Contested Spaces – Shared Places: A South African Perspective

Saloshna Vandeyar

University of Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding Author:
Saloshna Vandeyar, Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, Groenkloof Campus, Leyds Street, Pretoria 0002, South Africa. Email: Saloshna.Vandeyar@up.ac.za

Abstract

This paper presents an account of how Contested Spaces: Shared Places have played out in the South African education context by tracing how the historical, political, social and educational contexts of South Africa created and determined shared places. The paper draws on findings from a range of research projects that I conducted over the past fifteen years and that utilised the meta-theoretical framework of social constructivism and the methodological framework of qualitative case studies, narrative inquiry and portraiture. Findings from this collection of research studies reveal that the creation and evolution of shared spaces though activated by political, social and educational policy intent that was good and at times exceptional, 'knowledge in the blood' coupled with a passion for power witnessed policy in action transform these shared spaces into largely contested spaces. Intriguingly, within these spaces sparks of 'goodness' emerged that hold promise for a brighter future.

Keywords: Contested spaces; Shared places; Knowledge in the blood; Critical reflection; psychosocial passing; the look

Introduction

Just before he died, Edward Said stood up at a Cape Town conference on racism in schools and instructed the presenting panel: "do not tell me there is racism in your society; tell me what sustains it". After 350 years of colonialism and apartheid, how do South African education institutions, make the shift towards racial desegregation and social integration? How do black and white teachers and academics engage each other around a common, democratic curriculum? And what are the consequences for institutional culture and composition, as students from racially divided communities begin to occupy contested spaces, shared places? What is the impact of space-constructs on questions of history, identity and power?

The advent of globalisation and increased migration has witnessed nation states becoming more heterogeneous, displacing the notion of the ideal 'imagined nation state' and 'imagined dominant community' (Breuilly, 2016) that share a common culture, history and language. Such heterogeneity within the nation state is often characterised by asymmetric power and defined by a sense of belonging and non-belonging. "Whose space is it"? Different social layers coexisting in close proximity to each other, in combination with competing economic interests, over an already densely populated space, inherently harbours the potential to create contested spaces.

Contested spaces are "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt, 1991:37) spaces where people or ideals collide resulting in place for each player within the situation (Ludlow (2004) and spaces where conflict can break out as people defend ethnic boundaries (Minority Rights Group, 1994). Such contested spaces can serve to maintain separate identities. According to

Duffy and Gallagher (2016:108), contested spaces "can be malign, as sites of conflict, or benign, as lines of demarcation". Roche (2009:36) introduces the notion of 'bounded contentment' in contested spaces. He claims that such spaces do not challenge divisions nor do they provide effective ways of dealing with diversity.

The classroom and schoolyard are inherently contested spaces – a space that is not necessarily defined by conflict - but which includes room for conflict. In the contested classroom, knowledge is always marked by power and privilege, by "categories of race and sex that have been so exuberantly produced in the histories of masculinist, racist, and colonialist dominations" (Haraway, 1991:111).This marking of domination is a defining element of the contested space classroom. As Fisher (2001:149) reminds us, we must not examine our classrooms "in isolation" from the institutional system, that authorizes them. The contested classroom is a space delineated by the examination of experiences within systems of power and privilege. Ludlow identifies six elements that define a contested classroom namely, simultaneous collaboration and contention; situated knowledges; unresolved contradictions and simultaneous truths; intersectional understanding of identity; accountability, and interrogation of systems of power and privilege.

The pre-1994 education system in South Africa was framed within an apartheid ideology that promoted a segregated schooling system based on racial classification, regulated by four separate departments namely, House of Assembly (white), House of Delegates (Indian), House of Representatives (Coloured) and Department of Education and Training (African) and defined by a Christian National Education (CNE) curriculum. The official languages of learning and teaching (LOLT) were English and Afrikaans. Mother tongue instruction was

only offered in the foundation phase at public schools attended by African[1] students. From Grade 4 onwards African students had to learn through the medium of English. Afrikaans-speaking students however, could attend public schools where the medium of instruction was Afrikaans for all grades 0-12. These gross inequalities placed Black students and in particular African students at a disadvantaged.

