

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

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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.

INTRODUCTION

The 2008 xenophobic violence that led to loss of over 60 lives and displacement of many African immigrants in South Africa shocked the world (Crush et al. 2008; Sharp 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009; Consultancy Africa Intelligence 2010; Dodson 2010). Although the initial response by government was to also violently stop the conflict between the South African nationals and African immigrants in low income urban locations, it was the united voice of reason against xenophobia by political, religious and community leadership, UN agencies, civic organisations, high profile celebrities and the general populace that brought real calm. While military repression had been initially employed, sport proved to be an effective intervention variable for restoring co-existence among the South African inhabitants, who are characterised by geographical, racial, ethnic and socio-cultural diversity. The world cup's 'Can you feel it?' excitement mood (Tutu 2010) was instrumental in de-constructing the suspicions and mistrust

which had characterised the 2008 xenophobic violence. On a televised inauguration of the 2010 FIFA world cup, Desmond Tutu, the internationally respected human rights and Nobel Peace prize winner proclaimed that 'We are all Africans' (Tutu 2010).

During the pre-soccer world cup period, which was characterised by peaceful co-existence between the immigrant Africans and the national citizens, there was a lot of debate through conferences, open forums organised by civic organisations and institutions of higher learning, electronic and print media opinion-shows, as well as research publications on the possible causes and background to the South African and similar xenophobic conflicts in Africa (Crush et al. 2008; Neocosmos 2008; Sharp 2008; Steinberg 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009; Consultancy Africa Intelligence 2010; Dodson 2010). After the soccer world cup, there were isolated reports of re-emergence of xenophobic violence (Consultancy African Intelligence 2010). Driven by the fear of new wave of xenophobic conflict due to such reports, an estate agency which offers

accommodation to a diverse population of tenants warned that; “will the parents ensure that their children are controlled and do not play with other tenants’ cars or make noise around other tenants’ flats” (Real Rentals 2011: 2).

With the observation that xenophobic tendencies and fear existed in the minds of the adult generation and not in the world view and experiences of young children, this study sought to explore how children’s reading of the world could exemplify and be a source of cosmopolitan co-existence in the increasingly globalising modern society (Wells et al. 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas 2001; Tikly 2001; Nkomo and Dolby 2003; Banks et al. 2005).

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by theories on cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, which posit that the modern world has been reduced into a global village with diverse racial, ethnic and cultural realities (Tikly 2001; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2004; Banks et al. 2005). Concepts similar to cosmopolitanism or social cohesion in diversity include insular cultural pluralism, multiculturalism, inter-culturalism, anti-racism, non-racism, diversity, globalisation, global citizenship, social justice and social integration (Wells et al. 1998; Tikly 2001; Banks et al. 2005; Astiz 2007; Vandeyar 2010, 2011). In the South African context, cosmopolitanism can be equated to ‘rainbowism’, which is understood to mean recognition and tolerance of different ethnic, racial and socio-cultural groups within the country’s population (Moletse et al. 2004; Vandeyar 2010). Although these concepts could have some differences in their focus and emphasis, they are all indicative of the need to recognise and cherish the existence of people of diverse backgrounds.

Related to cosmopolitanism is the concept of inclusive or multicultural education, which seeks to promote to equality in educational access, representation in curriculum knowledge, staff composition, academic achievement, treatment of learners, and teachers’ competence to handle global classes. In this regard, Vandeyar (2010: 345) is of the view that “multicultural education sets out to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, socio-class and cultural groups”. In the same vein Banks et al. (2005) add that multicultural

education guides the young generation to immerse themselves in other cultures, engage with difference, and acquire diverse cultural competence. Multicultural education is relevant to social cohesion because of the increasing population of learners from African immigrant families living in South Africa (Vandeyar 2010, 2011). Cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism as approaches to building and embracing the new dispensation of ‘rainbowism’ is the reason for South Africa’s adoption of inclusive education as the framework for cultivating social cohesion among the country’s young generation (Department of Education [DoE]; White Paper 6 2001; Swart et al. 2002; Vandeyar 2010). Since building social cohesion is process in human development, this study investigated how foundation phase learners in grade R (Reception) to grade 3 at one desegregated or integrating school cope with a multi-racial and multi-ethnic inclusive learning environment that depicts the envisaged ‘rainbow’ South African society (Sonn 1994; Moletsane et al. 2004; Makhalemele 2005; Vandeyar 2010, 2011).

