Reflections on the State of Multicultural Education in Historically White South African Schools

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ABSTRACT The first South African democratic elections ushered in a new schooling system that was previously fragmented along racial and ethnic lines, unequal access to education and inequality. Post Apartheid policy developments, transformational imperatives and social changes, prone on promoting democracy, human dignity equality and social justice become the cornerstone for a new dispensation, particularly a non-racial, desegregated, multicultural schooling system. Twenty years after the abolished of Apartheid, it is observed via media reports and journal articles that incidences of racism, prejudice and human rights violence are still rife in these supposedly multicultural institutions. The purpose of this paper is therefor to reflect critically, through a qualitative study, on the state of multicultural education in historically White schools of South Africa. A key finding revealed that historically White schools have different notions and uphold various practices confined to multicultural education.

INTRODUCTION

Apartheid schooling[1] for Black and White people was organised along racial lines. Education legislation such as the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the Indian Person's Education Act of 1965, the National Education Policy Act of 1967 and the Coloured Person's Act of 1963, outlined the objectives and guiding principles for the provision of education for Blacks, Indians, Coloureds and Whites, respectively in South Africa. Each of these acts was geared at creating a schooling system which was based on racial, ethnic and geographical separation (Mpisi 2010; Alexander 2014). Accordingly, Christie and Collins (1984) argue that apartheid schooling was uphold to ensure that White South Africans received an education which would grant them managerial positions and leadership status in the economic, political and social spheres of South African, whilst Black South Africans were subjected to a schooling system in which these individuals took on menial, un/semi-skilled, inferiorised positions, particularly in the economy and workplace settings. The first democratic elections in 1994, signalled the desegregation of schooling in South Africa. The opening of schools to all race groups, especially historically White schools, resulted in the movement of learners, from predominantly Black residential areas to historically white schools, located in former White residential areas.

Khosa (2001) holds the view that schooling in post Apartheid[2], was characterised by the movement of Black learners, residing in historically Black residential areas to exclusively white schools. Coupled with the increase in the admission of Black learners, White schools experienced and in some cases, were confronted with various realities and complexities brought about by the intake of a racial and cultural diverse learner population- a phenomenon for which the predominant White teacher staff might not have been prepared for in their initial teacher education programmes and qualifications.

Mpisi (2010) is further of the opinion that the South African government's attempt at creating a harmonious and heterogeneous society is characterised by incidents associated with racism, stereotyping, cultural misunderstanding and human rights violations in schools. Racial conflict, derogatory racial abuse, racial segregation and discrimination are but some of the accusations levelled against some historically White schools.

The intention of the researcher of this paper is not to paint a bleak picture or not to acknowledge the initiatives in progressive historically White schools who appear to be committed in transforming their internal structures and practices. Teachers in South African schools seemingly demonstrate a lack of commitment; inadequate and/or inappropriate behaviour towards practices geared at promoting school integra-

tion (Moletsane et al. 2004). It might be argued that teachers, especially, older White teachers in historically White schools, have not received adequate training and support from education authorities in dealing with the issues and challenges associated with multicultural school contexts (Alexander 2004).

The portrayal of incidences of perceived racism, prejudice and human rights abuses in media, are however, predominantly confined to historically white schools.

In understanding how certain aspects of Multicultural Education have relevance to current media portrayals, I the researcher will discuss certain aspects relating to multicultural education. Thereafter, the researcher will propose how key tenets of critical multiculturalism might be used in enhancing educational transformation, social justice, human rights and eradicating racism at schools, more specifically, historically White schools.

UNPACKING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Multicultural education is viewed as a human rights and comprehensive reform philosophy and process aimed at changing the entire educational environment so that learners from diverse backgrounds and social group identifications (race, language, ethnicity, gender culture , socio- economic status, sexual orientation, social class, age, disability, ability status, religious/ spiritual traditions and migration status) experience equal opportunities and quality education (Miksch et al. 2003; Cimilo 2011). As a philosophical construct multicultural education is embedded on the ideals of freedom, social justice, equity and human dignity (Nussbaum 2003). In essence, multicultural education need to extend the daily classroom dynamics, learner interactions and curricular processes- it should facilitate a transformative agenda which is geared at understanding the school as an organisation, its teaching staff, learners, parents and the broader community (Miksch et al. 2003).