The advent of democracy witnessed educational reform efforts framed by legislative policies that promote democracy and human rights. The South African Schools Act (Act no. 37 of 1997) catalysed by the Bill of Rights and the South African Constitution formalized the process of desegregation of schools in South Africa and created the opportunity for students from diverse cultural backgrounds to attend public schools of their choice. The desegregation of schools brought about a one-way migration trend as increasing numbers of African students tried to gain access to former English medium white and Indian schools. The introduction of School Governing Bodies and differentiated school fees resulted in a multi-tiered public schooling system. Admittance was through proxy and resultantly race has become displaced by class. Coupled to this the advent of democracy also witnessed a change in the educational paradigm from Christian National Education (CNE) to Outcomes-based education (OBE). Twenty years after democracy the language of learning and teaching is still English and Afrikaans.

The latter years of democracy in South Africa added yet another layer to this already complex scenario as South African schools opened their doors to increasing numbers of Black

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[1] During the apartheid era, the term Blacks referred to Indian, African and Coloured people of South Africa. The terms Coloured, White, Indian and African derive from the apartheid racial   classifications of the different peoples of South Africa. The use of these terms, although problematic, has continued through the post-apartheid era in the country. In our paper, I use these terms grudgingly to help present the necessary context for my work

immigrant students[2] who hailed from countries across the continent of Africa and from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The majority of these Black immigrant students tend to live in the inner city and former Indian and African townships. This saw the emergence of inner city schools to cater to the need of African and Black immigrant students who resided in the inner city. Accordingly, given the complex South African educational landscape, this study asks, how have contested spaces: shared places played out in the South African context over the past fifteen years.

This paper attempts to presents an account of how contested spaces have been enacted in the South African education context by tracing how the historical, political, social and educational contexts of South Africa over the past fifteen years created and determined shared places that are racialized, gendered, ethicized and class-marked.

Exploring the terrain

The literature review engaged with three bodies of literature namely, identity studies, the construct of race and sense of belonging.

The architecture of identity

A number of scholars claim that identity goes through a variety of permutations during adolescence as the individual experiments with different identity strategies (Giroux, 2014; Cote & Levine, 2014; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Sirin & Fine, 2008). Some argue that all youth move steadily from a stage of ethnic or 'racial unawareness" to one of 'exploration' to a final stage of an 'achieved" sense of racial or ethnic identity (Marcia, 1966; Erikson, 1968). Others point out that the process of identity formation is, rather than being linear, more accurately

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[2] Black immigrant students: Students who come from countries cross Africa and from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan

described as "spiralling' back to revisit previous stages, each time from a different vantage point (Parham, 1989). Yet, others claim that identity is "an internal self-constructed, dynamic organisation of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual history" (Marcia 1980:159), which facilitates psychological differentiation from others. A sense of emerging identity characterised by 'a flexible unity', that makes an individual less likely to rely on others views and expectations for self-definition. Suarez-Orozco (2004:177) argues that identity formation is not simply a process by which one passes through a variety of stages on the way to achieving a stable identity. Rather, it is a process that is fluid and contextually driven. The social context is essential in predicting which identity is constructed (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). Identity is created from the ingredients of a personal past but is always in a process of transformation. It focuses on becoming rather than being and is formed in accordance with how one is positioned by and positions oneself with respect to the past. Identity is always influenced by culture, history and power (Giroux, 2014).

Negotiating the currents of identities for immigrant students can be particularly complex. The pathways they take, and the identities they form are determined in multiple ways. Critical to the formation of their identities is the structural and attitudinal environment within which they find themselves (Suarez-Orozco, Carhill & Chuang, 2011; C Suarez-Orozco & M Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Immigrant students must not only deal with aspects of personal development shared by all adolescents (relationships, work choices, examining values) but also often confront culture-related differences concerning these choices. They must also seek to create a sense of identity through personal choices surrounding relationships, occupation, worldviews and values, which sometimes may conflict with parental and other family expectations (Dion, 2006).

One of the ways in which this plays out is that of the social mirror (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). When the reflected image is generally positive, the individual is able to feel that she is worthwhile and competent. When the reflection is generally negative, it is extremely difficult to maintain an unblemished sense of self-worth. 'Psychosocial passing' (Suarez-Orozco 2000) is a way of overcoming the effects of the social mirror. Psychosocial passing refers to people who seek to render invisible the visible differences between themselves and a desired or chosen reference group. By behaving in ways that are consistent with other group members, they subconsciously seek to avoid having their differences noticed. Phenotypic racial features have considerable implications for the ease of assimilation.

