

The jagged paths to multicultural education: international experiences and South Africa's response in the new dispensation

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An ideal form of multicultural education is one that not only recognizes and acknowledges diversity, practices tolerance and respect of human rights, but works to liberate cultures that have been subjugated. Such an education would go beyond being "nice to those less fortunate" to working to promote equality of cultural trade. For what it is worth, pre-1994 multicultural education in South Africa did recognize diversity, but it was diversity as a strategy for containment. It was of a variety that was exclusionary in nature and constituted a cruel inscription of those colonized "Others" into the mainstream. From here, international experiences of multicultural education do not offer much inspiration. Multicultural education in the US, Canada, UK, and Australia is driven and fuelled in large part by an assimilationist agenda that denies authenticity to the marginalized cultures. In the South African situation, the Constitution, which is hinged on ten powerful principles, seeks to promote tolerance and respect for all cultures and to promote common values across the rainbow nation of South Africa. However, there is no attempt at this point to valorize the content of the culture of the different groups. This paper argues that silence is also policy. South Africa should therefore work towards a deeper and proactive diagnosis of the content of the culture of its diverse peoples and find spaces for dialogue based on equity within the education system. In order to do this, deeper analysis of the forms of cultural violence, their alibis, etc. that characterized the apartheid system, but which is now couched as mainstream, needs to be undertaken. In this regard, emerging perspectives from the South African History Project and the Indigenous Knowledge Systems movement, (especially its message of transcendence and cultural healing) need to be considered.

Introduction

It has been stated that education plays key roles in the development of an individual and society. In its skills and human capital formation role, education provides a learner with new skills and knowledge that should enable her/him to function in a modern society. In its liberation role, education has been conceived of as a tool for illuminating the structures of oppression and equipping the learners with the tools to alter those oppressive structures in society (Fägerlind & Saha 1989 in Odora Hoppers 1998). However, there is a third role of education, which is the transmission of the normative heritage of a people from one generation to the next. Citing Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981), Odora Hoppers states that a people's culture is the carrier of values evolved by that community in the course of their economic and political life. The values they hold are the basis of their world outlook, the basis of their collective and individual image of self, their identity as a people who look at themselves and to their relationship to the universe in a certain way (Odora Hoppers, 1998).

If the second and third role of education is transposed to the South African context, it becomes quite evident that the transformation agenda in post-apartheid South Africa as encapsulated in the Constitution of South Africa poses tremendous challenge for the education system. This is largely due to the fact that within the schooling sector, increased cultural and linguistic diversity of learners since 1994 resulting from the desegregation of schools has created a sense of unprecedented urgency as to the issue of what schools can or should do about the multiple cultural realities that are now represented in the South African school.

What is to constitute the "new and responsive practice" from a cultural point of view in the post-apartheid context? Will the answer lie in rapid assimilation of all other cultures (the proud rainbow) into the culturally western or eurocentric mainstream? What signals exist to make us anticipate that multicultural education is going to bring about equality in cultural trade between different cultural groups of which Kress wrote (Kress, 1996) in a new democracy such as South Africa's?

Multicultural education and South Africa's history

The concept of 'multicultural' can be broken down into its constituent parts: 'multi' which means many, and 'cultural' which refers to a group's ways of thinking and living — its "design for living" (Nobles, 1985:11). This "design for living" encompasses shared knowledge, consciousness, skills, values, expressive forms, social institutions and behaviour that enable the groups' survival as a people (Bullivant,

1989:27; Ogunjipe-Leslie, 1984:81). Culture is both enduring and challenging 'as it adapts to changing societal needs and goals' (Semmes, 1981:4). Development itself has been defined as the unfolding of a culture, the realizing of the code, or cosmology of that culture. The imposition of one cultural code onto another people's culture is a debilitating experience that leads to gross alienation or "culturocide" (Galtung, 1996:127)

A definition by Banks and Banks (1995:xi) captures multicultural education in a much more profound manner:

"A major aim of multicultural education is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good."

Multicultural education should therefore embed the learners' diverse ways of thinking and living as representative of the different group's "design for living" (Nobles, 1985); ensure the transmission of the normative heritage of different groups of people from one generation to the next (wa Thiongo, 1981); make certain that these are ingrained into the core curriculum; and finally, that it informs the ethos and daily practice of educators.

