PLURILINGUAL AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This paper tackles the rich cultural diversity in the Mediterranean countries (case of Algeria) that raises a number of key issues that we may encounter in our day-to-day business. The implementation of a plurilingual and intercultural education involves implications for the educational curriculum. It can have different forms according to context; depending on the language is cooling, the rule of the first foreign language, or the possible position of languages that are present in the school without being taught. It also depends upon varying conditions of feasibility and implementation, and the central or local institutional level, for the institution itself, in the classroom, and with respect to relations between the school and its environment. It also has an impact quite evidently on the training of teachers. These different aspects are addressed in other documents of the platform.

Key Words : Mediterranean, plurilingual and intercultural

Introduction

The Mediterranean area has undergone significant social, cultural, demographic and economic change since the early of the 20th century earliest. Until that stage, the Mediterranean populations were heterogeneous, to a limited extent.

The Mediterranean is a meeting point for languages from three language families:

- Indo-European, represented by the Romance, southern Slavic, Greek and Albanian languages.
- Afro-Asiatic, represented by the Semitic languages (mainly Hebrew and Arabic) and Tamazight and Berber (with their assorted varieties).
- Altaic, with Turkish as its most significant representative.

Manifestation of Cultural Diversity in Mediterranean Schools

School is without doubt one of the first places where children have daily contact with the range of values and worldviews that shape individual identities. Whether Mediterranean schools are secular, denominational or faith based they all share certain features:
• There is no real homogenous group of pupils, even within the same religious and cultural tradition, since religious and cultural practices and beliefs differ from one group to another and from one family to another;
• In Modern society, there are different ways of conceiving what constitutes a good life, and these conceptions arise from various cultural, religious and non-religious views;
• Children do not leave their values and deeply felt convictions outside when they enter the classroom. Neither children nor adults can be asked to abandon a large part of their identity in order to form a relationship with others.

Through this paper, we aim to reply on the following questions:

- What is meant by the term plurilingualism? How is intercultural education as a concept understood? Who are the main actors involved in its promotion? What challenges do the educational sectors face in their work? For whom Intercultural education is? What are the basis of intercultural education? What does intercultural requires?

To answer these questions, we tackle in this paper the most important element of plurilingualism and intercultural education in the Mediterranean countries.

1. Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

The focus so far has been on social multilingualism and individual plurilingualism, but it is now important to define the characteristics of plurilingual and intercultural education. From the social point of view, plurilingual and intercultural education takes into account above all what already exists and this presupposes that certain data relative to the sociolinguistic and sociocultural environment are taken into consideration and that the role of social representations that may sometimes undermine innovation is not neglected.

This can also lead to a more satisfactory language education in functional terms, for example with respect to the individual and his/her future professional activity. These are however, secondary benefits even if they are immediate and more visible for public opinion and the media than the personal development of individuals.

From the point of view of teaching methodology, plurilingual and intercultural education is not to be thought of as a new methodology for the teaching of languages. It is rather a change in perspective, characterized by the fact that it involves not only foreign languages but also that languages in proximity, the languages of the repertoires of learners, the language(s) of schooling and of all subjects, are integral to it. [(COSTE, D. (ed) 2009) Plurilingual and intercultural education as a right.]

At its core, intercultural education has two focal points:

• It is education which respects, celebrates and recognizes the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. It sensitizes the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches all of us.
It is education, which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built.

We can notice two competences: plurilingual competence, intercultural competence.

- **Plurilingual competence**: is the capacity to successively acquire and use different competences in different languages, at different levels of proficiency and for different functions. The central purpose of plurilingual education is to develop this competence.

- **Intercultural competence**: is the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that allow a speaker, to varying degrees, to recognize, understand, interpret and accept other ways of living and thinking beyond his or her home culture. This competence is the basis of understanding among people, and is not limited to language ability.

