

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION FOR MANAGING DIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Desegregation of South African schools has presented teachers with new challenges. The inclusion of multicultural education in teacher education programmes is essential to equip teachers in this context but multicultural education tends to be treated as an elective or a topic in a particular course. This article examines this problem through a case study of selected initial teacher education programmes at the largest national provider, the University of South Africa, using qualitative data gathering methods. The study is framed by theoretical approaches to diversity, in particular, Castagno's typology. Findings indicate that dedicated modules in multicultural education in initial teacher education suggest that the goals of multicultural education are achieved to some degree. However, the curriculum primarily fits the categories of cultural understanding and human relations. More effective programmes should expand to include social justice multiculturalism and should link directly to students' experiences in teaching practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the first democratic elections in South Africa held in 1994 public schools have been opened to all learners in accordance with non-discriminatory premises. Educational provision has moved from serving the interests of a white minority to serving the interests of all South Africans (Carrim, 1998: 305). The rights of learners to equal, non-discriminatory schooling are enshrined in the South African Schools Act [SASA] (No. 84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996b). The policy of open admissions has meant a shift from racial segregation to desegregation in schools, public and independent (Nkomo, Chisholm & McKinney, 2004: 5). Thus, schools have become more diverse, encompassing racial, class, gender, religious, linguistic and physical differences. Although most black schools remain monoracial due to demographical factors, a trend has been the steady migration of numbers of black learners to former Model C schools as parents and learners seek better resourced schools to give their children a "competitive edge" (Soudien, Carrim & Sayed, 2004: 57). School transformation has confronted the teaching corps with a series of challenges as they encounter, many for the first time, multilingual, multiethnic and multiracial classrooms (Carrim, 1998: 311), an increasingly diverse teaching staff and a diverse parent body. At the outset of school integration in 1994, very few members of the teaching corps had been prepared to manage diversity (Carrim, 1998: 311; Le Roux, 2000: 20). Prior to 1994 the provision of initial and inservice teacher training for diversity was piecemeal and *ad hoc* (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993) or lacking altogether. Subsequently, universities providing teacher education have begun to endeavour to provide teacher education for diversity (Hemson, 2006). However, multicultural education tends to be relegated to an elective or to a topic or strand running through the material of a particular course and thus reaching a limited number of teachers.

To investigate this problem, this article appraises the provision of teacher education for diversity at the largest provider of initial teacher education in South Africa, the University of South Africa, against the background of the most common approaches to diversity in multicultural societies; the legislative and policy landscape supporting the management of diversity in schooling in South Africa and a critique of the current approaches to diversity in South Africa.

APPROACHES TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Differing approaches exist towards coping with diversity in schools and society; differing definitions are given to the term multicultural education and the debate around multicultural education continues in different contexts throughout the world. Various typologies have appeared regarding approaches to multicultural education (Gibson, 1976; Banks, 1994; Kumashiro, 2002; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Castagno, 2009). Typologies are useful for the evaluation of practices and programmes; however, it should be

remembered that approaches may overlap; are not mutually exclusive; and can co-exist in programmes within a single organisation. Sleeter and Grant's (2007: 29) typology is well recognised in the literature. They identify five general approaches as follows: *teaching the exceptional and the culturally different* which aims to assimilate people into the cultural mainstream using transitional programmes in the regular school programme; *the human relations approach* which focuses on the development of love, respect and more effective communication in schools to bring people who are different closer; *single-group studies* which raise consciousness regarding the oppression and group identity of particular groups (e.g. women, ethnic groups, gays, lesbians) and to mobilise efforts for social action; *multicultural education* which takes cognisance of language, culture, race, gender, disability and social class in order to engage the entire school and all its programmes in the celebration of diversity and the fostering of equal opportunities; and *multicultural social justice education* which is the most recent approach to be added. This extends multicultural education to the sphere of social action, focuses on challenging social stratification and teaching political literacy in addition to the celebration of human diversity and provision of equal opportunities (Sleeter & Grant, 2007: 29-30). According to this approach, people are taught to question society and an account of truth which is accepting of unfairness and inhumanity and to develop people who are able to envisage, identify and progress towards a more just and compassionate society. It works on the basic sociological assumption that individuals form their beliefs and behaviour in accordance with their social structure. Correspondingly, an individual's position in society or the social and cultural signals received from that position, have an influence upon the individual's actions and how the actions are perceived and understood by others. If an attempt to change individuals is made and the world which they experience remains unchanged, then they will rapidly return to their former ways. Thus, people are required to work together in order to realise social change that is greater than mere individual action. Building on the work of Sleeter and Grant and others, Castegano (2009:43) has recently synthesised the various typologies of the multiple approaches and definitions of multicultural education offered in the literature into a six category framework. These are educating for: assimilation; amalgamation; pluralism; cross-cultural competence; critical awareness; and social action. Critical awareness calls for the questioning of power relations and social structures. Social action aims at mobilising students to promote social change. He argues that the first four categories are approaches to education; only the latter category is genuinely multicultural.

DIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION

Just as the international polemic around diversity in education continues, so the debate remains controversial in South Africa, which is a young democracy still in the process of defining itself. Endeavours to deliver public education that is appropriate for all South Africans are still in a relatively early stage. However, since 1994 firm steps have been taken to create an enabling environment to

accommodate South Africans in terms of the principles of equality and justice. A series of policy documents and commissioned reports have been published and legislation enacted to deal with diversity in society and in schooling. The following are identified as key documents.

The South African Constitution (RSA, 1996b) defines discrimination to include "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth." The founding principles of the Constitution affirm human dignity, equality, freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. The Constitution states that everyone has the right to a basic education and to receive education in the official language or languages of his/her choice in public educational institutions where such education is reasonably practicable. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a) provides for the democratic transformation of schools to redress past injustices in educational provision and provide education of progressively high quality for all learners. Schooling should lay the foundation for the "development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance" (RSA, 1996a:Preamble). The Report of the Gender Equity Task Team (Wolpe, Quinlan & Martinez, 1997) has tackled gender inequity in the education system. The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (DoE, 2001a) is founded on the idea that the Constitution (RSA, 1996b) expresses South Africa's shared aspirations, and the moral and ethical direction set for the future, including social justice and equity, equality, non racism and non sexism. Regarding linguistic diversity, the Constitution (Section 30), the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and the Language Policy for Higher Education (LPHE) have redefined the status of South African languages, entrenched language rights and choice and created opportunities for promoting language diversity and multilingualism in education and society. As far as schools, the school governing body should stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism and it determines the language policy of the school in accordance with regulations in the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a). Furthermore, special reports have dealt with integration of and racism in schools. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) report (Vally & Dalamba, 1999) is the most comprehensive. It suggests how racism can be combated in schools (Vally & Dalamba, 1999:65-75) and also called for specific attention to be given to both initial and in-service teacher education programmes (Vally & Dalamba, 1999).

This legislative and policy landscape has created an environment for the recognition of diversity in South African schools. However, it would be naïve to assume that official policies can bring about an education system that automatically guarantees equal educational opportunities; the elimination of discriminatory practices; and the recognition of the rightful existence of diverse language, cultural, religious and gender interest groups. Problems at the grassroots level are experienced in schools and classrooms with the

implementation of legislation and the management of diversity (Moletsane, Hemson & Muthukrishna, 2004).

Approaches to diversity in South African education

Francis and Hemson (2007: 282) argue that three main approaches to dealing with diversity in education in South Africa have emerged since 1994 and are distinguishable, in varying degrees and sometimes concurrently in different institutions: inclusion, multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism.

Inclusive education is commonly understood in international circles to focus on disability; but it has been extended in South African context to include all 'barriers to learning', including factors such as poverty and disease (e.g. HIV/AIDS) (DoE 2001b). However, the commonly held understanding of inclusivity in school practice and in teacher education deals predominantly with strategies of mainstreaming children with disabilities and, like multiculturalism, marginalises issues of gender and class (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009:105).