Yet, in the South African context, the notion of hegemonic and subordinate cultures is intricately linked to the complex legacy of colonialism and apartheid. Within this cruel legacy the right to culture was reserved for the racially white, culturally, and geo-politically western people. Both the indigenous and racially non-white people and their cultures, already condemned by social Darwinism as backward, primitive and thus irrelevant to their use (Foucault, 1980), were not permitted to enter the privileged spaces of mainstream culture. Education, lying as it was, in the heart of this preserve, performed the expected gate-keeping function.

To those "Others", education was neither for the development of new skills and knowledge that should enable her/him to function in a modern society, nor a tool for illuminating the structures of oppression as Fägerlind and Saha hoped, nor indeed for the transmission of the normative heritage of a people from generation to generation as Wa Thiongo so well articulated (Fägerlind & Saha, 1989, Wa thiongo, 1981). Instead, education was assigned crude and explicit functions. The Minister for the then Native Affairs was without qualms as he declared in the House of Assembly on September 17th, 1953:

I will reform it [African education] so that the Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them... (Hepple, 1987:53-57).

One year later, records of Senate debates of 16 June 1954 reiterate the unwavering diabolism:

There is no place for him [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community ... Current Native education produced "misfits" and "Black Englishmen" who expected to "graze in white pastures" (Hepple, 1987:53-57).

Central to this declaration was the two-prong strategy of containment and segregation. The 'native' was to be contained and bracketed, while horizontal segregation among the non-white sub-nationalities ensured fragmentation among the subordinate groups (see the Group Areas Act of May 29, 1950).¹ Within this framework, selective and regulated assimilation was permitted, especially in the area of language. Here, Afrikaans (as the language of power), and English (as the other official language) dominated the sphere of mainstream linguistic, cultural expression. The subordinate groups had to embrace to varying degrees these mainstream languages in order to survive as a labour force. Across the ravine, the marginalized majority cultures could, within the policy of segregation, containment and isolation, practice their cultures.

The mold was thus cast. With the superiority of white culture guaranteed and protected by law, those numerous "primitive Others" were guaranteed a place of sorts in the scheme of things. For the African majority, that place was in the "reserves", away from the privileges, and resources of the public domain. Those cultures were denied life and public spaces for regeneration. Reduced to artifacts, their cultural symbols were placed into museums, or relegated to the realm of the "exotic", a subject for the occasional marvel and amusement of the dominant group. For some sub-groups within the marginalized cultures such as the Indians and Coloureds, limited privilege was accorded within the boundaries of the hegemonic culture.

Least contemplated was either the remotest possibility of multicultural education ever becoming an issue, or for the white hegemonic culture to gear up for its own "traumatic moment" and an acceptance of "loss" of power that the ethos of "sharing", equality, and equity inherent in the new dispensation, and which is demanded of educational practice, would bring along. But what is it that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates for the rainbow nation and peoples?

The South African Constitution and Policy Framework

Emerging as it did from a system that has been referred to as a crime against humanity, South Africa carved a constitution that mandates all South Africans to build a just and free democratic society in which the potential of each person is freed. In particular it offers a vision of a society based on equity, justice and freedom for all. The Constitution itself calls upon its citizens to work to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. It is a conception that is bound up in South Africa's official motto, "*ike e: xarra/ke*" which means Unity in Diversity. It means accepting each other through learning and interacting with each other and through the study of how we have interacted with each other in the past.

Ten core principles are embedded in the Constitution that creates an enabling environment for a transforming, equitable and culturally more communicative education system in South Africa. They are Democracy, Social Justice and Equity, Equality, Non-racism and Non-sexism, *Ubuntu* (Human Dignity), an Open Society, Accountability, the Rule of Law, Respect and Reconciliation. These Constitutional imperatives bind all South Africans and all schools to the

establishment of a society based on "democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights".

The Constitution is unequivocal on equality, stating that everyone is equal before the law, and may not be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. The implications of what is known as the "Equality Clause" on schooling is spelt out even further in the South African Schools Act of 1996. The South African Schools Act committed the country to an educational system that would not only "redress past injustices in educational provision" and "contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society", but would also "advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, [and] protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages" (Preamble to the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996). The ten core principles imply profound transformation of the model of societal organization that was instituted during apartheid. It is from this implication that we impute, and establish benchmarks for the daily practices within the education system.

