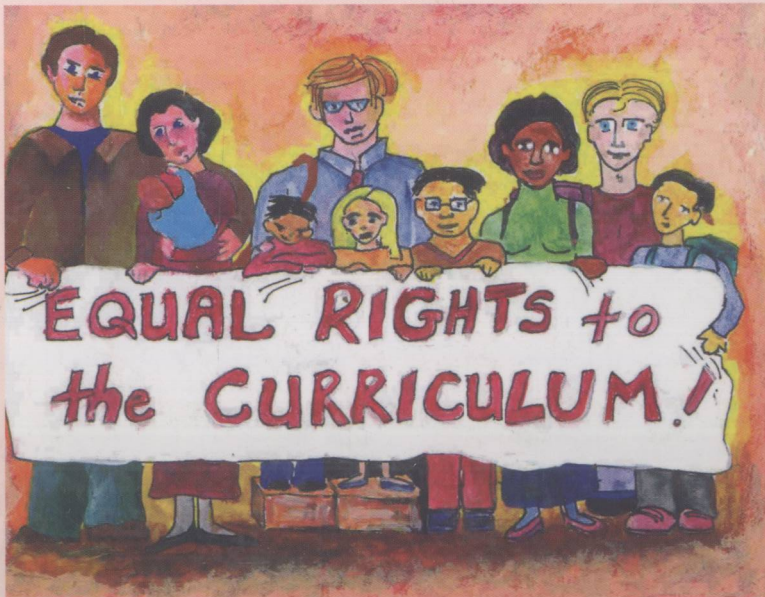


Eithne Gallagher

Equal Rights to the Curriculum

**Many Languages,
One Message**



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PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' GUIDES 10

Series Editor. Colin Baker

Equal Rights to the Curriculum Many Languages, One Message

Eithne Gallagher



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Foreword

Equal Rights to the Curriculum: Many Languages, One Message is all about transforming knowledge into action. It provides parents with the research-based information necessary to envision their children's full potential as human beings – who they can become and what they are capable of achieving – together with the tools to collaborate on an equal basis with their children's teachers to bring this vision closer to realisation. Likewise, for educators, this book opens up identity spaces – it provides an opportunity to reflect on the kinds of interactions we orchestrate in our classrooms, the messages we convey to students about their past and their future, and the extent to which we are expanding rather than constricting our students' identity options. It challenges us to rethink why we have become educators and what we are capable of achieving as educators. Eithne Gallagher invites us to reclaim agency – the power to act – in our professional lives, by advocating for the kinds of change that will transform our schools into everything implied by the term *international* – environments that promote vigorous intellectual inquiry and that cultivate equitable and respectful communication across languages, cultures and religions.

This book is also about *authority*. The noun gives rise to two very different adjectives – *authoritarian* and *authoritative*. We use the term 'authoritarian' to describe leaders who demand obedience and submission regardless of the veracity or legitimacy of their decisions; policy and practice are determined by ideology – preformed ideas – rather than by research; this style of leadership has little use for dialogue and collaboration. The term 'authoritative', on the other hand, refers to individuals whose perspectives or claims generate respect because they are the result of thoughtful inquiry and are backed up by convincing evidence. The pages of human history, as well as the history of educational institutions, are filled with examples of both kinds of leadership. A central message in *Equal Rights to the Curriculum* is that educators have the opportunity and ethical responsibility to become authoritative in their area of expertise – teaching. We shape the intellectual and social futures of the children in our classrooms – we need to know what we are doing. Collaboratively with our colleagues we need to expand our expertise so that we become confident and competent in teaching students who are learning the school language and whose cultural experiences may be very different from our own.

This book provides a wealth of research-based information about what is good for children in International Schools. It wraps this information around the lives and experiences of administrators, teachers, parents and children who are interacting on a daily basis in schools around the world. We emerge from the pages of this book armed with authoritative knowledge, inspired by the insight that education is an act of imagination that we can, and must, influence, and empowered to take action to change

mindsets and organisational structures that limit children's academic and intellectual development. As Eithne Gallagher reminds us, part of our ethical responsibility as educators is to challenge misinformed leaders whose decisions are authoritarian rather than authoritative. As parents, we are also in a position to challenge teachers who may be misinformed about what is good for our children.

We have all been misinformed at various times as parents, teachers and educational leaders. In an era of rapidly changing educational realities that reflect our mutating societies, no one has all the answers. But all of us can search for better information and for more effective teaching strategies to achieve our educational goals. Authoritarian leadership, or teaching, or parenting, is the refusal to become a learner. In the context of both International Schools and public schools serving increasingly diverse students and communities, authoritarian leaders demand conformity to past traditions of linguistic and cultural privilege. They also refuse to imagine alternative social orders based on equity of language and culture and acknowledgement of diversity as a crucial global resource.

