

Equality and Diversity How can this be translated into practice?

Equality and Diversity is something we hear so much about today and is relevant to Festive because in the majority of colleges there will be a direct connection between the Christian Union, and/or the Chaplaincy, and the person who has responsibility for Equality and Diversity within the College. This is because the law of the land has things to say about how public bodies conduct themselves in a number of areas, one of which is faith and religion.

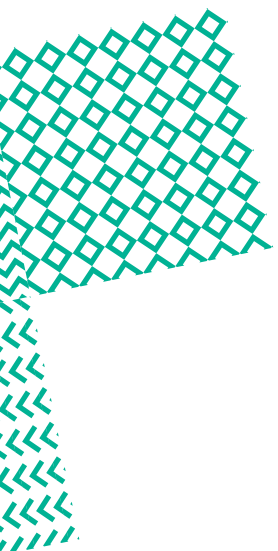
So, whether you are a chaplain, a member of staff looking to help provide the S in SMSC1, a manager whose remit is Equality and Diversity or a member of the local faith community looking for guidance on how to contribute to the Further Education Sector we hope that the following will be useful to you.

We extend grateful thanks to Peter Green who has allowed Festive to use his personal thoughts on the matter which he shared at the National Council for Faith and Belief in Further Education². Peter is the Ofsted observer on the council but this is his personal view and not the policy or guidance of Ofsted.

A way of look at how equality can 'play out' in work

My thoughts are ordered around a mnemonic FREDA, but not just simply a word for each letter. All the letters are Janus-like in that they face two ways to reflect that there are usually at least two ways of looking at things and we should consider different views and ways of doing things. The root of the word diversity is facing or looking in different directions. We reflect about ourselves but also our place in society alongside others.

Peter Green



F

Fairness is the starting point...

...because it is central to most cultures and societies. Without fairness and justice, prospects for peace are limited. This is very clear in the classroom where students accept feedback and criticism if it is fair, and are rightly indignant where they see or perceive injustices. For me as a Christian this is a central tenet of teaching and hard though it is, 'Give unto Caesar...'

Freedom

Not all of us enjoy freedom but true freedom is the freedom that does not restrict or limit other's rights or human rights, but accepts others' rights within the codes and values of the society we choose to live in or find ourselves living in. Accepting the limitations of freedom brings more freedom to act and make choices and is more empowering because we live cohesively with others.

R

Repect

...is the respect for the differences and ways of doing things that we may not like. But as long as they do not hurt or harm and are consistent with society's values and our moral codes we have the proper regard that enables us to live together. This was an aspect of the love Jesus preached.

Rights and Responsibilities

We only learn these rights by being responsible for our actions and behaviour. So in a classroom each student has the right and the responsibility to learn and this comes from respecting ourselves and others. We should be clear about those rights which are ours by virtue of being a human being and are defined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and those we earn or are owed by our place in and contributions to society and others.

E

Equality of opportunity and outcomes...

...are both necessary and complementary to each other. These are about impact and not just paying lip-service but making things happen for the different groups and people who are left behind often through no fault of their own. Helena Kennedy once said: "If at first you don't succeed, you don't." and that is true. It is why equality of access and outcome are so important. Without it, fairness becomes a worthy word without meaning.

Equity...

...is not only fairness but the practice of the being fair, even-handed and just. It goes hand-in hand with equality.

D

Dignity...

...is the worth of human beings and the self-respect that encircles Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Again to return to the classroom, students will and do accept praise and criticism when their dignity is not criticised and they can retain that self-worth that enables them to receive positive and negative feedback. The Roman satirist Juvenal remarked how poverty tested the dignity of human beings. Poverty today is not just material poverty.

Diversity and Difference

The one most remarkable thing about us all is how different we all are, and yet how we all seek to be similar! In some cases it's the differences that are the cause of so many conflicts. Good teaching recognises the differences in students and builds on this by seeking to meet individual needs – differentiation. In society how often do we make difference the cause of conflict, not the focus of celebration? Diversity is differences bringing people together. Choices and is more empowering because we live cohesively with others.

A

Accountability...

...is answering to each other, to society, to our consciences, to our faiths and beliefs. It is about being open and trusting. Like respect, true accountability brings greater freedom in behaviour because limitations are self-imposed and considerate of others.

Autonomy

Independence to act and think and behave. Autonomy is last, as putting self should be last; it is the omega to the alpha and echoes 'the first shall be last'. Teachers should seek to make students autonomous in their thinking and learning. We do this by modelling and giving them the skills. Autonomy means people are free and able to make the right decisions by themselves.

End Notes

¹ For more information on SMSC, see <http://www.doingsmsc.org.uk>

² To find out more about the National Council of Faith and Beliefs in Further Education, visit <http://www.fbfe.org.uk/>