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Effects of a brief intervention programme on teacher attitudes towards multicultural education

Da Silva, Zena

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3.5 **Evaluation of the Course**

The overall evaluation results are presented in Table V below.

TABLE VI

Evaluations of the course

	SESSION 1			SESSION 2			SESSION 3		
	Mean	Median	Mode	Mean	Median	Mode	Mean	Median	Mode
I feel comfortable to participate in the sessions	2,9	3	3	3,1	3	3	3,2	4	
I gained further awareness about the issues under discussion	2,7	3	2	3	3	3	3,1	3	
The subjects were explored in an effective fashion	3	3	3	3,2	3	3	3,3	3	
The material covered was relevant to me	3,2	3	3	3,4	3	3	3,3	4	
I had an opportunity to explore my own attitudes to issues	2,9	3	3	2,9	3	3	3,4	4	

0 - NOT AT ALL	1 - SLIGHTLY	2 -MODERATELY	3 - VERY MUCH	4 - EXTREMELY

As Table V shows, the evaluations of the course became more positive. There was significant shift from sessions 2 to 3 in item 5 ("I had an opportunity to explore my own attitudes to issues") (x^2 (2) = 6,6435; $p<0,05$); indicating that the intervention programme had provided teachers with the opportunity for introspection on issues around multicultural education. "I gained further awareness ....." also gives evidence of the positive awareness gained across the process of the three sessions.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of the findings

The effect of the intervention were varied. There were no significant overall changes in teacher attitudes after a intervention, although several changes on individual items were significant or approached significance. The trends varied between positive and negative change.

The majority of the teachers surveyed in this study were in favour of integrated schools, as reflected by their initial scores for the "attitudes of teachers to integration" component. The teachers tended to be generally supportive of a number of ideological issues related to multicultural education as well as to the change that those views required. It is noteworthy that the majority of the teachers were anxious about working with colleagues from different races as indicated by their "uncertain" response to "A single department of education for all races should be established". The teachers in general became anxious as an awareness of their required role in promoting change became more evident. These results indicate that teachers in general were in favour of multicultural education on an ideological and intellectual level. However, the consolidation on an emotional level appeared to present some difficulty for them.

A significant majority of the teachers were concerned with the issues and problems that they experienced arising from teaching in an integrated setting. The following difficulties emerged from expression in group discussion and on the survey: the disparity in education for the different races, the disadvantaged starting point for black pupils, differences in cultural backgrounds; second language difficulties; punctuality and time orientation; disrespect for authority and the frustration experienced as a result of the slower work pace. It would appear that the teachers in this study have experienced some of the difficulties of an integrated setting. This is reflected in the more cautious and uncertain attitude displayed on the more practical aspects of integrated education, as compared with attitudes on more general issues related to education. In other words, although the necessity of reform is recognised as urgent, the teachers tended to be hesitant regarding the actual implementation of integration.

The realisation that change is difficult emerged strongly through teacher reflections and discussions. The results reflected a trend from a denial of the difficulty of change to an increased awareness and agreement that change is difficult. This finding supports the view that when change is being debated, it is vital for leaders of institutions to know the viewpoints, commitments, anxieties and fears of their members.

The majority of the teachers in this study gave a very positive evaluation of the workshop they had undergone. A significant effect of the intervention programme was that it had provided teachers with the opportunity for introspection, and the chance to explore the fears and anticipation attached to transition, as well as the sense of loss of competence, anxiety over mastery of new skills and drop in self-esteem, that accompanies change. This was reflected by the very positive response to the item "I had an opportunity to explore my own attitudes to issues".

Although the majority of teachers were generally positive after the workshop programme, one of the ongoing affective needs expressed by the teachers was for containment of their anxieties through a structured, didactically orientated workshop. The anxiety appeared to reflect the emotional nature of the transition they were experiencing, and the need to be armed with problem-solving techniques. This need was more evident as awareness increased.

4.2 Comparison of this study with previous research

Previous research has documented the need for teacher training in preparation for multicultural education. It has also shown the critical relationship between teacher attitudes to multicultural education and their functioning in that situation.

