
Teacher preparation for diversity at three South African universities

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Abstract

This article reports on a study into how lecturers at three universities offering pre-service teacher education in the Western Cape are preparing future primary school teachers for diversity in classrooms and schools. The study is located within a social justice orientation to education, where teacher preparation aims to reduce barriers to learning experienced by learners from a variety of social settings. It describes how these teacher educators are responding and/or contributing to this challenge. The findings highlight the demographics of the lecturers and student teachers in the cohort, as well as lecturers' orientation to the topic and their specific classroom interventions. The article concludes by arguing for greater coherence in this work and for recognition of the systemic issues impacting on teacher preparation for diversity.

Locating the research question within a policy framework

Teacher education in South Africa today encompasses both pedagogical and social responsibilities. On the one hand teacher education institutions need to provide sufficient numbers of quality teachers to instruct children in a variety of disciplinary areas. Simultaneously, these teacher education institutions need to ensure that new teachers are able and willing to educate young citizens within a post-apartheid Constitution that deliberately “affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom” (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p.6), thereby contributing to nation-building.

Drawing on the notion of the intertwining of the pedagogical and the social task of teacher education, the study reported on here set out to investigate how pre-service teacher preparation at a selection of South African higher education institutions was preparing future teachers to deal with one particular challenge of nation-building, namely *respect for diversity*. What, we asked, are teacher education programmes doing to prepare teachers for the fact that many schools in South Africa now include learners from a variety of cultural, racial, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, who often speak different home

languages and who might have special educational needs? Are teacher education programmes acknowledging the barriers to learning experienced by learners from marginalized groups? And, more generally, in what way are teacher education programmes responding – or even contributing – to the South African imperatives of national reconstruction and social development?

A range of educational policies in the country provide a context for this issue. In addition to the end of racial segregation in schools, national policies and frameworks promote the mainstreaming of learners with special needs, provide equal recognition to different religions and acknowledge the importance of promoting multilingualism and elevating the status of formerly marginalized languages (Department of Education, 1997). The entire curriculum framework is based on the principle of “social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusive education” (Department of Education, 2002). The Education White Paper 6 is based on the “call to action to establish a caring and humane society (2001, p.20), within an acknowledgement and respect for “differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status (Department of Education, 2001, p.16). Underpinning many of these initiatives is the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Education, 2001a), which identifies ten values that should be promoted in schools: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, *ubuntu* (human dignity), respect and reconciliation.

Pre-service teacher education constitutes a key lever in giving shape to these values in schools, in that new teachers are being educated within the framework of the above-named policies. However the relationship between the formulation and the enactment of these policies for schooling is not unproblematic. Vally (2005), for example, argues that the positive infusion of human rights, social justice and conceptions of democratic citizenship in the new curriculum is severely constrained by teachers not being provided with adequate training and resources to enact these goals.

It has been argued that little sustained research exists on the internal processes of teaching and learning within the policy revisions post-1994, and more specifically on the induction of new teachers into a newly-constructed and demanding profession (Hugo, 2006). Much published research on teacher education has focused on institutional and curriculum restructuring, with some attention to the question of professional identities (see Lewin, Samuel and Sayed, 2003). Little attention, however, has been paid to the specific issue of preparation for diversity, a central aspect of the new democracy. Exceptions

are Moletsane, Hemson and Muthukrishna (2004) who articulate a set of questions to help us explore this issue, and Hemson (2006) who describes how three Faculties of Education engage with the challenges of diversity in their Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme. This study hopes to build on this limited literature in its exploration of the ways in which teacher educators in the Western Cape conceptualise and construct their practice in relation to diversity issues.

