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EFFECTS OF A BRIEF INTERVENTION PROGRAMME ON TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION
(EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Z. DA SILVA
June 1995

SUMMARY

The general aim of this study was to develop a workshop and to assess the effects of a brief workshop programme on teachers' attitudes towards multicultural education. In addition, the study aimed to determine teachers' perceptions of the difficulties and benefits experienced in integrated schooling, to design and develop a workshop which would address those needs and to determine teachers' attitudes towards integration, "change" and the problems associated with disadvantage. Finally, the study aimed to assess the effects of the workshop on those attitudes.

The opinions of 14 teachers were obtained via a questionnaire which yielded information of a quantitative and qualitative nature. The results indicated that before the workshop intervention the teachers in this study were generally supportive of integrated schools. The results also indicate that teachers in general were in favour of multicultural education on an ideological and intellectual level.

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, which was 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. Although the necessity of reform was recognised as urgent following the workshop, the teachers tended to be hesitant regarding the actual implementation of integration.

The majority of the teachers in the study had experienced the workshop very positively. A significant effect of the intervention programme was that it had provided teachers with the opportunity for introspection, to explore the fears and anticipation attached to transition, as well as the sense of loss, anxiety over mastery of new skills and drop in self-esteem that accompanies change.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Education for transformation

Recent developments in South Africa have drawn the attention of the international community to the dismantling of Apartheid and the abandoning of the assumptions which underlay and supported this ideology. The resultant restructuring of South African society into a democratic and non-racist nation has far-reaching implications for educational thought and practice. Holdstock (1987) indicates that a major shortcoming of South African education is that it ignores the fact that South Africa is part of the African, and not of the European continent. The educational implications of Senghor's view that "classical Europe has given the world a civilisation of discursive reason while classical Africa has contributed a civilisation of intuitive reason" (Holdstock, 1987:203), should indeed be considered in an attempt to provide relevant educational opportunities to the peoples of South Africa.

South Africa is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society. The challenge of all multiracial, multi-ethnic and multicultural societies is that of creating and implementing an educational programme that is infused with the nation's racial and ethnic diversity.

Until recently, South Africa has tried to address the issues of multi-ethnicism and multiculturalism by separating the peoples of one country along racial, ethnic and cultural lines (Thembela, 1991). Just as the formal, outward structures of education have been segregated on the basis of race and, to a lesser extent ethnicity, so too has philosophical thought about education been fragmented in South Africa (Higgs, 1993). The recent education reforms which allowed for the opening of white state schools to all race groups represented an attempt to address some of the problems created by the policy of separatism (Bot, 1991). It also signified a move away from segregated education to multiracial and multicultural educational paradigms.

The response of educational institutions to the demand of social reform can be seen in western democracies, such as the United States of America, Great Britain, Australia and Israel. In these countries educational policy has evolved from one pointing segregated institutions to policies that promote equality and attempt to ensure that the "outcomes" of different groups will not reflect their differential location within society (Jones & Street-Porter, in Cole, 1989).

This evolution began in response to the "ethnic revitalisation" reform movement of the 1960s, led by black Americans who protested that, although constitutionally they had equal rights, very few members of minority groups managed to achieve economic, political or social equality. As the reform process moved through different phases in these countries, new educational paradigms were introduced (Banks & Lynch, 1986). Each of these paradigms attempted to overcome the difficulties experienced by minority students in achieving true equality, and as each in turn failed, educational theorists came to realise that the inequalities of society could not be addressed by single

factor approaches to education.

As in the United States of America and Britain, the plural structure of South African society increases the complexity of the South African life-style and thus contributes to the uncertainty and even tension that many educators experience regarding their educative task (Oberholzer, 1989). As South Africa comprises one of the most diverse and multicultural societies in the world, it is important to understand and evaluate the different paradigms.

Watson (1985) states that the policies adopted towards subgroups of a given society have varied considerably from one country to another in different circumstances at different periods in history. These have ranged from extermination (e.g. Jews in the Third Reich); expulsion (e.g. Asians from Uganda); assimilation of minority groups into the mainstream culture, to "separate development" as practised in South Africa. The dilemma faced by all multicultural societies is to find the mythical equilibrium between the maintenance of reasonable social and political stability (social cohesion) and the tolerance and encouragement of cultural diversity (Goodey, 1989). The ideal social policy would thus be in line with the principle of cultural continuity.

