

Issues Influencing Black Learners' Scholastic Experiences in ex-Model C Further Education and Training Schools

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ABSTRACT Post-Apartheid education in South Africa is seemingly characterised by an open and accessible schooling system that paved the way for numerous ex-Model C (historically White) Further Education and Training (FET) schools to enrol huge numbers of Black learners and are therefore professing to practice multicultural education. Many of these schools are challenged to adapt their admission requirements, policies and curricula practices as a mechanism of supporting Black learners' experiences. The question therefore is, whether these schools are indeed practising multicultural education or whether they merely assimilating Black learners into the established school systems. With this background in mind, the purpose of this study was to investigate issues influencing Black learners' scholastic experiences in FET schools in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. A quantitative study was employed in selected ex-Model C schools, using a sample of 1037 Black learners. A key finding revealed that White educators lack the knowledge and skills to teach Black learners and seemingly do not cater for these learners' life experiences and world view orientation. In direct bearing to the latter, it is recommended that educators in ex-Model C FET schools of the Northern Cape province, should be exposed to training interventions initiated by the Department of Education.

INTRODUCTION

The first democratic elections of 1994 reshaped the political, social and educational landscape of South Africa. The new government inherited a country that had been shaped by colonial rule and apartheid policies (A system of racial segregation in South Africa enforced through legislation by the ruling National Party from 1948-1994) for 46 years. The country reflected a history that was deeply divided along racial lines, where the quality of educational provision and the social status ascribed to race groups were largely uphold by the National Party (Alexander 2014).

South Africa has been labelled the "rainbow" nation and rightly so. Cultural diversity is a key feature of South African society and affects all spheres of life, including education. This diversity was largely regulated by law during the era of apartheid is openly embraced by the majority of South Africans. Cultural diversity directly influences the context in which schooling takes place, the manner in which it is offered, as well as the content of the syllabi (Lemmer and Baden-

horst 1997). In addition to this, a non-racial national Department of Education, together with nine other provincial departments have been charged with the task of providing schooling for all children living in South Africa (Lemmer et al. 2006).

In practice, the above mentioned implies that educators in a multicultural society are faced with the challenge of teaching increasingly multicultural classes. Gollnick and Chinn (2002) support this view and are convinced that educators are faced with an overwhelming challenge of preparing learners from diverse race and cultural backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society and a world in which some groups have greater access to societal benefits than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, religion and ability. Beets and le Grange (2005) argue that the whole education process centres around the notion of 'ubuntu' which is regarded as a philosophy or a set of ethical principles that capture the belief systems of most South (Africans) according to which all citizens take responsibility for other citizens but also accept the authority and guidance of those who

have acquired an advanced level of knowledge and understanding in order to progress and grow as human beings. It could therefore be expected that schools and educators, especially those confined to ex-Model C FET schools, internalise their task of teaching Black learners (African, Coloured and Indian) as much more broader than merely preparing them to obtain a good pass at grade 12 level.

The desegregation and more specifically, the Africanisation (A notion expressing the need for all African people to be granted the space to become themselves without duress) of schools in South Africa, has further brought about a need for ex-Model C FET schools to reflect critically on the curriculum so that these institutions may change the nature of teaching and learning, so that the needs of all learners may be met (Kivedo 2006). It further implies that suitable learning environments should be created, for motivating learners towards acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and 'ubuntu' to enable them to participate meaningfully in a modern and post-apartheid multicultural society. Therefore the challenge for institutions of higher learning who are the providers of teacher education programmes, is to take cognisance of the approaches and strategies they affect when planning and designing curricula for training prospective teachers- these should include African values into teaching practices and how these are related to cosmology, spirituality, and artistic and expressive cultural forms (Beets and le Grange 2005; Van Zyl 2002; Bennet 2007).

In spite of the above-mentioned changes, many learners, parents, and even educators for that matter still experience great difficulty in coping with this inevitable reality. People are creatures of habit who find it difficult to change, whether at the individual level, the institutional level, or societal level. People often work from one set of assumptions, and one pattern of behaviour (Mpisi 2010). The way in which individuals have been socialised seems to have become part of them and as such, they might find it very difficult to think that things can be done in any other way. The same may be applied to the South African scenario, where the citizens of the country were divided along racial lines for such a long period of time that living, working, socialising and more especially learning together, have proposed seemingly insurmountable challenges for education authorities (Cushner et al. 1992).

