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## MULTICULTURALISM AND DEMOCRACY EDUCATION

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### INTRODUCTION

At the outset, the question needs answering: Why delve into this subject? Torres has lucidly explained that theories of democracy and multiculturalism attempt to clarify a sense of identity for a democratic citizen and a multicultural subject while also defining the possibilities and limits of forms of sociability that will promote the ability in individuals to tolerate and associate with people from different backgrounds<sup>5</sup>.

This paper will appraise this topic from a South African angle, where our emergence from an era of racial segregation has triggered new challenges. But before doing this, I would like to spell out the peculiar nuances and contexts in which the key terms of the title – namely, multiculturalism, democracy and education – have been utilized in my presentation.

### KEY CONCEPTS

Before examining "multiculturalism", we first scrutinize the term "culture" whose significations it carries within a pluralistic context as evident from the qualifier "multi".

Harris and Moran define culture as follows: "Culture gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they behave, and of what they should be doing"<sup>6</sup>. While this explanation is simple enough, it alludes to both the implicit components of culture like values, beliefs and attitudes upheld by a group of people as well as its explicit dimensions like concrete manifestations at the levels of technology, religion, political and economic ideology<sup>7</sup>. Culture's features are elaborated in terms of characteristics like individualism and collectivism, sense of self and space, communication and language, dress and appearance, food and eating habits, time consciousness, roles and relationships, values and norms, mental and learning processes, work habits and social roles, and perceptions and epistemology<sup>8</sup>.

This appraisal is more comprehensive than some popular media ones that either reduce its designation to a system (as found for instance in "a culture of violence" or "a

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5 Torres, C.A. 20 March, 1998. "Democracy, Education and Multiculturalism: Dilemmas of Citizenship in a Global World". Presidential Address to the Annual Meeting of the Comparative International Education Society (CIES), Buffalo, New York. [www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=EJ57](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=EJ57) (Accessed 2 December 2010), pp. 5-6.

6 Harris, P.R. & Moran, R.T. 1991. *Managing Cultural Differences* (3rd edition). Houston: Gulf, pp. 9-12.

7 Mead, R. 1994. *International Management: cross-cultural dimensions*. Cambridge: Blackwell, pp. 7-14. See also, Eco, U. 1994 (1983). "Does counter-culture exist?" (trans. Jenny Condie). In: Eco, U. *Apocalypse Postponed* (ed. Lumley, R). Bloomington: Indiana University Press and London: British Film Institute, pp. 115-128.

8 Peterson, R.B. (ed.). 1993. *Managers and National Culture: A Global Perspective*. Westport, Connecticut: Quorum, 206-211; Lane, H.W. & DiStefano, J.J. 1992. *International Management Behavior: from policy to practice* (2nd edition). Boston: PWS-Kent, pp. 25-41; Gudykunst, W.B. & Ting-Toomey, S. 1988. *Culture and Interpersonal Communication*. California: Sage, pp. 40-93.



culture of learning") or use it to describe the practices and refinements of society's affluent strata<sup>9</sup>.

**Multiculturalism** in the most literal sense means a multiplicity of cultures interacting and influencing one another<sup>10</sup>. The salient objective of this phenomenon is the creation of synergy based on the following values: respect, tolerance of ambiguity, non-disparagement, personalizing individual views and empathy<sup>11</sup>.

This concept has also been linked to the inculcation of civic virtues by Torres that, in turn, are grounded in solidarity across diverse cultures for the purpose of attaining common goals. He adds: "These goals ... can also be accomplished with a more ambitious agenda: how to thrive as a community of communities, as a culture of cultures, drawing from our cultural diversity as a cultural strength ..."<sup>12</sup>.

Multiculturalism is a byproduct of economic, cultural and political globalization that is unique to human history<sup>13</sup>.

