

CONFLICT AND PEDAGOGY: MODEL-BUILDING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING IN MULTICULTURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

One of the greatest challenges facing the post-apartheid South African state is the transformation of the education system, and addressing the tradition of violence and psychosocial dislocation, as well as managing cultural diversity. The move to multicultural schooling has created an urgent need to address what schools can or should do about the multiple cultural realities that are now represented in schools. Both government and educational practitioners have stressed the need to equip principals, teachers, learners and parents with the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills to understand and manage conflict in a constructive fashion. Research conducted in two secondary multicultural schools explored the development of a conflict management training programme for learners. The findings of this conflict case study show that an eclectic approach to conflict management training using elicitive strategies that embed “culture” in the training programme can be implemented with success in these settings. This study also indicates that the multidisciplinary field of conflict resolution and management can be blended with holistic approaches to educational policy and practice. Such interventions are crucial in micro- and meso-level interventions in strengthening social cohesion and social peace, which in turn will provide a more conducive environment for economic development.

INTRODUCTION

At a national level, there is a growing body of policy, and accompanying regulations and prescriptions, for improving discipline and social control systems in schools in South Africa. However, for such interventions to make a difference, there should be more self-conscious interaction between educational theory and practice, and the accompanying policy-making process on the one hand, and the burgeoning field of conflict resolution on the other.

The construction and implementation of sophisticated but robust approaches to managing and reducing conflict and disciplinary problems in South African schools require an understanding of the patterns of diversity in these schools, and the changing cultural and class divides. Chisholm (2004) has analysed the shift from racial to class divisions in schools, but more meso- and micro-level research is required to chart the migration of learners to schools formerly the preserve of apartheid-structured and -designated ethnic groups. In this regard, the shift of learners from multicultural backgrounds to so-called Model C (or formerly white) schools, and from black township schools to those previously constituted by Indian or coloured pupils is significant. It is particularly in regard to the latter situation that the locus of conflict on multicultural lines appears to be most intense.

While pupil profiles of such schools have changed (and continue to change), teacher profiles have not changed significantly. This has meant that a preponderance of coloured or Indian teachers have remained in former coloured or Indian schools, resulting in increased burdens on teaching staff to interpret and mediate multicultural conflict, with at best rudimentary conflict resolution techniques.

This article shows how appropriate models for conflict resolution interventions can be created and implemented in multicultural secondary-school environments. Such models can be integrated

with existing structures and practices, and do not require a radical restructuring of school structures. It is argued that this model construction should take heed of the growing recourse globally to qualitative research and post-positivist approaches in the design of regulatory frameworks for secondary-school management. And while it is not a formal focus in this article, the growing scholarly recognition of links between conflict resolution and peace-building interventions on the one hand (e.g. Canzanelli 2001: 31), and development policy on the other should be one of the subtexts of research in the field of model-building for efficacious conflict dilution and resolution.

Conflict resolution is a growing interdisciplinary body of knowledge – an applied social science for the most part – which needs to be taken more cognisance of in educational theory and practice (Deutsch & Coleman 2000; Johnson & Johnson 2004). At theoretical, applied theoretical and practical levels, the approaches and techniques from conflict resolution must be used more systematically within both primary and secondary schools. In a sense, this provides a broader context for a series of state-sanctioned interventions, such as positive discipline. But these interventions demand a more coherent and deliberate interplay between conflict resolution theory and approaches, and current educational policy design, interpretation and implementation. This article shows how conflict resolution training can be applied meaningfully in multicultural settings and how this interdisciplinary approach can inform the more conventional educational approaches.

THE CONFLICT CASE STUDY

The level of violence and conflict in South African schools is of grave concern to all involved in education, and requires research into the nature of the conflict, and interventions and training that will address these problems. According to scholars, in many cases the interventions implemented in South African schools have been conducted without an understanding of the conflict and have been “dictated by guesswork, personal prejudice or the domination of viewpoints” (Kasiram, Keen & Naidoo 1996: 374) of certain stakeholders, who have decided on the nature of the interventions. Stevens, Wyngard and Van Niekerk (2001: 154) stress that the proliferation of intervention strategies aimed at violence reduction among youth has often been based on “good intentions”, rather than on a detailed analysis of the conflict. Many conflict management programmes in South Africa have been strongly influenced by overseas models.