With the above mentioned in mind, the purpose of this study was therefore to investigate issues influencing Black learners' scholastic experiences in ex-Model C FET school settings.

Theoretical Framework

The study is propelled by the Social learning theory as basis for understanding learning in the integrated school contexts of ex Model C FET schools (Lave and Wenger 1991).

The Social-learning theory maintains that children learn social behaviours by observing and imitating models, usually those constituted by their parents. Learners are also regarded as active contributors to their own learning, rather than being perceived as primarily reactive (Papalia and Olds 1996). In the case of Black learners in integrated learning environments, such as ex-Model C schools, the home, community and society at large constitute the informal learning environment. Informal learning agents, which includes the immediate family and elders in the community, form the basis of subsequent educational processes, within a specific community of practice. The family home is the primary environment consisting of father, mother, children, other people, objects and places. Senior family members, like fathers, mothers, uncles, and elders in the community ultimately fulfil the roles of "educators" (and may also be assisted by, grandparents, relatives, guardians, siblings and older peers (Fraser et al. 1992; Luthuli 1982). Therefore in specific communities (Black residential areas), Black children are continuously exposed to informal learning agents and settings and are conscious of what the family and their particular cultural group requires them to learn, know and experience. Therefore, learned norms, values, beliefs and attitudes are of great value in the home and community setting.

The learning world of the Black child in the informal setting of the home, community and society at large, reflects a certain teaching-learning situation. The home, community and society impart their knowledge and skills to be learned by learner and in return the learner is expected to learn from these encounters (Alexander 2004). The argument could therefore be made, that the latter mentioned aspects should be considered as crucial to the teaching of Black learners (African, Coloured and Indian) in ex-Model C FET schools and should be consid-

ered by the educator component when teaching Black learners in particular.

Issues Experienced by Black Learners in ex-Model C FET School Settings (Historically White Schools)

When South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, a significant number of Black learners opted to attend historically secluded White schools. The reason for this phenomenon, according to Ntuli (1998) is that many Black parents were lured by the conducive educational conditions that is in sharp contrast with those in Black schools. While the latter might hold an element of truth, Black learners are now confronted with the dilemma of actualising themselves in an environment that straddles two divergent social milieus- the one represented by home and the other by school. The situation raises a number of pertinent questions relating to how this situation affects the scholastic experience of Black learners attending these schools. One such question is: what is the role ex-Model C schools ought to fulfil in supporting Black learners in constituting their life-worlds?

In response to this question, Vrey in Ntuli (1998) argues that when the Black child enters into the new multicultural environment of the ex-model C school setting, the world to which meaning is attributed now expands beyond that world which is also shared by parents. Black parents have within their social environments instilled certain codes of conduct which are acceptable with their cultural norms and values. This implies that when Black learners come into contact with other cultural groups, enticing influences of cultural assimilation, acculturation and de-culturation may unconsciously be introduced in Black learners' meaning and understanding frame of the world (Van Rensburg and Landman in Ntuli 1998; Alexander 2004). Instilling and nurturing positive attitudes in learners may assist them to attain self-confidence which might enable them to respond meaningfully during class interactions – this may also influence his/her Black- and White peers to respond to class activities in a positive way and as such assist with the enhancement of healthy race relations. (Alexander 2014). However, failure by ex-Model C FET schools and the parent community to maintain a balance between encultura-

tion, acculturation and de-culturation may prove to be confusing to Black learners. This confusion may in turn hamper the development of a positive concept and the self-actualisation of Black learners.

The researchers hold the opinion that Black learners in Further Education and Training (FET) schools (Schools offering grades 8-12 tuition) may be in the same dilemma, as far as actualising themselves in two divergent social and scholastic milieus. It may be necessary for School Governing Bodies (SGB's), School Management Teams (SMT's) and educators to take cognisance of this fact when dealing with Black learners in integrated school settings, consideration needs to be given to the aspect of diversity.

