

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NON-NATIONALS IN DURBAN SCHOOLS:  
NEGOTIATING PAST AND PRESENT IDEOLOGIES**

By  
Joanne Hunter

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN FORCED MIGRATION STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Supervisor: Loren Landau

February 2007

© Joanne Ruth Hunter

## CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>4</b>
 <i>CHAPTER 1</i>	
<b>INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION AND THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF A NATION</b>	<b>5</b>
Teachers' roles in education post-apartheid	5
Variables	8
Teachers as interview subjects and the exclusion of student interview subjects	10
Ethical considerations	12
Methods	13
Selection of interview subjects	13
Perceptions of whom?	13
Selection of schools	14
Selection of teachers	15
Interviews	15
Analysis	16
Conclusion and Summary	
 <i>CHAPTER 2</i>	
<b>ESTABLISHING THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS: LITERATURE REVIEW AND HISTORIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>18</b>
Education	18
Education in South Africa, 1835-1990	18
Education Post-apartheid	22
Xenophobia in South Africa	26
Can forced migrants be xenophobic? Teachers building Durban	26
The Reality of Xenophobia: Examples and explanations	27
From the world to the classroom	28
Teachers' perceptions in educational research	29
The Politics of education: Immigration and Assimilation	31
 <i>CHAPTER 3</i>	
<b>TEACHERS' TESTIMONY: TRANSLATING GOVERNMENT IDEOLOGY INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICE</b>	<b>35</b>
Introduction	35
Construction and perceptions of student success	36
Understanding success	37
Norms and values: Confronting unfulfilled expectations	40
Living through loss	48
"Suffering produces character"	49
"Hard work results in success, lack of success is a result of lack of work"	54
Intractable group characteristics	57
Building context	60

<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>72</b>
Limitations of the Study	74
Direction for future study	74
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>SCHOOL KEY</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: INFORMATION SHEET FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: RECORDING CONSENT</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT</b>	<b>86</b>

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of non-national students. It consisted of semi-structured one-hour interviews with fifty Durban teachers of non-nationals. Perceptions of non-nationals were always relative to perceptions of South African students. I argue that teachers are using apartheid educational values to explain and promote non-national students' performances in the classroom, while emphasising and essentialising South African students' shortcomings. I explain this in terms of the new South African educational curriculum. This curriculum, while having undergone a radical shift in spirit, is not giving adequate attention to the environment and challenges that teachers face. These challenges are not addressed in an idealised and overly optimistic view of students. Moreover, the curriculum does not adequately help teachers to explain the *impact* of economic and social inequalities without resorting to racist justifications.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION AND THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF A NATION

#### *Teachers' Roles in Education Post-Apartheid*

The education system, perhaps more than any other sector, helped to reproduce categories of the "African," "Coloured," "Indian," and "white," and served as a primary means of constructing and reproducing racial and ethnic identities.<sup>1</sup>

Education was one muse of the apartheid system. After apartheid, foreign nationals began to enter a country with a new government and education system, but with the same population and many of the same socio-economic realities. As during apartheid, education is an expression and reflection of South African society. This study looks at how teachers negotiate between their individual beliefs and the beliefs of their society—around race, gender, ethnicity, and nationality. In this thesis I reflect on how a particular segment of South African society is impacted by educational ideology, and how they respond to a society that is changing in significant and unusual ways. I do this by looking at teachers' testimony around non-nationals. Perceptions of non-nationals become a lens through which to understand how teachers are making sense of social change.

There is significant evidence to indicate that the department of education has promoted anti-racist education. Chapter 2 will go into detail on the change in the Department of Education (DoE), as the radical restructuring of education formed a major part of the “transformative moment” in South Africa. A quick glance of titles of recent DoE publications offers a glimpse into their spirit, for example: “Curriculum 2005: Guidelines for Inclusion” and “Equity in the Classroom.” Although schools are not puppets of the DoE, the spirit and language of these publications is a window into what is acceptable in schools. However, it was not clear how

---

<sup>1</sup> p2 Ntshoe.

teachers, or entire schools, responded to this language. As such, I interviewed fifty teachers over the course of five months.

Moreover, the inclusive language of the DoE, and more broadly, the South African government, is set against significant xenophobia in South Africa. The KwaZulu Natal-based president of the Inkatha Freedom Party (with a strong Zulu support base) famously declared, “South Africa is faced with another threat, and that is the [Southern African Development Community] ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where to live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, there are conflicting messages around inclusion and equality. As such, teachers’ perceptions of non-South African students allows a description of how this group are processing these conflicting messages, and living them out in the classroom.

\*\*\*\*

Historical “breaking points” between eras can seldom be located with precision, because transformative moments are usually spread out over a decade or more...In addition, long after crucial turning points occur, elements from older social formatives live on within the new. The coexistence of lead and lag elements blurs any neat divisions that may be adopted for the sake of narrative coherence.<sup>3</sup>

- *Janet Abu-Lughod*

Contradictory messages are not surprising given the massive political changes that have occurred in South Africa since the early 1990s. Rather, the apartheid/post-apartheid transformative moment is the juncture grounding this study, because it involves two ideological paradigms that are clearly distinct at the societal level, yet, as articulated by Abu-Lughod, must be negotiated gradually for those living in the midst of change. I was interested in creating a narrative that captures a bit of this “transformative moment” in South Africa.

---

<sup>2</sup> South African Migration Project.

<sup>3</sup> p7. Abu-Lughod.

The 1994 inaugural non-racial, national elections gave birth to a democratic government, whose goals were (amongst others) to ensure a better life for all. Education remains one of the key cornerstones for the realization of this goal.<sup>4</sup>

- Siposezwe Masango, Mpumalanga MEC for Education

It is likely that the radical and focused changes in the belief system of the DoE are a response and recognition of the universal power that education wields in defining the character of the nation. The Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance spoke of the importance of education in at least four dimensions applicable to both South African and non-South African learners: Education is a tool for the reproduction of community beliefs and language;<sup>5</sup> it is a measure of inequality and discrimination;<sup>6</sup> it is a “universal right” for all primary-school children, where migrants should not be discriminated against;<sup>7</sup> finally, it is a tool for countering xenophobia and other forms of discrimination in the wider population.<sup>8</sup>

Thus teachers are in a powerful position: they are the animators of South African education and their thoughts are lived out to affect the ideology of many people in a tangible way. Teachers’ perceptions of non-nationals are a reflection of their cultural and pedagogical beliefs. In this context, behaviours in the classroom are a response to beliefs, particularly beliefs around race, ethnicity, and culture. For example, one teacher may place all non-nationals together in a classroom and another teacher, separate students according to language. Non-nationals from different countries are grouped together because of the way that teacher categorizes the group.

---

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Declaration, p9, N. 34, p10, N. 42, p19, N. 108, etc.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Declaration, p9, N. 31, p9, N. 33, etc.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Declaration, p11, N. 51, p17, N. 96, Programme of Action, p23, N.10 etc.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Declaration, p15, N. 80; p16-17, N. 95, p17, N.96, p17, N. 97., Program of Action, p22, N. 3, p23, N. 10. etc.

...Prejudice and racism are processes by which people separate themselves from others who are different in certain ways and attach themselves more closely to people who are like them in certain ways.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning the study, I hypothesized that this process of “separating from others” would be taking place in the attitudes of teachers. The lens a teacher looks through is undoubtedly coloured by their experiences during apartheid, experiences largely defined by race. A decade after apartheid, teachers’ perceptions of non-nationals illuminates the ways that education, through the ideology of its teachers, is undergoing change. Concretely, I expected teachers to look at non-nationals and see people who were significantly separated from them, a group to be fitted into the apartheid frame of knowing.

In this thesis I will discuss how my hypothesis was both challenged and affirmed. Teachers’ perceptions are indeed set against the backdrop of the apartheid/post-apartheid landscape. Throughout this thesis, the body of knowledge behind the study is a literature of apartheid/post-apartheid social and educational change. Although teachers are indeed the product of their history and experiences, these experiences are in varying degrees contextualised and re-conceptualised in the minds of teachers. In the rest of this chapter, I will cover the methodology of the fieldwork portion of this study. Thereafter, I will discuss the literature and historiography that situates the study with respect to other studies, and in space and time. I will then introduce the narrative of teachers describing their perspective of non-national students.

---

<sup>9</sup> p7, Jones.



## *Variables*

Like it or not, research is participation in social change and in mutual, reflexive exploration.<sup>10</sup>

\*\*\*

Indeed, this study was about participating in the process of social change away from a thoroughly segregated society, uncovered while that change is still occurring. I identified two variables that structured the way I investigated my hypothesis.

- (1) Race and, related to this, time spent teaching at former Indian, former white, or former coloured schools.
- (2) Length of time teaching non-South Africans, that is, amount of time spent with non-national students.

- (1) Race and, related to this, time spent teaching at former Indian, former white, or former coloured schools.

Here, I hypothesised that white and Indian teachers, particularly teachers who have spent the bulk of their working lives at former white schools, may be most likely to try to categorise non-nationals in apartheid terms, to equate English knowledge with intelligence, and to equate inequality with some incompetence on the part of the poor, and thus favour a “hard work” approach to destitution.

Teacher perceptions evolve and are expressed with respect to a “dominant school culture”, which is the collective educational and social perspective of the school, evolved since it came into being. I hypothesise that the influence of the school’s culture on teachers’ perceptions is dependent on the extent to which teachers’ ideology lie in opposition to that school culture. Teachers are influenced by this culture, and in turn may reproduce or transform it.<sup>11</sup> When teachers define and help students to reproduce knowledge, they also, to an extent, perpetuate specific patterns of power.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> p40, Goodey.

<sup>11</sup> Or may reproduce some aspects of that culture and transform others.

<sup>12</sup> For example, with regard to “conflict”, or criticism: “The hidden curriculum in schools serves to reinforce basic rules surrounding the nature of conflict and its uses. It posits a network of assumptions that, when internalized by

- (2) Length of time teaching non-South Africans, that is, amount of time spent with non-national students.

It is not easy to predict how experience with non-nationals will be reflected in teachers report. On the one hand, teachers' extensive experience may reinforce their categorizations or prejudices. On the other hand, experience leads teachers to hesitate before classifying students because a large number of students may defy categorizations. Therefore, in the same way that a teacher's race and the institutional culture of his/her school recognises the importance of collective context, reference to experience with non-nationals acknowledges the importance of individual response to individual context.

This study uses the lens of post-apartheid educational ideology as its standard in answering the question of how non-nationals are perceived. The publications and official policy of the DoE may guide how teachers feel they *should* see their students; it is useful because it is *supposed* to be the ideology driving teacher education and school culture, not because it is perfect. However, outside of the classroom (and perhaps inside of it) apartheid beliefs persist, because teachers do not acquire beliefs or ideologies exclusively during tertiary education.

Teachers are members of their communities, their generations, their ethnic groups, their families and their nation(s). They were both implementers of apartheid educational ideology, and agents in undermining that ideology, which most often taught that they were not equal citizens of their own country. These identities, experiences, and education make teachers' beliefs convoluted. What is inevitable is that teachers *will* be influenced by their past, by their environment and by their education, but it is not inevitable *how* they will be influenced. While it is too ambitious to expect to know how teachers are influenced from the fifty interviews I

---

students, establishes the boundaries of legitimacy. This process is accomplished not so much by explicit instances showing the negative value of conflict, but by nearly the total absence of instances showing the importance of intellectual and normative conflict in subject areas. The fact is that these assumptions are obligatory for the students, since at no time are the assumptions articulated or questioned." p99, Apple.

describe, the teachers' own narrative allows the reader some insight into how teachers are processing diversity in their classrooms.

The following section outlines the methodological decisions I made before and during research, and the way these decisions shape the conclusions I can draw from teachers' testimony. I made one decision early on that defines all further steps: to look at *teacher* perceptions of non-national students. This is closely intertwined with the decision to make the research qualitative.

Qualitative research provided a good means of understanding the logic and patterns of belief that are reflected in teacher testimony. In the context of this study, qualitative research is research that looks at the 'quality' of something, that is, its essence or ambience.<sup>13</sup> Qualitative research tries to capture patterns of ideas; it is ideal for web-like interactions rather than linear, logically progressing thought. I conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers at nine Durban schools that are host to non-nationals. It is a discussion of these interviews—set against the backdrop of apartheid and post-apartheid educational ideology—that makes up the backbone of the results chapter.

### **Teachers as Interview Subjects and the Exclusion of Student Subjects**

Qualitative research can ... be of value through inventing ways of talking about the tacit knowledge that is involved in a complex and difficult activity like teaching, and by showing that what we *think* is happening is not always what is *actually* happening (or is not *all* that is happening).<sup>14</sup>

Teachers' perceptions of non-nationals reflect a broader set of ideas, and the way a teacher thinks and feels.<sup>15</sup> The school and education department is one important source of this ideology. Yet teachers are between two contrasting education systems: both apartheid and post-apartheid educational ideology: either as teachers, or as students, or both. As Hammersly says,

---

<sup>13</sup> Berg.

<sup>14</sup> p400 Hammersley.

<sup>15</sup> Britannica.

qualitative research amongst teachers may be a way of finding new vocabulary and new ways of thinking about the “living out” of tacit knowledge. This was the major goal of looking at teachers’ testimony.

Teachers own words should provide the basis for a discussion of this tacit knowledge, and the ideology behind these beliefs. Since both the apartheid and post-apartheid systems of beliefs are, in different ways, both explicit and extensive, there are meanings that likely manifest in many and varied dimensions inside and outside the classroom. There is too much going on in the classroom to be able to make out a teacher’s perception of non-nationals, or how views differ from the teacher in the classroom next door. As such, one-on-one interviews were very appropriate because they allowed for the isolation of certain things. Semi-structured interviews involved asking each teacher the same set of questions but allowing them to guide the direction of the conversation. This allows teachers to describe their conscious beliefs, and from these conscious beliefs, the researcher could nudge out subconscious ideas that teachers may not have considered.

However, teachers’ beliefs *cannot* accurately predict how teachers behave in the classroom or outside of it. Teachers’ *perceptions* of individuals who live largely outside of the usual South African apartheid racial and ethnic categories, may occupy a space where there is no new “national vocabulary”, and so their perceptions may be expressed in original ways.

The creation of a narrative in this thesis was aimed at maintaining the teacher’s context while simultaneously tracing connections between teachers, and between sets of phrases and the broader theoretical and historical contexts. This research faces the task of “describing the teacher’s perspective in the researcher’s perspective.”<sup>16</sup> There is a significant difference between charting *perceptions* about students and *predicting* behaviour towards those students.

---

<sup>16</sup> p254, Simon & Tzur.

This thesis will not do the latter. Rather, the narrative is based on the premise that negotiation between apartheid and post-apartheid belief systems can be understood in a unique way at the individual level.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

It is important that data collection does not cause harm to the research subjects. Interviewing teachers alleviated many ethical and methodological concerns over research methodology. Interviews with students would have involved a very complicated relationship between interviewer and subject around power, class, age, race, nationality, language, etc. Some of the ethical questions I addressed before designing the study were:

- 1) What is the relationship between the potential teacher subject and the principal of the school; was the teacher obligated to participate?
- 2) How will this affect the selection of interview subjects?
- 3) How will this affect the length and content of the interview?
- 4) How should I address or take into account teachers' suspicion over interviewers, particularly as being part of the Department of Education.
- 5) My race; as a white South African, teachers may associate certain beliefs with my race; teachers' responses may be altered to either fit with those beliefs or otherwise respond to them.
- 6) My age, as above.
- 7) My accent, as above.

In the next section, I discuss how the study was actually carried out in response to these methodological and ethical concerns and decisions.

