

Responses of South African teachers to the challenge of school integration

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Recognizing that teacher commitments are consequential for classroom practice, this study sets out to determine the extent to which the ethos of South African schools has been transformed towards integration in the truest sense. Findings emanating from this research indicate that teachers do not enter their classrooms as 'blank slates' with respect to diversity questions; teachers respond differently to the challenge of school integration; and a few teachers went against the grain and responded to school integration in a way that holds immense promise for the South African schooling system.

Introduction

The process of desegregation poses a challenge that is as pertinent internationally as it is in South Africa, as evident in the centrality of questions of race, racism, citizenship and diversity to school systems internationally. Schools, as microcosms of the society at large, are challenged to transcend institutional and educational racism. However, there are key differences and local particularities within this common global historical experience. The historical pattern and politics of South Africa's racial formation has been part of, but has also shown marked differences from, those of other countries. The South African portrait is framed by a history of apartheid in which 'difference' was construed in hierarchical terms and color coded within a carefully crafted, politically legitimated pigmentocracy" (Moodley, 2004). In this regard, key differences between South African and American discourses include that the latter frames integration issues primarily within a desegregation and multicultural framework, whereas South Africans prefer to speak of inclusivity and integration; but also that they are linked to the dimension of the issue within the overall context of schooling. Within South Africa, it is formerly white, Indian and coloured schools that have desegregated (Nkomo, Chisholm & McKinney, 2004). "A decade of democracy begs some attention to educational progress and reform, from the viewpoint of teachers, with the culture of their schools as the inquiry's landscape" (Smit & Fritz, 2008:1). After nearly sixteen years of democracy, what are the responses of teachers to the challenge of school integration?

The South African Schools Act (Act No. 37 of 1997) catalysed by the Bill of Rights and the South African Constitution formalized the process of desegregation of schools in South Africa. As a result of these Constitutional measures, the public schooling system in South Africa has undergone radical changes. It created the opportunity for students from diverse cultural backgrounds to attend public schools of their choice.

This choice however was accompanied by a plethora of reactions. Firstly,

it initiated the process of 'migration of students'. As African students flocked to historically white and Indian schools in search of quality education, a large percentage of white and Indian students migrated to Model C¹ white schools. Since English was a third or even fourth language of a number of African students, the general perception was that "*the standard of education will drop*" (Waghid, 2007). Secondly, admission was through proxy, as affluent previously white public schools subsequently reacted by raising the school fees² in an attempt to keep black students out. This created the multi-tiered public schooling system in South Africa. Thirdly, it introduced the phenomenon of 'bussing in'³ in education. Under apartheid South Africa the residential areas were segregated according to racial lines (Group Areas Act). Since the geographical location of the "school of choice" was in most cases situated in formerly white and Indian areas, African students seeking access into these schools were forced to commute to and from African townships. Fourthly, Afrikaans-medium⁴ schools have had to change the language policy to dual medium (English and Afrikaans) in an attempt to survive. And fifthly, it introduced the phenomenon of intra-black dynamics and xenophobia as the emphasis shifted from race to 'ethnicity'. A number of students from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Nigeria and Kenya have also entered the schooling system of South Africa. This "choice" in effect became qualified in terms of a number of variables, finance being the most pertinent of all.

The movement of students into 'schools of their choice' naturally had a profound impact on schools and elicited a series of reactions from various stakeholders within the schooling system. Various dynamics were at play at the macro (national education) and meso (school governing bodies) levels of the education system, in an attempt to relieve the tension created by recent educational reforms and to address the issue of power. Of crucial importance however are the dynamics at the microlevel (classroom) — the process of policy appropriation or misappropriation by agents mediating between policy and its actual practice on the classroom floor. In this case the policy in question is school integration. The mediators between policy and practice in the classroom are teachers.