As discussed in the review of literature, research indicates that for integrated schooling to be a success, teachers need to be adequately trained and committed to the aims and principles of multicultural education. The study by Buxton, Prichard, Bingham, Jackson and Talps (1974) indicated that the white teachers in their United States sample became more critical of their qualifications after the advent of integration. This suggests that teachers facing integrated classes are aware that new skills are necessary and this awareness may lead to a sense of inadequacy. In order that South African teachers do not experience the frustration and disillusionment expressed by the teachers in the United States study, it is essential that teachers are adequately equipped.

Washington (1982), in the North Carolina Multicultural Education survey on teacher attitudes, found that, within the integrated classroom, most teachers held attitudes indicating a commitment to educational practice which provided equal treatment and equal opportunity for the development of each individual. The present sample of teachers held a similar attitude. However, the fears that the teachers in the Buxton et al (1974) study experienced in teaching pupils of different races, are very similar to those expressed by the current study. Common concerns expressed by the present sample and the United States sample were: that communication would be difficult, the disparity in educational background of students and divergent backgrounds of pupils would pose difficulties; and that they had not received training to equip them for the integrated setting, and it was felt that they would benefit from in-service training.

The problems that the teachers experienced in the present study are also similar to those anticipated by the broad cross-section of teachers surveyed on behalf of the Natal Teachers' Society by Bot and Schlemmer (1986). This suggests that teachers do not consider themselves prepared for multicultural education and that the need still exists for teacher in-service training. Further, the results of the present study suggest that, without intervention, teachers may not be aware of the extent to which their unconscious prejudices affect their perceptions of interpersonal relations, choice of curriculum content and the dangers inherent in the ignorance of cultural differences of their pupils.

A great deal of anxiety emerged in the workshops, linked to the feelings accompanying the changes taking place, teacher abilities to accommodate the changes in terms of their personal value-system and their professional skills, and their lack of knowledge concerning different cultures and how cultural values affect learning. The ignorance teachers felt appeared to arise from their cultural isolation and the absence of a framework for dealing with the changes occurring in their lives. Their lack of knowledge and feelings of loss of control and the changes to be faced, brought with it a great deal of anxiety.

It was hoped that, through the workshops, teachers were equipped with a perspective against which their own values and future experiences could be viewed. This seems to have been reflected by the positive response to "I had an opportunity to explore my own attitudes to issues". The workshop provided the beginnings of a process, and the fears expressed would have to be pursued and dealt with. In-service training is thus needed to continue the process commenced in this programme.

4.3 **Practical implications**

Given the teachers' relatively favourable attitudes towards theoretical concepts of multicultural education, teachers would benefit from a training focus combining consciousness-raising, and provision of materials and model strategies for selecting and using these materials. An extended training programme should include peer-learning among teachers of similar content-areas. Thus, would imply that teachers of similar content-areas could provide a support base for each other which would consist of sharing of ideas, materials and strategies for implementation which individual teachers have observed to be working in their classrooms. A critical feature of training would be opportunities for work within the classroom setting, including the provision of multicultural materials, examples of alternative instructional methodology, and assistance in observing and identifying the unique strengths of individual learners. According to Washington (1982) training which has merely involved lectures, though enjoyed by teachers, has not proved effective in altering classroom practice.

Presently, teachers are being challenged to become more aware of the needs of pupils from diverse backgrounds and to adapt their curricula to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society. The majority of the teachers in this study supported the need for in-service training and the challenge therefore is that in-service training at schools and at tertiary institutions need to be implemented to equip teachers for a multicultural classroom and society. Resource centres should be established for teachers, to assist them in coping with the demands of multicultural education.

4.4 Limitations of the study

1. Sample

The present study was seen as a pilot-study and the decision was made to focus on white teachers in a government school who had expressed a need for the workshop. The sample of teachers were selected from one school and would limit the generalisation of the result of the study. A further limitation of the study was thus that different race populations from state and private schools were not included.