While South African schools are no longer allowed to discriminate on the basis of race, a number of exclusionary devices have limited access to comparatively better resourced integrated schools. The exclusionary devices may include the geographic location of the school, which may be far from where most Black learners live; high fees and the often unwelcoming cultural ethos of the school (Motala et al. 2007). The challenges encountered by Black learners seem not only to be limited to South Africa, but are also prevalent in the rest of the world. The Independent (2006), highlights the fact that Black learners are three times more likely to be excluded than their White counterparts, and five times less likely to be on the official register of gifted and talented learners.

Khosa (in Machaisa 2004), Coutts (1992) and Lemmer et al. (2006) identified some of the challenges and issues Black learners may encounter in the multicultural school environments. The same challenges and issues may also be relevant and therefore be equated to the school situation in Northern Cape FET ex-Model C schools.

The researchers now give a discussion on some of the possible issues that may influence the scholastic experience of Black learners in FET ex-Model C schools.

Lack of Institutional Policy

Most ex-Model C schools do not have a policy on racial integration (Mpisi 2010). It therefore appears that schools do not have official guidelines on how to deal with matters of integration. This is underlined by an article in the

(Sunday Times 2009), that reports on de facto segregation which was widespread in student residences at an institution of higher learning in South Africa. In relation to the latter mentioned it was also reported that 42% of White students at this specific institution of higher learning objected to share residence with Black students. In the absence of official policy on matters of racial and cultural integration, educators at ex-Model C schools are at a loss to deal with issues of diversity, as they lack the necessary skills and guidance (Kivedo 2006).

Assimilation Tendencies

Most ex-Model C schools still expect learners to be assimilated instead of integrated. The dominant school culture seems to be upheld by ex-Model C schools (historically White schools). Cultural activities portraying the history and sporting codes, associated with the dominant group, remains largely unchanged and Black learners are expected to adapt (Mpisi 2010; Hopkins et al. 1994; McLaughlin 1990). This state of affairs often result in Black learners not participating in cultural and sporting activities, as those in which they may be interested are often not offered by these schools.

The above mentioned assimilation tendencies may also cause Black learners to regard their own language and culture as inferior to those of their White counterparts. These tendencies are further exacerbated by the fact that most of the educators at multicultural schools, such as ex-Model C settings may still be predominantly White. In the Northern Cape, for example, only 9% of the entire teaching staff in FET schools is Black, (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). This state of affairs may result in Black learners perceiving White educators as superior to their Black colleagues. Kivedo (2006) aptly warns that this may further lead to possible cultural misunderstandings and the consequent breakdown in educator-learner relations. The above-mentioned may as a result, eventually culminate in unsatisfactory and unfulfilling scholastic experiences for Black learners attending these schools.

Alienation

Humans are social beings by nature and therefore possess an innate need to belong and to be

accepted by others. The latter is in keeping with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow 2009), that state that the need for friendship, family and intimacy does indeed exist in humans. In this regard Taylor et al. (2006) mention that the need to belong is a universal element of human nature, similar to hunger and thirst. For the mere fact that social relations are so central to human life, it is not surprising that loneliness and social rejection are major sources of personal distress. Black learners in FET school setups, are no different. Alienation is therefore in direct contrast with the learner's basic need to belong and for acceptance. Alienation, according to the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (2002) means to feel very distant or not welcomed by someone else. Given this explanation, it could be deduced that Black learners in FET ex-Model C schools in the Northern Cape may also be distressed and adversely affected. Moletsane (1999) warns that learners who feel alienated from the classroom and the school may withdraw emotionally from the educational process.

Language Diversity

Lemmer et al. (2006) mentions that South Africa is a multilingual country. Besides having the eleven official languages, there are at least 24 other languages spoken in South Africa. Language diversity has complicated the provision of South African education in various ways. Most South African learners are instructed through the medium of the mother tongue during the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3). The onset of the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) often marks a transition to English as the language of learning and teaching for all the learning areas. This transition may be the cause of many problems. One problem may be the disparity between the English proficiency of these children and the proficiency required of them in order to master all the learning areas through the medium of English.

Furthermore, there is an increasing tendency for non-English speaking South Africans to opt for English, as their *lingua franca* in the broader community, workplace, their language of learning and teaching at school and in higher education (Mpisi 2010). Consequently, there are an increasing number of Black learners entering English-medium schools. These learners may lack the command of English that is necessary

for school success. When placed in classes where the ability to communicate fluently in idiomatic English is often assumed, these learners find themselves at risk of underachievement, or of falling behind their English-proficient classmates. Black learners are thus faced with an educational challenge of mastery the subject content through the medium of a language other than their mother tongue.