Even more pertinent is that a deeper reading of the Constitution endorses the dynamic definition of equity that Kress refers to as "going beyond the business of making concessions to marginal groups, allowing them access to goods which mainstream dominant groups enjoy, or even being 'nice' to those less fortunate than ourselves, to a matter which works reciprocally, in all directions" (Kress, 1996:18). A truly equitable society, Kress states, is one in which the mainstream groups see it as essential to have access to the linguistic and cultural resources of minority groups, and demand such access as a matter of equity. Equity therefore, cannot be left as a matter of making concessions. It has to be seen as a matter of equality of cultural trade, where each social group is seen as having contributions of equal value to make to all other social groups in the larger social unit (Kress, 1996: 16-18).

But South Africa is, as has been noted, a relatively young democracy. What can we discern from international experiences from other parts of the world that have been practicing multicultural education for decades? These experiences may contain useful clues as to possibilities and pitfalls that we need to be aware of in operationalizing the tenets of our Constitution. The countries chosen for review are the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

International experiences of multicultural education

Multicultural education, in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, has its roots in the problems of slavery, immigration, colonization and the subjugation of the indigenous population. In spite of the existence of these structural and generic root causes of cultural differentiation, multicultural education is practiced with different emphasis and nuances within each of these countries (Sleeter, 1996:4). In the case of the United Kingdom, despite its extensive footprints as a key colonizing country, it is only since World War II that the country has experienced a significant influx of people of colour from outside its borders (Craft, 1986:78-79), and thus began to acknowledge the existence of diversity. Australia shares with the United States a history of whites subjugating aboriginal people, but only very small numbers of other groups of colour have been permitted to immigrate there until recently. This makes Australia an immigrant country principally for white people, thus increasing the propensity for cultural conservation in favour of the dominant group. Canada has a history of struggle between two strong European language and ethnic groups, the British and French (Mallea, 1989:57), which brings the phenomenon of cultural diversity amongst two white cultures a little bit akin to the South African situation. Both posit a model where two competing dominant cultures are united in the subjugation of the "Others".

Over the past five decades, multicultural education has emerged and grown out of various imperatives in the different countries. Multicultural education in the United States received its major impetus

¹ We should note however that the historiography of the Apartheid State is a disperse field. For a good review of the various understandings of the politics and culture of the apartheid state see D. Omeria, pp.419-489.

from the struggle and rejection by racial minority groups of racial oppression (Sleeter, 1996:10). In the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, the pressure was brought about by the changing social and demographic profile, and the need to address the increasing diversification of the immigrant population. The baseline macro-policy underpinning multicultural education in these different countries was that of assimilation. Coupled to this was the natural superiority of the white culture and the assumption that assimilation was the only way forward. The assimilation approach to multicultural education is directly linked to the protection of the material interests of the dominant group. That is why in Canada, USA, Australia and South Africa these material interests were pursued through the systematic encroachment, usurpation and forcible expropriation of the land of the indigenous people.

In terms of proponents and advocacy, the involvement among different groups in the debates about multicultural education differs from country to country. In most instances the movement arose from a combination of the marginalized people working in concert with people from the mainstream dominant group, who recognized and were sympathetic to the cause. Thus in the United States educators of colour have always been at the forefront of the development of multicultural education, along with some conscientious Euro-Americans (see the 1960 Civil Right Movement in Banks 2001:5; Gay, 1983: 562). In England, however, the development came more from the bottom than the top, from the efforts of both white liberals and black people (Figueroa, 2001:784). In Australia, on the other hand, whites are mainly involved in the debates and people of colour are largely excluded (Bullivant, 1986:105). In the countries under review, the first endorsement at government level of the problem of diversity came in the United Kingdom through the Swann report in 1985, which gave official national legitimization to multicultural education (Hessari & Hill, 1989:11); in Canada through the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 (Moodley, 2001:803; McLeod, 1984:32; Kehoe, 1994:358); and in Australia through the Galbally Report of 1977 (Samuda, 1986: 64; Bullivant, 1986:110).

In the United States, the evolution of multicultural education is clearly discernible in three phases:

1. In the first phase, ethnic studies courses (Banks, 2001:9; Gay, 1983:561) adopted a "celebratory approach" and focused on one ethnic group, what Sleeter and Grant term the "Single Group Studies" (Sleeter & Grant, 1994:124).
2. The second phase of multicultural education emerged in the form of multiethnic education (Banks, 2001:10; Gay, 1983:562), which was designed to bring about structural and systemic changes in the total school environment to increase educational equality for all students (Nieto, 1999:51).
3. The third phase of multicultural education emerged when other marginalized groups who viewed themselves as victims in society and the schools, such as women, people with disabilities, and gays, demanded the incorporation of their histories, cultures and voices into the curricula and structure of educational institutions (i.e. Content).

