

DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF INTEGRATION IN CULTURAL DIVERSE RURAL SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

G Alexander
Department Psychology of Education
Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
alexanderg@ufs.ac.za

Abstract: In 1994 the new democratic government brought with it a desegregated national education system, that resulted in an influx of large numbers of black learners into formerly white schools, whether in urban or rural areas. These schools became thus the sites of cultural convergence-where diverse and previously divided cultures met for the first time, on supposedly common ground. According to Meier (2005), some of the black learners who were integrated into formerly white schools found it difficult to adjust to the new educational environment because they lacked the language skills and required background to deal with the curriculum content and medium of instruction (Afrikaans and/or English) whilst white educators, representing the majority of the staff complement (Kivedo, 2008), are often not motivated because they lack the cultural diverse teaching skills, the Africanisation of learning content and strategies in the management of overcrowding in classrooms. In concurrence with the latter, national and local media frequently report on aspects relating to cultural-diverse learning environments and how it coincides with numerous challenges (racial conflict amongst learners; cultural misunderstandings, negativity, confusion and low morale amongst educators) facing schools in rural communities.

Despite efforts by the National Department of Education to integrate schools, the majority of black children in rural poor communities are receiving less than their right in a democratic South Africa (Nelson Mandela Foundation in Fox, Vos & Geldenhuys, 2007) and lags behind educational development in other parts of the country.

With the above said in mind, the purpose of this mix method research study was to investigate the complexities associated with the integration of cultural diverse rural school communities in the Northern Cape province of South Africa and to propose recommendations for dealing with present and future challenges.

Keywords: integration, cultural diverse learning environments, Northern Cape province, rural school communities

Introduction

The historical development of education for cultural diverse school communities in South Africa can only be effectively evaluated against the backdrop of the educational history of the country. Before 1948 a limited mixing of races occurred in certain areas. The official and formal segregation of schools along structured racial and ethnic lines commenced in 1948 when the Nationalist Party seized political control. The racial, ethnic and geographical separations within the education system led to the birth of 17 separate education departments up until 1994 (Naicker, 2000). These divisions in education were supported and upheld by apartheid legislation such as the 1953 Bantu Education Act, the 1950 Group Areas Act, the 1954 Native Resettlement Act, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, the Population Registration Act, the Homeland Act, and so forth (Mda, 2000). This separate system of education, characterised by race, class, gender and ethnic divisions (Alexander, 2004) resulted in the provision of uneven access to schools, unequal educational opportunities, irrelevant curricula, inadequate infrastructure, facilities and a qualified educator complement (Kivedo, 2007). More significant and still evident is that communities confined to the ‘homelands’ or Bantustans had to endure poverty, isolation and reduced services such as the availability and lack of basic services (piped water, tolerable roads, electricity); inadequate physical and infrastructure conditions (buildings, toilet facilities, telecommunications); distances travelled to school (children walk long distances, inadequate transport provision); quality education (shortage of qualified educators and teaching aids, lack of Early Childhood Development education, irrelevance of curricula, large classes, higher learner-educator ratios, language of teaching and

learning, rote learning approaches); curriculum relevance (need for Maths, Science and Technology, understanding of local and global environment, need to promote critical thinking and useful skills) competing priorities between education and domestic chores (child labour); educational disparities for girls and boys infringing the right to education and minimal support for the district education offices (Gardiner, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2005). The majority of South Africa's 350 000 educators and almost 12 million learners are concentrated in provinces (Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo) that are predominantly rural and which include former 'homelands' (Chisholm, 2004). The sample province (Northern Cape) for this study, is characterized as a rural province with 96 primary schools and 45 high schools. It needs to be noted that between 1994 and 1999, the democratic government of South Africa introduced a range of initiatives to improve access, equity and quality. The integration of schools can be viewed within the context of the latter said.

Accordingly and justifiably, I contend that all educational change endeavours in post 1994 South Africa were and still are largely driven by imperatives such as overcoming the devastation of apartheid, and the provision of equal, quality education to all citizens within a system that enhances democratic participation, human dignity, equality and social justice, and the redress of imbalances, as well as the empowerment of all citizens (Abdi, 2001; Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk, 2006). The integration of learners to former white schools, however, did not take place without some daunting challenges. To this effect, Goduka (1999) protests that in spite of the diverse groups of learners, these previously white schools continued to function as mono-cultural schools. Learners with different backgrounds had to adapt to the European culture of the school. The curriculum of the schools was based on European traditions while learner expectations were grounded on the experiences of educators who were never prepared to deal with diversity. Learners enter specific schools whose immediate contexts, histories, memories and commitments shape their organisation and practices (Banks & Banks, 1995). In no terms am I proposing, that issues relating the school ethos and culture in former white school settings be changed overnight, but that a constant awareness amongst the entire school population be created for the recognition of diversity.

