

Article

The Understanding of Learner Integration in a Selected Ex-Model C School

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Abstract: Learner integration has become an asset for the meaningful resettlement of learners from different backgrounds in a one learning environment. Psychologically, the learner integration phenomenon is a crucial component in a teaching and learning context because it is linked to psycho-socio elements for the learners' well-being. This study aimed to explore the understanding of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school. This paper identified the central elements of the diverse perceptions constituting successful learner integration in an Ex-Model C school. Moreover, the key traits in the understanding of learner integration were presented about the three overall themes that emerged from the findings of the study. The study was conceptualised within the Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) theoretical framework. The participants and research site were selected using purposive and convenience sampling. Data were generated through photovoice and multi-stakeholder meetings. Based on the South African historical background, this study maintains that learner integration has a transformative agenda as the phenomenon leans towards the democracy, social justice, and emancipation of education practices that are negatively affected by the inherent issues from the previous education system in South Africa. This implies that effective learner integration plays an essential part in ensuring equity, equality, and democracy in South African schools specifically Ex-Model C schools.

Keywords: Learner; learner integration; understanding; Ex-Model C school; South Africa

Introduction

The post-apartheid South African educational policy has emphasised the need for equity and the right of every learner to receive quality education. However, the body of literature has revealed that schools during the apartheid era were conducted on exclusionary basis whereby, race was the major category used to identify the nature of the school (Weber, 2015). In like manner, Zoch (2017) alluded that the education system in South Africa during the apartheid was divided in terms of race and language which resulted in the current social problems such as violence, poverty, racism, and exclusion within the schools and in the South African society in general.

Recently, reports on the multicultural learning have shown an increase in learners' enrolment in Ex-Model C schools. A report by the South African Institute of Race Relation notes that by the end of 2009, from a total of 1030 whites-only schools about 776 had transferred from being Model A and B to Model C. This is supported by the 2021 report from the Department of Basic Education which revealed a significant increase of African black learners' enrolment in Ex-Model C schools between 2015 and 2020. Nonetheless, the recently released results of the General Schools' hold Survey (GSS) found that in the year 2020, the number of Ex-Model C schools was more than 11,586 schools countrywide. The results from the GSS survey also affirm that about 311,765 learners enrolled in Ex-Model C schools each year and that Ex-Model C primary schools

have about 211,685 learners while the Ex-Model secondary schools take about 100,080 learners each year. Therefore, statistics show that the percentage of enrolled learners in Ex-Model C schools increased up to 60.4% each year, and this stipulates that enrolment figures as 22.1% African (black) learners; 18.1% white learners; 13.1% a coloured learner; and 7.1% are Indian learners (GSS, 2020).

Significantly, drawing from the above, the increase in black learners' enrolment in Ex-Model C schools is attributed to black parents' view that Ex-Model C schools provide quality education to their learners as well as help their children to pursue better opportunities in life (Christie & McKinney, 2017; Slabbert & Naude, 2022). It can also be suggested that parental concern for their children's future was another reason for the increase in black learners' enrolment in Ex-Model C schools (Canham, 2019). Therefore, the 2020 annual report from the Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FGBSAS) also affirms that there is definitely an increase in the transitioning of white learners from the Ex-Model C schools to single-medium Afrikaans schools. However, recent literature shows that the increase of black learners in selected Ex-Model C schools has resulted in the decrease of white learners who opt for either private or predominantly Afrikaans medium schools that offer mother tongue education. Hiss and Peck (2020) confirmed that Ex-Model C schools have either only a few white learners or none at all and this could be regarded as "white flight" (Hiss & Peck, 2020, p. 34).

Essentially, an Ex-Model C schools are described as former 'whites only' schools that were located in white areas. These schools were and still are well equipped with educational resources such as libraries, laboratories, big sports fields, and open-space classrooms (Radebe, 2015). They were established in the 1980s and early 1990s by the Apartheid government and were reserved for white learners only. They received a high state subsidy, while some of the staff's salaries were paid by the state (Radebe, 2015). In practice, Ex-Model C schools are characterised by high academic performance due to the availability of resources and greater parental involvement (Stuurman, 2013). This study regards Ex-Model C schools as semi-private schools in South Africa.

