

Editorial

This is a special edition of *New Horizons in Education* to celebrate the international conference held in Adelaide in November-December 2004 which was titled, *Education for Shared Values for Intercultural and Interfaith Understanding*. As the conference report prepared by Joy de Leo on p. 4 indicates the conference attracted 250 educators from 51 countries. The conference was sponsored by UNESCO, in partnership with seven international organisations, in particular the World Education Fellowship, and several local organizations, including the South Australian Department of Education.

The genesis of this conference was twofold. Firstly the Australian Forum of World Education Fellowship (WEF) at its 2003 Annual General Meeting in Sydney had proposed a conference on the ways in which education could contribute to the eradication of terrorism by developing the concept of 'learning to live together', the third pillar of the Delors Report. Secondly, the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Anan, had set up a Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism in 2002. He charged UNESCO with implementing sections of the Group's report. This was initiated by a meeting of UNESCO in February 2003 on *Promoting Peace and Security through Education and Science: Elements for a UN Strategy against Terrorism*. When the WEF proposal was put to the Australian National Commission for UNESCO in February 2003, the obvious synergy led to a decision to hold the conference.

The Opening Address, delivered by Mary Joy Pigozzi from UNESCO Paris, set the scene very clearly for what was to come during the conference, and the Call for Action, inserted as a centre-spread in the journal, indicates the conference outcomes.

From the many papers presented at the conference only a small sample can be published in the journal. One paper that provides an excellent overview of one of the themes of the conference is *Values Education for intercultural and interfaith understanding* by Peter Vardy from the University of London. Vardy stated at the commencement of his paper 'I should say at the outset that I start from a position of pessimism about values education in an interfaith and intercultural world. The challenges are immense and meeting them is not easy.' He argues a need to understand our history and development if we want to have an understanding of our present and possible futures. Later in his paper Vardy makes a very powerful point when he suggests that, 'Fundamentalism encourages a "we" and "they" attitude: *we* are right, *they* are wrong; *we* are virtuous, *they* are wicked.' Such views, he suggests, makes dialogue very difficult, if not impossible.

Gary Bouma, of Monash University, states in his paper titled *The challenge of religious revitalisation to educating for shared values and interfaith understanding* that while 'Religious revitalisation is sweeping the globe' Australians are not ready for the move back toward religion and the 'noticeable shift to the right'. He then suggests how education in Australia might approach this issue.

With a focus on values education in schools, Terry Lovat of Newcastle University questions the implications for teacher research. He argues that it is not the curriculum that is critical here, but rather the quality of the teacher. He further suggests that while many of the basic qualities of a good teacher remain as they always have e.g. concern for students, the contemporary teaching profession now 'has to accommodate the languages and cultural norms of one of the world's great polyglot societies, including the indigenous portion of that society. It also has to accommodate the religious beliefs of traditions with a dominant history of conflict within and between themselves.'

In addition to her opening address, Mary Joy Pigozzi presented a paper titled *The implications of global challenges for education for shared values for intercultural and interfaith understanding*. In this paper Dr Pigozzi explored the concept of 'quality education' and its role in supporting peace.

Although not part of the conference, the paper by Kevin Clements presented to World Education Fellowship, (Queensland) on 28th October 2004, and titled *Education for Peace: Post 9/11, Bali, Madrid, Beslan and Jakarta*, is a perfect complement to the other papers. Clements explained that he wanted to 'move on from the traumatic events of the past three years in order to utilise the full potential of our brains for peaceful purposes.' A worthy aim indeed.

So, enough from me, now to the papers from the conference, introduced by Joy de Leo, the conference convener.

Margaret Kiley
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