Difficult conversations: Lessons learnt from a diversity programme for pre-service teachers

ADRÉ LE ROUX
University of the Free State

PERCY MDUNGE
University of the Free State

Premised on the notion that any educational programme for pre-service teachers pursues excellence in both academics and social justice, teacher educators must capacitate student teachers to work in areas of social justice. Pre-service teachers must subsequently be assisted to become professionally qualified teachers who are prepared to move outside their contingent practices and assumptions to recognise and counteract oppressive practices, especially their own. However, to get pre-service teachers to challenge their own assumptions, to question what they know and to seek new understandings involves entering a field that contains complex, incongruous and even conflicting perspectives. In this reflective article we draw on our reflective notes, our observation and student journals to reflect on the lessons we have learnt from a diversity programme offered to final-year pre-service teachers. This article not only foregrounds how teaching for social justice is partial, but also makes room for considering some implications for teacher education.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, diversity programme, difficult conversations, social justice education, anti-oppressive education, oppression, teacher education

Introduction

Framed within the context of a progressive constitution (1996), social justice is regarded as a worthy national goal to bring about a South African society in which individuals are able to develop their full capacity and to interact democratically with others. The centrality of social justice in theorising about education and schooling is underscored by the Department of Education's commitment to

> *[n]ew education and training policies to address the legacies of under-development and inequitable development and provide learning opportunities for all [that] will be based principally on the constitutional guarantees of equal educational rights for all persons and non-discrimination (Department of Education, 1995: Chapter 3, Section 16).*

South African teachers are subsequently called upon to focus on classroom pedagogies and practices that seek to deal with and combat different forms of oppression such as racism, sexism and heterosexism (Bell, 2007; Francis & Hemson, 2007). However, a recent report on South African education indicates that the system not only "generally produces outcomes that reinforce current patterns of poverty and privilege", but there also seems to be little evidence of education challenging and transforming the apartheid social-era structure (Van der Berg, Burger C, Burger R, De Vos, Du Rand, Gustafsson, Moses, Shepherd, Spaull, Taylor, Van Broekhuizen & Von Fintel 2011:3). Whilst it can be assumed that various forms of oppression still play out in South African classrooms, the role of teacher education institutions in capacitating pre-service teachers to work in areas of social justice is foregrounded.

As national policy requires all teachers to be *socially just teachers*, teacher education institutions must assist pre-service teachers to conceptualise and understand the dynamics of oppression, and to think and articulate *how* they will counteract oppression (Kumashiro, 2002). The onus on teacher education to perceive schooling as a social project aimed at bringing about a more just society foregrounds the aim of this article, in which we, as two teacher educators, reflect on the lessons we have learnt from a diversity

programme introduced to final year B.Ed. Foundation Phase pre-service teachers. It is our contention that a reflection on our missteps and triumphs of our teaching for social justice will strengthen our ongoing attempt to create a space for pre-service teachers to develop an awareness of oppression, to question their own motives and assumptions, and to trouble the many approaches to challenge oppression in and beyond their future classrooms. In addition to the lessons we have learnt from our experience with the programme, we also indicate what should be considered when we think about teacher education.

The programme

Background and rationale

As with other institutions of higher education in South Africa, the University of the Free State was also compelled to reconsider its undergraduate programmes within the context of the newly enacted national policy on *The minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications* (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Opting for an in-depth reconsideration of its programmes, the UFS Faculty of Education worked with the assumption that pre-service teachers must ultimately engage in schooling as both an academic and a social project (Nieto & Bode, 2008:10; Kumashiro, 2002:13). The re-curriculation process was the opportune time to consider a module based on the premise that for pre-service teachers to enter the individual maturity process of professional identity construction, they first need to understand and challenge their own multiple identities (Bell & Griffin, 2007). It is assumed that, by starting to challenge their own multiple identities, pre-service teachers will gradually become professionally qualified teachers who are prepared to move outside their contingent practices and assumptions to recognise and counteract oppressive practices, especially their own (Kumashiro, 2002:1).