It is important to take cognisance of the fact that no educational theory or ideological paradigm can be implemented unchanged in different communities. Factors such as philosophies of life, cultural aspects and economic, political and demographic determinants play vital roles in the actualization of an educational theory in a particular society (Goodey, 1989). Consequently, educational theory and research have attempted to explore the many inter-related factors that need to be addressed for reform in education to achieve its goals.

In the light of the above, the policy and aims of multicultural education are presented.

1.2 Policy options in multicultural societies and their influence on education

The policy of multiculturalism is an alternative educational policy that can be implemented in an open school. Interestingly, multicultural education has existed in several forms over a number of years in:

* State schools, particularly English-medium schools in certain urban communities, with a diversity of first and second generation immigrants (Education and Culture, 1990, September). It appears that a form of multicultural education had already been practised within white schools, in some cases, possibly unconsciously.
* Private schools, many of which have served religious or other groups.
* Private sector funded schools established more recently specifically to be multicultural, and with no religious or sectarian bias.

The question of how an educational system should respond to cultural diversity generally evokes reactions in which emotion and political judgement play a major role. Once different groups find themselves in a nation-state, the question arises of how to deal with them. Does government policy in general, and educational policy in particular, seek to eliminate, modify or encourage cultural diversity? (Goodey, 1989).

There are as many definitions of multicultural education as there are proponents (cf. Grant, Sleeter & Anderson, 1986). As a result, many educators/teachers have come to view multicultural education as ill defined and lacking in substance, and have therefore been hesitant to adopt it as a sound educational approach, failing to see its value (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993). Viewpoints on multicultural education and policy could be regarded as forming a continuum, with assimilation at the one extreme and pluralism at the other (cf. Appleton, 1983; Lynch, 1986; Pratte, 1979).

1.2.1 The assimilation policy

The assimilation policy sees the aim of multicultural education as the eventual "conversion" of ethnic minority groups into the mainstream culture. Cultural differences, such as language, religion and values, are totally ignored. This approach is also known as Anglo-conformity because it was the official social policy followed in most western societies, such as the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia until the 1970s. Education is used to good effect to ensure assimilation because not only does the curriculum ignore the different facets of minority groups, but there is an insistence at official level that teaching is through one language, about one set of social values and customs (Watson, 1985:75).

The assimilation approach can be described as an anti-pluralistic approach, as it propagates a social policy whereby social cohesion is the ultimate goal. Banks (1981) notes that the "unfulfilled promises and dreams of the assimilationist idea was a major cause of the Black civil rights movement of the 1960s." This gave rise to the ethnic revitalisation movements in most of the major western nations.

1.2.2 The pluralistic approaches

On the other hand the pluralistic approaches emerged mainly in response to the ethnic revitalisation movements. Pluralism accepts that there are differences in culture. It strives to allow the retention of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups while promoting inter-cultural understanding. It acknowledges that people are born into a social group, thereby inheriting its culture. Each individual also plays a part in modifying and adapting that culture, in other words culture is not a static feature of society but is constantly changing in response to the circumstances in which the society finds itself. According to Appleton (1983) and Pratte (1980) cultural pluralism is an evaluative term which generally implies the following: cultural diversity; membership in a common

polity; relative parity and equality between groups; and a perceived value for the continuance of diversity.

While accepting the above, the proponents of pluralism are constantly aware of the fact that any action that focuses on, or encourages the identity of groups and thus their continued existence may lead to a situation where separate groups compete with one another for economic, social and political power.

1.2.3 The concept of cultural pluralism

The concept of cultural pluralism stresses the retention of one's own culture coupled with a recognition of the contributions and enrichments that other cultures can offer. It has been likened to a "salad bowl", where the various ingredients not only retain their particular distinctive characteristics, but also contribute to the ultimate whole (Van Zijl, 1987). It needs to be borne in mind that whilst culture and race are often viewed as being synonymous in this country, the distinction is important. Cognisance should also be taken of the impact of sub-cultural differences such as language, socio-economic level, sex, religious lifestyle and age. Multicultural education encompasses multi-ethnic education, but it is a broader reform movement that deals not only with the educational problems of ethnic minority groups but with many kinds of cultural groups such as women, handicapped persons, language groups etc. (Bank & Lynch,1986; Garcia,1982).

After evaluating a number of definitions, Montero Sieburt concludes that multicultural education "will lead to recognising cultural values and differences among and between ethnic groups and individuals, and will develop strategies that enhance communication, develop cross-cultural understanding and awareness, which will lead to more positive learning outcomes" (1988:5).