These educational reforms set new and more challenging demands on teachers, which were often in conflict with their beliefs and value systems. Many teachers completed their initial training as teachers in the previously segregated education system, with the understanding that they would be teaching students from a particular race group. Some teachers now had to come to terms with teaching through the medium of their second language and to students who are not proficient in the language of instruction. This has placed tremendous stress on teachers and has impacted on their identities, beliefs and value systems. The majority of Black students are fluent in their mother tongue, which is one or more of the indigenous languages of South Africa. However, many of these students, because of existing educational infrastructures and trends of globalization, are now striving to obtain an education through the medium of English, which for some is a third or even

a fourth language.

Although the above-mentioned constitutional measures set the stage for desegregation to unfold at schools, by establishing the physical proximity of members of different groups in the same school, it did not go further to interrogate the quality of contact; not only in the personal attitudes of students and teachers but also in the institutional arrangements, policies and ethos of the school (Sayed, 2001:254). Accordingly, this study asks, how are teachers responding to the challenge of school desegregation and to what extent has the ethos of these schools been transformed towards integration in the truest sense? What are the patterns of school integration that are unfolding fifteen years later?

In this article I investigate the desegregation process within formal schooling since 1994. The argument is presented as follows. I begin by outlining a theoretical framework on the nuances of desegregation. I then describe the design and sampling of this research study. This is followed by a presentation of findings. I conclude with an analysis and discussion of findings and examine ways in which South African teachers have chosen to respond to the challenge of school integration.

Conceptual markers

Assimilation, multicultural education, anti-racist education, critical race theory (CRT), postcolonial theory and cosmopolitanism are explored in this study as approaches for thinking through different ways of conceptualizing intercultural education and the difficulties of changing the western-derived models of schools which have become global.

The process of *assimilation* occurs when one ethnic or cultural group acquires the behaviour, values, perspectives, ethos and characteristics of another ethnic group and sheds its own cultural characteristics (Banks & McGhee Banks, 2001). Allied to the perspective of assimilation are claims of 'colour-blindness'. Colour-blindness occurs when teachers suppress the negative images they hold of students of other races by professing not to see colour (McCarthy & Critchlow, 1993:131). It is a perspective that objectively serves to hide institutionalized racism or discriminatory attitudes in desegregated schools. In contrast, *multicultural education* sets out to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups by acknowledging difference, i.e. 'seeing colour'. It is an approach that attempts to help all students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a diverse society (Banks & Banks, 1995: xi). However, multiculturalism is also seen as depoliticising culture, and ignores the power and structural dimensions of racism. It is based on the premise that racism is a result of prejudice and ignorance that can be eradicated by merely promoting personal contacts, cultural exchange, understanding and provision of information.

Anti-racist education, on the other hand seeks to challenge "the apolitical and folksy orientation of multicultural education" (Bonnet & Carrington,

1996). It is seen as “an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (Dei, 1995:25). This perspective calls for not only confronting and opposing overt attitudes, practices and customs, but also insists on opposing subtle racism, stereotypes and patronizing attitudes such as the ‘business as usual’ that has been systematized to maintain blacks and other minorities in an oppressed state (Spears, 1978).

Scholars of CRT are unified by two common interests — to understand how a ‘regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of colour have been created and maintained in [society]’ (Crenshaw *et al.*, 1995:xiii; Guinier, 1991; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Cadwell, 1996; Tate, 1997) and to change the bond that exists between law and racial power. The concern of critical race theory is to re-narrativize the globalisation story in a way that places historically marginalised parts of the world at the centre rather than the periphery of the education and globalisation debate.

CRT argues that social reality is created only through the stories we tell as individuals and as a society and that only by looking at the narratives of those who have been victimized by the legal system can we understand the “socially ingrained” and “systemic” forces at work in their oppression (Pizarro, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1997; Delgado 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993; Roediger, 1991). Central to CRT is the notion that the dominant mindset of society, the shared stereotypes, beliefs and understanding can only be challenged through telling stories. As Tate (1997:235) explains, “... the voice of the individual can provide insight into the political, structural and representational dimensions of the legal system, especially as they relate to the group case”.

