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“Strive for that greatness of spirit that measures life not by its disappointments but by its possibilities”

W.E.B. Du Bois
(civil rights activist, historian, writer)

The significance of this message resonates just as strong today. The perpetual struggle for humankind to defend itself in matters of rights and equity is ever more present, with ‘possibilities’ being inextricably linked to ‘opportunities’. But as the covid stricken biennium has highlighted not everyone has equal access to such opportunities. The pandemic has exposed significant fractures in the notion of ‘universal solidarity in the face of adversity’ - 10 countries have administered 76% of all Covid-19 vaccines, with widespread vaccine coverage for 85 lower-income countries not expected to be achieved before 2023.

The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities, although attempted by governments

to attribute this to biological and genetic factors, reports have highlighted access to healthcare, structural racism in healthcare systems, previous poor experiences of healthcare and social disparities as reasons.

The Black Lives Matter movement reignited by George Floyd’s murder evolved into a global movement for justice, freedom, equality and tolerance, underscoring how the shackles of colonialism are still very much intact.

Turning the spotlight onto educational institutions, research shows us they are not immune to discrimination and inequity. Schools and colleges are investing both time and money into diversity and inclusivity training and is a key priority at Doha College.

Inclusive education sends a very powerful message about belonging to the school community. As a member of the Cultural Committee, this is an issue close to my heart. How is DC addressing this?

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Policy is all good and well on paper, but DC is committed to being actively aware of issues around prejudice, discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. Ownership of where we are failing and proactive improvement planning at DC through the Welfare, Equity and Cultural Committees is fundamental in promoting a culture within the school that focuses on diversity being synonymous with strength.

Doha College strives to teach and model inclusiveness, to recognise individual needs and enhance self-awareness of unconscious bias among both staff and students. Training around inclusivity, equity and cultural competency for staff has helped facilitate teaching points to allow students to feel better about themselves - becoming more confident and competent individuals. Staff and students alike are encouraged to recognise our differences as this creates respect for cultural diversity, cultural values and customs and helps build stronger relationships, nurturing interaction, care and tolerance. Events celebrating diverse cultures in DC have created opportunities for open conversations and education, helping to recognise and remove barriers to learning created by inequality.

Evidence shows that hiring of diverse applicants in teaching is improving but educational institutions find promoting them more difficult. Promotions have

been shown to be dependent on relationships with management, so DEI & cultural awareness training, building stronger relationships with all peers and challenging discrimination when witnessed openly will help cultivate a culture of zero tolerance.

The school ethos of respecting and protecting the rights of individuals, and to alleviate disadvantages experienced by students and staff is enshrined within the Code of Conduct Agreement reinforced further by correlated policies such as special educational needs & disabilities (SEND), bullying, behaviour and rewards, and safeguarding to name but a few. Staff and students are openly encouraged to question and challenge assumptions, and a clear line of investigation and action plan is in place to address any complaints.

The mantra of any educational institution should be ‘Diversity is Strength through Difference’. Only when we create a safe space for honest conversation - an environment that challenges, supports and benefits all, embracing our differences, will we foster a culture that promotes community cohesion, preparing our children for life in a diverse society.

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