Drop-outs and Failure Rate

Dropping-out arises in instances where the learner can no longer cope with the school situation and decides to abandon school prematurely. This does not happen suddenly, but is the culmination of years of failure, meaninglessness and feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy, (Ministerial Review Committee 2003). Most of the learners, who drop-out of school, do in fact possess the cognitive ability to complete school. Learner drop-outs may more likely be emotionally immature, less well-adjusted, manifest a defective self-concept, rebellion, negativism, alienation, deep-seated feelings of hostility and resentment (Mpisi 2010).

In integrated school contexts, Alexander (2014) prefers to attribute the drop-out and failure rate to the fact that many White educators have adopted low expectations for Black learners, a stance that sets the stage for their possible underachievement and negative scholastic experiences. In addition, the researchers argue that educators often regard Black learners from a deficit viewpoint. According to this viewpoint, educators may focus primarily on the learners' perceived shortcomings and may pathologise their academic failure as a product of poverty and unsupportive family lives. By adhering to a deficit viewpoint, educators invalidate the unique perspectives, skills, and experiences of their learners. This tendency is supported by a newspaper article that report that Black learners at historically White institutions are continually and openly reminded that they would fail "because Blacks cannot do accounting" (Sunday Times 2009), as an example.

The fear of dropping-out of school or failing may also be one of the problems faced by many Black learners in Northern Cape FET ex-Model C schools due to unsatisfactory scholastic experiences. Educators at these schools should be trained to be able to detect drop-out tenden-

cies, particularly among Black learners, so that the problem is addressed and possibly remedied in time.

Sporting and Cultural Activities

Extra-curricular activities are one way in which schools may give recognition to the varied cultural groupings within the school community (Alexander 2004). The situation may exist where certain sporting activities may be preferred by some cultural groups, while another cultural group may not be interested, because of a lack of interest or exposure. A situation may arise where Black learners may not be interested in sporting codes traditionally prefer by White learners, such as rugby, swimming, water polo or "jukskei" (Kivedo 2006). It therefore becomes incumbent upon these schools to make provision for sporting codes that may appeal to all the learners at the school. The provision of a wider and preferred range of extra-curricula activities may assist in enhancing interaction between learners.

Sporting activities have the added advantage in that it may serve as an excellent means for multicultural education to create and foster social bonds, as well as developing positive attitudes. This sentiment is also shared by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) report (1999) that states that learners regard sport both as a unifying and divisive factor. Sporting activities may be one of the many measures to involve Black learners in enhancing their scholastic experiences. In an attempt to create a more accepting and welcoming spirit, these schools may also introduce indigenous games such as, "dibeke", "kho-kho", "kghati", "morabaraba", to name but a few (Mpisi 2010).

In the light of the discussion, regarding the various issues Black learners have to contend with, schooling in integrated contexts, such as FET ex- Model C schools in Northern Cape province, may therefore be seen as a multidimensional educational approach to schooling. It is an approach that accords equal recognition to all cultural groups and provide all learners with more meaningful and relevant educational experience. In order for multicultural education to be successful, the total school environment, including sporting activities, should be modified so that it is more representative of the cultural diverse nature of the South African society (Lemmer et al. 2006).

From the discussion, it becomes clear that there is an array of issues that may influence the scholastic experience of Black learners in integrated school settings. It may be necessary for educators in Northern Cape FET schools, to acquaint themselves with as many of these as possible. It is only when educators have a thorough understanding of how these challenges and issues influence their teaching that they may truly be able to educate and guide all learners to actualise their optimal potential. An improved understanding of these issues by educators may be the first step of addressing the feeling of hostility and animosity many Black learners experience.

Lemmer et al. (2006) appropriately points out that culture, race and social class are used to construct the major groups of people in society. Thus, educators need to understand how the ascribed characteristics of culture, race and class influence their understanding of learners. It may be important to consider these issues collectively, and not separately, since all learners are members of all three status groups. It is this simultaneous membership of all these groups that influences learners' perceptions and actions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Research

In the light of the mentioned purpose of this study, issues influencing Black learners' scholastic experiences in ex-Model C FET schools were investigated.

