Inaugural Lecture

delivered by

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at

The Technikon Witwatersrand

Thursday, 14 March 2002
CROSS CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS: KEY ISSUES IN
MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Culturally speaking that which we have in common is taken for granted – it is that which identifies us as different, which becomes challenging in cross-cultural encounters in multi-cultural classrooms.

The complexity of this rainbow nation of ours is heightened by the fact that until recently, the socio-politically and economically dominant group was numerically a minority group of Western viz Aglo-Saxon, North European male and middle-class origin.

While this situation has and is changing, it is a fact that adaptations do not proceed along a predictable course, nor at a universal rate in any one sphere of human existence. This statement holds good in respect of tertiary institutions and the TWR, in particular, where education and training:

- Remain founded on a Western, more specifically, Anglo-European, patriarchal, middle class tradition in respect of structure and organisation.
- Traditional teaching and examination strategies continue to dominate.
- English is the teaching medium with little regard to the needs of English as Second Language Speakers (ESLS).
- Academic productivity continues to be judged in accordance with set timetables which reinforces a “chalk and talk” lecturing style and related test and examination procedures.
• Emphasis on race remains the most important element of difference whether overtly or covertly as opposed to ethnicity, class, language, religion, gender, disability, urban or rural background.

While research into multi-cultural education in South Africa is relatively recent, as well as limited, issues and trends revealed in the United Kingdom, USA and Australia have direct relevance to the South African education system.

It is perhaps fortuitous that the TWR Throughput Rate Report coincides within this presentation as issues expressed by students are collaborated by the research based evidence which follows.

In order to establish a common frame of reference in respect of terms to be used, two definitions are relevant and from which it can be decided that the notion of race has no place.

1. **Culture and Sub Culture**

Culture has reference to the macro social and human environment in which we live while sub-cultures comprise the smaller social groupings with which we identify ourselves or are identified by others.

• Culture or a sub-culture may be described as “… a shared standard for ways of thinking, feeling and acting (Erickson, 1986) which constitutes the social and man-made environment that enables us, to adapt to and survive in the world in which we find ourselves (Kneller, 1965). It makes some people similar to others, yet different from the majority of people in the world (Marais, 1983).

• Culture is also a complex and integrated whole which is transmitted to and learned by each successive generation. It may be regarded as an active capital of material and non-material assets that attract
compound interest in interaction with the social and material world, thereby bringing about change (adapted from Lynch, 1983).

As such culture is a dynamic and an accumulative process implying ongoing enculturation or the acquisition of new traits and acculturation or a movement away from cultures of origin. Education itself may be viewed as an agent of both enculturation and acculturation. Herein lies the challenge in education. At the same time, it is important to note that no one can be a carrier of the totality of his / her culture or sub-culture.

Closely related to the concept of culture is that of:

1.2 World View

The way in which we, as members of a cultural group perceive events and people (Bennett, 1990). World view constitutes the social aspect of our psychological reality or frame of reference. It enables us to describe and give meaning to the world in which we live. It sets us up to act for or against persons, objects or situations in a predetermined way. It is the point at which human intellectual objectivity merges with subjective value systems. World views are accepted without questioning as "... the way things are" (Gudykunst and Kim, 1984). It is our frame of reference which allows us to stereotype people on grounds of factually incorrect perceptions, maintains group consensus about peoples attributed traits and discrepancies between their attributed and actual traits.

There are two other terms that I shall be using viz:

- **Mainstream** in reference to those groups who have traditionally dominated the education systems in the Western world.
• **Minority Groups** or those groupings which in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, race, disability etc. have traditionally been peripheral to decision making processes in education.

The use of these terms means that I can avoid the use of phrases such as previously disadvantaged groupings which carry value judgments and perhaps even the vague implication that characteristics pertaining to these groups are pathological versions of the dominant group and therefore subject to remedial intervention only, without any accompanying changes to existing systems and structures.

It is important to remember that the research findings that follow are not absolute, nor should they result in further stereotyping. There are, in fact, many similarities in the world views, cognitive, communication and interactional styles of different groups. It has been noted that different perceptual styles and modes of thinking and acting actually fall along a continuum with certain groups seeming to cluster at one end or the other (Arthur, 1992).