Literature Review

Xenophobic attitudes are known to exist in different forms in post-colonial Africa for reasons that range from narrowly defined nationalism or ‘nativism’, boundary disputes (Appiah 2006; Olukoju 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009; Soyombo 2009).

‘Nativist’ Nationalism versus Global Nationalism in Post-colonial Africa

Olukoju (2009) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) are of the view that Pan-Africanism or continental nationhood on which the unity against colonialism was founded, has in recent times degenerated into a new postcolonial “nativism”, which is attributed to the current wave of inter-tribally linked political conflicts in postcolonial Africa. In the fight against colonialism, pan-Africanism was led and guided by “African nationalists [who] were a bizarre mixture of people of various ideological persuasions” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 64). In contrast, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, argues that there has been an emergence of a new post-colonial hegemonic nationalism or ‘nativism’, which is a threat to multi-political, multicultural and multi-racial diversity in Africa. Based on

opposition to neo-liberalism and narrow view and revival of African national identity, 'nativism' is a post-colonial embourgeoisement of a small African elite who use the majority of the masses to fight European capitalist competition and other non-nationals within a nation-state (Neocosmos 2006; Steignberg 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). Such narrowly defined African nationalism has been viewed in South Africa as a challenge to Nelson Mandela's vision of 'rainbowism'. Faced with this challenge, Mbeki's "I am an African" speech sought to remind post-apartheid South Africans of the Freedom Charter of 1955 which broadly defines South African identity as cosmopolitan and all-inclusive or global democracy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009; Olukoju 2009).

Sporting as an Agent of Social Cohesion

One moment which revitalised the spirit of common Africaness and shared identity was South Africa's hosting of the FIFA 2010 World Cup as Chari (2011: 215) observes that, "The hosting of the tournament by South Africa was projected as a victory not just for South Africa but the continent as a whole". This world event on African soil denoted the arrival of a new civilisation and new found liberation based on brotherhood for all, irrespective of any differences. South Africa, before and during the world soccer tournament was like a children's playground since all sport is founded on and reflects child play. Sport is like child-play which can be a powerful intervention to xenophobic divisions and conflicts. It can be a foundation for building social co-existence or cosmopolitanism in the modern world which has been reduced to a global village with diverse cultural and ethnic differences due to human movement resulting in cross-population among different nation states (Wells et al. 1998; Tikly 2001; Banks et al. 2005). Making reference to South Africa, one newspaper contributor observed that "The World Cup brought such a sense of unity" (Rainbow Nation Child 2011: 9).

In this study, we observed that before they are socialised and socially initiated into the adult generation, children are not gender, racially, culturally and linguistically segregative. Play is therefore a means by which they accommodate each other beyond their naturalistic differences. Through play, children can transform and ac-

tively overcome differential categories such as culture and gender (Shizha 2000; Kyratzis 2004). According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2001), it is the agents of socialisation like the media and formal education which forcibly transfer and transform children, and destroy their tolerance of cultural, ethnic and racial, linguistic and other forms of diversity. The researchers therefore posit in this paper that the adult world should not only allow children from different backgrounds to play together, but even copy from such childhood inclusive nature of play.