Literature Review

1. Defining Learner Integration

The understanding of the learner integration phenomenon varies from context to context. Context plays a significant role in the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon. Essentially, there is no universal definition for learner integration. Research by Weber (2015) and Dei (2016) also supports that learner integration can be seen and understood differently and defined differently by people with different historical backgrounds. Radebe (2015) describes learner integration as how learners of different backgrounds, different ethnicities as well as people of different skin colour build up a simultaneous bridge to bind them together respectively. On the other hand, Stuurman (2013) also defines learner integration as the tendency of South African schools to open their doors to all learner regardless of their racial diversity, culture or ethnic groups. In Europe learner integration is viewed as the process of restoration of educational policies, schools' cultures, and practices in schools so that they respond to the learner diversity (Alidadi, 2017). The academic research done in European education systems reveals that one of the most concern to educational policy in Europe is learner integration because of the fact that it is a nascent source of tackling new educational needs in schools (Dusi & Steinbach, 2016).

2. Implementation of Learner Integration

In the African context, most of the studies done in Sub-Saharan countries affirm that the implementation of learner integration in this region is linked to the inclusive education practices in school environment (Weber, 2015). Furthermore, research by Weber (2015) and Chitiyo, Hughes, Chitiyo, Changara, Itimu-Phiri, Haihambo and Dzenga (2019) established that learner integration is key to the realization of equality, social justice and inclusion in schools in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia. In addition, Chirwa (2018) stipulates that learner integration in schools is the only means for African countries to balance the relationship of culture, language, and identity of the learner, teachers, parents and other staffs in schools' environment. Thus, it is through the implementation of learner integration in schools that learners can get

equal treatment, equal opportunities as well as be provided with decisive equal chances of becoming better citizens in the future (Chirwa, 2018).

In contrast the education system in countries like South Africa that have a history of segregation and marginalization, learner integration significantly acts towards the elimination of rejection of a segmented learner population (Mahlo, 2017; Francis, 2019; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). Essentially, when exploring the intersection of race, culture, and sexuality in the schooling space in South African schools, Francis (2019) alludes that, learner integration not only impacts learner academic achievements considerably but also improves living in diversity and enhances their competitive advantage. Schools that previously were one race-oriented, with the implementation of the learner integration practices results in the increasing a sense of belonging and acceptance of learners from the other races into the school environment (Mahlo, 2017; Padayachee, 2017; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). As evidenced in research by Mavuru and Ramnarain, (2020, p. 34) that “learner integration practices in learning environment intends to encourage peer group collaboration and also influences the sense of helping one another to the learners”.

Theoretical Framework

The study employed Critical Emancipatory Research (CER, hereafter) as its’ theoretical framework to explore the understanding of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school. CER was adopted as the research lens on social exclusion, disintegration, alienation, and injustice through allowing, respecting, and listening to the participants’ views, voices, and perceptions (Maboya, 2014; Msimanga, 2017). Hence, Dube and Hlalele (2018) opine that CER has emerged in connection to many social movements which identify a variety of domination, social justice, and equity of human beings in the society.

Essentially, the CER theory is framed using four elements namely: social justice, emancipation, transformation, and enhancing human lives (Masimanga, 2017). Hence, the promotion of social justice drawing from the CER theory requires the cooperation and involvement of every person involved in the research process so as to limit the issue of discrimination and oppression (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). On the aspect of emancipation, CER theory enables people from different backgrounds and statuses to work together in an atmosphere of freedom and empowerment (Weber, 2015). While the element of transformation in CER helps to raise awareness and consciousness of people on issues such as power, oppression, discrimination, and social injustices that needed to be addressed in their society (Fujino, Gomez, Lezra, Lipsitz, Mitchel & Fonseca, 2018). Lastly, enhancing human lives in CER aims to ensure that the living conditions of people in the research context are well improved (Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018). Meanwhile, Dube and Hlalele (2018, p. 49) assert that the process of improving human lives under the CER theory is “stressed on the negotiation, empowerment, and reciprocity”. Thus, the CER theory resonates with the purpose of this study due to the theory’s aim to create a space and empowerment for the oppressed (Maboya, 2014; Chidarikire, 2017). Hence, during the research process, this study created space for participants by empowering them through photovoice sessions and multi-stakeholder meetings, and other social interactions.