However, cultural analysts like Žižek have interpreted multiculturalism from a radically different angle in which it is intrinsically Eurocentric for understanding other cultures. People from other cultures are mainly seen as a means for achieving desired objectives.<sup>14</sup> Such a model withholds respect from different ways of life while denigrating the contributions of some sectors like women and minority groups to the country's civic culture. It fails to teach students the civic values of democratic dissent and disobedience to unjust laws<sup>15</sup>. It resorts to banning books, punishing teachers and pupils for unpopular ideas<sup>16</sup>. This was the approach adopted by the South African government during the era of racial discrimination, as implied by Neville Alexander<sup>17</sup>.

**Democracy**, a Greek term, denotes rule by the people or, more accurately, by a majority of people since they are rarely unanimous. Yet specific groups like women, slaves and resident aliens were excluded from this process in ancient Athens. In Western political theory, some social groups (like Jews and Gypsies), labourers and people of colour as also individuals lacking certain attributes or skills (like literacy and numeracy) were in principle also excluded from citizenship in many societies<sup>18</sup>. In recent times, the term's tenuousness was/is manifested in its appropriation by modern regimes having absolutely no justifiable claim to it, like Kampuchea, Israel and apartheid South Africa.

It also needs to be recalled that not all thinkers and politicians have been favourably disposed towards democracy in general or to some aspects of it. Plato and Aristotle both deplored it, Plato because it handed control of government from experts in governing to demagogues and Aristotle because government by the people was actually government by the

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9 Bošković, A. n.d. Multiculturalism and the End of History. [www.gape.org/sasa/multiculturalism.htm](http://www.gape.org/sasa/multiculturalism.htm), p. 2. (Accessed 1 November 2010).

10 Ibid, p. 4.

11 Dadoo, Y. et. al. 2001. Multicultural Sensitivity for Managers. Rant en Dal: Tsebanang Group, p. 7.

12 Torres, op. cit., p. 56.

13 Loc. cit.

14 Bošković, op. cit., p. 5.

15 Gutmann, A. 1996-2004. Challenges of Multiculturalism in Democratic Education. Princeton: Philosophy of Education Society, p. 2. [www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/95\\_docs/gutmann.html](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/95_docs/gutmann.html). (Accessed 22 November 2010).

16 Loc. cit.

17 Alexander, N. 12-13 Dec. 2005. Nation building in the multilingual and multicultural post-apartheid South Africa. p. 1. Paper presented at conference on "Social Sciences and humanities in Europe: New challenges, new opportunities". Organised by the European Commission, Brussels. [ftp://ftp.cords.europa.eu/pub/citizens/doc/alexander\\_pres\\_conf2005.pdf](ftp://ftp.cords.europa.eu/pub/citizens/doc/alexander_pres_conf2005.pdf) (Accessed 22 November 2010).

18 Torres, op. cit., p. 7.



poor who could be expected to expropriate the rich. For almost a hundred and fifty years up to 1920 leading scholars remained concerned about the tyranny of the majority.

Perceived anomalies have been addressed by political thinkers in different ways which have, in turn, generated other hitches. For instance, J. S. Mill proposed weighting votes in favour of the more educated and therefore richer segment of the voting population. Practically, this suggestion has resulted in specific interest groups carrying more political leverage than the casting of a routine vote at election time as well as greater centralized decision-making at local government level that minimize individual influence. James Madison supported representative democracy that would counter the intemperate passions of the majority, who – if allowed to make government policy directly – would threaten individual rights. All such pronouncements have led to the creation of checks and balances within a democracy which can also be contested.

Moreover, relying on the judgement of the majority does not secure the infallibility of any decision taken; majorities have voted to persecute minorities as has been the case in Northern Ireland, Israel and apartheid South Africa. To circumvent this problem, "democracy" is restricted narrowly to majority rule while toleration, entrenchment of rights and so on, are only regarded as preconditions for democracy<sup>19</sup>.

We now explore issues relating to the link between democracy and education.

Relating to schooling, there is a theory of learning and governance called democratic education in which students and staff participate freely and equally in decision-making processes<sup>20</sup>. While such a situation may be an ideal it may be contended that it is rarely attained to an effective degree anywhere.

