

Response to the proposal for a consultation on the Green Paper Migration and Mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education system.

QCA welcomes the Green Paper on EU education policy for children from a migrant background. The paper comprehensively covers

A. The policy challenge

England, like any modern European country, consists of a huge range of ethnicities, cultures, languages, beliefs and religions. These are not static but constantly changing and fusing, so that people identify with different aspects of their heritage in different situations. Therefore there is a need to look at the migrant policies as a whole, as the foundation for social cohesion agenda.

The policy challenges in terms of integration through educational programmes are common to other European countries and are centred around

- language differences and cultural sensitivity;
- various time of settling into school environment;
- relatively low participation in the pre-school programmes;
- their socio-economic status, which can influence attainment levels;
- parental educational background and aspirations;
- relatively high dropout and expulsion rates;
- low participation rates in Higher Education for some minority groups;
- extremely diverse groups of migrant children, from families of economic migrants to families fleeing war conflicts, unaccompanied asylum-seekers or trafficked children;
- their status in the country, as related to the above point.

At the grass root level, local authorities together with schools develop strategic planning to address these issues by learning more about the community it serves and community issues. Its schools duty by using that knowledge to promote community cohesion, serve the needs of all learners, including vulnerable and disadvantaged.

B. The policy response

Overcoming social exclusion has been a central element of government policy for many years, and policy in lifelong learning is strongly directed at ensuring equal access for all. The policy response covers a broad range of issues, from legislation and raising awareness to curriculum development, pedagogy and inspection arrangements. The Race Relation (Amendment) Act was adopted in 2000. All recent policies have regard to integrating children from migrant background and addressing their individual and specific issues.

The research evidence shows clearly the importance of early years education in determining life chances, and the availability of much improved data on individual learners (through regular assessment and the Schools Census) has made it possible to refine understanding of the processes of exclusion, identifying and responding to the needs of particular sub groups.

Throughout children's services, the *Every Child Matters* strategy focuses on reducing social exclusion and enhancing the protection of vulnerable children through 3,500 new *Sure Start* Children's Centres and through every primary and secondary school becoming an "extended school" offering a wide range of out of hours activities to pupils, parents and the wider community. This is expected to make real improvements inter alia in the outcomes and life chances of children in care, and further reducing the numbers of teenage pregnancies. An evaluation in 2005 showed positive findings for most children and families, but emphasised the importance of engaging with the most excluded and isolated families, and of outreach services.

In 2006 the English Department of Education and Skills (DfES) published a revised strategy *A Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Maintaining the Excellent Progress*. This built on the previous (2004) strategy which had launched a shift towards partnership and devolution of responsibility for service delivery; with a strong focus on **personalisation** of services and responsiveness to the needs of learners, parents and employers.

In response to the government priority for personalisation of education the DfES commissioned a review of its implications for teacher training, published in 2007 as *2020 Visions*. The English Schools White Paper set out steps to remodel the schools workforce and develop leadership. It will support higher standards, **personalised learning**, extended schools and reform of 14-19 provision. Particular attention is being given to the needs of early years and childcare staff, to address the requirements of the *Sure Start* initiatives, and to raise the status of work and quality of work with pre-school children through the development of new Early Years Professional role for those leading children's centres and full day care settings.

Personalised learning is central to raising standards and is critical in working towards a society where a child's chances of success are not limited by their socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity or any disability. It's important to support schools in implementing personalised learning to help them move to a system based on progression, underpinned by assessment for learning, with relevant interventions such as one-to-one support.

Current policy response includes the development of the education support programmes addressing some of the education and socio-economic concerns related to the issue of migrant children.

A special attention is given to development of an **effective inclusive school** that needs to adopt a whole-school approach to curriculum. One of the main purposes of the **whole-school curriculum** will be to establish the entitlement to a range of high-quality teaching and learning experiences, irrespective of social background, culture, race, gender, differences in ability and disability.

While developing inclusive learning environment, it is important to identify any groups of pupils who are not benefiting as fully as others from the current curriculum offer, and to consider if additional support and new experiences in and beyond the classroom could be helpful. This particularly applies to some groups of migrant children, especially those who may have been trafficked or unaccompanied asylum-seekers, who may have developed specific psychological and emotional conditions,

which need to be taken care of. Schools work closely with Admission and Education Welfare officers to accommodate **unique set of needs** of children of migrant background, including home visits. Schools and local authorities also promote positive role models of migrant background as part of the cohesive social agenda.

Planning for inclusion means thinking about how the curriculum can be designed to match the needs and interests of the full range of learners, especially learners who are learning English as an additional language.

Young people will also bring a range of different cultural perspectives and experiences. These are reflected in the curriculum and used to further an understanding of the importance of diversity issues. Teachers may find that a useful starting point for planning is the school's race equality and other policies combined with a comprehensive overview of learners from various groups.

Identity and cultural diversity in the curriculum. Young people can learn to appreciate and understand the complex diversity of our society through the opportunities offered as part of the planned curriculum of the school. They need to acquire a positive attitude towards difference, which can come about through a strong school ethos of valuing individuals and their contributions to the school community.

Developing the identity and cultural diversity dimension in the curriculum is an important part of the work schools undertake to promote community cohesion. Teaching opportunities can form part of what is taught through subjects, through cross-curricula activities and through other learning activities that are part of a school's curriculum.

Work on identities and cultural diversity may provoke extremely strong sentiments in some learners. There are a number of specific ways in which teachers can encourage learners to value diversity and challenge racism. To support this, the teachers have access to online resources to promote diversity across the curriculum and dealing with racist incidents.

There are a number of initiatives to improve the general performance of ethnic minority groups both in compulsory schooling and in further education. However, there is a major lack of assessment of the initiatives and the impact is difficult, in most cases, to evaluate.

C. The role of the European Union

The suggested initiatives could include:

- Mix policy with support programmes;
- Free tuition should include scholarships or grant giving opportunities for specific groups;
- ESL should not act as basis of the learning of host language, it should be further implemented into the curriculum and extra-curriculum activities
- Parent teacher/school programmes should be devised for parents to help promote knowledge of the education system and promote further education for children

- School placements – being placed in better schools (inner city schools do not always provide the best environment for them)

While the challenges of accommodating the needs of children of migrant backgrounds seem similar across the EU, the opportunities to meet these issues could be quite diverse in each MS. The process of engaging in a complex process of selective adoption of policy measures will remain the national prerogative. Nevertheless, the mechanisms of the education OMC and ways, in which it shapes this particular discourse could be maintained through establishment of a benchmark and by drawing on exchange of information, mutual learning and sharing best practice.

D. The future of Directive 77/486/EEC

There is definitely a need to evolve and include the 3rd world country migrants as well as addressing the challenge of integration, including the socio-economic challenges.