WHITE TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN INTEGRATED SCHOOL SETTINGS OF SOUTH AFRICA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract

This aim of this exploratory study was to ascertain the views of White teachers' on their development needs (N= 241) in integrated settings schools of South Africa. The recent incidences of perceived racism and various forms of oppression still persisting in South African schools, appear to be counterproductive for teaching and learning. The promotion of a conducive school culture, the maintenance of healthy human relations amongst learners and teachers; the nurturing of healthy classroom spaces; the enhancement of constructive practices for human interaction and socialisation should be at the forefront of integration attempts in a democratic, non-racialized and quality school system for all South African learners. Teacher's pedagogical practices should therefore be geared towards the development of empowered, critical and confident learners who have the knowledge and skills to participate in a transformed South Africa. With the latter said in mind, White teachers' views of their development needs are explored via a self-designed questionnaire. Findings revealed that teachers hold various understandings and views on issues relating to school integration, multicultural education, teaching, learning and the classroom environment. This study suggests that needs emerging from the data, are considered for the planning and implementation of staff development activities, in particular, historically White schools.

Keywords: White teachers, staff development, school integration, multicultural education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The abolishment of racial segregation and various other Apartheid policies and practices with the dawn of South Africa's democracy in 1994, paved the way for a large number of black learners to move from schools in black residential areas to those school settings, located in historically white, coloured and Indian residential areas (Kivedo, 2006). This movement of black learners to now open learning environments, such as historically White schools, became synonymous with the process of school integration. Furthermore, it can be argued that the integration of black learners to previously, exclusively ex-model C schools (historically White schools) lead to the origin of diverse races, cultures and religions in schools- a phenomenon for which white teachers in general (they constitute the overwhelming majority) were seemingly not trained for during their pre-service teacher training programme or prepared for via structured in-service

training and development sessions in a democratic, post-Apartheid schooling system (Khosa, 2001; Alexander, 2004). Attempts and initiatives by the Department of Basic Education in fostering a harmonious and heterogeneous society are currently marked by incidences of racism, stereotyping, cultural misunderstandings and human rights abuses, levelled against some historically White schools (Mpisi, 2010). For the period 2012-2015, incidences of racism, segregationist practices, racial abuse and derogatory remarks made by White teachers against black learners, attest to racist and oppressive behaviour portrayed by some White teaching staff members in certain historically White schools. In three separate incidents, a principal and three teachers were implicated and later found guilty by the provincial education authorities of racially abusing and exposing learners to dehumanising and racist treatment and engaging in acts of hate speech towards black learners (Mdhuli, 2014; Saba, 2015). In another unrelated incident, a manager of Curro Holdings seems to justify the segregation of learners on cultural grounds. The school management team of Curro private school in South Africa submitted to pressure by White parents, who wanted their children to be taught in separate classes (City Press, 2015). These few cases cited give an indication of the persistent realties and complexities associated with school integration in the South African context. The latter said, further highlights the crucial need for teacher support and school intervention, be it via a form of staff development or in-service training initiatives, to support teachers with cardinal teaching tasks with school integration.

School integration is an approach to facilitate change in meeting the needs of all learners and promoting meaningful interaction amongst learners and between learners and teachers in the classrooms, on the playgrounds and during extra mural engagements. Integration is about cultivating a human rights ethos, whilst addressing and responding to segregation, institutional prejudice and forms of oppression, such as racism, stereotypes, prejudice, biases, sexism, classism and discrimination. Instrumental to this process is quality education (Nkomo, Chisholm and McKinney (2004; Jackson, 2008).

A key aim of a quality schooling system in integrated, multicultural school contexts of South Africa should be geared towards the following aspects: the development of empowered, critical and confident learners who have the knowledge and skills to participate meaningful in a transformed South Africa; fully capacitated teachers, especially White teachers who possess the competencies in transmitting information in an effective manner , the provision of in-class learning opportunities for learners to share their experiences, world view orientations and to develop their knowledge construction abilities (Pandor, 2004). Teachers in integrated school settings, such as historical White schools, should therefor realise that notions attached to quality education should be construed as a dynamic concept, embedded in a specific political, cultural and economic context in which all education role players have an contribution to make in realising effective and equitable schooling for all learners, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds and social group origin (Motala and Pampallis, 2002). Facilitating change processes, as a means of supporting the teaching staff in integrated school settings, is dependable on structured and well-coordinated staff development initiatives and clearly earmarked in-service and training activities (Alexander, 2004). Staff development in an integrated school context can be described as a programme or a set of activities that are aimed at developing and enhancing an individual's knowledge, skill and expertise as a means of acquiring certain competencies in managing diversity on a personal-, institutional, community and societal level. Furthermore, staff development activities planned for supporting teachers in integrated schools, should address the effect of various inequalities, power, forms of oppression, complacent teacher attitudes and perceptions on the school's culture and institutional structures (Calderon, 1997).

With the above said in mind, the aim of this study is therefor to explore White teachers' views regarding their staff development needs in historically White schools of South Africa.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was used for the purpose of this study.