In the meantime, discursive shifts were also occurring inside the movements. Racism was clearly the main concern of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Since then, however, the discourse of multicultural education has shifted away from racism and toward culture, away from systemic oppression and toward individual attitude change (Mattai, 1992:66). As a result one can distinguish between five different strands of multicultural education in its contemporary manifestation:

1. Teaching the culturally different: which attempts to raise the achievement of students of colour through designing culturally compatible education programmes (Hollins, 1994);
2. Human relations: which aims toward sensitivity training in interpersonal relations; its intent is to improve the school experience more than to restructure society (Tiedt & Tiedt, 1986);
3. Single-group studies: which includes black studies, Chicano stu-

dies, women, gays, etc., focuses on the history of the group's oppression and how oppression works today;

4. Multicultural education approach: which involves redesigning schooling to make it model the ideal, pluralistic and equal society (Baker, 1983; Banks, 1981; Gay, 1983; Gollnick, 1980); and
5. Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist: which teaches directly about political and economic oppression and discrimination and prepares young people to use social action skills (Grant & Sleeter, 1986; Sleeter, 1991; Suzuki, 1984).

In the United Kingdom, a lively debate is being waged between proponents of multicultural education and proponents of anti-racist teaching. Assimilation, integration, multicultural education and anti-racist education remain competing approaches, which occur simultaneously with schools and communities varying in their choice of policy and stage of development.

Multiculturalism in Australia is understood from three perspectives:

- as a demographic description of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society;
- as a social philosophy which recognizes the value of cultural and linguistic diversity within a framework of shared values to achieve a harmonious society; and
- as a Government policy, which provides for the needs of a diverse society and fosters shared values that could contribute to unity, social cohesion and productive diversity.

In Canada, a composite model of multicultural education exists which straddles intercultural understanding and its broader focus on equality of opportunity and access and integrated language programmes. Responses of the different provinces to the federal governments policy of multiculturalism include official language education; cultural maintenance programmes; multicultural education and anti-racism education.

An important factor that arises from the countries under review is that none of the approaches in these varying countries targets either the power issue in the cultural exchange or the prior disempowerment of the marginalized cultures.

Multicultural education: facades in practice and possibilities in policy in South Africa

According to the recent report released by the South African Human Rights Commission the practice of multicultural education in South Africa is a far cry from any effort in equitable cultural trade. It is true that some schools, having realized the limitations of the assimilation approach and aided in this attempt by the popular notion of the "rainbow nation", are beginning to acknowledge diversity among learners. However, in these schools much attention is given to the symbolic representation of culture as manifested in external modes such as fetes, costumes, and cultural events (Vally & Dalamba, 1999:32).

Multicultural education is very much in the mode of the "celebratory approach" in which parents are invited to a "multicultural day" at the school, where a panorama of cultures, the dances, the dress, the dialect, the dinners, is put on display. It does not focus on what those expressions of culture mean: the values and the power relationships that shape the culture. It does not address discrimination. The current mode of multicultural education in South African schools has the view that "People are different and isn't that nice," as opposed to looking at how some people's differences are looked upon as deficits and disadvantages. The poverty of this approach is that it does not equip learners, parents or teachers with the tools necessary to combat racism and ethnic discrimination, and to find ways to build a society that includes all people on an equal footing.

Having said this, it will be recalled that the South African Constitution provided for the establishment of a range of bodies to monitor government compliance with human rights standards. To this end, a National Human Rights Commission and Values in Education Committee was established. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is an independent national institution established by the

Constitution of South Africa in 1994, to entrench constitutional democracy. It is committed to promote respect for, observance of and protection of human rights for everyone without fear or favour. This Commission serves as both a watchdog and a visible route through which people can access their rights. The SAHRC faces the challenge of ensuring that the noble ideals expressed in the Constitution are actually enjoyed by all the people.

The Values in Education Initiative for Democratic Citizenship is another body that has been created to fulfill its mandate to promote and monitor respect for human rights. The task of the Values in Education Programme is to secure commitment amongst educators and learners to the values derived from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, thus deepening the contribution of education to the creation of a democratic, united and non-racial society. Ideals derived from the Constitution, should be consciously embedded in the curriculum and should be visible within the institutional ethos, politics and programmes of the Department of Education.