Recently, the interface of education and democracy at a broader level has stimulated interesting responses. Briefly, the problem may be expressed as follows: Democracy implies full participation by all citizens in the decision-making processes of the country on the basis of their equality. But education suggests a path that needs to be followed to remove disparity between the less and more knowledgeable/skilled sectors of the population. In this set-up, it is profitable to conceive of less informed and less consummate people as being neither tabula rasa in cognitive and ethical terms, nor fully equipped to discharge their democratic rights and duties.

In this framework, multiculturalism occupies a pivotal position for appreciating and overcoming disparities of race, creed, language and other socio-economic problems.

**Education** and its associated issues have engaged the attention of thinkers for millennia.

For Plato (424 B.C.-348 B.C.) its holistic nature had to embrace facts, skills, physical discipline, music and art. While elementary education made the soul responsive to the environment, higher education helped the soul to search for the truth which illuminated it. Aristotle (384 B.C.-322 B.C.) stressed the importance of cultivating nature, habit and reason<sup>21</sup>.

Ibn Sina (980-1037) advocated the empiricist theory of tabula rasa by postulating that the human intellect at birth resembled a clean slate that was augmented through education.

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19 Anon. n.d. "Political Dictionary: Democracy". In: Answers.com (www.answers.com/topic/democracy), p. 4. (Accessed 11 November 2010); Anon, n.d. "British History: Democracy". In: Answers.com (www.answers.com/topic/democracy), p. 5. (Accessed 11 November 2010); Anon. n.d. "U S History Encyclopedia: Democracy". In: Answers.com (www.answers.com/topic/democracy), p. 6. (Accessed 11 November 2010); Morrow, W. 2009. *Bounds of Democracy: epistemological access in higher education*. Cape Town: HSRC, p. 55.

20 Distefano, A, et. al. 2005. *Encyclopedia of Distributed Learning*, p. 221. books.google.nl/books?id=PwNPSIDHFxcC&printsec=frontcover. (Accessed 18 November 2010).

21 Noddings, N. 1995. *Philosophy of Education*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, p. 1. These views have been reiterated by Rudolf Steiner in the early twentieth century. See www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\_upload/archive/publications/ThinkersPdf/piagete.pdf (Accessed 10 November 2010).



Knowledge acquisition proceeds from the known tangible world to the abstraction of intangible, universal concepts through syllogistic reasoning<sup>22</sup>.

But this was severely contested by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who believed that there was a single developmental process innate in all human beings in the form of curiosity which facilitated the acquisition of knowledge.

Mention has to be made of William Chandler Bagley (1874-1946) who insisted on the intrinsic value of knowledge rather than its instrumental value<sup>23</sup>.

On the other hand, opinions about the instrumental value of education have emphasized its role in character development. Representatives of this way of thinking are the acclaimed Muslim jurist, philosopher and mystic Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. 1111)<sup>24</sup> and the Indian passive resister and politician, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi<sup>25</sup> (d. 1948).

The Department of Education in South Africa constantly stresses both the intrinsic and instrumental values of learning (which includes multicultural sensitivity), as indicated by its templates of learning outcomes for different levels of learning<sup>26</sup>. The persistent question remains: has it succeeded in implementing those objectives? To answer it, we proceed to an interface between multiculturalism and democracy on the one hand and education on the other in contemporary South Africa.

### **MULTICULTURALISM, DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa is a country that has been eminently preoccupied with discourses of racism rather than multiculturalism, so it is befitting to review this enigma which, as our earlier discussion intimates, constitutes one segment of culture. This discussion will enable us to appreciate the role of multiculturalism and its impact on educational policy.

The difficulty lies firstly in accurately defining terms like (non)-racism, (non)-racialism, African nationalism and multiracialism.

The ANC practiced multiracialism until 1969 whereby Whites were tasked with organizing other Whites, Indians other Indians and Coloureds other Coloureds in their respective organizations which fell under the umbrella of the ANC-led alliance. Until then, Africans believed that White communists had used multiracialism to secure a disproportionate influence over the ANC. At the same time, White communists disapproved of the multiracialism of the ANC and maintained that the struggle for equal rights for all races was obscuring the real struggle which was class based. Meanwhile, it was the Communist Party that almost pioneered the practice of non-racialism by allowing people of all races to belong to the party.

