

UWC Congress October 2016 – Welcome Address

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you here to this morning's workshop on 'Living Deliberate Diversity: Inclusion and UWC Education'.

At the last Heads' Meeting in Southern Africa, I came away from the meeting accidentally as one of two Heads put in charge of designing the Education Stream for the UWC Congress.

We were commissioned to set the workshops delivered by the Colleges around the UWC Educational Model with the aims of raising awareness of the model and also introducing how the UWC Schools and Colleges interpret and deliver it.

One distinct advantage as one of the architects of the Education Stream was that I was able to recommend that the Waterford and RCN delegations were put together to deliver a workshop on 'deliberate diversity' and to discuss and challenge our approaches to diversity and inclusion on our campuses.

Indeed I started my UWC career at Waterford: I was fortunate enough to spend four months there on a teaching exchange in early 2009. As I discovered and as its name translates from SiSwati, Waterford is 'a world in miniature' with the UWC's philosophy running powerfully through it, offering a deliberately diverse body of students (and staff) remarkable, illuminating and life-changing experiences.

Perhaps one of the highlights of my time as an English teacher was when two Ethiopians and an Italian gave a joint presentation on the Abyssinian Wars of the 1890s and 1930s – in which the Ethiopians, with limited weaponry, proudly defeated and expelled the Italians, with all their colonial hopes and aspirations – joint project planning and delivery in a UWC classroom in Swaziland with shared perspectives and understanding.

The shared experiences and conversations between cultures is, I believe, part of the magic of a UWC education.

UWC Red Cross Nordic, of which I am Rektor, is itself a unique college within the UWC movement with its Nordic heritage, humanitarian understanding and environmental vision. We take great pride in inclusion – and encourage all on campus to value those around us and to celebrate and support all our differences and recognise the resourcefulness in all. The principles and values of the Red Cross are at the heart of all that we do.

So two sister schools within the UWC community – Waterford with 600 students aged 11-19 from over 50 different countries and RCN with 215 students aged 16-19 from over 90 countries...

...and in very different places:

the most northerly to the most southerly of the UWCs; same time zone; mountainous regions; Norway with 25,000 kilometres of coast line and Swaziland landlocked; both countries with very

different forms of monarchy; according to the Social Progress Index of 2016 measuring basic human needs and opportunity, one country ranks seventh in the world and the other 106th; one has one of the largest Sovereign Wealth Funds and the other has the highest HIV prevalence in the world, with 27% of its population living with HIV.

30% of RCN's student population comes from the Nordic region with 80% of Waterford's coming from the African continent.

Contrasting contexts but with the same mission to strive to make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.

At UWCs – and with special reference to Waterford and RCN for today's session - we believe in the integrity of difference and strive to provide education for a deliberately diverse community - expressed in terms of geopolitical, cultural, gender and socio-economic diversity. Our distinctiveness is established at the very heart of our Educational Model: we strive to be a 'deliberately diverse, engaged and motivated community in pursuit of the UWC mission'.

A breakthrough moment in the design of the educational model by the Heads was when the definition at the core of the model was changed from 'students' to 'community' – thereby embracing not only the students but the staff committed to delivering this unique educational model.

We are rightly proud of our diverse communities and we champion deliberate diversity – and celebrate difference.

We have been commissioned in this session to produce a stimulating, thought-provoking and challenging session for all participants.

Our plan is for two short presentations on how we seek - on our different campuses - to promote inclusion:

Waterford's introduction to Africa Week and other projects;

RCN's introduction to its Survivors of Conflict Programme with a focus on inclusion of UWC students with disabilities.

And we shall follow this with panel discussion facilitated by Sven Mollekleiv, President of the Norwegian Red Cross:

With deliberate diversity undoubtedly comes real responsibility for UWC. We intentionally bring students together from across the world – and seek to support them as they face a set of challenges including relocation from their home contexts, language acquisition, a rigorous academic programme, and much, much more.

Sven – along with his panellists – shall explore how deliberate diversity and inclusion are central to life on our two campuses, the associated challenges and sensitivities, the undoubted complexities, and how UWC needs to evolve its approaches and relevance in a changing world.

Are our staff bodies diverse enough? How should we embrace gender diversity? Do we provide enough diversity in terms of options / pathways for tertiary education? How do our local contexts sometimes constrain our commitment to diversity? Do we have the protection measures in place for organisations like UNHCR to enter in partnership with us to provide a greater number of places for students from refugee backgrounds? Are we inclusive enough?

‘Deliberate diversity’ can touch our insides at so many different levels - *diversity* reaches towards the roots of our sense of human/spiritual selves – but the alliterative ring of it must not detract from the huge social and psychological challenge that it presents, especially balanced with students eager to win academic passports to success.

Turning back in time to the 1960s, Waterford was one of Africa’s first multiracial schools, established in expressed opposition to the South African Apartheid regime and its laws of racial segregation. Michael Stern, the founding Principal’s initial deliberately diverse intake of 16 boys plus staff was denounced by local and international observers as ‘sick’ and ‘unnatural’.

Waterford rose as a phoenix from the ashes of apartheid.

In 1967 His Majesty King Sobhuza II, Ingwenyama of Swaziland, granted Waterford the title *kamhlaba*: “We are all of the earth, which does not see differences of colour, religion or race. We are ‘*kamhlaba*’ – all of one world.”

UWC needs to continue to move with the times and to the challenges ahead.

We need to challenge our current practice and make space for disruptive thinking in terms of deliberate diversity – and we certainly should not allow the demons of complacency to creep in.

It is a privilege for the RCN delegation to co-present this presentation alongside our counterparts from Waterford Kamhlaba, given our sister school’s history of and commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Richard D A Lamont
Rektor
UWC Red Cross Nordic
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