

Inclusion and Exclusion-Rural Teachers and Learners' Experiences: Cases in the Free-State Province

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KEYWORDS Agency. Experiences. Inclusive Education. Rural School. Urban School

ABSTRACT Rural schools, by nature and because of their contexts, are different from urban schools. These schools are situated in rural contexts where resources are scanty. The process of rural depopulation in South Africa has given rise to the phenomenon of teacher and learner migration from rural areas to urban areas which are closer to resources. However, teachers and learners from rural school often experience difficulties in adapting or being included into urban schools. The present paper analyses and contextualizes the inclusion and exclusion experienced by teachers and learners who move from rural schools to urban contexts. Qualitative data was collected through case studies by means of unstructured interviews with teachers and learners. Five teachers and ten learners participated in the study and were purposefully sampled. Inductive analytical framework was used to analyze data. Among the findings of the study was that teachers and learners from rural schools find it difficult to integrate socially in urban schools, that the different ways by which the two types of schools function creates constraining effect on learner and teacher agency. The major findings were that teachers and learners feel excluded from the urban school community as they have not been socialized adequately to occupy space as members of the new school community. It is therefore recommended that to enhance inclusion of teachers and learners from rural into urban schools a comprehensive preparative programme needs to be put in place which can address change in teaching and learning, dealing with attitudes, handling new school management systems, adapting and socializing learners and teachers within the new school culture.

INTRODUCTION

The South African Education system is composed of rural and urban schools. Since the advent of the new political dispensation there has been an influx of people from rural areas to urban areas. This rural depopulation has resulted in the closing of small non-viable farm schools (Reed 2013). The movement has presented some challenges to migrating learners and teachers, for instance, inability to relate to how urban schools function. This is further aggravated by the fact that rural schools and urban schools are by nature operating differently. Coupled with the issue of different operations is the fact that there are prejudices and stereotypes about both learners and teachers from rural schools posing challenges of exclusion and thus hampered integration.

It is significant to indicate that the broad transformation of South African society towards equality coincided with the initiation of a move towards inclusion as promulgated in international documents such as the Salamanca Statement (1994) and Dakar World Education Forum (2000) (Engelbrecht 2006 ; Nkoane 2006).

Before 1994, the schooling system was based on a racial and special-needs education approach

(Engelbrecht 1999; Engelbrecht et al. 2002). After 1994, the segregated system began to be replaced by a unified schooling system (Christie 1995; Nkomo 1990). However, there is a need to acknowledge that, although formal desegregation began after 1994, de facto desegregation had begun in the late 1970s to mid-1980s (Makoelle 2012). According to King (2001), the notion of an integrated and comprehensive approach to inclusion focused on a critical review of institutional policies, practices and programs, which implies adopting a holistic approach to inclusion. The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa became part of the broad social transformation of society (Sayed and Carrim 1998; Engelbrecht and Waghid 2002; Soudien and Sayed 2004). Mitchell (2005) describes this period as a paradigm shift from special and ordinary categories of schooling to a single system. But Hay, Smit and Paulsen (2006) found that teachers' frames of thought were informed by the past regime, which made them less ready to implement inclusion. The government of South Africa drafted policies that sought to ensure the implementation of inclusive education, conceptualized in Vision 2021 as encapsulated in White Paper 6 (DoE 2001). Various guideline documents were published to facilitate the im-

plementation of inclusive education. On the other hand there have been efforts to create an inclusive society across all spheres of the South African society making inclusion a process beyond schooling. However, the notion of inclusion has mostly been confined to inclusion of learners with learning barriers into the mainstream education. This paper though, in response to the aims captured in the constitution (RSA 1996) to create an inclusive society attempts to expand the parameters within which inclusion is viewed. The paper focuses on inclusion and exclusion within a broad social transformative agenda, not only as an educational matter but as also a human rights factor which includes teachers as well.

Aim of the Study

Since 1994 government of South Africa started with the transformation process to overhaul the education system, coupled with that was the growing phenomenon of the movement of learners and teachers from rural to urban schools as some rural schools became redundant. However, this process often happened haphazardly and it has not been very clear as to how to prepare adequately for inclusion of teachers and learners from rural schools into urban schools. The rural-urban migration of teachers presents a challenge of inclusion and integration. The following overarching research questions were therefore posed:

What are the inclusion and exclusion respective experiences of teachers and learners migrating from rural to urban schools?