It is therefore important for education in cultural diverse rural school communities of the Northern Cape province not to be internalised as a version of apartheid education; one that merely seeks to integrate and acculturate black learners into an existing Euro-centric structure, without challenging educational and psychosocial inequalities. It is only when the latter issues, amongst others, are fully comprehended by white educators in former white schools in the Northern Cape, that the school situation might be perceived as accepting and accommodating by black learners. The motivation for using white educators as the sample group for this study is that they represent, in terms of color, the majority of the staff complement (91 %) in former white high schools in the Northern Cape province. Thus, how they relate to black learners (69 %) during the teaching and learning situation, is a question that evoked interest and became a subject for this research.

In the wake of the above-mentioned purpose of this study, it becomes imperative to explore issues relating to integration in rural school settings.

The Need For Cultural Diverse School Settings In The South African Landscape

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1983), the word "diversity" originates from the Latin term *diversus*, which means more than one, of a different kind, or variety. Diversity therefore constitutes any kind of variety in humankind, such as personality, aptitude, appearance, sexual orientation, disability, learning preferences, nationality, educational level, age, marital status, parental status, etc. In educational terms, the concept "multicultural" is sometimes inadvertently used to describe the diverse nature of society (Lemmer et al., 2006). The concept often lead to misunderstanding, in the sense that it only emphasizes cultural, racial and ethnic groups, instead of being seen as an encapsulating term that includes all kinds of diversity. Educators often make snap judgements, based on their perceptions, about learners and go on to treat them differently. Many educators interact with learners differently according to the learners's race and socio-economic status (Alexander, 2004). These sentiments are supported by Bennett's (2007) research findings that educator attitudes influence learner achievements. It further discovered that the expectation of educators can sometimes and do affect educator- learner interaction as well as learner outcomes, however the processes are much more complex as originally believed. One conclusion is that teacher beliefs and expectations interact with learner beliefs and behaviours. She draws a parallel between ethnicity and educator expectations and is convinced that educator expectations, influences beliefs and behaviours in the same manner as ethnicity does. Many white educators have low expectations of their non-white learners, simply because of their belief that black students have less innate potential as their white counterparts. A classroom atmosphere of acceptance among learners, were more likely to exist when educators did not distinguish between the learning potential of black and white learners. The

findings also revealed that educators interact with low- expectation learners in intellectually limiting ways and are more supportive and stimulating with white and light-skinned learners.

The possibility does exist that the above-mentioned misunderstanding could also be prevalent at cultural diverse school settings in the Northern Cape. It is for this reason that both educators and learners in cultural diverse classes should thoroughly understand that diversity involves much more than just issues of race ethnicity, language or religious groups. The thorough understanding of the concept “diversity” by the mentioned parties might minimize potential conflict and might enhance the integration of black learners in rural schools of the Northern Cape province.

From the above-mentioned, it can be deduced that a cultural diverse classroom situation should be characterised by the understanding. It therefore becomes imperative, that educators are equipped with the skill to observe and interpret culturally-diverse classroom behaviour, in a manner that is not based on myths and stereotypes, influenced by race or culture. Educators, and particularly educators in cultural diverse rural schools, need to establish a classroom atmosphere of acceptance, where all learners are expected to achieve their optimal academic potential. This expectation should be based on the learner’s intellectual abilities and not on educator prejudice. In this regard, educators in cultural diverse rural schools should be encouraged to remain objective at all times. This objectivity may assist educators to become aware of their innate prejudices which may cause them to have low expectations for some learners.

Furthermore Lemmer et al. (2006) are of the opinion that the national and at times, provincial Departments of Education in South Africa often believe that by simply bringing different groups of learners together who have previously lived, grown up and schooled in isolation, barriers to inter-racial contact will fall away naturally and positive social contact will ensue. Casual contact, however this does not necessarily bring about improved inter-racial relations or reduce racial and cultural prejudice. It is therefore important to create suitable learning environments that foster inter-group contact which should be facilitated by appropriate education and support.

Clearly it can be stated that the first democratic elections of 1994, have reshaped the political, social and educational landscape of South Africa. The new government inherited a country that had been shaped by colonial rule and apartheid policies which are largely still reflected in the provision of quality educational opportunities for the marginalized and excluded (Alexander, 2004). However it must be noted that much has changed since 1994. South Africa has been called the “rainbow” nation and rightly so. Cultural diversity is characteristic of South African society and impacts on all spheres of life, including education. This diversity was largely regulated by law during the era of apartheid. This is no longer the case and in the new open South African society, cultural diversity directly influences the context within which schooling takes place and the manner in which it is offered, as well as the content of the syllabi (Lemmer et al., 1997). In addition to this, a non-racial national Department of Education, together with nine other provincial departments has been charged with the task of providing schooling for the learners of the country Lemmer et al. (2006).

In practice, the above implies that educators in the South African society are faced with the challenge of teaching increasingly culturally diverse classes. Gollnick et al. (2002) supports this view and is convinced that educators today are faced with an overwhelming challenge to prepare students from diverse cultural backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society and a world in which some groups have greater societal benefits than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, religion, ability, or age. It could therefore be expected, that the schools of the future will become increasingly culturally diverse.