### ***Methods***

In-keeping with the decision to conduct a qualitative, rather than quantitative study through semi-structured interviews, I conducted fifty one-hour interviews. They were semi-structured so I had the same set of open-ended questions prepared for all teachers (see Appendix 1)

#### ***Selection of teachers***

##### **1. PERCEPTIONS OF WHOM?**

Non-nationals do not, by any means, attend all, or even most, schools in the eThekweni municipality. There are a small number of non-nationals who are involved in multinational businesses or foreign missions. Their children tend to attend private schools, though there are exceptions, and they also tend to be European or Asian nationals. Durban hosts the full economic spectrum: from wealthy, usually temporary migrants, to those who are destitute. Teachers' perceptions are determined, at least in part, by the students that teachers are in contact with. The teachers interviewed in this thesis were predominantly teachers of low to middle income students. This decision was influenced by the reality that xenophobia in South Africa disproportionately affects black African non-nationals; xenophobia is surely an intersection of prejudice around race, class, ethnicity, nationality and even personal background. Moreover, most non-nationals in Durban *are* African.

To get an idea of which government schools in Durban enrolled non-nationals, I compiled a list of schools recommended by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the area. These NGOs were Durban-based or international; they worked mainly with non-nationals who approached them for some sort of assistance settling in Durban: either legal assistance to help them through the home affairs maze, financial assistance, or assistance placing their children in schools. This biased the study towards non-nationals who were also refugees. The schools tended to be schools with the lowest school fees in the eThekweni municipality (from as little as R190/year). The non-nationals attending these schools were from other parts of Africa, and to a much lesser extent, from South Asia. Based on anecdotal evidence, parents or guardians of South Asian non-nationals were typically small business owners. Parents or guardians of non-national Africans tended to be car guards, hawkers and other small business owners, hairdressers, university students or unemployed. Parents' occupations were not a good measure of their

education. Some students, particularly those in high school, were unaccompanied and lived with older friends, or in a group of other students who had come to South Africa alone. These students were refugees.

## 2. SELECTION OF SCHOOLS

In November 2005, I approached nine schools that enrolled non-nationals (see Appendix 1). Teachers at all nine schools were interviewed. Six of these schools were at the primary level (grades 1-7), three were high schools (grades 8-12). At the primary schools there were between 50 and 400 non-national students. At the high schools there were between 18 and 50 non-national students. Due to their urban context, in relative terms these schools are considered privileged in the South African context. This is largely due to the availability of school buildings, electricity, water, and trained teachers. However, they rely on support from private charities and feeding programs. Where school fees are above R500, the school tends to have very low rates of payment (under 50%).<sup>17</sup> Class size ranges from 40 to 78 learners per class. One (primary) school was formerly white, three schools were formerly ‘coloured’, five schools were formerly Indian. With the exception of the white school and one ‘coloured’ school, the former racial classification of the school was a reflection of the racial demographic of the area of which it formed a part. The racial composition of the student body was very complex. However, most schools had either a significant minority or majority of black South African students. There were very few white students at any of the schools. In coloured schools, teachers were not sure whether or not there were “white” students, as some students might either be coloured or white.

## 3. SELECTION OF TEACHERS

---

<sup>17</sup> This is based on interviews with 5 principals, and informal conversations with refugee learners in secondary school.

At the first meeting with the principal, I provided him/her with several copies of an information sheet (Appendix 2), to distribute amongst teachers. I asked for permission to then contact teachers who expressed an initial willingness to be part of the study. There was only one school where there were white teachers. Both white teachers I interviewed were in management positions. I also only interviewed three black teachers, though there were far more black teachers than white teachers represented within my nine sample schools. The balance of teachers (45), were Indian and 'coloured'.

I scheduled interviews with teachers who, based on the information sheet, felt they would be willing to be interviewed. The time required for the interview—one hour during the school day—could be fitted into teachers' free periods, so many teachers were willing to participate.

### *Interviews*

I conducted a total of fifty interviews between November 2005 and April 2006. Although the interviews were meant to last about one-hour, the interviews took between thirty and ninety minutes.

The first part of the interview consisted of informed consent. Yow suggests that one question that should guide informed consent is "by not telling all, do I leave the narrator vulnerable to harm?"<sup>18</sup> Of course, this leaves the interviewer with quite a lot of room for interpretation.

Even with the same questions and basic starting point, the interviews varied widely. No teacher pulled out after we had scheduled a meeting. Eight teachers requested I not record the interview. I took notes during these interviews. Interviews were conducted in a private room in the school. This allowed teachers to be comfortable in a place where they were more familiar than I was, so power remained with teachers. Conducting interviews at the school minimised the

---

<sup>18</sup> p91 Yow.



time and effort of participation, and therefore allowed me to conduct fifty interviews in only a few months.

In the majority of interviews, teachers responded at length and the conversation was an exploration of their experience as teachers, their belief, ideas and hopes for non-nationals. Perhaps because high schools tend to be busier and more exam-orientated, I interviewed a total of only fourteen teachers at three schools. At two of the three high schools, I interviewed only three teachers each. Teachers were between their early twenties and their early sixties.

### *Analysis*

I transcribed all recorded interviews, which came to several hundred pages of raw text. This process allowed me to begin to feel for explanations as to why teachers' perceptions were the way they were. It is an analysis of this information that forms the basis for the results chapter.

\*\*\*

### *Conclusion and Summary*

Distinguishing knowledge from belief is a daunting undertaking.<sup>19</sup>

In qualitative research it is particularly difficult to, as Pajares writes, distinguish knowledge from belief. However, the strength of this study lies in its ability to look at both knowledge and belief, at non-nationals and nationals organically, in a setting that is near-universal (school), through a group of people (teachers) that form the backbone of most societies. The next chapter is an analysis of teachers' testimony in progressively more contextualized terms. This testimony is set against the apartheid/post-apartheid juncture.

---

<sup>19</sup> p309, Pajares.

## CHAPTER 2

### ESTABLISHING THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS: LITERATURE REVIEW AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

This chapter situates this study in its educational context, and provides some background on xenophobia in South Africa, and on existing refugee and immigrant literature that may pertain to the themes discussed by teachers. This background also shows the social landscape that non-nationals arrive to. The first and second sections define how teachers' own background in education affects the perspective they enter the classroom with, and the context of their, perhaps xenophobic, social contexts. The third section deals with the theoretical framework created by refugee and immigrant literature: In addition to revealing teachers' relationships with the apartheid and post-apartheid educational landscape, this study derives value because teachers' perceptions *do* affect students' experience in the classroom.

#### ***Education***

The apartheid landscape played an essential role in describing and understanding teachers' perceptions of non-South Africans. Inequalities that took root before and during apartheid is vital to consider before analysing teachers' descriptions of non-nationals.

#### ***Education in South Africa, 1835-1990***

Although Natal, the province where Durban was located, opened its first school in 1835, in 1855 still only 145 black students were attending school.<sup>20</sup> After the introduction of western-style education, particularly by British missionaries, there was little financial provision for the education of non-whites. Thus a paternalistic and racist educational ideology took root even in the beginning of South Africa's Western education system. As this education system grew and expanded, so too did the ideology driving the direction of this growth. While in the early twentieth century whites had free, subsidised and compulsory education, education for non-

---

<sup>20</sup> South African history project, *Special Chronology: Black Education*

whites was grossly under-funded and consisted primarily of missionary schools. It is beyond the scope of this study to describe in detail how ideology around race developed in schools during this time. However, it is reasonable to extrapolate that ideology that dealt with race did not deal *only* with race. Rather, rigid ideas of race were closely related to rigid ideas about gender, religion, class and ethnicity.

Racist ideology became far more systematic and penetrating force in education curriculum and planning in South Africa. Shortly after the National Party came into power in 1948, a commission, headed by Dr W. W. M Eiselen, began a course of radical restructuring of ‘African education’, alongside Dr Henrik Verwoerd. This led to the Bantu Education Act (No. 47) of 1953, which compiled a curriculum to suit the “nature and requirements of the black people.” The South African history project describes the extent to which this educational ideology formed a central part of the apartheid regime:

All the definitions of culture, appropriate education content and levels, all the decisions about purpose and outcomes of the system were controlled by the apartheid government... This cornerstone of apartheid ideology-in-practice wreaked havoc on the education of black people in South Africa, and disadvantaged millions for decades. *Its devastating personal, political and economic effects continue to be felt and wrestled with today.*<sup>21</sup>

The impact of the Bantu Education Act can hardly be overestimated. Ideas of non-nationals in the current system cannot be separated from institutionalised educational inequality. This study is built on the premise that in the same way that apartheid education played a pivotal role in reproducing apartheid, post-apartheid ideology must be enacted through education.

Ironically, the premise of Bantu education was that *context matters*; a system should be suited to the people it serves. This notion is eerily similar to the ideas of the current education system, albeit with completely different intention and spirit, as I will discuss later.

---

<sup>21</sup> South African History Project: Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953, emphasis added

A decade after the Bantu Education Act was passed, and protested, the Coloured Person's Education Act placed the education of "Coloureds" under the jurisdiction of the Department of Coloured Affairs. The Indian Education Act did the same for the Department of Indian Affairs in 1965. Both Acts met with opposition. Both also made education for 'Coloureds' and 'Indians' compulsory.<sup>22</sup> In 1967, the National Education Policy Act laid out the principals of Christian National Education for white schools. Together with the Bantu Education Act, these acts codified the separation of races and the inequality in resources that had begun much earlier, and laid the foundation curriculum that served apartheid ideology.

Christian National Education was consonant with apartheid ideology, and viewed ethnicity as *the* intractable definition of self. Naicker describes the principles of fundamental pedagogics, taught to teachers of all races during apartheid, as failing to acknowledge social, political, or economic context and their affect on a students' learning process. The second ideological construct of fundamental pedagogics grew out of its Calvinist roots: in Calvinism a child is born in original sin, and so the characteristics of adulthood—rather than childhood—are considered the ideal. That is, a child should strive to become "independent, competent, wise, skilful, responsible, disciplined."<sup>23</sup>

However, as one of the areas where apartheid pressed down hardest, education was also the place where the system eventually began to fall apart. For example, Bantu Education meant the creation of homeland universities that produced radicalised teachers who taught in opposition to apartheid ideology.<sup>24</sup> According to Hyslop, "far from reproducing the dominant ideology, the classrooms were often an arena of ideological contestation."<sup>25</sup> This was most famously evident

---

<sup>22</sup> South African History Project, *Chronology*.

<sup>23</sup> p9, Naicker.

<sup>24</sup> p182-183, Hyslop.

<sup>25</sup> p121, Hyslop.

on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1976, when a build-up of tensions led students in Soweto to organise a peaceful march against the use of Afrikaans in half of all classes in schools. After firing tear gas into the crowd of students, the police began to use live bullets. After three days, almost 600 students were dead, and from this fulcrum of the classroom rang the call to make the townships ungovernable. In solidarity with Soweto, Nyanga, Gugulethu, and Langa students marched together on 11 August 1976. One student spoke for students at Athlone High School: “We want people to know we are not trying to hamper our own education or disrupt anything. We merely want to voice our dissatisfaction of the educational system.”<sup>26</sup> A voice against an unjust educational system became the concrete expression of opposition to the apartheid government.

Although not uncontested and never all-powerful, apartheid ideology was enforced and reinforced through education, changed and changed again to further and preserve a regime of violence. Teachers wielded significant power to steer the ideology of youth in South Africa. As described by Hyslop, teachers were vital in organising against apartheid. However, “they were also a product of the violence of apartheid—to the extent they became employees of a resented racist state.”<sup>27</sup> This tension between teachers as both dissenters and reproducers of the apartheid system forms the backbone of this thesis.

Thus education was not only a tool of social control; apartheid education beliefs stood hand in hand with economic goals for white South Africans: to create a certain type of labour supply, and to sustain a racist and globally isolated economy. For teachers who were immersed in and surrounded by apartheid ideology, the apartheid system remains a singularly important lens in their understanding of the world. Even if teachers acted *against* the system, the system

---

<sup>26</sup> South African History Project, *Cape Schools Join the Revolt*.

<sup>27</sup> p93, Hyslop.

was so large, extreme, and violent that it is reasonable to believe that ideology and action was always *in reference to* this system.

*Education Post-Apartheid: The New Standard*

Fear was replaced by hope, repression by democratic freedom, exclusion and division by the possibilities of inclusiveness and unity. A massive project to take down the scaffolding of apartheid and replace it with a system that promised well-being, respect, and expression for all South Africans began. The project challenged us to rethink every aspect of our nation, from concepts of democracy, justice and prosperity, to Constitution and its expression in policies, law and management. It challenged us nationally and personally to reconstruct our basic understanding of what it means to be South African.<sup>28</sup>

*Kader Asmal*

Kader Asmal imagines a completely new society, and with it a new education system. He encourages the notion of a new national discourse. In his optimism he describes a country that has the capacity to be transformed. The Department of Education (DoE) has considered the challenges of transformation at length:

By tolerance we do not mean the shallow notion of putting up with people who are different, but a deeper and more meaningful concept of mutual understanding, reciprocal altruism and the active appreciation of the value of human difference. To reach that state of human consciousness requires not only a truthfulness about the failures and successes of the human past but the active and deliberate incorporation of differences in traditions, arts, culture, religions and sporting activity in the ethos and life of a school.<sup>29</sup>

[Curriculum] 2005 has been embraced as a political project that has been successful in the *ideological* domain.<sup>30</sup> (*emphasis added*)

The tolerance that the DoE describes is both idealistic and ambitious. However, the ideal is not necessarily accessible to the average teacher nor is it necessarily congruent with the way they are used to understanding the people around them.

---

<sup>28</sup> DoE, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> DoE, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> p213, Chisholm.

1994 can well be seen as the beginning of a new era, where, for the first time, all South Africans are recognized as equal. Yet, as Janet Abu-Lughod describes, a transformative ‘moment’ may last decades. In the context of this study, teachers are at different points in this transformative moment. At the level of government, huge changes have taken place. Difference, as described in the National Framework for Teacher Education, involves a complex understanding of other individuals. The ethos of the new department of Education is very vocal in its respect for differences in learning contexts and trajectories.

Some scholars of education have been positive about the ways this new ethos has been translated into curriculum—though as a political, rather than pedagogical, project.<sup>31</sup> However, since it was first a political project, transformation may not have been processed and supported equally by all teachers. As such, I ask if teachers’ beliefs around difference model the ideology put forward by the department of education. Moreover, how does this ideology relate to teachers’ perceptions of non-nationals?

In spirit, the post-apartheid DoE’s recognition of context represents a major departure from apartheid ideology. However, the Bantu Education Act also justified context-based education, albeit ‘context’ based in racist, essentialist assumptions rather than in any interpretation of reality. According to the Bantu Education Act, black people had to be treated differently because a different education would “better serve” their context. Though the intentions of the two departments are completely different, there may be some ambiguity amongst teachers who lived through the transformation. In a sense, the “context” framework resonates with both the pre and post-apartheid eras, it is the facts that have changed.

In addition to these challenges of language and ethos, and despite the philosophy of equal possibility, deep lines have been drawn in the sand, largely separating those of different races.

---

<sup>31</sup> See Chisholm.

Educational opportunities are still weighed down and limited by apartheid. According to the 2001 census, Durban has about a 28% unemployment rate, and 89% of those who are unemployed are black. 36.4% of Durban residents have completed high school. This includes 74% of whites, 40% of coloureds, 50% of Indians, and 27% of black Africans.<sup>32</sup> These persistent inequalities—rationalised during apartheid along racist lines—mark residents’ ideology and belief systems around race. Moreover, determinist and essentialist grouping of people persist, sometimes finding a voice in the language of ethnicity, language, class, or as in this study, nationality.<sup>33</sup>

Given these gaping differences, the vision of the DoE is meant to show the way forward:

Our vision is of a South Africa in which all our people have access to lifelong education and training opportunities, which will in turn contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society.<sup>34</sup>

As a vocally *inclusive* vision, and a vision which is still linked to national identity but no longer on racial lines, teachers’ perceptions, or the way they think they should think, will likely be different than fifteen years ago. Notably, it is a vision that refers to “*our* people” (emphasis added). At the pedagogical level, the DoE document *Equity in the Classroom* emphasises that “teachers must develop skills to observe the impact of *their* beliefs and practices on pupil based on new awareness and knowledge.”<sup>35</sup>

The government presents a very lofty goal: “...the government had to overcome the devastation of apartheid, and provide a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice.”<sup>36</sup> These goals provide a standard that presses for the inclusion of non-nationals, not only at the practical level—of non-nationals being provided a

---

<sup>32</sup> Census 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Chisholm.