How can inclusion into urban schools be facilitated?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted qualitatively within a case study design. Qualitative data was collected through case studies by means of unstructured interviews from teachers and learners. The participants were asked the same question: what are your experiences of moving from a rural to an urban school? Follow-up questions were asked to determine the clarity in understanding. Five teachers and ten learners participated in the study and were purposefully selected. Having the unpredictability of migration of teachers and learners the participants were a

mix of 2 Black male teachers and 3 Black female teachers. Learners were 4 Black males in grade 10 and 6 females in grade 10. These were teachers and learners that were recently accommodated in an urban school from three small rural schools. Interviews were conducted in a classroom after school. The voice recorder was used to collect data. Interviews were transcribed for analysis. Data was analyzed using an inductive analysis framework. The following steps were followed in the analysis of data: The following steps formed the basis of the analysis process (Laws et al. 2003: 395):

Step 1: Reading and rereading all the collected data

The purpose of reading the data closely was to ensure that the researcher was fully conversant with it, thus making the process of analysis more manageable.

Step 2: Making a preliminary list of themes arising out of the data

Data was categorised from which the themes were derived to make data much more manageable.

Step 3: Reading the data again to confirm the themes

By reading the data several times, the researcher was able to verify that the themes were correct.

Step 4: Linking the themes to quotations and notes

The researcher then wrote themes alongside the quotations and notes as the researcher went through the data.

Step 5: Looking through the categories of themes to give an interpretation(s)

In the course of analysing the data, the attempted to answer the following questions: how is data answering research question?

Step 6: Designing a tool to assist in discerning patterns in the data

In order to triangulate and determine the patterns during data analysis, a spreadsheet was used which gave a summary of the themes. For example, the spreadsheet recorded the title of the theme and quotations from different sets of data.

Step 7: Interpreting the data and deriving meaning

During this stage, the researcher read the quotations and derived the meanings they were indicating in relation to each of them. This resulted in interpretations, which that the research-

er presented according to each theme. Structuration theory was used as a theoretical lens to deconstruct the duality of teacher and learner agency and structure. To use structuration as a lens the following question was asked: what are the implications of rural to urban migration of teachers and learners to their agency? (ability to function within the new schools).

Theoretical Framework

In the present paper it is important to locate the discussion around three significant concepts, that is, structure, agency and culture which were adopted from the Structuration Theory of Giddens (1994, 2013). In this study the structure is assumed to be the new school, agency is the process by which teachers and learners operate within the new school as structure. Culture is conceived to be the conditions and processes normative for education systems in a specific school (Hays 1994).

It is often taken for granted that the structure has a profound influence on agents operating within it. There is also a contending view that agents within the structure also have influence on how the structure functions. Hays (1994) postulates that a social structure is systematic, patterned, static and usually constrained in nature and format. It is significant to highlight Hays's (1994) argument in attempting to conceptualize agency within the structure but further making a contrasting analogous distinction between the two by noting that agency as opposed to structure is active, individual and usually represents freedom.

The significance of Hays (1994)' argument becomes central to the researcher's conceptual prism in the sense that it brings the notion of culture which is subjective, ideal and not structured and as opposed to structure. Culture is internal and requires interpretation while the structure is external and publicly available. The central tenet of the argument given in the above conceptualizations is to unmask the role of educational culture within the system as influenced by agency and visa versa, thus determining duality between the two. Like Hays (1994) it suffices to argue that culture is part of the structure, however, mostly linked to agency. Hays (1994) argues that the fact that humans choose value they wish to subscribe to encapsulate the notion of voluntarism which posit that agency be-

comes part of such a process. In the same argument, a culture therefore relates to agency and consequently becomes part of the structure. The following quote illustrates the argument.

A structural argument is overly deterministic while cultural arguments are celebrated as those that demonstrate human freedom and resistance in the face of structural constraints (Hays 1994: 23)

The central idea is to expose the deterministic, enabling, constraining nature of the structure. In the present paper it is therefore argued that teachers and learners operate as agents within the school as a structure, their agency is subjugated and constrained by the structural determinism and vice versa. Their activities which transcend voluntarism produce traits compatible to the constraining structure, thus develops in what Hays (1994) calls the structurally reproduced agency. Conversely the communicative rational acts of agents reject the structural determinism and may often result into what could be described as a revolution against structural dominance resulting in a transformative agency which has the potential to change the very nature of the structure. Therefore culture becomes an intermediary between structure and agency. Thus culture in structure is conceptualized as:

a social durable, layered, pattern of cognitive systems that are at once material and ideal, objective and subjectively embodied in artifact and embedded in behavior, passed about in interaction, internalized in and personalities and externalized in institutions (Hays 1994: 18).