In addition, the World Conference against Racism (31 August – 7 September 2001) once again endorsed the need to address "racism" as a worldwide practice. A shift in emphasis was discerned between the second World Conference against Racism and the third World Conference against Racism. The former conceptualized "racism" on the basis of colour and the antagonistic relationship between black and white, and the latter looked beyond mere conceptualization of "racism" on the basis of colour and focused on all aspects of racism and racial discrimination, that is, gender, sexual orientation, and xenophobia.

Apart from the above, the constitutional provisions of post-apartheid South Africa have at the same time also given impetus to vibrant debates and discussions from a range of national and civil initiatives whose concerted efforts are to promote and protect human rights. At the heart of these debates has been the concern that racism still survives in institutional practices across the country. This has led to an active debate and mobilization focusing especially around "anti-racism" and "anti-racist education" where it is recognized that the new mutations of racism in the South African schooling context need to be addressed with renewed vigilance (Vally & Dalamba, 1999:3). Anti-racism education attempts to comprehend the social and political relations embedded in the internal logic of educational institutions. Diversity itself is not seen as a problem, rather it is the significance or lack of significance attached to "difference" that poses questions about the locus of power.

Anti-racism education aims to raise levels of individual and group consciousness through the development of critical thinking to grasp and question the rationality of domination and inequality. Through knowledge and understanding of the history of racism, the process of conquest and the different forms of domination, anti-racism education promotes political education. The ultimate aim is transformation and a restructuring of the 'relations of dominance'. The shift from multicultural education to anti-racism education is from a pre-occupation with cultural difference to an emphasis on the way in which such differences are used to entrench inequality. The prime concern of anti-racism initiatives is with systemic discrimination in all its manifestations, ranging from the treatment of minorities in history to the hidden curriculum of schools (Thomas, 1984: 21). A dynamic rather than a static view of culture characterizes this approach. Instead of a pre-occupation with the "customs of the past" anti-racism education looks at the ways in which people transform their lives and respond to injustice especially through various forms of collective action. From the perspective of anti-racism, more work needs to be done which aims at tackling the tenets and the mechanisms that sustain or reproduce racism.

These continuing debates are a clear indication that all is not yet well in the South African educational system, but at the same time they provide signals for potentialities.

Some critical reflections on multicultural education

What the various proponents of "Human Rights" education are saying

is completely valid. But, how do we apply this in practice? It is important to note that none of the education policy documents spell out how transformation is to be achieved. What they do however is promote a relatively utopian discourse through the rhetorical use of terms such as 'democratic' and 'literate creative critical citizens' and postulate ideals in what Moodley refers to as "an unobtainable dream world" (Moodley 2002:11). They also can be said to perpetuate the illusions that all the ills of South African society can be eradicated by curriculum changes.

Looking at the international experiences, multicultural education attempts to bring about a sense of tolerance and harmony among different cultures, but ignores and underplays the inequality in power between different cultures. By focusing on sensitivity training and on individual differences, proponents of multicultural education typically skirt the very problem which multicultural education seeks to address: "racism" (McCarthy, 1988:269). Multicultural education thus depoliticises race relations by focusing on expressions of culture rather than sociopolitical relations among groups. As such "it serves as a vehicle for social control more than for social change" (Olneck, 1990:166).

Other analysts have pointed to the fact that multicultural education allows teachers to gain information and to have an awareness of the cultural backgrounds of pupils in order to better diagnose strengths, weaknesses and differences in cognitive styles. It also calls for appreciation of diversity in curricula material. However, it should be added that multicultural education, as currently being practiced both here in South Africa and overseas, has little hope of enhancing the life chances of children from black groups because it ignores issues of power, social class, the economy and politics. It also operates on the mistaken assumption that all cultures enjoy equal status in society. Prejudice and discrimination are attributed to ignorance and a lack of knowledge of other cultures and multicultural teaching is seen as the solution to this. As a strategy to integrate schools, it does not address the deep-seated racism that characterizes these institutions and society as a whole (Carrim, 1998; Zafar, 1998:5).

"Multicultural education ... provides only a veneer of change rather than a transformation of educational processes and institutional structures. The most pressing challenge is a recognition and response to the racial barriers which permeate the educational process, impacting upon curriculum, assessment and placement, pedagogy, hiring and promotion practices and the "ethos" of the school environment" (Tator & Henry, 1991:iii).