Postcolonial theory focuses on forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world: the politics of anti-colonialism and neo-colonialism, race, gender, nationalisms, class and ethnicities define its terrain” (Young, 2001:11; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996; Mongia, 1996; Barker, Hume & Iversen, 1994). Postcolonial studies seek to deconstruct the ongoing discourses; they point out the need to ask questions and to focus different ways of stating the problems in the dominant discourses in education, for example, related to power (Foucault, 1972; Deacon, 2006). Cultural hegemonic European knowledge is criticized in an attempt to reintroduce and give value to knowledge represented from the non-European world (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; Gandhi, 1998; Spivak, 1995; 2000). Hybridity (the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and colonised cultures) is celebrated for its ability to break down the false sense that colonized cultures — or colonizing cultures for that matter are monolithic or have essential, unchanging features (Lye, 1998) and is conceived as a “Third Space of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1994:37).

Cosmopolitanism (Gilroy, 2006; Appiah, 2006, Rajan & Sharma, 2006; Nussbaum, 1996; 1997; Carlson, 2003; Fullinwider, 2001) opens up the way for new conceptions of the world that transcends traditional boundaries by

offering people a way to think about their own identity and how they may formulate a more conciliatory view of the 'other' beliefs and cultures. Cosmopolitanism combines a commitment to humanist principles and norms, an assumption of human equality, with a recognition of difference, and a celebration of diversity (Kaldor, 2003). It is a perspective that enables individuals to negotiate their multiple identities and loyalties and prepares them to recognize that individual situations can no longer exclusively be explained in the traditional 'bounded' notions of citizenship, territoriality and nationality (Serrano & Walker, 2007). At its most basic, cosmopolitanism is a view of the world such as that proposed by Anderson-Gold (2001:1). "... the cosmopolitan is one that views herself as a citizen of a world community based upon common human values".

The above approaches to addressing diversity in education illustrate how cultural identities shift as people experience new languages, experiences and understanding (Gandhi, 1998). Different cultures interact in a third space in which boundaries and borders become ever more porous in the contemporary world. The education system and schools in particular have to take cognizance of these identity shifts in preparing the youth for their rightful place on the global stage. In this regard, teachers play a pivotal role in a class of diverse students for they set the boundaries for placement and displacement.

Research strategy

This research is composed of case studies of 18 teachers working in diverse South African classrooms. The data collection consisted of a mix of sustained classroom observations and in-depth interviews of teachers.

The research was conducted in six primary and five secondary urban schools, spread across three provinces⁵ in South Africa. The schools were selected to represent the larger group of similar urban public schools where rapid desegregation had been implemented during the nine years prior to this study.⁶ Migration of students has only been in one way; hence it is former white schools that have all four "old racial categories" of students, namely, white, African, Indian and coloured. The limitation is that the majority of schools are not, effectively, desegregated.

The race profile of the teaching cadre at these schools, however, had remained relatively unaltered. It was thus suspected that considerable mismatches would exist between the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of teachers and a significant proportion of students at each school. What was not clear was how desegregation at the level of classroom practice was manifesting itself. The racial and gender composition of the sample of teachers in this study were as follows: 4 white male; 5 white female; 3 Indian male; 3 Indian female; 1 coloured male; 1 coloured female, and 1 African female.

Observation was the main data gathering technique used in this study. Observations were conducted between 2006 and 2007. The researcher observed each teacher between 7–8 occasions over a two-week period. Observed lessons were videotaped and interviews were audio taped and transcribed. However, it must be noted that there are advantages and limitations of inten-

sive observations at a small number of schools. The advantages of such a technique is that it provides a lens into the 'lived experiences' of classroom life over a period of time that allows for in-depth study and creates the opportunity for patterns (if any) to emerge. The limitation is that the small number of schools observations could be seen as instructive and illustrative, and not as representative of all schools.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these teachers to determine what their perspectives were about the way in which the process of desegregation was unfolding in the classroom. These interviews were conducted after the two-week period of observations. In order to get a better feel of the learning environment, various field notes were made, based on informal observations of classrooms. Attention was also given to the physical atmosphere of the classroom, which included observations of artifacts such as paintings, décor, photographs, portraits and school magazines.