Reinventing and renegotiating the construct of "race"

Interrogating the concept of race has been and still is a problematic transnational discourse (McCarthy et al., 2003; Winant, 2000; Nieto, 2000). During the early years of the 20th century, Du Bois proposed a revolutionary interpretation of race, debunking the traditional theory of race as an essential biological "truth" (Winant, 2000). Instead, race as proposed by Du Bois was seen as an inconstant socio-historical construct dictated by economic variables, and is now a widely accepted view (Jansen 2004; McCarthy et al., 2003; Dolby, 2002; Nieto, 2000). Hence, any study seeking to insert "race" as an analytic category in the social process needs to problematise race as socially, historically and ideologically constructed, rather than accept it as a biological or physical fact (Gilroy, 1998). As Roediger (2002) writes, "race" is constructed differently across time by people of the same social class, and differently at the same time by people whose class positions differ.

The mercurial nature of race and racial analysis is a discernible signifier of social interactions through which perceptions of whiteness and blackness are formulated; whiteness as the

subject, blackness as the object or "the other" (Dolby, 2001; Hall, 1996b; Helms, 2003). Reliant on each other for their interpretations (McCarthy et al., 2003), whiteness and blackness are constantly shifting connotations of the political and social context in which they are situated (McCarthy et al., 2003; Dolby, 2002). However, the simplistic polarisation of these constructs has served to entrench views of homogeneity rather than dispel them, and in its wake has left race and racial experience being recast as static and essentialised (Hall, 1996a). These reductionist conceptions of race, casting whiteness as the norm against blackness, the subaltern, have, unofficially, sanctioned the continuation of racism (Dolby, 2001; Nieto, 2000). In consequence, with institutions such as schools reflecting this erratic social discourse, differential standards of societal power, privilege and positioning are consigned to whiteness (Delpit, 1988), relegating blackness to inconsequentiality.

The polarities of whiteness and blackness can further be embodied as first-and third - world constructs, respectively. However, the contestation between the first and third world, whiteness and blackness (Dolby, 2002), has been problematised by the advent of globalisation (McCarthy et al., 2003). With the accompanying escalation of cultural and human trans-border migration, race has taken on a new identity (McCarthy et al., 2003).

Hall (1996c) views "hybridity" as the archetypal post-modern experience. Culture, power and history are combined in the concept of hybridity to enable us to understand the present circumstances of the people. In this blurring of cultural and economic borders, race is constantly being reinvented and renegotiated through mediums such as popular culture (Bernhard, 2013; MacGinty, 2010; Dolby, 2001).

Sense of belonging

'Sense of belonging' refers to the student's subjective sense of being a valued member of the school community. It is about validating the importance of the cultural lives, cultural expressions and cultural experiences of immigrants and asylum seekers as part of the process of their inclusion and integration in society. It appears that when students have a lower sense of belonging at school they are less socially integrated in school and feel less attached to school and teachers (Demanet, & Van Houtte, 2015; Pearson et.al, 2007). They isolate and alienate more from school and peers (Pearson et.al, 2007) and skip classes more often to avoid interactions with others (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001). Students with a lower sense of belonging engage less with academic activities, have more chances to get lower grades, fail more often and choose a less challenging curriculum (Pearson, et.al. 2007). In contrast, when students do feel they belong in school, they often have a higher school motivation and interest (Goodenow, 1992). The degree of belonging to the school centres on how and with whom immigrants associate and identify with, in a bid to shape their identities, which is the road to acculturating to their new environment (Dika & Singh, 2002). When immigrants identify with the school environment they are able to "quickly discover that schooling is essential to success" in their host country, to be able to ascend the steps of social class mobility (Singh, Chang & Dika, 2010; Delgado-Gaitan 1994: 137).

Theoretical Mooring: 'Knowledge in the blood'

The concept of 'knowledge in the blood 'was first coined by an Irish poet, Macdara Woods (2007) who claimed that "when we look back on what we have done, or not done , we realize that it is the knowledge in the blood that has impelled us". This concept also resonates with what Bourdieu (Lizado, 2004) termed 'habitus'. 'Habitus' refers to the physical embodiment of cultural capital, to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that we possess due

to our life experiences. It represents the way group culture and personal history shape the body and the mind; as a result, it shapes present social actions of an individual. Borrowing the term 'knowledge in the blood', Jansen (2009) presents a powerful conceptual framework for understanding the reactions and behaviours of white students in democratic South Africa. He illustrates how knowledge about a phenomenon is received, ingrained and learnt from childhood and 'propels' people in a particular direction.