<sup>34</sup> DoE, *Vision in Education*.

<sup>35</sup> DoE, *Equity in the Classroom*.

<sup>36</sup> Kader Asmal, DoE, 2001.



space in school—but also for non-nationals to experience a sense of inclusion and respect within that school.

The language of inclusion provides a yardstick against which teachers' perceptions can be measured. The Curriculum 2005 Assessment Guidelines for Inclusion states that “all learners can learn given the necessary support,” that “schools create the conditions for learners to succeed,” and that “provision should be based on the levels of support needed to address a range of barriers to learning.”<sup>37</sup> UNESCO's conceptual paper, embraced by the DoE, emphasises the need for inclusion at both the practical and ideological level, where “inclusion is seen as a **process** of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.”<sup>38</sup> The Report of the Working group on Values in Education refers to tolerance—which brings together diverse learners and educators—as “[a deep and meaningful] concept of mutual understanding, reciprocal altruism and the active appreciation of the value of human difference.”<sup>39</sup> There is no mandate for non-South Africans overall, however non-discrimination clauses imply that immigrants and citizens can claim the same rights.<sup>40</sup> Thus refugee children *are* entitled to primary school education.<sup>41</sup> As I have hinted, the language of the DoE is extraordinarily egalitarian. Teachers may well attempt to measure up to this standard of inclusion without having the appropriate tools to do so. For example, it is impossible to single-handedly support all students in a large classroom.

Moreover, this ethos of openness preceded any concrete consideration of non-South Africans. Inclusion is contrasted with widespread xenophobia amongst ordinary South Africans.

---

<sup>37</sup> p4, DoE, *Curriculum 2005: Assessment Guidelines for Inclusion*.

<sup>38</sup> Emphasis original, p6, UNESCO.

<sup>39</sup> p5, DoE, *Report of the Working Group on Values in Education*.

<sup>40</sup> See section 5(1) of South African schools act of 1996. Quoted in p8, Landau.

<sup>41</sup> See Article 27(g) of the Refugees Act (130 of 1998). Cited in p8, Landau.

The Freedom Charter states, “The doors of learning and culture shall be open to all.” How does this xenophobia contrast the inclusiveness of the DoE? How was the tension between post-apartheid and xenophobic beliefs reconciled in the minds of teachers? To answer this question, it is valuable to have some background of what xenophobia looks like in the Durban context.

### *Xenophobia in South Africa*

I first came to Bechet [high school] in 1970, that’s right, to become a teacher. It was then Bechet training college, that was 3 years of training, then 1974 I was a teacher at a school called Umbilo. So, I taught there from ‘74-‘78. Then at the end of ‘78, because of your famous group areas act, we were told we couldn’t stay there because it was a white area. So the entire school moved here, teachers, principal, students, desks, chairs, everything... all came here in ‘79.<sup>42</sup>

As this teacher describes, the apartheid system has made forced migrants of too many South Africans. In this case a teacher at one of the schools where I interviewed, one teacher described the impact of the one enactment of the Group Areas Act, in 1979. 108 911 families across South Africa shared the same experience as a result of the act.<sup>43</sup> Although urban centre of Durban resembles other coastal towns in South Africa, Durbanites’ experiences of apartheid—because of its large Indian population—are also very unique. As in many other South African cities, Durban non-white residents experienced the apartheid government’s forced removals from the city centre into racially defined ‘neighbourhoods.’<sup>44</sup> Teachers know the meanings and impact of forced removals.

As a result of the Group Areas Acts teachers—and in particular older teachers—could relate to the experience of being forcibly removed from home, community, and school. They could also relate to the associated feelings and practical considerations. Over the apartheid period, thousands of exiles sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Aware of this, many South

---

<sup>42</sup> Richard, High School #1.

<sup>43</sup> SA history project.

<sup>44</sup> p531, Freund.

Africans feel a sense of obligation towards its neighbours. While the political and social context of non-nationals may be different, this history forms part of South Africa's collective relationship with the rest of the continent.

Despite the common experiences of displacements amongst South Africans, xenophobia is also a part of everyday life for many non-nationals in South Africa. The President of the Inkatha Freedom Party (with a strong Zulu support base) famously declared, "South Africa is faced with another threat, and that is the [Southern African Development Community] ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where to live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country."<sup>45</sup> Also at the level of public service, police officers and even the Department of Home Affairs have beaten up, demanded bribes, and even killed suspected non-nationals.<sup>46</sup> Amongst members of the general public, the Johannesburg-based Wits-Tufts study found that three-quarters of South African respondents who felt that crime had increased attributed that increase to immigrants.<sup>47</sup> Ballard refers to attacks, aggression and name calling as "part of everyday city life" for refugees in Durban.<sup>48</sup> According to the study conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), refugees in Durban emphasised South African's dislike for foreigners, and believed that South Africans saw them as "lesser beings".<sup>49</sup> While these studies go a long way in describing the extent of xenophobia in certain segments of society, they do not necessarily capture the opinions of South African teachers or students.

The strength of large-scale studies—such as the CASE study and the Wits-Tufts study—is that they leave little doubt that xenophobia is a serious problem in South Africa. Several

---

<sup>45</sup> South African Migration Project.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, p8-10 Landau.

<sup>47</sup> p7, Landau.

<sup>48</sup> p105, Ballard .

<sup>49</sup> p168-169, CASE.

explanations for xenophobia have been put forward: Landau shows how migrants have been used as scapegoats by politicians, causing the public to fear non-nationals as criminals or as a threat to (their) South African jobs. Singer explains xenophobia as a manifestation of South Africans' growing frustration with 'transformation', where they need someone to blame for unfulfilled expectations.<sup>50</sup> Akokpari suggested that South Africans who are unaccustomed to foreigners find it intolerable to suddenly be obligated to interact with them on a daily basis.<sup>51</sup> In Durban, where the population is far less cosmopolitan than Cape Town or Johannesburg, this might ring true, but even so Akokpari does not find these explanations for xenophobia entirely satisfactory.<sup>52</sup>

Regardless of the root causes of xenophobia in South Africa, teachers are in the midst of a transition from an apartheid past into a post-apartheid present. Their ideology must develop not only in the context of these two massive paradigms of thoughts, but also in the midst of South African xenophobia. This study is necessary because teachers' perceptions *matter*, and because existing studies cannot encompass or predict what perceptions will look like. The next two sections will briefly discuss why existing knowledge does not already capture teachers' perceptions of non-nationals, and why teachers' perceptions are important.

This study sits in a gap in existing knowledge: in Durban classrooms the extent of xenophobia differs from xenophobia in other places in important ways. The way prejudice against non-nationals evolves and is lived out relates to one's own lived experience and pre-existing belief and value system. Teachers' unique experiences mean their perceptions may not mirror those of broader society.

---

<sup>50</sup> p231, Akokpari.

<sup>51</sup> p231, Akokpari.

<sup>52</sup> p231, Akokpari.

I argue that apartheid ideology persists in essentialist, rather than essentially racist, categories of an ‘other’; teachers of non-nationals in Durban seem to occupy the “space between”, where they are usually neither black nor white;<sup>53</sup> where, unlike many professionals, they *do* have day-to-day contact with a fairly large number of non-South Africans; where, particularly at the primary school level, they *are* closely tied, through their students, to the poorest of Durbanites who are classified as “unskilled”, yet they are *not* part of that group of people.<sup>54</sup> Therefore teacher perceptions are unique and constantly evolving, influenced both by the socio-historical position described above and by related individual and collective systems of beliefs. These perceptions are given voice and influence in the space of the classroom.

### ***Teachers’ Perceptions in Educational Research***

Fenstermacher predicted in 1979 that teacher beliefs would become the most important construct in educational research.<sup>55</sup> Page describes the importance of teacher perceptions in actually defining what is taught:

Teachers’ perceptions of students are a crucial mechanism in the translation [of curriculum]. Perceptions are not simply the idiosyncratic notions of individuals, but are shared by faculty members in a school. Furthermore, teachers perceive students’ social characteristics, albeit not necessarily accurately. *Nevertheless, the perceptions are portent and assume a life of their own: they furnish a rationale for curricular decisions and thereby provide the conditions for their own re-creation.*<sup>56</sup> (Emphasis added)

In the context of xenophobia and education, teachers’ perceptions of Non-South Africans are a reflection of one slice of Durban society, and the ways in which beliefs and ideas evolve and are transformed. At the same time, teachers’ perceptions matter because they have an

---

<sup>53</sup> The large majority of teachers of non-South Africans in Durban are ethnically Indian. I use this as one dimension of teacher’s “in-betweenness” because while Indians experienced discrimination under apartheid, they did not suffer in the same way as black people, nor were they beneficiaries, as whites. This position during apartheid is important in influencing perceptions because of the way race continues to define class.

<sup>54</sup> This is important because the reasons described earlier for xenophobia are more likely to apply to this group of people (parents), and by extension they may be quite xenophobic.

<sup>55</sup> p329, Pajares.

<sup>56</sup> p77, Page.

impact on students, and therefore on society. The first dimension of importance is the subject of the next chapters, whereas the second is a justification for this study. No students were interviewed for this study; as such it is important to have evidence from the literature that students *are actually* affected by teachers' perceptions. Otherwise, it really doesn't matter what teachers think about their students. This section will use existing literature to discuss what is known about the impact of teacher perceptions.

Teachers' interpretation of curriculum distinguishes between students. Literature shows that students' experience of discrimination has an affect on their educational futures. According to this literature, when teachers have even subtly prejudiced perceptions, the learner may be negatively impacted. However, a few studies did show that students with experience of racism actually excelled, perhaps because they wanted to "prove themselves".<sup>57</sup> Teachers' perceptions influence teaching, and in turn students' educational outcomes are affected; at the level of school success, teacher perceptions are important.

However, while the importance of educational success, especially in an urban centre like Durban, probably cannot be overestimated, success in school does *not* signify equality, inclusion, or lack of prejudice on the part of teachers. Rather, the student who does well has navigated a complicated and dynamic school system, and found ways to gain specific types of knowledge. As a result the motivation for this study is only in a small way related to teacher perceptions influencing students' ability to pass the year, go to high school or go on towards further study. Rather, it is interested in understanding how teachers evolve perceptions of non-nationals in relation to their personal belief system, and the belief system of the school.

---

<sup>57</sup> See, for example Ogbu (1992), Edwards and Polite, Fornham.

### ***The Politics of Education: Immigration and Assimilation***

To understand where teachers fit in the larger framework of South African society, it is powerful to remember that teaching is political. Edward Said speaks of the relationship between *culture* and domination, specifically in the West.<sup>58</sup> That is, individuals feel empowered when their way of life is represented in every sphere of society. For teachers and students, this is a pertinent concept: if teachers affirm students' way of life as the norm, they are able to deal more easily with their classroom experience. Non-national students are not only at risk of being discriminated against, but also of the realities associated with being in a minority. This is only a small part of the picture because South African students may be equally at risk of finding themselves considered "abnormal", even when in the majority. Giroux describes this connection as a relationship with the "dominant culture," which is mediated in schools:

... through textbooks, through the assumptions that teachers use to guide their work, through the meanings that students use to negotiate their classroom experiences, and through the form and content of school subjects themselves.<sup>59</sup>

Thus what teachers—and the curriculum itself—affirm as the norm has an important impact on students. It may be inevitable that *a* school culture evolves and takes root; however, particularly in the South African context, this school culture may harm a large number of students unless its tenets are viewed in the context of their development. That is, given that evolution took place mainly during apartheid, the dominant culture has strong preconceived notions about race, class, ethnicity, and gender. In the Durban context, where schools attended by non-nationals were 'white' or 'Indian' before 1991 but are now mainly attended by black

---

<sup>58</sup> Said.

<sup>59</sup> p231, Giroux. "The complexity of hegemonic control is an important point to stress, for it refers not only to those isolable meanings and ideas that the dominant class "imposes" on others but also to those "lived" experiences that make up the texture and rhythm of daily life." p226, Giroux.

learners, the new generation of students may have entered on the schools terms.<sup>60</sup> Teacher perceptions of non-nationals are intertwined with beliefs about race and class that were developed during apartheid. These perceptions also have a personal component.

Due to the presence of this dominant school culture, teacher perceptions may tend to value learners that fit the school ‘culture’—which, as I have shown, in many cases is not the same as fitting into the majority culture of students. That is, learners are praised for having, or adopting, values that fit with school beliefs, and reprimanded for not doing so. This has specific consequences:

Consequences of assimilationism for subordinate groups are dire. They are expected both to give up their own identities and cultures and, critically, to acknowledge the superiority of the culture, and by implication, the identities of the groups into whose social context they are moving.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to expecting assimilation, there is an associated tendency to try to celebrate difference in very narrow terms, such as through songs or clothing. However, as asserted by Kehoe and Mansfield, “critics that accept anti-racist education as consisting of food, clothing, song and dance are creating a “straw person” who can easily be destroyed.”<sup>62</sup>

Teachers are more than products of their training and teaching experience. Most teachers in this study will have had personal experience of the oppressive nature of absolute categorizations presented during apartheid. One way in which teachers can be recognized as *more* than simple products of the apartheid system is to perceive this system in the context of their evolution and historical development.<sup>63</sup> That is, schools are not static, any more than are teachers. Part of this dynamism must surely come from teachers’ ability to *transform* power,

---

<sup>60</sup> This notion is explained in p109, Chisholm.

<sup>61</sup> p95, Chisholm.

<sup>62</sup> p272, Chisholm.

<sup>63</sup> p41, Gramsci.



rather than simply act as simple technicians transferring that power.<sup>64</sup> According to Giroux, “teachers and students do not interpret the curriculum-in-use in a passive way. Like workers on the production line, teachers and students... often reject the basic messages and practices of schools.”<sup>65</sup> Teachers had a key role in making the classroom a space of protest during apartheid.<sup>66</sup> In concrete terms, by looking at teachers’ views as dynamic—as influenced by their age and length of time with non-South Africans, among other time-based factors—it is possible to see teachers as more than mere conduits.

---

<sup>64</sup> p172, Pinar and Bowers.

<sup>65</sup> p231 Giroux.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Hyslop.

### CHAPTER 3

## TEACHERS' TESTIMONY: TRANSLATING GOVERNMENT IDEOLOGY INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

### *Introduction*

“And then... just in 2 years you find they are just as South Africans.”<sup>67</sup>

In this study, the term “perceptions” refers to a mixture of some seemingly objective realities and someone’s—in this case the teacher’s—interpretation and reaction to that reality.<sup>68</sup> Investigating these perceptions means investigating teachers’ words and making judgments as to how they respond to difference. The process is reflexive as perceptions reflect on teacher and researcher, as much as on students. In this study it was challenging to capture both the *movement* and the current *moment* of Durban schools. In the results section it was very difficult to balance these two imperatives, as capturing the “moment” of the thesis was sometimes diametrically opposed to capturing the movement and context of teachers’ beliefs.

This chapter will analyse teachers’ testimony at several levels, from the descriptive to the interpretive, where my interpretation of teachers’ perceptions, based on the literature, also evoked questions about whether or not certain sets of beliefs and perceptions could better serve students. At the first level, I look at teachers’ perceptions at face value. I then consider their perceptions in terms of apartheid education. This lens allows a view of the original hypothesis—do teachers at different schools and of different races have more or less essentialist views? Thirdly, I consider the notion of context: is teachers’ construction of contexts a reflection of an apartheid paradigm of thought? Is there such a thing as the construction of post-apartheid context? What does it look like?