2.1 Participants and setting

The sample size (N=260) for this exploratory research study was purposively selected and represented White teacher participants of 10 historically White high schools from four educational districts of the Northern Cape province. A total of 241 questionnaires were eventually completed by teacher participants. A 92.3% response rate was attained for this study, thus ensuring a very high degree of validity.

2.2 Procedure

Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Northern Cape Department of Education. School Governing Bodies, School Management Teams (SMT's) and White teacher participants consented to the

study. The purpose for which the data and findings were used was explained to the research participants. Teacher participants completed a self-administered questionnaire which probed White teachers' staff development needs in integrated school settings of South Africa. A 4-point Likert scale dealt with Section B (White teachers' views regarding staff development needs in integrated school settings).

3. PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Table 1. Biographical information of the teacher participants (N=241)

Item	Category	Percentage (%) of participant responses
Gender	Male	53
	Female	47
Age	Under 29	23
	30-39 years	40
	40-49 years	19
	50-59 years	17
	60+ years	01
Teaching Experience	0-9 years	43
	10-19 years	24
	20-29 years	17
	30-39 years	13
	40-49 years	01
Qualifications	Higher Diploma in Education	48
	Senior Diploma in Education	16
	Junior Diploma in Education	10
	University Diploma in Education	05
	BEd Honours Degree	14
	Master's Degree	05

Teacher participants used for the purpose of this study, were 53% male and 47% female. Female teachers tend to be more motivated than their male counterparts when partaking in staff development activities (Kivedo, 2006). Teacher participants (63%) were under 40 years of age. Teachers whom received their training during the 1990 are regarded as being more susceptible to teach in a diverse learning environments (Van Wyk, Alexander and Moreeng, 2010), whereas older White teachers appear to find it difficult to teach black learners in a multicultural context (Kivedo, 2006). Curricula for teacher training courses at most universities included programmes on multicultural education and diversity (Mpisi, 2010). It is further observed that 67% of white teachers have less than 20 years of experience- this could be a challenge, especially if novice teachers don't possess the skills of relating and applying their teaching contents to the life experience and world view orientation of their learners, especially black learners who represent the majority in these institutions. Teacher training courses during the Apartheid period emphasised separate education (Goduka, 1999; Kivedo, 2006; Alexander, 2014). About 13% of teacher participants have 30-39 years teaching experience. Experienced White teachers may to an extent, share their knowledge and skills on how to teach learners in multicultural classrooms of integrated schools (Alexander, 2004). A most promising trend in the data is that the majority of teachers (79%), hold professional qualifications, whilst 19% of teacher participants hold post graduate qualifications. A highly educated and well qualified teacher corps may be regarded as being more open and approachable for staff development activities and other initiatives which are focused on harnessing a repertoire of skills needed to become a competent, reflective and critical professional, cognisant of his/her role in a multicultural learning context (Bennet, 2007). With regards to race, it should be noted that the researcher purposively used only White teacher participants for this study. White teachers constitute over 75% of the staff compliment of historically white schools in South Africa (Alexander, 2004). In the United States of America the current teaching population is represented by 90% White teachers, where the majority hail from a white, female and middle class background (Hui-Min Chou, 2007).

Table 2. Views on White educators' development needs in integrated school settings (N=241)

Items	Mean score	1- Strongly Disagree		2-Disagree		3-Agree		4-Srongly Agree	
		F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%
2.1. Diversity management and multicultural education courses formed part of my initial teacher training programme	2.75	39	16.2	46	19.1	92	38.2	64	26.5
2.2 Education authorities provide regular training sessions on diversity management	1.76	116	48.1	86	35.7	18	7.5	21	8.7
2.3 The school management team initiates staff development sessions on aspects relating to multicultural education	2.75	41	17.0	88	36.5	32	13.3	80	33.2
2.4. Educators are in need of acquiring in-depth education on ways to respond and address racism and other forms of oppression	2.64	55	22.8	46	19.1	72	29.9	68	28.2
2.5 When I teach I accommodate the life experience and worldview orientation of my learners.	2.13	99	41.1	61	25.3	33	13.7	48	19.9
2.6 In my class I promote aspects of social justice as a means of creating an awareness of inequality and oppression	2.41	66	27.3	60	24.9	64	26.6	51	21.2
2.7 Where applicable, I create an awareness of human rights issues in my classroom	2.67	51	21.2	46	19.1	75	31.1	69	28.6
2.8. I have the abilities to provide a learning atmosphere in my classroom that is focused on quality education	2.96	39	16.2	23	9.5	87	36.1	92	38.2
2.9 In my class I can successfully interpret my learners verbal- and non-verbal behaviour	2.68	53	22.0	47	19.5	64	26.6	77	31.9
2.10 I use various activities such as role plays and cases studies in exposing learners to the culture and life world of all learners	2.23	89	37.0	62	25.7	35	14.5	55	22.8
2.11 I need to be empowered in change making skills such as critical and creative thinking abilities	3.15	29	12.0	17	7.1	82	34.0	113	46.9
2.12. I use various techniques such as cooperative learning to encourage interpersonal relations amongst learners from diverse cultural backgrounds	2.19	91	37.8	66	27.4	31	12.9	53	21.9
2.13. I know how to manage cultural misunderstanding in my classroom	2.00	105	43.6	69	28.6	29	12.0	38	15.8
2.14 I have the expertise to prepare my learners for a multicultural society	2.35	63	26.1	88	36.5	31	12.9	59	24.5

