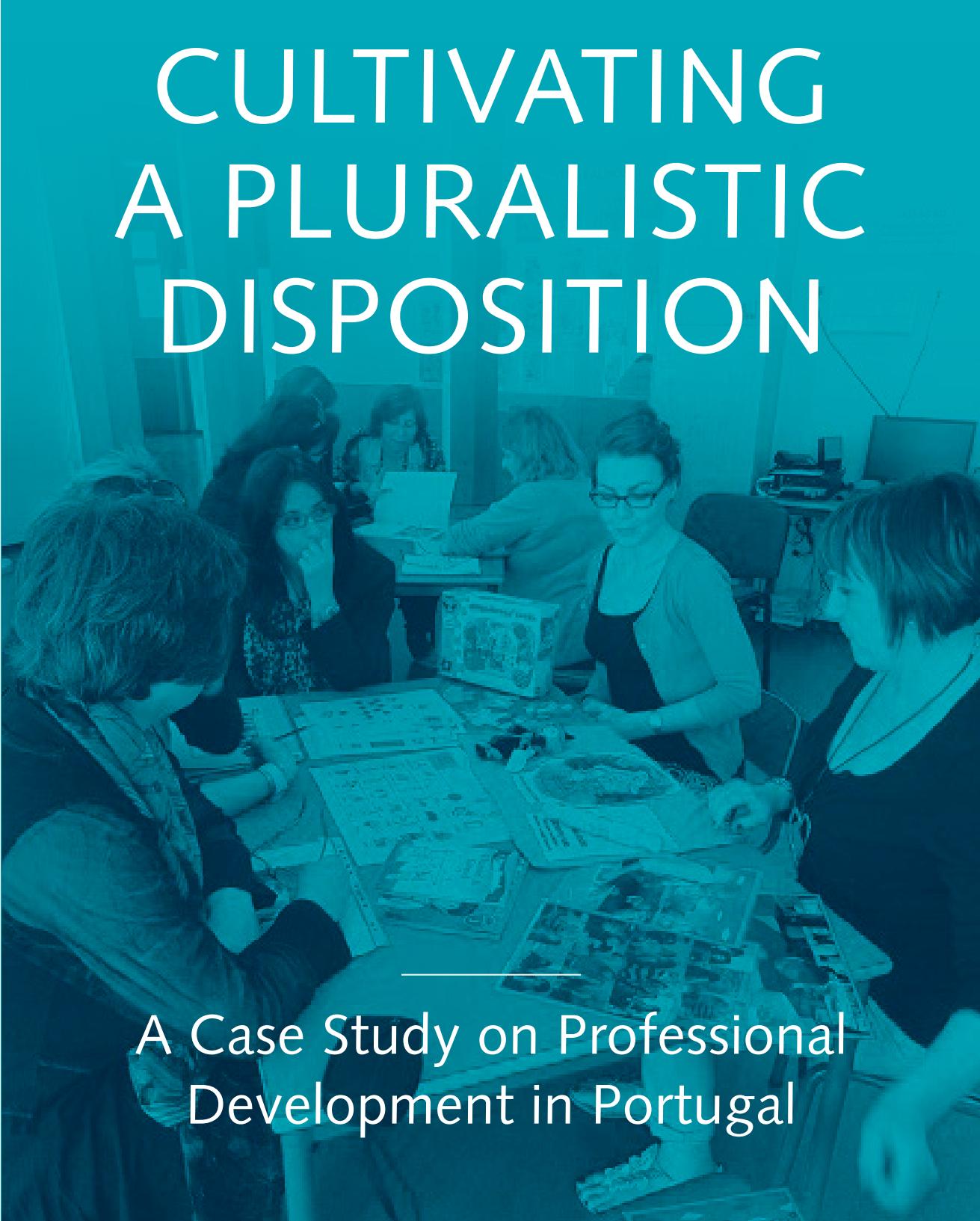


CULTIVATING A PLURALISTIC DISPOSITION



A Case Study on Professional
Development in Portugal



GLOBAL CENTRE FOR MONDIAL DU PLURALISM CENTRE MONDIAL DU PLURALISME

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Cover image: AKF Portugal

Founded in Ottawa by His Highness the Aga Khan in partnership with the Government of Canada, the **Global Centre for Pluralism** is an independent, charitable organization. Inspired by Canada's experience as a diverse and inclusive country, the Centre was created to advance positive responses to the challenge of living peacefully and productively together in diverse societies.

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Objective of the case study:

To provide an overview of a development process for adults to cultivate a positive response to diversity in the education environment.

Overview

Creating a pluralistic education environment requires that everyone view diversity as a strength, embrace human differences, and respect individual identities and alternative points of views. This requires an ongoing commitment to continually encounter and engage with difference across all aspects of our lives—as family members, neighbours, friends and professionals. The programme described in this case study is premised on the belief that by discovering what guides our principles and day-to-day life choices as citizens, we can change how we respond to difference in our professional settings and how we promote pluralistic education, which is defined as an ethic of respect for human difference. **This case study provides an example of a process of reflection for people to directly experience the challenges and possibilities of pluralism and build the skills needed to foster pluralistic environments.**

The following case study details a two-year programme piloted by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)¹ in Portugal from 2012 to 2014. Drawing on proven curricula elsewhere in Europe, AKF designed this lifelong learning development programme in Portugal with two United Kingdom-based organisations: the Development Education Centre South Yorkshire and Sheffield Local Authority (City Council). The programme supported teachers and school leaders in building the confidence and knowledge needed to create long-lasting systemic change in schools aiming to support pluralism. The programme asserted that by transforming educators' dispositions, their behaviour and attitudes would change in how and what they taught students (pedagogy and curriculum) and how the school was managed (policies and culture). The intention was to help individuals gain emotional understanding about contexts and ways of life guided by frameworks and models different from their own, to explore what this meant to them as citizens and to then consider the implications with colleagues on what this meant for their school system as a whole.

¹ The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is a private not-for-profit international development agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) that works primarily to improve the livelihoods and quality of life of marginalised communities, regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity or gender. AKF has been working in Portugal for more than 35 years along the life cycle of people in core areas such as early childhood development, education, civil society, economic inclusion and seniors. AKF Portugal's contribution lies in the versatility and interconnectivity of action-research work at the micro, meso and macro level, engaging individuals, communities and grassroots organisations as well as institutions and local governments to foster social and community innovations with the aim of influencing practices and policies.



Teacher workshop

Photo credit: AKF Portugal

The programme used dialogical techniques to transform educators' practices by exploring five themes: identity, sense of belonging, diversity, equity, and communities and families. The programme successfully supported adults through a development process to build and strengthen a pluralistic disposition in all aspects of their lives. This case study provides processes and frameworks that may be transferrable to different contexts, both in the classroom and in other professional settings.

Funded by a Comenius Regio grant from the European Commission,² the programme was developed and tested in the UK and Portugal, working in partnership with a local municipal authority in each country. This case study, commissioned by the Global Centre for Pluralism, focusses on AKF's experience in Portugal.

Sections I and II consider the value of pluralism and the pilot's background. Section III describes the programme's content and pedagogy and includes a specific example. Section IV details evidence of the programme's impact. The final two sections discuss issues to consider when adapting the programme to different contexts (section V) and the programme's wider relevance for all professionals (section VI). Specific examples of programme input are included in Section III and in the Annex to aid trainers adapting to their own teacher-training or professional-development context.