---

<sup>67</sup> Zodwa, Primary School #3

<sup>68</sup> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia.

### ***Construction and Perceptions of Student Success***

In the previous chapter, I quoted Pajares' phrase, "distinguishing knowledge from belief is a daunting undertaking." In this chapter, I start out with this "daunting undertaking". Here I want to recognize teachers' knowledge; teachers' views are not only a reflection of beliefs; there is something to be seen and something that happens in the process of seeing. So while perceptions evolve out of countless seemingly unrelated life experiences, they are also a response to the concrete experience or individual they are describing. Perceptions are, in the end, perceptions of *something*.

Many teachers' affirmed non-national students' successes in the classroom. This may well reflect a reality: non-nationals are doing better than South African students at school. School "success" is a reference point and standard in refugee and immigrant education literature in South Africa and around the world, thus making it an apt starting point for this chapter.

### ***Understanding Success***

The ways that teachers deal with the success of students is dependent on their underlying belief system. If non-nationals do better than nationals in an exam, a teacher may not notice—perhaps depending on if s/he sees non-nationals as a distinct group. If a teacher notices the distinction, s/he could decide that non-nationals are more intelligent than nationals, that they work harder or that it's just a coincidence that the students at the top of the class are not from South Africa. They could ascribe difference to curriculum, to language ability, to students' past schooling etc. The rationale that sits behind each explanation reflects teachers' tacit knowledge and belief system.

In fact, some teachers spoke about success in terms of academic performance, such as coming first in a class or receiving an award for a subject. Others referred to a success that

seemed to be measured against their own , abstract aexpectations. These had to be measured subjectively, and non-nationals were praised for exhibiting abstract ideals: resilience, perseverance, respect, and obedience. These ideal characteristics were measured against the performance of other groups of people, particularly black (in Durban, mainly ethnically Zulu) South Africans. This clearly demonstrated how subjective perceptions of success can be. Starting out with this term, “success”, is therefore only a means of beginning with vocabulary that resonates in international refugee and immigrant education literature.

In much of the literature, the picture-perfect refugee or immigrant is the individual who is able to negotiate between the old country and the new. In the North American context, this success involved bicultural competence where a young person could relate to both their home life and to a contrasting school and social context.

Teachers generally described *African* non-nationals. In Durban, the large majority of non-nationals in public schools are refugees from other parts of Africa. A minority are from South Asia, or from other parts of Africa but are not political refugees. There were a total of just fewer than one thousand non-nationals in all nine schools where teachers were interviewed. Overwhelmingly, when I introduced myself as interested in schools with non-South African students, teachers assumed this to mean *African refugees*.

In a school of close to a thousand students, about fifty students were non-nationals, yet both the head boy and the deputy head boy were from Burundi. At the same school, teachers found non-nationals part time employment where those places of employment, after several years of employing refugees, they *only* wanted non-nationals to work for them because “they’re [refugees are] so honest, and they’re so hard-working.”<sup>69</sup> Teachers at a primary school proudly described refugees in the school who had received scholarships to attend a well-known private

---

<sup>69</sup> Zelda, High School #2

high school in the area. All students were apparently considered for the scholarships, but thus far only refugees had received the honour. Teachers at all three high schools also proudly described having had a non-national student admitted to medical school.

At another primary school, a teacher felt that non-nationals were “a cut above these other children.”<sup>70</sup> It is notable that this teacher was in a formerly white (Model C) school that had changed extremely rapidly to include students from a far lower socio-economic background. This belief that non-nationals were performing at significantly higher levels than their South African counterparts is set against a range of challenges that this teacher was having with altering her approach to and perceptions about the majority of her students.

For one teacher, success was a future that contrasted with some of her student’s difficult pasts. Success was relative. That is, for those who had experienced fear, success was the overcoming of that fear and gaining the ability to build a life without that fear. Although she expected that they had some agency in shaping this future, it was also a kind of wish:

I would just like to see them making a success of their lives. Because they come from... and where their parents have come from their parents have seen absolutely nothing going on. I want them to be here in South Africa and see that... they’ve achieved something, that they were successful. Never mind in which direction they go, that they have some success and they are successful. Meaning they are not afraid, and the stress that they have felt... Because as young as these children are, they do feel... they come from countries where they have experienced such great trials that we could even understand. From wars, they duck in holes, they duck in bushes, they didn’t have food sometimes. And when they come to a [new] country, and they are given some kind of hope, then I hope that the hope that they were given will make them achieve. There are some children... they are actually in university now. So for me that seems like... looks like hope. Hope that they’ve gotten somewhere. They’ve reached somewhere....<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Maurice, Primary School #4

<sup>71</sup> Giselle, Grade 1 teacher Primary School 2.

Here, a teacher of grade 1 students had an almost parental tone. As with a parent of a child who has suffered things that they should have been spared, this teacher has expanded her vision of her students' futures to include safety, happiness, and security (and university attendance).

However, this teacher's idea of success was unique. Overall, fairly rigid classifications *of* success—success that is universally determined as much by opportunity as by ability or effort—seemed to generate equally rigid explanations *for* success. For the sake of policy, establishing direct relationships between realities, explanations and responses to non-nationals may be a response that can make that system that little bit more 'fair', according to that system's definition of success.

As expressed by Giselle, success can be defined and understood in a multitude of ways. Success can be defined in terms of expectations. The way a teacher explains a student's ability to negotiate an education system is associated with that teachers' experiences and beliefs. In the South African context, the echoes of the apartheid system in these experiences and beliefs need to be acknowledged and described.

Some non-nationals in Durban may be negotiating the education system better than nationals. Within this new education framework, teachers see successful non-national students, and try to associate this success with the apartheid education system's "building blocks" for a good student. The inverse could also be true: teachers may be looking for success in non-nationals because they put weight in the building blocks for success that non-nationals exhibit; they *believe* that those apartheid education characteristics are the marks of a good student. Either starting point may lead to a similar conclusion, but they are subtly different.

In the next section, I look at perceptions from the position that non-nationals *are* doing better than nationals in low fee government schools in Durban, and therefore look at the ways in

which apartheid explanatory variables are at the forefront of teachers' explanation of student success.

### *Norms and Values: Confronting Unfulfilled Expectations*

Difference in belief systems, and how one considers one's vantage point, is an important window on South African society. In the next three sections, I will associate teachers and apartheid ideology. Teachers tended to look at their experiences with a strong belief in their objectivity or neutrality; their experiences were too real to be deconstructed. In a sense, this assurance may be universal; don't we all believe our own experiences, to some extent? However, this sense of objectivity, of the 'scientific rigour' and neutral detachment of racist beliefs was also a particularly central part of the apartheid education system (see introduction). In this study it seemed the persistent assertion of objectivity—outside of race—is a means through which apartheid ideology persists and finds a voice, actually *because* it is so subtle. This paradigm of scientific truth is a reflection of the transition between apartheid and post-apartheid education. The language of norms and values were tied up with apartheid racist theories of domination, and so teachers' perceptions of non-nationals also have an impact on national students. However, many teachers saw their own norms, values and ideologies outside of race or class, and as 'objective'.

Teachers repeatedly praised non-nationals for their sense of "norms and values". At one school, a teacher appreciated non-nationals because they had "better morals and values, and they are not as aggressive" (Chris, 2005). This teacher was white, at a formerly white school that had changed rapidly over the course of just a few years. Unspoken in this short statement is a silent "not as aggressive *as*". The "as" in this statement, as in others, almost always refer to black

South Africans or, specifically, Zulu students. Some teachers explicitly compared the norms of values of non-nationals with respect to nationals:

They've [refugees have] got manners, they know how to speak, they've got their norms and standards, whereas this school's black child is rude, abrupt, expects you to do everything for them, you must respect them but they don't need to respect you, especially because you are female. Now with the refugees, whether you're male or female they respect you anyway. Now with the black [black South African] kids they actually don't respect women at all, we've actually got to earn their respect, so only when you fight them can you get them to respect you—so you've actually got to change your personality completely to get their respect. You've got to be a tyrant and if you actually sat in you would think now where does this person come from?!.... ... You'll find that the [non-national] children are actually scared of these parents. It's not they mistreat them but they still have strict norms and values.<sup>72</sup>

I found that the refugee kids had a very pleasant disposition. Very friendly kids. Very different from the kids that we are dealing with. Because we have kids that are slightly more aggressive.<sup>73</sup>

Teachers' praise of non-nationals is set against perceptions of nationals, particularly black South Africans. As the teacher in the first quote expresses, their feelings are related to "the system", the dynamic and sometimes amorphous set of values, politics and curriculum from 'above'—from the Department of Education—that have a huge impact on teachers' lives in the classroom. This teacher taught at a traditionally "coloured" school, and was coloured herself. She had been teaching for over twenty years.

That is, teachers' reference to non-nationals' "lack of aggression," to their sense of "norms and values," and to their respect, alludes to an awareness and experience of a contrasting experience. These positive feelings towards non-nationals seemed to be a reflection of teachers' sense of erosion of control with the majority of students. That is, I argue that teachers were struggling to assert their authority in the classroom, and felt unappreciated and overextended. In

---

<sup>72</sup> Marjorie, High School #2

<sup>73</sup> Chris, Primary School #1



the context of these feelings, non-nationals' behaviour became a reflection of how things could or should be.

In less abstract terms, many teachers felt that while they could assume they shared certain beliefs with non-nationals, these beliefs may not have been shared by their South African students. For example, Marjorie felt that the attitudes and actions of male students towards women teachers were highly inappropriate. Another teacher at the same school described how students who were parents were condescending and disrespectful towards her, since she did not have children. Her perception of students' values and morals were closely linked to the high value she placed on the nuclear family, and the fear she felt as she witnessed the erosion of this family structure. Thus when teachers referred to non-nationals 'norms and values', their point of reference was a set of morals that they considered "right". Occasionally they also referred to students' religious conviction, which, teachers asserted, was a strong guiding principle in the lives of their non-national students. The school where Marjorie taught bordered a traditionally coloured area of Durban and a "township" area. Gang-related crime was a major concern at the school. According to teachers, this was a recent concern.

Overwhelmingly, teachers seemed to sense their school environment spiralling out of control. This feeling is surely related to the speed and extent of educational change post-apartheid, specifically educational change that has alienated teachers or not brought about the system a teacher expected or hoped for. Teachers' ideas were a response to this feeling of impotence and alienation: So many teachers referred to obedience, respect and general subservience to teachers as an unfulfilled but desirable goal. Secondly, particularly in high schools, teachers referred to a moral code, an appreciation of student's conservative and often

deeply help religious (Christian or Islamic) beliefs. However, in South Africa obedience and respect are not neutral ‘norms.’

During the stringent disciplinary educational system of apartheid, obedience and respect were enforced through corporal punishment and other strict disciplinary measures. Most teachers were in school during apartheid as teachers, students, or both. The nature of this discipline, and the way it affected students, was tied to the ethos of Christian National Education (CNE). Under CNE, submission to authority was an intimate part reproducing apartheid, and, conversely, students undermined the apartheid system by refusing to conform. They were refusing to conform to a society that was designed to keep people in positions of submission for the benefit of the minority. Henrik Verwoerd wrote:

My department’s policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserve and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society... the Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze.<sup>74</sup>

The new curriculum emphasizes “learner-centred” education, where the needs of the student, rather than the maintenance and extension of authority, are centre-stage. This paradigm is a reaction to the ways that power was manipulated during apartheid. Teachers’ appreciation of non-nationals’ respect reflected teachers’ disillusionment with the current system. The new system does not seem to have created avenues that adequately address noisy, large classrooms or inattentive children. In classes of as many as 70 students, discipline may be a vital part of teaching in a very imperfect context. Teachers themselves experienced a highly disciplined

---

<sup>74</sup> Verwoerd

classroom. Disillusionment with the students 'created' by the new system therefore also ends up being an affirmation of the stringent discipline of apartheid. Non-nationals, through their discipline and obedience, are a reminder of the ordered classroom during apartheid. In this classroom, the teacher was a disciplinarian and the keeper of knowledge.

The roots of CNE were an expression of the beliefs of the National Party (NP), which was also extremely socially conservative. As a result South African conservatism is messily intertwined with racist beliefs and belief in the innateness of a person's character and abilities. So while appreciation of a set of conservative values need not be a perpetuation of apartheid, these values divide up South Africans along apartheid lines, where non-South Africans' beliefs tend to fit with apartheid values. The Calvinist morality of Christian National Education has been replaced by a sense of tolerance and context in the new system. However, when non-nationals affirm conservative Christian or, to a lesser extent, Muslim values, they are in good company with teachers.

For example, up until 1994 a pregnant student would be hustled off to another community and not return to school. Today, about 50% of matric students were reported to be parents at one school. This was the same school that had to contend with organized crime and straddling the boundary between two different racial groups. The school had to act in accordance with the DoE, which supports students' return to school, but teachers clearly had deep concerns over increasing numbers of pregnant students. The actual prevalence of high school parents was unconfirmed, but regardless of actual numbers, teachers felt that extremely high rates of teen pregnancy were a reflection of moral degeneration. The choice between conservative beliefs and "moral degeneration" were taken to be neutral. For many people,

however, the destruction of the family unit was a by-product of apartheid policies. Non-nationals' conservative beliefs were held up as contrast to this "moral degeneration."

Teachers' appreciation of non-nationals, particularly refugees, was closely linked to their own feelings around education:

They [refugees] don't *demand*...their whole temperament is so different from all their experiences they can't afford to really ... they do, they *can* do without, they're so different from our children I can tell you that much.<sup>75</sup>

This teacher taught at a traditionally "Indian" school that had recently become the high school of many non-national students. She had gone to extreme lengths to provide for the needs of non-nationals. Teachers voiced admiration for students who did not expect anything from anyone. Non-national's suffering—suffering that had resulted in a complete lack of any expectations—became something that teachers praised and appreciated. Surely it is not actually good for students to be polite and submissive if it is because they have been let down to the point of not expecting anything from anyone. Teachers, having experienced much of the dehumanization of apartheid, seemed to draw value from their own suffering. This sense, that suffering produces character, will be explored in more depth in a later section. It is my contention that it is dangerous for national students to be compared and criticized because they *do* demand.

Teachers valued parents' emphasis and investment in their children's education. Non-national parents' humility was often associated with this emphasis. Why do teachers perceive this association between parents' humility and parents' investment in their children's educational futures? I suggest that non-national parents' humility is linked to interest in education because success, in apartheid terms, was constructed as a function of both hard work and humility. That

---

<sup>75</sup> Aisha, High school #3

is, success came from being willing to begin in a lowly position and gradually work towards success:

...There's just something about them. There's a lot more interest from the parents of non-South Africans than our South African parents. And everyone's pretty much of the same socioeconomic background. Everyone is the way they are. You just find that those parents are a lot more humble in their approach to you. When they speak to you it's very soft. There's a sense of humility amongst them. You don't get that kind of humility from South African parents.<sup>76</sup>

In valuing the participation and humility of non-South African parents, teachers acknowledged that parents had the capacity to give their children a sense of power to change their lives and circumstances. The reference point is black South African parents, who were held responsible for the failures of their small Grade 1 children. Again, teachers very seldom looked to poverty or apartheid to explain failure. During apartheid, hard work did not necessarily result in success. Thus praise for non-national parents and students contained in it a condemnation of South Africans:

Because you get so many different ways of thinking, their parents instil in them wanting to achieve, that education is very very important. Compared to our South African students... most of them don't have that kind of attitude.<sup>77</sup>

At times, this criticism was explicit. The teacher below describes her students in language that brings to mind that language of civilization:

...it was a predominantly coloured school, and um, well as the years went by—the change of government and what have you, you find that the majority of the children are black, because they come from the townships, they come from KwaMashu they come from Cato Manor, so you find that they're very disruptive, and they don't take kindly to the refugee kids. You find that some of them taunt them and torture them because they can't talk their language... they sort of misfits at times... especially with those that I teach. So called Zulu and Xhosa children don't get on with them, because as I say, they're *much more refined, they speak nicely*, they know how to conduct themselves, whereas the other children are just wayward... very wayward.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Rachel, Primary School #3.