Jansen's (2009) take on 'knowledge in the blood' is thought provoking and refreshing. He (Jansen, 2009:117) argues that it is, knowledge "embedded in the emotional, psychic, spiritual, social, economic, political and psychological lives of a community". This knowledge sits so deep (the blood imagery invoking a life, or death, issue) that it cannot "simply dissipate [s] like the morning sun mist under the pressing sunshine of a new regime of truth". It is also 'emphatic' knowledge in that it " does not tolerate ambiguity", and 'defensive' in that it is a knowledge "that reacts against and resists rival knowledge, for this inherited truth was conceived and delivered in the face of enemies" (in the case of South Africa, the English imperialists, the barbarous blacks, the atheistic Communists-all of them"). And, while conceding that knowledge in the blood is not 'easily changed', it does not mean "through the transfusion of new knowledge the authority of received knowledge cannot be overcome". Knowledge in the blood as used by Jansen is both an assertion and a question. "As an assertion the phrase draws attention to deeply rooted knowledge that is hard to change: as a question, knowledge in the blood is itself subject to alteration". Agency, is thus central to understanding of the nature of 'knowledge in the blood', making the possibility of change inherent to the 'blood' – in much the same way as a real blood transfusion is inherently tasked with change (Jansen, 2009).

Thomson (2010) provides a useful outline of the tenets that embody Jansen's conceptual framework of 'knowledge in the blood'. She argues (Thomson, 2010: 194) that in

(dis)assembling the concept of "indirect knowledge', Jansen offers the following characteristics of this form of knowledge,

1. "Knowledge, that is not about experience or trauma or pathology"

2. *Indirect* i.e. that this 'knowledge' *is* "carried so powerfully among the non-present"; it is as if it is 'direct knowledge i.e. self-experienced. So where does it come from to hold such power?

3. *Transmitted* i.e. how this 'direct' knowledge become 'indirect' knowledge. "What are the mechanisms for transmission and how do they work inter-generationally?"

4. *Influential*. In other words, how "does this received or inherited knowledge affect children, the second generation recipients of knowledge of something they were not a part of?"

5. *Relational* i.e. "that there cannot be knowledge about a child without knowledge of an adult".

6. *Mediated* – and 'mediating agents' will vary in number and nature according to context, which is why 'context' must be central to any of this 'searching'.

7. *Paradoxical* in so far as asking how we explain 'owning' knowledge about something that one did not witness (or was integral in creating) oneself. This raises the problematic of 'knowability' and "generates complex philosophical and moral questions about 'not having been there'" (Jansen 2009:117)

Research strategy

Critical reflection was used as a research methodology for this paper. Several authors argue that although the terms reflection, critical reflection, reflective practice, reflective thinking, and reflexivity have similar meanings and are used interchangeably (Lucas, 2012) not all

reflection is critical in nature. Critical reflection denotes another level of reflection beyond other forms of reflection, for example, a diary or journal (Harvey et al., 2010); operates on a higher and more complicated level, which involves identifying, questioning and challenging the assumptions implicit in practice (Schon, 1993; Fook, 2002); focuses on power (Brookfield, 2009) and the means by which covert power imbalances can be identified and challenged, thus empowering those who are usually disempowered (Fook & Askeland, 2007:522); engages in metacognition (Eames & Coll, 2010); is associated with improved thinking, learning and assessment of self and social systems (Smith, 2011); requires reflection in relation to past and future action (Eraut, 2004) and is a precursor to transformative learning, which may lead to changes in personal understandings and potentially behaviour (Mezirow, 1990). According to Dewey (1938) we cannot learn or be taught to think. However, we have to learn how to think well and especially to acquire the practice of reflection. Critical reflection encompasses both critical depth and critical breadth. Critical depth implies that the situation should not be accepted at 'face value'. One should delve deeply beneath the surface to explore what may influence the situation, resulting in critical depth of understanding. Critical breath provides one with the ability to examine the bigger picture and view the situation in a more holistic manner. These enable us to develop a fuller understanding of experiences so we are better equipped to manage similar future situations (Thompson & Thompson, 2008). This ability to think critically is developed over time (Crowe & O'Malley, 2006) through guidance and support (Lucas, 2012).