² European Commission Education and Culture Directorate-General—Life Long Learning Programme, Partnership Reference No. 2012-1-PT1-COM13-12343.

I. What is Pluralism?

Pluralism as a Continuous Learning Process

Pluralism, as defined by the Global Centre for Pluralism, is an ethic of respect for human differences. A commitment to pluralism is an intentional process of valuing and perceiving human diversity as a positive and beneficial feature of society. Therefore, when applying a “pluralism lens,” diversity is not perceived as a challenge to overcome. Rather, it is an opportunity for continual development and more effective and inclusive solution-finding.

A PLURALISTIC DISPOSITION IS A VALUE AND A WAY OF LOOKING AT, AND RESPONDING TO, A DIVERSE AND CHANGING WORLD.

Pluralism is not something people are born with—it must be learnt. A pluralistic disposition is a value and a way of looking at, and responding to, a diverse and changing world. Pluralism needs to be fostered every day and in every situation. This requires lifelong learning and constant attention to changing experiences and realities. Children experience and learn pluralistic values through the adults they interact with: parents, family, school staff, as well as through their own peers. Adults need to understand and have a pluralistic disposition in order to support children developing this outlook.

Pluralism should be fostered through both “hardware” (institutions such as constitutions, legislatures, courts and schools) and “software” (cultural habits of mind, norms and narratives). This also applies to early years, schools and education environments. Curriculum and pedagogy can equip children and youth with knowledge of viewpoints other than their own, and with skills to actively listen and engage with another person’s or group’s perspective. Through participatory pedagogies and group work, children can learn how to constructively connect and respectfully debate with each other as a way to understand and build solutions together. School cultures and structures can mirror an equitable system to actively promote including diversities.

Pluralistic values can be nurtured by acknowledging and respecting all ethno-cultural, religious, socioeconomic, gender, sexual and linguistic backgrounds in daily activities, systems and processes, and by modelling attitudes and behaviours both with children and amongst adults. Children should experience a pluralistic education environment at every moment of every day so that the foundation laid in the classroom is not undermined by contradictory experiences elsewhere in the school environment. This lays the basis for people to embrace human differences, respect individual identities and alternative points of views, and to understand that diversity strengthens a society through the act of learning learning about and from each other and the exchanges it creates.

II. Background of Case Study

Portugal has historically been known as a country of emigration, with many documented voyages and exchanges over the centuries. Decolonization in the 1970s reversed migration flows and Portugal attracted immigrants from a number of Portuguese-speaking African countries such as Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe. In recent years, Portugal has witnessed a dramatic increase in linguistic and cultural diversity as a result of recent migration flows from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, China, Syria, Nigeria and Iran—countries outside its historical colonies. These rapid changes in population raised questions amongst education professionals, public servants and municipalities about how organisational systems had focussed on native Portuguese and now needed to respond to a broader range of people.

With over a decade of experience in working directly with early years, primary and secondary school teachers in Portugal, the Aga Khan Foundation Portugal (AKF) observed and heard from teachers and school leaders who stated that more support was required to meet the needs of a diverse, changing student body. AKF's experience was that many committed educational professionals lacked enough awareness, knowledge, skills, techniques and resources to respond effectively to the multicultural school communities they served.

BEFORE EDUCATORS COULD GUIDE STUDENTS ON A JOURNEY TO SHIFT DISPOSITIONS AND MINDSETS TOWARDS A MORE POSITIVE RESPONSE TO DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE, TEACHERS THEMSELVES HAD TO UNDERGO A SIMILAR TRANSFORMATION.

Previous AKF interventions focussed on individual teachers' pedagogy and curriculum content, but these neither resulted in students developing a pluralistic disposition through their school learnings nor ensured youth with a migrant heritage reached their educational potential. AKF surmised that a key barrier to educating for pluralism was that before educators could guide students on a journey to shift dispositions and mindsets towards a more positive response to diversity and difference, teachers themselves had to undergo a similar transformation. AKF Portugal found that many educators had few opportunities to interact or gain trust with the diverse society around them, or to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences. Teachers and education managers, as a professional group, are mostly from the majority population, and their social spheres would not necessarily involve much exposure to diversity. In addition, and based on previous experience, AKF knew that attention to school environments and systems beyond classroom pedagogy and curriculum was also crucial to ensure students left school with a pluralistic disposition.

Across various parts of Europe and other regions, many organisations had created professional development programmes covering awareness raising, prejudice awareness, anti-racism, dialogue building and intercultural competences. However, none of those in Portugal at the time of the 2012–14 pilot directly addressed the multi-faceted aspects needed to view approaches for a pluralistic disposition, environment and competences holistically.

Who

The original programme ran for two school years in one municipality in Portugal. AKF worked with 25 teachers in three clusters³ of schools, three school directors and three school coordinators, and the municipality's education team.

Any teacher development programme on pluralism without the understanding and support of school leaders, as previous projects showed, had a limited chance of long-term success because it was about it was about comprehending, engaging and reflecting a value across school practices, policies and culture. Thus, to achieve systemic change, AKF worked with teachers, leaders and the municipalities' education departments, as each played a role in and affected the student experience. Municipalities in Portugal have a variety of educational responsibilities, including hiring non-teaching staff in schools, managing school infrastructure and purchasing meals—all of which impact the school environment. The Ministry of Education is responsible for contracting teachers and head teachers, and setting curricula. Each school's director and management team are responsible for school culture and policies, and determining interaction styles with families and local communities, which all influence how pluralistic the school may be. Therefore, each of these decision-making tiers is directly relevant to the school environment and its inclusion practices.

CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

In order to participate in the programme, directors needed to show a commitment to, or the intention to, move in the direction of creating intercultural school settings, the positive recognition of difference and, ultimately, pluralism. Teachers from these schools needed to voluntarily commit to engage and show a desire to be more conscious of their students' diverse learning needs, and want to create a pluralistic context.

The teachers did not have to commit to change their classroom practice or school management systems as a condition of participation. **Emphasis was on working at their individual paces and starting points, exploring their own views on the world and on society, rather than seeking immediate tangible outputs in the classroom.** The only requirement was for teachers to think and participate by sharing what they had learnt, or how the inputs had affected them personally or in their daily lives. AKF believed that when professionals were ready, they would

³ A school cluster combines one or more early years, primary and secondary school all under one director in a geographic area.

start to change practices at work and in the school culture through their own initiative and with their peers. To truly benefit from the experience, participating teachers had to view themselves as learners and citizens in a world of constant change, seeking to better understand themselves as well as their students.

PARTICIPATING TEACHERS HAD TO VIEW THEMSELVES AS LEARNERS AND CITIZENS IN A WORLD OF CONSTANT CHANGE, SEEKING TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES

It was important to have the same group of people meeting regularly to build the trust required to express their views and possible sensitivities in safe spaces of belonging where everyone felt comfortable. This enabled sharing and created a circle of trust. This was crucial as the programme shook individual beliefs and raised doubts: people confronted past actions they now felt uncomfortable with and heard views they may not have accepted.