Much of this debate continues to resonate today, with questions being raised about whether non-Africans can truly represent the interests of Africans, or whether Africans are able to represent other Africans purely because they belong to the same race.

Meanwhile, many have suggested that Africans in government have done nothing more than enriching themselves which is a problem that will be examined a little later. David

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22 Rizvi, S.H. 2006. "Avicenna/Ibn Sina (980-1037)". In: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. [www.iep.utm.edu/a/avicenna.htm](http://www.iep.utm.edu/a/avicenna.htm) (Accessed 19 November 2010). Also see, Lock, J. 1996. *Some Thoughts concerning Education and of the Conduct of the Understanding* (eds. Grant, R.W. & Tarcov, N.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., p. 10.

23 Gutek, G.L. 2009. *New Perspectives on Philosophy and Education*. Pearson Education, Inc, pp. 346.

24 1957. *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (vol. 1). Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, pp. 10, 12, 15-17.

25 1998. Gandhi, M.K. *Gandhi on Education*. New Delhi: National Council for Teacher Education, pp. 2, 9, 17-18, 26.

26 For amplification, one needs only to examine range statements and learning outcomes of different education levels on the Department of Education's website at [www.DoE.gov.za](http://www.DoE.gov.za)



Everatt argues that non-racialism is a meaningless concept devoid of moral content today<sup>27</sup>. As Ivor Chipkin explains, the aim of non-racialism during Mandela's administration was to unite all South Africans on the basis of egalitarian and other democratic values. However, his successor, Thabo Mbeki, championed the cause of African nationalism through the formation of a Black government. This is interpreted by some analysts as racism.

Gradually, ethnic racism is being replaced by political racism. Any criticism of government is equated with criticism of African people in particular. Even Blacks who question or criticize government are often denounced as coconuts – Black on the outside, White on the inside. Here colour has been equated with loyalty to the government<sup>28</sup>.

Grisso, an African in the diaspora, offers the following perspectives: Racialism is the espousal of race as a factor that ought to condition one's economic, social and political conduct. So Mandela qualifies to be called a racialist because his struggle against apartheid was predicated on the race-based solidarity of those who were enslaved. Racialism translates into African nationalism. But racism is the practice or espousal of conduct leading to the oppression or subjugation of others based on race<sup>29</sup>. According to this definition, is the present South African government practicing racism? The answer lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Ramsamy declares that the non-racialism espoused by the ANC in early post-apartheid times encountered objections from the minority Indian and Coloured communities on the one hand, who felt politically and economically insecure with a strategy that they felt would ride slipshod over them, and from the largest African group, the Zulus, whose potentially volatile nationalism threatened to fragment the fledgling nation. To resolve this dilemma, it pragmatically adopted multiculturalism that could embrace all, and even antagonistic identities under the rubric of 'the Rainbow Nation'<sup>30</sup>.

During that time, the Deputy Minister of Education, Mosibudi Mangena, proposed a return to the "African cultural heritage" that, alas, has no information value in terms of definition and criteria<sup>31</sup>.

While all these debates continue, the socio-political landscape of the country reflects deep economic disparities. Alexander comments:

"What distinguishes post-apartheid from apartheid South Africa in this context is the changed relationship between race and class. That is to say, at the top of the racial hierarchy, there is a definite, if slow, deracialisation of the elites taking place, whereas at the bottom, we are faced with what is often a war of all against all, the result of a most potent cocktail of inherited racial prejudice and jobless growth, which is itself caused by the prevailing macro-economic policy"<sup>32</sup>.

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27 2009, Sep. 8. Momoniat, Y. "Yusuf Dadoo's legacy is our tradition of non-racialism", pp. 1-2. [www.historymatters.co.za/rendering-race-irrelevant](http://www.historymatters.co.za/rendering-race-irrelevant) (Accessed 22 November 2010).