The data were analysed utilising qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; Sandelowski, 2000). Codes were generated from the data and continuously modified by the researcher's treatment of the data "to accommodate new data and new insights about those data" (Sandelowski, 2000:338). Data were reduced into three categories: Denial of difference; Recognition of difference and preservation of cultural identity; Recognition of difference and incorporation and integration into daily classroom practices.

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the respective provincial departments. This research study also received ethics approval from the Ethics Committee at my university.

Findings

Denial of difference

Setting the scene: classroom climate and atmosphere

Overall, there seemed to be a sense of general apathy and non-committal among the majority of teachers in terms of creating a warm and welcoming environment for all students. Most classrooms were either decorated with students' work on one particular theme or aspect or boasted posters that were remnants of the former schooling era that serviced students of a particular race group. In these instances, if it was a former white school it would be white students and if it was a former Indian school it would be Indian students. Approximately two-thirds of the teachers in this sample (10) it would seem did not deliberately set out to create a sense of belonging for their students. The classroom climate and atmosphere was clearly representative of the hegemonic culture of the school and was conducive to promoting an assimilatory approach to education.

Teaching strategy

The teaching strategy of this group of teachers was aligned to the hegemonic culture of the school [former white school: culture would be of white students; former Indian school: culture would be the Indian culture] and fostered an

assimilatory approach. In general, students were addressed by their names and these teachers saw every student as 'the same', enjoying equal rights and opportunities in the classroom. "*I see all my students as the same*"; "*I see students, I do not see colour*". For example, if this was a former Indian school, irrespective of the fact that the student population of the classroom had changed drastically where the majority of students were now African, the teacher taught as if she was still teaching to an Indian group of students. Her curriculum delivery and assessment practices were filtered through this lens. The same applied to the group of white teachers who fell into this category. They taught from the perspective of a white cultural lens and adopted a "colour-blind approach" to teaching.

Some of the teachers within this group choose a more clinical approach and detached their teaching from culture, as evident from, "*It's my job. I am a teacher and I teach. Culture has nothing to do with it*". They did not relate what they were teaching to the background of their students. Cognisance was not given to the cultural or linguistic knapsack of the student. These teachers remained physically aloof from their students and opted for a more authoritative professional stance that divorced their personal life from their professional life.

Recognition of difference and preservation of cultural identity

Setting the scene: classroom climate and atmosphere

A lesser number of teachers in this sample (5 of 18) took the initiative to create a classroom that was warm and inviting. Classroom walls were decorated with commercially produced posters that addressed diversity. These walls reflected pictures of Mandela, Cultures in South Africa, Bill of Rights, Women and Children's rights and the new coat of arms. These posters were generally distributed to schools by the provincial districts of education. In addition to these posters some of the walls in the classroom were adorned with projects and posters of different learning areas. One did not get the sense, however, that the teacher actively set out to make her students aware of diversity. Everything was displayed more in the form of a 'showcase' and nothing was integrated into the lessons. Although a number of opportunities arose during the observed lessons for the teacher to draw on and engage with visual aids that adorned the classroom walls, the teacher remained impervious to them. These things were just there, and for what it was worth it could have been anything else as well.

Teaching strategy

A practice that one of these teachers (Nita) observed was to allow students to take turns to pray from their cultural perspective on a rotational basis. This observance of prayer in the classroom created an opportunity for students to learn about other religious rituals and exposed them to differences. Nita also tried to relate diverse and cultural issues to the students' background, for example in one of her lessons she brought students' attention to the fact that

“pocket money” differed in terms of the student’s home background. However, her emphasis on difference was more in the ‘celebratory’ mode of teaching. She did not engage her students in questioning what made for the differences in socio-economic status or in religious beliefs.

Vani, an Indian female teacher, from this category, seized the opportunity to teach Indian dance to students in an attempt to make students understand and appreciate Indian culture. However, 90% of the group of students that she was teaching were African students. On probing further as to whether any African dances were taught, the students responded, “... *well we are given no other options*”. Vani’s response to this same query was,

... this is an Indian school and they know it. If they want to come here then they must be prepared to follow the rules and regulations of this school” .

Albeit, this being a public school in a new democracy?

