

Multi-Cultural Education: Is Education Playing A Role In Acculturating Different Cultures In South Africa?

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Abstract

In African alone there are around 2000 ethnic groups in the 53 states. South Africa is not an exception in having different ethnic groups which have different cultures. Prior 1994, during the prime apartheid era, people were divided according to their race, culture and ethnicity. It is also important to note that in different cities, towns, farms and rural areas of South Africa, people were located according to their differences in terms of Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Africans (Blacks) as well as their ethnicity, wherein, Nguni (Xhosa, Zulu, Swati and Ndebele), Sotho (Tswana, South Sotho and North South), Venda and Tsonga groups were separated. Especially noteworthy, the White groups were separated in terms of ethnicity, where Afrikaner, English, Greek and some other Europeans had separate dwellings places in cities. However, the main emphasis was on rural South Africa, what used to be called, homelands which were defined and divided exclusively according to ethnicity and cultural background. In this conceptual paper we reviewed and access how far South African education has gone playing a role in assimilating and acculturating different cultures into one South African nation (culture) since inception of democracy in 1994. Let us not hesitate to assert that it cannot be easy to put together people of different cultures who were strategically divided over a period of centuries. Nevertheless, as a nation which is preaching unity, this should be a priority and supposed to happen sooner than later. We infer that the establishment of a united and progressive nation depends on the provision of education. The question which we attempt to answer is 'Is education playing a role in assimilating and acculturating different South African cultures?'

Introduction

In the Republic of South Africa before 1994 population was spread according to its ethnic background. There were four independent homelands (states), which were Republic of Transkei, Republic of Bophuthatswana, Republic of Venda and Republic of Ciskei. The Republics of Transkei and Ciskei respectively were for Xhosa speaking people. Republic of Venda was for Venda speaking people; whereas Republic of Bophuthatswana was for Tswana speaking people. Besides independent homelands, there were other homeland territories which were not republics. Those were Gazankulu for Tsongas; Lebowa for Pedis (Northern Sotho); Kwa-Ndebele for Ndebeles; Ka-Ngwane for Swazis; Qwaqwa for Southern Sothos; Kwa-Zulu for Zulus.

It is also important to show that The Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950 was promulgated to separate all ethnic groups and cultures from one another. The Whites, Indians and Coloureds had their own separate development as well as separate residential areas far away from each other. But to put the whole snapshot of apartheid and segregation in perspective, laws of segregation divided South African population or society according to race, religion, culture and ethnic background. It was only after the new dispensation of 1994 when South Africa became democratic country that the segregation laws were outlawed. We see this conceptual paper as a modest contribution and investigation of the role played by education in assimilating and acculturating different South African cultures.

Parliamentary Promulgated Laws Since 1994

In this paper we consider two preambles. Firstly, the preamble of the South African Constitution of 1996, which says: 'believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to:

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Secondly, the preamble of South African Schools Act of 1996 states that whereas the achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation; and whereas this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic wellbeing of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organization, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the state.

Subsequently, this means that the preambles of the constitution as a supreme law of the Republic of South Africa and South African Schools Act envisage one united nation which is not defined through divisive measures such as race, ethnicity and cultural background.

Multi-Culture

According to Bilgrami (2010:199) and Guangbo (2010:1) multiculturalism is a term which is used to describe the social condition of diversity among the population evident through various spatial formations, but particularly seen through the spatial lens of nation states and cities. In particular, in India, it refers to the existence of vast differences among the population in terms of racial, language, ethnic, religious, and other cultural characteristics. Based upon this recognition of social and cultural diversity, multiculturalism is also a version of integration which acknowledges the rights and needs of the groups within the mainstream, the practical adoption of which varies considerably between places and states.