Results

Incongruence between theory-in-action (educational policies) and theory-in-use (teacher actions)

The Constitution, Bill of Rights and Schools Act of South Africa, has provided an excellent 'theory in action" however, the "theory-in-use" at schools has been enacted in nuanced ways that has been largely dependent on historical, political and social contexts. The theory-in-use is overt behaviour, which is inferred from how people act. Argyris and Schön (1974) posit that people have mental maps about their actions and these mental maps guide actions rather than the theories they explicitly espouse. A critical reflection of the research studies conducted over the past fifteen years reveal that the theory-in-use, namely teachers' actions, was incompatible with the 'theory-in-action' i.e. educational policies. For example, Vani, an Indian female teacher, at a former Indian school seized the opportunity to teach Indian dance to students in an attempt to make students understand and appreciate Indian culture. However, 90% of the group of students that she was teaching were African students. On probing further as to whether any African dances were taught at the school, students responded, "... well we are given no other options". Vani's response to this same query was, "this is an Indian school and they [African students] know it. If they want to come here then they must be prepared to follow the rules and regulations of this school". Albeit, this being a public school in a new democracy? The theory-in-use was socially constructed during interaction; culturally embedded (Argyris & Schon, 1974) influenced by teacher beliefs, attitudes and values systems and was power-based.

Metamorphosis of language as a tool of power

The advent of democracy in South Africa brought about the desegregation of schools and witnessed the flow of African learners into former white and Indian English-medium schools.

During the initial years of this process many African students were eager to forsake their indigenous language, in an attempt to assimilate into the hegemonic culture of the school. In a bid to be accepted and to 'fit' in, they willingly acculturated and assimilated into the western culture, not only in terms of dress codes and the English language but also by adopting anglicised accents. Many of these students perceived English as the language of power and the gateway to global success. Fresh out of the apartheid era many Black [Indian, Coloured, African] students perceived whites as 'the haves' and wanted to strive to become part of this 'privileged group of people'. Some African students commuted daily from the townships to former white and Indian schools, straddling two cultures. This led not only to a conflict in values for these students but made them vulnerable, as they were now seen as misfits in the townships and were exposed to comments such as 'they talk like larnies[3]'; "look at these coconuts[4]". For example, Mpumi (African, female, Broadstream High) narrated an incident with another student who asked her "why don't you speak with a kind of African accent like other African people?" Mpumi mentioned how this comment had troubled her as, "she may mean that I'm not in touch with my roots. I am not African enough. She might mean that I act too white or something." Straddling two worldviews has left Mpumi interpreting her identity through the eyes of another, in turn becoming the other.

The latter years of democracy has witnessed a shift in language as a tool of power. The increasing influx of Black immigrant students into South African public schools has brought about renewed appreciation of indigenous languages. Many black immigrant students are non-conversant with the indigenous languages of South Africa. African students perceived black immigrant students as a threat and began using indigenous languages as a measure of exclusion. Language as a means of exclusion was expressed both academically and socially on the classroom floor and in the schoolyard. Indigenous

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[3] Larnies: colloquial term for 'white' South Africans
[4] Coconut: used as a simile – Brown on the outside – white on the inside

languages were now seen as a tool of power, an expression of belonging and non-belonging and something to be valued.

> Language is an issue. It marks you as an immigrant. For instance, when people speak in Zulu, I don't understand and I'm quite assertive and I tell them excuse me I'm here, please speak English let's all understand. They continue speaking in Zulu and then they say I am a makwerekwere and should go back to my country, this is the land of the Zulus. (Kevin, Zimbabwe)

Black Anglophone [African] immigrant students found that they were discriminated against in terms of a lack of proficiency in indigenous African languages:

> Yes, sometimes. Like when they speak their local South African languages, I try to join them but it's just hard and difficult. You feel you are excluded, as if you don't belong. (Elufisan, Nigeria)

Black francophone [African] immigrant students were doubly disadvantaged as they entered the country lacking proficiency in both English and indigenous African languages. These students were further disadvantaged as were the Anglophone immigrant students, when the teacher code-switched during teaching in order to ensure that the indigenous black students fully understood what was being taught:

> I feel excluded, like an outsider. It forces me to learn Sotho. The South African learners and teachers talk Sotho most of the time. They like start speaking English and then, they go into Sotho, like especially if one of the students asks a question, then they reply in Sotho and then the rest of the lesson continues in Sotho. (Packo, Zambia)

Many black South African students utilised the power of the indigenous languages as an exclusionary mechanism to exclude immigrant students from their social networks. During breaks, one could witness pockets of ethnic groups intensely engaged in casual conversations using their indigenous languages:

> They don't speak English when we in a group. I have to tell them English, English please and then they get all nasty and say you don't belong here. (Jedidah, Zambia)

The formation of groups inside and outside the classroom depicted another form of academic and social exclusion. During academic activities inside the classroom there seemed to be a tendency for

South African students to exclude immigrant students from their group formations:

> When the learners choose groups, most of the time, I don't have a group. (Andrew, Ghana).

> I have to pay to be in a group. I don't speak English good. It is a language problem, but they see I am not good [academically], I feel bad. Indians tell me to go back to my country. They say I don't belong here. They don't like me because I am from Pakistan. They call me a 'Paki'. They chase me away all the time. They say "our government should take you back to Pakistan". I wish I could go back, I am not happy here [sobs] (Moosa).

Accent also played out differently in the latter years of democracy. Accent was still a signifier of 'the Other' but now the 'Other' was the Black immigrant student, whose accent was markedly different from indigenous students and signalled his status of non-belonging.

> They call me a foreigner because of my accent. They like make jokes about the way I talk. (Brenda, Nigeria).

The look

During the early years of democracy 'the look' (Soudien, 2014) was directly related to phenotypical features and based on racial categorisations of South Africa namely, white, Indian, Coloured and African. Decades of segregation led to misperceptions, stereotyping and discrimination in the form of 'Othering' along this racial stratification. The latter years of democracy witness the lens of 'Othering' shift to the newcomer, namely, black immigrant students, in the form of shades of darkness. Many black immigrant students that hail from countries in Africa tend to have a darker pigmentation than indigenous African students. This 'look' immediately categorised them as the "other', a foreigner or Makwerekwere.

> They say you are black, like you are black more than other learners; you must be Congolese or maybe you from Somalia. They tell me to go back to where I came from …I am a foreigner, a makwerekwere or something like that. I hate that word. (Charles, Malawi).

Psychosocial passing

'Psychosocial passing' refers to people who seek to render invisible the visible differences between themselves and a desired or chosen reference group. By behaving in ways that are consistent with other group members, they subconsciously seek to avoid having their differences noticed. Phenotypic racial features have considerable implications for the ease of assimilation. Since identity was defined by the look in the initial years of democracy, Blacks could not pass as "Whites" in the physical sense, however many black students attempted psychosocial passing in terms of the conduct and western norms associated with white students, as evident from the quote below,

> Some black students are coconuts, black on the outside but white on the inside.
> They talk like larnies. They think they are white or something… (Sipho, Affluent, Secondary school).

The context of the latter years of democracy in South Africa has witnessed Black immigrants 'passing' as indigenous students with relative ease, since their phenotypic features are so strikingly similar. Here it is not an issue of trying to pass as "white" but more of trying to pass as "Black" – the ruling order of the day.

> Well they didn't really see me as an immigrant I was just like one of them.
> So, I just let them go on believing that I am one of them. I don't let them know that I am really an immigrant (Belece, Malawi).

> I fit in well, like the other South African Indians in this school. I speak English well, I don't really have an 'Indian' accent. I am like one of them. (Jeet, India).

> They say I look mostly like a South African, like a Venda. I don't look like a foreigner. I mean I look like a Venda. So, when I tell them I am from another country, they actually are surprised (Effi, Zambia).

In some cases though, unfamiliar and unusual surnames became a marker of the 'Other' especially in former Indian and African schools.

> They use my surname Dakkar to mock at me and they say I am dark. I am a makwerekwere and I must go back to Zambia (Effie).

Sense of agency and work ethic

The initial years of democracy in South Africa exposed a lack of agency on the part of African students. They seemed to have adopted a 'culture of entitlement', a lackadaisical attitude and disregard for discipline.