Banks (2001: 2) adequately summarises , multicultural education as follow:

"...multicultural education seeks to create equal opportunities for all students, including those from different racial, ethnic, and social-class groups. Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all

students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within society an d the nation's classrooms. Multicultural education is a process because it goals are ideals that teachers and administrators should constantly strive to achieve."

Gathering from the above, it is clear that descriptions of multicultural education may differ and may be defined differently by scholars depending on their focus of this broad concept. Multicultural education is generally regarded by scholars as a loaded, broad encompassing concept. It holds various understandings, meanings and interpretations for different individuals, people and nations alike.

Some descriptions, according to Gay (1994) highlight the cultural characteristics of diverse groups; others might focus on socio-political problems stemming from long histories of oppression (apartheid in the South African context); the misuse of political power; the unequal distribution and reallocation of resources and the enhancement of cultural pluralism.

Therefore, the assumption can be made as to what counts as multicultural education, to a large extent, might be determined by how this construct is defined (Gorski 2010). In the South African schooling context, multicultural education hold its own distinctive meaning. Education for the Black majority group in South Africa was characterised by a divided, racialised system focussed on promoting segregation, unequal access and distribution of resources. The racial, ethnic and geographical separation of the South African education in 1948 at the helm of a White Afrikaner majority government, lead to the origin of 15 separate departments of education, serving the needs of a white minority and a black majority. Instituted oppressive policy formulation processes and the implementation thereof, further uphold the structure of white supremacy and racial domination (Kivedo 2006; Mpisi 2010). The implementation of a multicultural schooling system is dependent on key democratic policy initiatives aimed at promoting crucial changes needed for the conception, organisation and execution of the total educational process. These changes require modifications in an educational system, encapsulated by a mono-cultural, Eurocentric orientation and a white 'cultural' perspective.

Educational transformation in democratic South Africa was largely driven by constitutional directives. The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) aspires to build a single nation by upholding values such as dignity, equality, non-racism, non-sexism and the granting of equal citizenship to all inhabitants of South Africa (RSA 1996 a). It therefore seems appropriate to reason as to why the education system should exclusively focus on the promotion of democracy, human dignity, equality, human rights and social justice (Alexander 2004; Kivedo 2006). All these changes gave origin to the practice of multicultural education. The Constitution of all schools, should therefor reflect the values and rights embodied in the South African Constitution- it recognises and embraces the diversity of interest in society and ensures justice and equal rights for all citizens. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) further consolidates and gives effect to the Constitutional obligations needed to transform education and schooling (RSA 1996 b). Educational transformation is regarded as a process aimed at achieving equal opportunity and equity among all citizens , particularly ethnic minorities (Black majority as in the case of South Africa) and the economically marginalised (Bennett 1990). It is disheartening to observe media portrayals of racism, racial abuse, acts of segregation and demeaning behaviour in South African schools- these issues are not only defeating the Constitutional imperatives but are delimiting attempts at promoting transformation, reconciliation and nation building. Individuals' interpretation of Constitutional obligations and meanings attached to multicultural education become further blurred when they appear to be promoting subtle forms of oppression and racial segregation. During the 2015 Curro private school incident in South Africa, a regional manager of Curro Holdings seems to justify segregation on the following grounds (City Press 2015)

"It is not because we would like to segregate the whites, it is just because of friends. Children are able to make friends with children of their culture"

In another incident in 2013, media reports alluded to the disciplinary hearing of a White male teacher found guilty by the provincial education authorities for racially abusing Black learners at a primary school in the Free State province of South Africa. The spokesperson of the education authorities response to the incident and subsequent action taken, was as follow:

"We are therefore pleased to inform the commission that the teacher has resigned following our intervention. In addition we want to inform the commission that we have developed a number of programs to address racism, foster social cohesion, and encourage learners to respect our national symbols and diversity...We doing this to ensure that the right of every child is respected and free from all forms of violence. Various workshops on racism, targeting teachers of ex-model C and affected schools were conducted throughout the province"