2. Questionnaire

The Questionnaire method, which was the approach used for assessment of this study was answered anonymously and done under controlled conditions. The teachers answered the questionnaire in a specified time allocation, of approximately 1,5 hours. Certain participants may have experienced social pressure to respond in a way that was supportive of the prevailing norms of the school.

The Questionnaire had some limitations as an assessment technique. It was not validated. It had a dual purpose namely (1) to assess the needs of the teachers and (2) to gauge any change in perception after the intervention. No factor analysis was conducted on the eighty item attitude scale which was used on an adhoc basis.

3. Intervention

As the teachers evaluated their experience of the workshop directly after each session, the anxiety and resistance raised during the course of each session may have prevented learning from being fully assimilated by the time the form was completed.

4.5 Implications for further research

This study was seen as a pilot study to explore the issues that encompass multicultural education and to provide the first stage of a process which would equip teachers to cope in a multicultural setting. The implications for future research in this regard include the following:

1. A validated scale should be developed and/or found to examine the effects on teacher attitudes towards multicultural education.

2. This study should be replicated, using different sample populations, in order to assess the universality of teacher needs in the area of integrated schools and the validity of the findings of the current study.

3. Future research should include in its methodology a follow-up evaluation which can examine the long-term effects of an in-service workshop on teacher competence and anxieties.

4. The needs of teachers should be re-assessed after a period of exposure to an integrated setting, in order to provide a relevant and supportive service to both teachers and pupils.

5. Also important is the design of training techniques and materials aimed at equipping teachers with the identified competencies.

6. A follow up study should be done to examine the long term effects on teacher attitudes towards multicultural education, as well as to determine the extent to which attitudes change has been sustained.

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APPENDIX I

TABLE 1

MODEL C - DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN RELATION TO THE CHILDREN

	MEDIANS		
	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	TRENDS
1. Poor listening skills	3	3	
2. Short attention span	3	3	
3. Deficits in early learning experiences	3	3	
4. Passivity - non-response to questions and reprimand	2	2	
5. Unfamiliarity with English (e.g. not understanding work)	3	2	+
6. Slower work pace	2.5	2	+
7. Punctuality/orientation (e.g. projects/homework not handed in on time	2	3	#

+ SHIFTS
# NEGATIVE SHIFT

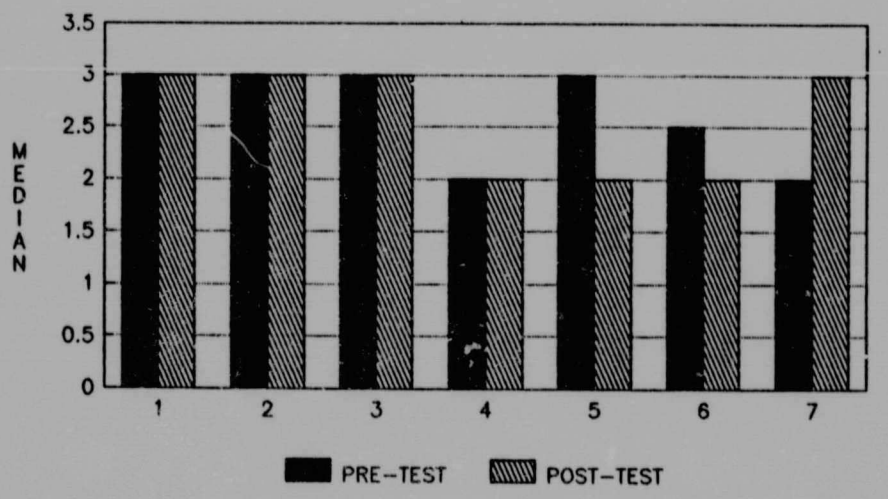

FIGURE I:
Difficulties experienced in relation to children

TABLE 1 (continued)

MODEL C - DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN RELATION TO THE CHILDREN

	MEDIANS		TRENDS
	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	
8. Lack of confidence	1	1	
9. Excessively rowdy	2	2	
10. Aggressive, rough play on the playground; disregard for feelings of others	1.5	2	#
11. Lack of motivation	2	2	
12. Increased incidence of theft	0,5	0	+
13. Disrespect for authority, disobeying instructions (e.g. teachers and prefects	1,5	2	#
14. Cultural differences in expression of behaviour/attitudes	2	2	