Multicultural Education for Social Cohesion

At the global level, both Banks et al. (2005) and United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2004) indicate that modern nation states all over the world are increasingly diverse in their racial, social class, cultural, ethnic, political, religious and linguistic composition. This implies that social cohesion in diversity can be realised by "allowing people the freedom to choose their identities - without being excluded from other choices important to them" (UNDP 2004: 111). According to Astiz (2007), schools should expose children to the experience of being global as well as national citizens, whereby they develop self-identity as well as recognition and tolerance of others. Making specific reference to South Africa, Soudien et al. (2004: 28) observe that "to accommodate 'difference', educational inclusion has taken the form of multicultural education or education for pluralism". Multicultural education is, therefore, a necessity for the rainbow nation in which immigrants from the African continent are extended the same rights and privileges of post-apartheid and democratic South Africa. It would be contradictory for South Africa to shun apartheid but be xenophobic to fellow Blacks from other African countries.

Research Objectives and Key Questions

The major objective of this study was to identify and explore how foundation phase learners' coping strategies at a socially desegregated school can be applicable to build a sense of social cohesion in the post-xenophobic violent South Africa. Child play was used as the main medium for data gathering to answer the following research questions:

- ♦ How do foundation phase learners at a desegregated school participate in and conceptualise cosmopolitan play?
- ♦ How do foundation phase learners at a desegregated school play in cosmopolitan manner in spite of their diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds?
- ♦ How can multicultural education and child play be guiding principles to social cohesion in post-xenophobic South Africa?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study sought a deep understanding of how foundation phase learners at one desegregated school coped with each other in spite of their diverse social, ethnic and racial backgrounds. To gather rich and relevant information qualitative research was employed and data were gathered using the case study of one desegregated school which enrolled children from diverse backgrounds in order to understand the learners' relationships, behaviour and attitudes to each other within cosmopolitan social environment (Berg 2001).

The Research Sample

Although the foundation phase teachers were consulted, the key informants of this study were their learners. A number of studies prove that, apart from observations, young children are capable to recount their views their life experiences (Howard and Gill 2001; Driessnack 2006). Researchers can therefore seek and extract information directly from children, because children are able to think, express and even interpret their views if they are given the opportunity and voice to do so (Eder and Fingerson 2002; Feelding and Prrieto 2002). This is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which calls for children's right to express and explain their own views and actions (United Nations Centre for Human Rights 1989; Detrick 1999; United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2003) rather than depend on other people's interpretations of their actions, which can be inaccurate. Coyne (1998: 409) also adds that "children have the right to be consulted over decisions affecting them and have their views taken into consideration". In concurrence, Scott (2002: 99) also insists that "children can give reliable account of events that are meaningful to them".

Convenience and purposive sampling methods were employed to select the study site as well as the participants (Seamark and Lings 2004; Silverman 2005; Creswell 2007). The qualitative case study of one desegregated school was adopted for "in-depth data collection" (Creswell 2007: 73). Convenience sampling was used to identify a desegregated school which was easily accessible for multiple visits in order to achieve data saturation (Merriam and Associates 2002; Silverman 2005).

Relevance of gathered data, which in qualitative research is data trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln 1994), was achieved through purposeful identification of a school that was cosmopolitan in its population and multicultural in its orientation (Nkomo and Dolby 2003; Vandeyar 2010, 2011). Such schools in South Africa have come to be called desegregated or integrating schools (Vandeyar 2010, 2011), which base their orientation on the rainbow nation which the founder of post-apartheid South Africa, Nelson Mandela, idealised (Rainbow Nation Child 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009).

The researchers sought to investigate how children's neutrality to racial, ethnic, gender, regional and tribal and other naturalistic differences can be viewed as diversity rather than some dividing socio-contour lines. A desegregated school therefore provided a sample that was relevant, knowledgeable and informative about life experiences that are cosmopolitan and multicultural. The selected study site was found suitable because it enrolled children of South African mixed races as well as immigrants, mostly Zimbabwean nationals. The school, therefore, was a suitable representation of a cosmopolitan population of learners that ranged in social class, ethnicity, race and religion of both South African nationals and non-nationals. Only young learners in the foundation phase grades were selected to participate in the study because they were considered as not yet socialised to discriminate on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, race or origin. Their foundation phase teachers who conceptualised the philosophy of social desegregated in schools complemented data gathered from children through their related narratives.