The desegregation and more specifically, the africanisation of schools in South Africa, has further brought about a need for a school revise curriculum that will change the nature of teaching and learning, so that the needs of all learners will be met. It further implies that suitable learning environments should be created, for motivating learners towards acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to enable them to participate meaningfully in modern and post-apartheid cultural diverse society.

In spite of the above-mentioned, many learners, parents, and sadly educators still experience great difficulty in coping with this inevitable reality and at times find it difficult to change, whether at the individual level, the institutional level, or societal level. Because of the way in which these individuals were socialized, their way of doing have become so much a part of them that they find it very difficult to think that things can be done in any other way (Cushner, 1992; Scott, 2004).

Moletsane (1999) concurs with the above and emphasises some of these challenges. In this regard she states that, the need and mandate for transformation in our schools have been demonstrated in widely reported racial violence and the failure of black learners in desegregated as well as mono-racial schools in the media, research findings, and national education policy documents (e.g. The South African Schools Act of 1996). She reiterates, that these demands for change in all school contexts include responding to: 1) socio-political context of the school, the country and the international and global arena, 2) differences in individual and group identities,

and 3) changing curriculum policy and precise to address the learning needs of all learners. In this regard, McCray & Gracia (2002) and Johnson (2003) found that even graduates of diverse educational programmes, mostly socialise in the current structure of public schooling and therefore sacrifice their personal ideology and professional identity in favour of educational practices that maintain the status quo. Kivido (2006) admits that the South African education system is in a state of transformation, that brings along the willingness to alternative ways of thinking and doing.

Problem Statement

Former white high schools in rural areas of the Northern Cape have enrolled a number of black learners and are therefore profess to practice cultural diverse education . Many of these schools have not adapted their admission requirements, policies, curriculum or staff development programmes. The question thus is whether these schools are indeed practicing integrated schooling or whether they are merely assimilating black learners into the existing system. Claasen in Le Roux (1997) supports this view and explains that mere integration of cultural or ethnic learner groupings in a single learning situation does not necessarily imply a cultural diverse education milieu. Similarly, the staff complement in most former white schools may not necessarily reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the learners enrolled. In the Northern Cape, for example, approximately 69% of all learners registered at former white high schools are black, while only 9% of the teaching staff is black (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). Kivedo (2006) and Diamond Fields Advertiser (11 February 2002) argue that this state of affairs may result in cultural misunderstandings and the consequent breakdown of educator-learner relations.

An issue linked to integration not only in the Northern Cape but country wide, is the ever increasing demand exerted by the Department of Education on staff representation in former white schools. In a radical attempt aimed at deracialising the education system, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has cautioned former white schools to employ at least 50% black teachers by 2005 as part of its equity plan.

Two teacher unions, the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (Naptosa) and the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) support this initiative from the National Department of Education but indicate that such a plan to address racial and gender representation needs to be coordinated with thorough consultation.

Against the background of the statement of problem, this study is aimed at assisting white educators in former white rural high schools of the Northern Cape province to fully comprehend their role, to understand the underlying pedagogical challenges which they face, and to embrace concomitant problems relating to the integration of learners in cultural diverse settings.

Theoretical Framework

According to Khosa (2000), after the 1994 South African elections, all schools were open to all children. This led to a process of black flight from schools located in black residential areas to those within white residential areas. This flight was, however only unidirectional. The influx of black learners to previously exclusively white schools led to the emergence of diverse races, cultures and religions in schools – a phenomenon for which educators had not been trained or prepared. The problem of deracialisation and integration was exacerbated by the education policy prior to 1994. The apartheid education policy was aimed at brain-washing all races into believing that everything about blacks was barbaric and inferior and vice versa.

Soudien (2001) records the availability of very little research work done in post- apartheid South Africa on how learners are coping within their new settings, and in particular how they are dealing with integration at predominantly white schools. Furthermore, he argues that there seems to be a limited understanding of the complex relationship between school and identity and that this complexity applies both to the apartheid and post-apartheid period.

In South Africa, the pre-apartheid education systems have openly marginalised African indigenous knowledge. In post Apartheid society emerging debates/discourses are enhanced of bringing indigenous knowledge systems into focus as a legitimate field of academic enquiry (Mkabela, 2005).

The Afrocentric paradigm attempts to locate research from an African viewpoint and creates Africa's own intellectual perspective-it focuses on Africa as the cultural centre for the study of African experiences. The paradigm aims to interpret research data from an African perspective (Asante & Asante, 1995). Africanisation is closely related to the Afrocentric paradigm. Teffo (1996, p. 144-145) describes Africanisation as: "*the process of inseminating African value systems, concepts and moral ethics into all our human activities ...The true search*

for an African identity, the recognition of the environment in which that identity is sought, become a concept that enables blacks and whites alike, to conceptualise and articulate Africa as the motherland. This ought to be done to affirm our being, personhood and nationhood.”