The concept of diversity

South African researchers have raised questions about what the most useful terms and concepts might be to advance our local understanding of the issue of diversity (Vandeyar, 2003; Hemson, 2006). In seeking a conceptual base for this study, we too realized that there is still much work to be done on developing a grounded conceptual framework for understanding the challenge of teacher preparation for diversity. In the United States, for example, teacher education for diversity has been framed within a social justice orientation to multiculturalism (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Irvine, 2004). In South Africa, however, the term ‘multiculturalism’ provides a less comfortable conceptual home, as the policy of apartheid rationalized oppression and exploitation of certain groups of people under the guise of a celebration of different cultures.

Discussions on respect for diversity have also been framed internationally within a broad notion of ‘inclusive education’, sometimes linked to notions of social justice. Booth, Nes and Stromstad for example, drawing on research from a range of countries, define inclusion as follows:

. . . inclusion is about consciously putting into action values based on equity, entitlement, community, participation and respect for diversity. Increasing inclusion is always linked with reducing exclusion. It is concerned with the reduction of inequality, both economic and social, both in starting positions and in opportunities (Booth *et al.*, 2003, p.1).

A similar view is articulated by Pendlebury and Enslin, who see inclusion as overcoming “the barriers to participation of all in education, so as to extend to all learners the human right to education and the right to participation in an inclusive polity” (2004, p.45). Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (2005) echo this, arguing that the concept of diversity, rather than emphasizing difference, should be linked to the principles of integration, commonality and respect for all people.

The term 'inclusion', however, proved to be limited as a base for this research, as it encompasses too great a variety of orientations and practices. Even though Booth *et al.* (2003) use the concept inclusion to frame their edited book, they also provide an overview of the different conceptualizations of inclusion contained within the chapters in their book. These include inclusive education as respect for diversity, as removing barriers to learning and participation in school life, as promoting democracy, as encompassing the cultures and policies of a school, and as related to justice for all in society.

The South African policy paper on inclusion (Education White Paper 6) targets the concept of inclusion directly, but itself encompasses a range of conceptualizations. On the one hand, it takes a broad view of inclusion, arguing that inclusive education and training is about "maximizing the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning" (2001, p.16). The implementation framework of this White Paper, however, is devoted entirely to one aspect of inclusion, namely support for learners with disabilities.

Further motivation for moving away from the concept of inclusion was the observation by Engelbrecht *et al.* (2005) that the so-called developed nations mainly use the term 'inclusive education' in relation to provision for learners with disabilities. And the concept is further complicated by the argument that "inclusive policies may result in new forms of exclusion" (Sayed, 2003, p.3). An example of this is where inclusion in the form of racial integration of schools draws attention away from the exclusionary force of poverty on educational access.

The location of the concept of diversity within a social justice orientation led us to feel that it would be best to remain with the concept 'preparation for diversity' in our interviews, as the term inclusion might have too many varied meanings for the teacher educators. Fraser (in Fraser and Honneth, 2003), in her outline of the politics and philosophy of social justice in the modern world, provides a useful conceptualization of two different elements that respect for diversity might encompass. Claims for social justice, she argues, are divided into two types: the redistributive claim which seeks "a more just distribution of resources and wealth" (2003, p.7) and the "politics of recognition" which resists assimilation into dominant cultural norms, calling for the recognition of the distinctive perspectives of ethnic and racial groups, as well as sexual minorities and gender differences (2003, p.7).

In considering how teacher educators addressed diversity, we were therefore not only concerned about how they were recognizing difference, but also about how the actions of the teacher educators did or did not offer the ‘just distribution’ of educational opportunities to their student teachers and, by implication, to learners in primary schools. We were therefore open to the concept of diversity taking on a variety of forms in the experiences and understandings of the teacher educators, including race, class, language, gender, disability, poverty and unemployment (see the Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005, study on rural schools), as well as customs, religion, age, ability to pay school fees (see a study from the University of the North, 2001). We sought to explore, with these teacher educators, their “curricula and ways of organizing learning” (Booth *et al.*, 2003, p.2) and in so doing, to better understand how teacher education was contributing to the skills and understandings of future teachers who would work in a context of diversity.