Multicultural education should not be seen as an examination of the problems faced by black people in adjusting to white society - and underlying this, the assumption that educational disadvantage arises from cultural differences. Evidence elsewhere (e.g. the Swann Report in Britain, 1985, and the findings of the Commission on Multicultural Education in the U.S.A., 1980) has shown that it is improbable that such a "problem-oriented" approach would be effective in the long term. Cultural differences are not "problems" or "defects" and multicultural education is not compensatory education (Van Zyl, 1987).

Criticism has been levelled at the practice of multicultural education elsewhere in the world in that the practice implies and produces a consequential lowering of educational image, with a lowering of prestige, when disadvantaged groups are integrated into disadvantaged educational structures.

Giles and Willey (1975) claim that the whole cultural/ethnic composition of the group suffers because of the grouping practices and the consequent evaluation of these groups become unrealistic. Both authors imply that when progress and/or promotions are governed by profile failure statistics and such techniques, there is a general lowering of standards to safeguard the image of the disadvantaged groups.

If we wish to reduce inequality, we should adopt policies designed to equalise not only income and the status of the group, but also in addition, to attempt to equalise opportunity in education - the goal of so much liberal reform in recent years (Levine, 1975:45).

1.3 The concept of change

Achieving change and initiating successful reforms are very much at the heart of the multicultural education issue (Verma, 1975). Basic to multicultural education for South Africa is the ideal, that it will allow the child to be prepared for the changing sociological environment into which he will proceed. "The change implied is so profound that a future where multiculturalism prevails is difficult to envisage" (Arciniega, 1981:6), but Cross, Baker and Stiles endorse that there must be a change away from stereotyped thinking in the national and international way of life of all communities (Cross, 1977).

Hickson and Kriegler (1991) state that in a society where social change is taking place rapidly, change itself is a major stressor. South African society is undergoing major restructuring and the state educational system is becoming a reflection of that society as it starts to free itself from apartheid.

Teachers and educators are caught up in the transition, and whether they welcome it or resent it, they are subject to the environmental and psychological changes accompanying it. Marwick (1991), writing for the Natal Education Department Director, states that while a multicultural classroom can be a rich educational resource, it has also the potential of becoming a "powder-keg of discrimination or prejudice" (p.13).

Although research has not been able to provide a perfect strategy for successful change in education, certain variables that favour or impede change have been isolated. The trend in the past was for administrators to decide on change and rely on the teachers to implement the change. Research indicates that this "top-down" approach is ineffective (Havelock and Huberman, 1977; Morrish, 1976). There appears to be a reasonable sense of uniformity as to how best to implement the basic element of change. Social activities must at the onset initiate the elements of change in the wider perspective that embraces the community at large, and any such sociological movement, if it begins to have a measure of success and the subsequent acceptance, will permeate to the school.

Multicultural education cannot work in isolation, but once the movement is in motion, "schools are in the forefront of social change" (Cross, 1977:67). Research in the field of education indicates that real change is unlikely to occur if those involved are not committed to the process, that is, if what is expected of them is not congruent with their own perceptions and values (Huberman, 1973). Change in education involves an "investment of self" on the part of the teacher and lack of involvement due to a paternalistic approach leads to widespread apathy, alienation and anger (Lee, 1987).

For teachers seeing the end of racially segregated education, feelings of positive anticipation, apprehension and loss may be mediated by their individual attitudes to non-racial schooling, their self-confidence and readiness to move forward, and their past history of negotiating transitions. Although the pressure of change may be external, for example, in the form of a government proclamation, or internal, support has to be generated for successful outcomes to be possible (Lyseight-Jones in Cole, 1989).

Implementing multicultural education and changing educational policies and practices to reflect the culturally diverse nature of open schools will be a challenging and demanding task. Research and experience in other societies shows that multicultural education can be successful, provided teachers are adequately trained and committed to the aims and principles of multicultural education.

Twitchin and Demuth (1985) research in multicultural schools in Great Britain indicates that any change in a school is dependent on the extent to which those who are most involved understand it, accept it, and are willing to work to achieve it. The adoption of a name or concept is not sufficient to ensure that real change will occur (Smith and Cox, 1976). These changes pose a serious dilemma for teacher educators. Many questions are being raised about the effectiveness of teacher education programmes in terms of the preparation of teachers to cope with the multicultural conditions which exist in our society. The following questions are representative of those concerns.