It is against this back-drop, that the Afrocentric paradigm is used to locate the integration of learners in cultural diverse rural school settings of the Northern Cape province.

Research Methodology

Purpose of The Research

The main objective of this empirical investigation was to collect data to ascertain the perceptions of white educators in former white rural high schools with regard to cultural diverse education.

Selection of respondents

With regard to the sample size of the population of this research, the researchers identified a total sample of $n = 260$ white educators from 10 former high schools, representative of the 4 educational districts (Francis Baardt, Siyanda, Pixley Ké Seme and Namaqua) of the Northern Cape province. A total of 100 learners selected from these 10 former white schools were interviewed as to siege an understanding of their experience in integrated school settings.

The Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was employed to investigate the perceptions of educators in former white schools with regard to integration. A total of 241 educators (128 male and 113 females) completed and returned the questionnaires, thus ensuring a 92.3% response rate. In this case, a very high degree of validity was ensured. In this questionnaire, Section A dealt with the biographical information of the educators, whilst a 4-point Likert scale dealt with Section B (perceptions of educators regarding integration). Educators were asked to indicate the preference for each item dealing with a specific issue/aspect related to integration as: 1- strongly agree (SA); 2- agree (A); 3- disagree and 4- strongly disagree (SD). A learner survey capturing qualitative responses of 100 participants were also analysed.

Findings And Discussion

The first section of the educator questionnaire consists of personal particulars such as, gender, race, age teaching experience, academic qualifications, professional qualifications, rank, educational district, historical type of school and language in which the educator feels most comfortable to teach.

The majority (53%) of the educators in former white schools in the Northern Cape are male whilst 46, 50 % of the educators are females. This development may be attributed to the fact that males are in the majority in the high school section, which represents Grades 8-12 (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). In terms of race, all educators targeted for this study were white, although between 1-5 % of educators at former white schools are of colour. In general, white educators are in the majority at former white schools (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). With regard to teaching experience, the majority (65,9%) of the respondents' teaching experience ranges between 10 and 39 years. Those having teaching experience between 1 and 9 years were in the minority; namely 43.2%. This tendency is a definite indication that most of the educators were trained in racially segregated training institutions, during the apartheid period and are therefore not fully trained for a cultural diverse education system. Additionally, these educators may find it extremely difficult to change their fixed and ingrained ways (McCray & Gracia, 2002; Johnson, 2003). With reference to academic and professional qualifications, most educators (59,3%) and (96, 7%) indicated that they were in possession of a B-degree and a teaching diploma. In terms of rank, the majority (77%) of educators are on the rank of educator (post level 1) and only 21,6% formed part of the school management team. Therefore, it has become necessary to review the manner in which educators and school management teams are trained and how their perceptions about cultural diverse learning environments are moulded (Meier, 2005; Rios, 1996). In relation to language in which it is most comfortable to teach, the majority (78, 5 %) of respondents chose Afrikaans (one of South Africa's official languages) and only 15% teach in English. This situation is of concern, as black learners constitute the majority at former white high schools and receive their lessons in English.

Table 1: Perceptions of educators regarding issues/aspects relating to cultural diverse school settings(n=241)

| 1 | Items | 1-Strongly Agree | | 2- Agree | | 3- Disagree | | 4-Strongly Disagree | | Arith-metic Mean | Mean |
|-----|--|------------------|------|----------|------|-------------|------|---------------------|------|------------------|------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1.1 | The establishment of a cultural diverse school climate is embedded in my school's mission statement | 58 | 24.1 | 103 | 42.7 | 38 | 15.8 | 42 | 17.4 | 2.504 | 2.00 |
| 1.2 | In my school all learner racial groups are served by a cultural diverse teaching staff | 19 | 7.8 | 20 | 8.3 | 85 | 35.3 | 117 | 48.6 | 2.254 | 2.00 |
| 1.3 | Values and norms as included in my school's code of conduct are directed at the creation of democratic citizenship | 31 | 12.9 | 39 | 16.2 | 69 | 28.6 | 102 | 42.3 | 2.216 | 2.00 |
| 1.4 | Multilingualism is promoted in my school | 30 | 12.4 | 27 | 11.2 | 69 | 28.6 | 115 | 48.0 | 2.538 | 2.00 |
| 1.5 | At my school educators make learners aware of fostering understanding for | 32 | 13.3 | 39 | 16.2 | 44 | 18.2 | 126 | 52.3 | 2.373 | 2.00 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| | different cultures | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.6 | Educators at my school support a learning environment where participative decision making is being applied | 62 | 25.8 | 76 | 31.5 | 47 | 19.5 | 56 | 23.2 | 2.245 | 2.00 |
| 1.7 | In the school curriculum certain important aspects regarding social justice issues are outlined | 23 | 9.5 | 40 | 16.6 | 65 | 26.9 | 113 | 46.7 | 2.353 | 2.00 |
| 1.8 | I have lower academic expectations for my black learners | 79 | 32.8 | 29 | 12.0 | 51 | 21.2 | 82 | 34.0 | 2.349 | 2.00 |
| 1.9 | I don't see why I should change my teaching style because I view it as being effective for me | 65 | 26.9 | 95 | 39.5 | 38 | 15.8 | 43 | 17.8 | 2.243 | 2.00 |
| 1.10 | I make an effort to learn about the cultures of my learners | 24 | 10.0 | 37 | 15.4 | 50 | 20.7 | 130 | 53.9 | 2.348 | 2.00 |

Items 1.1 – 1.10 (Table 1) are discussed below.