The above quote emphasizes the composition of culture in structure as embodied in human social relations and meanings. The systems of social relations could include roles and relationships in education, religion, race, gender, beliefs or values. Hays' conceptualization of culture provides a valuable insight into what could be called educational culture which presupposes the sub-cultures in schools which may be rural or urban. This further indicates that educational culture in rural and urban contexts within the structure may or may not influence teacher agency.

The migration of teachers from rural to urban schools is conceptualized within the broader context of social structuration. Gross and Lindquist (1994) in their work draws their conceptualization of migration as concept that re-

sembles principles in Giddens' structuration theory (1994). They argue that the dialectical relations between the structure and agency which manifests in what is termed the "duality of structure" presupposes a critical lens that is used in the paper to deconstruct the notion of teacher and learner agency within the structure. According to Gross and Lindquist (1994), the migration of labor is a process influenced by the social structure with its constraining character and determinism. The structure and its constraining impact on agents places an emphasis on the process through which either structure is reproduced or transformed as a result of transcendental agency (Giddens 2013).

Conceptualizing School Culture Within Structure

It is crucial at this stage to conceptualize the notion of school culture and discuss how is related to the structure (school in this case). The impact of how structure (school and all its values) presupposes the role of teachers and learners as agents and respond to their agency and produce the duality between agency and structure becomes crucial.

Culture is conceptualized as a group's shared beliefs, customs and behavior (Raywid 2001). School culture encompasses aspects such as school schedules, curriculum demographics and school policies (Mack 2013). Raywid (2001) submits that school culture is heavily influenced by social interactions which occur within its existential structures to give the school its character and nature. School therefore has different sub-cultures which operate within the broader school culture which function in the broader school community's socio-cultural framework. Raywid (2001:107) sums the notion of school culture as:

A school is also a culture and has personality of its own. It has hopefully, some cherished traditions, unwritten rules, unspoken expectations, a proud heritage or pats, and a sense of spirit, it may have a special song symbolizing what is important, it may have special traditions and meaning that are uniquely its own, in the other words it has a unique personality of its own (Raywid 2001:107).

The culture of the school influences agents within it which are in this case, teachers and learners. Teachers and learners as agents within

the structure develop traits and characters devolving from the structural determinism and constraints. The migration of teachers and learners from small rural school to large urban school require that their agency transcends the constraining boundaries of the structure to adapt to the new situation. This can be achieved, firstly by determining how teachers and learners as agents change within the structure function, and secondly, by determining how change is resisted. The understanding of how change happens would give a clear picture of how teachers and learners use their agency within the school education structure to determine the character and nature of the structure and how the constraints of structure determine their beliefs, values and character.

Conceptualizing Change as a Prerequisite for Agency within the Structure

Fullan (1999) distinguishes between two theories of educational change, namely, complexity or chaos theory and evolutionary theory. Complexity theory of change denotes that change is an interactive rather than a linear process. The link between cause and effect does not exist and change operates in a continuum ranging from the scale of stability to instability (Fullan 1999).

Evolutionary theory refers to how humans evolve with time in relation to their interaction and cooperative behavior (Fullan 1999). The school are places where activities take place in a planned routine and time tabling, however when things have to be implemented the school as part of the broader social structure is an unpredictable environment. It is for this reason that complexity theory becomes important for the process of educational change.

Change is dependent on the capacity of teachers and learners (their agency) to create knowledge with the purpose of learning new ideas (Hargreaves 2013). Change takes in what is called a "social collaboration context". The process of social collaboration occurs within the framework of a collaboration culture as part of the broad school educational structure. The culture where all members of the school community work as a team to achieve a common purpose supposes an interwoven immediate structural network. Social collaboration respects diversity while building trust among the participants. Social collaboration may instill anxiety among the

participants and also likewise absorb it. Knowledge is created through interactive engagement and connections. Change is an open system, subject to the contribution from the collaborating member (Fullan 1999). The spiritual, political and intellectual aspects are significant during the process of change. The process of change could transcend beyond the periphery of the school into the outside world through making connections, what Ainscow et al. (2006) refers to "network".