Sample representative in this case study was defined in terms of the participants' richness in information required for the research objectives and questions:

- ♦ Twenty grade R (Reception) and grade 1 learners were observed and listened to during outdoor play times.
- ♦ Twenty grade 2 and 3 learners were selected to describe their play activities through drawings.
- ♦ All the seven foundation phase teachers and the school principal at the desegregated school participated in a focus group interview to explain their experiences in working with children from diverse social, ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Data Gathering Instruments and Process

Three data gathering instruments were employed for the study, namely the child-talk conversation, observations of children while on informal play and a focus group interview was conducted with teachers.

Child-talk Conversations

While formalised, semi-structure and structured individual interviews are widely employed for adult research informants, informal and unstructured interviews or child-talks and informal play have been successfully used to understand children's lived experiences and the meanings they give to their individual and social identity (Francis 1997; Howard and Grill 2001; Driessnack 2006). During informal games and playtime, we observed, listened to and talked with foundation phase learners. Eder and Fingerson (2002) advise that the advantage of interviewing young respondents is that it allows them to give their own meanings and interpretations instead of relying on adult inferences and interpretations. Grade 3 learners were asked to draw pictures and write names of friends they usually play with at school or home.

Play Observations

As children played, we observed and listened to their informal conversations. The observations were meant to capture the plurality of their ethnic, gender and linguistic composition of their peer groups. The researchers also captured the terminologies they used in their conversations, which indicated children's non-confinement to a particular or rigid language constituent. Pho-

tographs were captured to illustrate the diverse composition of the foundation phase children's play/game teams and peer-groups.

Focus Group Interview

The researchers used focus group interviews for all the foundation phase teachers to cooperatively re-create their experiences on working with children from diverse social, cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds (Seamark and Lings 2004; Creswell 2007). We, therefore, complemented evidence from children's drawings and observations made during play with narrative data from focus group interviews with teachers.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This case study was conducted to investigate how foundation phase learners deconstructed their racial, class, cultural and gender differences in their play/game teams and peer-groups. The study was informed by theories on social cohesion, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and global citizenship (Nkomo and Dobby 2003; Banks et al. 2005). The study generated qualitative data in the form of verbatim narratives from children and teachers, photos, children's annotated drawings. In analysing such data, we sought to make sense out of the accumulated information (Vithal and Jansen 2003). Qualitative data analysis is the search for general statements about the relationships between the data (Bernard 2000). Data analysis therefore included exploring the properties, dimensions and meanings that were depicted by and inferred from the quoted statements, pictures and drawings (Strauss and Carbin 1998). The statements made by the children and their teachers were juxtaposed with photos and children's drawings to identify their relationships and explain factors that could contribute to socially desegregated or global classrooms (Nkomo and Dobby 2003; Vandeyar 2010, 2011). The researchers therefore, employed hermeneutic data analysis (Cromer and McCarthy 1999; Ploeg 1999; Thorne 2000) for inductive interpretation of the children's drawings and the expressed views of their teachers. As qualitative researchers, they then mediated between the different meanings on how foundation phase children experienced a cosmopolitan play environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data from children's play-talk conversations and drawings revealed that children at the foundation phase had the capacity to deconstruct tribal, ethnic and gender differences during their informal play activities. Teachers' narratives concurred that the informal social activities of children could be effectively harnessed into formal classroom activities and learning. In the following section, we present and interpret the captured data on how foundation phase learners expressed their life experiences into three identified themes:

- ♦ Children peer-groups as rainbow populated social environments
- ♦ Children peer-groups as gender neutral social environments
- ♦ Children peer-groups as multi-lingual social environments