For Charles a white male teacher, integration meant that

... we share food and make a fuss about cultural or religious happenings. They may bring cultural dishes to school for us to taste, and they may dress in their cultural attire especially on cultural and religious holidays. The children get to learn that Africans eat mieliepap and mopani worms and Indians eat samoosas and curry and whites eat braaivleis and koeksusters and that kind of thing you know ...

These data signify that Charles responded to the challenge of integration in terms of the celebratory approach that endorsed stereotypical thinking about the “Other”. This approach is based on first order changes that are cosmetic and superficial.

Recognition of difference and integration into daily classroom practices

Setting the scene: classroom climate and atmosphere

Of the 18 teachers in the sample, only three (Martie, Leela, and Miriam) took an extreme sense of pride in creating an atmosphere in their classrooms that was conducive to effective teaching. Martie was a white Afrikaans-speaking female in her late forties, Leela was an Indian English-speaking female in her early thirties and Miriam was an Indian English-speaking female in her early fifties.

The physical layout of their classrooms was well planned, despite small classrooms that had to cater to 40 students. The classroom was immaculately decorated and representative of all students in their class. It was warm and inviting and created a sense of belonging for all students. Classroom walls were reflective of the diverse group of students. It proudly reflected the “rainbow nation” by means of posters on the national anthem, the national flag, and the coat of arms. The national anthem exhibited in multilingual language also indicated to the class that different languages were acceptable in this classroom. Every available space in the classroom was adorned with posters, student attempts and artifacts that reflected the rainbow nation. The top of the cupboard that stood at the front corner of Martie’s class proudly displayed colourfully decorated artefacts of African origin — spear, shield, and

mask. Towards the back of Leela's class, a long string was hung from one side of the class across to the other, on which each student's artistic attempts were draped.

Teaching strategy

In all observed lessons these three teachers used every opportunity to discuss issues of cultural difference in a comfortable, informative and supportive manner. They created a home for their students by addressing them by their names and in so doing validated the cultural identity of each student in their class. Every available opportunity was utilized to incorporate the life-world and the cultural background of the diverse class of students into lessons.

Martie: "So what if your shoes are broken — your spirit is intact. You are special"

Martie actively sought to promote intercultural understanding by exposing her Grade 5 students to issues of "race" and "diversity". She planned her Human Social Science lesson on "Intercultural understanding" and used a simple and concrete method (fruit salad metaphor) to teach the abstract concept of 'race' to Grade 5 students. During her mathematics lesson on symmetry she took cognisance of issues of race and diversity and once again used a simple aid such as a mirror to teach the concept of symmetry. The Life orientation lesson on Emotions and Love was based on an abstract that was taken from the valued citizens student's manual. The problem posed to her students was: What do you think carries us through hard times? The ensuing discussion focused on issues of love, misunderstanding, acceptance, tolerance negotiation, fair communication. She also tried to instill in her students a sense of being valued for who they are. She said, "... *to be different is not wrong. You are entitled to your opinion*". Groups offered different reasons during the discussion and all reasons were valued. All students in her class were valued. One did not get a sense of one cultural group being pitted against the other or a sense of cultural hegemony.

In all observed lessons it was evident that Martie took much initiative to relate the new lesson to the students life-world. Students could easily identify with what was being taught as it was suitable to their level of understanding. She taught abstract concepts using concrete and everyday items. For example the concept of 'racism' being taught by using the fruit salad metaphor. She used the film "Balto" to teach about 'human rights'. She made mathematical concepts tangible and concrete — in teaching symmetry for instance students were required to fold paper along lines of symmetry. She related her teaching to television programmes that students watched, for example, she knew that her students were hooked onto "Pokemon". She was definitely in tune and in touch with the life experiences and background of all students. She actively and consciously set out to make each student feel a part of the class by drawing on the cultural background of each student, for example, she asked students: "*Sipho how would we say 'banana' in Xhosa*"; "*Maria, what do we*

call pears in the Afrikaans culture”; “Can anyone tell me what they call apples in their culture?”

Martie tried to instil respect and understanding of each other’s difference in her students by using every available opportunity to allow students to learn about each other. What follows is an example given about respect.