The literature study focused on a discussion of various issues influencing Black learners' scholastic experiences in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. An empirical investigation, by way of the quantitative research method was conducted. A self designed questionnaire was administered to Black learners to determine their perceptions on issues influencing their scholastic experiences in ex-Model C schools.

Research Sample Composition

The geographical area of this study was limited to twenty seven ex-Model C FET schools in the five education districts of the Northern Cape province, namely, Frances Baard education district (10 schools), Siyanda education dis-

trict (6 schools), Pixley Ka Seme education district (4 schools), Namaqua education district (5 schools) and J.T.Gaetsewe education district (2 schools).

The research group consisted of 1037 Black learners from historically White schools, comprising of at least 40 learners from each of the selected schools. Permission to conduct this empirical study was sought from the Northern Cape Department of Education (NCDoE), as well as from principals of these specific schools. A total of 832 questionnaires were completed by learners.

A pilot study in the form of a structured, closed questionnaire was also conducted to determine issues influencing Black learners' scholastic experiences in two ex-Model C FET schools in the Northern Cape.

In order for the researcher to make summaries, draw conclusions and offer recommendations, the data acquired from the questionnaires was integrated with the data acquired from the literature study. The University of the Free State's Centre for Statistical Analysis assisted with the processing of data.

Question one of the questionnaire related to biographical information of the learners, such as their gender, race, home language and residential area. Question two of the questionnaire related to issues influencing learners' scholastic experiences in FET schools of the Northern Cape province. Question three of the questionnaire related to the following issues: reasons why learners are attending ex-Model C schools; the existence of equal opportunities for learners from different race groups and the presence of a sport and cultural programme catering for learners from various cultural backgrounds. The perceptual inventory consists of items (Questions two and three), was scored on a 4- point Likert scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The biographical information (question 1) of the questionnaire yielded the following information: In terms of gender, the majority (54 %) of learners in ex-Model C schools of the Northern Cape province is female, whilst 45.9 % of the participants are males. In terms of race, 57.7% of the learners are Coloured, 36.5 % of the learners are African and only 4.8% and 1.2% are of other and Indian decent respectively. Pertaining to

home language, the majority of the learners' (64.0%) home language is Afrikaans, followed by English (10.0%). Learners who had Setswana and Isi Xhosa as home language, represented 15.0% and 5.0% of the participants respectively. In terms of residential area, 18.3% of learners live in historically White residential areas, whilst 81.4 % indicated that they live in Black (historically, African, Coloured and Indian) residential areas.

The data presentation in Table 1 (Question 2) was compiled from the responses of learners in relation to the question about issues influencing their scholastic experiences in ex- Model C FET schools of the Northern Cape province.

In order to assess the factorability of the data, the researchers used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. For the difference in items to be statistically significant, the P-value

Table 1: Issues influencing learners' scholastic experiences in ex-Model C FET schools of the Northern Cape province

Items	χ^2 value	p- value	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
2.1 I Experience no difficulty in adapting to my school.	1	0.486	346	41.8	333	40.3	111	13.5	36	4.4
2.2 Racial incidents often happen at our school.	1	0.583	165	20.1	302	36.7	231	28.1	124	15.1
2.3 In our school, all learners, irrespective of their cultural background are treated the same.	1	0.565	227	27.5	315	38.2	213	25.8	69	8.5
2.4 Enrolling Black learners in ex- Model C schools has led to a drop in standards.	1	0.477	124	15.1	277	33.7	270	32.8	151	18.4
2.5 Black learners tend to be more withdrawn than White learners during group work and other class activities.	1	0.524	165	20.0	251	30.5	271	32.9	137	16.6
2.6 The failure ad drop-out rate tend to be higher among Black learners than White learners.	1	0.539	229	27.8	300	36.4	189	22.9	107	12.9
2.7 My friends who are not attending ex-Model C schools still accepts me as a friend and has not changed their attitude towards me.	1	0.623	475	57.8	260	31.6	59	7.2	28	3.4
2.8 I find difficulty in going to school when there are strikes and stay-aways in township and Black residential areas.	1	0.567	111	13.5	169	20.6	307	37.4	234	28.5
2.9 I find living in a Black area/township has a direct effect on my performance because of the lack of facilities such as computer centres and libraries.	1	0.443	186	22.8	196	24.0	224	27.5	210	25.7
2.10 If I could choose, I would prefer to attend a historically Black school.	1	0.518	147	18.0	135	16.5	238	29.1	298	36.4

The difference is statistically significant if $P < 0.05$

must be $<$ than 0.05. Basically this means that there is a 95% chance that the results are due to the influence of an independent variable, or a combination of independent variables and not to chance (De Vos et al. 2005).