Such competence is not homogeneous with respect to the overall mastery of the languages of the repertoire, or to linguistic activities, or to the balance between competences in languages and competences in the cultural domain etc. It is diverse, malleable and evolves throughout life, linked as it is to experience and to the personal trajectories of each individual.

This conceptualization of the teaching of languages and other subjects is not only concerned with functional and instrumental aims, viewing languages as crucial in employment or economic competitiveness (economic benefit). It does not either focus exclusively on diversified and multiperspectival acquisition of knowledge coming from other disciplines taught through several languages, with a view to the knowledge society perspective (cognitive benefit).

It is considered to be a complete development of the individual based on values which languages can communicate (educational and developmental benefit), and to contribute to the opportunities and means of personal and emotional expression (affective benefit). It implies instigating reflection on language, in all its dimensions (system, communication, discourse, learning etc), by considering the plurality and the diversity of languages present and learnt in school (‘meta’-cognitive benefit: meta-linguistic, meta-communicative, meta-discursive, meta-cognitive).

This conceptualization also aims to encourage experience and knowledge of literary and more general cultural products of some of the languages taught in school (and also perhaps of those which are present without being taught) by referring for example to contrastive approaches from an intercultural perspective (cultural and intercultural benefit).

This form of education corresponds to a global project for education that ought to be implemented in different forms since there exists no unique formula. Teaching methodologies already available must offer diverse possibilities more or less “costly”, more or less extensive, and adaptable to each context by taking into consideration the characteristics of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural environment, and the needs identified in this context. It can probably only be realized in a gradual manner in school.
curricula and trajectories, which means paying attention to the continuity between different sectors of schooling. It must also evolve over time in such a way as to ensure its continuous adaptation to the changing needs of society.

In short, the notion of **plurilingual and intercultural education** tends to characterize this conceptualization of education as determined by values such as those proposed by the Council of Europe, and by a global language education across all languages present in school and all disciplinary domains. It aims at the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence and the broadening of the linguistic and discursive repertoire of the learner, being at the same time a preparation for lifelong learning.

It should be considered as a process at work in the school career of learners and in the construction of the curriculum in such a way as to contribute to the evolution of educational systems.

2. Components of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

Plurilingual and intercultural education has different components, the status of each of which varies in society according to the way in which it is acquired, the level of competence demanded and the place it occupies at the Algerian school which is not different from the other Mediterranean schools.

- **The learner and languages present in school**: all linguistic varieties, whether they are recognized in some way in the curriculum or whether they are simply part of the language repertoire of pupils, which can be used in school (for example in the playground). It is postulated that all these are languages of education in that all contribute or are susceptible of contributing — whether pupils possess them or are learning them, or are simply exposed to them— to their school experience of linguistic plurality and to the construction of knowledge and experiences of learning.

- **Language(s) of schooling**: the language (or, more rarely, languages), especially national language, which is used as the ordinary vehicle, shared and assumed to become common, for the functioning of the school; it appears in the school as taught subjects such, and as a medium of teaching other subjects.

- **Regional, minority and migration languages**: varieties recognized in school either as an object of teaching, or as a medium of instruction in other subjects, each being related to regional languages or minority languages or the family languages of children of migration or languages of origin: these languages and varieties may also be recognized in the school (taken into consideration, and "made invisible") without being taught. In these cases, situations are diverse. For example, the regional language may be the subject taught or an object of reflection and comparison in the teaching of another language or it may be the principal vehicle of teaching (in total or partial immersion schools). In several European national contexts, regional or minority languages have an official status that makes them by right languages of schooling.

- **Foreign languages - modern and classical**: other languages which are school subjects in the curriculum, which may also, as far as modern languages
are concerned, be part of bilingual education (contributing to the teaching of othersubjects). These situations are diverse. The "foreign" language may be the first language of certain children in school.

2.1. Language of Schooling

The language of schooling in every Mediterranean country is usually the official or national language.

In Algeria there are two languages of schooling: Arabic (for the Education sector) and French (for private schools and High Learning sector). Arabic is the official and national language, and French is the gain of a long period of colonialization.