<sup>77</sup> Rachel, Primary School #3.

<sup>78</sup> Alison, High School #3.

What does it mean to be “refined”, or to “speak nicely”? These terms have many deep and highly charged meanings. Non-nationals “norms and standards” and knowledge of “how to conduct” themselves ultimately refers to non-nationals fitting a mold. Where non-nationals fitted teachers’ view of the ideal, they highlighted the perceived deficiencies of South African students. Many students were too young to be responsible for their shortcomings. Young South Africans behavior was surely dependent on the behavior they saw modeled around them growing up.

Teachers want to be appreciated by their students’ parents. Teachers did not say they felt unappreciated by national parents. Rather, the ability of non-national parents’ to show an extra measure of appreciation made the teacher have positive feelings towards them. Thus respect and appreciation separated non-nationals from South African parents:

You know the non-South Africans... you know how South African parents they treat the teachers as if... as if... you are doing your job. And you just have to do that for my child. Whereas with the non-South African parents. They know that we are doing our jobs... but they treat us as though “we appreciate what you do for our children.” They treat us with respect. But some of our South Africans as well. Yes. But the non-South Africans. I think it’s from where they come from and... they feel like their children have actually learned things.<sup>79</sup>

As expressed by Giselle, non-national parents expressed and fulfilled of teachers’ purpose as educators; they affirmed teachers’ original hope to become individuals who contribute to the personal and educational growth of others. While they may not blame nationals for *not* fulfilling these goals, it is still interesting—and at some level counter-intuitive—that non-nationals were fulfilling teachers’ goals and desires for their roles in society, in a way that nationals did not. I argue that this is one of the most complex and subtle scars left by apartheid:

Where traditional education taught young people the value of respect for one’s peers and elders, a regard for diligence and trained young people to enter the

---

<sup>79</sup> Giselle, Primary School #2.

economy, the kind of education which apartheid laid before African people was that of subservience and subordination.<sup>80</sup>

Being provided with lessons in subservience and subordination does not facilitate belief in the value of education. During apartheid, a good education could not lead a non-white anywhere. “Norms and values” are context-based and subjective. Since there are deeply rooted reasons for South African students’ and parents’ disdain or apathy for education, a change in valuation occurs only when parents feel their students are receiving an education that is empowering and life-altering. Student’s norms and values are imbedded in the history of South Africa and particularly KwaZulu Natal, a society borne of blood. Non-nationals are slotted into a society where “norms and values”—expectations and standards—are highly valued, yet have been used and manipulated to serve the interests of specific groups. Thus “norms and values” that teachers appreciated in non-nationals are not neutral: they were also the values of apartheid. Many South Africans who have suffered the assault of apartheid ideology, either personally or collectively, are gravitating away from everything that apartheid taught or stood for (even education itself).

### *Living through Loss*

Up to now, I highlighted how teachers’ appreciation of non-nationals sense of norms, values and morals is also a tacit reinforcement of the apartheid educational system. It is through the apartheid lens that non-nationals exhibit the *only* acceptable ideology. It is in this all-or-nothing paradigm that nationals end up with *no* acceptable values or ideology. I also discussed how this tacit reinforcement was in part a reflection of the shortcomings of the new system in addressing teachers’ own need for control and a sense of usefulness.

---

<sup>80</sup> p494, Nekhwevha.

Teachers are finding ways to articulate the extreme losses to culture and identity that South Africans have experienced and are experiencing. For example, many teachers articulated a sense that students lacked motivation in comparison to nationals. This teacher refers to students in Grade one:

...there were also non-nationals who were very bright—they are going to do great things. Local child has no goal, wants to drive a taxi. Non-national would like to become a prime minister, a doctor, to be free of harassment.<sup>81</sup>

Although they did not explain South African's lack of goal or motivation, the implication is that non-nationals stood with more of their identity and sense of direction intact than did nationals. This is an expression of loss, a sense that South African society lacked an essential map-book to guide them through life. Although many teachers referred specifically to black South African students, they also referred to students of their own race groups (indian or coloured).

It seems important that this sense of loss—loss of direction or goals—was articulated in terms of norms and values, where nationals are held responsible for what they lacked. The pain and sorrow of loss are that much more poignant and painful because they are unexplained and essentially unacknowledged. Where poverty, aimlessness, and a sense of complete impotence all encircle nationals and seem to launch an assault on their humanity—family structure, beliefs, language and imagination—teachers were themselves really limited in articulating this pain—and its roots—because of the way apartheid structures continued to shape them.

Such a systematic and repeated articulation of absence and inadequacy *by* South Africans *about* South Africans was, perhaps, an expression of loss and systemic violence suffered. Apartheid policy incubated a vision of “deepest, darkest, violent” Africa above the border. To say that the perceived foundation of a society has been lost amongst South Africans *more than* amongst refugees—who seem have gone through the worst kinds of experiences that one can

---

<sup>81</sup> Flora, Primary School 2



endure—is to imply that South African society has suffered a *most* penetrating and mortal. As such, it is not surprising that teachers wish to ascribe the loss of norms and values to a small group, often an “other” (Zulu students)? Perhaps it is easier to recycle apartheid absolute expressions than to bring oneself to conceive of violence and damage at the societal—and thus also personal—level?

### *Suffering produces Character*

Teachers repeatedly referred to suffering as the justification for student success. Their idea was derived from the apartheid notion that lived out and enforced an interpretation of the Biblical notion that suffering ultimately produces character.<sup>82</sup> During apartheid, this notion was used to enforce a particularly stringent type of discipline in schools, particularly for boys. In it are intertwined notions of masculinity and femininity, and so particularly in this section, gender matters. The *selective* application of the notion that suffering produces character means that apartheid ideology is recycled in such a way that black South Africans still fall short. Violence—psychological or physical—can also be viewed through this lens.

Thus if a non-national does well, teachers described their suffering, and the inverse, that if a non-national does *not* do well, or is a trouble-maker in school, they were “not real refugees”. To convey the way in which this idea was articulated, I quote several teachers verbatim. Firstly, teachers verbalised a sense that South African students have ‘everything’ and that it is lack that contributes to non-nationals success and work ethic:

...Other kids they’ve got everything and yet they’re so apathetic towards their education. But you give these kids hope and they try, there’s no support system that they have, there’s no-one that can help them... I think number one, they [South African students] think “oh my parents will support me, I’ve always got someone to support me I don’t need to stand on my own.” Parents are “no, they’ll get better and they don’t get better.” Whereas with them, with the refugees, when they come in here it’s a chance, its an

---

<sup>82</sup> Romans 5:3-4.

opportunity. That little flicker of light, and every bit of fuel they can get they use it and that's why they're more successful. They're using the system for their full benefit.<sup>83</sup>

This senior teacher describes the “easy” life of South African students, and actually implies that their support system hinders their growth. This was a counter-intuitive but widespread idea amongst South Africans. Conversely, he associates success with suffering. He was a senior teacher with many years experience, and taught at a formerly “Indian” school in an “Indian” area of Durban.

When they come here they are so *desperate* to get on with their lives, so *desperate* to lead a better life. And that actually shows in the way they perform. I remember four or five years back, I didn't have as many immigrants, two or three come to mind. And they are very keen to learn, very keen. And they're very serious and dedicated about what they want to achieve. Probably the circumstances in their lives have mainly influenced that.<sup>84</sup>

This teacher associates the loneliness and isolation of being in Durban with students' seriousness and dedication. He is a senior teacher at a formerly white school in Durban, in a fairly mixed urban neighbourhood that used to have mainly white residents. Teachers continuously related this yearning to learn with difficult pasts and impossible circumstances:

But surprisingly once they get beyond the language, but what I like about these non-South Africans is that they have a greater yearning to learn. That desire that they have. It really encourages you to give to them. That is what I enjoy about the non-nationals. Whereas people, other kids they've got everything and yet they're so apathetic towards their education. But you give these kids hope and they try, there's no support system that they have, there's no one that can help them.<sup>85</sup>

Many teachers emphasized Indian students' sense of disillusionment and hopelessness because they felt that, as Indians in Durban, competition for spaces in higher education left them without any reasonable chance of success. They had lost any kind of hope. This sense of impotence was set apart from the suffering and desperation of non-nationals. According to

---

<sup>83</sup> Padayachee, High school #3.

<sup>84</sup> Chris, Primary School #4.

<sup>85</sup> Nicholas, High School #3.

teachers the cynicism of national students bred inaction, whereas the difficult experiences of non-nationals gave rise to a special type of passion and determination. This teacher writes as a very experienced Indian teacher in a formerly Indian school:

They spoil him [the South African student]. They give him everything he needs. So the child has everything they need. So the child thinks, I've got everything I need, why do I need to work hard? And because of that, they have that false sense of security you know "I'll always be fine", then the other feeling I've got from learners is "what does it matter how hard that I work, because in this country I'm still not going to go anywhere because I'm an Indian kid," now that is the perception... I don't necessarily agree with that but they are looking at it as, I can't get into varsity, I can't get into DIT, I don't meet the requirements, they're looking at it as "the black kids are getting it and so forth", I don't necessarily agree with that but that is how they feel. But largely they're disappointed, given everything they want, there's no motivation. Now *some* of the kids come from rich families, their parents have businesses, the businesses are established and they say, I'm eventually going to take over my dad's business so why I got to ... I'm set, he's here basically to kill some time, until he's ready to take over.<sup>86</sup>

Some teachers also voiced essentialist ideas with respect to the notion of success and failure.

The following teachers taught at formerly Indian and formerly "coloured" schools. They were both very experienced, but one mainly had experience in the high school setting (Andrew), and the other had experience in the primary school setting:

Local people are lazy. Also, foreign nationals, being foreign, have got no-one to fall back on... the non-nationals at Bechet itself... they tend to work harder, the local child from Sydenham is well off, he's got no problem, he's not as motivated as the foreign national. Definitely not. Foreign nationals do generally work harder.<sup>87</sup>

I think it's the efforts. You see our people here, if you look at it as a comparison, our guys here have laziness. You know they're not prepared to go and try ... probably if you were looking at background they feel that they have to be more privileged without doing anything. That things must come to you, instead of working hard for them. Now these people who come from the poorer countries like refugees and so on, they know what struggle and strife is, so when they come here they have to make the best of whatever they have. So that they don't have the same kind of a life as they did have. You know what I mean? But you can in these children definitely see a temperament difference, not to mention any ethnic group, but you find that, in terms of ... our groups don't have a tolerance, they regularly get frustrated, angry and so on. These children have got a high threshold, they're determined and so on... even if they fail, like this child, let's talk about

---

<sup>86</sup> Padayachee, High School #3.

<sup>87</sup> Andrew, High School #1

this child, she's a big girl now, she used to battle with English... but slowly but surely, they started to get things, and now she's more than 50% assimilated. Her friends are mixed and so on, but in terms of work ethos, you can make out the difference, there's a vast difference. They fit in very easily. I used to take them for orals and so on, and this child would try hard, even if the means of expressing herself was not very well articulated, she would come forward and give me what she can in English, she will make an effort, and come out and do something. Whether a conversation or whatever, she'll come out and do it.<sup>88</sup>

It was clear that notions of race, ethnicity and assimilation were wrapped up in perceptions of how one should respond to difficulty. The determination of non-nationals—who were usually described as “having nothing”—was a *most* valued response to suffering.

The idea that “suffering produces character” appears to have been articulated mainly in the case of male high-schoolers in the three high schools where I conducted interviews. When discussing the poor performance of nationals in their classes, they expressed their belief that nationals had everything they needed. I believe that this indicated that teachers were adopting a view of non-nationals that would allow them to continue to hold negative views of black South Africans. However, this position is measured by the realization that Indian teachers also criticised Indian students who did not do well in school. Thus, I would argue that teachers' beliefs around non-nationals did not only reflect prejudice towards black South Africans, at a broader level, it spoke to an approach to suffering. I will now explore this more deeply.

The articulation of the inverse also supports this argument that teachers' approach to suffering is tinged with apartheid ideas. That is, several teachers in a variety of school contexts felt that if a non-national was *not* performing well, they must be liars or misrepresenting their past. This rearticulates an apartheid conceptualisation of Africa as a continent (excluding South Africa) of anarchy and crime. Thus if a student is not a victim of anarchy, they are cast as a perpetrator of crime. Moreover, if they didn't do well it must be that they did not experience

---

<sup>88</sup> Rahma, Primary School #1.

suffering in the same way as students who *did* to well. This view reduced non-nationals to one-dimensional individuals, squeezed into the only dimension of apartheid:

The newer learners, now the one's that are coming in the last 2 or 3 years, I think what we are seeing now... the guys are generally not coming in under the same conditions, and they're coming in mainly with families, so what is happening is, they haven't been through the hardships of the earlier group, so the earlier group that had been through that real real difficult time, some of them ... "I need to succeed and this is my starting point," the younger group the one's that are just entering our system... are somewhat spoilt. Because they haven't been through the same kind of hardships. One of the differences, that is largely it.<sup>89</sup>

...every time he was getting into some kind of nonsense, and we ultimately realised that he was never really a refugee in the first place but he came in under that guise, from whichever home town he was from he was giving his family a hard time so they sent him to his uncle over here to try and sort him out. And so that's the handful of guys who's not really refugees, but they're coming here and they create that negative impression.<sup>90</sup>

So many teachers interpreted the suffering of non-nationals as a catalyst and precursor for success in school. It is important to show that this interpretation of suffering and the success of non-nationals is *not* universal. Rather, this position is in contrast with North American literature, which tends to argue that *voluntary* migrants are expected to achieve a measure of success that refugees will not attain. There are articles which dispute this idea: Gibson's important article on immigrant and involuntary migrant typology criticizes a literature that stereotypes voluntary migrants as successful in school and refugees as unsuccessful.<sup>91</sup> However, much of the literature suggests that refugees have a unique set of challenges to face in a new country. It is hard to catch up on years of lost education. Moreover, many refugees may believe that their stay in a host country is temporary and so be less inclined to adjust to the new country.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Mark, High School #3.

<sup>90</sup> Padayachee, High School #3.

<sup>91</sup> Eldering writes that "the assumption underlying multicultural education...is that pupils from ethnic/cultural groups have educational arrears that pupils from the majority group do not have. Multicultural education under this approach is aimed at removing these disadvantages." p319.

<sup>92</sup> p433, Gibson.

It was not entirely clear why teachers made this connection between suffering and success amongst non-nationals. Teachers seemed to be far more sensitive to the difficult experiences of non-nationals than the difficult lives of South Africans. At this historical moment there is a particularly intense generational tension between the teachers' generation, born during apartheid, and the generation currently in school, born mainly after the end of the apartheid government. The older generation seems to look on in disappointment. It is disconcerting that in this disappointment, they looked to their own suffering during apartheid as a contributing factor in their success. I am *not* arguing that teachers ascribed something positive to apartheid itself, but that their means of dealing with the present is still becoming an affirmation of part of the past. It is important to think about the implications of such an affirmation.

Perhaps recycling apartheid ideas of Africa became a vehicle for imagining and talking about a South African society that has not suffered to the point of being irreparably damaged. Rather, this suffering seems in this study to have been constructed as a source of strength and a badge of honour. Moreover, the reality that South Africans *have* suffered extreme physical and structural violence, and continue to live with the consequences of that violence, was very seldom acknowledged by teachers. As such, the poor performance of South Africans in school did *not* detract from teachers' belief in their society. It is my conclusion that it would be paralysing to conceive of a society where violence has reeked havoc and in which suffering might *not* always produce character, or hope.