Methodology

The target group for the research was teacher educators in three higher education institutions in the Western Cape.¹ This province was selected as at the time it provided the most convenient access for the researchers. The institutions chosen were those which focused on the preparation of teachers for the primary school, for a number of reasons. Primary school offers a generalised and more holistic experience for school learners, as opposed to secondary school, where individual subject teachers offer a more fragmented and academically-based pattern of instruction. The prospective teachers in these teacher education programmes would be preparing to teach children in primary schools in 2004 and beyond. Their learners’ experience of schooling would have been wholly located in the post-apartheid policies and frameworks described above.

As a result of the closure of teacher education colleges in the mid-1990s, and the incorporation of some of their programmes and staff into higher education institutions, the teacher education faculties in this study were part of the three formerly ‘white’ higher education institutions in the Western Cape. The two formerly ‘black’ higher education institutions in the Western Cape did not,

¹ A follow-up study was conducted in the Eastern Cape in 2005 but is not reported on here.

offer dedicated² primary school teacher education at the time this study took place. The participating institutions were spread over four sites in the Western Cape. Two of these were Afrikaans-medium, and two English-medium.

Two models of pre-service primary school teacher education were represented in this research: the four year integrated degree (BEd) as well as the one year postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). At one of the participating institutions, students were enrolled for a PGCE for primary teachers, while at the other two institutions students were enrolled in a BEd. General Education and Training (GET) programme. No distinction was made between these two models in the analysis of the data.³

Data on the poverty index of schools in the province was derived from information provided by the Western Cape Education Department. Demographics on the teacher educators were obtained from their institutional databases or websites and the respective Faculties/Departments of Education provided data on the racial composition of their student teacher enrolment.

Qualitative data was obtained through a combination of semi-structured focus group and individual interviews. A total of twenty-two lecturers teaching at the three higher education institutions offering dedicated primary school teacher education programmes in the Western Cape were interviewed. Interview sessions lasted between one and a half to two hours each. Interviews were considered appropriate, as this provided scope for probing in an area that is by its nature sensitive and complex. Lecturers were asked what they understood by the concept diversity, and how preparation for diversity in classrooms and schools was inserted into the teacher education curriculum. These questions were aimed at understanding what teacher education

² Graduates of the other two higher education institutions in the province do sometimes end up teaching in primary schools. However the teacher education programme at these two institutions was not specifically geared for the primary school situation.

³ At two of the three institutions differentiated courses are offered in the General Education and Training (GET) band: one for future teachers of Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) and the second for Intermediate/Senior Phase (Grades 4-9). No differentiation was made between these two levels. It should be noted that the Senior Phase is partly physically located in high schools, but because of the design of the teacher education curricula, for ease of reference all Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phase programmes are clustered here as 'primary school' offerings.

programmes needed to do to be responsible for, and responsive to, the challenge of national reconstruction.

Findings and analysis: 'who, how and what'

The findings in this study revealed that a range of initiatives were being undertaken to address the issue under discussion. These initiatives, however, displayed little sense of coherence or of operating within a commonly understood framework. Differences in the programmes were usually a function of how the different faculties of education, and more particularly the lecturers themselves, formulated their courses. Teacher educators also indicated that *who* their students were, informed to some degree *what* they chose to teach in relation to diversity, but also influenced *how* they chose to deal with this topic.

The lack of a common framework was not unexpected, in that lecturers in all the institutions indicated that there was much freedom and leeway to choose what they were going to teach within the broad policy framework of the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000), which only stipulates various components and expected outcomes for teacher education.

Despite the absence of a common approach, the study pointed to three important elements that impacted on the question of preparation for diversity in pre-service teacher education programmes . These elements were:

- The 'who' element: demographics of the lecturers and students in the Education faculties or departments in each of the three participating institutions
- The 'how' element: namely, the various orientations to diversity of the teacher educators in the three institutions, connected in many ways to the 'who' element, but also connected to the particular students they were teaching and the contexts in which they were teaching.
- The 'what' element: the specific topics, methods, and areas the teacher educators are utilising in their curricula to address diversity-related issues.