The above mentioned incidents, illustrate that multicultural schools and education authorities should make concerted efforts at promoting social justice awareness and initiating programmes aimed at supporting their teaching staff, learners, parents and the wider school community. Social justice is central to the promotion of multicultural education. At societal level the main purpose of multicultural education is to reduce prejudice and discrimination against oppressed groups; to promote equal opportunity and social justice for all citizens of a nation and to effect the equitable distribution of power among individuals of different race and cultural groups (Banks 2008; Sleeter and Grant 2003). Schools and in particular, historical white schools should create an awareness of how social relations, social privilege and oppression influence teacher expectations, learner-teacher/learner interactions, socialisation and classroom dynamics (Alexander 2004; Singh et al. 2012). In the South African schooling context there appears to be a growing need to develop anti-racist, oppressive and diversity programmes as a measure of promoting multicultural education. Multicultural education has implications for decision making that might affect the operations and the functioning of the school at all levels. In essence decision making includes direction and input towards the vision and mission statement of an organisation, teaching, learning, school management and governance, learner achievement, staff performance and the establishment of a vibrant school culture.

Noting the prevalence of various social justice concerns (racism, prejudice, oppression, discrimination, segregation, school inequalities, etc.) in the South African schooling system, the state of multicultural education, in particularly,

historically White schools, requires a deeper reflection and the genuine involvement of all relevant education stakeholders. Mpisi (2010) is convinced that South Africa has not yet mastered the process of integration into a harmonious and heterogeneous society. Media reports portray at regular intervals, incidences of racism and discrimination, racial segregation, human rights violations, racial abuse, conflict and cultural stereotyping levelled against historically White schools.

Nieto's (2000) view on multicultural education, which is most relevant to current schooling issues in South Africa, cuts across issues of school reform, pluralism and curriculum processes. Her comprehensive stance on multicultural education, which in essence promotes a brand of critical multiculturalism, is most relevant to the contextual realities and complexities of the South African schooling system. Nieto's (2000: 305) position on multicultural education is echoed as follow:

"Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students (learners). It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic and gender amongst others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education permeates the school's curriculum and instructional strategies, as well as interactions among teachers, students and families, and the way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it has critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes democratic principles of social justice"

McLaren (2003) claims that critical multiculturalism creates a platform for the introduction of democratic initiatives in the curriculum, pedagogy, social relations in school settings and an understanding of participation in diverse communities, which seems to support efforts towards the acquisition of social cohesion and cultural harmony. Critical multiculturalism can viewed as an enabling form of education which is focused at harnessing the abilities, skills and commitments of teachers and learners in promoting social change, nation building and a competent global citizenry (May 1999; Hopkins-Gillispie

2011). According to Grant (1994) schools, particularly historically White multicultural schools in South Africa have the responsibility of preparing learners for social structural equality; develop learners' critical, conscious and social action skills; enhance cultural pluralism and promote equal opportunities in classrooms and school settings. At the end, critical multicultural education should be directed at expounding principles and values of the South African Constitution, whilst also instilling a conducive school culture which is geared at transformation, reconciliation, inclusion, nation building and quality education.

Finally, it should also be noted that critics of multicultural education seemingly debunk policies of multiculturalism with the prejudicial effects of national unity and nation building attempts. The effect of heterogeneities such as, ethnicity, religion, gender, class, professional status, educational credentials, and nationality (legal citizenship) on multicultural education may in a sense, obscure certain inequalities, social injustices or even promote equalities (Kymlicka 1995).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is therefor to reflect critically, via a qualitative content analysis methodology on the state of multicultural education in South African schools. Content analysis was used to interpret the written texts of specific documents (scientific journals and newspaper reports) relating to multicultural education and schooling. Content analysis deals with the forms and antecedent- consequent patterns of form that can be fruitfully employed to examine virtually any type of communication (speech, written text, interviews, images, etc.). This technique therefore serves as a tool for interpreting the words of the written texts and undertaking the perspectives of the producer of these texts (Abrahamson 1983; Weber 1990). Various media, newspaper reports and literature sources were analysed as to get an understanding of pertinent issues and challenges affecting the state of multicultural education in schools, but more specifically, historically White schools.

