Diversity and Equity in Education

An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity

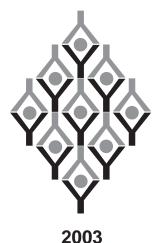
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INTRODUCTION :

Manitoba K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success, 2002-2006 The Manitoba K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success, 2002-2006 (hereinafter referred to as the Education Agenda) provides a set of priorities for education in Manitoba. It is the basis for communicating actions to be taken to improve Manitoba's education system. The first priority of the Education Agenda is improving outcomes for all learners and especially for those who are less successful. Manitoba Education and Youth recognizes that to achieve this goal we need to address the needs of our linguistically and culturally diverse students and communities more effectively. For this reason, this initiative, Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity, was launched in the summer of 2002 as one of the actions under the Education Agenda, Priority 1.

Multicultural Education in Manitoba

Manitoba Education and Youth has had a long-term commitment to addressing the issues of diversity and equity. In the early 1980s, Manitoba initiated its first efforts to create schooling that is more inclusive. ESL programming and support, enhancements in Heritage language education, and a number of multicultural education initiatives were launched. The Department's vision and hopes for creating a more inclusive school system were captured in the 1992 policy document *Multicultural Education: A Policy for the 1990s*. Manitoba was one of the first provinces to have such a policy and it has guided our work to date.

In the period following the release of the policy, the Department focused its attention on promoting and supporting antiracism education initiatives in schools and classrooms. Since 1996 we have worked hard to make our curricula more inclusive and responsive to our diverse student population. The social studies curriculum development process, which included the participation of a Cultural Advisory Committee, is one example of our recent efforts to ensure that the voices of all of Manitoba's people are heard in the Manitoba curriculum. The Cultural Advisory Committee comprised representatives from various community and cultural organizations, representing a cross-section of Manitoba's diverse cultural and linguistic groups. The committee was instrumental in the development of the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol and Manitoba social studies curriculum frameworks. In addition, Francophone and Aboriginal peoples were involved as full participants from the onset of the social studies curriculum development process.

Re-energizing Our Commitment and Charting a New Course While Manitoba has made some meaningful progress in building a more inclusive school system and improving the educational opportunities for a broader range of learners, we have more work to do in ensuring all students have an equitable opportunity to experience success. Through the Education Agenda, we intend to develop a comprehensive and meaningful action plan that will help build schools that are committed to social justice, equality, democratic government, equitable economic opportunity for all, intellectual freedom, environmental protection, and human rights.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a basis for discussion and dialogue with community and partner organizations on the Department's current and future directions concerning diversity and ethnocultural equity. The intent of the consultations is to develop a provincial action plan that will lead to improved educational outcomes for all learners. This paper is composed of two parts: the first discusses some important concepts and provides other relevant information; the second proposes a multi-year action plan that would further ethnocultural equity in Manitoba.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY – IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

The concepts defined below are the Department's working definitions and are ideas that provide a framework of core beliefs that inform our thinking and actions.

Diversity encompasses all the ways in which human beings are both similar and different. It means understanding and accepting the uniqueness of all individuals as well as respecting their differences. It is ultimately about acceptance and respect for difference.

Equity is a concept that flows directly from our concern for equality and social justice in a democratic society. Educational equity refers most broadly to a condition of fairness with respect to educational opportunities, access, and outcomes for all people. Departmental initiatives towards equity are intended to remove barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices.

The use of these two terms together signals the importance of departmental initiatives towards building acceptance and respect for human differences and eliminating systemic barriers and impediments to educational equity, both in policy and practice.

Principles

The following principles have informed our thinking about diversity and equity.

- Respect for diversity is essential for the education system to meet the needs of all learners.
- All students and families must have equitable opportunities to participate fully in the education system in Manitoba. To achieve this, the removal of systemic and institutional barriers is essential.
- Communication and collaboration throughout the whole system are key to the achievement of goals.
- To be effective, diversity and equity education policies and initiatives must be well developed, meaningful, inclusive, and collaborative.
- Leadership and monitoring of progress are critical for the successful implementation of a diversity and equity strategy.

Goals

Our efforts to achieve outcomes that are more equitable for linguistically and culturally diverse students have the following goals. To ensure that:

- All students have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of school life in an inclusive and affirming manner.
- All students experience culturally and personally relevant learning that engages
 them and encourages a sense of community and belonging that promotes socially
 responsible behaviour and action.
- All students become knowledgeable about human diversity, the multicultural nature of Canada, and Aboriginal peoples, both their history and contemporary lifestyles and aspirations.
- All students, regardless of origin or gender, complete their secondary education
 and access post-secondary education and training that will enable them to flourish
 and participate fully in the community and in the workplace.

THE ACTION PLAN AND DEPARTMENTAL PRIORITIES

The proposed Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity complements and expands on the primary goal of the Education Agenda, which is to improve the educational outcomes of all learners, especially less successful learners. We expect that the interaction between the implementation of the Action Plan and other elements of the Education Agenda will result in additional initiatives and collaborative actions that will enhance diversity and equity in Manitoba.