We realised that the cohort of current students have had limited opportunity to engage with their own multiple identities and to reflect on how their own stereotypical beliefs can contribute to the marginalisation of learners. A request to work on issues of diversity with the final-year pre-service teachers resulted in a 7-week programme (1 period of 50 minutes per week) for the Foundation Phase students. This article is based on our reflection of this particular programme, and insights gained will be used to inform the presentation of the same programme for Intermediate Phase and Further Education and Training Phase students. In addition to creating the space for students to engage in issues of diversity, the programme also afforded us the opportunity to pilot some of the ideas conceptualised for inclusion in our new undergraduate teacher education programme.

Themes and conceptual lenses

During the conceptualisation of the programme and having to decide what frameworks to introduce, we drew on Adams, Bell and Griffin's (2007) editorial work, *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. Although we gained valuable ideas from this source, it was important to frame our programme within the South African context. We wanted our students not to work with issues related to sexism, heterosexism and racism divorced from their own diverse contexts and real-life experiences; rather, we wanted them to start to question their own assumptions about what they regard as 'normal' and how their sense of 'normalcy' can be complicit with the marginalisation of those learners who are regarded as 'other' than the norm. The decision to work with sexism, heterosexism and racism was due to time constraints and is not meant to centralise these issues within the broader context of various forms of oppression. We also acknowledge that marginalisation involves, *inter alia,* learners from under- or unemployed families, learners with disabilities and learners with non-Christian religious backgrounds. In addition to working with three themes only, we also realised that we had little time and space to endlessly engage in students learning about and inventing strategies to counter oppression across the foundation phase grade levels and the content areas in which they will be required to work. We had to be realistic and settled on two broad programme outcomes, namely to get the students to start to engage with their own multiple identities and to develop an awareness of oppression and the myriad ways in which it can play out in classrooms. We

wanted to create the space for our pre-service teachers to scrutinise their own stance to and assumptions about diversity issues (Kumashiro & Ngo, 2007:X).

In order for students to engage with and make sense of the three themes, especially in terms of where their own perceptions and prejudices come from, Harro's *Cycle of socialisation* (Harro, 2010) was introduced as a conceptual framework. Since the programme was structured in terms of several conceptual organisers and for the students to become familiar with this basic conceptual vocabulary, we drew on Hardiman and Jackson's (2007:35-48) *Theory of oppression*. We wanted our students to become conversant with concepts such as *agents*, *targets*, *privilege*, *disadvantage, internalised domination, internalised subordination* and various forms of *horizontal* and *vertical oppression*.

Assumptions and identities

Although we agree with Kumashiro and Ngo (2007) that any approach and practice to work with issues of diversity is partial as it has both strengths and weaknesses, we premised the programme on the assumption that any programme makes some learning and change possible. Hence, the position from which we approached our engagement with issues of diversity in our conversations with our students is also the standpoint from which we write this article - to reflect on the partiality of our programme; thus to reflect on the lessons we learnt from entering a field that contains complex and conflicting perspectives (Kumashiro & Ngo, 2007:XIX).

We knew from the outset that with a diversity programme we were about to enter an uncertain space to which our students bring their own experiences, understandings and socialisations. Although we, as facilitators, share the same basic values and commitment to teach about power and privilege in relation to the intersections of, *inter alia,* gender, sexuality and race, we also enter the programme with our own multiple identities and personal experiences. It is subsequently important to introduce our identities: Adré is a middle-aged white female who was raised in a middle-class family during apartheid, buttressed in the comfort of white innocence. Working in higher education, she came to the project of teaching for social justice with the realisation that if we want teachers to disrupt the cycle of oppression, pre-service teachers must be assisted to understand oppression and to explore the possibilities that exist for social responsiveness and change within the school context. Percy is a 25-year old African male who was raised in a working-class family. During the first year of his training as an undergraduate student he enrolled for an elective module on Diversity, and since then his own learning has been dedicated towards teaching for social justice.

Despite our different identities, we share the same optimism that we could make a difference and, like North (2009:3), we regard our inadvertent biases as inescapable part of the human experience which could, through our interactions with our students, also be exposed to enable us to work through them.