The limitations of authoritarian styles of leadership are becoming increasingly clear. Fortunately, a major shift in perspective is taking place within the International Schools community. There is increasing recognition that students for whom English is a second (or third) language (ESL) are the norm and that these students do not suffer from intrinsic deficits by virtue of the fact that English is not their home language. For many years, policy and practice in International Schools was as likely to position students' multilingualism as a deficit rather than an asset.

International Schools are the scouting parties of educational globalisation. At a time when population mobility and cross-cultural contact are at an all-time high in human history, International Schools are in the vanguard of exploring uncharted territory. Education as a societal institution was originally established to reinforce conformity among homogeneous populations and to promote homogeneity among diverse populations. It is no exaggeration to say that human survival may depend on how successfully we can navigate to a new educational paradigm. Resolution of urgent ecological challenges and mediation of global conflicts require cooperation rather than competition, respect rather than disdain, and the exercise of imaginative intellect rather than conventional thinking.

Many English-medium International Schools are beginning to move away from unquestioned use of English as the only legitimate language of instruction and interaction within the school. Gradually, other languages are being acknowledged as important cognitive tools, as crucial channels of communication within the family, and as resources for communication and cooperation within our global community. However, for many schools this journey is just beginning and some have not even realised the dysfunctional and discriminatory nature of 'education as usual'.

Eithne Gallagher's book has the potential to jumpstart this process. It maps the landscape and invites dialogue about how best to proceed. Different schools will, and should, pursue different directions. This is intrinsic to teacher agency. The choices we make are infused with challenge, opportunity and responsibility. Some schools will

place more emphasis on exploring transformative pedagogies – enabling students to see themselves as change agents who are capable of influencing the negotiation and distribution of power in their worlds; others will encourage students to use their home languages as cognitive tools and support them in transferring concepts and learning strategies across languages – what Eithne Gallagher calls *interlingual teaching*. Still others will focus on instilling an international orientation across the curriculum where mathematics, science, literature and social studies draw from a global knowledge base rather than privileging only Western orientations to knowledge. Clearly, all of these pedagogical directions will reinforce each other.

Hopefully, educators within International Schools will document these initiatives so that they will illuminate new possibilities for addressing linguistic and cultural diversity within the public education systems in many countries. Diversity is still perceived all too often as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. The classroom examples presented in this book illustrate vividly the opportunities for intellectual enrichment that open up when we welcome children's cultural experiences, and the languages in which these experiences are encoded, into the instructional space.

As I read Eithne Gallagher's book, it rekindled a memory from almost 30 years ago. I remember listening to Mary Ashworth's closing address to the Ontario Teachers of English as a Second Language conference in Toronto in the late 1970s. Mary, an iconic figure and perhaps the most influential pioneer of ESL in Canada, drew our attention to the fact that many second generation newcomer children came to school bilingual, or soon-to-be-bilingual, but left school 12 years later essentially monolingual in English, having lost their fluency in their home languages. She pointed out that when schools were complicit in this process, either through hostility towards or benign neglect of children's home languages, they negated the core meaning of the term *education*, which refers to the process of nourishing talents and expanding potential. Eithne Gallagher likewise invites us to nourish students' talents, including their multilingual talents, and to expand their potential to act effectively and powerfully in their personal lives and on the global stage.

Jim Cummins
Toronto
January 2008

Introduction

In writing this book I had two main audiences in mind, parents and educators:

- Parents of second language children, parents of bilingual children and parents who have children in the many International Schools around the world.
- Educators: ESL teachers, mainstream teachers and administrators who work in International Education.

The book provides an introductory text for those interested in learning about the world of International Education and the important role that second language plays within it. However, the text is not restricted only to the world of privately run International Schools. Schools in every part of our globe are becoming international through necessity as they awaken to the reality of having to deal with culturally diverse children. This book therefore aims to contribute to the skills and understanding of teacher trainers, teachers, administrators and policy makers whose concern is to provide for the educational needs of *all* children growing up in a multicultural society. The book will also be of value to parents who need to choose the right school for their children.

The book is divided up into six chapters:

- Chapters 1 and 2 focus on second language research and theory, respectively, whilst also considering the links between language, power and social justice.
- Chapter 3 deals with the issue of transition and discusses the impact of mobility on children's education.
- Chapter 4 raises the important issue of parental involvement.
- Chapter 5 introduces the concept of interlingual classrooms and ways of promoting the many languages of schools are outlined.
- Chapter 6 was written primarily with parents in mind, the goal being to help them choose the right school for their child. However, it is equally useful for administrators and teachers who want to review policy and practice.