A comparative case study conducted in two multicultural Eastern Cape South African schools revealed that conflict in both schools is multifaceted and caused by a complex pattern of micro-factors (interpersonal and intergroup) and macro-factors linked to socioeconomic conditions and the transforming educational system. Teachers and learners expressed concern about what they perceived as the deteriorating school environment, and issues that were found pertinent were discipline, diversity and multilingualism. Interviews revealed that racism, prejudice and discrimination were not really confronted by teachers and school management. Teachers acknowledged that there was “avoidance” behaviour among ethnic groups in both schools but did not see this as a major source of conflict. Teachers and learners had an incomplete understanding of the role of conflict and violence, equating conflict only with overt, physical violence. The challenge for the scholar-practitioner was to plan an intervention that catered for the needs of these schools and addressed the problems holistically. A training programme was developed for learners, and is described and discussed below.

DEVELOPING THE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The training of the learners in both schools involved an eclectic approach, which incorporated both prescriptive and elicitive approaches. Based on the information gathered and the need to identify and explore the theories and core assumptions, the development of the training programme for learners in both schools involved consideration of the following aspects:

- **Understanding the nature of conflict**

In order to manage conflict constructively, those involved must recognise that it exists. Conflict exists among individuals and groups when incompatible activities occur (Deutsch 1973). The mapping of the conflict revealed that teachers and learners had an incomplete and inaccurate understanding of the terms “conflict” and “violence”, associating conflict with extreme acts of violence and danger. They needed to be made aware that the goal of conflict management is not to eliminate conflict, as conflict is an inevitable and pervasive part of school life and has many positive outcomes, but rather that the goal was to eliminate violence in all its different manifestations. In the words of Johnson and Johnson (2004: 35), “conflicts provide insights into other perspectives and life experiences, strengthen relationships, add fun and drama to life, increase disputants’ ability to cope with stress and be resilient in the face of adversity, and increase general psychological health”. These authors say that students generally have a negativity bias in which they see conflicts as always involving anger, hostility and violence, and do not recognise conflicts “when they lead to laughter, insight, learning and problem-solving”.

- **Choosing an appropriate conflict strategy**

It was important to enhance awareness of different conflict behaviours, such as aggression, avoidance and constructive problem-solving. The study revealed that participants, especially teachers, had an incomplete understanding of “avoidance” behaviour and saw it as an absence of conflict. The communication process is central to the concept of choosing a strategy. Conflict is constituted and sustained by the behaviours, both verbal and non-verbal, of the parties involved and their reactions to one another. The use of often violent and abusive communication in these schools was a source of concern and anxiety for teachers and learners alike. Learners described this communication as racist and contributing to intergroup tension in these schools.

- **Problem-solving**

The contribution of educational theories to the field of conflict management highlights the importance of critical-thinking skills, which assist in problem-solving, as well as of cooperative learning environments and their role in school-based conflict management. Heydenberk and Heydenberk (2000: 10) propose that conflict resolution and critical-thinking skills are seen as “related and complementary” and that “problem-solving, critical-thinking skills and conflict resolution skills . . . [occupy] different places on a continuum”. They add that “perspective-taking abilities; listening and comprehension [and] divergent thinking abilities” are all skills that are needed by students to learn conflict resolution, especially when they encounter different values that are often the source of conflicts. Speaking from a broader perspective, Schulze (2003: 6), observes that in a post-apartheid environment “critical thinking, rational thought and deeper understanding [are] seen as ways to break down class, race and gender stereotypes”.

Deutsch (1994, 2000a) sees cooperative learning and conflict resolution as two interrelated movements in education, which develop learners’ skills in perspective-taking, communication and problem-solving. Deutsch and other authors cited in this study have consistently argued that conflict management processes are strongly influenced by the context in which the conflict occurs. For example, Harris (1990: 20) argues that competitive environments contribute to “the violence of traditional education” because individuals focus on antagonistic interests, exhibit distrust and suspicion, and communicate in misleading ways. Research has shown that in a cooperative climate, where there is a perceived similarity of goals, and trust and open communication, learners have more time to engage in critical thinking. In a study of school practices that positively affect race relations, it was found that “discussions about race were less effective than actual interracial interaction in improving learners’ interracial behaviour and attitudes” (Slavin & Maddon in Day-Vines et al. 1996: 340)

- **Experiential learning**

According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Marsick and Sauquet (2000: 384) explain that learning takes place as “people interpret and reinterpret their experience in light of a growing, cumulative set of insights and then revise their actions to meet their goals”. Maas (1990) offers a working definition, which holds that experiential learning refers to learning activities that engage the learner directly in the phenomena being studied. The research team was well aware of the role of experiential learning and the necessity of a programme that included role-plays and opportunities to transform experience. Marsick and Sauquet (2000: 384) argue that, for people to learn deeply from experience, they must “reflect critically on the assumptions, values and beliefs that shape their understanding”. It was thus important to incorporate these insights into the development of the programme.