While multiculturalism emerged as, a popular way of dealing with the challenges of social and cultural diversity including inequality and racism, many nations who originally adopted this stance are currently beginning to shift back toward an assimilationist agenda. Multiculturalism was theorized in India but not within the accepted protocols and language of the modern, western academia. Multiculturalism is the appreciation, acceptance or promotion of multiple cultures, applied to demographic makeup of a specific place, usually at organizational level such as school. Multi-cultural background refers to a complex of deepening globalization, more frequent exchanges of economy, culture, and thought, fast-developing science and technology, the advent of information technology, competitive economic trends, fiercely violent ideological value, differentiated social stratum and the continuously changing lifestyle (Wikipedia, 2010).

World Book Encyclopedia (1997) states that culture is a term used by social scientists for a way of life. Every human society has a culture. Culture includes a society's arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, inventions, language, technology and values. To learn about a culture, one may ask such questions as these: what language do people speak? What do people of the society wear? How do they prepare their food? What kind of dwellings do they live in? What kind of work do they do? How do they govern themselves? How do they judge right from wrong?

The process by which people-especially children-learn their society's culture is called *enculturation*. Through enculturation, a culture is shared with members of a society and passed from one generation to the next. Enculturation unifies people of society by providing them with common experiences World Book Encyclopaedia (1997).

We argue that South Africa is multi-cultural country. While a shared cultural background makes people feel more comfortable with other people from their own culture, however, many people may feel confused and uneasy when they deal with people of another culture. The discomfort that often people feel when they have contact with an unfamiliar culture is called *culture shock*. Culture shock usually passes if a person stays in a new culture long enough to understand it and get used to its ways. We assume that if a multicultural society supports the view that many distinct cultures are good and desirable, therefore, multicultural society will encourage such diversity. Whereas multiculturalism succeeds best in a society that has many different ethnic groups and a political system that promotes freedom of expression and awareness and understanding of cultural differences.

On the other hand, ethnic groups can bring variety and richness to a society by introducing their own ideas and customs. However, ethnic groups that keep their own values and traditions can also threaten national unity. In many parts of the world, neighbouring ethnic groups dislike and distrust one another World Book Encyclopaedia (1997).

Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism:

According to World Book Encyclopaedia (1997) many people in all cultures think that their own culture is right, proper and moral. Hence, they tend to use their own cultural standards and values to judge the behaviour and beliefs of people from different cultures. Probably, they regard the behaviour and beliefs of other people from other cultures as strange or savage. The attitude that one's culture is best is called *ethnocentrism*. Ethnocentrism is regarded as harmful if carried to extremes. It may cause prejudice, automatic rejection of ideas from other cultures, and even persecution of other groups. The opposite view of ethnocentrism is called *cultural relativism*. It contends that no culture should be judged by the standard of another culture.

How cultures change

The question we persuaded to ask, "How does culture change?" given that all cultures think their own culture is right, proper and moral? In pursuance of a multicultural society where all cultures are equal, how do cultures change to accommodate others? We surmise that every culture changes now and then. But all parts of culture do not change at the same time. The failure of certain parts of a culture to keep up with other, related parts is referred as *cultural lag*. A number of factors may cause a culture to change: contact with other cultures and invention World Book Encyclopaedia (1997).

We suggest that no society is isolated that it does not come in contact with other societies. When contact occurs, societies borrow cultural traits from one another. As a result, cultural traits and patterns tend to spread from the society in which they originated. This spreading process is called *diffusion* World Book Encyclopaedia (1997). When two cultures have continuous, firsthand contact with each other, the exchange of cultural traits is called *acculturation*. Acculturation has often occurred when one culture has colonized or conquered another, or as a result of trade. Through acculturation, parts of the culture of one or both groups change, but the groups still remain distinct. Through the process of assimilation, one group becomes part of another group and as a result, loses its separate identity.