Procedure

An analytic inductive strategy was used for coding the themes. Content analysis grants the

scholar an opportunity of immersing him/herself in documents (various messages) in order to identify dimensions or themes (Abrahamson 1983).

The corpus of texts selected for analysis in this paper consist of articles relating to South African schools which were published in South African newspapers between 1999 and 2015. A computer search with a combination of the words, *multicultural education, multiculturalism, segregated schools, desegregated schooling, deracialised schooling, diversity in schools, school integration, racism and racial abuse in schools* indicated that SABINET, South Africa's media search option had various newspaper clippings relating to the above mentioned words.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results will now be analysed and discussed based on themes emerging from literature sources and media reports, highlighting the state of multicultural education in South African historical White schools.

The researcher observed several occurring trends and patterns on the state of multicultural education as depicted from various literature and media reports. The following themes emerged through my engagement with these sources, namely school segregation, Constitutional directives, racism, social justice imperatives and quality education.

School Segregation and Desegregation

School segregation can be described as the practice or policy administered by certain educational institutions which separates learners of different races by dividing them into different classrooms (Alexander 2004; Kivedo 2006). A misbelief created in some historically White schools is that desegregation is interpreted as the opening of institutional spaces to racial diverse learners and as such, these settings pronounce their seemingly non-racist and non-discriminatory stances towards the promotion of a democratic South Africa (Nyakudya 2015). Recent reports in the South African media show a steady increase in the prevalence of racism and acts of racial behaviour towards black learners in historically White schools.

Goduka (1999) further states that the desegregation of schools, particularly, historically White schools hasn't prevailed with some daunting challenges. White schools appear to be monoculturalist in character and seem to propagate a false sense of diversity. Black learners tend to be integrated and acculturated into existing European school cultures.

In May 2015, an incident, depicting the occurrence of racial segregation amongst learners at a private primary school was investigated by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDoE). According to the provincial Minister of Education, the findings of the investigation revealed that the school submitted to pressure from White parents who didn't want their children to mix with Black learners, hence the action from school management to divide learners in different classes according to race; culture and the fear of isolation (Eliseev 2015). The minister articulated the following sentiment in this regard:

"The majority of parents are predominantly white and they wanted to pull their children out of the school. The institution gave into pressure and told them that it's racist"

According to Nyakudya (2015) the school initially denied allegations, but consequently apologised for their actions by stating:

"the different races were kept apart as a way of ensuring that children made friends with others who shared their culture and didn't feel isolated"

From the above incidence it can be deduced that some multicultural schools are still persisting with a "peace meal' approach to educational transformation and that some of them appear to be practicing conservative forms of multiculturalism. The assumption can be made that these institutions still view the notion of culture as a fixed, essentialist and predetermined entity. Upholding a school culture through the expeditious transmission of the cultural heritage of the economic, dominant society (white minority in South Africa) through a fixed body of knowledge and the existing social order, are still of cardinal importance to the imposers of such acts. This type of multiculturalism is premised on a partial recognition for diversity, causing fragmentation and it also delimits nation building (Banks and Banks 2007).

Constitutional Directives

The Constitutional directives of South Africa refer to a set of guiding principles prescribed

by the Constitution which the government is supposed to keep in mind, follow or give effect to the ideals a democratic compensation whilst developing new laws and policies (Kivedo 2006). Historically White schools were obligated by the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) to admit learners from diverse racial, cultural background and invariable socio- economic status (Alexander 2014).

Incidents at certain historically white schools, demonstrate the perceived inability and non- commitment of these learning institutions in upholding democratic principles, such as human dignity, fairness and equality- the Constitution of South Africa of 1996 (RSA 1996 a) is based on a declaration of human rights (equality, human dignity, freedom, security, political and social rights). Joubert (1998) postulates that practising teachers in South African schools has a *"vague general concept of the commitment to human rights"* as pronounced in the South African Constitution.