The 'who' element: demographics of lecturers and student teachers

Lecturers

The table below summarizes some of the demographic details on the full-time complement of lecturers in the Faculties or Departments of Education in the three participating institutions at the time of the research.

Table 1: Lecturer demographics (2004)

Faculty/ Department of Education	Total	Male	Female	% Age over 40yrs	Black [This demographic category can be broken into the historical divisions: 'Coloured', 'African', 'Indian']			White
					'Coloured'	'African'	'Indian'	
Institution A	18	13	5	95%	3	0	0	15
Institution B	45	20	25	90%	9	0	0	36
Institution C	54	26	28	85%	8	1	1	44
TOTAL	117	59	58	Average: approx 90%	22 = 19%			95 = 81%

A number of interesting features emerge from this data. First, it is evident that in 2004 the racial profiles of staff reflected the racial origins of the three participating institutions as formerly white; the closure of the former black colleges of education clearly having had the (unintended) consequence of limiting black staff numbers in the sector.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that over 90% of all the lecturers in the study were over 40 years of age. They were all raised, educated, and taught in schools in a period characterized by strictly enforced segregation. The general context of their lived experience was a highly racialized and politicized existence in South Africa. In contrast, the students in the study averaged 20–25 years of age. They were in primary schools in the 1980s and early 1990s, and would have been too young to make meaning of the political and education unrest of the time. These students would have attended high school post 1994, when apartheid legislation was being dismantled.

Student teachers

The student teacher demographics in the Western Cape at the time of the

research are summarized in the table below. The figures show clearly that young black people (particularly those formerly classified ‘African’) were not entering the teaching profession at primary school level at the same rate as ‘white’ students. These figures could be seen as a reflection of broader societal changes, such as an opening up of a range of opportunities for Africans in the formal economy, an increase in extra teacher posts created by the School Governing Bodies of formerly white schools (Crouch and Perry, 2003), or of a suspension of the bursaries formerly offered to study teaching, or a poor perception of conditions in schools and in teaching. The scope of this research and constraints of this paper do not permit exploring or elaborating these issues here.

Table 2: Enrolment in BEd and PGCE general education and training/ primary school programmes in the Western Cape 2005

Institutions	Demographic categories				Totals
	White	Black, which can be subdivided into:			
		Coloured	African	Indian	
Institution A	26	3	4	0	33
Institution B	414	26	1	0	441
Institution C	937	254	69	6	1266
TOTAL	1377	283	74	6	1740
%	80	16	4	-	100%

Source: Enrolment figures from Faculties/Departments of Education

The significance of these figures is that the student profile is likely to be closely linked to the kind of schools in which the student teachers will probably end up teaching once they have graduated. This is a matter of great concern in a province where about 50% of the province’s 1106 schools fall into the category first or second poorest quintile (WCED, Annual Survey of Schools, 2004). A national study on teacher shortages notes the same concern, arguing that “White students are not known for having a particular interest in teaching in black schools in particular. But even if they were interested, they would be constrained by an inability to teach in the mother tongue, as is the requirement in Foundation Phase” (Department of Education, 2005, p.68)

The concern with the demographics of teacher education students and lecturers can be considered from a more qualitative point of view as well. The backgrounds of the lecturers and the student teachers signal likely differences in orientation to the topic of diversity, both *within* the lecturer groups and the

student teacher groups, as well as *between* these two groups. The importance of *who* these key players are, lies in what they bring to their understandings of the topic of diversity and how to deal with it. Britzman refers to teachers' "implicit institutional biographies – the cumulative experience of school lives . . . which inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum" (Britzman, 1986, p.443). In the shared terrain of the teacher education programme, it needs to be remembered that teacher educators and prospective teachers will bring from this 'cumulative experience' different definitions, different values, and different data sources, as they consider topics in their curriculum (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). This includes how to deal with issues of diversity. Clandinin and Connelly's notion of personal practical knowledge, which forms part of the substance of what teachers (and prospective teachers) bring to teaching, is pertinent to the diversity orientations of the teacher educators in this study:

Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. . . It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation (Clandinin and Connelly, 1988, p.25).