Similarly, Hoban (2002) conceptualizes complex theory by using the analogy of "systems approach" to define the school's change process as a system. He postulates that educational change is a complex system, and change is dynamic and metabolic in nature. The dynamic nature of teaching also makes change even more complex, because each situation represents a unique educational context drawn from a diverse knowledge, cultural and socio economic background. Hoban (2002) accepts that educational change can only materialize as a collective rather than an individual endeavor.

To think about a change teachers and learners have to apply what Hoban (2002) calls "systems thinking" which is seeing the interrelation between the whole and its parts. Systems thinking is in contrast with the notion of a piecemeal approach to the implementation of change, drawing from the fact that reality could be so complex and dynamic that it refutes the linear cause-effect model of educational change.

The notion of how teachers and learners change is a complex phenomenon. Mittler (2000:134) refers to this process as ongoing. Mittler (2000) highlights that it is significant for teachers and learners to take opportunity to reflect on the proposal for change by reviewing their values and beliefs affecting their day to day work. Fullan (2001) goes further to indicate that educational change should be planned around the context and the prevailing local culture. It requires that all involved with the change process show high level of commitment acknowledging diversity and instilling tolerance of the opinions of other. It is significant that the participants in the change process exercise have attention and patience as every change takes time to be realized. Conversely, Richards et al. (2001) conceptualizes the notion of change by referring to it as a process encompassing concepts like beliefs, attitude, knowledge, understanding,

and self-awareness and teaching practice. Teacher and learner beliefs are important because their belief and context shape how they will relate to the change process. Change process becomes more effective when a bottom up approach rather than a top down approach is modeled.

FINDINGS

The analysis of data pointed out that within the structure agents (teachers and learners) are subjugated by the structural trajectories and these manifests into commonly held discursively and structurally produced stereotypes. These were synthesized into the following themes:

Teaching and Learning

This theme focused on the conditions of teaching in terms of the resources and pedagogic approach between the rural and the urban school. Firstly the data has demonstrated that the difference in terms of resources in rural and urban schools influenced how both learners and teacher conceptualized teaching and learning processes. For example teachers highlighted that the under resourced conditions of their previous rural school has resulted in them working in a different way from that in urban schools; one teacher alluded "*because we do not have electronic machines such as photocopy and computers our work in rural schools is different as most of the things have to be done manually*" while there seemed to be an excitement about the impact technology will have on their work, teachers were worried that their ability to use some of the technology acted as a barrier towards effective teaching, for instance this is what one of the teachers said "*I am happy that we are going to use computers, I hear that they make the work easier but I still have to learn how to use it*"

The analysis has revealed that learners had challenges being taught by different teachers per grade. For instance one learner said "*at our previous school we were taught by one teacher for all grades so, we had similar things to expect from a teacher, unlike here*" It also seemed as though that learners felt learning in urban schools was more individualistic in the sense that less collaborative learning occurred across grades as learners are in different classes. For instance the following extract provided evidence

in that regard *“here you can’t work with learners in other grades because grades are separated, at our school we had only two classes for all grades”*

Data informs that change from a multi-grade teaching used in a rural school to a mono-teaching approach poses challenges to both teachers and learners. Asked about the change in teaching approach one teacher indicated *“in rural school you present one lesson that integrates all grades but here you have to plan each lesson and assessment for every grade separately and because of high numbers marking becomes a challenging task”*

It also seem clear that teachers are concerned that in rural schools where some were principals the control of work was not as frequent and robust as at urban school, for example one teacher who was a principal at a rural school said *“at my school no one controlled my work Learning facilitators and Circuit Managers did not come as frequently as they do here, and also the HOD here is checking”*

Attitudes and Beliefs

Data displays that teachers and learners from rural schools developed an inferiority once in urban schools, for example asked about how confident they are about been in an urban school one teacher postulated *“because of the size of the urban school one does not always feel confident and motivated to do good, but maybe the feeling will improve over time.”* The same sentiments were echoed by the learner who indicated *“I see that here there were more clever learners in our class, they speak English.”*