Multi-Cultural Education Thoughts in Schooling

We have observed that provision of education is a topic heatedly discussed. If a country cannot afford the duty to educate every child, other areas of development suffer. For these reason, it is necessary to create equal educational opportunities for students from different races, ethnic groups, social station and inter-cultural group, to help all students grasp knowledge, attitude and skills. As a result, children will be able to meet the cross-cultural communication's demands and create common civic and moral interests of society which is the ultimate objective of education. While teachers are the key factor of provision of education, there are two points in the socio-cultural education's enlightenment to be considered: the first is that teachers need to have sufficient cultural sensitivity to treat more fairly students from different cultural backgrounds and to assume more instructional responsibility for gradually diverse population, and the other is that design suitable curriculum, teaching materials, teaching methods to cultivate teachers' ability to face students of different races, different nationalities, different cultural backgrounds (Dicko, 2010:36).

Myer, van Wyk and Lemmer (2007:162) state that education plays an important part in equipping people to recognize, accept and appreciate differences in attitude, lifestyle, language, religion, ethnicity, culture or gender. It is a great challenge to for schools worldwide to accommodate diversity in the fullest sense without prejudice. Even mono-cultural schools are fundamentally characterized by diversity, which includes all kind of differences related to such matters as gender, class, religion, and intellectual and physical ability. Diversity brings richness to the school, thus, it needs to be treasured and built upon.

In practice, we see schools that are often characterized by tension, ignorance, misunderstanding and aggression, as a result of mismanaged diversity. Schools therefore have a grave responsibility to prepare learners for adult life by educating them to society freed from bias. If learners are made aware of and duly informed about diversity and the needs of other people, then the stage is set for them to develop mutual understanding and trust.

A key strategy in which greater understanding between peoples may be brought about is through the various approaches of multicultural education Myer, et al. (2007:162).

In South Africa it is not possible to talk about multicultural education without diversity of society. As stated in the introduction, African (Black) ethnic groups are in majority to White, Indian and Coloureds. According to Basia (2009:29) the concept of the universal values, usually expressed in terms of universal human rights, is based on the notion that there is a universal human nature that creates a moral requirement to treat human beings in a certain way simply by virtue of being human. The moderate position is that some human rights standards are universal and must be respected by all people, and that there is an overlapping of values which can be used to establish a common core of Human Rights. Some negative stereotypes about values in the context of multiculturalism today exist in the research literature and public discussion. The most popular of them are the following:

- Multiculturalism destroys the traditional system of values as such and creates nothing in exchange;
- Multiculturalism is grounded on relativism and rejects values as such;
- Multiculturalism destroys ethnocentrism, making it a changeable construction function, which is narrow and pragmatic, on which any foundations for new identity creation could not be laid;
- Multiculturalism, as the lack of common standards and values, leads to personal disorganization, resulting in unsociable behaviour;
- Multiculturalism is a source of deviant behaviour and habits (Basia, 2009:29).

Basia (2009:29) further states that sometimes, the stereotypes about values in the context of multiculturalism are completed by common myths about influence of ethnic groups on the clash of values. The United Nations (UN) "Human Development Report 2004" described and discussed some of them:

- People's ethnic identities compete with their attachment to the state, so there is a trade-off between recognizing diversity and unifying the state;
- Ethnic groups are prone to violent conflicts with each other in clashes of values, so there is a trade-off between respecting diversity and sustaining peace;
- Cultural liberty requires defending of traditional practices, so there could be a trade-off between recognizing the cultural diversity and other human development priorities such as progress in development, democracy and human rights.

Beiner (2003:24) states that, as societies become increasingly diverse, promoting inclusivity to counterbalance cultural fragmentation may create a paradox, as Will Kymlicka has noted: On the one hand, many of these groups are insisting that society officially affirm their difference, and provide various kinds of institutional support and recognition for their difference, e.g., public funding for group-based organisations. On the other hand, if society accepts and encourages more diversity, in order to promote cultural inclusion, it seems citizens will have less and less in common. If affirming difference is required to integrate marginalized groups into the common culture, there may cease to be a common culture (Beiner, 2003:24).