The 'how' element: orientations to diversity

Lecturers indicated that they understood the concept of diversity to encompass a range of categories, namely colour and race, gender, class and socio-economic issues, religion, language, learning differences, ability, disability; elements that give rise to exclusion of individuals. However, more interestingly than the expected categorizations was one lecturer's comment that, what matters most is '*how you come at it*'. In this section we explore lecturers' orientations to the topic of diversity, defined by the following meanings in the Oxford Dictionary: 'by what means, in what way' as well as 'to what extent'.

There were various orientations to the topic amongst the lecturers in this study. Some lecturers spoke of a reluctance to approach the topic overtly or directly, and individuals were having to deal with the issues around diversity in an individual way, rather than more holistically within the faculty, school or department.

Included in the orientations of lecturers was an aversion to terms that have negative connotations, not in and of themselves, but in the context of the language of South African politics. For example, Joe explained

Words I also don't like are 'multicultural, multiracial, multi-religious'. Euphemisms. Just using another word for 'those guys are different from me'. I might as well say, 'they are another race'.

The implicit negative connotation of being 'another race' is embedded in South Africa's history of racism. What is embodied in these explanations, these ways of making sense of diversity, and the language used to describe it? For educators who have come from particular personal and institutional histories, for whom terms like 'multicultural' and 'multiracial', in their lived experience, were used in ways that signified domination of one group by another, in oppressive, racist ways, it appeared hard to separate out a neutral, let alone positive, connotation to these terms. Ambivalence towards particular notions of diversity needs to be viewed against the political, socio-historical realities of South Africa's recent past, a past that continues to impact strongly on present realities and orientations.

The orientations to the issue were often linked to the context from which either the lecturer or students came, or in which they were currently located. Lecturers indicated that they recognized that contexts are constantly changing, especially in South Africa, in ways that mean adjusting how they approach the topic. Julie, a black lecturer in a predominantly and historically white university, talked explicitly of experiencing '*talking into a context that has changed*', where there was '*resentment to talking politics*', with some of her students becoming angry, seeing it as the lecturer's '*baggage*'. A lecturer at another institution recounted a similar reaction from some of his students: '*[in a core module] where the discussions were around injustices, some students just don't want to go there – no politics*'. Julie remembered a time in the previous political dispensation when teachers were not allowed to 'talk politics', a transgression that could have had serious consequences for the teacher. In this period, she explained, lecturers have to be '*more compromising*' in how to raise the same issues that would have been eagerly and defiantly taken up in the 1980s and 1990s.

The experience of an '*absence of shared memory*', strongly informed the orientation of another lecturer. The fact that lecturers and students are from two generations which are very different in terms of the changing South African context, has had several educational implications. Tim, a lecturer with a strong academic background in sociology and political studies, described not being able to refer to shared memory between lecturer and student, and having to use a story-telling technique in order to create common understandings of a time and place that informed critical perspectives that would be part of their classroom discussions. Tim's approach was to create shared historical memory

that could serve as a reference point from which to address issues that fall within the realm of diversity studies, for example, to illustrate the consequences of apartheid. This point speaks to Holt-Reynolds' (1992) assertion that a professor and student are apt to misunderstand each other, unless they confront the fact that differences in their frames of reference exist. In creating shared memory through stories, Tim seeks to develop shared understandings that assist in preparing student teachers to deal with particular aspects of diversity, and more generally, with diversity as a concept.