Our approach, student composition and ethical considerations

In our teaching approach we adopted a collaborative facilitation style characterised by informal dialogue and reflexivity, and centred on the notions of care and compassion. Whilst explicitly attempting to connect class conversation to our everyday life experience and that of our students, we constantly tried to get them to challenge their own assumptions, to question what they know and to seek new understandings (Landis, 2008). Due to the institution's language policy, all lectures are offered on a parallel-medium basis in both Afrikaans and English (cf. www.ufs.ac.za). By implication, the 7 periods resulted into 7 sessions for Afrikaans-speaking and 7 sessions for English-speaking students. As we collaboratively facilitated all sessions, we constantly engaged in code-switching. Although Percy only conversed with the students in English, Afrikaans-speaking students were encouraged to present their views in Afrikaans, with Adré translating into English. Although we were initially concerned that this approach might inhibit some students to express their views, it was well received:

> *Although communication took place in Afrikaans and English, it never bothered me. I never felt that I didn't want to participate in the discussions because of the English. [S24]*

The student composition itself posed certain challenges: all of the 91 final-year B.Ed. Foundation Phase students are females. The lack of diverse voices was further exacerbated by the fact that 86 of the students are white, 3 coloured and 1 African. Of the students, 77 are Afrikaans-speaking, while 14 are English-speaking. As Percy was the only black male voice in class, we had to ensure that his contributions and narratives were not perceived as representative of all black males.

Although class attendance is compulsory, not all students attended the sessions on a regular basis, presumably because the sessions did not involve formal assessment. Another contributing factor to non-attendance might be a growing feeling of discomfort with new forms of knowledge. Kumashiro (2002:6) notices that, although students desire to learn, their belief for normalcy and the affirmation that they do not oppress others often lead to a desire for the repetition of silence regarding difficult issues such as racism, sexism and heterosexism.

Students were required to keep a journal in which they reflected on their feelings and learning gains from each session. As this article is, in addition to our own experiences of and reflective notes on the sessions, also based on data drawn from students' journals, we sought and gained permission from the students whose journal entries we report. To protect their identity, no pseudonyms are used; rather, we opted for a reference system whereby students were randomly assigned numbers.

Lessons learnt: Missteps and triumphs

Our reflection is premised on the belief that we can learn from our students, but also from one another as we bring different experiences and knowledge to our collaborative attempt to work towards social justice. In the next section we reflect on our missteps and indicate how they make room for doing things differently. We also highlight some students' new realisations and unlearning. This reflection highlights two important aspects of teaching for social justice, namely the partiality of any programme and the partiality of our own teaching and learning.

They wanted classroom strategies; we expected them to challenge their prejudices

Our intention with the programme was for our students to develop a basic understanding of how oppression works and to start to challenge their own assumptions and prejudices. Although we realised that due to time constraints it would not be possible to explore strategies to interrupt various forms of oppression, we hoped that the students would develop a commitment to become teachers who will actively and audaciously seek and come up with their own strategies to counter oppression.

However, it soon became evident that many students were less interested in challenging their own assumptions and prejudices; rather, they wanted us to *give* them strategies for classroom practice:

> *I feel the classes could have been better used for techniques about how to teach. [S21]*

Some students were also of the opinion that the topics themselves are problematic in that they are not suitable for discussion in the Foundation Phase:

> *Today we spoke about homosexuality. I think this topic must not be shared with Foundations Phase learners. These learners are still too small and they will get confused. [S19]*

Although we conceptualised the outcomes for the programme beforehand, we failed to clearly communicate the outcomes for the programme, in general, and for each session, in particular. We soon realised that the students entered the programme expecting to be *taught* certain strategies to become better teachers. This expectation could also have been fed by the fact that the allocated periods were part of a year module that primarily focuses on teaching practice, including various teaching strategies. As we realised that some students thought that we expected them to actually teach topics such as sexism, heterosexism and racism in their Foundation Phase classes, we were under no illusion that the outcomes were not going to be reached by many of the students. In an attempt to help our students notice how they themselves were socialised by powerful forces to take up particular roles and to find connection with real-life experiences,

we continuously referred them to the *Cycle of socialisation*. We hoped that they would realise how they, as future Foundation Phase teachers, will not only contribute to the socialisation of their learners, but that they can make a conscious decision to interrupt the cycle of oppression and stand up for change (Harro, 2010:51). However, some persisted:

> *I feel the classes were an absolute waste of time. I didn't learn anything. I feel that our time could have been used in better ways. For e.g., they could have offered classes to teach us techniques. [S16]*

Although we will in future set out the outcomes for the programme from the outset and continuously remind our students thereof, we also have to accept that we cannot prepare our students to respond in certain ways. Outcomes may serve as guidelines and reminders, but we will have to consciously remind ourselves that our students will respond differently since they use different lenses to make sense and react to what they learn (Kumashiro, 2004:112).

But, as with all approaches to counteract the many forms of oppression, our programme also opened new spaces for some students:

> *I learnt a lot about myself and my eyes were opened regarding prejudice and stereotyping on my behalf that I never knew was there. Now that I am nearing the time to get my degree and become a teacher, I realise the big responsibility I have to teach these young impressionable minds. [S3]*

The diverse reactions of our students underscore the partial nature of the knowledge they bring to class and how our own views regarding issues of diversity have strengths and weaknesses. However, we soon realised what Obear (2007) meant by her comment that "facilitating dialogues about issues of diversity, inclusion and equity can be challenging and stressful work".

Racism as a major trigger

Literature on teaching for social justice is interspersed with reflections on how the introduction of issues of race, class and gender and concomitant oppression "often generates powerful emotional responses in students that range from guilt and shame to anger and despair" (Tatum, 1992:1-2; North, 2009). When conceptualising the programme, we discussed the possibility of racism as a trigger event that might evoke strong emotional responses from our students. Given the legacy of our racialised past and the emotional reaction often evoked when referring to racism, we decided to first deal with sexism and heterosexism before tackling racism. Thus, while we expected race and racism to be a trigger event later in the programme, we were not entirely prepared for our students' resistance after two periods into the programme. Apparently, the lodging of a formal complaint was triggered by the introduction of the theory of oppression; more specifically, reference to *white people as agents* and *black people as targets* triggered an almost instantaneous emotional response from some students. Unlike our Teaching and Learning Manager who was concerned with a grievance procedure that was set into motion, we were cautiously excited about the new space the students opened.

We did not prepare the students for feelings of discomfort

We realised that the complaint came from a position of white privilege, but also stemmed from a feeling of guilt. Most students equate racism with apartheid, and by claiming that they were not part of apartheid, they work with the assumption that racism ended with the abolishment of apartheid itself. They subsequently find it difficult to recognise their own privilege and to reflect on the possibility that they might unconsciously discriminate in their classes on the basis of race:

> *Racism is not something we like to talk about because it is made such a big thing, but we didn't really live in that time ... it is no longer a problem. [S13]*

The students' response to the issues of race and racism reminded us of Kumashiro's (2002:4) statement that

> *the desire to learn only what is comforting goes hand in hand with a resistance to learning what is discomforting and this resistance often proves to be a formidable barrier to movements towards social justice.*

Whilst the latter was reflected in some journals where students indicated that they have learnt nothing from the programme, we realised that we did not prepare our students for the discomfort they might experience during the programme nor for the possibility of being pushed from their comfort zones, and how to make sense of their discomfort when this happens.

To make use of this new space our students created, the programme was put on hold and the concepts of *comfort zones*, *learning edges* and *triggers* were discussed (Hardiman & Jackson, 2007). The students were encouraged to reflect on discussions in the programme that made them feel uncomfortable. The aim of this session was to help them understand how one is often pushed from a comfort zone when new information is discussed. Words and phrases may serve as triggers to stimulate emotional responses. Finding oneself on the edge of one's comfort zone, there is a choice: one may choose to resist the new information, or one could seize the opportunity to expand one's understanding. We realised that, if this conversation took place during the first session, concepts such as *comfort zones*, *learning edges* and *triggers* could have served as guides for our students.