What

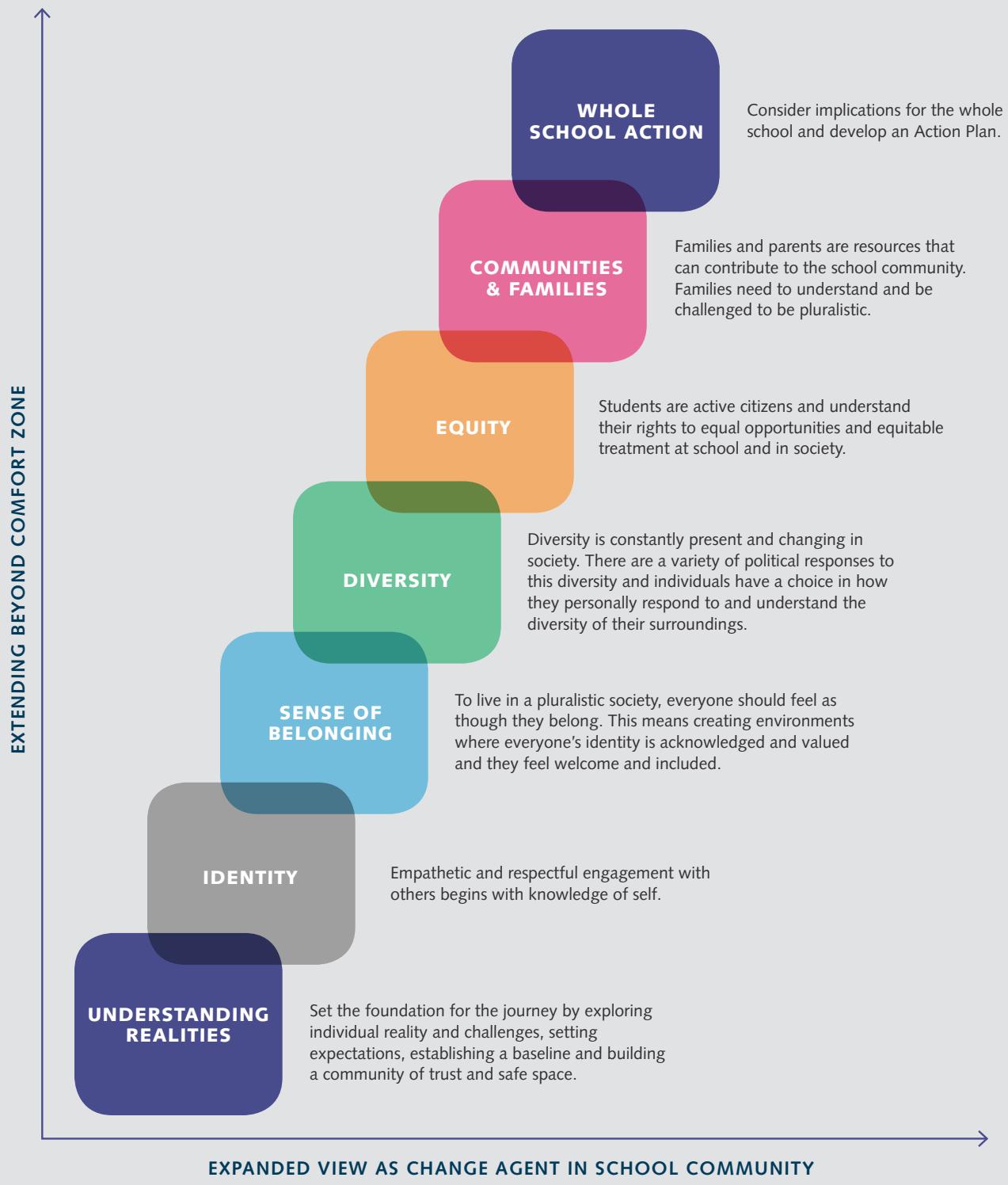
The programme's core covered **five themes** over two years in a series of 15 AKF-facilitated sessions with the same participants. The programme began with a foundation session to understand participants' everyday realities (ensuring relevance and respecting different entry levels) and to develop contextually driven content through a "building blocks" approach. Internationally recognised themes for promoting educator capacity on **identity, sense of belonging, diversity, equity, and communities and families** were developed. A final session resulted in identifying whole school action (see Figure 1).

When

Each theme lasted an average of one school term, consisting of two sessions. Each session was scheduled for two-to-three hours, though sessions sometimes lasted longer if the group expressed a need for further input or debate. There was a two-to-four week break between group sessions to allow for individual thinking time and peer reflection. This allowed information to settle in and for changes to occur in the participants' own lives. For those that wanted to, the break also allowed time for participants to test a new technique, for non-participants in the school environment to observe the participants' experiences and to perhaps discuss this with them. Informal opportunities to reflect in small circles of trust were encouraged, as they helped build sustainable practices and support that continued after the facilitated sessions.

Separate sessions (at least one per school term) were held for school heads and management teams to complement those held with teachers.

FIGURE 1: PROGRAMME BUILDING BLOCKS



III. Pedagogy and Method

The methods and techniques applied throughout the programme used participative tools to actively encourage and demonstrate a disposition for pluralism. These tools included active listening, dialogue building, critical thinking and agreeing to disagree. They also encouraged pluralistic interactions such as kindness, genuine curiosity for the other's story and experience, and explicit, diversified and simplified communication. Individual, pair and group work were all used. When set as a method for practice, dialogical pedagogies allow space and time for everyone in a group to have their voice heard and to take an active part in building group learning. Hence, modelling this encourages teachers to foster diverse learnings in the classroom through active participation, which increases student engagement and ultimately more pluralistic dynamics.

BOX 1: AN EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANT RULES

Jointly formulating and mutually agreeing on **basic rules** at the beginning of the programme (and revising that agreement at the start of each session) supported creating a non-judgemental environment:

- Basic measures of respect were agreed upon by all.
- Timekeeping was made explicit at the start.
- Not feeling like sharing aloud was accepted.
- No view was wrong. Everyone was allowed to ask questions and to respond with their views and experiences.
- Active listening was encouraged even when disagreeing with someone's views and respectfully sharing reasons for disagreeing. Respectful debate was encouraged as well as seeking to understand the other's view.
- If even one person found a word to be derogatory or offensive, participants agreed not to use it.

Over time, these rules nurtured a sense of group belonging where people could honestly express themselves, say difficult things, hear or develop alternative viewpoints, or choose to only share with facilitators on an individual basis afterward. **As a method, it enabled discovering a value by connecting with personal beliefs.** This safe space of acknowledgement strongly affected participants' engagement with contents for more lasting outcomes.

This method explicitly highlighted personal development and self-awareness, which required individual reflection time. The participants were on a shared process of learning—or unlearning—previous prejudices and views, both individually and collectively. Through experiential learning, participants **expanded their awareness, engaged with their personal responses to diversity and considered changes to their attitudes and practices to reflect the values of pluralism.**

Reflection on the current reality at school identified starting points for each specific theme so participants could establish an emotional connection with each topic and the theme sessions could have practical relevance for them. The sessions exposed participants to facts, theories and alternative ideas under the five themes. Techniques used for this involved individual activities to pinpoint and explore one's own values, practical exercises and activities to demonstrating theory and debates to deepen layers of understanding of others. Stages of receptivity to people different

from ourselves—from denial of difference to genuine appreciation and effort in understanding and respecting diversities—were covered, and participants self-assessed where they stood, and why and what else they needed to move forward. The facilitators used feedback, reframing and questions to drive deeper reflection or to challenge a particular view, and they sometimes offered a view (which may or may not have been their own) to deepen learning.