Kymlicka's point is not that too much diversity makes fragmentation inevitable, but rather that if cohesion is centred on a shared sense of belonging within a common and inclusive culture, then as the amount that is included increases then so too will the danger of that culture melting away: there will be nothing left to belong to. This is because the psychological mechanisms that sustain a cultural model of belonging rely upon members being able to perceive a resemblance between themselves and the wider culture, so that they can see themselves reflected in it. But there are likely to be limits to how much 'thinning out' a culture can bear before it ceases to function as such a source of identification (Beiner, 2003:24).

The cultural fragmentation objection thus survives the inclusivity rejoinder. However, empirical claims about the *quantity* of diversity a culture can bear without compromising psychological bonds of identity and affinity do not explain *why* the absence of such bonds should concern liberal political theorists. What the cultural fragmentation objection requires is an account of why it matters if some citizens do not feel 'at home' in a society. One such explanation is that without bonds of affinity and identity citizens may be likely to understand their relationships with one another (and with the political community at large) in purely 'instrumental' terms, and that this will diminish the kinds of solidarity necessary to secure trust, social co-operation, and to motivate compliance with the demands of social justice (Beiner, 2003:24).

For example, in a wide ranging critique of multiculturalism Brian Barry argues that because ‘political life presupposes citizens who can think of themselves as contributing to a common discourse about their shared institutions’ (Barry, 2001:300), then egalitarianism will require a ‘politics of solidarity’ in which citizens self-consciously ‘belong to a single society, and share a common fate [and participate in] a society-wide conversation about questions of common concern’ (Barry, 2001:300). This he illustrates during a passage concerning the United Kingdom, in which Barry worries that well-meaning multicultural apprehensiveness about imposing a British identity upon cultural minorities might weaken the criteria that define political membership, rendering it ‘incapable of providing the foundation of common identity that is needed for the stability and justice of liberal democratic politics’ (Barry, 2001:83). Similarly, Carens related point in a discussion of Canadian multiculturalism, where he observes that ‘it would be deeply unfortunate for Canada as a political community if the Quebecois stay within Canada only out of a sense of regrettable necessity, that is out of a fear of the costs of separation rather than out of a positive identification with Canada as a political community’ (Carens 2000:171).

Relations of enmity amongst different cultural groups typically involve a range of complex contextual factors, and rarely concern fundamental disagreements over values. Thus even if value pluralism does compromise political stability, since multicultural education need not reinforce, encourage or foster radical forms of value pluralism, it is not a threat to stability in this sense. Second is the *irrelevance* argument, which applies to moderate forms of value pluralism. According to this view, moderate value pluralism does not compromise political stability, because it can be secured in the absence of agreement about values. The irrelevance argument is an argument about political stability, and disagreement about values is not irrelevant from the perspective of justice, if a particular understanding of political legitimacy is true (Shorten, 2010:67).

Thus, in contrast to the cultural fragmentation objection, according to which diversity threatens the psychological sentiments of affinity and belonging, the value fragmentation objection holds that radically different cultures will be unable to settle on fair terms of co-operation around which to forge a life in common. In this sense it is a thesis about the importance of consensus rather than the importance of common sympathies. With regards to civic education, one implication is that instead of cultivating patriotic sentiment, schools should concentrate on encouraging students from diverse backgrounds to honour a shared set of values (Shorten, 2010:69). Shorten (2010:71) further states that one justification for a robust civic education programme in a multicultural society is that its three goals (toleration, autonomy and patriotism) could offset the fragmentary tendencies of multiculturalism, and that it should therefore be favoured for reasons of political stability. This justification is unconvincing but helpful. It is unconvincing to the extent that the fragmentation objection is largely exaggerated. Formulated as a claim about cultural fragmentation, there are reasons to believe that political stability does not depend upon either cultural cohesion or patriotic loyalty.