*Hard work results in success, lack of success is a result of lack of work*

During apartheid the implications of an unequal system were downplayed as central factors defining where people end up in society. If someone was successful, it was because of their individual merit, and if they were not successful they were either not trying hard enough or

simply didn't have the inherent abilities they needed. This concept extended across race groups, even though in reality there was virtually no chance that someone's ability or strength of will was enough to catapult him/her over the walls limiting the opportunities available to non-whites.

Post-apartheid, the notion that someone's ability or effort is the only factor in their success has been overtaken by a more contextualised idea that one is also defined by one's circumstances. Affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) is rooted in this paradigm. The apartheid view was rooted in an emphasis on human responsibility: if someone or some group is less successful than another, the problem lies with them and only them. I argue that in post-apartheid South Africa, where racial inequalities are glaring and deep-rooted, the persistence of such a view, where an individual or group is responsible for their position in society, is essentially the persistence of racism.

Yet the notion of individual responsibility was far-reaching in teachers' descriptions of non-nationals. If non-nationals did well, although teachers tried to explain this success circumstantially, they often reverted to essentialist notions of success and failure. However, as described in the earlier section, recognition of the limitations around non-nationals was very different from the limitations recognized around nationals. I quote these teachers who were all in management positions:

When our foreign students struggle, it's not their fault.<sup>93</sup>

With these children, they actually set an example... they've got a good work ethic... so they're achieving... so the competition and the level of our academics is raised a little by them... but that... and these boys who have won scholarships... now everyone knows it can be done, they can get scholarships. And also they set an example of how they should behave. Our children don't look at it as "look you're a refugee"...they don't look down to them. As long as the student is performing well and doing well, the other students look up to them.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Robert, Primary #5

<sup>94</sup> Ray, Primary School #4

South African students tend to take things for granted and not work very hard. Whereas almost all our foreign students are in the 'above average' category.<sup>95</sup>

She was successful because she paid a lot of attention in class. When you're explaining certain things you can see she's grasping those concepts, and I didn't have much of a problem. She was quite advanced. I would say her attention span was excellent.<sup>96</sup>

If they were like some of our lazy South Africans, they stay in the country but they can't pay a little school fee of R550, they can't pay them, they can't give their children stationery, they're too lazy to get up... [Whereas] these children who come from outside the country, they will appreciate it. What we teach them... they go home and they learn it. Unlike our South Africans. They just lay back. So they [non-nationals] really appreciate their education.<sup>97</sup>

In the eyes of many teachers, a student was fully responsible for his/her own destiny. If a child was very young, the parents were responsible for this destiny. Amongst teachers for whom R500 was a small amount of money, they could not consider it a large amount of money for another South African. However, for some students R500 was a prohibitively large fee. For South African students, bad performance was interpreted as a lack of personal investment or a lack of desire. A different standard was applied for non-nationals, because of the distinction teachers made between South Africans' and non-nationals' experiences.

On the one hand, this interpretation grants students a huge degree of agency and credit in the eyes of the schools for achieving well. For individuals whose lives are objectively difficult, surely success must be affirmed and amplified? However, this autonomy and the perceived circumstances of non-nationals are inaccurate, and the result of this inaccuracy is not neutral: the perceptions of non-nationals are weighed differently from perceptions of nationals. Affirmation of success among non-nationals can be a tacit condemnation of nationals. While representations of "the refugee" emphasize suffering and displacement in a dramatic and distant way (allowing allowances), poverty and its symptoms are perhaps too close to home with too many implications

---

<sup>95</sup> Edward, Primary school #5

<sup>96</sup> Fred, Primary School #1

<sup>97</sup> Ursula, St Augustines #2



to make even theoretical allowances for the possibility that nationals are struggling with some of the same circumstances as non-nationals. Apartheid ideology allows teachers to cope more easily with the stark and harsh realities of their classroom, and of the slowness of economic transformation. The success of non-nationals actually perpetuates and reinforces this paradigm.

In this way, ironically and with a completely different intention, the behaviour of apartheid has been reproduced in the very shadow of the inequalities it created. During apartheid, de-contextualization was a means of reinforcing and justifying apartheid policies (simplistically: if a group is failing in school, it became a rationale for separate and unequal education.) Today this de-contextualization, and the racism that it is linked to, becomes the means of coping with the painful realities of our city and society: if a group is thought of lazy, then it is up to them to work harder; they are solely responsible for their poverty, and another's wealth is deserved. It is a means of avoiding the structural violence of our society. Non-nationals' successes reinforces a de-contextualised and 'othering' gaze.

### *Intractable Group Characteristics*

Some teachers described non-nationals in terms of absolute physical, mental or emotional characteristics. The by-product of bringing the category of "non-national" into the interview is that teachers make use of that category. Thus their categorization should not be taken out of context. However, the ways that teachers navigate the category they were presented with has significance and meaning; since they could have used the category in countless ways, the descriptions they chose reflect their own mindset and emotional response to my questions.

Earlier in this chapter, non-nationals were considered in terms that tended to relate specifically to intelligence and abilities in the classroom. In this section, I will briefly look at

these categorizations. For example, several teachers referred to non-nationals ability in mathematics, in relation to ability in literacy:

They caught on quite quickly. They were quite teachable. I found that they were quite literate in numeracy. Very sharp in numeracy. compared to the literacy and the reading.

When students did better in mathematics than reading and writing, rather than explaining that mathematics usually requires less English fluency, teachers looked at students' ability as inherent. Some teachers complimented students' ability in language. A teacher described one student who was struggling in class:

One teacher said he was doing really well because he was doing so well in conversation. His head is much bigger than his body, and for a 9-year-old he's much smaller than he should be. I asked what he eats, and he said his mom does a lot of things with Marie Biscuits. I think that might be his staple diet. He's really slow moving. Every day he doesn't complete the tasks. He can read well, and his maths is good. He speaks very well, compared to Zulu students. But he lacks concentration so you have to keep bringing him back. His English is good.<sup>98</sup>

This teacher was young, and was teaching at a formerly 'coloured' Catholic school in Durban. It is very powerful for this teacher to associate her students' inability to concentrate with his diet, as that she clearly considers his physical wellbeing as intimately related to his success in the classroom. She attempts to establish and acknowledge a context that may be producing a certain set of behaviours. However, her focus on this child's physical presence seems also limit our appreciation of his personhood.

A focus on non-nationals' physical presence reflects the tension between 'othering' and contextualising. On the one hand, an acknowledgement of physical realities is a means of recognizing that one's physical context affects one's education. On the other hand, it is a means of separating and differentiating between South Africans and "the other", non-South Africans. In the same way that apartheid was exceedingly physical—from the ways in which individuals

---

<sup>98</sup> Giselle, Primary School #2.

were classified to the consequences of those classifications—teachers physical classification straddle this boundary between two ways of thinking. Their language reveals that there is not necessarily yet any resolution to this tension:

Gloria is very tall, and very spindly. Her mouth is always ready to say something,<sup>99</sup>

They're [non-nationals are] big, bigger than your Bechet [school] boy, typically they're older as well.<sup>100</sup>

These teachers were also from coloured schools. One teacher taught at middle school, the other was an extremely experienced high school teacher. At one level it seems strange to describe someone's physique and their style of communication in the same breath, but Giselle related Gloria's physical presence to her character and the life she had lived. Similarly, the statement that a non-national is bigger not only differentiates between two students—who are in the end both “Bechet” boys—but also justifies this difference by referring to students' age, which is quite objective.

\*\*\*

...the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their language, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as on wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's language rather than their own... Amidst this wasteland which it has created imperialism presents itself as the cure and demands that the dependent sing hymns of praise with the constant refrain: “theft is holy”. (wa Thiongo, 1986:3)

Success and failure are both personal and collective. Success of one student is set against the shortcomings of a collective. For “success” to constantly be considered a characteristic of another group is to be forced to look upon one's past “as on wasteland,” or to constantly see *oneself* as an outsider (as for some white and Indian teachers). Moreover, while there is some

---

<sup>99</sup> Susan, Primary School #2

<sup>100</sup> Ray, High School #1

underlying reality that some non-nationals are navigating the South African education system extremely well, this careful navigation does not avoid the “cultural bomb” for those students. The interpretation of success for non-nationals may also constitute a “cultural bomb” for South Africans; where one’s past is considered the cultural “wasteland” one has described.

### ***Thinking of Alternatives/Building Context***

The first results section focused on non-nationals’ success against the backdrop of absolute constructions of success and failure. Against this, both South African and non-national students were narrowly compartmentalized and their background interpreted in apartheid terms. This section delves more deeply into the notion of separating apartheid and post-apartheid constructions of context. While in the first section there were only hints at really considering the lived realities of students in relation to their concentration and discipline in the classroom, this section looks at how, even when teachers attempted to consider the impact of students home lives, they did not necessarily avoid the categorizations and perceptions of apartheid. Both facts and the way those facts are processed play an important role in truly transforming the education system after apartheid.

Where teachers were thinking about the relationship between their students’ behaviour and their context, what context did they draw on? When the DoE affirms that a student’s context is important, there is a set of decisions involved in selecting *what* context matters, and why. This chapter I investigate the implications of this decision. I ultimately argue that the attempt to incorporate and understand the context of students can be based on *imagined* context.

In particular, apartheid images of Africa, projected to sustain the apartheid system, have not disappeared. They may be slow to disappear because they were not only apartheid images; global media tends to also represent African in this way. As touched on briefly, the apartheid

government put forward an idea of “deepest, darkest Africa” in order to tighten their grip at the moment when most countries in Africa were forcing power out of the hands of imperialists. This idea tends to be perpetuated and extended in perceptions of non-nationals from Africa. What teachers would find inconceivable in South Africa is conceivable and expected for other African countries.

One teacher with about fifteen years of experience teaching Grade 1 students at a ‘coloured’ school, wrote about her knowledge of the countries her students came from:

The only things that I knew were the things that I had seen on TV. Because the country has seen a whole lot of trouble... you mostly see the negative things; There could be some beauty in their country, that we don’t know of... but because their country is so down... they feel its gone down.. and they feel it. So much poverty... they’ve maybe had that themselves, and that’s why they... I’ve watched programs on National Geographic, programs on the Travel Channel, I’ve seen situations in those countries. The money first of all... the value is really down. And because the value of the money has gone down, the value in the country as well, has gone down. Even though the country is beautiful and has a lot of natural resources, they have no money to get it out. No money to... you need money to make money and they don’t have that. That’s why they have problems.<sup>101</sup>

Seen in this light, South Africa and other countries are barely comparable. Although Giselle considered the context of non-South African students, they were considered against the backdrop of a *possibility* of beauty in their country, and the presence of natural resources. She is not speaking about a specific country, but of Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda simultaneously.

... *They* have given *us* a lot of personal experiences of what they’ve been through but unfortunately with the smaller ones not much but just the struggle that they’ve been through and how they had to stumble in the dark through the bushes and into the river and get attacked by crocodiles uh.. but they were like... what’s the word I could use... its very saddening to hear the circumstances under which they’ve been through to be here.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Giselle, Primary School #2

<sup>102</sup> Nancy, Primary School #4

I'm not so familiar with the kind of education they have, just what I see which is teaching outside under the trees. You see that's their only way. So they just teach them where they live. But for those who came to South Africa when their children were 2 and 3 years old. They make sure they still have money. They make sure their children go to South African Creches and South African pre-schools, to learn ... and by the time they come to school, they know their English some of them.<sup>103</sup>

Nothing! I knew nothing, absolutely nothing. I just knew there was a war going on and that's it but when I did find out my children told me.. they told me that.. they were running away from some bullets... since now they can talk they tell me they were running away with their parents from bullets, people bombed their houses, they had to come on ships, and how they were fetched and helped by the groups in central Durban you know, they helped them out, now they've got jobs but they still feel very abused by the Zulus, they tell me about all their problems.<sup>104</sup>

The major sources informing each impression are different: National Geographic, a foundation phase (elementary) student, and an unknown source. Each source is only credible because that teacher had had very limited exposure to non-nationals, and so they did not have a better source of information. It may also become credible because a teacher may *expect* an education system in Africa north of the border to be a certain way. The credibility of the National Geographic or Travel channel depends very much on the generalization one draws after watching a documentary. In the post-apartheid attempt to capture and take into account *context*, the way that that context is built and measured is important.

The construction of context also placed students into a set of categories, a type of cookie cutter idea of what few belief systems they can embrace and what they may not, and what the results will be. At the same time it is a means by which the teacher attempts to make the classroom a neutral space for all her/his students:

If you look at the back of my classroom, you see I have the things of various religious groups. So you know to identify this that you are coming in here, you may be a Hindu or Christian or Muslim but I'm here to embrace all. So when a new... when a refugee child comes in, I've already instilled the values in this

---

<sup>103</sup> Jane, Primary School #2

<sup>104</sup> Fatima, Primary School #5

class, that every child regardless of colour class or creed. So when the child comes in we have already developed this sense of sharing, a sense of love, a sense of getting to know the next, to respect the traditions and cultures of the next child, so its actually quite ok... so when a child comes in they are reaching out to these children they are helping these children they are getting a warm reception. And with this everything falls into place. We've got the world map and so we ask the child to show us on the map exactly where he or she comes from and tell us about his country, so we have this kind of interaction.<sup>105</sup>

Teachers did try to understand the context of students' behaviour. Their ideas, interpretation and language provided interesting insights into each teacher's personal understanding of differences, and they ways they placed that understanding into a context:

...I noticed something that happened with one particular learner when I'd get them to line up in an orderly fashion so they could lead out, in terms of discipline and training... the one child... the moment I said will you close your books lets get ready she would immediately run to the door. And I found it quite odd and the one day in a little discussion during the reading lesson, he said to me that when he arrived, when he was in the country that he had come from it was some country and they had to be run all the time and you couldn't afford to waste any time because of the sort of trouble that they had to escape from one point to another. That was why his parents told him, at one time or another, you must get ready to run. And so, he was conditioned to run. He suffered from anxiety. With the other students they have very pleasant memories of their country, one even won an award in our class, and I had a very good relationship with them.<sup>106</sup>

It is interesting that Nayantara uses the students' voice and makes it clear that she is relaying what the child told her, to add a sense of objectivity to her voice. She is an experienced teacher at a previously "Indian" school. She also switches very quickly to students who have not had problems in the class, to somehow balance the impression left by this one child.

There are limitations to the extent that teachers could construct context, and they didn't always find a good way to understand difference. At an Islamic school, one teacher said:

My kids in class are sometimes curious I have a little girl who comes from Congo, and there are times when he has all these things in her hair when she comes to school. And then the kids want to know why. And then she says well its some part of a tradition. But then she can't completely explain it to me. And I can't get her

---

<sup>105</sup> Nayantara, Primary School #1.

<sup>106</sup> Nayantara, Primary School #1.

mother to do it because she doesn't speak any English whatsoever. So there's that barrier there now. The kids would like to know, I would like to know.<sup>107</sup>

Teachers ultimately delved deeply into how to deal with a student's life. The following teacher from a coloured and Catholic school discusses her own understanding and response to students' home lives:

If a child comes into my class I like to get some kind of history from the parent. Of how they got here, what happened, what actually transpired to bring them here, how were their lives that side. Were their parents professionals? What kind of life did they lead? Now I had a student in my class last year whose mother was a teacher and the father was actually an engineer. Now the mother was at home. She couldn't get a job. She couldn't teach, she taught French. And the father was a car guard. So the whole drop in lifestyle, and how it impacted on their lives and how they had to accommodate that, and live with it. If we could know that kind of background, then you know more or less how to deal with this child.

But I feel that for me to teach them I must be able to understand that when this child leaves in the afternoon and goes home, what happens there? Does this child go home into a stable environment? Is this child going home or going first to beg in the street? If I know that then I know I must be more patient with this one, and this one is just spoilt, so I don't really need to sympathise, this is just a cry-baby, you know? He gets everything at home. This one has gone through a lot in his life, and I must be more patient with this child, and sometimes this child can't bring lunch to school, not because mom is too lazy to make it but because there is none, when did he last eat, I must try and make plans of what he is going to eat at school to be able to learn.

