



POLICY RESOLUTION 1 - DIVERSITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION AS A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO AN EQUITABLE EDUCATION

Proposed by: Graduate Women New Zealand

Seconded by: The British Federation of Graduate Women

The 33rd GWI General Assembly resolves that:

1. NFAs encourage education systems and government departments to increase the numbers of teachers of varying ethnicities and backgrounds.
2. GWI advocate strongly for having teachers of the mix of different ethnicities and identities reflective of the student/children demography they are teaching to enable greater empathy and shared spaces for learning.
3. GWI encourage the raising of the consciousness of diversity by the authorities who employ teachers.
4. NFAs enhance peaceful relationships between people by diversifying educational encounters.
5. In doing this GWI resolve to support the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the Declaration on a Culture of Peace (1999).

Suggested Plan of Action

1. NFAs should urge their respective governments to increase funding and support for underrepresented minorities – including gender, ethnic, sexual orientation – to pursue teaching and education as a career;
2. NFAs should advocate for improved diversity in teacher training, both in the instructor population and incoming teachers (i.e. student teachers) to enable teachers to gain the knowledge required to understand diversity and its impacts;
3. NFAs should encourage academic research into the effects of increased diversity in teaching and education;
4. NFAs may consider investigating methods of contributing to a scholarship in their area specifically aimed at improving diversity in the field of education, and also to make considerations of diversity when awarding existing scholarships;
5. GWI should publicise these goals to NFAs and set up a working party to produce a resource kit and/or policy document to support NFAs in this work in their home countries.



Supporting Statement: *Diversity in educational providers is still an overlooked factor in education outcomes, particularly for those students that do not see representation in their teachers. Certain population demographics tend to be overrepresented in teaching, and particularly in postcolonial nations; this is typically reflective of societal power dynamics. In reference to teacher population diversity it was reported that “Although we live in an increasingly multi- ethnic society, this is not necessarily reflected in the populations of all schools, or, as this study has shown, within particular departments within schools”. Research shows that having diverse voices in the classroom improves the education of all children; not only is this of benefit to the individual, but also to community relationships. In particular it has been shown that the relationship between child and teacher (encapsulated by the Māori concept of Ako) is vitally important to learning, and that this is enhanced by commonality in backgrounds (Bishop, 2011).*

Diversity in all roles encourages understanding and empathy and should not be dismissed or undervalued; rather, it needs to be encouraged throughout the teaching body worldwide.

Two key pieces of knowledge have arisen from research in the area:

☒ *When teachers are from a different background to the children, there can be ignorance due to differing cultural understandings and values. This mismatch between the background of the child and that of the school impedes learning.*

☒ *Education benefits globally when all classes, ethnicities, and world views are included and recognised in all levels and areas of schools.*

We agree that in teacher education “there should be a critical examination of the admissions and selection criteria and processes used in recruitment for their impact on widening participation strategies” (Flintoff et al, 2008, p.12).

Although GWI has previously advocated for cultural diversity with education with the resolutions Education for Indigenous Peoples (2013, No. 9) and Cultural Diversity and Education (2004, No. 4), this current resolution specifically targets the need for diversity in the demography of teacher selection and teacher education and deconstructing the underpinnings of current biases in this.