2. **KEY ISSUES IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN MULTI-CULTURAL CLASSROOMS**

Over the past four decades, studies concerning the relationship between race, ethnicity, social class, language, religion, gender, disability and educational attainment have proliferated. In spite of the fact that the research findings are sometimes paradoxical and mainly related to why students fail as opposed to succeed and that the research itself is frequently undertaken in only one of the key areas, in isolation from all others, significant trends have emerged. The fact that minority groups underachieve at school has become a major concern in countries worldwide (Arthur, 1992). What then are the factors in multi-cultural classrooms that play a role in these educational outcomes?
2.1 The Educator-Learner Encounter

The terminology of lecturer and student as well as systems such as fixed lecturing and examination timetables already indicates a particular mindset that is significant when we consider that the atmosphere and emotional tone of the classroom is determined by the leadership of educators. This atmosphere is influenced not only by their level of expertise or teaching and evaluation strategies, but also by the cultural perspective of their personal life-worlds and their interpersonal competencies. In cross-cultural encounters, part of the problem stems from educators' ignorance of what is meaningful to those who are sub-culturally different and the fact that they operate from within the framework of an entrenched personal subjective sub-culture (Brislin, et al., 1975).

When minority students enrol at tertiary institutions, they are expected to adapt to the milieu of that environment and their capacity for adaptation and/or the support they receive may significantly determine their ability to achieve academically. A question seldom addressed is the degree to which sub-cultural differences influence students' perceptions of the learning environment (Anderson, 1988). To its credit, the TWR has just engaged in such an exercise.

Research has revealed significant trends about the effects of prejudice and stereotyping displayed by educators towards particular sets of students.

Many educators, in knowing little about the life-styles, living habits and preferences of different groupings, believe that they are either culturally deprived or should receive remedial intervention using middle class standards as the norm. Such attitudes and expectations are transmitted in everything they do and say in the classroom (Gay, 1989). Biased perceptions held by the dominant group culminate in discriminating behaviour against minorities (Saunders, 1982). Minority youths come to believe that they will fail and act accordingly so that their responses become self-fulfilling prophecies (Gary, 1989). Examples from documented research include the following:
A study in France revealed that teachers are preferentially attracted to children from privileged backgrounds. They rated privileged children most favourably with working class French children following in the hierarchy, while immigrant children were rated as antipathetic, indifferent and sometimes unattractive (Camilleri, 1986).

In the UK and USA, studies were done in which teachers were requested to mark test papers. Those papers identified by mainstream names such as Tracy Campbell scored, on average, anything between 5 to 15 per cent higher than those identified as minority groups with names such as Juan Pere da Silva dos Santos. Subsequently, the names were altered and marked either by a different teacher or six months to a year down the line, by the same teacher, and the results in terms of names, displayed a more than significant correlation.

In a three-year study in a Washington School, it was demonstrated that teachers frequently grouped children on non-academic grounds such as clean clothes, use of standard English, being more verbal or coming from "better" families. On the basis of these criteria, children were grouped or segregated and taught differently (Rist in: Gollnick and Chinn, 1986).

In the UK, where children were considered to fall into working class groups, many staff members held expectations and attitudes towards their role and future in English society which differed from those which they held towards mainstream students (Giles, 1977).

These and other findings indicate that many educators employ prejudicial and undemocratic education techniques in respect of minority groupings. Teachers expectations influence the type of interaction which is displayed towards students. For example teachers:
• Give proportionality less time to students for whom they hold lower expectations.

• Do not make eye-contact or touch them, seldom smile at them and may be ungenerous in their comments on their efforts (Saunders, 1982).

• Praise them less and pay less attention to ideas contributed by them.

• Give routine as opposed to specific feedback for particular achievements.

• While Euro-American educators do demonstrate concern and interest in the academic work of Euro-American females, they tend to pay more attention to the social behaviour and skills of their Black counterparts and interact more with males (Grossman, 1991).

A combination of verbal and non-verbal cues, based on social criteria substitute for an understanding of the learning difficulties of minority groups.

On the basis of the above, it may be said that educators hold lower expectations of minority than mainstream students even when intelligence scores and achievements are similar (Persell, 1989). Such inconsistent behaviour must of necessity lead to tension and ultimately to the deterioration of education in multi-cultural classrooms (Liebenberg, 1988).