Most of the educators (66.8%) are of the opinion that aspects relating to their school's cultural diverse climate is embedded in the mission statement. This is a good sign of the intent of former white schools to aspire to becoming inclusive. Of concern is that 33,2% of educators hold the opposite view to item 1.1. As portrayed from statistics (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008) and evident in the analysis of the data, 83, 9% of educators are of the opinion that racial groups are not served by a cultural diverse teaching staff (item 1.2). The National Department of Education postulates that this trend needs to change at former white schools and that a concerted effort should be made by the school management to recruit educators across the colour line. According to the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education (GDE) learners, mainly black, are almost exclusively taught by white teachers. The culture and environment of former white schools do not implement the process of transformation in line with the new democratic dispensation that promotes cultural diversity and a positive appreciation of indigenous African and disempowered cultures (Independent Online-The Star, 2001).

Relating to item 1.3, most educators (70, 9 %), indicated that values and norms as included in the school's code of conduct are aimed at enhancing democratic citizenship. These schools should study relevant policies such as the Constitution, the South African Schools' Act (SASA) and the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), so as to orientate educators and learners in the core values enshrined in these documents. With regard to item 4 a total of 76, 6% of educators alluded to multilingualism not being promoted at former white schools, yet it can be argued that these schools have 69% of black learners (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). Educators need to be equipped to deal with the challenges of multilingualism in an ever-changing class situation, as most of them possess a low level of English (Alexander, 1994; Sieghrun, 2002). The National Department of Education's Language-in-Education policy document should be used as a guide to promote the use of more than one language in the teaching and learning environment in former white schools.

Regarding item 1.5, 70,5 % of educators indicated that a non-awareness exists at their schools concerning the promotion of an understanding of different cultures. An adequate teaching and learning culture needs to be created that encourages educators and learners to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to participate in meaningful ways in the classroom setting (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993; Massey, 1991). Furthermore a total of 29.5 % of educators are of the opinion that they create awareness for the promotion of understanding of different cultures at their school. Adams, Pardo, & Schniedewind (1991) and Alexander (2004) posit that educators in culturally diverse school settings, such as in former white schools, need to make a focused effort to know and show an interest in the cultures of their learners; in other words they need to 'step outside themselves' and look for the habitual values, norms, beliefs and practices required to construct their own cultural backgrounds.

In reference to item 1.6, the majority of educators (57, 3%) indicate that they support a learning environment where participative decision making is being applied. This is healthy for processes in which a degree of consensus seeking and decision making is necessary and in essence, promote democratic classroom practices. It is for the principal and members of the School Management Team (SMT) to initiate inexperienced educators into decision making processes. Only 42,7% educators are distancing them from this statement. Item 1.7 reveals that the overwhelming majority (73,6 %) of educators view important aspects such as social justice, not being included in school curricula. Harley and Wedekind (2002) concur with the above position and view the curriculum as a tool that should be constructed in such a way that it allows for the uniting all learners as equals in a democratic and prosperous school and classroom setting. The minority (26,5 %) of educators were in agreement regarding the inclusion of social justice issues in the curriculum. Educators and learners will respect one another's diversity if notions of social justice such as racism, poverty and other societal challenges are more clearly articulated during the curriculum development processes (Shulz, 2007). Moreover, most educators (55.2%) as observed from item 1.8 have indicated they have higher expectations for their black learners. In contrast, 44.8% of educators maintain they have lower expectations for black learners. Lemmer et al. (2006) concurs with the latter view and are convinced that many white educators have low expectations of their black learners and tend to be more supportive and stimulating to their white learners, with the result that black learners underachieve. Regarding item 1.9, the 66,4% of educators do not see the need to change their teaching style. Against the learner-centred Outcomes Based Education (OBE), as South Africa's official approach to learning, educators in former white schools need to mindful that not only is the demonstration of knowledge required via this approach, but also high-level skills, values and attitudes; thus, the educator should have a more holistic, formative and developmental approach to learning (Naicker, 2000). There should not only be a focus on the 'how much of learning' but invariably also on 'how do learners learn?' and 'what do they learn?' The minority (44.8%) of educators indicated that they would change their teaching style when conditions dictate. This is the type of educator who needs to be educated into culturally diverse schooling settings in South Africa; the kind of educator who needs to be willing to reflect on his/her own practice and constructing meaning-making opportunities, as a means of teaching learners from their own realities (Alexander, 2004). Regarding item 1.10, the majority of educators (74.6%) are of the opinion that they do not need to know the cultures of their learners which is a worrying response. Educators should support learners to develop their ethnic identities, their knowledge about other cultural groups and competence in one or more cultural systems. On the other hand, 25.4% of educators indicated that they would like to have a better understanding of their class's cultural diversity.