Methodology

1. Research Approach

With qualitative research approach ethics this study was able to generate detailed data with rich descriptions of what is being studied (Punch, 2013 & Padgett, 2016). Study employed qualitative research approach to get a deep understanding and depending on direct quotations that reflecting the participants’ perspectives and experiences (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Moreover, this research approach was useful in describing participants’ behaviour, feelings and beliefs (Padgett, 2016). In addition, a qualitative research approach also promoted freedom of expression to the participants.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) affirm that qualitative study improves credibility by employing several data generation instruments which constantly influence observation, active participation, probing, triangulation as well as encourage discussions and exchanging of knowledge. In addition, triangulation enhances the validity of the study. Therefore, to make this approach valuable to this study, we asked an open ended questions that encouraged participants to speak deep on their understanding of issue researched.

2. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study research design under the critical research paradigm to explore the understanding of learner integration in an ex-model C school. Fujino et al. (2018) defines a case study as an investigation of an enclosed phenomenon in which the researcher employs several data generation methods to get rich and thick data within a research context. Studies affirm that a case study research design is a systematic investigation of a particular phenomenon in its context in order to get a deeper understanding of the researched phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, this study was conducted at one of Ex-Model C schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal province of South Africa.

3. Sample

The participants and research site were selected using purposive and convenience sampling. The sample comprised of the principal of the school, two educators (male and female), and four learners (two boys and two girls) aged between 14-17 years old. The research site was an Ex-Model C school which located in Durban North. And the schools viewed as a well-resourced school since previously it used to serve as a white-only school with only white learners in a whites' community.

4. Data Generation Methods

Researchers in this study employed a wide range of data generation from the multi stakeholder meetings and photovoice art-based method as to enable the process of triangulation in the study. Multi-stakeholder meetings were triangulated with photovoice art-based method to generate data in this study by the researchers. Data were generated through multi-stakeholder meetings and a photovoice art-based method.

Multi-Stakeholders Meeting

A multi-stakeholders meeting is a data generation method mostly used in critical research to “bring together all the people who are involved in the certain ‘stake’ and provide them with a sense of collaboration and commitment” (Dodds, 2019, p. 112). Studies on qualitative research have identified the importance of doing research using multi-stakeholder meetings in generating data (Dodds, 2019). Generating data using multi-stakeholder meetings according to Archibald, Ambagtsheer and Lawless (2019, p. 24) bring about “a meaningful engagement and encouragement to the participants’ (stakeholders) ownership of the research process”. With this data generation method, authors managed to gather the reflections, feelings and perceptions of the participants on their understanding of learner integration within their school.

Photovoice

Photovoice is referred to as a participatory visual methodology that allows individuals to take charge of the photography process to voice, describe, reflect and converse about their everyday life experiences with the researched problem (Nwokedi, 2019). Furthermore, photovoice is also seen as a powerful photographic method that promotes critical dialogue and produces critical knowledge. To support this, Miller (2021) stipulates that the photovoice data generation method promotes and builds up the democracy of the people involved by meaningful engagement in the whole research process.

In addition, the photovoice method in this study took place in three sessions which are photovoice workshop; whereby the participants got a chance to explore different types of photovoice methods and were trained on how to use photovoice in research by considering the ethics on visual art methods. The second session was photo shooting in which the participants engaged fully in the action of taking photos of the things that influence their understanding of learner integration around their school compound. Lastly, was a photo interpretation session in which the participants were required to interpret and explain their photos and how the photographs influence the understanding of learner integration in the school. Therefore, using multi-stakeholders meeting and photovoice in this study enabled participants to become more actively involved, engaged, and full participation in the study as they were emancipated to make informed decisions concerning the learner integration as well as teaching and learning process in their school.

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis and interpretation were done by preparing transcripts from both data generation methods. Through reading and rereading participants' responses from both the multi stakeholders' meeting and photovoice sessions authors managed to reveal an emerged theme from the findings. The tape-recorded discussions from both methods were transcribed and were meticulously read by us and the mentioned aspects on the understanding of learner integration were highlighted and recorded. To avoid speculation in data presentation any covert and implied reasons were therefore eliminated. In both cases, repetitive aspects were also indicated, and both sets of recorded data were separately categorized as emerging themes of the study.

6. Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations in research involved considering what is proper or improper and the right or wrong conduct when undertaking a research project (Gajjar, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is very important in a selected research process to protect the participants from any potential harm throughout the research process (Cohen, Manion & Marisson, 2018). In light of that, this study was conducted on the school ground which the researcher's obtained permission from the Department of Education to conduct the study in the selected school. Moreover, the researchers of this study were granted permission from the principal of the school, the selected teachers, and the four learners. The principal, teachers and learner signed informed consent agreements. And for the learners because they are minors and below 18 years of age, permission was sought from their parents/guardians and all letters were written in simple English for better understanding of the aims and objectives of the study before signing their consent to participating in the study. The explanation of all ethical issues and the participants' rights to participate in the study including voluntary participation were clearly explained before the data generation sessions began. For issues of confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used for all the participants and the selected school (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

7. Trustworthiness

The aim of qualitative research is to design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the 'trustworthiness' of the findings. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) assert that proper methods of data generation and data analysis are the best way for measuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research. This suggests that through proper data generation methods the qualitative study verifies trustworthiness by demonstrating the credibility and fitness of the study findings and ensuring its' conformability. Therefore, to ensure the credibility, conformability, dependability, and transferability of the study the following were employed by both the researchers and participants of this study. First and foremost, during the data generation process, all the participants were invited to participate in the study. The researchers also applied a meticulous record-keeping using an audio recorder and a filed note online, demonstrating a clear decision trail and ensuring that the interpretations and analyses of the participants' perceptions, understandings, opinions and experiences are consistent and transparent (Taylor, 2019).

Findings

This section discusses the study's findings under the emerging themes. Three themes are presented in this section in line with participants' multi-perspectival knowledge on the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon. The three themes are; i) learner integration is the promotion of freedom of expression; ii) learner integration is other cultural insertion and lastly, iii) learner integration is an intellectual, physical, and social well-being involvement.

Data generation process was guided by three research questions that seeks participant perspectives to understanding of the researched phenomenon. These questions are; (1) What are the participants' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school? (2) What are your experiences regarding learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school? (3) Which events influence the understanding of learner integration in a selected E-Model C school? Additionally, these questions were answered from multiple and diverse understanding, perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and opinions of the participants of the study on the issue of learner integration as follows;

1. Theme One: Learner Integration is The Promotion of Freedom of Expression

During discussion in the multi-stakeholder meetings, the participants revealed that the understanding of the learner integration based on their experiences and events and programs as they are taking place in their school. Their responses reveal that learner integration is the process of promoting freedom of expression of people specifically learners at their school. As demonstrated in Van Vollenhoven (2015) that freedom of expression is an important requirement for promoting and protecting democracy in South African schools. Therefore, the learner integration phenomenon is not just a process of bringing together learners from different backgrounds but also a process of promoting the right of expression which results in the school to “be a marketplace of ideas” (Van Vollenhoven, 2015, p. 1). The following quotations reveal the participants’ understanding of learner integration as the promotion of freedom of expression.

The principal elucidated that:

Although this phenomenon has lots of meanings... to me, I see it as the promotion of freedom of expression...well I said so because once the learners are fully integrated into school they have autonomy to question anything to their teachers as well as school authorities.

The female teacher commented that:

Learner integration is a freedom of expression ...because, through it, our school management system allows the collection of some new knowledge and ideas from our learners, (Emh) and this helps us to be able to know the balance of our learners’ perceptions regarding their studies, school, and the whole society.

Additionally, learners, Bridge and Eagle (pseudonyms) viewed learner integration as the promotion of the right of expression by associating this with the actual integration activities that take place in their school. Furthermore, they used the photovoice method to present their understanding by taking photographs of things around the school that informed their understanding of learner integration as freedom of expression. Therefore, the presentation of comments and photographs on the understanding of learner integration presented below.

Bridge (female black learner) mentioned that:

(Emh) to me our integration is when our teachers allow us to ask questions, listen to us, discuss with us and then they make informed decisions regarding different issues in our school.

Bridge supported her understanding by presenting the photograph that shows the meeting point at their school. She mentioned that teachers and learners normally meet at the place to discuss some issues that arise in the school which impacts their learning and lives in general.