2.2 Cultural Orientation of “Learners” versus “Educators”

Perceptual frameworks of both vary according to ethnic group, social class etcetera. Persons, within cross encounters, experience each other at different levels of their perceptual field in respect of “self” and each is prepared to defend that perception, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees.
Cultural orientation exists in different spheres of human behaviour:

2.2.1 *Perceptual Frames of Reference*

An important difference between the life experiences of mainstream and minority groupings is that the former have seldom experienced discrimination whereas the latter have (Gollnick and Chinn, 1986). The consequence is that having frequently suffered unfairly, minority group members are liable to imagine injustice even where it is non-existent and the most tolerant majority members may meet with wounding rebuffs (Bibby, 1960), thereby aggravating misunderstanding.

Further misunderstandings may be generated by the fact that each participant in a cross-cultural encounter interprets a situation from his own sub-cultural framework with all its inherent differences.

- Thoughts, feelings and behaviours, accounted for in biological and sociological terms and set in a religious framework in the West, are seen as located in body organs or social systems by some cultures. Non-Westerners do not necessarily make clear distinctions between the person and the group, neither are distinctions between medicine, biology, psychology, sociology and religion replicated throughout the world (LeVine and White, 1986).

- In Western First World Societies, members of dominant groups easily separate intellectual, emotional and physical responses, tend to only analyse ideas, mainly in written form, and assume that people can argue views in which they do not believe, while traditional African cultures tend to reinforce holistic approaches (Cooper, 1989).

- Western thinking (as represented more specifically by dominant or mainstream groupings) is characterised by linear thinking patterns.
(Sleeter and Grant, 1988) with everything commencing with a beginning, moving through and progressing to a conclusion, whereas an Eastern mind thinks in a cyclical fashion (Codrington, 1985). Furthermore, the preferred perceptual style of Afro-American as well as Black South Africans and females, is generally one that emphasises a person rather than an object orientation (Shade, 1989).

Such differences could be potent forces in the learning outcomes of minority groups as could differences in

2.2.2 Cognitive and Learning Styles

Cognitive style refers to ways of thinking, perceiving, remembering and problem solving, while learning style is the method whereby the individual arrives at a knowledge and understanding of the world.

Two cognitive styles, field dependent and field independent as identified by Witkin and his colleagues (Singh, 1988) seem to influence whether the individual encounters his world as a whole or in parts, intuitively or analytically, inductively or deductively.

- Field dependent sensitive people have a more global perspective of their surroundings and are more sensitive to the social field.

- Field independent people tend to be more analytical, focusing on the more impersonal, abstract aspects of their environment (Wieseman, 1986).

The characteristics identifying approaches to learning in most classrooms include:

- Task rather then person orientation.
- Focus on parts of a whole.
As this is the learning style fostered in mainstream environments, minority groups are disadvantaged because their learning styles diverge from dominant teaching styles. They tend to be orientated towards co-operation, content about people, whole-to-part-learning, discussion and hands-on-work (Sleeter and Grant, 1988).

The most characteristic feature of the African philosophical system is a focus on unity in which all systems of thought and behaviour, from simple and practical concerns to the more formal sciences, are interwoven into a logical and functional system in which there is no conflict between the cognitive and emotional (Anderson, 1988). This world view may cause Anglo-Europeans to deduce that the African way of thinking is illogical and vice versa.

2.2.3 Modes of Communication

Modes of communication reflect cultural orientation and comprise both language and communication style.

- Language is not only made up of vocabulary, rules of grammar or a sound system, but also appropriate facial and body gestures, the use of varying levels of formality in appropriate contexts, correct styles of conversation and an ability to express abstract concepts (Ovando, 1989) – a situation compounded by the fact that each
language does not necessarily possess the reciprocal word for the translation of every concept while accents and pronunciation pose a potential problem.

- It has been suggested, (Ovando, 1989) that an average non-English speaking student can learn to communicate at the level of basic interpersonal skills after about two years of instruction in a language enriched environment and that cognitive academic language proficiency may be attained in about 5-7 years. When students appear to be fluent in the daily social routines of the classroom, it becomes easy to assume across-the-board-academic based proficiency, so that when they perform badly, failure is presumed to be due to learning difficulties rather than lack of appropriate language skills. At this point, it should be noted that radically different findings have been reached with regard to the degree to which students benefit from special language instruction (Levine and Havighurst, 1989).