Martie: In the western culture what do we do when somebody comes in to the classroom?

Students: *We stand up and greet ma’am.*

Martie: Yes ... In the African culture, how do we show respect?
An African student demonstrates, by standing and bowing his head down.

Martie: So you keep your head down, and if you don’t know that culture, how would you react? You’d shout and say something like “Look at me when I am talking to you!” Is there a certain way that Indians show respect? Turns to an Indian student, tell us, you go to Madressa⁷ classes?

Student: *We greet in another language.*

Martie: You speak in another language. Now class if someone comes up to you and speaks in another language and you do not understand that language you are going to say that person is rude.

Aside from drawing on the cultural differences of all students and incorporating this into her lessons, Martie also actively set out to learn other languages that were representative of students in her class. She intentionally set out to expose her students to each other’s cultural background by teaching them two new words from the different cultures represented in her class on a daily basis. Every week the students and Martie would learn 10 words from a different culture in the class and try to use those words during class interactions. Her teaching was driven by her belief: “*So what if your shoes are broken — your spirit is intact. You are special. I want to save each and every child from having a low self-esteem*”.

Leela: “You need to adopt an inclusive teaching strategy all the time”

Leela drew on students’ experiences and potential all the time. She randomly asked students of different races and gender to read to the class. In this way she integrated teaching and made all students feel a sense of belonging in her class. “*When she asks you put up you hand she won’t just leave you and ask someone else. She always gives you a chance*” (Karabo, African student). Her class was integrated and fostered a sense of working together. Students in this classroom did not feel that they were pushed away by other students or by the teacher “*They do not push you away from the group*”. They felt a part of the class and were encouraged to participate by the teacher as evident from a students comment: “*She actually makes you part of the class*”.

As opposed to Martie’s approach above, Leela assigned a task that required her students to perform dances cross-culturally bringing in the notion of the ‘rainbow nation’. She encouraged her students to reflect on the

assigned activity and to say what made their group successful. Since the activity was about cross-cultural dances, students learned about other cultures and the reason those dances were famous in their communities

I want you to tell the class the reasons you chose those particular blends of dances and also what made it possible for you to perform it so well.

Another opportunity to promote respect and understanding of each other's difference in Leela's class was provided through the procedure of voting for the class captain. Her class of diverse students democratically elected a class captain. Students were taught that they would respect their class captain despite his/her race and gender. "*Madam makes me give points because I am class captain*" (Sibongile, an African student). The sense of instilling democratic values and responsibility to the chosen leader.

Miriam: "Make your students feel at home. Lessons should be life encapsulating"

In order to give all students a sense of belonging Miriam "*tried to make lessons as friendly as possible*". She believed that it is through this teaching style that the students feel part of the class and are not afraid to attempt any difficult tasks with which they are confronted. She mentioned that "*bringing the real life experience into the classroom makes her students feel at home*". Miriam is strongly of the view that teachers need to change their mindset "*to perceive that these are children I have to teach presently and I have to adapt to meet their needs*". "*I've got to think differently*" in order to make them part of the classroom first and foremost. Sensitive issues such as race are discussed in her classroom in an engaging yet cautious manner to allow students to get to know each other.

In her quest to try to bring in as many things around experiences and situations of her students, Miriam assigned tasks to her class of diverse students that were community-based. For example, in her lesson on parallel lines, students had to bring indications of parallel lines in and around the community. The lesson indicated that these lines were found in the townships of Laudium,⁸ Atteridgeville,⁹ Mamelodi¹⁰ and other surrounding areas. These townships represent the catchment area of her students and this indicated to them that at some level their residential environments had some relative similarity. Miriam viewed students that she taught, "*... not on the basis of skin colour, but as innocent children very ready to learn, children who come from extremely poor and deprived backgrounds*". It was this view that propelled her inclusive teaching strategy.