SEQUENCING OF A SESSION

(Entry points: Knowledge – Awareness – Skills – Techniques)

i) *Setting the Scene:*

- a. Practical energiser [*Pluralistic interactions techniques: engagement, stimulating genuine curiosity, getting to know others better, etc.*]
- b. Reflections on last session: this opened space for reflections in participants' personal lives, how they felt about the theme, any daily occurrences that stimulated new introspection, new questions, whether they adapted anything in practice and interactions observed since. [*Awareness and self-awareness; Skills*]

ii) *Stimuli/Tools to Prompt Self-Reflection and Discussion of Module:*

- c. Theory/Content input, for example demography, frameworks of diversity, etc. [*Knowledge input*]
- d. Practical exercises to provoke understanding (many adapted from values-based education curriculum) [*Techniques through experiential learning*]

iii) *Supporting Action:*

- e. Consideration of what this new learning meant for my students or school environment. [*Knowledge and awareness*]
- f. Final reflection and evaluation: what will they take away from the session and in what ways will it be significant to their reality in the next few weeks? What else would they like to learn about the theme?

iv) *Post-Session Individual Concerns:*

- g. Support or respond to participants' queries between sessions.

The second session on a continuing theme revisited doubts or unresolved debates from the previous session, strengthening topics that required further exploration or approaching newly surfaced issues. Thus, the start of the session systematically provided space for new questions, reflection sharing and for participants to discuss what they had done differently since the last group session.

Many of the questions participants asked were not directly relevant to classroom activities. For example, how do I communicate with parents who do not speak Portuguese, what do I need to know about other religions and why don't children's pictures of themselves reflect their own skin colour? If participants asked for tools on how they could approach a curricular subject to better reflect diversity, then facilitators would bring examples and/or experiences of how this could be done, or a practical activity to try out in the session. Whatever participants raised, the facilitators worked with or encouraged participants to explore the issue further.

BOX 2: AN EXAMPLE OF BUILDING UNDERSTANDING ON IDENTITY AND SENSE OF FAIRNESS

Participants experienced and engaged with how they viewed themselves (identity), their attitudes (approach to diversity) and how they had been affected by varying perceptions and inclusion. They could think of:

- How their own family structures were represented in images at school (if at all).
- How a divorced friend, single parent or adopted child may have found an image of recognition.
- How they might feel acknowledgement that these examples were “normal” family structures.

It was a structured process, not a structured curriculum. This allowed for content to be tailored to meet the development needs of the group and also allowed time to revisit doubts participants raised. The deeper reflection led to greater learning than moving promptly to a new topic whilst participants were still internalising earlier lessons.

Participants experienced and engaged with how they viewed themselves, their attitudes and how they have been affected by varying levels and perceptions of fairness and inclusion in relation to the session’s theme. Through the sessions, they were encouraged, for example, to consider the ways they had been, or felt excluded, in their own lives, and to then **think about how excluded people feel and develop understanding and empathy before exploring concepts of equality and equity.**

All of the inputs—school realities, content (theory/data), practical exercises, peer views and experience, and facilitators’ questions—aimed to stimulate self-reflection and learning. Each session encouraged participants to reflect on what the previous learning translated into for their student groups and to consider outcomes for whole-community approaches and engagement. In this way, self-development shifted into classroom and school change.

STRUCTURED PROCESSES FOR ALL SESSIONS

- Each two-to-three hour session allowed time for learning, thinking, questioning and discussion to unfold throughout the process. Each of the five themed sessions had time built-in for **quiet and voiced reflection**, individually and in group discussion.
- Day-to-day examples or **questions raised by the participants were used as often as possible to make the content more relevant**, emotionally connected and memorable.
- Knowledge input should carefully balance between theory and practice. **Exercises, activities and stimuli** were used to prompt understanding and discussion, and each had clear intent.
- The facilitator remaining at the end of the session allowed **confidential time and space for individual issues and concerns** to be discussed safely. (Much of the input and exercises affect individual belief systems and may bring out confidential concerns and comments, which need to be acknowledged.)

Facilitation

The method and pedagogy were implemented through skillfully facilitated sessions with two experienced facilitators who understood and demonstrated the value of pluralism in every aspect of their lives, and **who had been on the journey themselves prior to the programme.**

Facilitators needed to engage with the programme as a self-awareness journey and consider themselves learners as well—the experiences shared by participants increased their knowledge, and challenged and affected them personally. Facilitators needed to have highly developed emotional intelligence and the ability to recognise when people in the group were distressed and needed support—and have the tools to provide it. It was important that the facilitators not be seen as experts with all the answers. Their role was to reflect back what they did not have an answer to. Indeed, often no certainties were offered, which enabled participants to share their experiences and to suggest solutions. Thus, participants could begin to recognise their knowledge, build confidence and develop peer support from the facilitator-enabled sharing of a diversity of solutions and strategies.

Having more than one facilitator was crucial in that each module and session outcome needed to inform adaptation for the following building block. Facilitators acted as each other's reflection partners, keeping a record of participant feedback throughout the programme and providing emotional support following challenging sessions.

Part of the facilitator's role between sessions was to adapt, or tweak, the content to respond to questions and challenges raised in previous sessions. Facilitators were also available for discussion with participants individually and to make school visits at the participants' request to support introspection, activity planning or implementation. This built participants' understanding, confidence and experience of skills, and contributed to the programme's impact. Without this additional support, some participants would not have adapted their professional practice.

Similarly, time to work with school heads and directors separately from teachers was crucial. School heads and directors are also on their own path of growth in unfolding and practicing a value, which in their case is at a wider scale where they need to mirror management and systems change. When working with people's belief systems, not everyone agrees with the value of pluralism, even after taking part in a programme on pluralism. Having team members that do not subscribe to the value itself raises challenges for school leaders wishing to embed pluralism in schools. The programme needed to support participants through building strategies to overcome such hurdles.

SUMMARY

- Facilitators should always seek to approach complex ideas of relevant theory from accessible starting points, using practical stimuli and simple jargon-free language to convey the ideas in a non-academic way.
- Similar to other dialogic learner-centered introspective programmes, much of the power of these journeys rests in skillful facilitation and in establishing circles of trust.
- Facilitators need to be resilient, experienced and well prepared, and should not be fixed to a pre-prepared plan, lesson or activity.
- Rather, facilitators should draw on their participants and environments to continually develop content or explore lines of inquiry that may arise in discussion on the agreed upon theme, making the journey more real and relevant for participants.

Content

The programme consisted of a foundation session, Understanding Realities, to capture the current everyday reality and starting points of each participant. Thereafter, five themes and a final session, Whole School Action, unfolded with specific objectives and anticipated learning outcomes (see Figure 2).

By adopting a building-blocks approach, understandings developed in each theme built upon one another, gradually expanding the participants' worldview and comfort zone. As sessions progressed across the five themes, ideas were never left behind. Instead, ideas were continuously woven together with the intent to deepen learning with an openness to work through previous questions and topics through new materials and examples.

Participants were guided on a journey to expand their view as agents of change within their school communities by becoming more inter-culturally competent. Examples are given in the Annex.