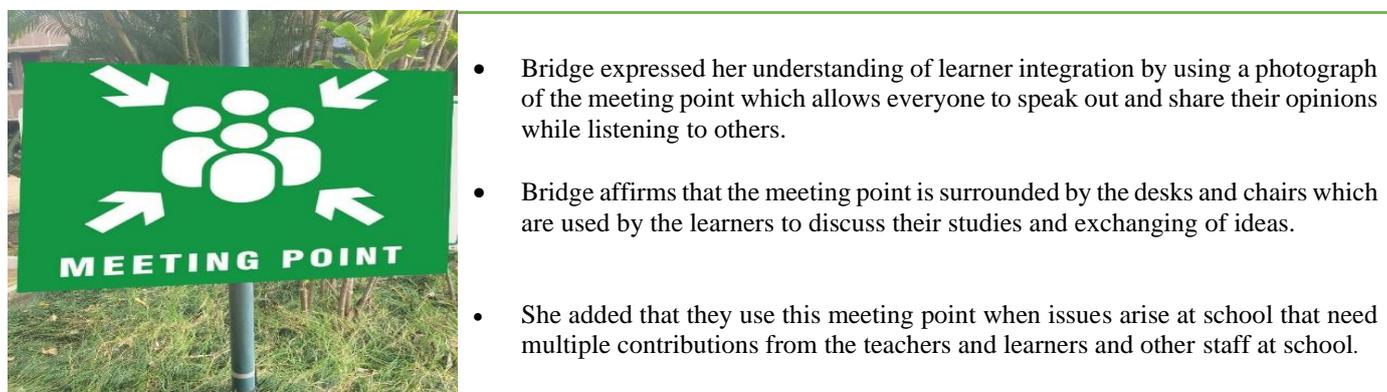


Figure 1. The meeting point as a source for the understanding of learner integration.

Furthermore, Eagle (male coloured learner) pointed out that:

With learner integration in our school the right of expression is entitled to everyone... which helps us, learners, to develop confidence and a stand for our own opinions while respecting others’ opinions too.

To support the construction of knowledge of learner integration as the promotion of freedom of expression, *Eagle* illustrated his understanding by using the photograph of a megaphone.



- During the photo interpretation session, Eagle explained the freedom of expression at school by using the megaphone photograph.
- He mentioned that learner integration in their school is viewed as freedom of expression because through integration everyone now is entitled to this right which also, he claimed to be the factor for them (learners) to develop in confidence.
- Eagle also included that the megaphone at their school is placed near the assembly area. Where everyone is allowed to share his or her opinion while respecting others' opinions too...

Figure 2. A megaphone as an object to enhance the understanding of learner integration

Therefore, the understanding of learner integration as a promotion of freedom of expression explained by the participants of the study, informs one of the civil freedoms that are guaranteed in Section 16 of the South African constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996 hereafter). According to the RSA (1996) section 16 (1) says that “*Everyone has the right to freedom of expression....*” This includes the freedom to share and receive information as well as freedom for academic and scientific expression. Convincingly, the protection of this right is very important in South African schools because the previous education system under apartheid government denied this right to the majority of people. Hence, protection and promotion of this right create a comfortable learning environment that allows learners to feel free and safe to learn and attain their academic goals as well as enable them to develop and grow holistically.

2. Theme Two: Learner Integration as Insertion and Recognition of Other Cultures

An exploration of the understanding of learner integration which was viewed from the participants' perceptions defined the learner integration phenomenon as the insertion of other cultures' values and norms into the Ex-Model C school system. Meanwhile, after the transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa became more racially and ethnically diverse in all aspects, especially in its education system (Padayachee, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). Our schools became racial and ethnic islands in which learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, races, religions, and beliefs are learning together in one school. Recently, most powerful agendas like inclusion and integration in South African schools seemed to be raised by many politicians, civil leaders, and educational activists to promote awareness and desirability of racial, cultural, and ethnic integration in schools (Mahlo, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019).

To support this, the following quotes were stressed by the participants of the study on their understanding of learner integration as the insertion of other cultures into the Ex-Model C school system. The principal explained:

Learner integration is the adoption of other cultural values into the teaching and learning process...It is all about bringing in all other costumes, beliefs norms into the teaching and learning environment.

The male teacher stated:

Just like our principal said... Learner integration is a form of bringing together all other cultural symbols, ideas, features, and language and trying to make meaning of the teaching and learning process from diverse information and experiences.

The female teacher explained:

For me ... I can relate the issue of learner integration with the development of intercultural practices and competence in our school for the past few years. Learner integration is well informed by our intercultural practices that take place every year in our school.

