

## To what extent is knowledge is a dangerous thing?

Within the context of Christian education, how do we teach our children about the modern world with its many different faiths and practices?

Should we teach them about other religions? How much do they need to know about them? There is a spectrum of opinion on this amongst missionary parents and educators. Some think that the children need to be taught about Christianity to the exclusion of all else, or with at best a cursory glance at other faiths. Others may feel that their children need to understand quite a lot about other faiths, simply for general knowledge.

Some families may be living in a country where another religion is dominant to the point of being almost universal, and where they observe the practical effects of this religion frequently in their interaction with nationals. Others may be in an expat 'bubble' whereby they have relatively little awareness of the beliefs and practices of the local people, and the impact of these on their daily lives. Parents vary in the ways in which they choose to share with their children, and the children's exposure to the local culture depends on many factors, such as the context, the location, or the nature of the parents' work.

How much do they need to know about alternatives to traditional family life, and how should these be portrayed? For example, some families are living in societies where polygamy is the norm, and others where cohabitation is common.

Parents from European or English-speaking countries are aware that their children will one day be expected to adapt to a secular society with its beliefs in equality, diversity and multiculturalism. With this expectation, the children need some information and knowledge to understand the people around them.

This article will seek to address some questions which are especially relevant to missionary families from multicultural sending countries.

### What is meant by the terms 'political correctness' and 'equality and diversity'?

**Political correctness** can be defined as 'the avoidance of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.'  
[https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=what+is+political+correctness&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&qws\\_rd=cr&ei=JpCRVMXWN9LZ7QaD5oGYBA](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=what+is+political+correctness&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&qws_rd=cr&ei=JpCRVMXWN9LZ7QaD5oGYBA)

'**Equality and diversity**' is a twin philosophy embracing the following points:

**Equality** is about 'creating a fairer society, where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential' (UK Department of Health, 2004). An equalities approach understands that who we are, based on social categories such as gender, race, disability, age, social class, sexuality and religion – will impact on our life experiences.

**Diversity** literally means 'difference'. When it is used as a contrast or addition to equality, it is about recognising individual as well as group differences, treating people as individuals, and placing positive value on diversity in the community.

The above information is found at the following web link:

<http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning/diversity-equal-opportunities-and-human-rights/what-is-equality-and-diversity>

### **How has the recent growth of these ideologies made an impact on both the collective consciousness and the everyday lives of people in Western nations?**

The ideas expressed by the term 'equality and diversity' have grown rapidly in importance in Western countries in recent years. For example, in the UK, the Equality Act introduced in October 2010 brought previously fragmented pieces of legislation together into one document. This kind of legislation is typical of Western countries.

All public sector organisations in the UK now have equality and diversity policies in place, and many, such as the Fire and Rescue Service, local councils and colleges of further education employ full time equality and diversity officers. The organisations are required to comply with 'equality duty', the aim of which is to ensure that 'all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equal opportunities for all'. [*Equality Act 2010: Equality Duty – What do I need to know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations*, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85041/equality-duty.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85041/equality-duty.pdf)].

The document referred to above explains the difference between the previous regulations on equality, and the new ones, in force from 2011. The earlier regulations recognised just three categories – age, disability and gender – whereas the new ones include the following.

- Disability
- Gender
- Transgender/Trans-sexual
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and Belief
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

[Source: [http://www.wiltshire.ac.uk/diversity/what\\_is.asp](http://www.wiltshire.ac.uk/diversity/what_is.asp)]

## **What could be the effect of introducing equality and diversity legislation in a post-modern and increasingly secular culture?**

A current example from the UK illustrates this. In September 2014, the UK Department of Education published a new Governors' Handbook, setting out the specific requirements for running schools. One of the new requirements was the promotion of 'British values', described in the handbook as follows:

*Every effort should be made to ensure the school's ethos promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs; and encourage students to respect other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.*

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/352752/Governors\\_Handbook\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/352752/Governors_Handbook_2014.pdf)

Much controversy has been generated over the way in which 'British values' have been interpreted by school inspectors in recent months. The challenges that schools have faced are currently being documented and publicised by two key organisations in the UK, the Christian Institute and the Association of Christian Teachers.

