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Paragraphs 53 to 60 in the **Draft Recommendations on Minorities and the Right to Education** acknowledge the importance of the curriculum as the principal means through which governmental educational agencies communicate their commitment to equality in educational opportunity. The rationale for addressing the “nuts and bolts” of education in the Draft makes a great deal of sense, from the perspective of both policy and practice. After all, without these materials, whether in the form of subject-matter frameworks, instructional objectives, lesson plans, professional development of teachers, and the multiplicity of assessments used to evaluate the progress of students, the goals in the Draft will not be met. It is through these materials that educational policies and practices sensitive to the reality of linguistic diversity, racial and ethnic heterogeneity, academically promising female learners, and the reality of the persistent failure of state-supported educational systems to acknowledge the cultural assets of all of their students will be addressed.

Nevertheless, I believe that the Draft would be further strengthened if it were to include a recommendation that governmental agencies and NGOs involved in the promotion of equal educational opportunities be provided the means to share their knowledge with each other. In today’s global village, this has become necessary, if we are to achieve success in addressing the educational marginalization of people of Korean descent in Japan, Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States, African immigrants in Europe, Haitian students in the Dominican Republic, Turkish children in Germany and Greece, the Baha’i children in Iran, Kurdish students in Turkey, Black American children in the Central Cities of the United States, etc.

The misconceptions that sustain such marginalization in many of these situations treat diversity as a fundamental threat to normative educational policies. Because these misconceptions transcend existing geopolitical arrangements, they should be challenged from multiple geopolitical perspectives. Therefore, the Draft should include a call for the establishment of an ongoing forum where advocates of equal educational opportunity can come together on a regular basis to discuss their successes and frustrations, their tactics and strategies, as well as their sources of inspiration to generate lessons and understandings that will transcend these geopolitical arrangements. Through alternative conceptual frameworks, the forum will create the possibility as well as the means to challenge the intellectual, scientific, and moral basis of invidious misconceptions. Instead of portrayals of diversity, pluralism, and heterogeneity that place advocates of educational opportunity in the role of supplicants and special pleaders, change agents are likely to gain significant advantage from challenging the polity to adopt new frameworks for analyzing the consequences of inequitable educational policies. Permit me to elaborate.

The cost and consequences of racism and discrimination for victims is well-known, as evidenced by the heart-rending accounts we have heard in the last two days. Less widely acknowledged is that racism and xenophobia also questions the moral basis of the politics of exclusion and denigration. This was the message that secured the Nobel Peace Prize for Martin Luther King, Jr. He argued that the costs of racism and discrimination were as crippling to their architects as to their victims. Therefore, if we were to take King’s message seriously, it follows that advocates of equal educational opportunity for historically subjugated minority groups should frame their demands in the language of mutual benefit. This goal cannot be achieved without a language that emphasizes the social and economic costs of racism,

discrimination, and xenophobia to the larger societies. Consequently, I suggest that the first order of business of the proposed forum be the creation of an affirmative language of equal educational opportunity. I imagine that this language will emphasize the larger benefits of inclusionary educational policies and practices.

Imagine how the future development of the United States might have evolved in Thomas Jefferson had not included in the 1776 Declaration of Independence the following sentiment: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."* This sentiment made it impossible for the political leadership first new nation in the "New World" to continue to rationalize slavery in the 19th century. Jefferson's interpretation of human rights also made it impossible for the United States of America to continue to justify State-sanctioned racial discrimination against the descendents of slaves in the 20th century. Jefferson's perspectives also played a major role in motivating USA political leaders in the aftermath of World War II to push for the establishment of the United Nations.

Language that would advance the educational aspirations of minorities in the same manner that Jefferson's sentiments set the table for the eventual inclusion of the United State's most historically despised minority into the mainstream of the nation's social, economic, and political life, strikes me as a self-evident benefit. There is much in the various documents issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that come close to providing this language. However, the type of transformational language we need is not yet at hand.

My second recommendation is that the most advanced communication technologies be used to make demonstrably effective curricular materials, professional development programs, and learner-assessment rubrics and be put at the disposal of this community of change agents. An educational initiative that proves to be effective in activating the intellectual capabilities of Black Students in the United Kingdom is likely to be useful to proponents of equal education in the United States. A language teaching method that is effective in helping immigrant children acquire proficiency in academic English in California may hold important lessons for Roma educators in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Spain, and Portugal, as well as champions of minority languages in South Africa. An educational initiative that has proven to be unusually effective in increasing the performance of Arab-Israeli female high school students in physics and chemistry is likely to contain lessons regarding the nurturing of female academic potential that transcend the borders of Israel and Palestine.

The production, gathering, and sharing of such examples in an accessible format would help champions of equal educational opportunity across the globe to challenge the erroneous misconceptions used to justify exclusion and oppression. In the long run, this type of virtual community will lead to conceptualizations in educational policy that cease to treat pluralistic curricular materials and educational practices as burdens imposed upon the majority political system by ungrateful demanding minorities.

In fashioning this location-independent community of change agents, we will have to take into account existing inequities in the distribution of communications resources. A permanent connection to the Internet cannot be assumed. Accordingly, the finished document should challenge technologists from advanced countries to collaborate in the design and implementation low-cost communication technologies, such as solar-powered computers, inexpensive devices for using broadband

communication resources, and digital video technology that can be used to capture outstanding examples of effective practices. My personal experiences suggest that many outstanding technologists residing in advanced economies would welcome the opportunity to take on this challenge.

A virtue of equal educational opportunity is that it often expands the size of the pie in ways that generate breakthrough conceptualizations of educational that benefit everyone. Here, at the risk of being excessively self-centered, permit me to call upon my own experiences verify this claim.

A decade ago, I spent a sabbatical year teaching mathematics in a religious-based middle school that enrolled a large population of English language learners, from many different countries. Nearly all lived in poor households, and many were living in the US without the official permission of governmental authorities. Naturally, as an “eleventh-generation non-voluntary migrant minority US resident”, I identified personally with the obstacles these students would be encountering.

I quickly discovered that the standard mathematics textbook was pedagogically useless. In my desperate search for a alternative to the textbook I asked my students to supply me with drawings, pictures, maps, tapestries, and other iconic representations used in their homes and communities. We then proceeded to collectively identify strategies for using these naturally occurring representations to create mathematics problems. Because I am a typical mono-lingual American academic, I relied upon my students, and they upon each other, to determine the nature of these new pedagogical strategies.

Somehow, we collectively managed to cobble together a set of representation-rich mathematics curriculum materials that proved to be remarkably effective in helping them benefit more fully from the English-medium curriculum materials we were required to use. A surprisingly high proportion of my students achieved normative levels of mathematical proficiency by drawing their skills in “reading” and interpreting a multitude of naturally occurring representations to reduce the mathematics learning gap between themselves and their more linguistically advantaged students.

Due to these experiences, I challenge the prospective teachers of high school mathematics and science enrolled in my classes at the University of California at Berkeley to use similar representation-rich materials to support native speakers of English. These future teachers tell me that materials have proven to be as beneficial to mainstream students as they were for the language minority students I learned so much from a decade ago.

Imagine what lessons might be learned if it were possible to explore similar exercises in curriculum design with other language minority groups in other geopolitical settings. My hunch is that were it possible for geographically dispersed mathematics teachers, working in geopolitically and linguistically diverse educational settings to share their experiences, many, many important lessons would be generated.

The use of easy navigable digital video, distributable over the Internet, would make these lessons available to everyone. Moreover, the availability of lessons in this format would reduce the importance of textual accounts of these lessons, while also giving those creating and using these lessons to retrieve and re-interpret their significance continuously.