

PREFACE

An important challenge for our world is to understand how cultural understanding and geographical education can be linked and used to improve the global society. We readily accept that our world is constituted by numerous groups of people who are organised by committees, tribes, regions, nations or continental entities. How these groups interact, show concern for each others' well-being and progress is still an unpredictable activity. Intercultural tensions, racial conflicts and religious clashes have all led to the challenges for enacting a constructive world. Fundamental perspectives challenge moderate ones, and the resulting tensions produce elements of fear, doubt and distrust. The extremist views of terrorist groups exaggerate these tensions to the extent that some different cultural groups do not prefer to live in peace with their neighbours. Deep-seated intercultural tensions predominate over peaceful co-existence. Such challenges may easily dominate the interaction between racial groups, tribes, indigenous peoples and colonisers. However, we know that through the sound practice of intercultural understanding, cultural groups in different contexts around the world can interact and co-exist successfully and productively. In fact, they can work together to seek to improve their society. This does not mean that one group will dominate the other. Rather, it means that both groups work together to improve their collective lives. Education has played an important role in the long-term achievement of such harmony.

This volume has been developed to demonstrate that geographical education can be a potent force in the development of cultural understanding in different societies. Such development can occur in a constructive manner when geographical educators adopt strategies that develop or enhance this understanding. The wide range of international geographers and educators who have contributed from their own perspectives reflect the mosaic of views held in the wider social and cultural world. Their goals in this volume have been to provide an understanding of: the place of geography in intercultural understanding; the various forces that influence the role of: geography in the intercultural field; the contribution that geography can make in the development of an effective, active citizenry; pedagogic approaches to promote such understanding through geographic education; and some predictions of how such an approach can be projected into the future for the sake of the well-being of our society. We are confident that geography can contribute strongly to making our planet a better and more harmonious place in which to live.

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