The Association of Christian Teachers predicted some months ago that Christian schools could

*"find themselves 'challenged' and discriminated against for holding and expressing mainstream Christian teaching - especially where it conflicts with the 'spirit of the age' and the current political orthodoxy. This is particularly true in areas of sexual ethics, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the place of other religions. 'Christian-ethos' schools could be at particular risk."*

<http://us2.campaign-archive1.com/?u=bed173cc9adfcad1e0e442a35&id=2275c8c5ab&e=37650bbf20>

A recent article on the current situation may be found on the Christian Institute website at

<http://www.christian.org.uk/news/ofsted-taking-intolerant-approach-to-british-values/>

## **How should Christians address the issues arising from the emphasis on equality and diversity?**

There are many helpful and well written articles available on this subject. We recommend the one found at the following web link, and summarised below:

<https://bible.org/seriespage/christ-and-cultures-multiculturalism-and-gospel-christ>

### **A summary (including direct quotations from the author, Dr. Kenneth Boa - with permission)**

The belief in Jesus Christ as the only way to God is often viewed as arrogant and intolerant. Multiculturalism, now viewed as ideal in the West, took root in the 1960's. The multicultural reality has been enhanced by the increased ethnic and religious diversity of Western society. It is often thought of as an ideal goal for society. Within this, there are two traps to be avoided. First, polyculturalism, the idea that all cultures are equally valid, and there is

therefore no need to learn from one another. Second, monoculturalism, or the idea that only one culture is valid.

Christians should see in the call for a multicultural ideal a real opportunity to present the claim of Christ to all people. Jesus was a Jewish rabbi, remarkable in all that he said and did. Christ is the reconciler of cultures, the redeemer of cultures and the ruler of cultures. He offers forgiveness, healing and cleansing to people of all cultures. The claim of Christ's universal authority over all cultures is undoubtedly the most troubling and "politically incorrect" aspect of the Christian faith, but it is non-negotiable. Jesus is the one religious figure in history that cannot be ignored.

### **Some ideas for those seeking to educate children and young people from Christian families about other religions and worldviews**

Design your own religious education course, based on your own reading and research.

The following ideas are more suited to older children aged 11 plus.

- Study the Scriptures to discover how other religions are viewed. Look at the idolatry of the Old Testament and the practices of the nations surrounding Israel. How did God view these religions? For the nation of Israel, what were the consequences of combining the worship of Yahweh with other religions, or even abandoning God altogether? What happened to the nations of Israel and Judah politically and why? What happened economically and socially?
- Then study the political, social and economic consequences of the religion of the host country where you are living..
- Study the references to other religions in the New Testament. Look at key passages such as Acts 17:16-34, where Paul addresses worshippers in Athens. What is the effect of following Jesus Christ rather than serving idols?
- Teach about the historical evidence for Jesus and for the reliability of the Scriptures. Compare the New Testament Gospels with the ones that were rejected, such as the gospel of Barnabas, the gospel of Mary and the gospel of Philip. The texts of these can be found by searching online. Consider how it is decided whether a religious text is historically reliable or not. The following books are very helpful:

Bruce, F. F., *The New Testament documents - are they reliable?* 5th ed., CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011

McDowell, Josh, *Evidence that demands a verdict*, Authentic Lifestyle, revised edition, 1999.

### **More recommended reading:**

GCSE *religious studies revision guide*, at the following web link:  
[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Religious-Studies-Revision-Guide-online/dp/184762300X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1418912849&sr=1-1&key](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Religious-Studies-Revision-Guide-online/dp/184762300X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1418912849&sr=1-1&key)

It is possible to look inside the book, and so gain an overview of the course and the ideas expressed within it.

Gumbel, Nicky, *What about other religions?*, Kingsway, 2nd edition, 1999  
(This is a small pamphlet)

Noebel David, *The Battle for Truth*, Harvest House, 2001  
Compares Christianity with secularism, Marxism and New Age philosophies.