- Communication style represents the manner in which ideas and information are conveyed:

  - The (dominant) American school system prizes individualised, documented learning and written demonstration of achievement, contrary to the performance style of many minority groups, which emphasise oral, verbal and participatory learning (Gay, 1989). It is difficult to transform one performance style to another so that when minority groups are assessed, the format of the examination may present a greater problem than the content and substance of the learning task (Bennet, 1986).

  - In respect of the speaker-listener relationship, research indicates that teachers / lecturers do over 75% of the talking, while students remain passive. In middle-class homes, parents often use question and answer techniques to stimulate their
children. For minority groups, questions and answers may be interpreted, wrongly, as hostile because they occur most commonly when adults are angry. In addition, the communication style of Blacks as well as the lower classes and women tends towards the holistic and informal. They learn best in settings that encourage active exchanges between speaker and audience and allow for a simultaneous response of thought, feeling and movement (Bennett, 1986).

- Mainstream groups may be described as growing up in an aural tradition - a tradition where meaning is found in the words themselves, whereas style of delivery is frequently as important as the words themselves in minority groups.

- Thought processes may be dominated by aural, visual or haptic (kinaesthetic) processes, all of which may influence learning outcomes in terms of the mode through which information is presented.

3. HOFSTEDE'S THEORY OF CULTURAL DIFFERENTATION: ROLES, ROLE EXPECTATIONS AND ASSOCIATED VALUE SYSTEMS

In wider context, Hofstede's (1991, 1994) theory places all the previously mentioned broader educational issues in broader cultural context. He identified five dimensions of national cultural variables. These dimensions are linked to the frequently ignored patterns of everyday life that occur in all stages of the life cycle so that the cultural role of educator and learner is reflected in other role forms such as those of parent-child, man-woman, boss-subordinate – the reality being that students will react to their teachers and vice versa in the same way as they learned to react to other role players in society. Obviously, descriptions refer to extremes and the actual situation may lie somewhere in-between. The cultural dimensions include those of:
• **Power Distance** or the degree to which inequality is distributed as "more" versus "less" and endorsed by both followers and leader. Hofstede, (1994) found that parents in large power distance cultures value obedience and respect in children, while children in small power distance societies are encouraged to have a will of their own.

These characteristics are reflected in the respective schooling systems. In large power distance cultures, the type of education is teacher-centred. Educators display more authoritarian attitudes and learners value conformity, order and direct guidance from the teacher. Conversely, in small power distance societies, education is characterised by student-centred education, initiative and impersonal truths as opposed to the wisdom of the teacher.

• **Individualisation versus Collectivism** or "... the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups" (Hofstede, 1994). In individualistic societies, ties between individuals are loose and people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family, while in collective cultures, people are integrated into strong cohesive groups, frequently extended families, which protect them in exchange for loyalty.

Families in individualistic societies educate their children towards a strong "I" consciousness in which private opinions are expected. Because obligations are to "self", personal characteristics of self-interest, self-actualisation and guilt emerge. Education is viewed as a life-long occurrence with emphasis on learning how to learn. People tend to be universalistic and apply the same standards to all. They view others as potential resources and task prevails over relationship at work.
Collective societies educate their children towards a “we” consciousness in which opinions are pre-determined by the group, obligations towards the family are paramount and expressions of harmony, respect and shame are fostered. Value systems differ for in- and out-groups and other people are viewed as members of their particular group. Relationship prevails over task.

Educators from individualistic societies complain that students in collectivist societies do not speak up in class not even when questions are put to them. Collectivist students hesitate to speak up in a group composed of relative strangers – to expect them to do so without the sanction of the group is illogical. In an individualistic society, the random assignment of joint tasks more easily leads to the formation of new groups. Values or harmony reign supreme in collectivist groups so that conflict and confrontation is to be avoided, while “preferential” treatment may be expected from educators of the same group – a situation viewed as nepotism in individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 1991).

In respect of communication, Hall’s, (in: Bennett, 1990) theory of low-high contextual communication styles, ties up closely with Hofstede’s dimension of individualism–collectivism.

A high context message is one in which most of the information lies in the physical context of the message or is communication internalised by the person. This implies that the speaker knows what is on the mind of the recipient of the message. The end result is talking around the point and putting all the critical pieces in place except the crucial ones. Conversely, a low context message is one in which the mass of information is contained in the explicit or stated code, which is clear direct and unequivocal in nature (Levine, 1988). All cultures labeled as low context are individualistic.
The data on power distance and the individualism-collectivism dimension for South Africans are based on Whites only, where the population scored medium on Power Distance and above average on Individualisation. The data for East and West Africans reveal scores above average in Power Distance and quite Collectivist. Hofstede’s assumption (1994) is that Black South Africans will reveal above average Power Distance and strong Collectivism with the exception of an acculturated intellectual minority.