Further, using Castagno's (2009) framework, understandings of multiculturalism as practised in most ex-model C schools range from educating for assimilation and amalgamation to pluralism and cross-cultural competence. They stop far short of the categories of critical awareness and social action. While teachers may endorse the principles of multicultural education, the disconnection between theory and practice remains evident (Van der Walt, Grimbeek & Marais, 2001:105; Vandeyar, 2007). Furthermore, newer developments in South African society require further interrogation of current approaches to diversity and stress the need for a distinctive definition of multicultural education. These include, among others, the stigmatisation of people with HIV/AIDS, irrespective of racial or cultural background, and the recent violent xenophobia exhibited towards black immigrants or refugees from other African countries (Morrow, 2006). Clearly these issues transcend simple dichotomies of race or culture and include issues of poverty and competition for scarce resources such as housing and jobs. Islamophobia, increasingly recognisable in Western countries since September 11, seems a less prominent issue in the management of diversity in South Africa, which is recognised as one of the most Islam-tolerant societies worldwide (www.islamonline.net). In summary, approaches to diversity in education in South Africa have been criticised of failing to engage in an examination of power relations among different groups (Carrim, 1998; Gqola, 2001; Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Abdi, 2002). They focus mainly on racially integrated ex-model C schools, thus excluding the majority of public schools for black learner, which are monocultural but in which other dimensions of diversity, such as gender, sexuality and class, remain unexamined (Enslin, 2001:281). Moreover, schools formerly designated for coloured and Indian learners have also become increasingly diverse and warrant further analysis (Chisholm 2008).

In the light of this lack indicated in the foregoing discussion, growing attention is being given to what is termed critical multiculturalism among South African scholars (Soudien *et al*, 2004; Moletsane *et al*, 2004). This approach would appear to fall within Sleeter and Grant's (2007) multiculturalism for social reconstruction and Castagno's (2009) educating for critical awareness and for social action. Carrim (1998) and Abdi (2002: 78) call for a "critical anti-racism" to create a greater understanding of the differences and dynamics within racial groups and to close the socioeconomic and educational disparities that divide the numerous groups in South Africa.

Teacher education for diversity in South Africa

Against this background, the discussion moves to teacher education for the management of diversity. The Norms and Standards Policy for Teacher Education in South Africa (DoE, 2000) has identified for teachers a complex set of seven roles with moral, social and economic responsibilities. All roles include competencies related to the critical and inclusive handling of diversity, such as "understanding the impact of class, race, gender and other identity-forming forces on learning" (DoE, 2000: 19). In particular, the community, citizenship and pastoral role of an educator requires that teachers should "uphold the Constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society" (DoE, 2000:14). The learning mediator role requires educators to communicate "effectively showing recognition of and respect for the differences of others" (DoE, 2000: 12). Parker (2001:5) argues that these roles should contribute to developing specific pedagogic identities in teachers, that is, teachers with "a particular moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices". Moreover, teachers described by official policy as 'qualified, competent and caring' (DoE, 2000) should include those with the skills of cultural competency.

Thus, teacher education in South Africa, directed by the guidelines set in the Norms and Standards Policy (DoE, 2000), should address the challenge of teaching for diversity. Several authors (Le Roux & Moller, 2002; Moletsane *et al*, 2004; Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk, 2006) stress the need for initial and in-service teacher education programmes which address racial and cultural diversity, both in dedicated programmes and across the entire teacher education curriculum. Meier (2005:172) argues that in spite of the need for teacher education for diversity and the scope for such training embedded in the Norms and Standard Policy, the national Department of Education has shown a lack of commitment to introduce such programmes. Inservice teacher education for diversity has been piecemeal and *ad hoc* dependent on the contributions of individuals, NGOs and sponsors. Hemson's (2006) study of initial teacher education for diversity found that the curricula and practice of teacher education provision post 1994 has been dominated by historical legacies and by higher education restructuring. The latter led to the closure of

colleges of education and the location of teacher education within university education faculties. This restructuring has resulted in considerable diversity of approaches to diversity practised in different institutions. Further, his study in three selected universities using contact methods of instructional delivery indicates that diversity training for teachers ranges from the minimal (a single study unit of a programme) to the more intensive (multicultural frameworks which permeate the programme) (Hemson, 2006:43).