The qualitative responses of the learner survey are outlined in table 2. Learners were requested to briefly expound on their responses.

Table 2: Experiences of learners regarding issues/aspects relating to cultural diverse school settings (n=100)

| QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO LEARNERS | YES % | NO % | MAIN ISSUES EMANATING FROM RESPONSES |
|---|-------|------|---|
| Did you have expectations of the school you attending currently? | 82 | 18 | High academic standards |
| Do racial incidents often occur at your school ? | 56 | 44 | Perceptions |
| Are learners, irrespective of their cultural background treated the same in your school ? | 40 | 60 | Cultural misunderstandings, stereotyping |
| Do you think that the enrollment of non-white learners in former white schools led to a drop in standards? | 48 | 52 | Difficulty in communication and understanding |
| Are black learners more withdrawn than white learners during group work and other class activities ? | 57 | 43 | Limited interaction on social and academic level |
| Do educators use experiences of learners during lesson presentation? | 37 | 63 | Unawareness to life world and world view |
| Are your need for belonging met by your school ? | 23 | 77 | Eurocentric school culture / Referrals to 'us' and 'them' |
| Do you think that educators in former white schools are more committed than those teaching in townships and non-white areas ? | 66 | 34 | Educator strikes and absenteeism |
| Do you find living in a non-white area / township having a direct effect on your academic performance? | 46 | 54 | Lack of facilities and resources |
| If I could choose, would you prefer to attend a historically non-white school? | 32 | 68 | Good pass rates |

With reference to table 2, questions in which the majority of learners were in agreement (yes responses) were: expectations of school where attending (82%); occurrence of racial incidents(56%); withdrawn from group work and class activities (57%) and more committed educators (66%). The occurrence of racial incidents in cultural diverse school settings raises concern as one would think that South Africa's first democratic elections were held in 1994- surely education authorities should make a concerted effort in delimiting racial incidents in rural integrated school settings. Another issue, reflecting a majority response (57%) is that of black learners being more withdrawn than white learners during group work and class activities. With regard to the latter it's crucial for white educators to have expertise on cooperative learning techniques. Cooperative learning according to van Wyk (2007) is a teaching method which could be used to enhance social skills and intergroup interaction in cultural diverse class environments.

Questions in which the majority of learners were in disagreement (no responses) were: learners from diverse cultural backgrounds treated the same (60%); enrollment of non-white learners led to a drop in standards (52%); educators use experiences of learners during lesson presentation (63%); need for belonging met by your school (77%); living in a non-white area / township having a direct effect on your academic performance (54%) and preference to attend a historically non-white school (68%). Educators need to be aware that all learners irrespective of colour must be treated in a fair, just and humane manner. The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) demands that the core values enshrined in it, be implemented through education policies. Moreover it becomes critical that educators in cultural diverse rural school settings acquire the knowledge and skills to teach learners from different cultures.

Implications Of The Study

Chisholm (1997) postulates that the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 signalled major changes in the South African educational sector. Official state education policy that was historically geared towards affirming whites and male superiority was reoriented towards “redressing inequalities between black and white on principles of inclusion, social justice and equity. This reorientation had implications for the South African teacher Education sector. The implications include policy proposals in Teacher Education which according to the Department of Education policy document, (Department of Education, 1997) must develop” dynamic, transformative and emancipatory model” that embraces the “principles and values that inform South African democracy” . James, Ralfe, van Laren, & Ngcobo, (2006) insists on the necessity of this policy, because prior to the democratic elections teachers in South Africa were deprived of acquiring knowledge and skills which allowed them to creatively capitalise on South Africa’s rich diversity and instead were forced to focus narrowly on defined and racist stereotypes of people in” their own” race group.

Lemmer et al. (1997) however, warns that before an approach to the enhancement of cultural diversity can be successfully implemented on a large scale, much more research must be done and various problematic issues ironed out. Even then the success of integrating black learners in cultural diverse rural school settings will not necessarily be guaranteed. Educational changes are important, not only in teaching and learning *per se*, but also with regards to learners who, as the next generation, carry ideas, attitudes and behaviour into the future and into society at large.

Conclusion And Recommendation

Dealing with the complexities of integration in cultural diverse rural school settings of the Northern Cape province of South Africa requires a holistic approach. The development of educational programmes and curricula that enhance awareness, knowledge, and skills for learners is vital if these schools are to provide culturally relevant, respectful, and affirming quality teaching-learning environments. To that end, the development of culturally sensitive teaching, learning and intervention strategies, as well as professional training needs to take place. It is important that the latter actions should be structured along the lines of awareness, knowledge, skills development and an awareness of cultural diversity.