- **Appreciating diversity**

Conflict emerges as part of the interdependence between the individual and the socio-contextual learning environment. In multicultural school settings, various barriers emerge between learners, and language, ethnicity or culture, social class, gender, and personal and social differences become part of these interactions and infiltrate relationships (Vogel et al. 2003: 27). In both these schools, these barriers are a serious obstacle to a culture of teaching and learning, and have resulted in direct violence, both verbal and physical. In post-apartheid South Africa, these schools experience additional and unique problems. Educators and learners, who have had very different experiences of the transformation process as a result of their position in the apartheid racial system, are interacting together for the first time (Finchilescu & Dawes 1998: 563). The deep-rooted nature of the conflict around issues concerning ethnicity, identity and language in these schools, which is part of the legacy in this country, means that any conflict management training or intervention cannot overlook these issues and relegate them to secondary importance.

- **The contact hypothesis**

Smit (2002: 18) argues that two major approaches have been employed to reduce intergroup tension: “facilitative conditions and conflict resolution programmes”. Facilitative conditions are based on Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis. What emerges from the literature is that, under certain conditions, intergroup contact can facilitate positive relationships. There is considerable debate about the ‘ideal’ contact conditions. Mynhardt and Du Toit (1990: 286–292) argue that these basic preconditions are important because it is not the contact per se that leads to positive attitude change, but the experience of the contact. The preconditions cited by most authors are, inter alia, contact on an equal basis between two groups; contact in an intimate, pleasant and rewarding institutional climate; cooperative interdependence; opportunities for personal friendships; and opportunities for self-revealing interactions.

- **The participation hypothesis**

Ross (2000b) cites Verba (1961) and others, who find a great deal of evidence for the proposition that active involvement in a process builds commitment. The participation hypothesis suggests that people will be more committed to goals that they articulate and establish themselves. Ross adds that people become invested psychologically when they spend time on an activity and that participation builds a new social identity which is sustained, at least in part, by working towards common goals. Ross also comments that Lederach’s (1995, 1997) concept of elicitive conflict resolution builds on this hypothesis. In the elicitive approach, participants define a conflictual situation and contribute to the design of a contextually relevant model for the resolution of the conflict.

PRESCRIPTIVE AND ELICITIVE APPROACHES TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Lederach (1995: 48–53) describes the “prescriptive approach”, in which the trainer is the “expert” and knows what the participants need – the trainer’s knowledge is the key resource to be transferred. The trainer’s expertise is often brought to the participants as a model made up of strategies suggesting how “conflict is resolved” and presenting different techniques to enable them to deal with conflict effectively. This approach is understood and presented as skills-building. For Lederach, this modality tends to reduce conflict resolution to “technology – to technique and skill which become key aspects both of the training and of subsequent application of the model”.

One of the central criticisms of the prescriptive approach, and an important consideration in this study, is that the cultural and ideological underpinnings of the model are rarely made explicit; “they are however, the very elements that tend to emerge from the context where the model was developed”. Lederach (1995) observes that culture is often seen as an additional level of expertise added to the repertoire of the already trained and thus is not embedded in the model presented. Scholars have stressed that Western perspectives on conflict management and interventions have generally failed to consider the cultural contexts involved and have attempted to construct universal models and techniques applicable across all social domains (Augsberger 1992; Avruch & Black 1990; 1991; Kimmel 2000; Ross 1993a, 1993b, 2000a).

The debates concerning the different approaches to multiculturalism in South African schools have raised important issues. Approaches which recognise and “celebrate” diversity but do not fully engage with the underlying issues are criticised extensively (Vally 1999; Vandeyar 2003). For the scholar-practitioner to engage with diversity and culture in a superficial fashion, or as an “add-on” expertise in a conflict management training, seriously impoverishes the development of the conflict field. It has been extensively argued that conflicts are best approached through the cultural frameworks of the disputants as culture is rooted in the shared knowledge and schemes, created and used by groups for perceiving and responding to their social realities. Geertz (1973) in Avruch and Black (1991: 29) reminds us that to ignore the “locally constructed common sense understandings” of conflict is to seriously hamper the work of the conflict specialist.