As a female writer I have chosen to refer to the second language child as she and her so as to avoid the cumbersome repetition of he/she, him/her throughout the text. A detailed Glossary is provided at the end of the book.

There are many terms used for describing the second language student, I have chosen the term 'ESL student' (English as a Second Language student) as this is the term most commonly used in International Education in English-medium schools. There are several case histories throughout the text. They are illustrative rather than research evidence and have been used to introduce discussions on theory and practice.

The idea for this book came to me after I had organised the ECIS ESL & MT conference in Rome in 2005. The conference theme was *Many Languages, One Message: Equal Rights to the Curriculum* and it addressed many of the issues covered in this book. The conference was a success and it made me realise that more had to be done to make the theme a reality in all schools. As so often happens at conferences, ideas are aired and suggestions to move forward are made and then teachers go back to their respective schools and nothing happens, nothing changes.

I decided to write a book hoping that it would provoke change in schools. My initial intention was to inform parents so they could be the instigators of reform but it is parents working together with administrators and teachers that will ultimately bring about the change needed so that all children will have what they deserve: equal rights to the curriculum.

My hope is that this book will make a contribution to such reform.

Eithne Gallagher
Rome, 2008

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Chapter 1

Hidden and Overt Power Structures in International Schools

Introduction

English is the medium of instruction in the vast majority of International Schools. Many of these schools have developed and grown out of what were once Overseas Schools, i.e. schools set up after the Second World War to cater for the children of businessmen from English speaking countries such as America, Canada and the United Kingdom. Many of the schools developed because of the huge resurgence of trade that brought Americans in great numbers to Europe. The curriculum used in these schools was based on various national curricula, the rationale being that children would eventually return from overseas and need to fit back into the curriculum used in their homelands.

The population of such schools is now made up largely of second language learners many of whom have never lived in America or Great Britain, nor do they plan to do so in the future. Yet many International Schools today still follow national curricula, usually American or British.

In this chapter the idea that notions and beliefs often intrinsic to national systems of education have found their way into International Education is considered. How this affects the choice of curriculum and school policies is also discussed. The main aims of this chapter are to look at:

- power structures in schools and how they may affect the ESL child;
- pedagogical choices and how they affect the second language learner;
- various programmes from the perspective of second language learners.

All of the above is discussed in the light of recent research on language acquisition.

Research and Theory

ESL teachers in International Schools have relied on theory and research related to national systems in America, Australia, Canada and Great Britain to inform them on effective teaching and planning strategies for second language learners. However, the research in national systems (e.g. Collier & Thomas, 1997) is applicable if we bear in mind three important differences:

- (1) Many International Schools are not in Anglophone countries, this means that many International School children may be exposed to the language at home (maybe more than one), English at school, plus the host country language.

- (2) Most International School children come from a relatively high socio-economic background. This suggests that these children may have access to more academic materials in the home. It is important to remember though that in the research carried out by Collier and Thomas (1997) the amount of formal schooling in the L1 (mother-tongue language) that students have received is the strongest predictor of how rapidly students will catch up in the L2 (English). This factor is a stronger predictor than socio-economic status or the extent to which the parents may or may not speak English.
- (3) Second language learners in International Schools move to a different location and encounter a new language every three years on average. In a study involving 15 International Schools, Edna Murphy found that children moved an average of 2.2 times before the age of six.

The research and theory included in the next two chapters has been produced by world authorities in the fields of language acquisition, bilingualism, applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, social linguistics and sociology. Many of the researchers mentioned have spoken at International School conferences and ESL & MT conferences. Several have visited International Schools. These researchers and theorists have been chosen because, although their research and theory is based on national systems, they know International Schools well. They have also been chosen because they are known for not staying in the ivory towers of their universities, but rather for being present in classrooms, talking with teachers and students. They have linked their research and theory to practice therefore, as Cummins says, 'they respond to issues and concerns articulated by educators' (2004: 2).

Bilingualism is cross-disciplinary, being studied in linguistics, sociology, psychology and it is also studied in relationship to power and status structures and political structures in society. Bilingualism and bilingual education cannot be understood unless connected to basic philosophies and politics in society. For more on this see Baker (2003). One of the overriding aims of International Education should be to promote *Additive Bilingualism*, that is the adding on of a second language without detracting from the maintenance or development of the first language. Cummins (2004) cites more than 150 empirical studies carried out over the past 30 years that have reported a positive association between bilingualism and students' linguistic, cognitive or academic growth.

Large scale research on second language learning is long overdue in International Education. None has been done to date.

Politics in ESL

The decision about how to teach second language children in International Education can be very political. When a school administrator makes a statement such as, 'We are an International School not a bilingual one', this is a politically loaded affirmation. Another example is, 'English only please'. Statements such as these are not based on purely educational preferences. These speakers may have bought into