)

It is therefore vital that education systems develop an adequate response to racism. Writers reflecting on the genocide in Rwanda have highlighted the need for new approaches to schooling based on human rights principles:

For those preparing educational responses appropriate to the post-genocide situation, it was clear that Rwanda's education could never be the same again; it was evident that such themes as peace, reconciliation, human rights and tolerance would have to figure in the 'values education' of all Rwanda's children and young people in the future. (Aguilar & Richmond, 1998:123)

Educators at the regional IBE conference in Nairobi focused on the 'everyday violence' of schools, such as corporal punishment. Interestingly, the participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo, although currently living in a state of conflict and insecurity, choose to focus on the everyday violence experienced by girls who were subject to sexual abuse by teachers and male pupils at school. She pointed out that these
girls were often forced to endure the additional violence of expulsion from school as a result of pregnancy. Teachers are seeking longer-term educational responses to what are, in many schools, ‘everyday racisms, inequalities and abuses of children's human rights’. Among the concerns that these African educators wished governments to address are:

- policies to promote peace and children's rights;
- resources for peace and human rights education;
- measures to motivate teachers in developing a peaceful citizenry, including guidance and training on non-violent positive approaches to discipline;
- bullying and other forms of harassment.

All these were seen as important in preventing future inter-ethnic conflicts and contributing to the development of schools which respect difference and promote equality. In preparing young people as citizens it is important that they are equipped with the skills and attitudes which enable them to live together in contexts of cultural diversity. It is also vital that they are equipped with skills that enable them to challenge racism, a major barrier to the participation of many citizens.

**Leadership**
A strong and determined lead on equal opportunities is given by the headteacher.

**Listening**
Inclusive schools listen to, and learn from, their pupils and their pupils' parents, and try to see things from pupils' point of view.

**Patents and community**
Inclusive schools create and maintain careful links with parents and local communities.

**Persons and individuals**
Inclusive schools try to understand and work with 'the whole child' - they are concerned with the personal, emotional and social development of each individual as well as with academic attainment.

**Curriculum**
Inclusive schools find and create opportunities, within the framework of the national curriculum, to show recognition and respect for their pupils' and students' cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic identities.

**Combating bullying**
Inclusive schools have clear procedures for dealing with racist bullying and racist harassment.

**Preventing exclusions**
Inclusive schools put great stress on strategies to prevent exclusions, both fixed-term and permanent.

**Expectations**
Inclusive schools have high expectations of both teachers and pupils, and clear systems for targeting, tracking and monitoring the progress of individual pupils.

**Monitoring**
Inclusive schools monitor by ethnicity to see whether all groups are achieving equally; to identify unexpected shortcomings in provision; and to target specific areas for attention.

**Figure 1** The Features of Inclusive Schools (Richardson & Wood, 1999)
Setting standards for race equality

In England the school inspection agency, Ofsted, is required to monitor how schools are preventing and addressing racism. Although Ofsted was slow in responding to this role (Osler & Morrison, 2000), it now requires that all inspectors of schools are trained on questions of educational inclusion. Those who do not complete this training will be prevented from carrying out inspections. Although external forms of quality assurance, such as inspection, can make a contribution to the achievement of race equality standards in schools, it is also critical that schools engage in processes of self-evaluation and that headteachers take a lead in the development and implementation of such processes.

Richardson and Wood (1999) have drawn on research findings (Blair & Bourne, et al., 1998) to identify the features of an inclusive school (see Figure 1). Headteachers might use this as a checklist to assess whether their school is, in fact, inclusive, noting in each case whether a particular statement applies 'always', 'sometimes' or 'never'. The checklist might be used as a starting point for discussions among staff, parents and, indeed, children. These discussions may themselves enable greater inclusivity, by encouraging a wide range of stakeholders to listen to each other's perspectives and experiences. From this initial assessment it should be possible to identify key areas for action and to draw up a development action plan with an agreed time-scale for implementation and review. The Commission for Racial Equality (2000) offers further guidance on developing and implementing standards for race equality in schools.

Conclusion

Human rights provide us with a set of internationally agreed principles from which schools and other institutions can develop shared values for living and learning together in multicultural societies. Education for human rights is thus the foundation, of learning to live together and for citizenship. This learning is essentially about making a difference - contributing to the development of a more just society. Such learning in our increasingly globalised and diverse societies and communities must necessarily include education for race equality; indeed, the international human rights project developed in responses to the genocide and other abuses carried out during the 1930s and 1940s.

Citizens of the twenty-first century need to be equipped to live in communities where both equality and respect for diversity are recognised as key principles of living together. Schools will need to equip children and young people with the skills to challenge everyday racisms and other forms of inequality. This implies an education that is grounded in and related to their everyday experiences. Such education is unlikely to be provided by chance. It will require the leadership and support of both governments and headteachers. It will also require governments and teachers to listen to children, understand their viewpoints and learn from their experiences. It implies that we as educators are reflective and self-critical and that we are willing to develop tools for greater self-evaluation and reflection.

Correspondence

Any correspondence should be addressed to Prof Audrey Osler, Centre for Citizenship Studies in Education, University of Leicester, School of Education, 21 University Road, Leicester LE1 7RP, UK. (A.H.Osler@le.ac.uk).
Notes

1 This paper was presented as the third Dorothy J Skeel Memorial Lecture on 9 July 2001 at the IACSEE Conference, *Entrepreneurship and Citizenship in the 21st Century*, held at St Aidan's College, University of Durham, UK. Dorothy J Skeel was Emeritus Professor of Social Studies Education at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University in Nashville, USA, and chair of the Association from its inception until her death in 1997.

2 Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager, was murdered by a group of white youths on the streets of London on 22 April 1993. No one has yet been convicted of the crime. Following a long struggle by Stephen's parents, the UK Home Secretary agreed to an inquiry in 1997, which set out to identify the lessons to be learned for the investigation and prosecution of racially motivated crimes.

References