Masculinity versus Feminity refers to the distribution of male-female value systems in specific societies. Hofstede’s studies revealed that women’s values differ less between societies than do men’s and that men’s values, vary from one country to another, containing a dimension of very assertive and competitive and therefore, maximally different from women’s values on the one hand, to modest and caring and similar to women’s values on the other. In feminine societies, women have the same modest caring values as men, although they are somewhat more assertive and competitive in masculine societies, but not to the same degree as men. In feminine cultures, family life stresses relationships, solidarity and resolution of conflict by negotiation and compromise. Masculine societies on the other hand stress achievement, competition and resolution of conflict by fighting it out.

Masculinity–femininity affects participation in the classroom. In masculine classes e.g. America, students try to make themselves visible and strive for high grades whereas in feminine classes e.g. Holland, average performance is not only the norm, but more socially acceptable. On the masculine side, the brilliance and scientific reputation of educators and academic performance of students are dominant factors while on the feminine side, the friendliness and social skills of the teacher and social adaptation of students play a more important role (Hofstede, 1991).
Uncertainty-Avoidance dimensions deal with the extent to which members of a society feel threatened by unknown or uncertain situations, which leads to emotionality and aggressiveness, the promotion of institutions requiring conformity, and a belief in an absolute truth. Difference is viewed as dangerous and members display high levels of stress and anxiety.

Uncertainty-accepting cultures are more tolerant of opinions different from themselves, attempt to have as few rules as possible, view difference as curious or ridiculous, display low stress levels, ease and indolence. It is acceptable for educators not to know all the answers.

The effects that uncertainty-avoidance societies have on classroom participation can best be described by contrasting the expectations of Germans (strongly rated) and English (weakly rated) in the educative event. German students require a structured learning environment, are comfortable with structured learning situations, precise objectives, detailed assignments and strict timetables, correct answers and expect to be rewarded for accuracy. Conversely, the English prefer open-ended learning situations with vague objectives and broad assignments. The suggestion that only one answer exists is unacceptable and students expect to be rewarded for originality. German students expect teachers to be experts and respect academic language, while the latter prefer plain language and view intellectual disagreement as a stimulating exercise (Hofstede, 1991). In a combined German-English classroom, to meet the needs of one half is to create anxiety and frustration in the other.

There is no significant difference in Uncertainty-Avoidance between East, West and South Africa, but white South Africans score more masculine than both Black African groups. By way of contrast many Western and some Latin American and Asian countries score even less masculine e.g. the Netherlands and Nordic countries score quite feminine (Hofstede, 1994).
• **Long Term versus Short Term Orientation**

Cultural values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift, perseverance, subordination of self for a purpose, adaptation of traditions and concern for virtue expressed as concern for the proper way of living. Conversely, features of Short Term Orientation include respect for tradition, fulfilling social status obligations regardless of cost, expectation of quick results, low savings and concern with “face” or status.

Interesting to note, of the five dimensions, Long Term Orientation is the only one that correlates with economic growth over the past twenty-five years. The economically dynamic countries of East Asia all score at the top of the scale, and most Western countries score Short Term Orientation as do Zimbabwe and Nigeria (Hofstede, 1994).

A strong correlation exists between Hofstede’s dimensions and universal findings concerning education in terms of:

**Interactional Style and Modes of Participation.** The differences reflect the indirect *versus* the direct, elaborate *versus* succinct, personal *versus* contextual and affective *versus* instrumental styles of communication (Gudykunst and Ting Toomey, 1988).

4. **GUIDELINES TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN THE MULTI-CULTURAL MILIEU AT TWR**

The TWR is geared towards educating and training students for occupational participation. However, when the concept of education and the criteria used have little to do with learning and personal security a mismatch occurs (Wilson, 1986) as has been demonstrated not only by research findings but also the experiences of our own students. Unfortunately, no change is going to occur without some action. The guidelines that I offer remain guidelines...
only, until a strongly endorsed and funded strategic plan is in place and implemented.