It must be told that the teacher parent I was talking about she hits her child with the high heel part of the slipper and all the marks are on the child's body and the child's face. And I was quite angry at first and I thought ok she must be very frustrated. Here she is with a whole profession and there's nothing she can do with it. There's so much red tape to hiring them. Why bring them into the country if you're going to have a whole lot of red tape to work through?

The child had severe behavioural problems because there's... a whole dynamic in that family and what is going on in that family.. but they didn't look at it from that perspective... they looked at it that he was twooked [cursed].

This teacher showed that she considered her students as individuals with context. She revealed that she tries to get some understanding of her students' backgrounds, and only then makes decisions about how to relate to them. Her description showed a lot of empathy for

---

<sup>107</sup> Anna, Primary School #6.



students. Her explanation for student's behaviour is a recognition that students are impacted by their lives at home. Imbedded in her description is, simultaneously, respect for the context of individual students in particular circumstances, and a sense that other students are naughty without explanation. There is a black and white distinction. She abruptly ended her description with the parent's explanation for their child's problems: that he was cursed. This sums up the negotiation between her beliefs and the parent's. She was clearly familiar with the notion of being cursed, yet she chose to use terms from psychology to describe her perspective on the child's problems.

Teachers' impressions of culture seem to be compartmentalised in such a way that they expected a student to feel willing summarise a culture in the classroom:

We do discuss a lot of cultures, but our discussion on cultures tends to be about the Indian child, the white child, the Christian, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sunnis, and so on. But we don't bring in much from you know the kids that come from Burundi and Congo. Except we might just ask them to stand up and tell us a little about their culture. I find that they're not too keen on doing it. I don't know why. Is it because fear that they're going to be ridiculed? Or is it because there is just one or two in the class compared to a whole lot of others?

Teachers focused on clothes, food and dance as symbols of culture. However, few individuals consider themselves summed up by their culture's dances, food or national dress. Yet this is what teachers hoped that students might do in front of the class. This emphasis highlights difference rather than commonality. This is what one teacher from a formerly white school says:

I think as far as drawing on their own experiences, we are a multicultural school. We have days when children can draw on their own culture. We have different holidays when different people are emphasized. We allow children to express themselves. Their beliefs. Their dress code. So there are days actually set aside for when they come dressed in their traditional outfits and that kind of thing, that kind of setup. So definitely, we allow for that. They come dressed beautifully, in their African garments. It's a way of expressing to other students, and respecting that is who we are. The educators actually practice that as well. It starts right from the

principal, she sets the tone. And then from there the educators, and the students.<sup>108</sup>

This teacher-administrator reflected the tension between South Africa and the rest of Africa, particular for non-black South Africans. “*Their* African garments” is not a remarkable expression in the South African context, which indicates the divisions within South Africa and between South Africans and the rest of the continent. This language creates context that differentiates rather than unifies.

A few teachers had interactions with non-nationals outside of the classroom. This interaction seemed to create a more nuanced set of perceptions that they could then build into context. One such teacher was very candid about her initial fear of non-nationals:

In the area I live we see them every day, but then again there’s the good and the bad. You get those who just do drugs, especially in our area. And then there’s the good, we belong to some church group together, so there’s good and bad. So I think sometimes people judge people just because I remember when they first started coming, you know it’s scary, but now I’m used to them. And I see they’re just people like us and they also need things. And especially after I saw the movie [Hotel Rwanda] it changed my whole attitude towards them. But I don’t see them as bad people if you learn to know them. To tell you the truth they’re actually very well behaved children in the classroom. I don’t ever ask them to keep quiet or sit down they’re very well behaved.<sup>109</sup>

At the same time, she speaks of “them” in such a way that non-nationals are set apart, where the “good” are known, and the “bad” largely unknown. The default is to be afraid or think of non-South Africans as “bad people”. The unknown is a source of fear. It is only the process of becoming known that changes a person—and even a group—from “bad” to “good.” How might this kind of impression play out when this teacher discusses non-nationals’ context? A non-national begins with an identity that is either to be pitied or to be feared, and those who are

---

<sup>108</sup> Nancy, primary school #4.

<sup>109</sup> Jane, primary school #2.

unknown or nameless never have the opportunity to adopt a new identity or force a new perception.

Linked to the dichotomy presented by the previous teacher, some teachers favoured non-nationals by constructing a context where students are those who came “in pain”, and thus are deserving of compassion. The concept of desperation is repeatedly mentioned here:

Obviously we look at it as these children have left their countries [referring to Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Zimbabwe] as refugees, in pain, obviously seeking refuge and many in desperate circumstances... coming to our country and needing help. And if you look at it from that perspective as a point of people coming and needing help, and this is personally how I react in my class... ja... if they are students. The fact is that they tend to become special because they have left their country and obviously they... if they... had the choice they would probably stay, but because of circumstances prevailing they were forced to actually leave their country. When they come here they are so desperate to get on with their lives, so desperate to lead a better life. And that actually shows in the way they perform. I remember four or five years back, I didn't have as many immigrants—two or three come to mind. And they are very keen to learn, very keen. And they're very serious and dedicated about what they want to achieve. Probably the circumstances in their lives have mainly influenced that.<sup>110</sup>

As with this teacher from a formerly Indian school, several teachers at different schools attempted to distinguish, or set apart, non-nationals and by setting the students apart by linking difference to child-rearing styles or teaching methods. Such a context is relatively neutral:

I would really like to know how come the kids from Burundi are that bright... I find that they know concepts better, there's a lot of emphasis maybe on teaching them, I don't know, Its probably what.. I know in Sweden when you go to the clinic they teach you about child rearing, but I don't think that the thing that's happening here! But something. I'd like to know what they do differently.<sup>111</sup>

I have no idea! At first I thought maybe it was the teaching method that they used in their home country. It could be that, but uh, I really, I can't understand how this... so maybe they're eager to learn their second language and they know without that English they don't have contact with the outside world. No-one's going to understand... or maybe... I don't know... It's amazing I've found that they're able to learn to read much faster, and they become very confident, very

---

<sup>110</sup> Nicholas, Primary School #4

<sup>111</sup> Sayeda, Primary School #5

very confident. More confident than you know the children who *are* nationals. I couldn't put my finger on it really<sup>112</sup>

In all these examples and ways of thinking about non-national students, although teachers used context as a means of understanding and explaining students' behaviour, in most cases teachers freely associated absolutes with non-nationals. I have left these absolutes as they are, without delving more deeply into their context. I do not do this because teachers do not have complicated sets of knowledge, but because it was very difficult to balance between the views of many teachers, versus extremely detailed snapshots of a few teachers. In the conclusion, I will discuss this decision to compartmentalize teachers—as well as its strengths and weaknesses.

In the case of teachers, knowledge of students' context was not enough to break down the barrier between “us” and “them.” That is, for most teachers it was not clear that they considered non-nationals in a way that allowed non-nationals to exist as three-dimensional human beings. Rather, they seemed to be the embodiment of a fixed set of ideas, which helped guide teachers in teaching and “understanding” the needs of non-national students.

\*\*\*

Therefore, teachers' construction and consideration of context was not monolithic. They based their perceptions on sources that made the most sense to them, on what fitted with their personal experiences. However, as I showed in the previous section, teachers' thoughts around context tended to emphasize difference, rather than discover and highlight underlying commonalities.

Within this overall trend, two groups were unique. Those teachers who had been exposed to other African nationals on neutral ground tended not to make judgments about any group. This included two black teachers who also coached soccer. Although they made generalizations

---

<sup>112</sup> Minakshi, Primary School #1

about other students' response to non-nationals, teachers generally avoided generalizing about non-nationals themselves. Thus the simplest and most striking example of neutral ground seemed to be the sports field. The sports field was the space where people are able to present their own identity in the context of a relatively neutral *team* identity. On the sports field, South Africans become advocates for non-national teammates who had been wronged. For example, members of a soccer team were excluded from the final of a major inter-school tournament because they did not have green ID books, meaning the whole team could not play. Teachers and players had a deep sense of the injustice of the situation, even long after the fact, when I interviewed the school coach.

Common religious belief also led teachers to look at specific students in a way that emphasized commonalities between students and teachers. For example, at Muslim schools, non-nationals who spoke or understood Arabic were valued for having highly valued knowledge because they could read the Qu'ran with greater comprehension than many South African Muslims. At Catholic schools, teachers similarly wanted to draw out the commonality between themselves and their students, particularly Catholic non-nationals.

Despite these two spaces of commonality, it is important to continue to interpret the limitations produced by a structure that engendered distrust and separation. Banteyerga writes about the role of education in transforming in line with African needs and priorities:

Africa today is full of challenges. Education is expected to be an effective tool in coping with these challenges. However the existing education in Africa is the legacy of colonialism. It has been geared to meet and maintain colonial interests under the cover umbrella phrase "modernizing Africa". What we see today is that the so-called "modern education" is not satisfactorily addressing the problems of Africa to meet the needs and aspirations of the African people. In other words, it has not much to boost the material growth and spiritual development of Africa. What is vividly observed is that African wisdom and knowledge is being systematically undermined: African self-concept and pride; African understanding and interpretation of the environment; and all in all the culture and psychological

make up of the African. If Africa is to regain its place as the centre of culture and civilization, it needs to re-think and reframe its education in the context of Africa—and its problems and aspirations.<sup>113</sup>

Koetser believes that OBE, like the curriculum of the apartheid epoch, reproduces the exclusionary mono-cultural discourse of the West.<sup>114</sup>

In South African education's "transformative moment", Abu-Lughod's "lead elements" could be the rapidly changing curricula and the new South African constitution. The lag elements are the day-to-day realities and experiences of South African life, the persistence of poverty and inequality.

Does the general disjoint between these lead and lag elements create a momentum that takes schools back to apartheid ideology? Is it a contradiction for a teacher to embrace the *idea* of equality and yet use the educational tools s/he was provided during apartheid? Teachers seemed to genuinely want their students to have the best opportunities. However, older teachers did not tend to consider the impact of apartheid with respect to the way that many of their students, particularly black South Africans, were obligated to live. Thus for most teachers, South Africa's echoes of apartheid—outside of race—became a means of rearticulating notions of the "other" without dealing with the depth and extent of apartheid ideology.

Overall, both young and old teachers were disillusioned *with* the new curriculum, and felt alienated *from* the system. Many teachers voiced their concern with the way that the new curriculum was only effective in the abstract, rather than dealing with realities in the classroom such as large classes that did not have the means to support students' individual needs. Teachers felt that the curriculum was pedagogically flawed because it did not allow them to teach in the context they found themselves.

---

<sup>113</sup> p1-2, Banteyerga.

<sup>114</sup> p500, Nekhwevha.

Ironically, the curriculum that encourages an understanding of students' backgrounds and beliefs had not, according to teachers, succeeded in dealing with the *classroom* context and *teachers'* backgrounds and beliefs. For example, where teachers explain motivation in terms of non-nationals' difficult background, they expressed their respect for context and their apartheid view of that context simultaneously. This interpretation was a response to the reality that their training, and the new curriculum, had not been able to help teachers deal with the challenge of motivating students, or understand the apathy in their classroom. The absolute discipline and submission that was required during apartheid and that teachers admired in non-nationals is surely also a response to the feelings of impotence faced by teachers trying to adopt the new, egalitarian, curriculum.

In view of these trends, the length of time teaching seemed to have a huge impact on views of non-nationals. At the same time, there was a virtually universal sense of lack of control. Race mattered. Black teachers spoke of non-nationals very differently from other teachers. Although only three black teachers were interviewed, their perceptions are worth noting because they were so different from those of other teachers. They did not voice disillusionment with the curriculum, as expressed by most teachers. Perhaps linked to this, black teachers did not report that non-nationals were more or less successful in the classroom therefore there was no reason to explain this success or failure. Although a minority in the urban setting, black South African teachers make up the majority of teachers across the country.

## CONCLUSION

I felt privileged to interview so many teachers and become part of the trajectory that is guiding non-nationals and discover the ways that they were dealing with change. Most teachers were trying to find a way to have a positive impact on their students' lives. Although I have made generalizations about teachers' perceptions, I have made these observations as a contribution to our understanding of the ways that this historical moment is entangled in the xenophobia that is rife in South Africa. That is, xenophobia can be reproduced without a clear "bad guy" to point a finger at.

Teachers' testimony reflected the piecemeal process of change after apartheid. Teachers did not subscribe to the beliefs held by part of the South African population, that non-nationals are responsible for crime. Yet they held that South African students, particularly black South African students, were lazy. Therefore this study has implications both for South African and non-national students. As during apartheid, teachers were both reproducing and transforming state ideology through their interpretations of its meaning.

The DoE has already undergone radical transformation. Exclusion and paternalism has been replaced—in the curriculum—by a sense of inclusion and equality. However, the perceptions of teachers reflected the limitations of this transformation; while teachers believed in equality in the abstract, as put forth in the new ideology of the DoE, the language they chose to describe specific students reflected an ideology of separation and exclusion.

These descriptions reflected the ways that teachers' perceptions of South Africans were intimately tied to their perceptions of non-nationals. Non-nationals actually seemed to impact teachers' perceptions of South Africans; they served as "proof" that negative circumstances did not preclude success. In fact, most teachers believed that non-nationals' suffering was actually a



contributing factor in their success. South Africans were considered universally privileged, and therefore lazy.

Teachers' perceptions reflected the limitations of the new curriculum in creating an alternative discourse and practical solutions to the glaring challenges teachers face in the classroom. The curriculum emphasizes equality without engaging teachers in a new paradigm for thinking about the *inequality* they see every day. It emphasizes the centrality of individual students' educational journeys without providing practical approaches for teachers to cope with seventy learners in one classroom.

Teachers articulated an abstract hope for equality, and distanced themselves from apartheid ideology. However equality, as articulated in the new curriculum, generally did not fit with the way teachers thought, felt and experienced their professional lives. Thus the curriculum's explanations for inequality and its reflection on apartheid, though not dismissed, tends to be distanced from teachers in such a way that it does not become a new way of looking at the differences they see in their classroom. Thus the idea of human equality lost power; teachers maintained that students are theoretically equal, yet used apartheid categories to explain non-nationals' successes and failures. These apartheid categories emphasized human agency and constructed African misery.

In fact, apartheid categories seemed to offer a cushion against the harsh realities of the classroom, where the new ideology of the DoE was proving too abstract. To acknowledge that non-nationals who, teachers believed, had suffered immeasurably, were performing better than South African students, is an acknowledgement that our society has also suffered immeasurably. By categorizing South Africans as lazy or complacent, teachers could maintain the status quo and avoid acknowledging the suffering on our doorstep.

Teachers' testimony reflected the abstract and ambiguous boundaries between racist and anti-racist ideologies. Imagined context, although often meant as anti-racist or anti-xenophobia, became, in practice, very similar to racist and xenophobic constructions of the "other." Their testimony showed prejudice to be a passive and jaded response to passive and jaded students, rather than malicious or bigoted. Their perceptions seemed to imply that perceptions, even of a completely new group, are driven by a response to quotidian realities.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

The major limitation inherent in any exploration like this one was that is the challenge of explaining the generation and regeneration of categories when one presented a category to teachers to start with. In order to show how teachers dealt with the categories I presented them with, I included a lot of narrative. In doing this I hoped to make the categories inherent to this exploration as transparent as possible, and to convey the logic and trajectory of teachers' thoughts and ideology, not only the content.