The mean score for item 2.11 (*I need to be empowered in change making skills such as critical and creative thinking abilities*) was 3.15. Teachers who are effectively trained and inducted into integrated school settings, appear to have better decision and problem solving skills, they are perceived to come across as being critical, innovative, dynamic and creative (Alexander, 2004). For item 2.8 (*I have the abilities to provide a learning atmosphere in my classroom that is focused on quality education*), the mean score was 2.96. Quality education is a broad encompassing term, which includes the participation of various role players in realising equitable schooling for all learners, irrespective of their diversity (Motala and Pampallis, 2002)**.** The mean score for item 2.1 (*Diversity management and multicultural education courses formed part of my initial teacher training programme*) was 2.75. Policy directives and structures at universities must ensure that the new teaching and learning processes, adequately prepare prospective teachers for the realities and complexities of a diverse South African schooling system (Winburg, 2006). The mean scores indicate that White teachers' viewed the mentioned items/aspects as most significant to their development needs in integrated school settings.

Furthermore, the mean score for item 2.9 (*In my class I can successfully interpret my learners verbal- and non-verbal behaviour*) was 2.68. Teacher effectiveness and quality teaching are dependent on the teacher's ability to interpret learners' classroom behaviour (Mpisi, 2010). For item 2.7 (*Where applicable, I create an awareness of human rights issues in my classroom)* the mean score was 2.67. In responding to Constitutional imperatives such as democracy, equality and social justice, the South African education system should promote the teaching of human rights issues in their classrooms (Alexander, 2004). Item 2.4 (*Educators are in need of acquiring in-depth education on ways to respond and address racism and other forms of oppression*), registered a mean score of 2.64. The prevalence of racism in schools, particularly incidences confined to historically White schools in the Free State province of South Africa, are of concern (Sowetan, 2014). According to these mean scores, White teachers' viewed the listed items/aspects as significant to their development needs in integrated school settings.

In conclusion, the mean score for item 2.5 (*When I teach I accommodate the life experience and worldview orientation of my learners*) was 2.13. The life experiences and world views of black learners seem to be based on the expectations held by White teachers, who appear to come across as being unprepared for their roles in a democratic schooling compensation (Goduka, 1999). For item 2.13 *(I know how to manage cultural misunderstanding in my classroom*), the mean score was 2.00. Cultural misunderstanding and the breakdown in educator-learner relations can be detrimental for the establishment of a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere in integrated school settings (Mpisi, 2010; Kivedo, 2006). Item 2.2 (*Education authorities provide regular training sessions on diversity management*) registered a mean score of 1.76. The success of school integration is predominantly dependent on the contribution made by education authorities in skilling teachers with diversity management strategies and skills (Kivedo, 2006). This set of mean scores indicates that White educators' viewed the listed items/aspects as the least significant to their development needs in integrated school settings.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

A thought for education authorities, school management teams and teachers should be around exploring ways to respond to the needs and issues of a culturally diverse learner population in a multicultural learning context, such as historically White schools. The latter therefore implies that pre-service and current practising teachers need to be prepared for various school contexts and staff development initiatives which ought to be directed towards teaching methods, learning styles, curricular issues, diversity and classroom dynamics (Future planned teacher training and staff development activities for integrated school settings should therefore be premised on the aims, characteristics and dimensions of multicultural education. Some options to be explored as a means of equipping teachers and learners to deal effectively with diversity in multicultural classrooms of integrated schools, might include aspects, such as a flexible and self- directed approach to teaching learners from diverse backgrounds; a readiness to meet unexpected class situations in an imaginative and ingenious way; a person-cantered approach which is sensitive to the different values and norms of different learners; a curriculum that develops critical, innovative and reflective thinkers; an assessment system that develops and challenges learners to higher levels of success and a professional engagement with diversity that recognise and embrace difference.

5. CONCLUSION

Various needs and areas for staff development arose from the above mentioned discussion and analysis of results. The wish of the researcher is to discuss key tenets for staff development with education authorities, school management teams and personnel of integrated learning settings, such as historically White schools. The prevalence of racism and other forms of oppression in particular, historically White schools should be

relegated to the Apartheid archives. The surge for a democratic non-racial South Africa should not be comprised at the expense of a few individuals and schools whom still appear to uphold the legacy of Apartheid. Furthermore, findings of this exploratory study might also be extrapolated to schools located in former Coloured and Indian residential areas- this is to ascertain the impact of integration on these learning settings as well.

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