It is still questionable whether all historically white schools have truly embraced the Constitutional mandate. The positive steps that some schools have initiated in a bid to right the apartheid wrongs, cannot be ignored. Educators have also noted that the lack and in some cases, non availability of training programmes and empowerment initiatives from the education authorities, discourage them of actively partaking in multicultural practices and school integration processes (Nyakudya 2015). In line with the latter view, Soudien (2001) records the availability of limited research conducted on diverse schooling in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly to the issue of how Black learners are dealing with issues confined to integration and multiculturalism in historically White schools.

Failing to provide basic human rights can viewed as contravening constitutional rights and promoting social injustices (Motala and Pampallis 2002). In a statement by Howard Ndaba (Sowetan 2014), spokesperson for the Free State Department of Education (FSDEoE), he uttered the following sentiment with regards to the protection of human rights:

"We (FSDoE) doing this to ensure the right of every child is respected and free from all forms of violence"

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (1999) reiterates the role to be fulfilled by a uni-

fied and cohesive democratic society in upholding the rights of a diverse nation in its institutions, various educational settings and national culture. Working towards constitutional directives, can best be achieved through collaboration between learners, parents, educators and the wider community.

Racism

Racism is a belief that humans are subdivided into distinct groups that are different in their social behaviour and innate capacities which can either be classified as superior or inferior. (Newman 2012).

Incidences of racist conflict and violence were reported in media as early as 1999. In the Northwest province of South Africa. A historically White Afrikaans medium school was the scene of some of the worst racial tensions since the abolishment of apartheid, as White parents tried to prevent the first black learners from joining the school. Black learners, who comprised about a quarter of the 600 students (according to Andrew Babele, the Black learner who stabbed a White learner in the neck) was taunted and beaten by groups of White students while White teachers looked on (McGreal 1999). A Black learner uttered the following remark related to the incident:

"This school is pure hell. The white teachers call us kaffirs. The white students can beat us and the teachers laugh"

The reaction from some white learners of this school was startling:

"The blacks must stay away. They are rotten and barbaric. They are unhygienic and carry diseases,' wrote one student. Another commented: 'They fuck up our school, fucking kaffirs.' A third said: 'The boere [Afrikaners] should eliminate all the black pupils, and I personally want to help with the elimination of black pupils."

According to Vally and Dalamba (1999), the SAHRC study titled *Racism, Racial Integration and Desegregation in South African Public Secondary Schools*, which was the first national study on racism and integration in schools, examined overt racial manifestations and practices that prevented integration and advanced various forms of racism. The study further alluded to the ubiquitous nature of subtle racism as having the ability to mutate and adapt in post-1994

South Africa. Vally and Dalamba's prediction to the latter said is spot on. The North west incident was marked as one of the worst cases of racist conflict and violence in a supposedly desegregated schooling system, after the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa.

In recent, separate incidences of the Free State province during 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively, a principal and staff members attached to three historically White schools were implicated by the Free State Department of Education and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) of racially abusing Black learners (Saba 2015). In the first incident a principal and a teacher in the employment of a primary school was found guilty of racism by the provincial education department, whilst calling learners *"baboons and kaffirs"* The individual teacher ultimately resigned while the principal's elevated his case for arbitration (Sowetan: 2014).

With regard to the second incident, the SAHRC found staff and a principal of a combined school guilty of exposing learners to dehumanising and racist treatment and engaging in acts of hate speech towards Black learners. Learners alleged that teachers at this school called them racist and derogatory names such as *"kaffirs, baboons, monkeys, and little black bitches*". Furthermore, the teacher displayed the old South Africa flag (synonymous with an undemocratic, apartheid South Africa) and displaying a picture of Julius Malema, the party leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters, next to an image of a monkey (Mdhluli 2014). Learners further alleged that a teacher made a remark in regard to the above said:

"after seeing their ugly faces, he adores his dog even more because it is more beautiful than them"

According to the Sowetan (2014), the Free State leader of the Democratic Alliance , Patricia Kopane also expressed her concern about the incident:

"It is a disgrace that children at a public school in a democratic South Africa can be exposed to insults and racist abuse by teachers"

The above accounts of individualised racism (a personal view held be a person that members of one racial group is inferior compared to members based on physical differences) and institutionalised racism (exist through laws, school policies, conventions and practices which reflect racial inequality) illustrate the prevalence of racism and the presence of teachers with racist leanings in historically White schools (Nieto 1992). Racism has a debilitating effect on the integration of learners in multicultural contexts such as historically White schools.