> The most troublesome are the African students. It has to do with the "it's our country" attitude that they have. African learners have a great sense of entitlement and at some stage abuse it. In many ways you will find a learner's conduct is unnecessary and they go out of their way to indicate their presence. They end up in fights with other local students. (Mr. Mau, Median High)

There also seemed to be a lack of agency on the part of white and Indian students to assist African students. It was very much about retaining power, competitiveness and protecting 'schoolscapes[5]'.

In contrast, the arrival of black immigrants in the latter years of democracy was marked by their strong work ethic and determination to succeed.

> They [immigrant students] are very determined, unlike most South Africans. They concentrate in class and they don't bunk school. They don't talk back to teachers. They don't do drugs. They are here to learn. They respect education more than South African students (Khotso, South African).

> Immigrant students are very clever and they work very hard. Education is not a joke for them. They want to be the best in the class. Our South Africans, they just play around, they not serious about studying. They into other things, like smoking, drugs, dating, drinking. These things are 'cool' for them…not education (Samishka, South African).

Of note was their keen sense to assist their 'African brother' who shared a continental identity i.e. we are all from Africa.

> I cannot say we different, we look more or less the same except I am slightly darker in color then them, but where we are different is in the attitude. The only difference is attitude. We are African brothers; we come from the same

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[5] Schoolscapes: evolved from the concept of a 'scape' that was first proposed by Appadurai (1996) in his attempt to describe forces of globalisation and global cultural flows that are 'liquid' and irregular in nature. This idea of a 'scape' is extended to the school and suggests a site that is not just geographic or temporal but social and political as well, a 'place' that is bound up with questions about popular culture and relations of power in local, national, and globalized contexts. (Dirlik 2002).

continent. I will change them. I want them to understand what education is really about and how to treat elders. They must really get to understand that (Kevin, Zimbabwe).

Some African students saw this as a threat, as many of the Black immigrants found their way into former African schools where school fees were much lower, resulting in contested spaces in terms of limited resources. The arrival of black immigrant students seemed to jerk African students into an acute awareness of the value of education. Some South African students came to realise the long-term effects of their lackadaisical and 'culture of entitlement' attitude and began to take education more seriously.

> Most immigrant students, they are trying to do as much as they can to be the best of the rest. Maybe in ten years' time we [South African students] will be saying that they have taken over our jobs, whereas we are not doing enough. A repercussion of this is if we don't want to learn, and immigrant students are here to learn, they [immigrant students] will complete their schooling and occupy key positions. Then we will be saying they have taken over our positions. But, we did not make use of the opportunities (Xolani, South Africa).

Discussion

Contested spaces and shared places have witnessed the implementation of education policies take on different nuances that are informed by the historical, political and social contexts and framed within power dynamics. What could be the reason for the incongruence between theory-in-action and theory-in-use? Perhaps it could be a fear of a loss of power and resistance to change? In an attempt to explain schools' varying interpretations of policy texts of curriculum reform, Helsby (1995) noted that the professional interpretation of educational policy is linked to the idea of "readerly policy texts" in which the user has minimal scope for creativity, and "writerly policy texts" in which the reader assumes an interpretative role. The state of being readerly or writerly is not inherent within the policy text, but rather is dependent upon the interactions between the text and the user. In other words, there is a degree of choice

(Helsby, 1995). School governing bodies may effectively collude in the diminution of their professional autonomy by unquestioningly accepting policy regulations as readerly texts, or they can resist and attempt to subvert and reinterpret them (i.e., be writerly). The implication of this on the transformation agenda of education would mean that there is a direct correlation between the School Governing Body's interpretation of education policy texts and school practices that maintain the existing status quo of the school.

Language as a tool of power played out differently during the initial and later years of democracy. What could be the reason for this? In both cases it was about the dynamics of power and a desire to 'fit in'. During the initial years the struggle was between different racial groups of South African students and a need to aspire to 'be white' with all its associated rights and privileges, very much attuned to the apartheid ideology. The later years saw a noted shift to a reclaiming of indigenous languages as a means of power to exclude and protect territorial spaces. Why is this? South African students are left alone on how to deal with the history of the apartheid, which is still very much on the shoulders of their parents and their frame of learning. The reaction of black South African students to immigrant students can be partly ascribed to the sharing of limited resources, but more importantly, it is the fact that neither black South African students nor their parents had the opportunity to find balance or the time to heal. And, rather than healing in a protected space they are being thrown into an international competitive education system. Some students will be equipped to do that because they are on solid ground but if you are historically disadvantaged, you are not on solid ground to meet this. In South Africa, international competition is not an abstract policy; it enters the school through immigrant students.