Cosmopolitanism is about tolerance and inclusion of all people despite racial and ethnic, gender, class, language, religious and other differences (Banks et al. 2005; Appiah 2006). Data from this study demonstrated that children at the foundation phase level do not define or characterise themselves using ethnic, gender, and class, linguistic, tribal or religious identities as labels for inclusion or exclusion of others. While social groups are identifiable by these attributes,

Banks et al. (2005) posit that people in various communities, societies, nations, regions and continents are increasingly economically, culturally, politically, technologically and environmentally interconnected and interdependent into a diverse global village. In this study, the researchers identified and analysed how children were able to bridge racial, ethnic, gender and linguistic differences during play. The objective is to illustrate to the old generation that the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-ethnic identities that threaten peace in most societies, can be deconstructed through tolerance of these identities as global diversity than differences.

Young Children's Peer-Groups as Rainbow Populated Social Environments

Children who participated in this study had limited writing skills. They expressed their game and play experiences through drawings and child-talk conversations. An analysis of the children's drawings illustrated that young children played in more multi-racially composed peer groups at school than at home. The following drawing illustrates the diversity of children's play environment in terms of race, ethnicity and gender (Fig. 1).

As an indication that the children's reading of the world is non-segregatory and therefore



Fig. 1. Grade 3 learners' cosmopolitan play environment

operate on the framework of inclusion, children's pictorial depiction of their play groups show that they are diversely populated with boys and girls of black, white and coloured racial descent. From the dressing and hair styles in Figures 1 and 3, it is apparent from their drawings that children do not discriminate on the basis of gender. Long hair on the other hand may be a reflection of the inclusion of girls as well as children of white or coloured ethnic groups in play teams, while short hair is an illustration of black ethnic group.

Names can symbols of cultural identity and can also be used for inclusion as well as exclusion of others (Walters 2007; Folami 2008). Stereotyping of people based on their names can result in loss of objectivity even among academics and researchers (Jansen 2004).

In this study, observations of children's drawings revealed that the listed names in figure 1, namely 'Tino', 'Vele', 'Kim', 'Annet' and 'Liza' located the play group members into a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. For example, 'Liza', which is a short version of 'Elizabeth', is of British origin. Investigations revealed that 'Tino' and 'Vele' are both indigenous African names while 'Kim' is the abbreviation for 'Kimdrapper', a common Afrikaans name.

Because young children have no social or emotional values to hide, the researchers concluded that they did not discriminate when they played. Discrimination and exclusion are values that are socially constructed during the process of socialisation within society's various sociali-

sation agents like parents, siblings, classmates, teachers and the neighbourhood.

Unlike in the adult world spheres (Jansen 2004), this study revealed that for young children, names were not labels exclusion and discrimination of the other by foundation phase learners. This is in contrast to the observation by Jonathan Jansen, the first black Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, who was labelled "that Boer from Tukkies" because of being critical to the poor educational outcomes in post-apartheid South Africa (Jansen 2004: 165). Tukkies is the other name for University of Pretoria, a former all-White university in South Africa. According to the radical view of post-colonial African nationalism, criticism of the people's popular institutions, no matter how constructive, is not expected to come from 'fellow Blacks' (Jansen 2004; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). It is the researchers' contention that in the adult world, names can be labels that act as push-out and pull-in factors for socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic groupings. However, the study of young children's play environment revealed that for young children, names might not have discriminatory influence on them.

Children Peer Groups as Gender Neutral Social Environments

An earlier study by Shizha (2000) revealed that young children are gender neutral. Chil-