It can further be argued that various forms of racism are reincarnated and that this social phenomenon flourishes in subtle ways in the South African schooling landscape (Erasmas and Ferreira 2002). Subtle forms of racism remain complex, dangerous and real and as such, reinforce segregation at various societal levels, such as in the homes of learners, schools, places of prayer, workplaces, at community level, in policies, etc. (Msomi and Shilaho Nd). A similar sentiment, echoed by Nyakudya (2015) illustrates the manner in which institutionalised racism may occur.

"It has been argued that in South Africa, racial transformation is often packed away into policies that have no tangible outputs and have no impact on society. If these policies were practical, racial transformation would see the inclusion of more black teachers in the role educators..."

Teachers in general and educator staff confined to historically White schools, should refrain from forming preconceived ideas about individuals who is typified of belonging to a particular race. The value of each learner and the contribution of each teacher to a democratic South Africa should be acknowledged and embraced. Positive school experiences greatly contribute to the resilience of learners who have been exposed to stress, violence, gangsterism and abuse. The cultivation of a warm, nurturing relationship with learners and the fostering of an inviting class atmosphere are aspects teachers need to take in account when promoting a positive cultural identity and self-esteem in multicultural school settings, such as historically White schools (Dines and Humez 2003). If the ideology of the post –apartheid government was to establish a non-racialist, inclusive and democratic schooling systems, questions can be asked about the prevalence of racism, prejudiced behavior and the ill treatment of Black learners which are levelled against some historically white schools (Soudien 2001).

Social Justice Imperatives

Social justice fosters an awareness of the historical origin and an understanding of indi-

vidual and institutional prejudice and forms of oppression such as cultural racism, stereotypes, discrimination, sexism, classism, prejudice and biases (Jackson 2008)- it is realised when people embrace other individuals' rights to equitable treatment, support other individuals human rights and the fair distribution of various resources.

Efforts and initiatives directed by educational role players on transforming schools should be based on actions directed at promoting social justice, equality, whilst simultaneously advocating for the eradication of prejudice, intolerance and cultural misunderstandings between teachers and learners and amongst learners (Lemmer et al. 2006). The high level of racism and racial abuse reflect South Africa's past history and current realities on individual, school, and community levels in a society marked by deep inequities, massive uncertainty and the complexities associated with educational change. The abolishment of apartheid in South Africa and the subsequent incidences of racism and racial abuse, remain at the core of human rights violations and social justice issues in schools (Vally and Dalamba 1999). Critics of conservative multicultural educational approaches are of the view that a contributory strategy to school integration is followed and that schools are responding to diversity in an increasingly harmful manner (Hopkins-Gillispie 2011). Multicultural schools, such as historically White schools tend to masked social justice imperatives, needed for a transformed South Africa. The provincial education departments appear to respond to incidences of racism and racial abuse in a sort of laissez faire approach- the prevalence of human rights violations necessitates a more proactive, informed and guided support strategy from officials tasked with the constitutional responsibility of promoting social justice in schools. In relation to the latter said (Stotsky 1991) highlights the following

"myths of multiculturalism fed to all school children by a state monopoly that is masquerading behind the values of tolerance, diversity, and pluralism"

Furthermore, the role of parents and the wider school community cannot be overlook in the process of establishing a democratic and non-racial society. Nyakudya (2015) is vocal on her outlook of school and society and is of the view that a much bigger debate is needed at promoting equitable, accessible and non-racialist schooling in South Africa. She expresses her view as follow:

"What happens beyond the school gates directly and indirectly influences the context in which the school will operate. Therefore, the blame is not pointed towards the education system but the society as a whole"

An understanding of multicultural issues in historically white schools could give consideration to the involvement of society and the broader school community in effecting an equitable distribution of power amongst members of different groups, the eradication of prejudice and discrimination against oppressed groups and the promotion of equal opportunity and social justice for all involved stake holders (Banks 2008; Sleeter and Grant 2003).

