

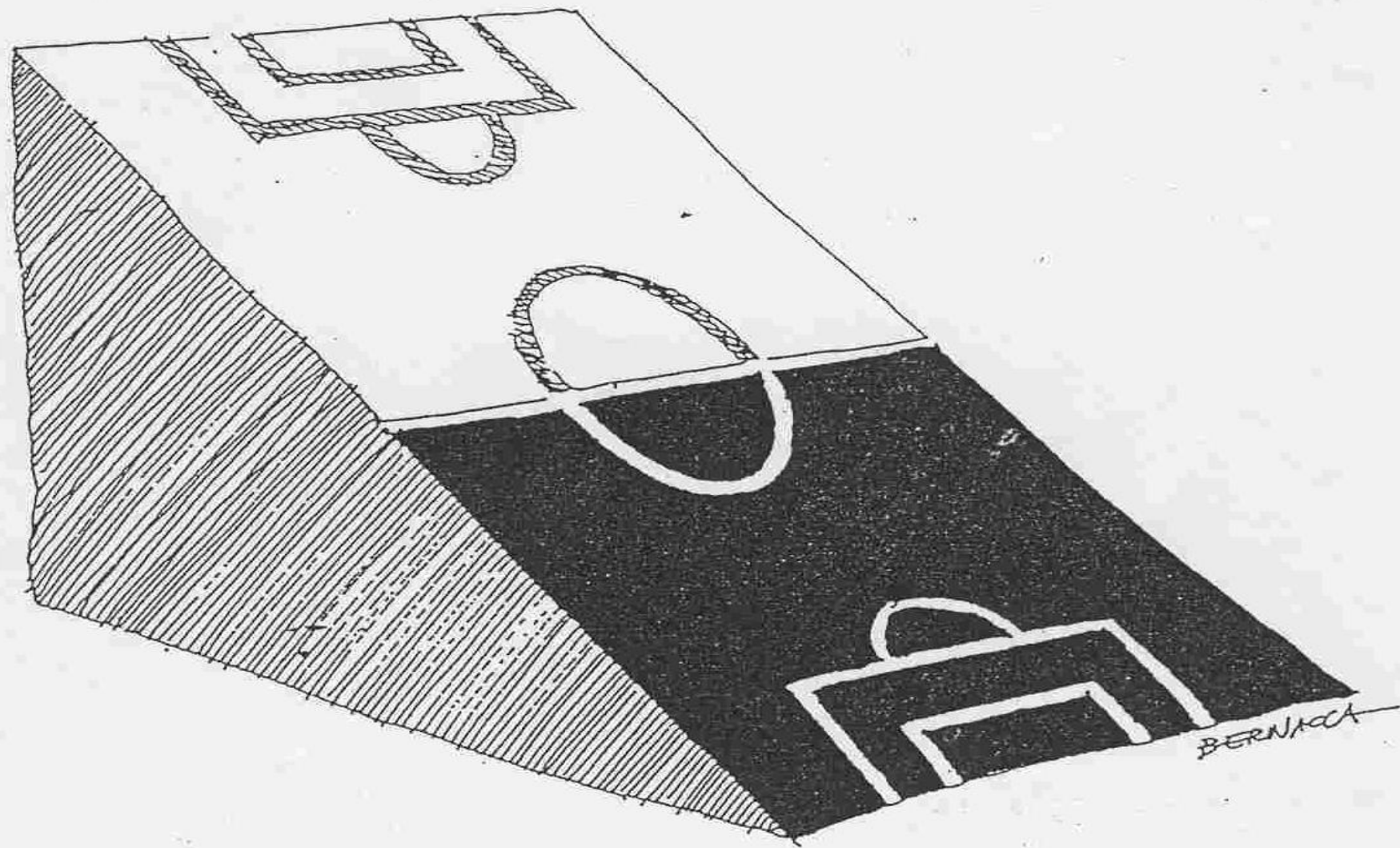
Citizenship: a new ethic for the 21^o Century - The Contribution of *eTwinning*

Workshop on:
Addressing discrimination and racism in schools

Florence, 21- 23 September 2016

A terminological premise

- The use of the word 'racial' throughout this presentation does not in any way imply the acceptance on my part of any ideas or theory based on the existence of different human races. Such use is in line with the language used in EU legislation on the subject of discrimination, which I will be discussing shortly.
- The derived word 'racial' is used here to discuss 'race' as a social construct and not as a biological concept.
- Tolerance is used here to refer to respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of the world's cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human. It is not concession, condescension or indulgence, but an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others.