This fact is the very core of plurilingual and intercultural education in Algeria. It is also important because of the diversity of dialects and languages used in the Algerian society (Arabic, French, Kabyle, Chaoui, Mezabi, Tergui, Chelhi, etc.).
It is too crucial because:

- It has to be regarded as the pivotal language of all language education: plurilingual and intercultural education must be devised on the basis of that language and on how it is taught;
- It is the first formal and institutional linguistic education that strongly shapes and governs representations of the nature of a language and its teaching/learning;
- Descriptive approaches that reveal the internal variability of each language appear in principle to be more suited to this basic function of the language of schooling.

This type of education tends to help learners develop awareness of their specific characteristics through approaches that contrast or compare them with those of other identities and cultures: it is through a knowledge of others and their otherness that a full awareness is acquired of the different facets of one's own identity.

However, how far the language of schooling plays a part in plurilingual and intercultural education depends on the context, it is doubtless easier to embark on plurilingual and intercultural education through the teaching of foreign languages in which the symbolic investment may be smaller than it would be for the national language. In that specific case, foreign-language teachers could be trained to be able to work towards opening up all teaching of languages and other school subjects to plurilingual and intercultural education.

The fact remains that consideration of the variability of the language(s) of schooling can be the first step towards awareness of the internal plurality of every language and a starting point for plurilingual and intercultural education.
2.2. Foreign Languages

There are many foreign languages are taught in every Mediterranean country (the case of the Algerian school: French, English, Spanish, German, Italian, Russian and recently Chinese and Turkish, as shows the diagram below).

Plurilingual and intercultural education includes foreign languages that can be learnt in more or less depth depending on the opportunities afforded by the school’s formal teaching context. This ought to avoid the problems caused by unrealistic expectations such as the acquisition of native-speaker competence, which it is impossible to attain in the school context.

It is obvious that the benefits of plurilingual and intercultural education, as they have just been described, cannot be realized in an automatic way, and can only be attained if certain conditions are assured. It is clear that all the benefits of plurilingual and intercultural education as they have just been mentioned do not accrue automatically and can be attained only on certain conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>• as 1st foreign language</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>• from the middle school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as 2nd foreign language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish, German</td>
<td>• from the secondary school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Italian, Chinese</td>
<td>• University studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
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The case of the Algerian school: French, English, Spanish, German, Italian, Russian and recently Chinese and Turkish.

2.3. The Multiple Functions of “Other” Languages and Dialects:
Still other languages and dialects which are not present to any significant extent or in a traditional or continuous manner in any Mediterranean country are found in schools: they may be present – introduced by pupils speaking other languages – and taught officially or optionally, or they may lead an underground life. Without exception, all such languages could be included in plurilingual and intercultural education in one way or another depending on the context, the status of the languages concerned and the available resources, etc. This means that:

- All languages are thus valued regardless of their status in the eyes of society (official, minority, regional languages, languages of migration etc) and teaching status (first language, second language, languages of origin, modern foreign languages, classical languages);
- The various languages forming part of learners' personal repertoires but not included in the languages of schooling are of special importance; they are languages which the school can develop through varied, plural and partial approaches, thus reinforcing learners' identity, and giving them equal opportunities for school success;
- Dialects or languages of origin could be developed as language resources that will become available for an increasingly globalized economy requiring human resources with a high degree of proficiency in a wide range of languages, particularly those of potential customers.

2.4. Other Subjects

Plurilingual and intercultural education includes as an important component other school subjects, whether they are taught solely in the main language of schooling or also through other languages (minority, regional, foreign etc).

These other subjects (mathematics, history, geography, biology etc) are “carried” by the language used, whichever it may be, and “carry” languages with them: in so-called "natural" language, but also in other semiotic, non-linguistic forms of communication used together with language (diagrams, graphics, maps etc), in their lexis, in their forms of discourse (scientific discourse, didactic discourse, discourse of popular dissemination) which represent the concepts and knowledge specific to each.