Pertaining to the learner questionnaire, questions 2.1 to 2.10 were asked to gather information on the experiences of the learner in FET schools. Table 1 presents a summary of how learners responded.

Table 1 captures the significance of the p -values for the experiences of learner at in FET schools in the Northern Cape. Again, all the values are greater than 0.05 and are therefore not statistically significant.

Issues of concern, particularly for this study, is whereby respondents indicated that, irrespective of their cultural background, all learners were treated the same (38.2%); racial incidents often happened at their school (36.7%); the failure and drop-out rate tended to be higher among non-White learners than White learners (36.4%) and enrolling non-White learners in former White schools has led to a drop in standards (33.7%). These findings of the empirical study concur with that of the sentiments expressed by Simons et al. (1987) and Mwamwenda (2004) that impressed upon the learners' the need for affection and belonging.

Research undertaken by Erasmus and Ferraira (2002) indicates that the self-concept of Black learners at integrated, historically White

schools is intermittently under attack. Motala et al. (2007) blames the hostile and unwelcoming culture and ethos at these schools for this state of affairs. The latter may result in a situation where Black learners perceive their scholastic experiences as negative. This may in turn have a direct influence on their academic success.

According to the findings of the literature study, segregation had been a constant feature of South African society and therefore of its education. The policy of segregation contributed to the formation of certain perceptions that militated against the establishment of a tolerant society and caused widespread cultural misunderstanding and conflict. It is often against this backdrop that Black learners in ex-Model C schools are expected to perform academically and to attain self-actualisation (Manganyi 1973; Mwamwenda 2004).

According to Table 2, almost half of the learners (49.2%) attending these schools thought that they received high quality teaching. This finding reiterated the fact that many Black learners were lured to these ex- Model C schools by the conducive educational conditions that were in sharp contrast to those in Black schools, after the demise of apartheid (Ntuli 1998).

Deduced from Table 3 and in response to the question on, whether equal opportunities exist at these schools for learners from different cultural groups, the majority of the learners from all races are sharing the sentiment that equal op-

Table 2: Reasons why learners are attending ex- Model C FET Schools

<i>Item 3.1: Reasons for attending ex-Model C schools</i>	<i>Learners responses</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
3.1.1 High quality teaching	409	49.2
3.1.2. My parents insisted	213	25.6
3.1.3 Better facilities	136	16.4
3.1.4 Enrolling Black learners in ex- Model C schools has led to a drop in standards	74	8.8
Total	832	100

Table 3: Distribution of learners' responses according to their race group, to whether equal opportunities exist for learners from different race groups

<i>Item 3.2: Equal opportunities exist for learners from different race groups</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly disagree</i>		
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	
African	304	73	24.0	76	25.0	97	31.9	58	19.0
Coloured	478	124	25.9	100	20.9	134	28.0	120	25.1
Indian	08	01	12.5	02	25.0	03	37.5	02	25.0
Other	39	07	17.9	07	17.9	13	33.3	12	30.8

portunities does not exist (disagree and strongly disagree) for learners from different racial backgrounds [African (50.9%), Coloured (53.1%), Indian (62.5%) and other (64.1%)]. These findings are in line with the literature study that shows that ex-Model C schools are apparently providing equal opportunities, amidst prevailing challenging situations (Sunday Times 2009).

Those learners who respond positively, constitutes the minority. The findings are congruent with that of the literature study that state that equal opportunities do not exist for learners from different race groups at these schools (Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg 1988; Dreyer and Duminy 1983; Mncwabe 1993; Ntuli 1998; Bezuidenhout and Joubert 2006; Motala et al. 2007).