Furthermore, Umbrella (pseudonym) linked the annual Heritage Day ceremonies at their school to the insertion of other cultures. She mentioned events such as dances, plays, singing of songs, preparation of different traditional foods and drinks, decorating the walls of classrooms with pictures of traditional leaders, drawing of pictures of different religious symbols among others. She added that not only those events take place but also, they are allowed to wear their traditional clothes, head gear, and all other accessories at school on Heritage days. The photograph she presented was the photo of her and other learners and teachers during the Heritage Day at their school.



- During the photo interpretation session, Umbrella mentioned that the presence of other cultures in their school system made the Heritage Day to become a more exciting and happy day every year in their school.
- Also, she revealed that learner integration is all about the inclusion of diverse cultures and enhancing the feeling and sense of belonging for everyone.

Figure 3. Heritage Day celebration to support the understanding of learner integration

In addition, Eagle also stressed:

Inclusion of other cultures into our learning allows us to learn from our peers. Our peers bring different perspectives, opinions, ideas, and knowledge.

He also added:

(mmmmh) through learner integration cultural insertion brings awareness and appreciation of all cultures in our school.



- During the photo interpretation session, **Bridge** outlined that learner integration brings inclusion in their school. She mentioned that the photograph is from one of the many notice boards in their school.
- Also, she claimed that the welcoming environment in this school influences the insertion of other cultures which through it, they (learners) managed to learn and understand some values and customs of different tribes and communities.

Figure 4. Notice body as an object used to promote the understanding of learner integration

This understanding also was illustrated by the girl named **Bridge** by using the photograph of a wall of pictures from their school that express the words of embracing diversity.

Essentially, when exploring the intersection of race, culture, and sexuality aspects of the schooling process in South African schools, Francis (2019) alludes that, learner integration in South African schools not only considerably impacts learners' academic achievements but also it improves their lives in a diverse society too. Thamane and Thobejane (2019) allude that learner integration reduces prejudices and enhances the capabilities of people in diverse settings, especially schools. In addition, some psychologists like Hockly (2018) states that, learning in cultural, racial, and ethnically diverse setting help a learner to become smarter, become better at solving complex problems as well get an opportunity to learn new things from other learners of different cultures, races, experiences, and backgrounds.

Therefore, this study contends that the learner integration concept in Ex-Model C schools should incline with the continuum of the school aspects and services that highlight social justice, equities, and equalities for teachers, learners, and other staff within the school.

3. Theme Three: Learner Integration is an Intellectual, Physical, and Social Well-Being Involvement

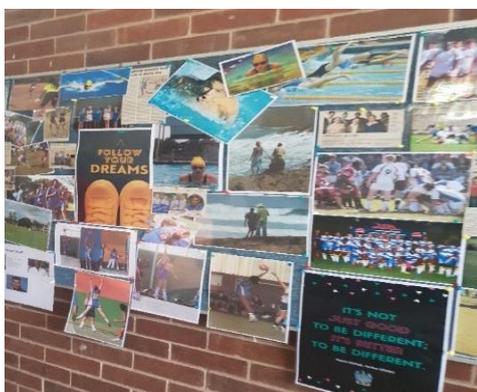
The theme on the construction of the understanding of learner integration emerged to interpret this phenomenon as a way of organising the school curriculum to promote the intellectual, physical, and social involvement of the learners at school. Findings under this theme maintained that learner integration is acknowledged as an attractive strategy for the school programmes rearrangement, particularly in issues like inclusion, multicultural learning, intellectual, social, and physical integration, and effective implementation of desegregation policies for both curricular and extracurricular activities in the education system. The following verbatim narrations express the participants understanding of learner integration. The principal commented that:

(Mmh) to me learner integration seems to be as an amendment process connected to the application of curriculum synthesizes into the teaching and learning context to achieve an effective involvement of the learners... in all aspects...intellectually, physically and socially.

The female teacher concurred:

(Yaah!) That's true ...learner integration breaks up the traditional boundaries of the curriculum... by creating a bridge between the school, academic practices, and learners' communities. With learner integration... we managed to take part in international Olympic competitionsin both aspects sports and academic.

To explain his understanding of learner integration as an intellectual, physical, and social involvement process Star used a photograph of a notice board at their school which shows different photographs of extra-curricular activities that students are engaging in this school.