The importance of non-racialism is enshrined in the 1996 constitution of the Republic of South Africa. See section 1(b).

28 Chipkin, I. June, 2008. "South Africa needs non-racialism, not Zionism". In: HSRC Review (6:2). [www.hsrc.ac.za/HSRC\\_Review\\_Article-99.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/HSRC_Review_Article-99.phtml), pp. 1-2. For this understanding of non-racialism, also refer to Ramsamy, E. Sep. 2007. "Between Non-Racialism and Multiculturalism: Indian Identity and Nation Building in South Africa". In: *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* (98:4), p. 468. [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2007.00415.x/full](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2007.00415.x/full), p. 7. (Accessed 4 November 2010).

29 Grisso. n.d. "Malcolm and Mandela: Black Nationalism or Non-Racialism?" [www.theafrican.com/Magazine/malcolm.htm](http://www.theafrican.com/Magazine/malcolm.htm) (Accessed 22 November 2010).

30 Ramsamy, op. cit., p. 1.

31 Bošković, op. cit., p. 6.

32 Alexander, op. cit., p. 2.



The middle classes and a few Black people in the upper class (who are pejoratively called black diamonds) are the only real beneficiaries of the new dispensation<sup>33</sup>.

It is within this context that multiculturalism needs to be understood.

Robert Jensen mentions that White beneficiaries of the apartheid regime invoke multiculturalism to evade genuine redressing of previous socio-economic imbalances based on racial lines. Their line of reasoning is roughly as follows: Now that a new non-racial government has been installed, political problems relating to race are irrelevant. People need to foster a climate of greater cultural understanding and engagement. This approach smacks of condescension because difficult questions about disparities in power and distribution of wealth are addressed via multiculturalism. Obviously, acknowledging and using cultural diversity for creating synergy is a noble task, but multiculturalism by itself cannot be a substitute for just redress and compensation<sup>34</sup>.

A laissez-faire attitude towards multiculturalism has also been evident among some people and groups profiting from the dismantling of apartheid which means, in essence, that the status quo remains with minimal window-dressing to validate their social, economic and political commitment to an equitable dispensation. A perfect example of this stance lay in the lukewarm response the authors of a book on Multicultural Sensitivity for Managers received from the higher echelons of Unisa. Despite being awarded the highest prize for a well researched and pioneering work at a lavish gala by the Centre for Business Management at that university the course on multiculturalism (for which this book constituted primary reading material) fizzled out in less than five years due to fiscal reasons. The book's authors were clearly informed that a course like this failed to answer the more urgent economic skills development needs of the population<sup>35</sup>. The work is all but forgotten by the university which runs multicultural workshops for its staff on a regular basis. Appallingly, the fruits of these endeavours remain largely concealed.

The ideals of multiculturalism for higher education institutions include diversification of academics and student bodies, to the extent possible and given the available resources<sup>36</sup>.

Despite all the inconsistencies conveyed by 'multiculturalism', it has become a buzzword in South African social discourse. To its credit, it has to be emphasized that its earlier Eurocentric connotation has been diluted to a large extent in overt discussions among members belonging to different racial groups. However, this does not mean that it is absent from overt and subtle innuendos during assessments of the country's broad social and political climate or in situations where individuals or communities have grabbed the democratic spaces available to them for promoting separatist agendas. The foggy insights into multiculturalism have produced ramifications like the following:

Many schools located near traditionally Black residential areas, which are legacies of apartheid, have become dysfunctional for reasons beyond the scope of this paper. Meanwhile, previously privileged schools that catered for White pupils during apartheid are admitting Black pupils now. However, their admission fees can only be afforded by the proportionately low percentage of poor Black parents. The governance at such schools has remained largely

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33 Ibid., p. 3.

34 Jensen, R. 9 June 2009. "In South Africa, Apartheid is dead but White supremacy lingers on". In: Counterpunch.(ed. Cockburn, A & St. Clair, J.). [www.counterpunch.org/jensen06092009.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/jensen06092009.html) (Accessed 4 November 2010), p. 2.