Introduction – understanding discrimination

- This football field on a slope offers an illustration at first glance of the topic this workshop will be dealing with in the course of this conference – discrimination, racism and related intolerances. We find both in most countries though the group(s) affected may be different. In all cases, they constitute a violation of human rights and an impediment to the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms by those directly affected.
- Schools and the educational community in general are part of society and as such, are affected by discrimination which damages not only the victims but also the entire educational community.
- Different categories of people are discriminated for different reasons or on different grounds. What is discrimination then?

Discrimination as systemic disadvantage

- Experiencing a discrimination is like playing a football match uphill while the rival team plays downhill. The peculiar aspect of the football field on a slope is not the inclination but an important rule of the game:
 - a normal football match lasts for 90 minutes and the teams change sides at half time.
 - In the case illustrated above, the entire game is played from the same side and for some players, 90 minutes mean their entire lifetime.
 - Consider the case where the downhill is coloured in pink and uphill in blue. The daily match between these two teams, we all know, goes on for an entire lifetime.

Definition of Racial discrimination

- Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

- The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination [ICERD],
Article 1

Concept of discrimination

- direct discrimination shall be taken to occur where one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of racial or ethnic origin;
- indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Concept of discrimination

- Harassment (racial) is any unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin (*by extension, to any other ground of discrimination*) which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment is deemed as discrimination within the meaning of the definitions of direct and indirect discrimination above.
- COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin

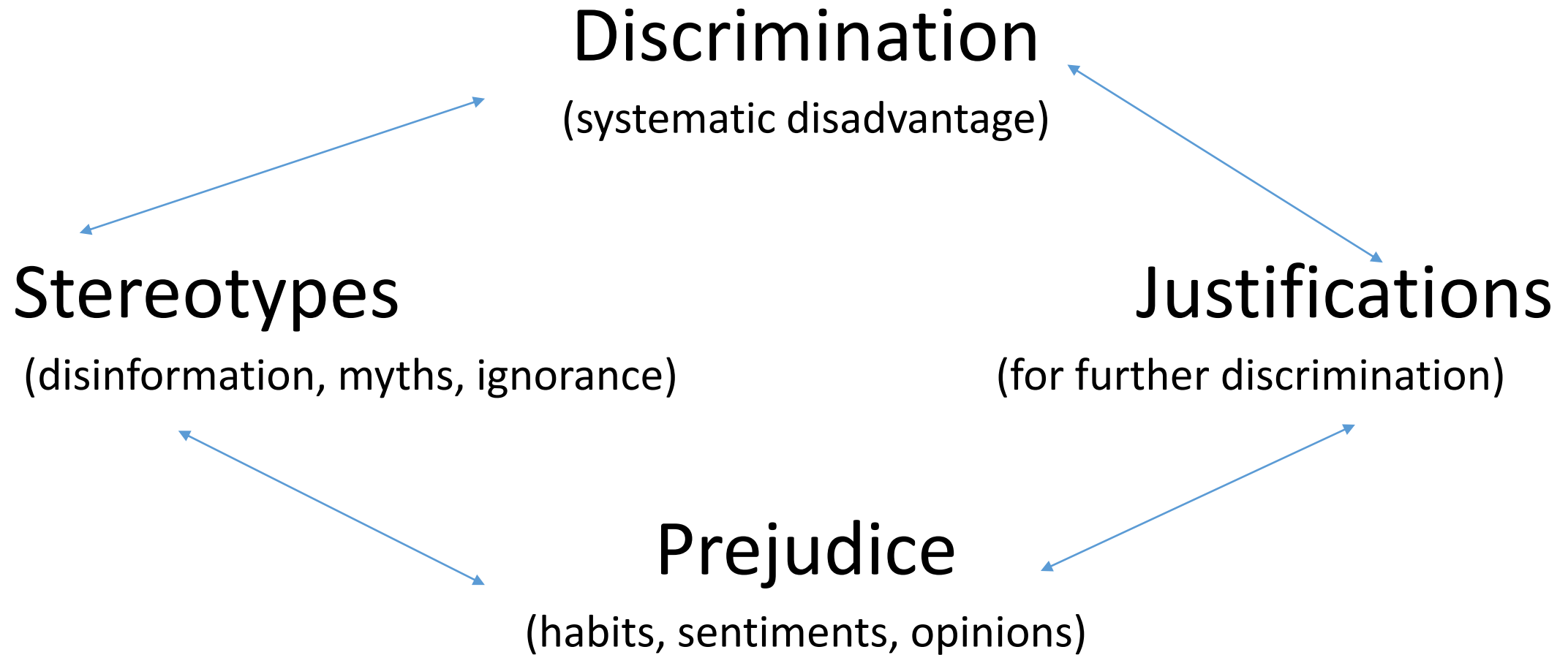
Institutional discrimination

- The collective failure of an organisation to be fully representative in every respect of the community it serves because of the 'racial' or ethnic origin, the religion or belief, disability or the sexual orientation of members of that community.
- It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which disadvantage members of the community.
- It may occur in the failure to provide an appropriate and professional service to all members of the public, in a failure to ensure equality of opportunity to an organisation's employees or to the employees of a sub-contracted organisation.
- The failure of institutional procedures to detect or act upon discrimination can be seen as an indicator of institutional discrimination.