1.4 The importance of the teacher as an agent of change in multicultural schools: The international perspective

In a nation of increasing cultural interaction, are teacher's attitudes, knowledge and skills meeting the needs of students from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds? And, are teacher education institutions, preparing teachers sufficiently to meet the needs of culturally diverse students? (Mahan and Boyle, 1981).

The public schools of South Africa are currently being called upon to accomplish perhaps the greatest social mission in the nation's history, full integration of all ethnic groups. A review of literature indicates that professional journals are replete with articles announcing the advent of integration in the nation, but few studies attempting to gauge the attitudes of teachers towards integration in the schools prior or subsequent to the phenomenon having been reported. There is an actual dearth of research concerning the attitudes of teachers facing integrated classrooms and ways in which the transition may be most effectively achieved (Buxton, Prichard, Bingham, Jackson and Talps, 1974).

Most research in western democracies which explores the effects of school integration/desegregation and the progress towards attaining the goals of that process has tended to focus on student outcomes, for example, the effect of school integration on self-concept and patterns of social relationships of the pupils (Washington, 1979; Washington, 1982). While much research supports the fact that these characteristics of the child correlate with academic success, researchers have recently begun to delineate teacher variables, for example, behaviour and skills, attitudes and values, that interact with pupil variables to bring this about. The variables of the child that have been found to be related to teachers' perceptions and expectations in integrated classrooms are a child's race, ethnic/cultural group and social class. The teacher variables that have been found to be associated with these pupil variables include the teacher's race, social class, gender and teaching experience.

Buxton et al (1974) using a questionnaire answered by 251 teachers, found that attitudes of teachers towards students of a different race may indeed affect the amount of academic subject matter to which they are exposed, and, consequently, their achievement. According to them, the influence of prejudice as a form of cultural atavism on both teaching and administrative practice in the public schools merits serious consideration.

Gay (1978), in a study investigating teacher effectiveness in desegregated schools, found that too often teachers have been exposed to desegregated situations with inadequate preparation in differential values, attitudes, expectations and behaviours they might find among multi-ethnic student populations, and the implications of these for restructuring the educational process. Gay concluded that if pupil-teacher interaction is the heart of the education process, and since Anglo and minority students do not have equal access and opportunity to engage in this process, then minority students in desegregated schools are not receiving the same quality of education.

Washington (1981) noted in a study of elementary school teachers in an economically disadvantaged norm Carolina School System that many teachers have not been prepared for the reality of cultural diversity, and teacher trainers have attempted to minimise differences among children of diverse cultural backgrounds, as was consistent with the "melting pot" theory.

Ladson-Billings (1991), a Professor of Teacher Education, in a study of undergraduate students registered for the multicultural course as part of the California University's ethnic studies requirement, describes students' knowledge of multicultural and ethnic perspectives as "very poor", because of the monocultural nature of the university and their backgrounds. She describes the students as "multicultural illiterates" - a term used to mean that they are not conversant with the basic ideas, issues, personalities, and events that enable one to understand the perspectives and experiences of people other than white, middle-class males.

Teachers were asked to comment on their concerns with respect to teaching racially different pupils on the advent of integration. In order of frequency the following concerns were suggested: lack of common ground for understanding lifestyles, values etc.; understanding language/communication; overcoming prejudices; planning for individual differences of pupils; lack of respect for adults; understanding pupils; poor backgrounds of black pupils; black pupils lack of training in the home; black children downgrading themselves; fear of being prejudiced; defensiveness among students; vulgarity; lack of confidence in handling purely racial problems and parental apathy. Some teachers commented on the positive experience integration had been for them, while others held the view that they had experienced no change as "pupils are pupils, colour makes no difference".

Most researchers comment that the teachers questioned had not received any training to equip them for the integrated setting, and it was felt that they would benefit from in-service training to help them adjust to the demands of integration and to enable them to overcome prejudice.

Washington (1982), in the North Carolina Multicultural Education survey on teacher attitudes found that, within the integrated classrooms, most teachers apparently hold attitudes indicating a commitment to educational practice denoting equal treatment and equal opportunity for development of each individual to the fullest of his or her potential. Teachers, however generally indicated a lack of access to materials to enhance implementation of multicultural education theory in classrooms.

According to Washington, given the teacher's relatively favourable attitudes towards the actual concept of multicultural education, a training focus on consciousness raising would not be warranted. Rather, teachers might benefit most from training which includes provision of materials and model strategies for selecting and using multicultural materials.