Although we will in future prepare our students from the outset for discomfort and unexpected emotional reactions they may encounter during the programme, having this conversation at a 'late' stage of the programme was not 'too' late:

> *I was also first upset with some of the things we discussed, but when the lecturers explain it in such a way [comfort zones, learning edges and triggers], I had a better understanding ... We can only benefit from it and it will not only enrich you as a person, but as a teacher. [S36]*

We were too focused on introducing basic conceptual vocabulary

Once we identified the *Theory of oppression* as the major triggering event, we realised that we were so focused on introducing the basic conceptual vocabulary that we never engaged in a critical discussion of the theory itself. As with all theories, this theory also has its strengths and weaknesses and it was not our intention to present it as a 'grand theory'. Rather, we wanted the theory to provide our students with a lens through which to examine and better understand how oppression operates as a system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on social group memberships (Hardiman & Jackson, 2007:58). However, given the defensiveness with which some students responded to the theory, we realised that they perceived the theory as our perception of an 'absolute truth':

> *I was very uncomfortable in this class and felt like they want to force a certain feeling and way of being onto us. I do not think their information is very accurate. [S16]*

In future we will explain the role of theories, in general, and then enter into a critical discussion about the *Theory of oppression,* in particular. It is important for the students to understand that a theory can serve as a helpful conceptual framework to make sense and meaning of new information and awareness. No theory should, however, be uncritically accepted, and a critical discussion of the theory can help students work through their own perceptions of new historical conditions in post-apartheid South Africa.

Navigating and managing our own triggers

In our attempt to make sense of our students' response, we first reflected on our reaction and feelings to the complaint. As facilitators, we also bring to the learning environment our own fears, stereotypes, memories of past traumas and current experiences, and we were unexpectedly triggered by the students' defensiveness. Obear (2007:23) argues that triggering events can be effectively navigated, providing that facilitators are prepared to "effectively manage themselves when they are triggered so that they both model the skills and attitudes they are teaching in the session". It was subsequently imperative for us to reflect on our own emotions before we continued to work with our students.

Unlike Percy who immediately connected the complaint to the possibility of him being black, Adré did not even consider her whiteness as a reason for the complaint. Whilst the timing of the complaint was unexpected, she was not surprised at the complaint itself, nor at the reasons offered for the complaint. Working with issues of whiteness in her own research, she understood and expected that part of the privilege of being white is that one could choose not to hear and not to know (Steyn, 2001:9). However, she discovered within herself a hint of impatience with some students' commitment to not critically interrogate how their own prejudices can feed into contemporary reification and replication of injustices. In this regard, she realised that she has to intentionally navigate her impatience so as not to compromise the upholding of the principle 'not to harm'.

Percy's lived experiences regarding issues of race and racism influenced the manner in which he reacted. Having experienced and witnessed racist situations in the past, it was an immediate trigger to see students shying away from discussing racism based on their claim that we are now all equal. The students' complaint subsequently led to a feeling of guilt as he reflected on questions such as: "Had I made the students feel guilty for the continued existence of racism?"; "Was my identity as a black person in any way evoking discomfort among the students when it comes to discussing issues of race?". This led to the realisation that it is important to constantly affirm that they cannot take responsibility for the existence of oppression (Harro, 2010), but that at the same time they need to be motivated to work towards challenging its continued existence.

Not all was always civil

Landis (2008:i) argues that the art to respectfully argue, including the effort to find mutual solutions, seems to be in trouble. When working with challenging content, we knew that care should be taken that students are not marginalised for their conflicting perspectives. In order to create a space in which students could feel safe to express their opinions, they were asked to collaboratively identify guidelines for class discussions (Hardiman & Jackson, 2007:54). Although the aim of these discussion guidelines was to help with the development of trust and safety, we made the mistake in assuming that the mere identification of such guidelines was sufficient. We did not engage the students in a discussion of each guideline, nor were they asked to identify indicators for each guideline. Although the conversations during the sessions evoked conflicting responses, we never experienced any emotional outbursts that spiralled into destructive class discussions. We thought all was well and only reminded the students of the discussion guidelines when they were asked to talk about their own feelings of discomfort. It was only during the final session and while working through the journals that we realised things were not as civil as we thought:

> *Unpleasant things that came to the fore during the sessions were that some opinions in class caused friction amongst the students ... some lectures have caused the group to be torn into two. [S39]*