TEACHER EDUCATION FOR DIVERSITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

In the light of the above discussion the following research problem is formulated: *How are student teachers prepared for teaching in culturally diverse classroom during initial teacher education programmes?* This problem was addressed by a case study of teacher education for cultural diversity at the University of South Africa (Unisa) encompassing the period 1996 to the present. Gall, Gall and Borg (2010:339) define a case study as the in-depth study of a phenomenon bounded in time and place in its natural context; typically data is collected over a period of time by more than one method of data collection. Furthermore, Gall et al (2010: 346) suggest that a case study can be used to describe the phenomenon by providing a thick description (Gall et al, 2010: 346). Thus, a clear statement is necessary of how the site and persons studied in a case are defined (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:26). In this inquiry, the research site was the Unisa and the case study was limited to the provision of a dedicated module: Multicultural Education in two teacher education programmes: The B Ed (Intermediate and Senior Phase) and the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (Senior and Further Education Training Phase). To sketch the context further, Unisa is a distance education university with the largest student enrolment (260 000 students in 2009) in the country (Kruss, 2009; Herman & Pillay, 2009; Department of Information and Strategic Analysis, UNISA, 2009). Moreover, Unisa is the largest provider of initial teacher education (Centre for Education Policy Development [CEPD], 2007:9). Initial teacher education is offered through the B Ed (under graduate) and the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes respectively. The 2009 enrolment for the B Ed programme was 25 001 students and 3 551 students for the PGCE programme. The typical student in both programmes is black and female (Department of Information and Strategic Analysis, UNISA, 2009). Lecturing staff in these programmes is still predominantly white although the appointment from other groups is increasing due to university policy which promotes the appointments of previously disadvantaged groups, particularly black women. Both the B Ed and the PGCE offer dedicated modules in the theory and practice of multicultural education.

Method

The case study rests on document analysis of submissions for the introduction of the module: Multicultural Education, curricula and instructional material, interviews with the current lecturer and students' written evaluation of courses. Interviews were unstructured and recorded on digital voice recorder in the lecturer's office and later transcribed. Students' written evaluation of courses was gathered during annual contact teaching sessions. Student evaluation was anonymous and voluntary and students were informed of the use of the evaluations for the purpose of programme improvement and research. Documents were accessible in departmental archives. During analysis transcripts and documents were scrutinised and themes identified as suggested by the data and support for those themes was sought (Delamont, 2002:171) Data was triangulated by participant feedback, that is, cross-checking information and conclusions with stakeholders for verification and insight (Mc Millan & Schumacher 2006:374) as well as by sequential analysis by both researchers. The findings represent the agreed upon interpretation of data by both researchers. Finally, the case study was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature and is not generalisable in any way.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented according to three themes: early initiatives towards teacher education for diversity; the location of Multicultural Education in the B Ed and PGCE; and curriculum and teaching methods.

Early initiatives towards teacher education for diversity

Early initiatives at the development of multicultural teacher education at Unisa lay in efforts of individual lecturers who developed an in-service teacher education programme presented countrywide prior to political change in 1994. This led to a publication, (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993) which formed the basis for the development of the first dedicated formal offering in multicultural education, the Further Diploma in Education (FDE) (Multicultural Education). The FDE programmes were postgraduate diplomas aimed at teachers who wished to upgrade their qualifications and specialise in a particular aspect of teaching. As one of several FDE programmes introduced at Unisa in 1996, the FDE (Multicultural Education) comprised five modules and targeted teachers who wished to specialise in multicultural education (Study guide FDEMC1-E: Multicultural Education, 1996). The FDE was terminated in 2001 due to low student enrolments. The termination of the programme was typical not only of this FDE but of the FDEs in general. The period 1996-2001 had been typified by the transformation of the school curriculum with the introduction of outcomes-based education. This affected the design of teacher education programmes and was a possible cause of falling student numbers. Initially it was recommended to continue to prepare

teachers for diversity by the inclusion of multicultural education content as an elective module within the Advanced Certificates in Education (ACE), which replaced the FDEs, in particular within the ACE in Inclusive Education. However, this endeavour failed (Department of Further Teacher Education, Unisa, 2000).

The location of Multicultural education in the BEd and PGCE

Currently initial teacher education at Unisa is offered through the four-year BEd programme and the one-year PGCE programme (following a B degree). Both are offered in three streams according to the three phases of education: the Foundation Phase and Early Childhood Development (birth to Grade 3); The Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase (Grades 4-9); and the Senior Phase and Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10-12).