In the wake of the purpose of this study, we propose the following recommendations:

Educators to be provided with adequate, appropriate and effective training and guidance in all the aspects relating to school integration.

Erasmus & Ferreira (2002) argue that tolerance in itself is insufficient, as it indicates a mere endurance of and not necessarily respect for other cultures. It would seem that the solution involves a change of attitude towards, rather than only the acquisition of knowledge about other cultures. Furthermore, the integration of learners into cultural diverse school settings should not only be treated as a series of isolated experiences; rather, it should form part of the curriculum, whilst educator training should incorporate cultural awareness, knowledge and skills as part of the educator’s course. Modules and courses on cultural diversity should be made compulsory in teacher-training programmes at institutions of higher learning. The initial focus should be on persuading student teachers to actively assess their perceptions of learners from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

Equipping the school management teams integrated rural school settings with the necessary strategies to celebrate this diversity should be an indispensable necessity.

Any knowledge production process, whether at school, university, home or community should be relevant to the social and economic needs of South Africa (Winburg, 2006). From the survey, it could further be deduced that learners from diverse cultural groups may continue to present challenges to integrated schools and those providing educational and support services. The development of educational curricula that enhance awareness, knowledge and skills for learners is vital if these schools are to provide culturally relevant, respectful and affirming teaching environments. To that end, the development of culturally sensitive teaching, learning and intervention strategies, as well as professional training, needs to take place. It is important that the latter actions should be structured along the lines of knowledge, skills development and an awareness of diversity. In relation to the hands-on practical activities as an instructional strategy, Moore, Madison-Colmore & Collins (2005) advise that learners should become acclimatised to content on diversity through the early exploration of issues of diversity and self-reflective activities.

Creating educational opportunities for educators and learners.

Educational opportunities which seek to include all learners create multiple opportunities for educators and learners to experience diverse views and people on a daily basis and to converse about difference, human rights and social justice. Neither recognition nor redistribution of resources as a means of addressing socio-economic inequalities alone, can make education more socially just; students also require both respect and adequate social goods to develop holistically and pursue and achieve their academic and lifelong goals (Lynch & Baker, 2005).

Educators to ascribed to the characteristics of culture, race and class.

Lemmer et al. (2006) appropriately point out that culture, race, and social class are used to construct the major groups of people in society. Thus, educators, especially in former white schools, need to understand how the ascribed characteristics of culture, race and class may influence their understanding of learners. It may be important to consider these characteristics collectively and not separately, since all learners are members of all three status groups. It is this simultaneous membership of all these groups that influences learners' perceptions and actions. This challenge may be addressed if a concerted effort is made by SMTs to recruit the best qualified, experienced and 'fitting profile' educators of colour. I am not implying that competence and quality should be jeopardised in the process, but I contend that these schools should reflect the diversity of the learner population.

References:

- Abdi, A.A. (2001). Integrated education and black development in post-apartheid South Africa: critical analysis. *Compare*, 31(2), 229-244.
- Adams, B.S., Pardo, W.E., & Schniedewind, (1991). Changing "The way things are done around here". *Educational Leadership*, 39-40.
- Alexander, G. (2004). *The design and evaluation of a staff development programme for amalgamated schools in the Northern Cape*. Ph.D. Thesis (Unpublished), Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.
- Alexander, N. (1994). *Language planning for a multilingual South Africa*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.
- Asante, M., & Asante, K. (1995). Great Zimbabwe: An Ancient African City-State. In I. van Sertima, (Ed.), *Blacks In Science: Ancient and Modern*. New Brunswick, USA and London, UK: Transaction Books.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C.A.M. (1995). *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*. New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan.
- Bennett, C.I. (2007). *Comprehensive Multicultural Education*. Sixth Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Calitz, L., Viljoen, J., Moller, L., & Van der Bank, A (1992). *Effective School Management*. Pretoria: Via Afrika Limited.
- Chisholm, L. (1997). *The restructuring of South African education and training in comparative context*.
- Chisholm, L. (2004). The quality of primary education in South Africa. *Unpublished Paper prepared for UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. 13 April 2004.
- Concise Oxford Dictionary. (1983). UK: Oxford University Press.
- Cushner, K. (1992). *Human Diversity in Education. An Integrative Approach*. USA: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Department of Education. (1997). *New norms and standards for teacher training, education development*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Diamond Fields Advertiser. (2002). Ritchie – Rietvale High School – Allegations of Racism. DFA 14 April:1
- Erasmus, P., & Ferreira, G.V. (2002). Black Grade 9 learners in historically white suburban schools and their experience of integration. *South African Journal of Education*, 22 (1), 28-35.