Discussions have pointed to the use of the elicitive approach in cross-cultural training. Fundamentally, this approach builds on the knowledge in the setting, and thus, unlike the prescriptive approach, cannot bracket culture. “Culture, in other words, natural and taken for granted knowledge in a given setting, is understood as the foundation and seedbed of model development and creation” (Lederach 1995: 62). The relationship between participants and trainers redefines knowledge as implicit in the setting rather than in the trainer and redefines power as participation in discovery and naming, rather than transfer of knowledge. The table below provides a comparative summary of the two training approaches that have been discussed.

Table 1: Prescriptive/elicitive: A comparative summary

Prescriptive ←	→ Elicitive
Training as transfer	Training as discovery and creation
Resource: Model and knowledge of trainer	Resource: Within-setting knowledge
Training as content oriented: Master approach and technique	Training as process oriented: Participation in model creation
Empowerment as learning new ways and strategies for facing conflict	Empowerment as validating and building from context
Trainer as expert, model and facilitator	Trainer as catalyst and facilitator
Culture as technique	Culture as foundation and seedbed

Source: Lederach 1995: 65.

AN ECLECTIC MODEL FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Diversity and issues around race and language were also the sources of destructive conflict in these schools, and it was recognised that culture had to be incorporated into the actual conflict training model. The “avoidance” behaviour of the groups meant that they had very little understanding of each other’s cultures. The diversity of the participants in both schools meant that creative approaches to training were needed. It was decided that an eclectic model would be used in the training at these schools, with certain key aspects of the elicitive approach emphasised.

The elicitive approach is very appealing because it highlights creativity and discovery, and allows the trainer to say, “I do not have the answer, but I can work together with others on a process that may help.” For Lederach (1995: 117–118), multicultural settings “represent enormous challenges requiring insight, sensitivity, and creativity”. In these settings, the training process is about relationships and the purpose is the “development of networks and linkages that can be sustained over time through training”. In this way, the trainer, as facilitator, draws from the cultural resources within the setting and is not concerned with a model which everyone must learn. The participants create their own model of conflict management drawing from their own common-sense understandings of conflict – the implicit knowledge of the group.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

The purpose of the initial sessions of training was to set the stage and generate an atmosphere of trust and safety, so that the participatory process of joint exploration, learning and experimenting could begin. In the first session, the concepts of conflict and violence were explored. The purpose of this warming-up exercise was to get the group thinking about conflict, both destructive and constructive, and how it differs from violence. This creates an awareness of when a conflict is and is not occurring, and the potential constructive consequences of conflict. Instead of starting with a definition of conflict, participants gathered in small groups and listed everyday words and phrases synonymous or closely related to conflict. What emerged, as predicted, was that the participants had a negative bias in which conflict involved anger, hostility and violence. The facilitation then involved getting the groups to think about conflict in positive terms and the positives that can emerge from a constructive process. This involves a re-orientation in their thinking in which they come to realise that without conflict, or if conflict is not managed constructively, there is no growth, creativity and development in society.

SETTING UP ROLE-PLAY CREATION

Role-plays and simulations are a major part of conflict management training (Kimmel 2000; Lederach 2000; Lupton-Smith et al. 1996). In most training settings, they are used to practice a given skill or technique, learn the steps in a model or work on a specific conflict situation that involves certain conflict management skills, such as negotiation and mediation. In the prescriptive approach, the trainer often prepares the simulations and scenarios ahead of time, with detailed descriptions of the circumstances and instructions, laying out the various roles. In the elicitive approach, the use of role-play is a means for model discovery and creation rather than exclusively to practise a model. This means readjusting the thinking about the use of role-plays. Facilitators do not prepare role-plays before the training. They trust the participants’ own creative abilities by allowing them to identify and create their own conflict scenarios.

The elicitive approach to the use of role-plays is depicted in figure 1, in which the key steps are outlined: discover, categorise and describe, evaluate, and adapt or recreate. and practice. These five interrelated activities and the way they were implemented in the training will be described.