The B Ed programme consists of 40 modules, divided into three major study components. The first component involves the study of three approved school subjects, with the number of modules depending on the subjects concerned. The second component consists of ten modules on Educational themes, such as child development. The third component comprises 15 modules on Professional Studies, such as teaching practice. The latter includes five weeks of compulsory practical training every year. The module: Multicultural education (2005) is included only in the BEd (Intermediate and Senior Phase) and the BEd (Senior Phase and Further Education and Training) as a compulsory module (Calendar, Part 2 Subjects and Syllabuses, 2009: 168, 189). The module: Multicultural Education is not linked to teaching practice in the BEd programme. Since 2002, due to rationalisation, the module on multicultural education has been scrapped in the BEd (Foundation Phase: Early Childhood Development) programme.

The PGCE curriculum is structured differently for each respective phase according to fundamental, core and elective modules. The module: Multicultural Education (2005) is included in the PGCE (Intermediate and Senior Phase) programme only as an elective module. The PGCE includes two sessions of compulsory teacher practice in the year during which students complete a workbook dealing with diversity themes in classrooms. In 2009 the combined number of students (B Ed and the PGCE) enrolled for the module: Multicultural Education was 730 students of a total of 28 552 students, that is, less than 0,5 % of the total number of students enrolled for both programmes combined (Department of Information and Strategic Analysis, Unisa, 2009). This relatively small number of students enrolled for the module: Multicultural education can be attributed to the fact that it is only compulsory in one phase (B Ed: Senior and Further Education and Training) and is an elective in only two other phases (B Ed and PGCE: Intermediate and Senior).

Curriculum and teaching methods

The curriculum of the module: Multicultural Education (2005) covers four units: Introduction of the theory of multicultural education; critical issues in multicultural education; teaching methods; and managing multicultural schools and classes. Instructional material includes a prescribed text (Lemmer, Meier & van Wyk, 2006), a study guide (Multicultural Education, 2005) and a series of tutorial letters including assignment and exam guidance. Unit one discusses concepts for teaching about diversity, models and a historical overview of the development of approaches to diversity in other countries and South Africa. Unit Two includes a discussion of anti-racist education, language diversity, human rights, gender and class, values and approaches to disabled learners. It does not deal with sexual orientation. Unit three includes teachers' attitudes to diversity, learning and teaching styles, curriculum development, lesson preparation and assessment in multicultural education. Unit four includes developing a school mission, policy and development plan for multicultural education, school governance and parent involvement. The study guide and the prescribed text are interactive with self-assessment exercises and suggested activities, which promote a critical appraisal of the school and classroom. Formative and summative assessment comprises four written assignments (one optional) and an examination (Tutorial letter ETH305V/101/2009). One assignment comprises multiple choice questions; two assignments require writing short paragraphs on various topics and the critique of an academic article on multiculturalism; the final assignment comprises writing a self-reflective biographical narrative and the interviewing and writing of the narrative of a member of another cultural group. The narratives encourage the student to reflect critically diversity in family and parenting styles, language and communication styles, religion and values, lifestyle, educational issues, social status and gender. In general, certain components of the module content, material and assignments require students to assume a critical stance in evaluating themselves and society and compel them to confront issues not only of race but of gender and class. The module therefore includes some elements of a social justice education curriculum as explained by Sleeter and Grant (2007) and educating for critical awareness (Castagno, 2009).

Currently, the module: Multicultural Education is presented by a white female lecturer with considerable experience in teaching and research in diversity. The module uses teaching methods typical of print-based distance education: an interactive study guide; and assignments which are marked and returned with a memorandum or extensive feedback. A new addition to tuition is a student chat room facility on MyUnisa. A voluntary one and a half hour contact session takes place annually on the main campus in Pretoria and other centres to address the disconnect between multicultural theory and practical situations. Here issues of racism, sexism and classism are confronted through group and individual activities (Meier, 2009). Arguably this critical engagement of students with multicultural content is very limited; however, student evaluation reports written after these classes indicate a positive even

enthusiastic response: the classes “helped me to develop a positive attitude towards diverse learners;” “in fact the way the module is written is changing the attitude of us teachers;” “The lecturer herself is practising multicultural education”. In particular, PGCE students attending discussion groups have queried the status of multicultural education as an elective module and feel that the module should be compulsory for every teacher education student. Other responses by B Ed and PGCE students as evidenced in assignments, the discussion class and student surveys have been very positive (Meier, 2005). Students’ comments include: “I must also highly recommend Multicultural Education. It has given me wonderful insight into what I teach every day.” “I have a class that is diverse and from all cultural backgrounds. It has made me evaluate and modify my teaching and learning strategies and given me a whole new look at how and what to teach my learners.” “It has made me aware of how important culture is, and how very careful we must treat and what precious soles we have in front of us every day”.