Analysis and discussion of data

Denial of difference

Whether the actions of this group of teachers were intentional or operating at a subliminal level, they perceived what they were doing as the correct thing as evident from their emphasis on "*I see all students as the same — just students*"; "*...whether they have curly hair or blonde hair, a fair pigmentation*

or a dark pigmentation, I treat them all the same". However, inherent in their practices were racial discrimination and cultural bias as they chose to teach from a particular cultural lens. For instance, in the case of a white Afrikaans-speaking teacher she would teach as if she was teaching to a class of Afrikaans-speaking students (despite the fact that she had a class of diverse racial and ethnic students). And, in the case of the Indian teacher she would teach from an Indian cultural perspective. In essence, these teachers saw a group of diverse learners as either all white learners or all Indian learners. They did not take any cognizance of the cultural or linguistic capital of the other learners in the class and did not make any attempt to integrate this asset into their lessons.

The question arises, "*the same*" from whose cultural perspective. Their response to school integration was one of assimilation and colour-blindness. These teachers suppressed the negative images they held of students of other races by professing not to see colour (McCarthy & Critchlow, 1993:131) and attempted to absorb students from other cultural groups into the presiding hegemonic culture of the school, which was either a 'white' culture or an 'Indian' culture. In doing so, they failed to draw on the rich cultural and linguistic capital of their students, and deprived all students in their class of an enriching opportunity. The predominant response of this group of teachers to school desegregation was that of assimilation and colour-blindness. This is an approach to school integration that objectively serves to hide institutionalized racism or discriminatory attitudes in desegregated schools.

Recognition of difference and preservation of cultural identity

This group of teachers recognized and acknowledged differences between their students. However, they did not go further to engage and interrogate issues that arose from those differences, namely race, identity or culture. It was more a sense of awareness of cultures and promoting a sense of acceptance and tolerance. Their response to the challenge of school integration was to adopt a multicultural approach that acknowledges the presence of different cultures. However, with this acknowledgement came a sense of stereotyping and patronizing attitudes as evident from comments made by Charles,

... *the children get to learn that Africans eat mieliepap and Indians eat samoosas and curry and whites eat braai vleis and koeksusters and that kind of thing you know ...*

These teachers depoliticised culture, and ignored the power and structural dimensions of racism. Their understanding of school integration was based on the premise that racism is a result of prejudice and ignorance that can be eradicated by merely promoting personal contacts, cultural exchange, understanding and provision of information. Multiculturalism opts for a position that says, "*I know you different and that nice*". It does not interrogate the whole issue of power dynamics. Power still plays out in terms of one cultural group presiding over the others. Integration for most of these teachers was still very much at the celebratory and superficial level.

Recognition of difference and integration into daily classroom practices

Teachers such as Martie, Miriam and Leela held the view that they were not merely conduits of information. For them, “*lessons should be life encapsulating*”. These teachers professionally captured this by incorporating different perspectives in their lessons,

That’s my method of passing on information not just limiting them to the content that is required. I diversify and draw on my students backgrounds to make the lesson as meaningful and as interesting as possible for my students (Miriam).

These teachers engaged students by making learning area related jokes. They engaged with students and indicated to them that they were approachable and most importantly, that learning was fun. Furthermore, *edutainment* came out strongly in their approach to teaching. Teaching and learning should be fun. They attempted to bring in as much as they could into the daily classroom living, the things that centre on their students’ experiences and situations. They took much initiative to ensure that issues of power were addressed and to ensure that all students felt a ‘*sense of belonging*’ and a sense of being ‘*at home*’. They encouraged students to participate in dialogic engagement about issues of race, identity and culture and were committed to creating a generation of students that would collectively strive for a society that protects and nurtures human rights and democratic citizenship (Schoeman, 2006).

Their practices were propelled by the belief that educating for diversity is as essential to teaching as nurturing is to human development. To be effective and equitable teachers, they must understand and appreciate human diversity.