Racial classifications in South Africa very often still rely on 'the look' (Soudien, 2014). The look defines 'the Other'- who is, or is not, 'one of us'. Why would children, many of whom were born with the advent of democracy and did not witness apartheid personally still rely on 'the look' to classify people? It would seem that knowledge in the blood has been transmitted, where 'direct' knowledge has become 'indirect' knowledge. This received or inherited knowledge has influenced the behaviour of second-generation recipients of knowledge of something they were not a part of and as this study shows, has been mediated within the schoolscape. This knowledge is also paradoxical as these children seem to 'own' knowledge about something that they did not witness or were integral to creating.

Psychosocial passing seemed to favour the traditional paradigm of equal opportunity that camouflages the realities of power asymmetry and unearned privilege afforded to dominant groups. Black immigrant students quickly identified the dynamics of race and differential access to opportunities for advancement that create disparities in life outcomes. Hence, some of them were keen to hide their real identities. Although the racial stratification of South African society influence racial identity and racial identification, some Black immigrant students resisted the categories into which they were inserted. They sought exposure, familiarity and affirming contexts that provided alternative and empowering meanings associated with their own racial and ethnic group in an attempt to establish a positive and healthy racial identification that did not support the perpetuation of the racial stratification of South African society.

The lack of agency on the part of White and Indian students to assist African students could be apportioned to knowledge in the blood of second generation white and Indian students who were born in South Africa. These students seem to hold stereotypical views of broader society about African students. It would seem that although this knowledge is indirect, "carried so

powerfully among the non-present" (Jansen, 2009); it is as if it is 'direct' knowledge which is self-experienced. In contrast, black immigrant students lacked this knowledge in the blood as there seemed to be an inherent drive on the part of immigrant students to improve the human condition of others. What emerged were genuine empathy and a collective sense of 'brotherhood' with indigenous Black students. Black immigrant students wanted to improve the moral, social, cultural and educational standing of their South African brothers and sisters in the spirit of a common 'African' identity. They apportioned blame to apartheid for the resultant behaviour of black indigenous students and were determined to restore the dignity of the 'African nation'.

A critical reflection of research studies conducted over the past fifteen years in democratic South Africa reveal just how deep knowledge is embedded "in the emotional, psychic, spiritual, social, economic, political, and psychological lives of the school and the community at large" (Jansen, 2009). Although many of the participants in this study were 'born-free' students, knowledge of the other, which in most cases was indirect, transmitted, relational, mediated and paradoxical, was so deeply embedded in the very essence of their being that it became defensive and did not allow for ambiguity. Yet, despite this sparks of goodness emerged, which illustrates that although knowledge is not 'easily changed', it does not mean that "through the transfusion of new knowledge the authority of received knowledge cannot be overcome" (Jansen, 2009). The hope exists that with the passing of time renewed knowledge of 'the Other' will create uncontested spaces in shared places.

Conclusion

The creation and evolution of shared spaces though activated by political, social and educational policy intent that was good and at times exceptional, 'knowledge in the blood'

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coupled with a passion for power witnessed policy in action transform these shared spaces into largely contested spaces. Intriguingly, within these spaces sparks of 'goodness' emerged that hold promise for a brighter future. These sparks of goodness were evident in African students' rejection of an oppressed identity and in their reclaiming and re-affirmation of a South African and ethnic identity and language. Coupled to this was a re-awakening of the value of education to these students. The lackadaisical attitude of African students towards education is slowly eroding away. Furthermore, the arrival of Black immigrant students and teachers has created the opportunity for South African students to break out of their insulation capsule and be exposed to the international world. And finally, the process of desegregation of schools has created the potential for integration. Although schools are not fully integrated, evidence of pockets of integration seems to be emerging. The initial years of democracy witnessed racial pockets at desegregated schools. Students found solidarity, and support in racial likeness. The latter years have witnessed racial pockets being displaced by pockets of integration in some schools, where students from all racial groups congregate around common interests and talents. The transfusion of new knowledge and exposure to the 'Other', seem to be sowing the seeds of social cohesion, which holds the promise of a brighter future for all.

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