Multicultural attitudes and skills are not specifically evaluated or observed in teaching practice by lecturers in the B Ed programme in any of the phases. Only PGCE students prepare lessons in the learning areas: Art and Culture and Life Orientation, from a multicultural perspective (Tutorial letter PFC104T/113/2009). The presentation of the lessons are evaluated by the class teacher; students submit the lesson plans and carry out written self- reflection and evaluation on the lessons in a workbook submitted to the lecturer responsible. The latter does an overall evaluation of the lessons with some attention to how the student has coped with diversity. In lesson presentations in other learning areas, no specific attention is given to the management of diversity.

DISCUSSION

The introduction and presentation of multicultural education at the Unisa over the past 15 years has been limited to the individual endeavours of ‘champions’, that is, individuals with a particular interest in and commitment to diversity issues (Pendleton, 2001). This commitment is expressed by the lecturer who is currently presenting the course: “There has to been someone fighting the battles [for the inclusion of the module] all the time through all the committees, at all the meetings.” At different points in curriculum development, certain lecturers were responsible for compiling curriculum proposals for the introduction of the ACE and the module: Multicultural education; for shepherding the proposals through the various tuition committees of the former Faculty of Education, the College of Human Sciences and Senate; for submissions for National Qualifications Framework registration; and for the design of the curriculum and the instructional material. They also kept the debate around teacher education for diversity ‘alive’ with considerable effort in a generally indifferent environment where management has considered either subsuming multicultural education into other subject matter, such as inclusive education, or terminating the current module. This

institutional history suggests a marginalisation of the diversity. Where other lecturers in the two programmes have expressed interest in the field of multicultural education, they are reluctant to be involved in further development or presentation of the module due to workload constraints. While lecturers bow to the rhetoric of the importance of multicultural education in teacher education programmes at Unisa, they are reluctant to be engaged in any active lobbying for a compulsory module. Selected topics related to diversity are included in other modules solely at the discretion of lecturers. Moreover, the call for greater attention to multicultural education tends to be overwhelmed by the current call at the university for the Africanisation of the curriculum. This is generally understood as a renewed focus on Africa and indigenous African knowledge which forms part of post-colonialism discourse (Horsthemke, 2004:571).

Notwithstanding, the provision of a dedicated module in Multicultural Education in initial teacher education at the Unisa, albeit as an elective in the B Ed (Intermediate and Senior Phase) and PGCE and a compulsory module in the B Ed (Senior and Further Education and Training Phase), is evidence that the goals of multicultural education are being recognised, at least to some degree. This represents a dedicated endeavour to raising awareness of diversity issues and to prepare the large numbers of student teachers who enrol at Unisa for the multicultural classroom. The dominant aim in the module: Multicultural Education is to teach about diversity, tolerance and respect. Issues of race, gender, class and poverty are touched upon and students are introduced to different models of multiculturalism, including that of social justice. Critical self-reflection is encouraged in two assignments and through the annual group discussion. However, the module cannot be described as educating for social action (Castagno, 2009). A particular weakness of the module is that multicultural skills are not specifically observed and evaluated during teacher practice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher education programmes at both initial and in-service levels should ensure that all students develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills to deal effectively with learner diversity in South African schools through dedicated modules or units of study. It can be argued that a multicultural approach should rather be accommodated throughout the teacher education curriculum (in the same way as a topic such as parent involvement should permeate the curriculum); however, in practice it transpires that such content is frequently 'lost' in other instructional content. In contrast, a dedicated module based on a multicultural social justice approach which challenges social and gender stratification, celebrates human diversity and promotes the provision of equal opportunities should be offered on first year level to provide a theoretical *knowledge base* about all cognitive and affective processes regarding learner diversity. Students should be taught how to question society and its account of truth. The issues

highlighted in this *dedicated knowledge based* module should then permeate all other modules in a programme. The remaining modules in a programme should *build on* the knowledge based multicultural module and be seen as *skills based modules*, where subject matter, from maths to literature, is used to instil social action and a more just and compassionate society. Thereafter, the cycle of *knowledge, skills* and *application* should then come to full fruition in teaching practice modules which can be seen as *application based modules*.

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