Although bonds of affinity and identification perform desirable social functions, especially by encouraging certain important virtues and dispositions (trust, solidarity, social co-operation), the achievement of such ends is not dependent upon the widespread diffusion of nationalist sentiment. Indeed, in multicultural societies, promoting patriotism to encourage these dispositions might have severely counter-productive results. Meanwhile, formulated as a claim about value fragmentation, the objection is either incoherent or mistaken. The value fragmentation objection is incoherent if it relies on treating cultural and value pluralism as identical, since there are important differences. It is mistaken if it holds that political stability requires shared values, since this is false (Shorten, 2010:71).

Dicko (2010:38) states that in all teacher education programs, teaching practice are considered as the transition between professional preparation and practice, and it can assist teachers linking the knowledge into more comprehensive education activities, get wisdom of practice and form implementation of teaching principles. It’s the vital part of teaching program. Study shows that there is no special effect that pre-service teachers study multicultural education theory in the promotion of their different cultural backgrounds of students as well as the diversity of the teaching of critical reflective question. Even in South Africa, pre-service teachers are not taught or prepared for multicultural education.

Meanwhile, the justification of civic education as a corrective to multicultural fragmentation is helpful in the following two senses. First, whilst many accounts of civic education emphasises either autonomy or patriotism, this account draws toleration to the fore.

Importantly, taking political stability seriously reveals that teaching children to be tolerant may be less crucial than undermining the spread of intolerance, and preventing the deepening of sectarian boundaries amongst cultural communities. Political stability alone, of course, does not help to answer questions about the limits of toleration, or about the role that autonomy should perform in a civic education programme (Dicko, 2010:40).

A full account of civic education will therefore require a more detailed examination of both what ends it is to aspire to and of what methods can be used for their achievement. Second, the justification is helpful in the sense that its failure helps to defuse a general objection that has frequently been levelled against multiculturalism as a public policy, namely that proponents are reckless about its effects upon political stability. Conservatives and republicans alike have good reasons to be sceptical about the transformative effects of multiculturalism on political communities, but these are not reasons that liberals should endorse (Dicko, 2010:40).

Teachers should not confront different cultural students for the first time in their own classroom, instead of being trained during the college studying. Such training would greatly reduce the collision among the cultural contradictions in unfamiliar scene. Teacher training is the most important part of educational planning, and by it teachers can get in the field of knowledge as well as other cross-cutting knowledge, so we can say that another key knowledge stems is wisdom of practice. In another way, training enable to provide pre-service teachers opportunities of practicing knowledge learning from classroom of university and also can make prospective teachers engage in multicultural education better to meet the challenges of the real world (Dicko, 2010:40).

Diversity

Diversity is a Latin term *diversus* which means more than one of different kind. Diversity applies to ethnicity, race, religion, socio-economic, viewpoints, gender, geographic origin, aptitude, appearance and sexual orientation. In this paper, we define diversity in terms of race, culture, language and ethnicity (Meier, van Wyk and Lemmer, 2007:162).

Race

The founder leader of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe in the basic document of the PAC says there is only one race and that is human race. If the world accepted human race, we would not talk about multiracialism. Nevertheless, this multiracialism is within us. Individuals of a given race differ in their ethnic, cultural, socio-economic and religious background. All over the world, even in our country, race is regarded as a tool to divide and distinguish people. Lopez (1994) as cited in Phendla, 2000: 237 provides a simple and yet comprehensive definition of race. He offers that,

Races are categories of difference which exist only in society: they are produced by myriad conflicting social forces; they overlap and inform other social categories; they are fluid rather than static and fixed; and they make sense only in relationship to other racial categories, having no meaningful independent existence. Races are thus not biological groupings, but social constructions. (Lopez, 1994, p.200)

Culture

Myer et al. (2007:163) state that culture is a highly complex human phenomenon, and in many respects, a misunderstood concept. Culture is often associated with material goods and artefacts or with visual aspects such as food and dress. It is also defined in terms of a particular group's art, music and literature. Lemmer and Squelch as quoted by Myer et al. (2007:163) define culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. They further define culture as the distinctive way of life. However, it is evident that culture has many faces, some highly visible (explicit), others hidden from view (implicit). Explicit culture is easily recognizable in aspects such as food, dress and language. Implicit elements are discreet and hidden, such as attitude, values and beliefs. It is rather difficult to define the term culture in such a way that it embraces every meaning derived from different life experiences. Culture is a social construct and should be perceived as such. Therefore, different people will derive different meanings as a result of their different historical life experiences. We tend to look at culture as if it was cemented through time.