35 The fiscal challenges have been well articulated by Torres, op. cit., p. 59.

36 Ibid., p. 58.



White, thereby reflecting Eurocentrism, with many affluent Black parents content to sponsor their children's education there without critiquing the superficial, condescending type of multiculturalism that is often promoted at those institutions.

Guilt in this context also has to be borne by "the Black diamonds" spoken of earlier who actually measure their material progress by contemporary White standards. Their criteria of success include cultivating British or American accents when speaking English, wearing designer label clothing, consuming fast foods and preferring individualism to their traditional collectivism. Consequently, they veer towards the predominant, global culture and by implication assign a low rating to their traditional culture/s. Certainly, multiculturalism cannot be advanced with such an attitude.

This situation is a stark reminder of the reflection of Ibn Khaldun, made more than six hundred years ago, about the imitation of new rulers and, one may add the nouveau riche, to the material norms of their predecessors: "Rulers always imitate the previous regime as regards the phase and conditions of sedentary life. They observe the conditions of their predecessors, taking mostly from them"<sup>37</sup>.

Roughly the same malaise prevails at higher institutions of learning too.

During these times, democracy has also been summoned to promote separatist cultural identities by some minorities that are either linguistic/cultural or religious. The first of these categories have just been analysed while discussing Eurocentrism. A final comment about this trend is that it will prize the teaching of European languages to the teaching of indigenous languages, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The religious trend is detailed now.

It is illustrated by religious private schools where the curriculum is mainly secular with a small number of courses devoted to the specific religions observed by their founders. They have emerged as a counterrevolution to practices promoted by the state and broader society in which, involved parties believe, the necessary religious values can be instilled<sup>38</sup>. The societal outlook of pupils from such schools remains introspective, that is, confined to what they have been taught to be in the best interest of their religion. It needs to be remembered that such outlooks can sometimes be ingrained very subtly into the fertile minds of pupils.

According to Gutmann, whose observations to the American situation are equally valid for South Africa, the problem with these schools is that they primarily create separatist identities of the communities they serve and bolster the self-esteem of students and pupils based on their membership of a separatist religious community. Ultimately, they inculcate a sense of religious superiority and superciliousness towards the lifestyles of all other citizens. Even if there may be academic justification for some of the arguments advanced by these institutions, the resulting disrespect towards other religious groups counters the objective of democratic education. This attitude assists in drawing blinkers over the eyes of pupils who

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37 Ibn Khaldun, 'A al-R. n.d. Muqaddima. Baghdad: Al-Muthanna, p. 172.

For more details about the pervasiveness of material greed and individualism of particularly the socio-economically mobile elite and the appalling nature of many educational institutions, refer to Morrow, op. cit., p. 1.

38 For more details of these schools among Muslims, refer to Dadoo, Y. 2008. "The Consolidation and Spread of Islam in South Africa" in American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (26:2), Herndon, VA: Association of Muslim Social Scientists of North America & International Institute of Islamic Thought, pp. 48-78.



learn to generalize about others' behavior on the basis of their religious differences to them rather than by virtue of the merit or demerit of acts per se that are performed by others.

In a democratic society, mutual respect is both a public as well as a private good. It enables citizens to discuss their differences at various levels in a meaningful way by firstly understanding other perspectives before striving to resolve mutual disagreements amicably. A simple knowledge of multiculturalism is inadequate without a desire to engage constructively with other opinions. Multiculturalism, uninformed by civic values, discriminates among citizens on the basis of their group identities.

Besides, the particularist response to religious diversity neglects, or at least downplays, the government's role in regulating the schools that it subsidizes.

Unless schools serve civic purposes that citizens can share, their support should be left primarily to parents and private associations. This recognition opens the door to giving precedence to democratic principles (such as teaching mutual respect across cultural differences) over and alongside particularistic purposes. Particularism, so modified, is far more defensible, but it can no longer claim the attraction of avoiding controversies over the content of civic education by ceding to each religious group its own autonomous sphere of schooling. Nor is this kind of particularism easy to distinguish from a universalism that recognizes the value of religious diversity<sup>39</sup>.