In this sense, they contribute powerfully and in different ways to the expansion of learners' language repertoires (even if they are taught only in one language of the school) and are an enrichment of their experience of the world and of their contacts with other cultures (scientific cultures and foreign cultures). They are thus a fundamental element of plurilingual and intercultural education.[(BYRAM, M. (2006) : Languages and Identities, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg), VOLLMER, H.J. (2006) : Languages across the curriculum, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, COSTE (ed.) CAVALLI, M., CRİŞAN and VEN , P.-H., van de, A European Reference Document for Languages of Education, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg)]
Methodology

The nature of this study calls for adopting qualitative and analytic research method as it requires both to describe and analyze the different aspects of plurilingualism and interculturalism in Algerian educational system as well as their impact on Algerian school and its related environment. This to highlight the role of languages in developing Intercultural Education competences. And to point out the importance of plurilingualism and interculturalism implementation in Mediterranean countries education especially in Algerian schools.

Results

For whom Intercultural Education is?

Intercultural education is based on the general aim of enabling the learner to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others, thus contributing to the good of society. Intercultural education is beneficial to all learners especially young ones irrespective of their identity, since all children need to learn how to live within and contribute to the evolution of our growing intercultural society.

Intercultural education facilitates all children in coming to value their own heritage and the heritage of others.

The benefits of intercultural education for all children include the following:

- It encourages the child’s curiosity about cultural and social difference.
- It helps to develop and support the child’s imagination by normalizing difference.
- It helps to develop the child’s critical thinking by enabling the child to gain perspectives on, and to question, his/her own cultural practices.
- It helps to develop sensitivity in the child.
- It helps to prevent racism.

What are the basis of Intercultural Education?

Intercultural education is embedded in knowledge and understanding, skills and capacities, and attitudes and values.

The vision for the curriculum is to nurture the child in all the elements of her or his life—spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social, and physical. Intercultural education is built on this vision, and is outlined in these guidelines under the headings of knowledge and understanding, skills and capacities, and attitudes and values. This is in keeping with the specific aims of the curriculum, which include enabling the child to understand the world through acquisition of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes and the ability to think critically to develop spiritual, moral and religious values to develop personally and socially and to relate to others with understanding and respect.

Neither racism nor interculturalism is based on knowledge alone. Both are informed and influenced by emotional responses, feelings and attitudes, as well as by knowledge. Simply providing people with facts and information or focusing on cognitive development will not, on their own, counteract racism, since there may be an
emotional resistance to changing one’s mind even in the face of new evidence, facts, or ways of thinking. In particular, the development of positive emotional responses to diversity and an empathy with those discriminated against plays a key role in intercultural education.

Intercultural education may give rise to conflict and to a range of strong emotions. When people (children, teachers, parents, and others in the community of the school) explore their own attitudes and values, and when they look at their own past reactions to certain situations they may get defensive, angry, or upset.

Learning to deal with one’s own emotions and the emotions of others is central to the development of intrapersonal (self-understanding) and interpersonal (understanding of relationships with others) skills, which the curriculum identifies as being essential for the child’s personal, social, and educational fulfilment. This is best done within a school and classroom ethos that is characterized by a caring relationship between school staff and children, and by providing children with a successful and happy school experience.

Intercultural Education is Integrated with all Subjects and with the General Life of the School

The integration of knowledge and understanding, skills and capacities, and attitudes and values across the school curriculum provides the learner with a more coherent and a richer learning experience. It is also more likely that appropriate attitudes and values will be developed by learners if these are integrated with all subjects and with the whole life of the school, than if they are addressed in a piecemeal or ‘one-off’ fashion. Intercultural education, therefore, should be central to all aspects of school life. It should be reflected in the hidden curriculum of the school, as well as in school policies and practices and the teaching of curriculum content.