Language and Ethnicity

Baruth and Manning as quoted by Myer et al. (2007:165) indicate that language and communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, may constitute the most important aspects of an individual's culture, and characterize the general culture, its values, and its ways of looking and thinking. There are many ways in which a group may express its identity; language is a common one and is particularly conspicuous, has deep psychological roots and can act as a vehicle for culture on many levels. The relation between language and culture is intimate and complex. Many children come to school with some values, beliefs and behavioural characteristics which differ from those of other children and from those expected in school.

Ethnic identity and language were used as tools to divide and rule in South Africa, where black people have been stripped of their South African citizenship and forcibly removed to Bantustans. According to Enslin (1986), education for black children was to include the following features: it is in the mother tongue; it should not be funded at the expense of the white education; it should, by implication, not prepare blacks for equal participation in economic and social life; it should preserve the cultural identity of the black community (although it will nonetheless consist in leading the native to acceptance of Christian and National principles); it must of necessity be organized and administered by whites (Enslin, 1986, p.140).

While most South Africans hold a belief that mother tongue and ethnicity divides and separates, they also hold a belief that all eleven official languages should be developed and are equal. As a result, the question of ethnicity and mother tongue raises contradicting responses. For one reason, people want to embrace the multicultural image of a new South Africa while at the same time maintaining their unique cultural heritage. The realities are that South Africa is still divided in terms of ethnicity and mother tongue, given that the people in different provinces are still predominantly from the specific ethnic groups they serve.

Various scholars including Horowitz (1991), Maartens (1998), Tshivhase-Phendla & Mashau (2010) and Alexander (1997) assert that African minority groups are still marginalized in the present South Africa. To sum up, Richardson (1994) cited in Phendla (2000) states that:

Language does not reflect social reality, but produces meaning, creates social realities. Different languages and different discourses within a given language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another. Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where our sense of self, our subjectivity is constructed. Understanding language as competing discourse, competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world, makes language a site of exploration, struggle. Language is not the result of one's individuality; rather, language constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific. What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourse available to them. Experience is thus open to contradictory interpretations governed by social interests rather than objective truth. (Richardson, 1994, p.518, as cited in Phendla, 2000, 217).

Richardson's conception of identity appears to provide a genuine area of synthesis for the language and ethnicity debate. The topic of ethnicity is as complex as it is important. At the same time, beliefs about the role of ethnicity in South Africa affect the very nature of the problem, and must therefore be taken into account, though not accepted at face value. We argue that ethnicity is seen as one of the major obstacles to equal access to power and privileges. Ethnicity, by its nature, functions to perpetuate the divisions created and supported by apartheid structures to distribute power and privileges differently to different ethnic groups.

Education for Global and Multicultural Citizenship (A Strategy for Victorian Government Schools)

We analysed, reviewed, evaluated several strategies which may be utilised to assist the education system accommodates all cultures and decided on the Victorian state in Australia. Bronwyn (2009:1) states that Victoria is a thriving multicultural society with a population of over 230 nations, speaks 180 languages and dialects and follows more than 116 religions. Bronwyn (2009:1) goes on and states that advance in communications and transport technology, increasing global migration and new forms of cultural exchange have led to the rapid globalization of society and economy. In the 21st century, at school, in work and in life, people are interacting across cultures.