Journal entries reflecting the difficulty some students experienced when they were criticised and labelled after class for their opinions made us realise that we did not provide sufficient support for them to move into the contradiction phase. Bell and Griffin (2007:76) explain the contradiction phase as the phase in which activities encourage students to not only take risks, but also resist the tendency to relieve uncomfortable moments in class. So what will we need to do different? We will spend more time on the discussion guidelines, ensuring that students really understand the meaning of each guideline. We will visually display the guidelines during each session and remind the students thereof. We hope that the combination of these guidelines with the preparation of the students for feelings of discomfort might make it easier for them to express their own confusion and to reflect on their own struggle with complicated issues as they arise.

Despite some students feeling judged by fellow students for their opinions, most students expressed an appreciation for the informal approach:

> *I enjoyed being actively involved during each session. It was nice to engage in discussions, to argue at times, to share opinions ... The facilitators treated us as equals and they respected our opinions. [S28]*

However, not all students enjoyed hearing different opinions and some perceived conflicting opinions in a negative light. We were somewhat surprised by this, especially as we thought we succeeded in effectively dealing with controversy:

> *About every time that the class took part in discussions it turned into a negative discussion because students disagree about things and then it made the class very unpleasant. [S17]*

As we accept that part of our task is to "show students how to transcend the boundaries of their own perceptions, and engage respectfully with new ideas" (Landis, 2008:i), we realised that we need to make sense of these negative experiences. From the journal entries it was evident that the students are more used to classes where the lecturing style requires them to be mostly passive recipients. It was noticeable how most students expressed their appreciation for a space in which they felt their opinions were respected and they were treated as equals. However, students who feel safer in what is perceived to be a 'pleasant' space where all are in agreement may feel threatened when different perspectives challenge the frameworks they use to affirm their own identities and knowledge. It is this desire for certainty that often compels students to resist learning something that disrupts their common-sense view of the world (Kumashiro, 2004). In reflection, we realised that, although our programme will necessarily disrupt what our students perceive as certain, we need to constantly think of different and innovative ways in which we can make our programme inclusive for *all* voices to be heard.

Implications for teacher education

This article affirms our understanding that, as teaching for social justice is always partial, we as teacher educators are required to be continuously reflexive about how our own teaching and learning are partial. In addition, the lessons we have learnt also highlight some implications for the inclusion of social justice education in initial teacher education (ITE).

Any programme for ITE should foremost be informed by the link between the constitutionally protected right to education and the development imperative whereby teachers, among others, are required to "free the potential of each person" (RSA, 1996: Preamble). Within the context of teacher education, pre-service teachers must be capacitated to advance the "acquisition, integration and application of different types of knowledge practices or learning" (DHET, 2011: Section 3), and to confront inequalities and stratification in schools that hamper the freeing of all learners' potential. The imperative for teacher education to include social justice education is underscored by Kollapen's (2006) argument that the realisation of the right to education, thus the freeing of everybody's potential, is a precondition to creating "the conditions for the attainment of substantive equality and social justice". The dual purpose of schooling, namely the pursuit of excellence in academic and social justice (Kumashiro, 2004), subsequently highlights the challenge for teacher education programmes to not only find a balance between the two goals, but also strengthen their interconnection.

Our pre-service teachers' expectation to be *taught* strategies to be 'good teachers' and their desire for pleasant spaces where all are in agreement highlight the tendency of teacher education programmes to focus on producing "technicists who may be able to replicate performance in similar contexts, but who are severely challenged when the context changes" (DHET, 2011: Section 3). As South African education is still producing unequal learning outcomes that reinforce patterns of poverty and privilege (Van den Berg *et al.,* 2011), teacher education should adopt a systematic approach to critically consider how pedagogy and curriculum are infused with values of social justice. As teacher educators, we should remain reflexive about the way in which the curriculum prepares pre-service teachers to become professional teachers who offer rigorous education of high quality, whilst simultaneously being responsive to the economic, social and political conditions in schools and society that inexorably affect the lives of our learners (Nieto & Bode, 2008). As such, modules on social justice should not be treated as merely *in addition* to or as *add-ons* in the pursuit of competence in teaching subjects. Rather, we argue for the inclusion of modules in teacher education programmes that not only address education for social justice as deeply inscribed habits of feeling and thinking shaped by discursive habits (Petrovic & Rosiek, 2003), but also infuse pedagogy and curriculum across the board with values of fairness, respect, dignity and generosity. Teaching for

social justice should therefore not be confined to so-called social justice modules and programmes; rather, it is important that *all* teacher educators become allies in the quest to deliver socially just teachers "who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader society in which we live" (Bell, 2007:1-2).