Intercultural Education Requires a Real-world Focus

It is a fundamental principle of learning in the curriculum that the pupil’s existing knowledge and experience should be the starting point for acquiring new understanding, and that pupils should be enabled to move from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the more complex, and from the concrete to the abstract.

Young learners’ lives will provide the teacher with many opportunities to explore intercultural themes and to develop intercultural competence. Children may well experience examples of unfairness, discrimination, or conflict in their own lives that will enable them to engage in a concrete way with the concerns of intercultural education. Conversely, unless children are encouraged and facilitated in applying interculturalism to their own lives, they may well embrace intercultural ideas in the abstract but not engage in intercultural practices.

Teachers should be aware that looking at situations which involve conflict or disagreement between ethnic groups may well give rise to strong emotions, especially if children are being asked to consider if they are part of the dominant or discriminating group. Nonetheless, exploring such situations is central to developing in them the ability to apply intercultural ideas to their own lives.
Examining real-life situations can also play a role in developing in the child a sense of empathy for those who are discriminated against. Many children will feel that they have been treated unfairly at one time or another, whether that means having had someone else getting preference over them unfairly, or having had assumptions made about them because of the way they look or where they live, or having encountered someone in authority who refused to listen to them.

Such experiences can help children to empathize readily with others who are victims of discrimination.

**Language is Central to Developing Intercultural Competence**

The curriculum notes that language has a vital role to play in pupil’s development. Whatever the pupil’s first language and whatever the language of instruction in the school, pupils clarify ideas and acquire new concepts through the interaction of language and experience. In doing so they learn to make sense of their world. Whether difference is seen as normal or abnormal, and whether equality is seen as a good thing or a problem will depend, largely, on the language, that children learn to apply to situations.

Because language is seen as being crucial to the learning process, the curriculum incorporates the use of talk and discussion as a key learning strategy in every curriculum area. This facilitates the child’s exploration of ideas, emotions, and reactions through increasingly complex language.

Children should be encouraged to verbalize experiences and reactions. When children are using inappropriate language in relation to members of minority groups they should be given opportunities to discuss how words or terms may be hurtful or biased. Efforts should be made to ensure that they feel able to speak in an honest way, in order to better engage them in discussion and to enable them to learn new language or change their minds, if appropriate.

**Intercultural Education Takes Time**

Pupils will already have developed some ideas about diversity prior to entering primary school. These ideas and attitudes are developed throughout the child’s early years. Building intercultural competence and the ability to challenge prejudicial beliefs, attitudes, and actions will not be accomplished in a short period of time. It takes longer to create a context in which something can be discussed and explored than it does to simply lecture to children on right and wrong. However, such a context is precisely what is required.

Intercultural competence will not be developed overnight. Developing an understanding of the nature of the social world and developing the language, skills, and capacities to act within that world takes time. The curriculum provides opportunities for a child to return to the same knowledge, ideas, and skills over time in order to deepen her or his understanding. Similarly, the work of facilitating the development of intercultural competence will not be accomplished in one lesson or one term. It is an ongoing process. Understanding, skills and values will only be built by stages.
The School Context is Important in Facilitating Learning

The curriculum identifies that the social context within which learning takes place is a key influence on the nature and effectiveness of the learning process. In teaching children the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of intercultural competence the education system can model good practice for the children.

Children will learn attitudes, values, and skills through seeing them modeled by those in the school and in the community of the school. In teaching children to think critically about the world in which they live, it is appropriate for us to model this by thinking critically about our own actions and the institutions within which we work, and if necessary, to examine school policies critically in context of their potential for discrimination. Indeed, in this respect, intercultural education benefits the school and the education system in general as well as individual children.

The concepts of ‘indirect racism’ and ‘institutional racism’ help us to understand how institutions such as schools may in fact be unintentionally racist in their operations. When a school prioritizes the culture of one ethnic group to the detriment of others, it may be guilty of institutional racism. Those in the school community who are responsible for policies, practices, and the cultivation of the school ethos should always be vigilant in ensuring that the culture, beliefs and way of life of all the children in the school are respected.

