

Multilingualisms, translanguaging and transknowledging: education for inclusion, cohesion and wellbeing

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After approximately 150 years establishing national education systems in most countries of the world, the scale and unpredictability of recent migration brings a fundamental challenge. It is a challenge for transnational institutions such as the Council of Europe; the United Nations and its various organs, including UNESCO and UNICEF; and it is a challenge at the level of each national, regional and local level of state provided education. While the challenge of migrant and refugee communities may appear to be more noticeable in urban contexts of Europe and North America, in fact, two-thirds of people who are displaced through conflict are 'internally displaced persons' who remain in their own countries. Of those who manage to leave their countries, the majority settle in neighbouring countries (in Africa, Central and South America, and Asia). Because these are also parts of the world in which 86% of the world's linguistic communities have originated, they also have the most extensive experience of education for displaced, migrant, minority and refugee students.

The United Nations and its various organs, e.g. UNESCO and UNICEF, have recently developed a series of documents and international frameworks, such as the Global Compact for Refugees (UN 2018) that commit 193 signatory countries to the provision of inclusive and quality education for migrants and refugees. These documents provide guidelines for joint responsibilities to be taken and implemented. Joint responsibilities include the sharing and exchange of expertise between countries of the global north and south.

This presentation will focus on the implications for teachers in the classroom (from early years, primary and secondary school) and teacher education of increasing diversity with specific attention to lessons learned from longitudinal studies of different approaches to bilingual and multilingual education in Africa, Asia and Australia.

Multilingual education means more than a focus on languages. It means a focus on two or more languages (often through what is now known as translanguaging) plus the exchange and translation of two or more systems of knowledge. It also means respect for diversity of students' systems of belief and culture. Preparing teachers to become comfortable with three principles: bi-/multilingualism (including translanguaging), culturally sustaining pedagogies and knowledge exchange (transknowledging) is not difficult. These involve common sense, practical and inexpensive solutions to complex student diversity. They also facilitate inclusion, quality education, and the wellbeing of students from receiving and migrant communities.

Kathleen welcomes discussion about practical ways in which these three principles can be used by teachers in the classroom.