Racism – a definition

- Any attitude, behaviour or model – be it political, cultural, economic, social etc. – which, irrespective of the intention, has the effect of creating and / or maintaining power, influence and well-being of a “*racial*” group to the detriment of another “*racial*” group.
- A “*racial*” group is any group defined by reference to colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin.
- Racism is a much broader concept than racial discrimination; it ranges from the use of racial prejudice e stereotypes to genocide, passing through, among others, racial discrimination, verbal and physical violence etc.

Circle of discrimination



Discrimination in schools

- Who is affected by discrimination in the educational context and on what grounds?
 - Students**
 - Teachers**
 - Non-teaching staff including members of the school management
 - Contractors
- Grounds of discrimination include:
 - Racial or ethnic origin, nationality
 - Having an immigrant background
 - Religion or belief
 - Disability
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
 - Age

Discrimination in schools

- A ground of discrimination may be real in the sense that the victimised self-identifies as belonging to the given group, but it could also be presumed by the actor who, in any case, decides in which category to place the victim.
- It is not rare in some countries that some people get discriminated because they are presumed to belong to a group to which they do not belong, e.g., considering brown skin as indicative of being a Muslim or, treating a Sikh as a Muslim because the person wears a turban.
- Discrimination targets individuals because they belong to one or more groups. Categorising people is a necessary component of discrimination (*“categorisation is full of knowledge as well as oppression”* – Etienne Balibar)

Recognising discrimination

- Discrimination as a power relation; power is required in order to discriminate (certain types of discrimination can be simply defined as 'prejudice + power to transform the former into action').
 - ✓ Cultural power such as the power to offend others. Some minority group members may have prejudice against some majority group members but this does not translate into discrimination unless they acquire the necessary power to do so.
- Multiple discrimination and intersectionality of grounds of discrimination (nationality, religion and sex etc.)
 - ✓ The effect of each component reinforces the others, making it far more pernicious than being discriminated on a single ground

Examples of discrimination

- Offensive graffiti
- Damaging personal property
- Making fun or jokes about others' languages, clothes, habits etc.
- Stereotyping people from different cultural or linguistic groups (name-calling)
- Telling people to 'go back to where they came from'
- Leaving out students from targeted groups during class activities
- Not valuing and encouraging some students as much as others, on grounds of their belonging

Examples of discrimination / racism

- Expecting different performances based on belonging
- Educational orientation based on presumed group characteristics
- Not respecting people's different religious beliefs
- Bullying – cyber-bullying
- Hate speech in the age of total digital communication;
 - freedom of expression and right to dignity(?)
- Outright aggression on the playground, in moments of low supervision – entry and exit from school; during group work etc.
- Making fun of a victim's name or accent
- Refusing to sit next to or work or play with someone because of his/her belonging

Recognising discrimination

- Impact of discrimination on its victims:
 - Isolation
 - Low self-esteem
 - Disaffection, disengagement or drop-out from school
 - Depression – can lead to suicide
 - Aggressiveness
 - Vulnerable to exclusivist ideologies – radicalization
 - Sense of insecurity, powerlessness

Tackling discrimination at school

- Why?
 - Discrimination and racism hurt and cause suffering
 - Violations of victims' human rights and fundamental freedoms
 - Weaken cohesion
 - Undermines ability of those affected to use their potential to the highest level possible
 - Negative impact may extend to family and not just the student or teacher etc.
 - A duty as educators – moral and legal

Tackling discrimination

- Legal prohibition (useful but not sufficient)
- Positive duty not to discriminate (three components)
 - ❖ Tackle discrimination and racism at the present
 - ❖ Adopt measures to counter the consequences of past discrimination
 - ❖ Promote equality, understanding and respect in the educational community
- Rights-based approach
 - ✓ A human rights-based approach to education offers students and teachers a sound framework within which to assess behaviours and attitudes in a school setting. It ensures the right to respect in the learning environment and includes respect for students' identity, participation and integrity [OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, 2006]
 - ✓ structure as part of lessons on citizenship, respect for human rights, equality of rights, tolerance etc.