There is evidence favouring the presumption that multicultural education will have positive effects on teacher attitudes and classroom behaviour. Baker (1977) found that the attitudes of student teachers about ethnic groups could be changed through participation in a workshop which exposed them to multicultural materials and aspects of different cultures. Several authors have addressed the problem of preparing teachers for bilingual classrooms (Christian, 1977; Moffat, 1977; Rodriquez, 1970).

Research with teachers who are successful with students of colour (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Moll, 1988) suggests that teacher educators need to improve the modelling of the kind of classroom social interactions they want to see in pre collegiate classrooms.

Ladson-Billings (1991) found that students began to participate in a process of multicultural remediation which consists of two phases, namely (1) **self-examination** (involving exposure and multiple perspective, informed empathy and understanding of what it means to be white in society), and (2) **action** (where students investigate how well schools are addressing the multicultural needs of students). Those students who had taken the multicultural course exhibited more knowledge and flexibility of thought in both the social foundations of education and cross-cultural, interpersonal communication.

Watson (1984) observed a mixture of indifference, complacency, laissez-faire and hostility with regard to the multicultural component in teacher education in the United Kingdom. He notes that this situation "has helped to fudge issues, to reinforce stereotyping and to foster racism."

In the same vein, Sofer (1986) reviews recent publications on teacher education and multi-culturalism and notes "... one is left .. with the nagging feeling that all remedies (better in-service training, the development of a multicultural curriculum, more emphasis on home-school relations) are just a little too vague, too long term, too much the result of wishful thinking ..."

In the United States the Commission on Multicultural Education (1980) referred to a rather different type of teacher attitude, namely, "multicultural education is viewed by some faculties as an educational fad that will soon disappear and therefore does not merit serious attention ..."

Gay (1983) has pointed to the fact that most teachers in the USA are ethnically and culturally illiterate and live in ethnic enclosures isolated from all but superficial and transitory interactions with ethnic others. According to Van Zyl (1987) the position in South Africa is hardly likely to be any different and it would accordingly be unfair and even irresponsible to expect teachers to implement multicultural programmes without substantial preparation.

Gay (1983) along with many other authors advocates the importance of self-awareness training. Teachers need to be consciously aware of what their racial attitudes and instructional behaviours are toward culturally different students.
Awareness of one's own and others' ethnic attitudes and values is a critical component of teacher preparation for integration, both as a means of helping teachers crystallise or clarify their own racial attitudes and values, and of providing them with experiential data and exemplary instructional techniques to use with students.

In conclusion research and experience in other societies show that multicultural education can be successful, provided teachers are adequately trained and committed to the aims and principles of multicultural education.

1.5 The situation in South Africa

In 1990, the Minister of Education, P J Clase, announced that from 1991 White government schools would for the first time be able to admit black pupils according to one of three models. Schools which want to change to one of these models had to conduct an opinion poll among parents; a minimum of 72% of those entitled to vote had to vote in favour of the change, and at least 80% of parents must participate in the poll.

The three models were:

1. **Model A** - a private school which after closure of the public ordinary school operated in the same buildings.

2. **Model B** - a public ordinary school which determined its own admissions policy within the provision of the Constitution; or

3. **Model C** - a public ordinary school which has been declared to be a state aided school (Department of Education and Culture, 1990, September).

The class models of open schools provided a sharp division of opinion across the ideological spectrum. On the Left, the models were regarded as tokenism, reformist and therefore irrelevant. On the Right, the criticism was phrased in terms of the betrayal of apartheid ideals and the fear of 'beswarting' (Africanisation) (Morrell, 1991).

While most open schools have been characterised by small numbers of non-white pupils with entrance tests ensuring the successful assimilation of black pupils into the schools, and parental pressure ensuring that the number of black pupils does not become too large, some schools have adopted a broader approach with emphasis placed on the nuturance of diverse cultures, programmes to address disadvantage and a strongly anti-racist policy (Coutts, 1990).

While it is clear that these models are a step by the State towards greater democratisation and diversification in communities, it is also evident that the guidelines laid down are an attempt to take into account the fears of the white electorate with regard to cultural integration. The Work Committee of South African Teachers Association (SATA) reports the frustration of many of its members who recognise that education is in transition, wish to contribute towards change, but "feel isolated and impotent to do anything within the present system" (1989, p.6).

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