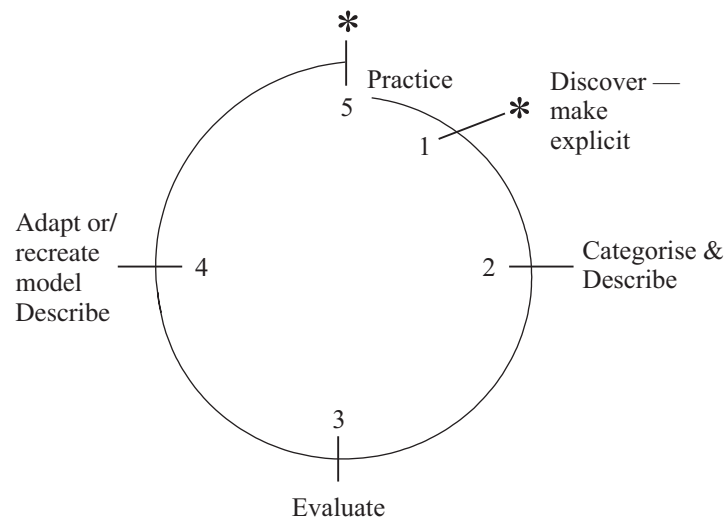


Figure 1: Key steps in the elicitive model

Source: Lederach 1995: 59.

The creation of role-play involved asking the participants to divide into small groups of six and think about a conflict situation that they had experienced. The mapping of conflict in both schools and an overview of the literature emphasised the importance of relationships at individual and group level in schools, and the significance of relationships during adolescence in terms of identity development. In order to promote cooperative and constructive interpersonal interactions, the following interactions were chosen to provide a guide for the participants in creating their conflict scenarios: parent/child, girlfriend/boyfriend, teacher/learner, learner/learner and pupil leader/learner conflicts. The groups were asked to choose one of the interactions, given a wide latitude, and asked to draw from their immediate setting and experience in creating their conflict scenario. This was to be enacted in front of the whole group. They were given considerable time to prepare. Each member of the research team was assigned two groups to observe and facilitate through the preparation process.

STAGING THE CONFLICT ROLE-PLAYS

The conflict scenarios that were scripted by the small groups were then staged for the entire group. The role-plays in both schools were based on incidents from the participants' real-life experiences, and reflected a great deal of verbal and physical violence in their dramatisation. For example, girlfriend/boyfriend role-plays involved jealousy and frustration on the part of the girlfriend or boyfriend about another "love interest", and jealous "catfights" ensued between two girls, or the boyfriend threatened his girlfriend either physically or verbally.

Discovery and description

The discovery process involves participants engaging and interacting with their own understandings of how conflict occurs and how their responses to it operate in their environments. This staging of the conflicts was important in identifying and categorising how conflicts were handled because it allowed participants to see the different behaviours in these settings. Each of the enacted scenarios was opened up for facilitated group discussion in which the "insider" knowledge of the participants was often clarified in relation to the "outsider" professional knowledge of the facilitator, and new understandings were co-generated. New mutual understanding emerged through open and supportive communication.

Mutual understanding that emerges from the staging of conflict involves skilful facilitation, which was part of the learning process for the members of the research team and the participants. In order to elicit responses from the group that could lead to identifying and categorising the conflict situations, certain questions were crucial to the facilitation process. The following excerpt is an example of a conflict scenario, quoted verbatim from the worksheet of one of the group's preparation for the staging of their conflict situation.

Sitting on the corner with his friend. Now his other friends join them.

They talk a bit. They ask him does he know this chick Stephanie.

Ye! It's my chick you know mos. Why?

His friends tell him that his friend he is drinking with is messing with his chick. He gets violent, leaves to go back for his gun, and comes back . . . shoots his friend and gets arrested . . . sentence to life without parole.

After each role-play, the focused group discussions gave participants ample opportunities to discuss their perceptions and reactions, explore a range of different responses, ask questions and elicit responses from others. In this way, they participated collectively in the activity and learned from others. The role of the facilitator was crucial in the process of creating a safe and comfortable climate in which everyone could participate fully. This involved conveying warmth and understanding, and diffusing heated situations or interactions as they arose. The differences between constructive and destructive conflict, and the different conflict behavioural styles were explored in the group discussion. Some examples of the questions asked are:

- What is happening here?
- What has caused this conflict?
- How did the conflict become destructive?

At first the participants were not forthcoming, but once they started exploring the different viewpoints, debates around different beliefs, assumptions and values emerged. In the above scenario, different values relating to friendships, relationships, gossip and rumours, drugs and alcohol, and the use of violence were discussed as they related to the realities of the participants' environments. Debates sometimes became competitive, which created a "win-lose" orientation and led to faulty and simplistic reasoning that invited "battle and blame". In order to avoid this, the facilitator skilfully encouraged and motivated participants to seek new information and perspectives, which led to constructive alternatives to the problems that emerged.

