

## Learning to Live Together

8th of October  
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As Professor Irabinna Rigney commenced the Learning to Live Together Conference with an Indigenous ritual he explained, "it's easy to train your mind to think two ways". Adapting to difference and accepting change may not come naturally to everyone, however, just like learning to play the didgeridoo, it can actually be taught. Held on the 8th of October at the University of South Australia's Magill campus the purpose of the Learning to Live Together Conference was to provide a research platform between key stakeholders in Australia and EU countries to explore pedagogies that enhance cohesion in a super diverse world. Convened by the Hawke EU Centre and the Centre for Research in Education in the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, UniSA, the event sought to develop connections between key EU educational researchers, policy makers and teachers in Australia by drawing on the knowledge and experience of diversity and cohesion in the European Union. The information convened was then expected to develop new curricula and workshops that would enhance the current approach taken by educational institutions as well as develop policy in respect of increasing mobility and migration.

### *Conference speakers included:*

- Professor Fazal Rizvi from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education
- Ms. Eva Kannis Torry from Thebarton Senior College, a UN global peace school
- Dr. Amrita Malhi from the International Centre for Muslim and non Muslim Understanding
- Dr. Alison Wrench from the Centre for Research in Education, UniSA
- Dr. Ibrahima Diallo from the research Centre for languages and cultures, UniSA
- Dr. Andrew Peterson from the Centre for Research in Education, UniSA
- Dr. Mel Baak from the Centre of Research in Education, UniSA
- Professor Gert Biesta from Brunel University London & Art EZ Institution of the Arts, Netherlands
- Professor Michael Singh & Nhung Nguyen from the Centre for Education research, University of Western Sydney
- Dr. Nahid Afrose Kabir, International Centre for Muslim and non Muslim Understanding, UniSa
- Professor Irabinna Rigney, Centre for Research in Education, UniSA
- Dr. David Radford, Hawke Research Institute, UniSA
- Professor Michalinos Zembylas, Open University Cyprus

Professor Fazal Rizvi from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education began the conference by narrating the virtues and challenges of cosmopolitan learning. Cosmopolitanism, an ideology of a single community with a shared notion of humanity, is a concept that can be related to students in classrooms today, he commented. Cosmopolitanism can appeal to solidarity and belonging by opposing and changing the belief that cultures are parallel to each other but instead suggesting they interact. As an example, the East versus West divide conceptualized by authors such as Samuel Huntington has become ahistorical in educational institutions. By shifting the focus from division between diversity toward highlighting where such cultures and civilizations meet politically and socially, students may be able to move beyond a fear of difference and have positive perceptions of diversity.

Thebarton Senior College, recognized as a UN peace school, is example of students and staff actively building cohesive environments and optimistic views of multiculturalism. As Eva Kannis Torry explained, restorative practice plays a significant role in both the staffs and students attitude towards the challenges of everyday life. It enables them to make a cognitive connection between action and consequences by stimulating thought processes that question how and why problems arise. As a school with students of multiple identities, staff strive to build a community environment for students to feel a sense of welcome and belonging. Dr. Alison Wrench continued this discussion saying teachers should seek to shape an atmosphere of belonging with pupils who may feel disconnected from their communities. Practical support and connection are a responsibility for staff who should be culturally aware of the many groups within their classrooms. Frequent visits to mosques and temples or information sessions could enhance understanding of other faiths and nations, which could then enhance teaching issues of race. These initiatives would aim to build reciprocal connections between school, students and teachers.

Dr. Mel Baak elaborated on the importance of teaching to improve students' sense of belonging and decreasing "othering" attitudes by encouraging the acceptance of peers from all backgrounds, cultures, skin colours. Perceivability, for example, affects students' emotional well-being and new arrival students may nurture feelings of isolation, desperation and anger. Bullying can also shape a sense of isolation and staffs ability to deal with bullying and alter the perceptions of difference to that of acceptance will improve the welcoming nature of a school. Dr. Andrew Peterson's presentation about human rights pedagogy similarly stated education should embrace and enrich diversity of civilization, religion and cultures. Educators should engage students in a dialogical approach to human rights by acknowledging the dominant discourse is driven by western epistemology. The ontology of learning should encompass critical thought and question: "is what I desire (in terms of culture), desirable?", rather than looking to convert others to their ideals and norms. Professor Gert Biesta responded by stating these questions should interrupt thought processes to emancipate and establish a relationship with one's desires, to understand why people think or act a particular way, rather than inhabiting subjective views that "my way is best".

The sum of these discussions is educators are keys to assisting students analyze the assumptions of their societies and understand the world is subject to the meaning they wish to give it. Living in a multicultural society, students should be equipped to answer questions of, "what does this require of me?" when experiencing difference. As Dr. Ibrahima Diallo mentioned, curriculums should be designed to meet the needs of students and assist them achieve goals in wider global perspective.

The active engagement seen at Thebarton Senior College demonstrates the success of Intercultural communication, which Dr. Amrita Malhi addressed at the conference. In the globalized world of today, there is no such thing as a sealed system where mobility does not penetrate national borders. Dr. Malhi believes there is a need to challenge the discourse of multiculturalism towards an agenda of *interculturality*. This methodology would alter a top down approach and inspire peer-to-peer dialogue. Dr. Malhi acknowledged much of the division of UNESCO revolves around the Anglo-Australian dialogue, which lacked awareness of other groups in Asia for example. Dr. Wrench also highlighted the "white rule" in our dialogue where there is a fear of boats and only Christian refugees are considered "real refugees". She suggested the curriculums focus of Judeo-Christian civilization manifested this. The political separation of the Abrahamic religion of Islam, from Judaism and Christianity was a formulation of the right wing think tank. Education stakeholder should look to deconstruct rhetoric and analyze the purpose it serves. Both speakers emphasized the need for the anti immigration sentiment to change in order for migrants and refugees to be appreciated as assets rather than problems.

In contemporary society, youth should be commended for being more comfortable with diversity. Professor Biesta said when conflict is noticed in the school space it should be used constructively. Students can be taught to respond with kindness while applying positive resilience. Professor Biesta also believes "Australianess" should be linked to tolerance. Incorporating hybridization into our lived experiences was a possibility agreed upon by Professor Michalinos Zembylas, who said the Indigenous communities are an example of how to mitigate climate change. Education curriculums can look at different nations as a means of adopting new methods of dealing with social, political, economic and environmental problems. This can foster an appreciation and respect for cultures that are dissimilar to our own.

The Learning to Live Together conference brought together people from significant areas in policy and education to share experiences, ideas and opinions on how to incorporate mobility and migration into the curriculum to create a harmonious society for generations to come. By hearing from speakers of both an Australian and EU perspective, guests were able to see international approaches of integrating interculturality with student learning. It also provided a platform for guests to network with relevant parties and continue discussions on enhancing social cohesion and managing superdiversity tensions around ethnic and cultural difference. The Hawke EU centre thanks the contributors and guests of the symposia for the attendance and has hopes for progress and discussion to endure well into the coming years