Richardson, Don, *Eternity in their hearts*, Regal Books, 3rd edition, 2005

Ridenour, Fritz, *So what's the difference? How the world's faiths compare to Christianity*, Regal Books, 2nd revised edition, 2007

Zacharias R, *Why Jesus? Rediscovering His Truth in an Age of Mass Marketed Spirituality*, Faithwords, 2012

### **Related issues**

There is insufficient space in this edition of *Educare* to address the related issue of different explanations for the origin of the universe, but this will be considered in a later edition.

### **Your comments**

Feedback, comments and questions regarding this article are warmly invited.

Gill Bryant, December 2014

## Multilingualism - how it works for the King Family

### **1. Give a brief snapshot of your family's language dynamics and your family's language policy (what language(s) do you speak, who speaks what with whom?).**

We are a family of four: Ommah (me), Abbah (my hubby), H (4 year-old rambunctious son) and Y (2 year-old I-want-everything-my-way-daughter). I am Korean but Hong Kong is where home is and my husband is a gravy biscuit eatin' white Southern boy from the U.S. My hubby and I speak English with one another, I speak Korean with the children and they speak mostly in English with their abbah (means "dad" in Korean. That's what the kids call him). We live in China, so when we are in the local community, we use Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua). It is not uncommon, however, to catch us using a mixture of all three languages in any given sentence!

### **2. What prompted your decision to raise your children bi-/multilingually?**

There are multiple reasons why we decided to be intentional about raising our children to speak in Korean, English and Chinese. First, we would like for our children to enjoy having a relationship with their family members on both sides. My hubby is from the U.S, so naturally English was a no-brainer. Our children would be learning one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, plus, be able to communicate with their grandma (even if it is in a Southern accent!). My family is for the most part in Korea, so it was imperative to me that my parents would be able to have fun with their grandchildren. I don't doubt that a lot of loving can happen without the exchange of many words, but it sure is much easier and more enjoyable when everyone can freely speak the same language.

At home, we are primarily focusing on Korean and English, because these are the two "heart" languages that are spoken in our family. Seeing that we are a blend of American and Korean, I desire for my children to be comfortable and confident in both cultures and learning the language is imperative for this to happen. In turn, I am hoping that their confidence in conversing in these two languages will result in them feeling firm and secure in their ethnic identities.

The one regret I have (apart from never practicing the piano) is not having learned Cantonese during the 18 years I lived in Hong Kong growing up. My family moved from Korea to Hong Kong when I was a year old and I grew up there until I went to the U.S. for university, yet, embarrassingly, my proficiency never extended beyond a few essential phrases such as, "Where is the bathroom?", "I don't understand." or "I would like har gow and shiu mai please with a lot of chili sauce on the side." My hope is that my children will be a lot more proficient than me in conversing in Chinese, not only because it is spoken by more than 20% of the world and is becoming an important language to learn, but more so because I would like for my children to become acculturated into the host country in which we live.

### **3. What positive growth or results have you witnessed in your children/family because of their multilingualism?**

Hands down, the best thing has been their ability to make friends and form a sense of belonging and community in all our "home" countries. In our neighborhood playground, H and Y love playing with their Chinese buddies and have also received a lot of love from the local yeyes (grandfathers) and nainais (grandmothers). When you're a cute toddler, it doesn't matter much whether you can speak, but once you get to pre-school age, being able to speak the "sandlot" language makes a huge difference in that process of socialization. We were in Korea for one month this summer and now we are currently in the U.S. for a short period of time, and I've been pleased with how effortlessly my children have made friends in all three countries, using the host language in each place.

#### **4. What challenges have you faced or are you facing with language rearing and learning? How do you handle them?**

My son, H, spent the last 3 years in China. He attended a Chinese pre-school for 2 mornings/week and an English pre-school for 3 mornings/week. He attended a Korean Sunday School and played almost every day with both Chinese-speaking and Korean-speaking friends in the afternoons in our apartment complex. Needless to say, we had a pretty rich and ideal natural learning environment for all three languages. Well, for the past three months, we have been back in the U.S. and as expected, the children's English vocabulary has increased at a faster rate than the other two languages. In fact, H, started pre-school here 5 mornings/week and he has started speaking to me in English, which is a first. I must admit that I feel as though I am watching all my efforts of exposing my kids to Korean and Chinese go down the drain very quickly! Unfortunately, we are currently living in a small town with non-existent Korean or Chinese community (I literally double the Asian population when I am here), so the pressure is on me. OK, so here is my game plan for now:

- Continue to converse only in Korean with my children. If they speak to me in English, I politely say in Korean "would you repeat that in Korean?". Stay firm and consistent.
- When H mixes in English vocabulary, repeat those words in Korean when I respond to him so that he can learn what it is in both languages.
- Don't get angry or too "teacher-like" (something I am often guilty of) but just weave it naturally into conversation.
- Spend two to three afternoons (while little sister is taking a nap) for about 30 minutes each time, working through our Korean alphabet workbooks, which I brought with me from Korea. They are a ton of fun and H seems to be enjoying it.
- Read, read and read in books from all three languages (My Chinese is not good enough for my four year-old now. Sigh)
- Make a concerted effort to limit screen-time and music listening to Korean language programs and songs. This is so easy to do now with the Internet.
- Encourage my hubby to use the Korean he knows with the kids.
- Make an effort to speak Chinese as a family now and then. I must admit that we are not doing this as much knowing that we will move back to China in a few months.

#### **6. Share a memorable moment you and your family experienced with language learning, something that shed light or taught you a lesson about bi-/multilingual parenting.**

When we first got to the U.S. this summer, our 18 year-old nephew, wanting to hear H speak some Korean, asked him, "Hey H, how do you say water?" Without skipping a beat, H looked up and asked with all seriousness, "In which language?" This tickled us adults and this story was repeated several times in the company of other friends and family. Although cute and funny, this prompted me to realize that often times, our children can unconsciously become arrogant about being multilingual, especially as older people "ooh" and "aah" over their skills. My kids are a little bit too young to have this consciousness yet, but I want to be sensitive to this and teach my children that their ability to speak multiple languages does not make them better than anyone, but is a gift and a skill that God has enabled them to have to use for good.

#### **7. How do you involve your family, community, school and/or world at large in this multilingual adventure?**

Exposing your children to other people in a particular language is so important because this reinforces their language learning and also increases the child's scope of vocabulary in ways that you could not imagine.

OK, so my mother has been really great with the kids. We Skype with her about 2-3 times a week for at least 30 minutes at a time. In fact, she goes to her local library in Korea and checks out books to read to them. She holds the book up to the screen so they can see the pictures and keeps them captivated. Recently, she started doing flashcards over Skype with H to help him learn the Korean alphabet. Despite being geographically far apart, my mother plays a key and active role in my children's language development.

### **8. What advice or encouragement can you share with other families raising their children bi-/multilingually?**

The earlier the better. A common question I get from adults is "do your children ever get confused?" If they were adults, that would be a fair question, but for children, this is a non-issue. Start them when they are in your womb or at whatever age your child is right now. If you are entertaining the idea of teaching your child another language, do it now!

Be intentional. Yes, language learning is very natural and children soak it up like a sponge, but for language development and true proficiency to occur (in reading, writing and speaking), parents need to be very intentional about either using/teaching the language or making sure the child is getting the right exposure, especially as the child gets older. For us, English is our dominant family language (and the strongest language for both me and hubby) so it requires less effort to teach our children English. So this means I need to be intentional about getting my children exposed to Korean and Chinese. This has meant doing things like speaking to my children consistently in Korean (even when I don't want to), making that extra trip to Korean church, researching around for a Chinese pre-school and making play dates with our Chinese and Korean buddies and not just our English speaking ones. Simply put, it takes sacrifice and work.

Don't give up! There were many times when I wanted to quit going to Korean School every Saturday as a youth, but I am so grateful my parents didn't give in to my whinging. Instead, they gently, yet firmly, encouraged me to press on. The result has not only been an ability to speak another language, but an ability to develop a real deep friendship with my parents and other Korean people, which would not have happened otherwise (plus watching and understanding my Korean soaps is another perk! There will be times, especially during those tween and teen years when you just want to throw in the towel. Assess what your goals are and why you have them. If they are worth the fight, then press on and don't give into the path of least resistance. I promise you it'll be worth it. Let's press on together!

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