Several different frameworks and approaches were used in the various teacher education programmes to deal with the topic of diversity. At one institution some of the lecturers indicated that a social justice framework informed their approach to preparing teachers to deal with diversity. This framework, they said, best described their institutional orientation to diversity issues, and had '*steered curriculum choices made by the lecturers*'. This framework informed how core topics, such as philosophy, sociology and history of education, could be oriented. For example, framing questions that guided discussion of diversity-related topic were: 'Who benefits and who doesn't? What are the inclusionary and exclusionary devices involved in the situation?' This orientation, in the view of one lecturer, set up the foundation for discussions on diversity, and helped prepare prospective teachers understand the related issues.

Others in the same institution described an opposite approach, namely starting from the students' personal experience, and working outwards towards a theoretical understanding. For example, one lecturer spoke to the importance of getting a sense of the individual identities of students, and searching out the ways in which aspects of their identities encompass minority or majority affiliations and characteristics. The issue of marginalization then became pertinent, and this, claimed the lecturer, was a central aspect of addressing issues of diversity.

The '*what*' element: addressing diversity in the curriculum

The 'who' element (i.e. the lecturers and students), and the 'how' (their orientations to the concept of diversity), inform the 'what' element, namely the specific issues and activities taken up. There appeared to be much variety in the nature of the content used to address the topic. However, how the topic is addressed is a component of the 'what' element as well, an understanding that is evident in the phrase, familiar in teacher education literature: '*how* you

teach is *what* you teach'. The lecturers in this study spoke almost with one voice about how *not* 'to come at' the topic of diversity: "*Just to go to a class and talk about diversity, is NOT the approach*". In fact, said one lecturer: "*when students see the heading 'diversity', they bunk the lecture*".

Many of the lecturers acknowledged that diversity '*is not an easy thing to just raise. It's **an issue**, in an institution like this, to talk about [it]*' (lecturer's emphasis). Clearly, in some institutional contexts, there is uneasiness about explicitly addressing issues of diversity. In particular, black lecturers in historically white institutions in this study talked about feeling this discomfort, illustrated in a statement by Julie about the silence surrounding these issues in her institution, and stated differently by a lecturer in another institution as 'I am uncomfortable to talk about it. . . It's a predominantly white university, where the children [students] went to white schools. . . so that's how it is.'

Finding 'a way in', an entry point, to the topic was one of the issues the teacher educators had to deal with. Several educators refer to mechanisms, or triggers that help to place the topic of diversity on the classroom agenda. Joe said: '*I am not going to start a conversation out of the blue about racism. It has to be triggered by an event.*'

The spaces and places where such triggers were to be found were part of both a hidden and formal curriculum. One example was the reference by a respondent to the 'imagined classrooms' in the mind of the teacher educator. This educator was aware of assumptions that are likely to inform a particular approach, aware of the hidden nature of the curriculum that would be taught, and suggested that an important step in addressing diversity in teacher education programmes, would be for teacher educators to make explicit what their 'imagined classrooms' are, where they are located, and who the students are.

Another hidden aspect of the curriculum is the educator's own ideological or philosophical orientation. Julie advocated that lecturers make explicit why they do things the way they do, and that this would demonstrate that the way any particular lecturer teaches is informed by particular ideologies and philosophical orientations.

Certain subject areas or knowledge disciplines lent themselves more formally to 'triggers' which created spaces for dialogue around diversity. For example, lecturers at two different institutions spoke about a visit to the Holocaust Museum, which served as a springboard for talking about and confronting

issues related to diversity. This event was built into the History Methods course, and is also an example of how the subject itself provides the tools for raising the topic of diversity. A number of other courses or topics provided relatively straightforward vehicles for raising issues of diversity. These included core Education Studies courses, such as History, Sociology, Psychology, and Philosophy. Method or Didactics courses in particular subject or learning area disciplines (for example, South African History, Life Orientation, Religious/Multi-faith studies, Social Studies, Drama, Arts and Culture) also provided opportunities to discuss the variety of life experiences of South African children. The learning areas of Life Orientation and Lifeskills included topics such as multi-faith religion education, HIV/AIDS and schooling, and issues around social justice and personal rights.