4.1 Institutional Philosophy of Multicultural Education

Foundations for effective multi-cultural education rest on institutional commitment and should be clearly spelt out in the institution’s mission. Not only must the institution’s philosophy be clear and unequivocal, it must also be reflected at the operational level (James, 1978). The policy must incorporate a definition and the intended impact of the policy on the whole institution (Baker, 30: 1983).

The TWR's equity policy rightfully addresses the aspect of balancing numbers in terms of what I have referred to as minority groupings. However, the mere appointment of people with diverse frames of reference will not ensure that the essence of multi-culturality will prevail. Responses may range from reinforcement of existing frames of reference to attempts to bridge the cultural divide. Unfortunately, within the framework of traditional educational structures and the lack of in-service training, the trend is towards reinforcement of stereotypes and traditional organisational, educational and evaluational strategies.

Because of the time constraints I am restricting the guidelines to academic staff.

4.2 In-Service Training Programmes

I suggest that those of us from minority groups who have “made it” within the traditional structures have done so because we have internalised many of the values and behaviours embedded in the mainstream education system albeit with differing sub-cultural frameworks. For this reason, in-service multi-cultural training is a requirement for us all.
It should be noted that at national level, SAQA and the NQF offer a point of departure to change the existing focus to meet the needs of all learners in equal proportion. There is strong anecdotal evidence to indicate resistance in this regard.

Any suggestion that academics should know the sub-cultural background of all their students is impractical – in any event, social change is occurring at such a rate that certain assumptions are immediately rendered invalid. The real issue is to gain a clear sense of cultural dynamics as they affect education and to develop education strategies which ensure that each student has equality of opportunity to realise his / her potential.

Inservice Training Programmes should include the following:

4.2.1 *Understanding the Reality of Multiple Life Worlds*

A basic consideration is the establishment of a knowledge base in which academics explore and learn about culture and the effect it has on their own individual life-styles which in turn can be expanded into its effect on others.

Educators can be enabled to move beyond a pre-occupation with self to understand how their personal prejudices / attitudes and prior understandings influence the outcomes of any cross-cultural learning encounter. They can be brought to a realisation of how they handle culture shock and focus on building mutual understating, rather than focusing on specific areas of overt cultural difference (Broome, 1991). They can be brought to realise that:

- Vast similarities exist and have always existed in and between cultures.

- The learning situation is always a cross-cultural learning encounter in terms of age, expertise, gender, disability, social class, immigrant groups, personality. There is a need to understand that values and social background are critical inputs into the classroom and that
acknowledgement of the life circumstances of students, or the lack thereof, are powerful forces in engendering empowerment or powerlessness in the learning process.

- All educational strategies are culture bound and currently favour mainstream students.

- All minds are equally complex and that minority groupings can and are able to learn at the same level as others when proper support is given (Hunter, 1974)

- Respect for the human dignity of all students is critical to student empowerment. Implicit in this statement are the criteria of acceptance and high expectations for all students and an absence of bias and prejudice.

4.2.2 Student Selection

Student selection procedures continue to be based on middle-class, predominantly Western approaches.

- Academic results remain important, but should not remain an exclusive criterion for success. Constant demands for increasing minimum requirements are heard – inclusive of certain academics who admit that should they apply for programmes today, they might not meet the admission criteria.

- Structured interviews have their place, but frequently disadvantage those applicants not trained in handling the interview situation as well as screening out those who are not fluent in English. Cultural fair strategies for student selection within the TWR needs to be workshopped in a structured fashion.
4.2.3 **Academic Support**

The need for academic support needs to be vigorously addressed within the TWR. Currently the ASU addresses certain specific needs of students but on the academic front, support tends to be sporadic and reliant on dedicated individuals. Too often, the cry of "spoonfeeding" or this is "adult education" is heard. In the only study I came across that investigated why students from minority groupings succeed, the one ingredient that came to the fore was the academic's confidence in the student's ability to succeed.

Definition of intent needs to be clarified and publicised as opposed to value judgments and the appropriation of blame inherent in the terms "social disadvantage", "remedial education" and "poor quality students".