Again, as depicted by Table 4 the majority [African (58.7%), Coloured (83.3%), Indian (62.5%) and other races (74.3 %)] of learners are convinced (Agreement and strongly agreement) that their school's sports and cultural programme cater for their preference. The minority of learners, that is 41.3 % African, 16.7% Coloured, 37.5 % Indian and 25.7 % other races hold the view that their school's sports and cultural programme don't cater for their preference- they therefore disagree and strongly disagree with the statement. This is contrary to the findings of the literature study that found that White cultural activities and sporting codes remained largely unchanged and Black learners are expected to adapt to the status quo, (Lemmer et al. 2006).

CONCLUSION

Most Black learners attending ex- Model C FET schools in the Northern Cape seem to have a relatively satisfactory scholastic experience. The lack of institutional policy and assimilation tendencies at schools are issues which seem to delimit processes aimed at enhancing the

scholastic experience of Black learners. It therefore becomes important that a concerted effort should be made by education authorities to make the educator component more representative of the learner population. In relation to this attempt, clearly structured interventions can be initiated to support White educators' knowledge and skills repertoires. In this way Black learners may be able to identify with educators as role models, especially, those who have a similar cultural and linguistic background or those educators who make concerted efforts to learn the realities and complexities associated with their learners' life world experiences. This may even assist in bridging the underlying conflict that may exist between the Euro-centric and Afro-centric values of the school and the Black learner respectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Attempts should be made by educators to create a classroom atmosphere that is based on the norms, values and practices of that particular classroom situation. Learners of other cultural groups to whom the classroom is a foreign and even an awe-inspiring space, should be introduced to a warm, conducive and empathetic classroom atmosphere so that they can feel both at home and safe. In this way feelings of alienation experienced by Black learners may be minimised.

It seems as if School Management Teams will have to make deliberate attempts to establish effective communication and information-disseminating mechanisms. This may assist those parents who are not well versed in English or Afrikaans, as well as counteracting the divide between the school and home environment.

The drop-out and high failure rate amongst Black learners at FET schools remains a reason for grave concern. Most Black learners, who

Table 4: Distribution of learners' responses according their race group, to whether their school's sports and cultural programme cater for their preferences

<i>Item 3.3: School's sports and cultural programme cater for Black learner preferences</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly disagree</i>		
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	
African	304	102	33.4	77	25.3	69	22.8	56	18.5
Coloured	478	181	37.8	217	45.5	42	8.7	38	8.0
Indian	08	2	37.5	2	25.0	2	25.0	1	12.5
Other	39	16	41.3	13	33.0	6	15.7	4	10.0

drop-out of school or fail, may in fact possess the cognitive ability to complete their school careers. Possible reasons for the Black learner drop-outs and high failure rate in integrated schools, may be because of defective self-concepts, suffering from a sense of inferiority, negativism, alienation or experiences of deep-seated feelings of hostility and resentment.

As far as sporting and cultural programmes are concerned, these should be extended in an attempt to cater for learners from various cultural backgrounds. Extra-curricular activities are one way in which integrated schools, such as ex-Model C schools can give recognition to the varied cultural groupings within the school community. Extra-curricular activities have the added advantage of serving as an excellent condition for multicultural education, where the creation and fostering of social bonds, as well as the development of positive attitudes in participants, are achieved.

In order for schools to effectively address the challenges and issues experienced by Black learners, the School Management Team should make a concerted effort to ensure that parents of Black learners serve on the School Governing Body and parent-educator structures.

Additionally, it may also be of cardinal importance that the expertise of Black parents on matters of culture, tradition, sport and other relevant issues should be genuinely and sincerely tapped into. This might provide the School Management Team with some guidance and insight, as to how the perceived negative scholastic experience of these learners may be addressed.

A strategy that may assist in improving the scholastic experience of Black learners may be to encourage educators and other staff members to have positive expectations for all learners. This strategy may prevent educators and other staff members from making snap judgments, based on their subjective perceptions about Black learners coming from educationally and culturally inferior backgrounds and consequently treating them differently. It is therefore imperative, that educators, in particular, White educators should be equipped with the skills to enhance their observation and interpretation of culturally-diverse classroom behaviour. The latter should be done in a manner that is not based on myths and stereotypes, nor influenced by race or culture.

Finally, educators should be skilled on how to establish a classroom atmosphere of acceptance, where all learners are expected to achieve optimally. This expectation should be based on the learners' intellectual abilities, as well as their social capabilities and not on educator prejudice. Moreover, educators should be trained to remain objective at all times.

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