We now comment on the role of democracy in the South African educational sphere.

Our foregoing assessment accentuated the abuse of democracy for particularist/exclusivist motives. Attention will now be given to its efficacy when applied to the core concern of education, which is the enhancement and promotion of intellectual activities for pupils and students.

Seminal to this stimulus is the preeminent role of discussion or dialogue between at least two parties aimed at resolving disagreements and conflicts in society rather than through debates among conflicting individuals or groups. By means of this the detriment of dogma, violence, propaganda or other kinds of manipulations is averted. Morrow offers the following benefits of discussion:

"Discussion is educative in the sense that it has the potential to transform our prior opinions and, over time, to reconstitute not only our opinions, but our very identities as well. Discussion is the principal way in which humanity is cultivated...

The intrinsic value which make inquiry the practice that it can be called epistemic values. They are the shared values of communities of inquiry, and are misunderstood if interpreted as merely subjective or relativist. In practice, different fields of inquiry and different communities of inquirers embody epistemic values somewhat differently (the disciplines of history are different from the disciplines of physics), but any field of inquiry, by definition, is constituted by epistemic values"<sup>40</sup>.

Negotiations for identifying epistemic values eventually produce, what Torres calls, foundational canons to which all citizens can relate. Naturally, these exercises are open-ended and based on the people's experiences. They also enjoy what Freire defines as an "epistemology of curiosity; an endless need to define what cultural principles make the life of

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39 Gutmann, op. cit., pp. 2-7.

40 Morrow, op. cit., pp. 10-11.





people more harmonious, the cultural exchanges more self-reflective, and the ethical underpinnings of the culture closer to the cultural imperatives of social justice, individual responsibility and caring"<sup>41</sup>. So long as the foundational canons do not gain metaphysical or infallible status by being revered as the embodiments of all wisdom, truth and virtue through authority sources or legitimacy claims (be they premised on the sheer weight of political power, racism, claims to being the original founders of the nation, language control, moral superiority or religious bigotry) they remain negotiable<sup>42</sup>.

This outlook embraces both the instrumental value and contingent effects of education like the amelioration of social and political problems (such as the prevalence of diseases). In sum, Torres defines education's priority to be the humanizing influence upon people<sup>43</sup>. It is precisely this kind of holistic learning that has been espoused and defined as Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa.

However, the existential reality suggests that if effective measures are not taken to eradicate some false premises, like servitude to globalization, gnawing away at the fabric of foundational canons of education the struggle for political liberation will be futile.

Finally, the tricky question needs to be answered: Should a democrat be in favour of academic freedom, especially as it is intended to be upheld at universities?

An affirmative answer is understandable for the following reasons: A university reserves the right to allow any competent person to articulate his or her views. Moreover, democracy is promoted by rigorous debate amongst those of divergent opinions.

A negative answer implies that the entire debate is misplaced because universities always have their own rules of inclusion and exclusion since it is impossible for them to remain ideologically neutral. In reality, academic freedom is only a private playground in which a few privileged intellectuals can dispute with one another under the delusion of dismantling current power structures. In South Africa, examples of these universities are found that bolster the dominant ideology through their practices and public stances. It is not surprising that such institutions are liberally funded by the state and remain in the limelight of society. Paradoxically, those universities that claim to oppose the dominant ideology by adopting neutrality simply serve it by default.

The plausible solution lies in thoroughly democratizing the universities themselves as academic freedom is nothing but an attempt by academics to operate outside the boundaries of democracy, thereby carving cozy niches for themselves away from the requirements of social accountability and obligation<sup>44</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The above discussion has shown that multiculturalism and democracy are theoretically an integral part of education in South Africa. Nevertheless, much has to be done to accomplish their concretization which will entail change of hearts and mind-sets on the part of the culprit rather than encouraging government to outlaw it.

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41 Torres, op. cit., p. 62.

42 Ibid., pp. 63-64.

43 Torres, op. cit., p. 54.

44 Ibid., pp. 58-60.