4.2.4 **Communication**

Sensitivity towards English as Second Language Speakers (ESLS) is required which focuses not only on the language itself but on non-verbal feedback from ESLS learners in the classroom. Lecturers should not evaluate knowledge competencies and skills in accordance with standard modes of language practice, but in the context of the meanings that the message conveys. The following attributes on the part of academics have been shown to contribute towards more effective communication in the cross cultural encounter:

- Positive self-concept.
- Ongoing introspection characterised by self-monitoring skills.
- Communication skills that include use of feedback, acceptance and tolerance of difference and use of affiliative behaviour such as eye contact, head nods, facial expression, choice of words in terms of complexity.
- Self-understanding and empathy.
- High levels of behavioural flexibility.
4.3 **Educational Practice**

There are no quick fixes in respect of transforming educational practice. What is true is that lip-service is currently paid to any movement away from “talk and chalk” practices. From timetabling, to concepts about getting through the syllabus, to three hours written examinations and traditional methods of measuring academic productivity based on student contact time of 40 minute periods – all these reinforce the traditional focus of mainstream educational practice.

Important aspects include those elements of which we are all aware, but are not necessarily translated into action.

4.3.1 **Learner centeredness**

*Learner centeredness* and insights into the nuances inherent in the meanings of learning versus teaching and facilitation of learning as opposed to lecturing. Perhaps the term lecturer should be changed to that of facilitator or educator.

4.3.2 **Participative learning**

The fact that students can no longer be passive recipients on the receiving end of teaching material and methods. To this end, absentee academics cannot fulfil their obligations for a variety of efforts must be made to engage students in an exchange of ideas which enables them to make sense of what they are learning, experiencing and living.

4.3.3 **Modes of Instruction**

Multi-cultural educational programmes cannot be realised within the mode of traditional methods of teaching. Academics should:
• Question the traditional Western, linear compartmentalised, objective modes of presenting material.

• Seek and experiment with strategies whereby material can be treated holistically.

• Make use of multiple educational strategies so that the full spectrum of cognitive and learning styles are catered for thereby ensuring a balance between the written and verbal mode, person versus task orientation and active versus passive mode so that total involvement is achieved. Use of multiple strategies is the only approach whereby Hofstede's five dimensions of culturality can be accommodated.

• Develop facilitative strategies whereby students’ decision-making abilities, problem solving and socio-occupational skills are developed.

These approaches militate against rote learning and encourage flexibility and the confidence to modify and change information where necessary as well as an acceptance of responsibility for personal achievements.

4.3.4 Modes of Assessment

Traditional written examinations favour the dominant group, result in poor performance by minority students and fail to create an environment in which competency is acquired.

I cannot count the number of reasons that academics give when challenged about discrepancies between year and examination marks. These range from statements that year marks are artificially inflated by assignments or practical work to the fact that it is easier to learn for tests than examinations. The problems are compounded by the fact that written examinations encourage rote learning and in spite of the stated application of Bloom's taxonomy, the
reality is, that facts gain marks and not the application of higher order cognitive verbs.

Evaluation must be recognised as an integral part of participative and self-directed learning so that mechanisms for self-evaluation and reciprocal feedback can be built into learning materials. Criteria against which work is to be measured must be available to students. In this regard too, objections are many and seen as spoon feeding.

4.3.5 Study Guides

The TWR has a longstanding policy in respect of study guides – the very nomenclature of which is becoming questionable. Academics are inadequately trained in developing learner guides to meet the requirements of OBE. As yet there is no centralised mechanism to ensure that uniform capacity is developed or to ensure that the learner guide fulfills its function. There is a lack of uniform criteria against which different educational strategies and assessment techniques can be benchmarked to ensure participative and learner centred educational experiences.

4.4 Ethical Universals

Perhaps the time has come for the TWR to draw up a Charter of Student Rights and to this end some sort of training in ethical universals would not go amiss. Notions such as the following are not as simplistic as they sound:

- Keeping promises.
- Refraining from doing harm.
- Enabling staff and students to recognise moral choices and their own criteria for decision-making.
- Integrity and credibility.
- Professional expertise.
• Accountability and recognition that each decision carries implications for others.
• Recognition of value-laden issues.

4.3.7 Research and Resource Centre

Successful education in a multi-cultural milieu demands both research, resources and a resource centre.

CONCLUSION

The curriculum, student selection and language proficiency may well be the cornerstones of education and training, but the most significant variables in successful learning outcomes within multi-cultural classrooms are the educators, their attitudes, quality of instruction, understanding of the students environment, ability to be supportive and respectful and to offer constant assurance that their students are capable of learning (Morrison, 1981).
REFERENCES