The curriculum is designed to be broad and balanced, affording flexibility to the teacher and the school to take account of the diverse backgrounds, interests, capacities, and cultures that are found in the school. The discretion afforded the teacher in the selection and sequencing of content, and the range of assessment techniques available ensures the adaptability of the curriculum to the diversity of children’s circumstances and experiences.

Conclusion

Young people should be enabled to appreciate the richness of a diversity of cultures and be supported in practical ways to recognize and to challenge prejudice and discrimination where they exist.

The implementation of a plurilingual and intercultural education involves implications for the educational curriculum. It can have different forms according to context, depending on the language is cooling, the rule of the first foreign language, or the possible position of languages which are present in the school without being taught. It also depends upon varying conditions of feasibility and implementation, and the central or local institutional level, for the institution itself, in the classroom, and with respect to relations between the school and its environment.

It also has an impact quite evidently on the training of teachers. These different aspects are addressed in other documents of the platform.

The rich cultural diversity in the Mediterranean countries raises a number of key issues that we may encounter in our day-to-day business.
Intercultural education is for all learners irrespective of their ethnicity. Since all learners live in a country and a world that is becoming increasingly diverse, we need to prepare them for that world.

Intercultural education is an important part of every learner’s educational experience whether the pupil is in a school which is characterized by ethnic diversity, in a predominantly mono-ethnic school, or whether the pupils from the dominant or a minority culture.

Intercultural education is for all learners irrespective of their age. Recognizing that diversity is normal in humans is something that is appropriate at all ages. Many of the skills, attitudes and capacities that will be crucial to the pupil later in life will begin to be developed at a young age.

Language and talk are identified as a fundamental component of intercultural education. While it is important to give the pupil accurate information and to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions, developing the pupil’s intercultural capacity is more effective if it is done through talking with the pupil about his/her thoughts rather than simply telling him/her the ‘right and wrong’ of the situation.

Intercultural education is for all learners especially children. It is embedded in knowledge and understanding, skills and capacities, and attitudes and values. Intercultural education is integrated with all subjects and with the general life of the school. It requires a real-world focus, and languages are essential to developing intercultural competences.

**Recommendations**

This paper represents a new vision of educational Curriculum in the framework of intercultural education in the Mediterranean countries. Thus, we strongly recommend the following points:

- Support the aims of the educational Curriculum in the context of a growing cultural and ethnic diversity in a way that will maximize and enrich learning for all learners, and make the curriculum as accessible as possible for learners from minority ethnic groups
- Address the curriculum needs of all learners, whether from a minority or the majority ethnic group, which arise in the context of growing cultural and ethnic diversity
- Facilitate schools and teachers in creating an inclusive culture and environment
- Raise awareness within the educational community of issues that arise from increasing linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity in the Mediterranean countries.
- Provide an overview of assessment in an intercultural context.

We also recommend to establish guidelines that outline the characteristics of contemporary good practice in intercultural education.

The curriculum presents a vision for primary education which:
Celebrates the uniqueness of the learner and seeks to nurture the child in all the elements of her or his life—spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical;

- Recognizes that young learners live in and are part of society and that their personal development is deeply affected by their relationships in the home and with other people;

- Recognizes that education not only reflects society but is a key influence in shaping its development;

- Equips people to share in the benefits of society and enables them to contribute effectively to society and to deal with and adjust to the changing nature of knowledge and of society.

The characteristics of intercultural education are based upon the following aims of the curriculum.

These general aims are the basis of more specific aims of primary education, which include enabling the young learner (child) to:

- Come to an understanding of the world through the acquisition of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes and the ability to think critically;

- Develop spiritual, moral and religious values;

- Develop a respect for cultural difference, an appreciation of civic responsibility, and an understanding of the social dimensions of life, past and present;

- Develop skills and understanding in order to study their world and its inhabitants and appreciate the interrelationships between them;

- Develop personally and socially and to relate to others with understanding and respect.

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