Evaluation

Part of learning from the role-plays in the elicitive approach is the element of contextualised evaluation, which occurs through the training process. Participants were asked not only to describe what happened but also to evaluate the action as part of experiential learning. They reflected on the actions and behaviour in the role-plays according to the standards and values of their particular setting, without having to judge these approaches according to outside criteria. Questions posed by the facilitator to elicit reflection were:

- What is helpful and good in this situation?
- How could this conflict be managed differently?
- What needs to be changed?

As discussed, reflection is central to every phase of learning from experience. Reflecting critically on the assumptions, values and beliefs that shape understanding can play a key role in this phase by opening up lines of thinking that would otherwise remain unexplored. These questions opened up the discussion and allowed the participants to see conflict from a generalised third-person perspective and from different viewpoints. Throughout the discussion, participants were exposed to alternative ways of dealing with conflicts in which people have diverse points of view, and had to learn to listen to other perspectives

In support of the argument above, the problem-solving approach, which involves critical-thinking skills and the search for new ways of handling conflict, was adopted in the group discussions after the enactment of each scenario. The participants, guided by the questions above, were asked to generate alternative solutions to the conflicts presented. This step in the elicitive training process involves adapting old approaches, creating more effective and positive ways of dealing with conflict, and then experimenting with how conflicts should be approached. Part of this final step is the practical application of the new strategies. The training process must include exercise and opportunities for experimenting and refining the ideas, approaches and models that emerge. The groups were thus asked to rewrite the scripts they had presented and re-enact the new ways of dealing with these conflict situations. This provided the individual groups with an opportunity to practise the lessons learnt from the evaluation so that they could experience managing conflict in a constructive way.

DISCUSSION

The eclectic approach to the training, with its emphasis on scenario-based role-plays to promote learning with the integration of certain prescriptive elements (the transfer of certain factual information and knowledge), was perceived as successful in terms of the findings in this conflict case study. It was realised that the facilitator plays a crucial role in integrating both cognitive and experiential learning skills into the training and in drawing from the diverse experiences and perspectives of the group. Prescriptive elements which involve expert knowledge were important in clarifying concepts and providing guidance when there was confusion and the group appeared to be stuck. It was important for the participants to move beyond the current destructive patterns of dealing with conflict.

Role-plays were not only central to the learning during the conflict management training but were also an important part of the enjoyment of the training. These role-play activities provided the research team with a “window” into the participants’ implicit, “taken-for-granted” knowledge. This insight into the dynamics provided key understanding of the conflicts they encountered and the ways they approached their problems. This understanding served as a guide to the facilitator in the areas and aspects of learning that needed special attention during the focused discussions after each role-play. The use of violence, aggression and abusive language was significant in how they portrayed the various interactions in the role-plays and was also attributed to the adults (parents and teachers) in their scenarios.

The main advantage of the eclectic training approach used in this conflict case study is that culture was infused into the training. The use of scenario-based role-plays, which were created, enacted, evaluated and adapted/recreated by the participants, were crucial in allowing the participants to reflect on the actions and behaviours in the scenarios according to the standards and values of their environments, rather than by externally imposed criteria. Kimmel (2000: 463) says that role-play that makes “such contextual information explicit enables participants to understand and grow beyond their current cultural identity”. What was interesting was that drawing on the common-sense, implicit knowledge (within-setting knowledge) of the participants allowed them to see that the conflict and problems they faced were similar. As adolescents, they faced the same challenges in dealing with issues concerning identity, autonomy and relationships. The realities of their school and communities meant that they had common experiences relating to violence, crime, aggression, and alcohol and drug abuse.

CONCLUSION

This article has stressed the importance of constructing conflict resolution models for secondary schools that take conceptual cognisance of the substantive multicultural environment of South African schools, and the embedded possibilities for structural conflict in the schoolyard and

schoolroom. This is especially so for under-resourced former Indian and coloured schools, which are ill equipped for dealing with dramatic demographic shifts as result of the relatively unchanged teaching corps.

The systematic use of conflict resolution models should ideally be integrated in more synoptic approaches to related school effectiveness and whole school development, as well as contribute to efforts to manage cross-cultural perceptions and practices. More broadly, it is not merely a question of trying to reduce or ameliorate conflict and violence in schools, but of seeking to construct more civically minded and tolerant school environments. As Clive Harber argues, it is vital that schools “can and do contribute to a culture of democracy and non-violence” (Harber 1997: 1). This vision should impact on efforts to create a more innovative, reflexive school environment, and ultimately to create a more critically productive social economy within the country as a whole.

More generally, it needs to be recognised in future research that efforts at building more peaceful schools should be part of a broader national effort aimed at integrating conflict resolution approaches and techniques to developmental interventions from local to national levels.

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