FIGURE 2: BUILDINGS BLOCKS OF A LEARNING JOURNEY

BUILDING BLOCKS	OBJECTIVES	LEARNING OUTCOMES
UNDERSTANDING REALITIES	Assess each school's starting point. Identify gaps between leadership, teachers' and students' perceptions. Outline learning interests. Gain deeper portrait of reality.	Understand in what ways one's own perspective of the environment, resources and relationships is similar to and differs from those of students, families, management and non-teaching staff. Appreciate, on first reflection, how such elements may influence well-being, participation and learning and collective outcomes.
IDENTITY	Acknowledge multiple layers of identity. Empathetic and respectful engagement with others begins with knowledge of self.	Acknowledge what elements one's own identity is made up of. Express self-worth safely without feelings of shame or the desire to hide a part of one's identity. Ultimately, everyone's identity at school is acknowledged and respected.
SENSE OF BELONGING	Understand and identify who may be less engaged or excluded. When living in a pluralistic society, everyone should feel as though they have multiple spaces of belonging. Alongside other elements, this will enable active participation.	Understand the importance of creating a sense of belonging in all aspects of (school) life and begin to consider ways to develop a more open school culture (environment, dynamics, practices, staff, pedagogy, etc.). Checking everyday reality can help implement new systems, e.g., identify possible reasons for exclusion, improve interactions with different groups, in different languages, etc.
DIVERSITY	Get acquainted with different frameworks. Diversity is constantly present and changing in society. There are a variety of ways to view diversity and, over time, a number of political responses to it. Individuals have a choice in how they view and understand the diversity and changing phenomena of their surroundings. As a consequence, they can choose how to respond.	Acknowledge different frameworks on diversity: the historical, social and demographic context, and changes in diversity within one's own setting (and tools to understand these changes). Awareness of local policies on inclusion and response to diversity. Recognise pluralism as a choice and a particular response that requires active ethics and engagement. Acknowledge and explore different responses, biases and stereotypes. Avoid crystallising individual traits to whole groups.

BUILDING BLOCKS	OBJECTIVES	LEARNING OUTCOMES
EQUITY	<p>Students are active citizens and have rights to equal opportunities at school. Each one of their starting points, though, is different. Explore differentiated preparation and methods to respond to different learning styles. Provide fair development journeys.</p>	<p>Engage with the concepts of equity and equality as lenses to view the world (i.e., the media, group building, tasks, our work environment, etc.). Understand the importance of difference in each person's starting point and prior experiences, in promoting equality of opportunity and in building strategies for working together. Understand the importance of everyone having their voice heard and the implications for participation and achievements.</p>
COMMUNITIES & FAMILIES	<p>Families and parents are resources that can contribute to the school community. Students are agents of change and can be champions of pluralism in the community. Set standards and interaction channels. Reinforce pluralistic values through families and communities.</p>	<p>Understand how parents can be an important part of the school community, and in what ways and roles, and what impact it would create to have them in the system. Identify entry points and opportunities for parents to be a resource and engage with the rest of the school community on the basis of the same pluralistic values embraced and understood by all. Outline ways to engage families as learning partners.</p>
WHOLE SCHOOL ACTION	<p>Reflect on new learnings and knowledge, on current reality in the professional environment. Identify things that need changing at school.</p>	<p>Prioritise next steps and outline an action plan for school policies, systems, practices, culture and environment.</p>

IV. Impacts

The programme aimed to transform the views of participants and encourage a pluralistic disposition and practices by increasing participants' knowledge, awareness and techniques. This process transformed participants' ideas about the practice of teaching through engagement and active experiential learning and appreciating where each person came from as a starting point. It gave participants a structured process and time to think about themselves. Because transformation comes from a place of self-awareness and internal change, this time-based approach was far more sustainable.

Common across the end of project feedback was the value recognised in sharing ideas and practices, as well as the power of observing practices in other school environments. Participants commented that they appreciated the realistic nature of the project. They noted that it was deeply connected to their settings and took them on a step-by-step journey which allowed them to appreciate the little things that might shift their mindset and, consequently, in some cases, shift the dynamics of their classrooms or school environments.

Testimonials from programme evaluation and interviews with participants

"When you have the opportunity of getting to know a different reality, you also grow as an individual. When I completed the programme I wasn't the same person as when I started. I thought I was tolerant and inclusive before, but now I see things completely differently."

— Ana Paula (senior teacher)

"This experience has been important to me because I now see the work with a different set of eyes. It was like renewing my old skin, and I now know I won't lose this new skin—it has offered me a different way of thinking." — Isabel (school management, former geography teacher)

"We have always strived to be a multicultural school, but the programme taught us different approaches with different kinds of students who need to be taught in a different way." — Rui (head teacher)

"This project shouldn't have an end. We have the seeds, we still use the techniques and strategies, but regular companionship and coaching is required – to help make the outcome more productive."

— Elisa (department coordinator)

"Through this programme, we have been able to see the importance of making change quickly and effectively through simple measures that help us better understand our constituents. We now make it a point to celebrate more events from different cultures [and] ensure our documents are in multiple languages. We are now more alert to the things diversity can offer our city, and other cities—diversity is seen as richness and we value it more." — Marisa (municipal government department manager)

For most participants, their mindsets and dispositions were changed. Participants had more confidence in their own skills and in trying something new. They had the humility to ask their students questions and admit they, as teachers, did not have all the answers. For participants, this made more space for active participation and an awareness of diversity and inequality of opportunities of achievement. When interviewed two years after completing the programme with AKF Portugal, participants could still cite moments that triggered a shift in their thinking, as well as the programme's overall impact on their personal and professional growth.

Social and emotional learning, global citizenship education, anti-bias, cultural mediation and other pedagogic approaches are all useful contributions to pluralism. **However, pluralism only occurs if stakeholders at different levels commit to a whole school approach, which involves framing policies, systems, culture, pedagogy and practices alongside curricula and content.** Following this programme, the majority of participants embraced the value of pluralism and started to work on long-term school improvement including a much longer action plan, examining governance, structure, policies, organisational culture, leadership and vision, personal development for all staff and school resources (e.g. books, posters, images, the playground, etc.), and began creating a welcoming school culture where everyone felt that they belonged, as well as implementing relevant curricula.

There was no expectation built into the programme that the participants would do anything in the classroom or school. The programme focussed on the personal and professional transformation of mindsets, believing, correctly, that openness to others and behavioural change would follow.

- When participants understood the value, they created their own teaching activities, or changed their practice to value approaches relevant to their context. By imbuing the person with the value, they found their own ways. The programme evaluation confirmed that professionals were better equipped with empathy and understanding to foster more pluralistic environments in multicultural settings.
- Three years later, teachers still request more input and space to reflect on topics with AKF.

The programme developed techniques on how to build the skills for a pluralistic disposition. Many teachers used this approach for the first time by changing their classroom management and supporting students in their skill-building. For example,

- Teachers gave students the space to speak freely in the classroom about their emotions and created a sense of empathy—a practice that moved a participating teacher to tears and caused her to reflect on her classroom as “a space to be human.”