Their response to school integration at an intuitive and naive level was a blending of anti-racism, critical race theory, postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism and took the following forms: First, they took action to change institutional structures (albeit within the microcosmic space of their classrooms) so that they could address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression. They demonstrated the ability to interpret classroom activities critically, to identify and solve problems regarding their teaching practice, and to make thoughtful and reflective instructional and classroom management decisions that were conducive to teaching a class of diverse learners. Furthermore, these teachers were active participants in the classroom and observers of the learning and teaching processes, assessing and interpreting the data forthcoming from a class of diverse learners and using that knowledge as a basis for planning and decision-making in their classrooms (Deacon, 2006). Second, they acknowledged the multiplicity of realities that existed in order to better understand specific manifestations of the interactions of these realities and allowed students to tell their stories. Third, they attempted to reintroduce and give value to knowledge represented from the non-European world and promoted cultural hybridity by creating a third space of enunciation. Fourth, these teachers opened up the way for new conceptions of the world that transcends traditional boundaries by offering people

a way to think about their own identity and how they may formulate a more conciliatory view of the 'other' beliefs and cultures. Furthermore, these teachers responded to school integration with a strong commitment to humanist principles and norms, an assumption of human equality, with a recognition of difference, and a celebration of diversity.

Conclusion

This study found that there were three main responses to the challenges of school integration, namely assimilation, multiculturalism and a blending of antiracism, critical race theory, postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism. Although the sample in the latter approach was relatively small, the signs of change and transformation are there, like the buds of spring flowers pushing through the earth after a long, hard and bitter winter. The approach of the three teachers, who not only recognised difference but tried to incorporate it into daily classroom practices, holds immense promise for a young democracy like South Africa. The promise is that South Africa could be the envisioned 'rainbow nation', a nation of cosmopolitan citizens based on common human values where all citizens feel a sense of belonging and a feeling at home. For, it is within the confines of the school as a microcosm of society that the seeds of a socially just and democratic society are planted, germinate and are nurtured to blossom into a healthy and flourishing tree that would weather any storm and provide magnanimous shade against the harsh rays of the sun. Schools, as microcosms of the society at large, are challenged to transcend institutional and educational racism. They should be seen as centres of opportunities (Haley, 2002). Each of us is defined by multiple identities — including gender, race, class and age. All of these combine to determine our opportunities in life, to empower or disempower us, depending on our context. Thus, teachers in responding to the challenge of school integration, should begin by viewing diversity as an asset within diverse school environments. The greater challenge ahead goes beyond accommodating cultures in terms of the celebratory approach. It involves embracing the "archaeology of knowledge heritages, and notions of love, equality and justice that exist in cultures around the world, and actively re-appropriating these and putting it at the service of present and succeeding generations" (Foucault, 1972:210).

Notes

1. Model C School — a government attempt to cut state costs by shifting some of the financing and control of white schools to parents.
2. School fees — The School Governing Body determines school fees in South African public schools. Hence, the multi-tiered and multi-layered public schooling system.
3. Bussing in — a phenomenon that has occurred post 1994, where large numbers of African students are transported by bus from neighbouring black suburbs to middle class Indian English medium schools.
4. Afrikaans — Afrikaans is one of the eleven official languages recognized by South Africa's new Constitution. In the previous dispensation, only English and Afrikaans were recognized as official languages and languages of instruction in whites-only schools. Afrikaans is one of the eleven official languages recognized by South

Africa's new Constitution. In the previous dispensation, only English and Afrikaans were recognized as official languages and languages of instruction in whites-only schools.

5. Provinces — South Africa is geographically divided into nine provinces.
6. It is important not to overstate the growth of racial integration in South African education. While some white schools have become 'black' due to white flight, black schools have (understandably) not changed in terms of their racial distribution of students and teachers. A large number of mainly middle class, white and Indian English medium urban public schools and low class Afrikaans-medium urban public schools have changed as a result of the growth of black students in such schools. The overall picture in South Africa is that children of colour have moved in large numbers towards the English-speaking sector of the former white and Indian school systems (Soudien, 2004).
7. Madressa — Vernacular school of Arabic-speaking students.
8. Laudium — Township designated for Indians during the apartheid era and is still predominantly Indian in character.
9. Atteridgeville — Township designated for Africans during the apartheid era and is still predominantly African in character.
10. Mamelodi — Township designated for Africans during the apartheid era and is still predominantly African in character.

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