Other than the specific knowledge areas, teacher education programmes focused on skills to help students to work better with various aspects of diversity in the classroom. For example, most of the programmes included modules on multilingual education. In the four-year BEd programme, students were exposed to courses in all three languages spoken in the Western Cape, namely English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

Special needs education provided another area of skills development. With new education policies like the White Paper 6 (referred to earlier) relating to inclusive classrooms, teacher education programmes have had to include modules on working with children with special needs, for example learning disabilities, and visual and hearing impairments.

An exploration of personal and identity development formed another entry point into teacher preparation for diversity. In two of the teacher education programmes, lecturers had designed an aspect of their curriculum to get students to uncover and confront their own assumptions about who they are, what their norms and values are, and the contexts in which these have been formed, through personal identity exploration or development exercises. Interestingly, in one institution, the lecturers reported that there was often strong resistance to this kind of exercise by some students. For example in one PGCE course, this exercise was the basis of a compulsory assignment. However, so strong was the resistance to it by some students that they chose to forgo a grade rather than complete the assignment.

In addition to their classroom-based instruction, the three teacher education programmes had designed a number of different experiences to expose student teachers to diversity in classrooms and schools. This was particularly through

the Teaching Practice component of the programme, where Teaching Practice placements were set up to give students an opportunity to experience different kinds of schools. These differences were in general based on socio-economic factors, with student teachers being expected to teach in a school that was different from that with which s/he was familiar. Student teachers were also routinely provided with Teaching Practice experience in schools for learners with special educational needs.

Various lecturers referred to a less tangible, but crucial, aspect of the curriculum, namely that of developing certain 'dispositions' in teacher education students. The most explicitly named disposition was that of developing critical thinking, or a willingness to ask '*big questions*', particularly about role of education in society. This was also linked for some lecturers to personal identity development, through which students would gain habits such as introspection, openness, or self-awareness, all presumed to be essential components of learning to respect others.

Conclusion

This research was driven by the question: *How are teacher education programmes in South Africa preparing pre-service teachers for diversity in classrooms and schools?* While it is acknowledged that the sample was limited and that the study focused on the intended rather than the enacted curriculum (Hemson, 2006), (what lecturers *said* they did, rather than what was observed), it is possible to identify a number of underlying themes by way of conclusion.

The data has indicated that, at least for the institutions involved in this study, lecturers are indeed attempting to prepare their student teachers for diversity in a variety of ways. The specific interventions relate to *who* the lecturers and student teachers are, *how* lecturers came at the issue of diversity, and *what* kinds of learning experiences are contained in the teacher education programmes.

The imagined classroom

The 'who' element relates to the histories and profiles of the students and lecturers and to their identities, biographies and expectations. The unbalanced racial demography stood out most starkly. Fortunately, it would appear that

this is a matter that the national Department of Education is taking seriously (see DoE, 2005). It will be important to track the efforts of a national teacher recruitment campaign in future enrolment trends.

Of perhaps deeper significance was the impact of different generational experiences of teacher educators and student teachers on understandings and practices in relation to diversity issues. These generational differences invoked a range of experiences, assumptions and understandings, which can be formulated as ‘the experience of the present, is not the experience of the past’. This was shown to lead sometimes to complex negotiation in order to come to shared understandings of what diversity means, and how it should be dealt with in the teacher education curriculum, and in schools and classrooms.