Some teachers also developed **classroom activities** to reflect the practices and knowledge exploration they had experienced:

-
- **Cultural boxes** were developed and tested in early years as well as in secondary classrooms. Students were asked for their own views, objects and inputs on the diverse cultural roots that make up their own identities. They were asked to share with the class to create dialogue and deepen understanding.
 - Year 10 geography lessons focussed on how media creates stereotypes about people in different countries across the globe. Critical thinking around **not crystallising misconceptions** about a whole country and its population was addressed in different ways through a whole term of the geography curriculum. Materials were developed and adapted to suit curriculum objectives.
 - As a result of the reflection time and practice support between sessions, there were opportunities for **subject area crossover** (or interdisciplinary work). For example, a Portuguese language teacher and a photography teacher, who both explored identity as a theme with their students throughout the term, produced assignments.
 - A geography teacher who, for the first time, saw a **map where Europe was not placed in the centre** during a session, changed how she thought about the world and immediately used this new perspective in her classroom.

Changes also occurred at the **school** level:

- A school's linguistic diversity was recognised and valued, leading to signpost **directions in different languages** being placed around the school.
- One school set up a **teachers' community of practice** to brainstorm, share, debate and find solutions which provided a stronger development environment at the school and modelled acknowledgement of, and respect for, collaboration with students. The change process continued two years after the programme finished.
- One school cluster director (managing a set of schools with approximately 2,650 students from 31 countries of origin) committed to providing time and space for participants to **continue their professional development journey** through group reflection, new input and learning from other practices.
- Communication materials were produced as starting points for **better family-school interactions**. These materials included signposting, boards at the entrance of school with names, photos and places of origin of teaching and non-teaching staff, posters in different languages and a co-created newsletter.

The **municipality** also made changes:

- For the first time at a public event, the municipality had a **welcome board in several languages**. The head of education was excited when she overheard a student say with pride: "That is my language."
- It **reconsidered the food purchased** for school meals to offer alternatives to pork. This removed the stress of some school staff members who had to decide between Muslim and Jewish children going hungry and pretending they were not eating pork.
- The municipality **recognised diversity as an asset** for their work and put this centre stage in subsequent years' annual plans.

There was wider impact for **AKF Portugal** as well:

- It received an invitation from the Ministry of Education and the High Commission for Migration to collaborate in developing and delivering an **Intercultural School Stamp** across Portugal to recognise schools around the country willing to work on intercultural environments. The stamp is in its fifth edition.
- AKF Portugal had content that was able to be **adapted for other professional groups** (civil service, public and private organisations, service providers). This was met with an astonishing number of requests, indicating the effectiveness of the approach and the demand for it.
- It received in supporting the development of inclusive environments and in professional development, and on working more effectively with diversity in a variety of professional and community settings.

V. Adapting the Programme to Different Contexts

This dialogical learning journey was developed for the Portuguese context and, whilst the same thematic framework and process may be applicable in other settings, other context-specific content would need to be developed. The theoretical frameworks used to support learning modules were mainly sourced from European academic work (including a small percentage from Portugal), with some of it coming from the US and Australia. Ideally, in order to guarantee relevance and credibility, local frameworks from the relevant region's academic settings should be used to create materials to explain these frameworks in a practical way.

Many of the specific themes (e.g. equality, community engagement, etc.) will have very different expressions in each regional setting and society, and materials would need to take into account local sensitivities and contemporary issues.

The programme's effectiveness is strongly linked to the dialogic pedagogy used, which acknowledges that educating for pluralism takes effort, is challenging because it involves examining personal beliefs and values, is learned over time and must be linked to context. The dialogic pedagogy supports reflection, active listening and dialogue.

In Portugal, this was the first experience many participants had with this type of learning. Pedagogical practices in public schools are decided by individual teachers, drawing on their initial teacher training, which is mostly theoretical and not very differentiated. In practice, teachers are generally more comfortable with textbook-based and “teacher talk” styles in the classroom and very structured peer interaction versus freer activities, opinion sharing and experiential learning. A result of the programme was that the techniques used in the sessions (see Box 1) built the skills required to develop pluralism in the teaching environment.

BOX 3: AN EXAMPLE OF SENSITIVITIES TO KEEP IN MIND FOR COUNTRY ADAPTATION

For adaptation, specific issues would need to be considered for each country. For example:

- In Kenya, the exploration of the diversity of political systems might include more background on ethnic groups, identities and power.
- In India, the content would need to take into account deep caste-based and religious divisions that intersect with socioeconomic disadvantages.
- In Bolivia, the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples would be pertinent.
- In the Canadian context, content should cover the country's many different kinds of diversity, including linguistic, ethno-cultural, immigrant, indigenous and religious.
- In Brazil, the content would need to reflect the history of racial inequalities and exclusions suffered by Afro-Brazilians.

In transferring the programme to another context, it is important to understand the usual pedagogical techniques and skills of participants. In contexts where dialogical techniques are unusual, the programme can specifically develop teachers' ability and confidence in using these techniques. In other contexts, where group work and dialogical techniques are more common, the programme's emphasis can be on other elements of development such as knowledge, awareness and attitudes. Overall, the programme can **strengthen understanding, techniques, skills, content and knowledge depending on what is most needed and what participants are responsive to.**



Sharing knowledge and experience

Photo credit: AKF Portugal

VI. Conclusions... Or New Beginnings

The programme demonstrated its value at successfully supporting adults along a development process to build and strengthen a pluralistic disposition in every aspect of their lives. It exposed people to ideas different from their own and built conversation, active listening and dialogue skills. Participants were encouraged to continually reflect on ways to positively engage with others of different backgrounds in their personal life, in their professional practice and more broadly as citizens. The programme brought about change and developed a disposition of pluralism and an understanding in participants of how to nurture this disposition in themselves and, most importantly, in people around them, including their students. It changed participants as individuals, leading to sustainable change.

Crucial to the programme's success was engaging with participants' experiences as individuals and creating an emotional connection and deeper understanding of pluralism. **Skills and techniques can be easily learned; however, feelings, empathy, respect, equity, etc., require a lot more than a technical course or a few training sessions.** It takes time and relationship building for participants to think about themselves as individuals and about the issues they live with in their everyday life. With this, they can gain self-awareness about how they position themselves and reframe which interactions they genuinely wish to achieve. In turn, participants then apply the same values and disposition to their professional practice, recognising that the journey and commitment is not easy and requires constant thought and attention in each and every moment of the day.

Professionals need to be living it in order to be able to teach it.

The same structured framework and process is relevant and successful for all professional settings, not just in a school context. When viewing individuals as citizens, acknowledging awareness-raising processes and capacities to drive minor changes for pluralism, development journeys become relevant for professionals (and others) within any given community or social setting. All that is required is a willingness to see oneself as a change agent, and to invest in a reflection and development journey through dialogical methods.

At the heart of this is the commitment to continually encounter and engage with difference across all aspects of our lives, recognising it as a strength that benefits everyone. The process of pluralism is never complete. It is, in essence, a lifelong learning path, as well as an ethic to be nurtured every day.

Annex: Examples of Input for Guided Facilitation (by Building Block)

Building Block	Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion (individual, pairs or group following stimulus)
Understanding Realities An awareness of the realities of each setting, learning what my own school context looks like and outlining themes of interest for this learning journey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is in and around my school? What do I need to know about the students and surroundings? Who is in the local communities? What does my reality look like and how does it feel? Would students, non-teaching staff, parents and local communities share this perception? What dynamics, resources and systems (school, education) need to change, given changes in demography and/or identities in my school?