During the photo interpretation session, Star presented a photograph that express some of extra-murals that take place in his school. He mentioned that learner integration influences curriculum rearrangement allows them to engage in different extra-curricular activities such as cross country, soccer, rugby etc.

Figure 5. Extra-mural activities to enhance the understanding of learner integration

Eagle also supported that:

Intellectual, physical, and social involvement... not only shape up the integration in school but also brings up the connection of curricular and extra-curricular activities as well as connections between school, families, and our communities too.

Eagle supported this by providing a photograph of the food-giving activity that he was engaged in last year during the Covid-19 crisis. This was an activity whereby the school and communities together decided to prepare food and drinks for the homeless, poor, and needy people who were negatively affected by the pandemic and unrest situation in the province.



- During the photo interpretation session, Star presented the photograph that shows his understanding of learner integration as an intellectual, physical, and social involvement of learners.
- He mentioned that with learner integration in their school, learners are well involved and engaged in various community activities like food giving to homeless people, visiting orphanage centres etc.

Figure 6. Community services as the process of understanding learner integration

Drawing from the participants' comments and photo interpretations above, the learner integration phenomenon recognises the interconnection of several aspects that are shaped by the curriculum rearrangement in school. Therefore, it is important for the curriculum developers to consider diverse experiences across multiple contexts, diverse roles, methods, and more favourable ideas that enhance the integration of learners at school.

Moreover, excerpts from the participants of the study on the understanding of learner integration phenomenon are monitored by several indicators that influence the presence and appreciation of learner integration phenomenon within a school context. Therefore, for an effective learner integration in an Ex-Model C school, this study admitted that the indicators explained by the participants needed to be recognised and placed into the school processes so as to encourage and empower everyone to mitigate the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon with relation to the lived experiences and beliefs.

Discussion

The findings above indicate the presence of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C School. With regard to the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon which was explained by the participants as a promotion of freedom of expression, this informs one of the civil freedoms that was guaranteed in section 16 of the South African constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996). According to the RSA (1996) section 16(1) it says that "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression." This includes the freedom to share and receive information as well as freedom for the academic and scientific expression.

Additionally, findings showed that the selected ex-model C school is currently upgrading some of the multicultural practices in its system. Mavuru and Ramnarain (2020) confirm that issues like biases and personal experiences may not be well understood when they are investigated in a group. This implies that a person may face some difficulty in explaining or talking about these issues in an uncomfortable place or at an inappropriate moment, especially when the researcher discusses and analyses an issue with people from different positions, perspectives, or even classes (Mahlo, 2017). The study maintains that the prevalence of one cultural program tendency in most of Ex-Model C schools is influenced by white culture which results in

other cultures to not being visible enough and this seems to be a big problem although these schools do not really acknowledge it.

Conversely, the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon is shaped by the multiple entities existing in an Ex-Model C school context. This implies that the understanding of this phenomenon is determined by several indicators that seemed to influence the presence and appreciation of the learner integration phenomenon within a school context. Therefore, for an effective learner integration in an Ex-Model C school, this study recognised that the indicators explained by the participants needed to be acknowledged and integrated into the school processes to encourage and empower everyone to gain understanding of the learner integration phenomenon in relation to their lived experiences and beliefs.

Conclusion

The study's findings revealed that learner integration is a complex phenomenon. Learner integration is influenced by many psychosocial issues like learners' sense of belonging, self-esteem, well-being, and learning experiences. Nonetheless, the findings revealed that understanding of learner integration in the Ex-Model C school is demonstrated from multiple perspectives and this understanding is related to the dynamic aspects like culture, language, sports, norms, and values that exist within the Ex-Model C school.

Learner integration is also viewed as a perfect training activity that involves and touches diverse aspects in real lives of the learners at school, this is because their daily academic, social and physical interaction at school and communities comprises diverse people with different life experiences and perspectives. However, in order to have an effective learner integration at school, this study suggests that the Ex-Model C schools' SGBs encourage and provide interaction of different cultures, languages, values, and norms in its school system. This will create a more conducive learning environment as well as policies and programmes for effective learner integration.

Notwithstanding, the findings of the study insist that the understanding of learner integration needs multidimensional factors and approaches, therefore, this study concludes that it is important for Ex-Model C schools to consider the inputs of their learners, parents, and their local communities on the process of reconstruction of their schools' policies, programmes, and procedures as to operate under the multiple indicators.

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