Now and in the future, therefore, it is important to prepare students for global and multicultural citizenship. Students who possess the skills, knowledge and attitudes of global and multicultural citizen will have a competitive edge and contribute to national advantage. Purpose of education for global and multicultural citizenship:

- Improving educational outcomes for all students through the implementation of inclusive practices and through learning and teaching domains relevant to global and multicultural citizenship.
- Developing the intercultural literacy that students, parents and educators, and leadership groups need to live and work as part of a diverse and globalised population.
- Promoting social cohesion and diversity as sources of educational and economic advantage for all students.
- Enhancing the engagement, wellbeing and sense of belonging for all students in safe and secure learning environment.
- Building the capacity of the school community to identify and address overt, subtle and institutionalised racism, stereotyping and other forms of prejudice.
- Building and sustaining inclusive and participative school community partnerships that prepare all students for global multicultural citizenship.

Education for global and multicultural citizenship Bronwyn (2009:5) states that today's world is multifaceted and rapidly changing. It is no longer possible to compete successfully in a complex global economy from a mono-cultural and monolingual base. Changes on the global, demographic and linguistic landscape have also brought challenges. Schools need to know how to negotiate confidently the cultural, religious and linguistic differences within their communities. Principals as school leaders are in a strong position to build inclusive school cultures, in which diversity is explored and valued. The development of such a culture will contribute to improved learning outcomes for all students.

The strategy goes further to indicate that global and multicultural citizenship education has an important role to play in supporting social cohesion. Every student, regardless of cultural or linguistic background, has a right to learn in a safe and inclusive environment, and schools are foundations of multicultural society. When appropriately delivered, education for global and multicultural citizenship builds the human and social capital that an inclusive nation needs for social cohesion as well as for economic success Bronwyn (2009:6).

Concluding Remarks

To give additional insight, I see multiculturalism as a fairer system that allows people to truly express who they are within a society, a system that provides more tolerance and that adapts better to social issues. Trotman in Wikipedia (2010) argues that multiculturalism is valuable because it uses several disciplines to highlight neglected aspects of social history, particularly histories of women and minorities and promotes respect to the dignity of the lives and voices of the forgotten. By closing gaps, by raising consciousness about the past, multiculturalism tries to restore a sense of wholeness in a postmodern era that fragments human life and thought. After these deliberations what comes to my mind are the questions: "What is the definition of ethnicity? And what is our understanding of race? Why is racism so obvious and yet so invisible? Is there a recipe for true acculturation in sight?"

Horowitz (1991) as cited by Phendla (2000:237) sees ethnicity as a purely divisive and negative phenomenon, which needs to be balanced by recognition of the positive dimension in the intellectual, political and academic levels that will transcend to education. Horowitz (1991) maintains that South African society is not difficult to classify because:

It is characterized, above all by what is appropriately called *ascriptive ranking*. There are superordinates and subordinates, largely defined by birth criteria. To be sure, within the ranks of each stratum, there are also cleavages that divide, in some variables measure, Afrikaans speakers from English speakers, Zulu from Xhosa and Tswana, and so on. But the overall design of the society is predicated on racial hierarchy, and the significance of those alternative cleavages is, at least temporarily, suppressed. (p.35)

In conclusion, the question which I attempted to answer was "*Is education playing a role in assimilating and acculturating different South African cultures?*"

In fairness, it is a difficult question which raises debates and discourse that are particularly entangled in racial identities, ethnic groupings, mother-tongue or language of disempowerment and cultural characterisation. For example in language to language, it was so interesting to hear a Tsonga mother reprimanding her child to sit down while eating, she said: “Dyana u tshamile ehansi u nga dyi ku fana na nwana wa Muvhenda”. To my surprise as Venda speaking, I never thought I would hear someone saying such words to her child.

I argue that acculturating different cultures in South Africa may begin to give education a chance to equalise the past inequalities, and realise the preamble of the South African Constitution of 1996, which says: ‘we believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. When we consciously work towards the genuine adoption of this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic, we move closer to “heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights” and “build a united and democratic South Africa which is able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations”’.

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