EXAMPLE OF STIMULUS

Interactions				
14. All visitors and new pupils are made to feel welcome by staff, children and young people of the school.				
15. All staff can pronounce the names of children and young people, parents and other staff members.				
16. The staff value and treat each child or young person equally, and as both as an individual and as a member of different social and cultural groups. Expectations are high for all and pupils irrespectively of their social and cultural group.				
17. Staff are alert to injustices (including any racist incidents) and behavioural issues and let children and young people see the consequences of these actions. Children and young people feel safe at school.				

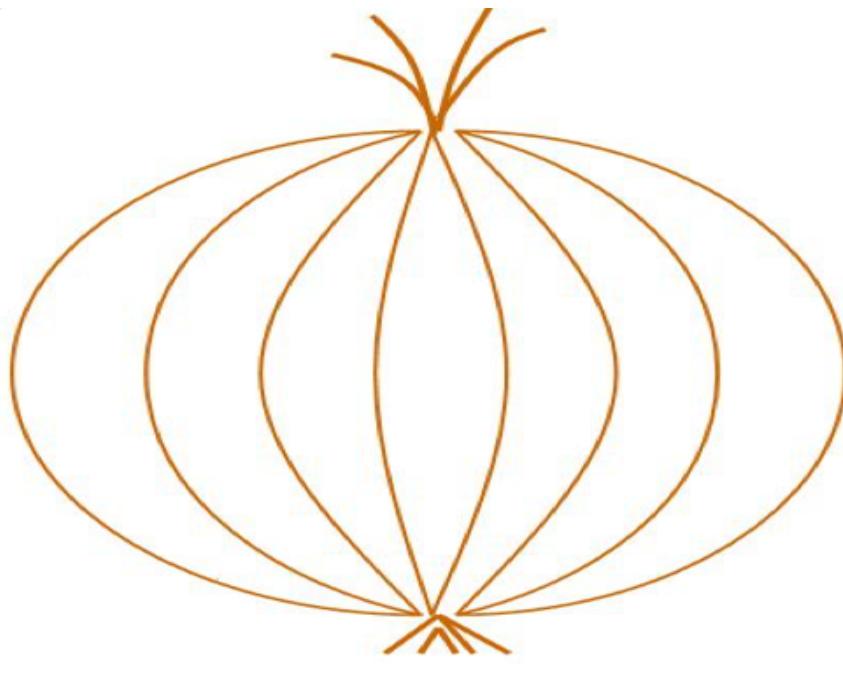
The colour scale

- It is up to each individual member of school staff
- It occasionally applies to classroom or spaces, if the opportunity arises
- This matter is always given attention in classrooms or spaces, when the opportunity arises
- This matter is always given attention in classrooms and spaces where the opportunity arises and, sometimes, applies to the whole school and not just to specific classrooms
- It is a regular school/ Family of schools practice, inside and outside each classroom

Source: Aga Khan Foundation Portugal (2014), *Guide for Reflection* (Lisbon: Aga Khan Foundation Portugal).

Building Block	Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion (individual, pairs or group following stimulus)
Identity	<p>An understanding that we all have multiple identities, roles and influences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who am I? What do I value in myself? • Are all facets of my own identity visible? Should they be? We are entitled not to share some... but why does this happen? • What is my own multiple identity made of? How does it affect my professional outlook and choices?

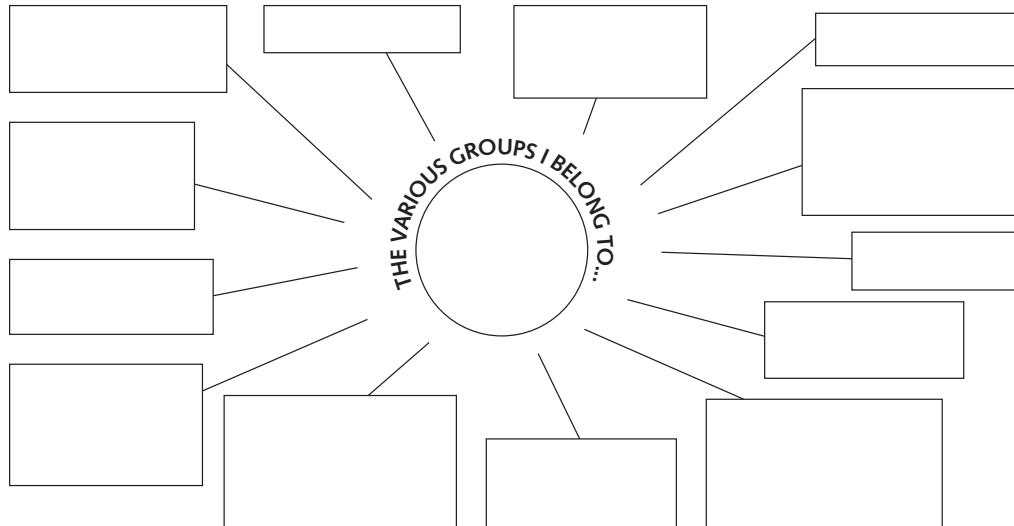
EXAMPLE OF STIMULUS



Source: Geert Hofstede (1991), *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill); Fran Martin (2012), *Think Global* (Exeter, UK: Exeter University).

Building Block	Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion (individual, pairs or group following stimulus)
Sense of Belonging Affiliating with different people and groups at different times is directly dependent on identity bonds and acknowledgement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where and when do I feel I belong? • What elements make me feel more or less comfortable with different people at different times? • How does my self-esteem affect my learning engagement? • What would make me feel more like I am part of a given group? What would help me develop empathy and/or a sense of belonging and enable it within my group?

EXAMPLE OF STIMULUS

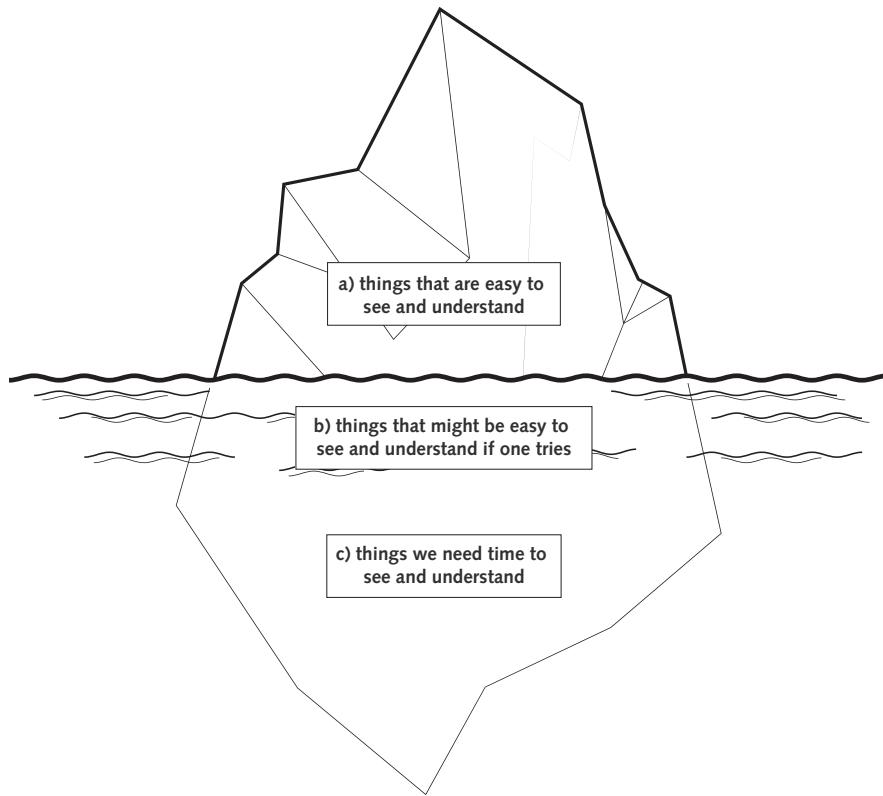


SPIDERGRAM

Source: Geert Hofstede (1991), *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill); Fran Martin (2012), *Think Global* (Exeter, UK: Exeter University).
Spidergram Design: Sue Withey, Sheffield City Council.