+ SHIFTS
# NEGATIVE SHIFT

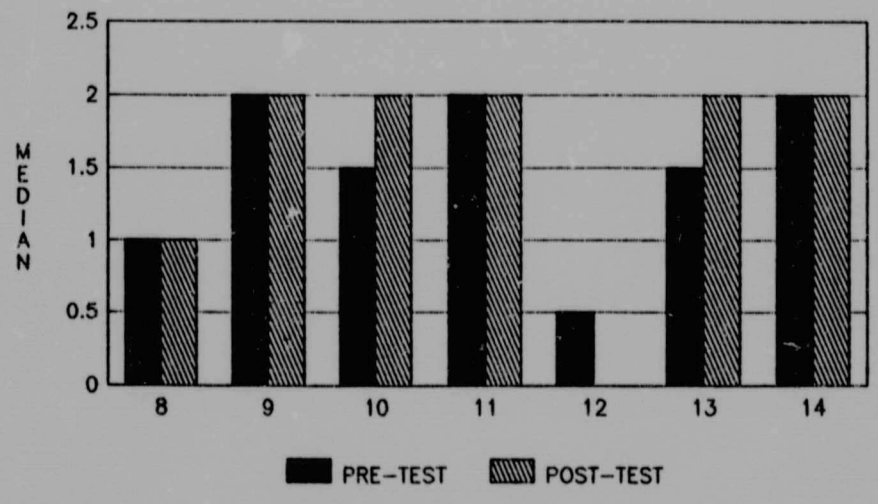

FIGURE I:
Difficulties experienced in relation to children (continued)

TABLE 2

MODEL C - DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN RELATION TO FAMILIES

	MEDIANS		
	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	TRENDS
1. Lack of supervision of homework	2	2	
2. Lack of parental value of education	2	1	+
3. Unrealistic expectation of teacher with regard to educating and disciplining a child	1	1,5	#
4. Lack of parental resources	2	3	#
5. Lack of community resources (e.g. libraries, material resources)	2,5	2	+
6. Inaccessibility of a parental figure	1	2	#
7. Behaviour suggesting trauma in a child	1	1	
8. Strong expectations of corporal punishment	1,5	2	* #
9. Difference in financial status	2	1,5	+
10. Unrealistic expectations of a child	1,5	2	#
11. Great variation in attitudes	1	2	#

* SIGNIFICANT $p < 0,0256$
+ SHIFTS
# NEGATIVE SHIFT

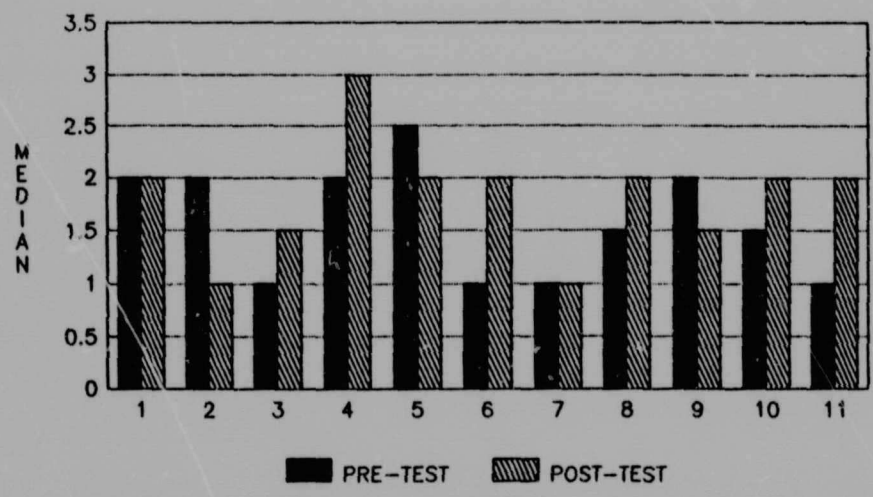

FIGURE II:
Difficulties experienced in relation to families.

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