Quality Education

It should be noted that various definitions exist in local, national and international contexts to describe quality education. Notions attached to quality education include aspects such as learners who are healthy, ready to participate and learn; learners who are supported in learning by their families and communities; environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities; content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic literacy, numeracy and life skills; processes through which trained teachers use learner-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and learning outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. Quality education may therefore be construed as a dynamic concept, embedded in a specific political, cultural and economic context (Adams 1993).

Definitions of quality must be open to change and evolution based on information, transforming contexts, and new understandings of the nature of challenges in the educational arena**.** A contextualised understanding of quality might be interpreted as the inclusion of relevant stakeholders in realising effective and equitable schooling for all learners, irrespective of their racial and cultural background and social status (Motala and Pampallis 2002). Therefore, according to Glasser (1990), the quality of a schooling

system should focus on some or all the dimensions of systemic quality which include learners, teachers, learning, environments, content, process and outcomes. Accordingly, Kivedo (2006) expresses the following sentiment with regard to the notion of equality as a means of realising quality education in a multicultural school setting, such as the historically White schools in South Africa:

Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all learners, regardless of their gender; sexual orientation; social class; and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics, should have an equal opportunity to learn in school"

Nyakudya (2015) believes that the under representation of Black teachers in historically white schools is an area of concern and that it effects the delivery of quality education. The author claims that

"teachers' attitudes and views have a profound affect on learner perceptions, academic performance, self concept and believes"

Kivedo (2006) and the Diamond Fields Advertiser (2002: 2), a local newspaper of the Northern Cape province, reported on the under representation of Black teachers in historically White schools and further indicated how this development may result in cultural misunderstandings and the consequent breakdown of relations between learners and teachers from various racial backgrounds- this may hamper the quality of education in schools. Finally, it needs to be noted that multicultural schools (especially those institutions with the fewest resources), located in urban areas with high levels of violence, poverty and crime might find it daunting to respond to these socio-economic issues. Dines and Humez (2003) propose that educators establish trusting relations with learners and promote teaching practices that are focused on crime prevention, anti-oppression and anti-violence. Alternative conflict resolution techniques and constructivist approaches to learning such as role-playing, community research projects, small group discussion and cooperative learning might be used as a means of challenging social injustices and inequalities (Alexander and November 2010; Dines and Humez 2003).

CONCLUSION

Although progress has been made in schools in adhering to the principles of a democratic dispensation, as espoused in the Constitution of South Africa, incidences predominantly confined to some historical White schools, give an indication that these institutions have not appropriately dealt with the challenges in transforming and managing multicultural related issues at their institutions. It further became evident that school principals, teaching staff and provincial education officials appear to be inadequate prepared and trained in effectively managing racism, racial conflict and human rights violations and social injustices in a democratic, non-racial South Africa. A brand of critical multicultural education may assist schools and all relevant education stakeholders in understanding and facilitating social realities and complexities, such as inequality, issues of racism, human rights violations, social injustices in a political, social and economic challenged South African education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a way of promoting multicultural education and recognising diversity, school management teams and leadership serving at provincial education departmental level need to voice their concerns against any form of segregation. Appropriate, relevant in-service and staff development training initiatives are needed to support the total school population with issues confined to multicultural education. Any form of racism and oppression is counter productive for learning and the education of a future, critical and productive citizenry- proactive measures are needed in addressing racism and encouraging social cohesion, nation building and diversity at school level. The school culture of historically White institutions could consider applying Constitutional principles and values as a yard stick for promoting inclusive and democratic teaching and learning environments. Positive teacher expectations and the belief that all learners have the inherent potential to contribute to an economic, productive, active and critical civil society should be the point of departure in schools' deliberations and efforts at establishing sustainable and critical multicultural education policies and practices- these attempts might instill the realisation amongst educators that they have indeed a role to play in providing equal opportunities and quality education to all learners, irrespective of race.

NOTE

1   (prior to first democratic elections in 1994)

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