The individual and collective identities of different generations are related to their own personal and institutional biographies, including their experiences of schooling. These experiences inform their expectations of contemporary schools. The teaching and learning of pedagogical skills is often based on an imagined picture of the classroom and social conditions of learners (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Yet the ‘imagined classrooms’ of teacher educators and their students, coming as they do from different generations and in many cases different social backgrounds, may not be the same or even similar. This is where we believe recruitment into teacher education to be so significant, both in terms of diversifying the corps of teacher educators, as well as student teachers. Unless those engaged in teacher preparation have a varied experience and expectation of schools, the teacher education curriculum is likely to remain limited in its awareness of and sensitivity to the diversity of school contexts in the country.

Creating coherence

Lecturers in this study indicated that they were working with a wide conception of diversity, including race, gender, class, religion, language and disability, and that they were addressing diversity in a variety of ways. However, despite the extensive array of national policy frameworks relating to respect for diversity, individual rather than programmatic or institutional interventions appeared to dominate curriculum planning and implementation.

We would argue that if teacher education is to play a meaningful role in ensuring life chances for all young learners, a more coherent and rigorous framework of action is needed. Cochran-Smith (2004, p.143) calls this “the

coherence question”, arguing the importance of making connections between political, institutional and pedagogical interventions to support respect for diversity. Applying the coherence principle to this study would mean, for example, Faculties of Education actively recruiting student teachers and teacher educators from a variety of backgrounds; constructing a knowledge base for teaching in a context of diversity, particularly around pedagogies of teacher preparation; building links with a variety of communities, and understanding the place of teacher education in the larger social, historical, economic and political context.

Hemson makes a similar point, arguing that “addressing issues of diversity effectively must involve critical examination of the purposes of education, processes of learning, methods of teaching, forms of knowledge that are privileged, and the role of the educator (2006, p.48). He provides a number of practical suggestions to give effect to this, arguing, for example, for the value of staff discussions, the use of critical incidents in teaching, and the linking of work on diversity to institutional vision and mission statements.

Part of planning for a coherent approach to teacher preparation for diversity will mean facing the varying definitions and conceptions of diversity that abound in the national and international literature. Despite White Paper 6’s broad discourse of inclusive education, teacher educators in this study seemed more comfortable with the concept of diversity, seeing inclusive education as a part of the diversity ‘umbrella’. Wildeman and Nomdo (2007) illustrate the impact that different conceptions of inclusive education can have on implementation strategies, through showing how some provinces look to bolster special needs schools, while others seek a complete overhaul of the education system.

Porteus (2003) has argued that inclusion and exclusion in countries of the South need to be specifically located within notions of human rights and social justice. Following this, teacher education discourse in South Africa might benefit from an exploration of the concept of a ‘human rights pedagogy’, to capture the link between teacher education, pedagogy and social development, and to encompass both the respecting of difference and the equal distribution of educational opportunities.

Systemic issues

A final comment needs to be made about the some of the systemic issues that

were highlighted in this study. As has been explained, the rationalization of particularly the college sector in the last decade depleted the number of black teacher educators in the Western Cape. The mergers in higher education had, in at least one of the institutions investigated here, delayed staff appointments in teacher education, as new posts were affected by institutional restructuring. This had, ironically, restricted opportunities for a diversity of recruitment in teacher education. Secondly, the poor enrolment of 'African' students into primary school teaching is a matter of great concern, particularly if set against the argument for mother tongue education in the early years of learning. Thirdly, while all institutions in this study indicate that they exposed their student teachers to a variety of schools during Teaching Practice, the poor social conditions within which many schools are located often leads to student teachers resisting teaching in particular geographical areas, thus creating a situation where the most marginalized of schools do not receive support from teacher education institutions.

The task of preparing good teachers for the diversity of South African classrooms resides in our teacher educators. This study has illustrated how a group of teacher educators in one province are – in their own ways – attempting to address this challenge. It is to be hoped that, in highlighting the strategies being employed by these teacher educators, this study will contribute to a wider debate on the relationship between the pedagogical and social task of teacher education in this country and to the concrete implementation of the policies aimed at nation-building through education.

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