The disjunction experienced by some of our pre-service teachers between their perceived non-sense and the relevance of our diversity programme stresses the need for teacher education to strengthen the interface between professional identity construction and the development of agency for change. As a dynamic process that begins during teacher education, teacher professional identity construction involves and evolves the way in which pre-service teachers start to imagine themselves as future professionals (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000:750). Whilst teacher education sets this individual maturity process into motion, a teacher education programme informed by a meaningful balance between teaching for academic excellence and teaching for social justice has the potential to affect pre-service teachers' ability to start to imagine themselves as agents of change. It is assumed that, when the process of professional identity construction remains informed by pedagogy of reasoning and action for academic achievement *and* for social justice, pre-service teachers will become action-oriented professional teachers who are prepared to use power and influence to make decisions that affect positive social change (Moore, 2007:592).

References

Bell LA 2007. Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M Adams, LA Bell & P Griffin (eds), *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge, 1-14.

Bell LA & Griffin P 2007. Designing social justice education courses. In M Adams, LA Bell & P Griffin (eds), *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge, 67-87.

Beijaard D, Meijer PC & Verloop N. 2004. Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teacher and Teaching Education*, **20**:107-128.

Department of Education 1995. *White Paper on Education and Training.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Higher Education and Training 2011. *The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Francis D & Hemson C 2007. Rainbow's end: Consciousness and enactment in social justice education. *Perspectives in Education*, **25(1)**:99-112.

Hardiman R & Jackson B 2007. Conceptual foundations for social justice education. In M Adams, LA Bell & P Griffin (eds), *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge, 35-48.

Harro B 2010. The cycle of socialization. In M Adams, WJ Blumenfield, C Castañeda, HW Hackman, ML Peters & X Zúñiga (eds), *Readings for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge, 45-51.

Kollapen J 2006. *School violence.* Opening address at a public hearing (transcription), 28 September.

Kumashiro KK 2002. *Troubling education: Queer activism and anti-oppressive pedagogy.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Kumashiro KK 2004. Uncertain beginnings: Learning to teach paradoxically. *Theory into Practice*, **43(20)**:112-115.

Kumashiro KK & Ngo B (eds) 2007. *Six lenses for anti-oppressive education.* New York: Peter Lang.

Landis K (ed) 2008. *Start talking. A handbook for engaging difficult dialogues in higher education*. Anchorage: University of Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University.

Moore F 2007. Agency, identity and social justice education: Pre-service teachers' thoughts on becoming agents of change in urban elementary science classrooms. *Research in Science Education,* **38**:589-610.

Nieto S & Bode P 2008. *Affirming diversity. The socio-political context of multicultural education.* 5th edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.

North CE 2009. *Teaching for social justice? Voices from the front lines.* London: Paradigm Publishers.

Obear K 2007. Navigating triggering events: Critical skills for facilitating difficult dialogues. *Generational Diversity*, **15(30)**:23-29.

Petrovic J & Rosiek J 2003. Heteronormative subjectivities of Christian pre-service teachers. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, **36**:161-169.

Republic of South Africa 1996. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.* Pretoria: Government Printer.

Steyn M 2001. *Whiteness just isn't what it used to be*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Tatum BD 1992. Talking about racism, learning about racism: The application of racial identity development theory in the classroom. *Harvard Educational Review,* **62(1)**:1-24.

Van den Berg S, Burger C, Burger R, De Vos M, Du Rand G, Gustafsson M, Moses E, Shepherd D, Spaull N, Taylor S, Van Broekhuizen H & Von Fintel D 2011. *Low quality education as a poverty trap*. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.