Indeed, the proposed Action Plan is an important and critical aspect of a broader commitment to enhancing diversity and equity. Together these initiatives seek to reduce inequities in educational outcomes for students of diverse origins and socio-economic status. Some related initiatives include Healthy Child, Early Intervention, Early Childhood Development, Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy Framework, Special Education Review Initiative and its implementation, Gender Equity, and Adult Literacy and Learning initiatives.

The demands and reality of living in a diverse and pluralistic society, regardless of one's origins, necessitates that students of all origins and social contexts have the opportunity to experience schooling that is culturally appropriate and relevant, encourages social caring, and challenges prejudice and discrimination. The relationship between the Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity and the Department's Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy Framework provides a good example of how these initiatives or thrusts are related and how each works towards enhancing our diversity and equity goals. Virtually every First Nations or Aboriginal education study or report has stressed the need for cross-cultural and antibias education for teachers and students in the educational system. It is important to recognize that developing an appreciation and informed knowledge about the unique place of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is an essential part of antiracism education. The Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy Framework and the proposed Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity reinforce and strengthen each other.

Manitoba Education and Youth believes that recent efforts to make all curricula more inclusive and responsive will result in engaging and inclusive classrooms. Professional learning opportunities for educators and the opportunity to share successful models will be important to support equity and diversity in instructional programming and classroom practice.

Equally important is that the Action Plan complements the government's commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity and equity issues, as demonstrated by initiatives such as the recent creation of the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council.

AN ACTION PLAN FOR ETHNOCULTURAL EQUITY =

The proposed Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity is composed of eighteen actions. These actions fall into three categories or areas of focus: *Enhance Manitoba Education and Youth Policy and Capacity Building, Enhance School Division and School Capacity*, and *Build a More Inclusive Teaching Force*. Collectively, the actions are intended to increase our capacity to respond more positively and effectively to diversity and build a more inclusive teaching force. The categories and the specific actions, which fall under each, are:

Enhance Manitoba Education and Youth Policy and Capacity Building

- 1. **Policy Renewal:** Renewing and reaffirming the Department's policies with respect to diversity and equity is a critical step.
 - Renew and reaffirm provincial policy on diversity and equity in
 education: Manitoba Education and Youth's multicultural policy will
 be strengthened to ensure it meets our current and future needs.
 Reaffirming our commitment to ethnocultural equity will
 communicate our vision and direction to our staff, partner groups, and
 schools.

Timeline: 2003-2004

Department informational campaign on diversity and equity: The Department plays an important role in informing educators and parents about important educational developments and issues. An informational campaign targeted to parents, students, and educators will help to create a better climate for change and ensure the Department's priorities and perspectives are understood. This could include using existing vehicles such as *Education Manitoba* and the parent section of our website, as well as other means.

Timeline: 2004-2005

2. Review and renew departmental policy on second language education: Manitoba's policies on second language education with respect to Basic French, International languages, and Aboriginal languages were developed in the 1980s. There is a need to revisit these policies and ensure they meet our current needs and aspirations. Second language education is an important part of preparing students for our linguistically diverse nation and global economy and society.

Timeline: 2004-2005

- 3. Enhance support for International (Heritage) and Aboriginal languages: International (Heritage) and Aboriginal languages are an important aspect of our diversity. The provision of curricula and other supports for bilingual and language of study programming is an important part of preparing our students to meet our local and global challenges.
 - Curriculum Renewal: Manitoba will work collaboratively with other provinces and partners to develop new curricula or renew existing curricula and support materials for Aboriginal and International languages.

Timeline: Curriculum development is expected to focus on projects initiated earlier in Ukrainian Language Arts, German Language Arts, and Spanish in 2003-2004; from 2004 onwards, Aboriginal and other languages

 Provincial promotional campaign to encourage second language learning targeted to parents and students: Opportunities to learn a second or additional language are an important aspect of preparing students for full participation in Canadian and international society. Multilingualism provides personal and economic benefits. It is important that parents and students are aware of the research on second language learning and the value of multilingualism.

Timeline: 2004-2005

4. Review and renew guidelines to ensure equitable representation on curriculum development teams and other departmental committees: Manitoba has made a commitment to developing more inclusive curricula by committing to integrate Aboriginal perspectives, antiracism education, and human diversity, among other elements, into all curricula. To do so successfully, we need to ensure that our development processes and teams are reflective of our diversity. It is important that diverse "voices" be part of all curriculum development processes. While we have made significant progress in making all departmental and curriculum development teams and committees much more inclusive and representative, there is still room for improvement.

Timeline: 2003-2004

5. **Increase diversity and equity (multicultural and Aboriginal) content on the MEY website:** The Internet is an increasingly important tool for educators and the public at large. It is important that our website and resources are inclusive and address the needs of our diverse students, families, and teachers.