Data also points out that learners and teachers had perceptions about how they are regarded by their fellow urban counterparts, for instance one teacher said *“because I am from the farm school, my colleagues here feel I am a less teacher than them.”* The same sentiments were supported when one of the learners said this *“learners here lough at me when I can’t speak English in the class, I am now afraid to answer question in the class.”*

Governance and Management

The analysis points out that teachers felt parents at urban schools are more active in the school and are more informed about the school

policies, for instance one of the teacher indicated *“here parents are interested to know what is happening to their children’s work, on the farm parents are working late hours and few of them are interested in what is happening to the education of their children...they do not even challenge the teacher if they are not happy about progress of children compared to here.”* It was also a feeling that there were too many conflicts at the urban school such that sometimes teaching is affected negatively for example the extract of this teacher supported this *“because there is too many teachers and learners I experience lots of conflict as weekly there are issues between teachers or a teacher and learner or teachers and a parent.”*

School Culture and Socialization

There was an indication by teachers that school culture in urban schools is very entertaining for example one teacher alluded *“on the farm you are alone with learners or with only one or two colleagues and no other activities to entertain yourselves after work.”* However there was also a strong feeling that more entertainment in urban schools was sometimes a disruption to effective teaching and learning for example one of the teacher highlighted *“there is too many functions here at our school which sometimes waste the learner’s time for tuition.”* Data also shows that teacher felt excluded socially by their counterparts and are still referred to as farm school teachers by their peers, this quote evidenced this *“I feel one has not been fully accepted here, during break people sit into little groups, I am still struggling to find a person to sit with.”*

DISCUSSION

The study investigates that teachers and learners once accommodated in an urban school experience challenges in terms of the use of electronic resources that are not been used in rural schools. This apparently will impact on the effectiveness of their teaching and learning process. The study further indicates that the difference of teaching approaches could impact negatively on both teachers and learners in that rural mode of teaching in predominantly multi-grade and in urban is mono-grade. The way teachers prepare and present lessons in the two

modes is different and apparently poses challenges to teachers employed in urban schools. The issue of numbers presents a challenge especially when teachers are used to a few rural numbers where it is easy to give all learners the attention they require. Further numbers in urban schools come with more administrative load of teaching and marking which teachers are often not prepared for.

The study has demonstrated that learning is also affected, being taught in a different style and by different teachers creates a learning barrier for learner who have been in rural schools where such was not a practice. Further, the study posits that learning in a rural context is highly collaborative therefore the less collaborative nature of urban school classroom seems to impact negatively on learners.

The study points out that teachers and learners experience less confidence and the consequence is that could potentially impact on their motivation and consequently their ability to be effective during teaching and learning.

There seems to be a clear indication that teachers are not prepared for the increase in conflict situations in large urban schools which are caused by the fact that the schools are bigger and complex and have more learners and teacher than rural schools. The study indicate that teachers are overwhelmed by parental involvement and activity which according to them is alien to rural schools. It is also clear that the routine urban schools or the way they function presents a challenge to teachers as there are usually more disruptions as compared to their previous school. The study has also found out that teachers are usually less prepared for the frequent and robust control measures in urban school. Finally, both teachers and learners feel excluded from the urban school community as they have not been socialized adequately to occupy space as members of the new school community.

CONCLUSION

While there could be a critique that rural schools are different, so are urban schools and that there cannot be a universal way of dealing with transition from one school to the next, however, the study provides the ground breaking framework to enhance inclusion and integration of learners into urban schools particularly those

from small rural schools. The study has expanded the dimension through which inclusion is viewed and makes a valuable contribution to inclusion as a philosophy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While it is acknowledged that each situation is unique and that no recipe could be helpful in all situations it is in order though to recommend that to enhance integration and inclusion of teachers and learners from rural into urban schools a comprehensive preparative programme needs to be put in place by the department of education. Such a programme must focus on preparing teachers and learners about the different teaching and learning approaches between their previous rural school and the new urban school. The items of the training programme are derived from the themes in the findings:

- ♦ *Teaching and learning modalities of an urban school*: the item could focus on facilitating both teaching and learning within urban context.
- ♦ *Changing attitudes in schools*: addressing the basic human relations among fellow learners and colleagues.
- ♦ *Adapting to new school culture and socialization processes*: exploring alternative coping and adaptive mechanism to new school culture.

There may also be efforts to socialize teachers and learners into the new school and members of the new schools should also be subjected to programme such that there could be acceptance to facilitate a smooth inclusion.

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