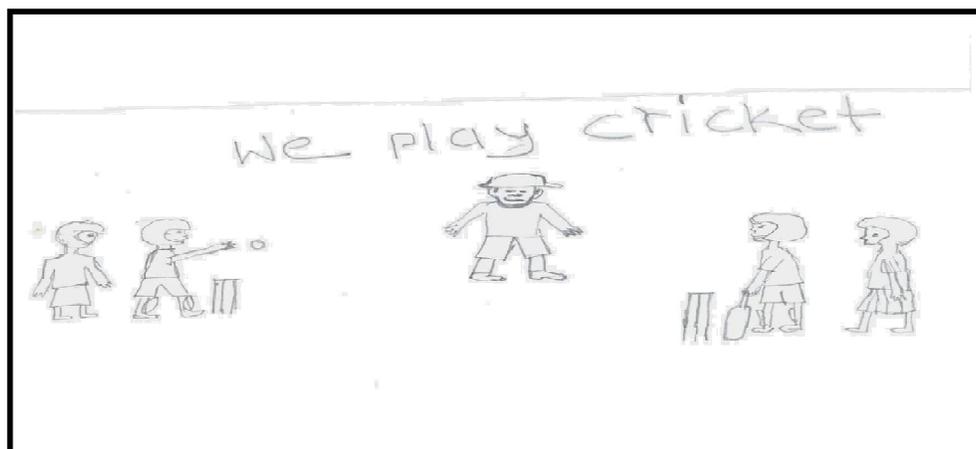


Fig. 2. Grade 3 learners' gender balance in children's game teams



Fig. 3. Grade 3 learners' memories of South Africa 2010 FIFA World Cup

dren only learn to identify themselves as male and boy or female and girl later in life through socialisation, role modelling and role taking from their adult significant others. Gender bias is, therefore, socially constructed during interaction. Data from observations of children during informal play and their narratives confirmed that unlike adults, children are not influenced by gender differences (Fig. 3).

Grade 3 learners drew pictures of games they played without adult supervision. Given the urban setting of the study participants, the most popular sporting games included soccer, netball, tennis, hockey, cricket and rugby. From the drawings and annotations, some of the children de-mystified the engendered perceptions that soccer, rugby and cricket should be male oriented sporting disciplines. There were also indications that children do not label netball and hockey as exclusively female sporting disciplines, as illustrated by the mixed gender composition of hockey players in Figure 2. In the soccer world

cup memories, the grade 3 learner who drew the children's perception of the soccer game (Fig. 3) included a female goalkeeper despite that the 2010 FIFA soccer tournament was for male teams only. The researchers interpreted this as evidence of gender neutrality among young children.

Observations of foundation phase learners during informal play revealed that it was uncommon to find children of both sexes playing a game like soccer or cricket, which are in the adult world male dominated and played according to gender. This concurred with an earlier study by Shizha (2000) which indicated that in their imaginative world, children are capable of transcending beyond the adult world's gender specific roles.

Observations during play revealed that a five year old boy role-played as a mother with a doll or cooking in the kitchen and equally so a young girl role-played as a truck driver (Fig. 4). Peer group composition during children play-time and



Fig. 4. Grade R learners' gender neutrality in the public and work spheres

games proved unconfined to either male or female social engagement. Children's games and peer groups suggested that foundation phase learners conceptualised human beings as equal. To young children, there is no gender superiority or inferiority. During informal play, boys were not viewed as physically superior to girls and therefore girls were not excluded from soccer, cricket or rugby (Fig. 4).

Narrative reports from school teachers at the desegregated school revealed that sporting, group learning activities are good avenues for bridging gender, racial, class and cultural boundaries among children. Extracts from statements made by teachers during group interviews illustrated some principles which inform desegregated school's vision of social cohesion. One teacher at the desegregated school where the study was conducted was of the view that children naturally like to play with each other without paying attention to their differences. According to her:

When boys and girls, or children of different races play together, we should not praise them, or appear surprised. That is natural. If you praise them as an adult, they start to question themselves; that maybe they have done the unexpected (School teacher).

The school principal added that when playing, toddlers should not be interfered with by governing them with too many rules on what, how and with whom they should play. She gave the advice that:

As a school, we are not governed by the "Don'ts and Dos" policies because they instil

a sense of fear in children. Children like each other, do not discriminate because one is White, Black, Asian, Coloured, boy or girl. We let them loose than restrict their interaction (School Principal).