Timeline: Guidelines 2003; Implementation 2003-2005

- 6. **Building a more diverse departmental staff:** It is important that our staff reflect the diversity of our society.
 - Review Department experiences and develop a strategy for building a more diverse staff: The Department has made some significant gains through its Employment Equity Policy and through other initiatives toward building a more inclusive workplace and workforce. However, there is a need to continue these efforts and develop new strategies to address the continued under-representation of some groups.

Timeline: 2002-2005

• Continue and enhance the inclusion of elements related to Aboriginal and diversity education in departmental staff professional development plans: Manitoba Education and Youth's staff play important roles in curriculum development and in supporting school change. It is important that our staff continue to expand their awareness of diversity and knowledge of antibias/antiracist education and explore their application to their work.

Timeline: 2002-2005

7. **Explore the possibilities for the integration of diversity and equity elements into departmental indicators initiative:** Manitoba Education and Youth has made a commitment to develop a set of provincial indicators to chart the progress and health of our educational system. To be able to chart our progress in reducing educational disparities and meeting the needs of diverse learners, we need accurate and group-specific information. The Department will strive to develop indicators that may provide important information with respect to diversity and equity.

Timeline: 2004-2006

Enhance School Division and School Capacity

8. **Kindergarten to Senior 4 ESL Program Review:** An investment in our ESL learners is an investment in our future. English as a second language programming plays an important role in the educational success of linguistically diverse students. In addition, immigration will continue to play a vital role in our future economic growth. The development of a strategy and action plan for strengthening ESL programming is important as we expect to double immigration to Manitoba and as we strive to improve our ability to respond to the needs of diverse learners.

Timeline: 2002-2005

9. Provide teacher support documents on diversity and equity in the classroom for compulsory curricula and strategic areas, beginning with social studies: Manitoba has made significant progress in making our curricula and selection of learning resources more inclusive and antibias/antiracist in nature. However, there is a need to provide Manitoba-specific and -focused resources that will help teachers and schools address the needs of ethnocultural groups and their communities in all subject areas. This initiative would see the Department develop resources that would assist teachers in implementing the curricula with a focus on diversity. Themes such as: Exploring Diverse Voices in Literature, Multicultural Mathematics, and Exploring Black History Throughout the Curriculum are examples of some of the possibilities.

Timeline: Initiate project 2004; Implementation 2004-2006

10. **Develop professional learning series on inclusive schools and teaching for teachers and administrators:** Manitoba Education and Youth plays an important role in stimulating dialogue on important educational issues and providing professional learning opportunities for educators. There is a need to re-energize our activities in this area. We will collaborate and partner with community organizations and other educational partners to enhance professional learning opportunities.

Timeline: First series in 2004-2005; Balance 2005-2007

11. Enhance divisional and school planning to build safe and inclusive schools

Divisional and School Planning: School and divisional processes
and plans are an important aspect of educational and school
improvement. This initiative is aimed at encouraging and helping
school divisions and schools to address issues of diversity and equity
in their annual plans. A support package and workshop series will be
developed and offered.

Timeline: Publish 2004; Implementation 2005-2006

• Integrate antiracist/antibias elements in safe schools initiatives:

Safe schools are inclusive and ensure a welcoming working and learning environment. Antiracism is an essential aspect of building safe schools. Our initiatives in support of safe schools provide us with the opportunity to further our antiracism goals.

Timeline: 2004-2005

Build a More Inclusive Teaching Force

12. Consult and work with faculties of education to develop a common strategy to increase diversity and representation of the underrepresented in teacher education programs: Despite some progress in attracting teacher candidates of Aboriginal and diverse cultural origins, our teacher population does not adequately reflect Manitoba's diversity. If we are to build a more inclusive and representative teaching force, we need to increase the number of Aboriginal and culturally diverse students who seek a career in education. The development of a provincial strategy to recruit and increase representation in the faculties of education from underrepresented groups would help us achieve our goal.

Timeline: 2003-2005

13. Consult and work with faculties of education and Manitoba Labour and Immigration to develop provincial guidelines to facilitate the evaluation and certification of teachers with credentials from other countries: Newcomers often face difficulties and barriers in having their credentials recognized. Teachers from other countries face similar obstacles. Manitoba Labour and Immigration has made some efforts to facilitate the recognition of credentials of newcomers in a variety of fields and professions. There is a need to develop a more effective approach to assist teachers from other countries to meet the requirements for certification, and to orient them to the school system and "educational culture" in Manitoba.

Timeline: 2003-2005

14. Use departmental and government internship programs to promote education as a career: The next decade will see a significant turnover of our teaching population. It is important that Senior Years students and first-year university students from under-represented groups consider teaching as a career. Manitoba Advanced Education and Training will seek to use existing government internship programs and youth initiatives to promote education as a career for Aboriginal and culturally diverse youth.

Timeline: Plan 2004; Implementation 2005