- Fox, T.D., Vos, N.B., & Geldenhuys, J.L. (2007). The experience of cross-cultural peer teaching for a group of mathematics learners, *Pythagoras*, 65, 45-52.
- Gardiner, M. (2007). Research methodology for rural education in South Africa: the experience of CEPD and its associates: 2000-2007. *Education Monitor*, 15 (1), 1-4.
- Goduka, I.N. (1999). Indigenous epistemologies – ways of knowing: affirming a legacy. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 13(2), 26-35.
- Gollnick, D.M., & Chinn, P.C. (2002). *Multicultural education in a Pluralistic Society*. 6th Edition. Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Harley, K., & Wedekind, V. (2002). Political change, curriculum change and social transformation, 1990 to 2002. *International Journal of Education Development*, 20 (4), 287-304.
- Independent Online. (2001). Hire black teachers, schools told. *The Star*, 24 June: 1-2.
- James, A., Ralfe, E., van Laren, L., & Ngcobo, N. (2006). Reacting, adapting and responding to change: Experiences of multicultural and anti-racism teacher education post 1994. *South African journal of Higher Education*, 20 (5):679-690.
- Johnson, L. (2003). Multicultural policy as social activism: redefining who ‘counts’ in multicultural education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 6(2), 107-121.
- Khosa, R. (2001). De-Racialisation and integration in South African schools: Challenges, Initiatives and Opportunities. Retrieved on January, 20, 2010 from: <http://www/Cambridge.UK.iafrica.com/html/>.
- Kivedo, C. (2006). *A Psycho-educational investigation into the state of multicultural education and the design of a multicultural educational framework for Northern Cape schools*. Ph.D. Thesis (Unpublished), Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.
- Lemmer, E., & Squelch, J. (1993). *Multi-Cultural Education: a teacher’s Guide*. Halfway House: Southern Book Publishers.
- Lemmer, E.M., Meier, C., & Van Wyk, J.N. (2006). *Multicultural Education. An educator’s manual*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Le Roux, J. (1997). *Multicultural education: what every teacher should know*. Pretoria: Kagiso.
- Lynch, K., & Baker, J. (2005). Equality in education: An equality of condition perspective. *Theory and Research in Education*, 3, 131-164.
- Massey, I. (1991). *Developing anti-racist multicultural education in schools. More than skin deep*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- McCray, A., & Garcia, S. (2002). The stories we must tell: developing a research agenda for multicultural and bilingual special education. *Qualitative studies in Education*, 15(6), 599 -612.
- Mda, T. (2000). *Critical Issues in South African Education after 1994*. South Africa: Juta and Company.
- Meier, C. (2005). Addressing problems in integrated schools: learner’s teachers’ perceptions regarding viable solutions for learners’ academic problems. *South African Journal of Education*, 25(3), 170 – 177.
- Ministry of Education. (2005). Education for Rural People in Africa: Policy Lessons, Options and Priorities. Ministerial Seminar, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 7-9 September 2005.

- Mkabela, Q. (2005). Using the Afrocentric method in researching indigenous African culture. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(1), 178-179. Retrieved on October 23, 2010. from:<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR10-1/mkabela.pdf>.
- Moletsane, R. (1999). Beyond desegregation: multicultural education in South African schools. *Perspectives in Education*, 18: 31-42.
- Moore, S., Madison-Colmore, O., & Collins, W. (2005). Appreciating Multiculturalism: Exercises For Teaching Diversity. *Journal of African American Studies*, 8(4), 63-75.
- Naicker S. M. (2000). From Apartheid to Inclusive Education: The challenges for transformation. Unpublished Paper presented at the International Education Summit for a Democratic Society. Wayne State University, Michigan, U.S.A, 26 June-28 June 2000.
- National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996. (Vol. 370, No. 17118). Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Northern Cape Department of Education. (2008). Education Management and Information Services (EMIS). Rios, F. (1996). *Teacher thinking in cultural contexts*. New York: Suny Press.
- South African Schools Act. (1996). Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Schulz, D. (2007). Stimulating social justice theory for service learning practice. *Calderón*, 24-35.
- Sieghrun, A. (2002). A scenario for indigenous minority education in South Africa: the case of Schmidtsdrift San Combined School. *Perspectives in Education*, 20(1), 141-150.
- Scott, D.M. (2004). Postwar Pluralism, Brown v. Board of Education, and the origins of multicultural education. *The Journal of American History*, 69-82.
- Soudien, C. (2001). Certainty and ambiguity in Youth identities in South Africa: discourses in transition. Discourse: *Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 22 (3): 311-326.
- Teffo, J. (1996). Kingship and democracy in South Africa. In research unit for African Philosophy Decolonising the Mind. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on African Philosophy. University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, October 1995.
- Naicker S. M. (2000). From Apartheid to Inclusive Education: The challenges for transformation. Unpublished Paper presented at the International Education Summit for a Democratic Society. Wayne State University, Michigan, U.S.A, 26 June-28 June 2000.
- The Constitution of South Africa. 1996. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Van Wyk, M. M. (2007). The use of cooperative learning in economics in the further education and training phase of the Free state province. Ph.D. thesis (Unpublished). Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.
- Winburg, C. (2006). Undisciplining knowledge production: Development driven higher education in South Africa. *Higher Education*, 51, 159 -172.