This research methodology is not well suited for catalyzing policy change, because it neither systematic nor does it necessarily result in transparent solutions to prejudice (if such solutions exist). This study can only talk about non-national students' lives and achievements second-hand, as no students were interviewed. Teachers are ultimately conduits and interpreters of knowledge for the *new* generation, and so it is important to know what that generation is thinking and feeling. It was therefore a difficult methodological decision to exclude non-national students' voices, through classroom observation or interviews with students. The decision was motivated by the hope that teachers would feel less inhibited if they did not need to be concerned with explaining what their students might say. At the practical level, I was also concerned about

the ethical and research concerns involved in interviewing children, adolescents, and teenagers, and in obtaining and processing those responses.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to portray the diversity and complexity of teachers' thoughts. It is inevitable that teachers' perceptions are simplified to make comparisons and draw out similarities. Although this may limit the anthropological value the study, I do not believe it detracts from the strength of the narrative or the picture painted by this narrative.

### ***Direction for Future Studies***

Teachers attempted to squeeze non-nationals into their existing picture of South Africa and race, rather than actually change this picture to accommodate "new evidence". By interviewing teachers, rather than helping to present picture of non-national students themselves, non-national students were mainly the means through which teachers understood South Africans. However, there is no doubt that teachers wanted the best for their students. As such, future study should look at non-nationals students' experiences in the classroom. The impact of teachers' beliefs and perceptions can be better understood. The relationship between the beliefs and behavior of teachers would enrich our understanding of this transformative moment, and the apartheid/post-apartheid juncture.

Durban urban teachers are not representative of all South African teachers. The impact of specific Durban context could be better understood if measured against the perceptions of teachers in other cities. However, this study measures trends and connections qualitatively and so is not easily reproducible in other cities.

Teachers are not only defined by their South African identity. Particularly in light of a global, western-controlled media, teachers are also global citizens. It is important to consider perceptions with respect to this global identity. This study was situated in the apartheid/post-

apartheid frame; a future study could investigate teachers' perceptions in the global context. The imperialist mindset of apartheid was certainly not completely unique to the apartheid system. Teachers' ideas of Africa were not born only of apartheid-constructed images; they were born of far more pervasive global representations. The idea that hard work can be an effective response to almost anything is not unique. Thus the "transformative moment" is not specific to South Africa, although the manifestation and set of circumstances surrounding it are unique. The DoE faces a massive challenge: to create a practical ideology of equality and empowerment in contrast to both South African and global inequalities.

Up to now, the ideology the DoE have put forward has created an illusion of transformation without dealing with the daily realities of teacher training, scarce resources and large class sizes. It was clear from teachers' perceptions that ideology cannot be preserved in a vacuum; it must make sense in the real world. Curriculum must deal more concretely with the unequal and resource-scarce environment teachers face every day. It may be difficult to find the language to grapple with this environment, but in the long term finding less idealised language and curriculum will help us face down apartheid, racism and xenophobia across South Africa.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu-Lughod, Janet. (1999). *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Akokpari, John K. (2002). "International Migration, xenophobia and the dilemma of the South African state," 221-246 in *South Africa Since 1994: Lessons and Prospects*. Edited by Sipho Buthelezi and Elizabeth le Roux, Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.
- Ballard, Richard. (2005). "Preliminary considerations on the relationship between forced migrants and the city of eThekwin" *Forced Migration in the New Johannesburg: Towards a Local Government Response*. Edited by Loren B. Landau, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Banteyerga, H. (1994). "An Alternative Model in Teacher Education: The Classroom in Focus." A Paper presented at the *Pan-African colloquium: Educational innovation in Post-colonial Africa*. University of Cape Town, Rondebosch.
- Baruch, H. (1979). *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt: Roots of A Revolution*, London: Zed Press.
- Berg, B. (1989). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bowles, Samuel & Gintis, Herbert. (1976). *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Chisholm, Linda ed. (2004). *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Community Agency for Social Enquiry. (2003) *National Refugee Baseline Survey: Final Report*. Researched for Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Congress of the People. (1955). *The Freedom Charter* accessed from <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html> [2 February 2007]
- Croucher, S. (1998). "South Africa's illegal aliens: constructing national boundaries in a post-apartheid state." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21(4): 639-660.
- Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*. Accessed from <http://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf> [November 2005]
- Edwards, Audrey. Polite, Craig. (1992). *Children of the Dream*. New York: Doubleday.

Eldering, Lotty. (1996). "Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education in an International Perspective" *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 27 (3): 315-330.

Ideology. (2007). in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed from Encyclopaedia Britannica online <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-12150> [09 August 2006]

Fordham, S. & Ogbu, John. (1986). "Black Students School Success: Coping with 'the burden of Acting White'" *Urban Review*, 18(3):176-206.

Freund, Bill. (2001). "Contrasts in Urban Segregation: A Tale of Two African Cities, Durban (South Africa) and Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire)" *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27(3):527-426.

Gibson, Margaret. (1997). "Complicating the Immigrant/Involuntary Minority Typology" *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 28(3): 431-454.

Giroux, Henry. (1980). "Beyond the Correspondence Theory: Notes on the Dynamics of Educational Reproduction and Transformation." *Curriculum Inquiry*, 10(3):225-247.

Goodey, Christopher. (1999). "Learning disabilities: The Researcher's voyage to Planet Earth." 40-53 in *Critical Issues in Social Research: Power and Prejudice*, Edited by Suzanne Hood, Berry Mayall and Sandy Oliver. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Hammersly, Martyn. (2000). "The Relevance of Qualitative Research" *Oxford Review of Education: The Relevance of Educational Research*. 26(3/4): 393-405.

Hyslop, Jonathan. (1999). *The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa 1940-1990*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Jansen, Jonathan. (1990). "Curriculum as a Political Phenomenon: Historical Reflections on Black South African Education" *Journal of Negro Education* 59(2): 195-206.

Jones, James. (1997). *Prejudice and Racism 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Landau, Loren. (2005). "Transplants and Transients: Nativism, Nationalism, and Migration in Inner-City Johannesburg," *Forced Migration Working Paper Series #19*.

Levitt, Peggy, and Mary Waters. (2002). "Introduction." In *The Changing Face of Home: the Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, edited by Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. 1-30.

Naicker, Sigamoney (2000). "From Apartheid Education to Inclusive Education: The Challenges of Transformation" presented at *International Education Summit for a Democratic Society*, Detroit.

Nekhwevha, Fhulu. (1999). "No Matter How Long the Night, the Day is Sure to Come: Culture and Educational Transformation in Post-Colonial Namibia and Post-Apartheid South Africa." *International Review of Education Education, Equity and Transformation*. 45(5/6):491-506.

New International Version, *Romans 5:3-4*.

Ntshoe, Isaac M. (2002). "The Impact of Political Violence on Education in South Africa: Past, Present and Future" in *Current Issues in Comparative Education, Teachers College, Columbia University*. 2(1). Accessed from <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/Archives/2.1/21ntshoe.pdf> [14 July 2006]

Ogbu, John. (1992). "Adaptation to Minority Status and Impact on School Success" *Theory into Practice: Literacy and the African-American Learner*, 31(4), 287-295.

Page, Reba. (1987). "Teachers' Perceptions of Students: A Link between Classrooms, School Cultures, and the Social Order." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 18(2): 77-99.

Pajares, M. Frank. (1992). "Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning up a Messy Construct." *Review of Educational Research* 62(3): 307-332.

Pinar, William. (1992). "Politics of Curriculum: Origins, Controversies and Significance of Critical Perspectives". *Review of Research in Education* 18:163-190.

Roberts, Shelley & McGinty, Suzanne. (1995). "Awareness of Presence: Developing the Researcher Self." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 26(1): 112-122.

Said, Edward W. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism* New York: Knopf.

Sanders, Mavis. (1997). "Overcoming Obstacles: Academic Achievement as a Response to Racism and Discrimination" *The Journal of Negro Education*, 66(1):83-93.

Simon, Martin A. & Tzur, Ron. (1999). "Explicating the Teacher's Perspective from the Researchers' Perspectives: Generating Accounts of Mathematics Teachers' Practice." *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education* 30(3): 252-264.

South Africa. Department of Education. (1999). *Equity in the Classroom*, Accessed from <http://www.education.gov.za/dynamic/dynamic.aspx?pageid=329&catid=10&category=Reports> [19 June 2006]

South Africa. Department of Education. (2000). *Report of the Working Group on Values in Education*. Accessed from <http://education.pwv.gov.za/> [October 2005]

South Africa. Department of Education. Kader Asmal (2001). *Education in South Africa: Achievements since 1994* Accessed from <http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/reports/education/achieve.html?rebookmark=1> [ 2 Jan 2007]

South Africa. (2002). Department of Education. *Curriculum 2005: Assessment Guidelines for Inclusion*. Accessed from <http://education.pwv.gov.za/> [October 2005]

South Africa. Department of Education. (2004). *Curriculum Adaptation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement*. Accessed from <http://education.pwv.gov.za/> [October 2005]

South Africa. Department of Education. (2005). *A National Framework for Teacher Education in South Africa: Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education*. Accessed from <http://education.pwv.gov.za/> [October 2005]

South Africa. Department of Education. [online] *Values in Education*. Accessed from [http://www.education.gov.za/about\\_doe/vision.asp](http://www.education.gov.za/about_doe/vision.asp) [June 19 2006]

South Africa. Mpumalanga Department of Education. (2004). *5 Year Strategic Plan 2005-2010* accessed from [http://www.mpumalanga.gov.za/education/documents\\_publications/plans/strategic\\_doc/strategic\\_performance\\_plans.pdf](http://www.mpumalanga.gov.za/education/documents_publications/plans/strategic_doc/strategic_performance_plans.pdf) [June 19 2006]

South African history project *Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953* [online], Accessed from <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/specialprojects/june16/education.htm#> [20 June 2006]

South African history project *Special Chronology: Black Education* [online] Accessed from <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/special-chrono/mainframe-blackedu.html> [20 June 2006]

South African History Project. *Cape Schools Join the Revolt* [online] [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za) [22 June 2006]

South African history project. *Chronology* [online] Accessed from <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/mainframe.htm> [June 18 2006]

Statistics South Africa (2001). *Census 2001*. Accessed 15 January 2006 from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/Census/Database/Census%202001/Census%202001.asp>

Terreblanch, Sampie. (2000). *A History of Inequality in South Africa: 1652-2002* University of Natal Press: Pietermaritzburg.

UNESCO, [online] *Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education: A Challenge and a Vision. A Conceptual Paper for the Education Sector*, 2001 Accessed from <http://education.pwv.gov.za/>, October 2005.

Verwoerd, H.F. (1954). "Bantu Education: Policy for the immediate future." *Statement by the Hon. Dr H.F. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, in the Senate of the Parliament of the Union of South Africa*.



wa Thiongo, Ngugi. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey.

Washington, Valora. (1982). "Racial Differences in Teacher Perceptions of First and Fourth Grade Pupils on Selected Characteristics." *The Journal of Negro Education*, 51(1): 60-72.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. (1994). *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

\*\*\*

### **SCHOOL KEY**

In order to prevent the reader from immediately developing ideas about a school, I referred to each school by number, rather than name. Teachers were consistently referred to by a false name.

#### ***High Schools*** (Grades 8-12)

Bechet High School	High School #1
Sparks Estate High School	High School #2
Centenary High School	High School #3

#### ***Primary Schools*** (Grades 1-7)

Overport Primary School	Primary School #1
St Augustines Primary School	Primary School #2
Clare Estate Primary School	Primary School #3
Addington Primary School	Primary School #4
Clareville Primary School	Primary School #5
Juma Musjid Primary School	Primary School #6

## APPENDIX 1

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. I am new to the school and would like to know more about it from your perspective. Could you tell me a little bit about the school and your experience here?
2. (if not answered in #2) Teachers tend to have different perspectives depending on how long they have taught for and where they have taught. Could you tell me a bit about your teaching experience, from you decision to become a teacher to the present?
3. So you have been in this area a long time?  
Oh so you are new to this community how has it been to live here how has it changed over the years.
4. I've been reading about the three curriculum changes that teachers have gone through in the past decade. How have these impacted you?
5. I have predicted that teacher experiences with their non-national students might be different depending on how many non-nationals are in their class. How many non-South Africans do you usually have in your class?
6. Could you speak a bit about your expectations of or hopes for your non national students for your 1 year with them?
- 7: How do these expectations compare to the rest of the class?
- 8: Where do you students being in ten years?
9. Do your students attend school on a regular basis?
10. Do you know what causes non-nationals to miss school?
11. I am trying to learn what teachers would like to know about their non-nationals' counties. What would you like to know about the countries your students come from?
12. After getting to know your students' better, what do you think about what you knew before? (ie, was it accurate?)
13. I recognize that Parents' occupations have a big impact on their children. What do the parents of your South African students do for a living?
14. What do your non-national parents do for a living?

15. How do you think this impacts students in your class?
16. What kind of education do non-national parents have?
17. How do you communicate with parents?
- 18/19. Have South African parents ever spoken about the presence of non-South Africans in the class? (if yes, how did you respond)
20. In you daily life—shopping, relaxing, meeting family and friends—do you come into contact with non-South Africans?
21. Could you describe one challenge you or another teacher has had teaching non South Africans, and how it was dealt with?
22. Could you share with me one success story?
23. What do you attribute the child's success to?
24. Is there anything that you want to talk about that I haven't asked you about?

**APPENDIX 2**  
**INFORMATION SHEET FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS**  
**(PROVIDED BEFORE THE INTERVIEW DATE)**

***Teacher Perspectives on non-South African Learners in Durban Schools***

This sheet is to invite you to consider being part of my research, and tell you a bit more about it so that you can decide whether you would like to participate. If you do not want to participate, after reading this info sheet or during the interview, you are free to refuse or end the interview. Knowing how precious your time is, you need not give a reason. I will not speak to the principal or any other member of the staff at this school about your participation or non-participation, or about your responses.

My name is Jo Hunter, and I am writing a dissertation at University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. The research will be submitted for a Masters in Arts. I am learning about teacher perspectives and perceptions of non-national learners. The way I am doing this is by interviewing teachers. I am interested in interviewing teachers at this school because it is one of the schools in the area that has non-nationals enrolled in it. The interviews I will be conducting are “semi-structured”, and so I have a set of questions but we are not bound by those questions and so you can also guide the conversation. I usually speak to each educator for about one hour. None of the questions are very personal, but I do ask about general questions about your experience as a teacher, then go on to ask about your experience as a teacher of non-South African learners.

I will not reveal your name, the name of your school, or even the area it is in, in my dissertation. However, because there are only a limited number of schools in the Durban area that will fit the description of your school there is a chance that it is not completely anonymous. My readership will be limited and so it is highly unlikely any response could be traced back to you.

Thank you so much for your consideration. If you feel comfortable with the information above, perhaps we could organize a time suitable to you when I could visit the school?

Sincerely,  
Jo R. Hunter  
University of the Witwatersrand  
Cell: (082) 4040 106

**APPENDIX 3**  
**RECORDING CONSENT (VERBAL)**

I would like to record this interview for my own records. Would you feel comfortable with this? The tape will not be played to anyone other than myself. I transcribe the interview and then reuse the tape. If you do not feel comfortable with the interview being recorded, but would like to be part of the study, I will take notes.

#### **APPENDIX 4**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT**

(After the participant information sheet, Appendix 3, has already been read, and the teacher has provisionally agreed to be part of the study)

Good morning \_\_\_\_\_, my name is Jo Hunter. I am from the University of the Witwatersrand, doing research in education for non-South Africans. The aim of this study is to learn more about educators' perspectives of non-South Africans. This interview will last for about an hour, but if you need to leave at any time, please feel free to do so. I will not tell the principal or any staff here at \_\_\_\_\_ whether or not you participate.

I will not use your name, the name of the school, or the name of the area that the school is in. In so doing I will make every effort for your responses to be anonymous. If I quote you, I will make extra effort to this end. However, because there are a limited number of schools in Durban, anonymity is not complete. The dissertation will have a narrow readership and it is very unlikely that your responses could ever be linked to you.

I would like to say that you are not obligated in any way to participate in this study. Are you comfortable with what I have told you about the study so far? Has anything I have told you made you doubt your ability to participate? Do you have any questions?

(If consent is provided) Thank you so much for being part of my research.