Building Block	Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion (individual, pairs or group following stimulus)
Diversity Getting acquainted with different (academic/business) frameworks to understand diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is my attitude to diversity now and how do I want to develop? • Who's missing? Is anyone from our diverse local communities not represented in the school community? • Are we looking at history, mathematics, arts, etc. from local viewpoints? Are we offering more global perspectives/outlooks? • Are we using sources from different parts of the world to approach our enquiry and study projects? • Do images at school represent different ethnicities and styles of life?

EXAMPLE OF STIMULUS

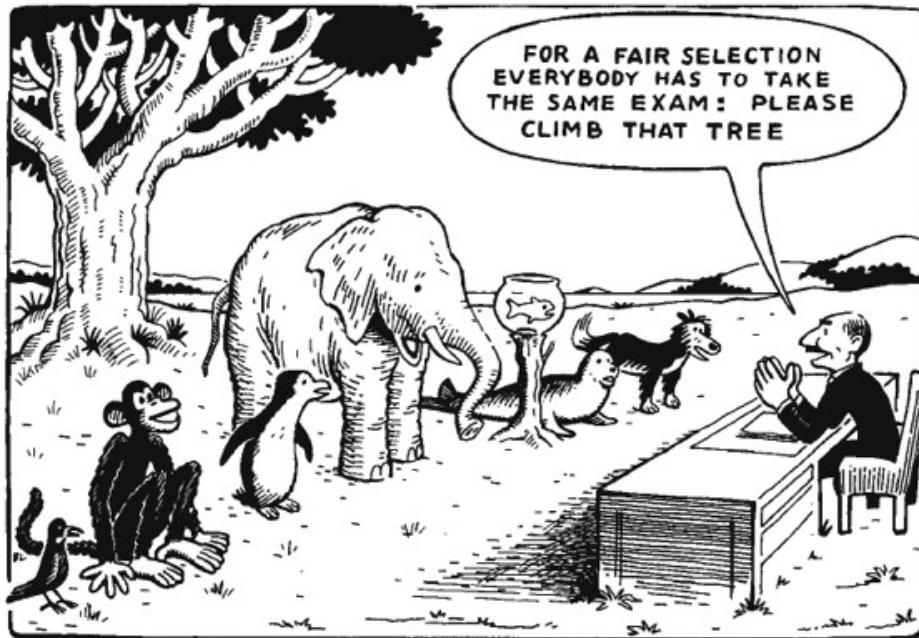


CULTURAL ICEBERG

Source: Edgar H. Schein (2010), *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass); Development Education Centre South Yorkshire (2012), *Developing Global Learners*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, UK).

Building Block	Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion (individual, pairs or group following stimulus)
Equity and Equality The discourse about equality has misled some on the need for differentiation in learning environments. The same tests do not work for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is our aim to promote everyone having the same access? Or, are we equipped to understand the diversities within each group and adapt to different starting points and needs? • Are we aware of existing systemic and structural barriers? What can we do to reduce them?

EXAMPLE OF STIMULUS



CLIMB THAT TREE

Source: <https://carleton.ca/tasupport/2016/blog-nurturing-environment-engagement-inclusive-teaching-practice-challenges-teaching-assistants/>

Building Block	Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion (individual, pairs or group following stimulus)
Communities and Families The engagement of families and representation of diversity in the school governance and systems (school, education).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it important to involve parents, families and diverse local communities? • What information and support can they provide for student achievement and engagement? • How can we support families' understanding of supporting children's learning paths as well as the importance of school culture and learning environments?

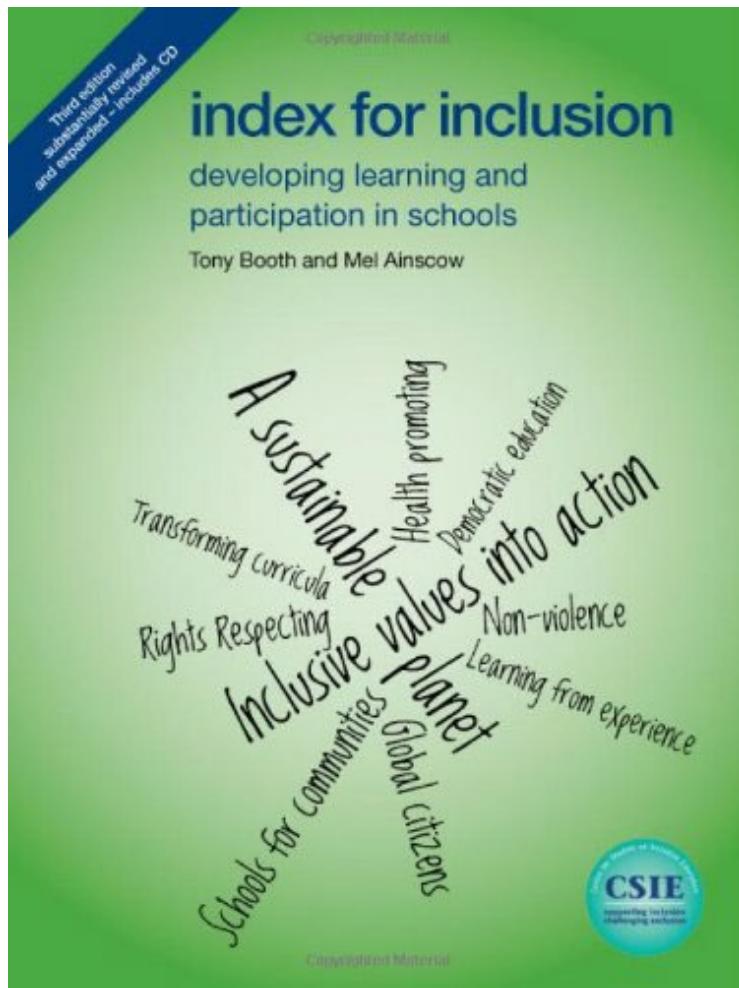
EXAMPLE OF STIMULUS



Source: Global Centre for Pluralism, 2019.

Building Block	Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion (individual, pairs or group following stimulus)
Whole School Action Piecing it together. Planning and supporting systemic change. Rethinking a wider set of systems, policies and governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now that a whole school group has been through the journey, how do we wish to develop further? In which ways are our school culture, curricula, practices, staff, governance activities, etc. inclusive? Of the elements that do not reflect inclusive and pluralistic approaches, which are in our power/within our reach to change? How do we plan to do it? How are we going to demonstrate our pluralistic intentionality through practice?

EXAMPLE OF STIMULUS



Source: Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow (2011), *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools* (Bristol, UK: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education).