

**Education for a Rainbow Nation:
A Desegregated School Playground as a Model for Reconstructing
Social Cohesion in Post-Xenophobic South African Communities**

Tawanda Runhare¹ and Peter Mulaudzi²

*School of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Venda,
P. Bag X5050, Thohoyandou 9050, Republic of South Africa*

E-mail: ¹<Tawanda.Runhare@univen.ac.za>, ²<Peter.Mulaudzi@univen.ac.za>

KEYWORDS Xenophobia. Foundation Phase. Play. Social Cohesion. Rainbow Nation

ABSTRACT The hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa helped people to realise that the game of soccer can enable people from various backgrounds to share their happiness together irrespective of race, colour, creed, gender, ethnic group or country of origin. The world event was a symbol and engineer of social cohesion that came after the violent xenophobic attacks on immigrants from African countries in 2008. Due to the post-world cup fear of xenophobia, an estate agent warned a cosmopolitan group of tenants in a residential complex to guard against children who made noise as they played together. The warning prompted this case study in which we investigated how foundation phase learners (Grade R -3) at one desegregated¹ school coped with the racial, ethnic, social and cultural diversity that characterise their school life. Purposive and convenience sampling were employed to select foundation phase teachers and their learners for the case study. Research instruments comprised child informal play observations; focus group interviews for teachers, and children's drawings and play conversations. Results of the study revealed that young children do not build social barriers in their diverse play and peer groups. From the results, we conclude that desegregated schools can be avenues for social cohesion in post-xenophobic South African communities and recommend that higher education institutions include handling of diverse or global classrooms as one of the contemporary issues for the teacher training curriculum.