Another teacher, however, partly differed with the principal in that she believed in guided group formations especially during classes. According to her, social cohesion can be deliberately fostered at a young age by assisting children to accommodate each other's racial, gender, religious or any other differences. She therefore emphasised that:

During group tasks in class, we help to create mixed group. We encourage mixed sitting whether in class or at assemblies; not according boys, girls or even grades (School teacher).

The notice to tenants which prompted into this paper explicitly sent the message that children need restrictions and close monitoring from parents during play (Real Rentals 2011). From views expressed by teachers at the social desegregated school, it would seem that children need freedom from adults when they are in their world of play. Through play, children can express and resist cultural and ethnic exclusion that is common in the adult world spheres (Kyratzis 2004; Banks et al. 2005).

Children Peer Groups as Multi-lingual Social Environments

Language is a shared social phenomenon which groups can use to define a sense of belonging as well as for exclusion of the other,

such that “in multi-national or multi-ethnic societies, language becomes one of the symbols used as identity for in-group and out-group distinctions” (Zungu 1977: 212). In the adult world, Urciuoli (1995: 525) uses the concept of “language and borders” which “suggest that language differences signify categories of person defined by ethnic or national origin”. In contrast to the adult world, Kyratzis (2004: 625) observes that children use “peer talk” as “an active process by which children playfully transform and actively resist cultural categories”. Children’s language is a significant symbol for communication that is not limited to vocal words. They can accommodate others who are new or foreign to them during play through smiles, laughter, toying and gestures.

Through play, children in this study demonstrated the capacity to resist segregation that characterise adult monocultures. Although the children had diverse linguistic backgrounds, they were able to socialise with each other in their play activities through peer and friendship communication skills which were not limited to ethnic vocabulary. They used a mixture of communication methods which included their different home languages, and English as a common linkage. Children used their different home languages yet play was not disrupted. Play, to children was the centre of attraction for social intercourse and therefore a means and medium of communication.

Child play, like music and sport in modern society can break mono-cultural and ‘nativist’ barriers and manage world diversity into a global social village. The taste for music and sport is common and universally understood even when the world’s different languages are used as media for communication. The 2010 World Cup in South Africa signified world unity in diversity and extended Nelson Mandela’s vision of South Africa as a rainbow nation into a global context. For a while, the world celebrated its cultural diversity on South African soil through the FIFA World Cup. The world soccer extravaganza exemplified the adult world in moment of children’s world which can be a source of social cohesion beyond social, ethnic and racial differences.

CONCLUSION

By taking a leaf from the foundation phase children playground at the social desegregated

school where this case study was conducted, it is therefore our contention that if the adult generation the world over could be like children in play games and be guided by the spirit and principles of the sporting world, modern civilisation could become more cosmopolitan and anti-xenophobic, where there is no clash of civilisations between the North and the South, Black, White and Coloured, male and female, Christian and Muslim, and nationals and non-nationals within a nation-state. We therefore recommend that the cosmopolitanism experienced during the preparation for the world cup in South Africa should be cherished and preserved, as one newspaper reader recalled: “The World Cup brought such a sense of unity, and it died with the blow of the final whistle” (Rainbow Nation Child 2011:8). Sport, like child play, can be an intervention to xenophobic emotions and to build social cohesion despite socio-cultural, ethnic and racial diversity that are common in the modern global world. Like children, the adult world should live, play and work with one another. Maybe, international sporting tournaments should be hosted more often so that adults can more often experience the children’s world sociality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on observations of how a desegregated school environment where this case study was conducted, promoted social cohesion among the learners, it is recommended that:

- ♦ Globalisation, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and diversity should be among the contemporary issues for inclusion in all teacher education curricular the world over.
- ♦ Teacher-parents associations should be constituted with representatives of all the ethnic, linguistic, religious groups that exist in the learner population of the school.
- ♦ National policy frameworks should embrace multicultural and cosmopolitan values.

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