At the same time, anti-racism education (the preferred choice for some of the above analysts) on its own is also not the panacea to all ills. Like multicultural education, it too has its limitations (Sefa-Dei, 1993: 41), which are summarized below:

- It reduces racism to colour discrimination and thereby tends to overlook racism based on other ethnic and structural markers.
- Portrays racism as exclusively perpetrated by white against black (Sarup, 1991:40).
- Its focus on race exacerbates the very stigmatization that anti-racism aims to destigmatise.
- In exclusively blaming "institutional racism" for minority disadvantage in education, dogmatic anti-racism blinds itself to other causes of inequity, such as group-specific histories and traditions.
- By labeling various immigrant groups as "black", anti-racism falsely assumes that all designated minorities identify with the label and see themselves in terms of colour.

Individual changes in attitudes and behaviour are necessary, but not sufficient, to eliminate racism. Knowledge, respect, and appreciation of different cultures are necessary, but also insufficient. Eliminating racism requires restructuring power relationships in the economic, political and cultural institutions of the society, and creating new conditions for interpersonal interactions (Vally & Dalamba, 1999:37). Examining the dynamics of oppression and power and how individuals participate in these dynamics are essential. But, what may make a difference is vigilant excavation based on new theoretical premises that can enable the arresting of continuing forms of racism and cultural inequality.

Conclusion

This paper outlined some international experiences of multicultural education, and South Africa's response to this challenge in the post 1994 dispensation. The main conclusion, of this paper, is that more work needs to be done in order to deal with both the discrimination and marginalisation of the past, and the task of reconstruction and healing that needs to be undertaken across cultures in South Africa. To this end South Africa may need to consider Kress's preposition on equality of cultural trade and the role of education in this regard. As long as multicultural education remains within the confines of "sensitivity training" and "celebrating diversity" it will remain highly inadequate in any agenda for transformation in South Africa.

To this end, emerging insights from two national initiatives may be instructive in so far as deepening the diagnosis and prognosis of the problem of cultural diversity is concerned. The first is the South African history project and the second is the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) movement.

The South African history project aims at fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our past, the origins of our present diversity, and the rich potential among all South African citizens. It seeks to prevent the destruction of the past or, more specifically, of the social sinews that bind people's contemporary experience to that of earlier generations. This project was launched to help prevent citizens from becoming captives of any crude or partisan versions of the past. It concerns itself with providing multiple perspectives on how various elements have come together to create a society or to build a nation (South African History Project: <http://education.pwv.gov.za/sahp/default.htm>). It is a reconstructive force that deals with the misrepresentations of the past that obfuscate the construction of the present and the future on new premises.

The Indigenous Knowledge System movement in South Africa raises interesting questions that are central to the question of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Among these are questions around the universality and diversity of knowledge heritages; the integration of knowledge systems and the terms of such integration; and the critical evaluation and reciprocal valorization of knowledge systems as a way of going beyond the tinkering with surface cultures (Odora Hoppers, 1999). The role of representative institutions such as schools, sector ministries, higher education institutions and the scientific community are highlighted with a view to making the issue of equality of culture and knowledge be taken up at every level of national systems. Central to this focus is the intention to let inequality, inequity, subjugation, and marginalization be discussed in the present tense, and thus enable its major tenets (such as the ideological moral ground of the dominant culture, its archaeology, its ideological functions, scientific alibis and legitimization mechanisms used in its operationalization, etc.) to be confronted scientifically and politically (Odora Hoppers, 2002).

Apart from this, IKS gives substance and content to culture thereby inviting discussions around the issue of objective content to all cultures in terms of what is valuable, what is retrogressive and what is silencing in every cultural form. In this conceptual adroitness, every culture is both part of the problem, and part of the solution, thereby making a collective critique of the hegemonic culture the natural way to go. It anticipates the liberation of the mainstream from its narrow, parochial and eschewed understanding of "universal" by recognizing the dissonance in the application of the dialogue, and aims at enlarging the epistemic cognition of all (*ibid.*).

It is this kind of depth of analysis that educationists and researchers, as well as advocates of multiculturalism need to engage in because it is only at this level that transcendence of structures of violence, the creation of new futures, and the reflexive praxis inherent in the South African Constitution can be operationalized.

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