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Post Colonial Perspectives On Education Policy Research

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Post Colonial Perspectives On Education Policy Research



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Abstract

The focus of this article is on the role and contribution of policy research in contexts of social transformation. With reference to education transformation policies in post-apartheid South Africa, the argument is developed that research studies vary in their contribution to change, as a function of the paradigmatic assumptions and methodological choices of the researcher. Based on an analysis of post-colonial theory and transformative perspectives on policy research, a framework is proposed which could be used to evaluate research contributions. This is then used to evaluate a selection of policy research reports on Inclusive Education published since 1994. Findings from this exemplary analysis suggest that there is a disjuncture between policy research practices and transformation imperatives inherent to current policies, and that these reflect the paradigmatic and methodological assumptions made by researchers. Strategies are proposed which could strengthen policy research contributions to social change in South Africa.

Keywords: Post-colonial theory, transformative research paradigm, inclusive education, education policy research, research methodology, South Africa

Introduction

Policy research is generally accepted as central to processes of social change in society. With the advent of political changes in South Africa came a wave

of policies designed to support transformation and democracy goals (Spren and Vally, 2010). These policies have all been fairly well researched (Cloete et al., 2002), with some studies focusing on development as well as the implementation and effectiveness of policies since 1994 (Fiske and Ladd, 2004). Examples in education include studies of governance changes in higher education (Jansen, 2002; Van der Westhuizen, 2007), curriculum changes in schools (e.g. Bloch, 2009; Cross, Mngadi and Rouhanie, 2002), and Inclusive Education (e.g. Maher, 2009).

Research reports represent the participation of researchers in policy processes, and in the context of South Africa, responses to the transformation imperatives. The latter include goals of responsiveness, accountability, relevance, and quality (Department of Education, 2008). Given the growing number of policy studies in the South African context, it is appropriate that questions be raised about the relevance and contributions of such reports to the goals and imperatives of transformation. Assuming that the changing South Africa is essentially a post-colonial project, it would make sense to draw on post-colonial theory to evaluate published research. This would encourage policy analyses on levels of paradigm and practice, following the examples of Chilisa (2011), Odora Hoppers (2002), Odora Hoppers and Van der Westhuizen (2013), Mertens (2009) and others.

The focus of this article is on the relevance and contribution of examples of policy research studies published in South Africa since 1994. The purpose is to evaluate a selection of studies on Inclusive Education in terms of a framework based on post-colonial theory, in order to propose research strategies which would contribute to transformation.

Perspectives of post-colonial theory

Post-colonial (PC) theory examines the cultures of former Western colonies and how they relate to the rest of the world, focusing on the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised and on what happens when the one is positioned as superior and dominant to the other (Ilieva and Odiemo-Munara, 2007). Fanon's (1991) notion of the self-other binary, where the colonised are depicted by the coloniser as the other, and inferior to the coloniser, is key to PC theory. The colonised is the 'the subaltern who cannot speak' (Spivak, 1988, quoted by Sherry, 2008).

Post-colonial theory is a multi-stranded theory concerned with the advancement of liberatory and resistance politics that support decolonisation and engages subaltern experience, which involves the perspectives of dominated,

marginalised, oppressed, and subordinated peoples (Hammer, 2004). It is concerned with the provocation, authentication, and celebration of the voice of the other and with deconstructing assumptions about the nature of language and texts by critiquing the cultural imperialism and master narratives of dominant white, Christian, Western, patriarchal, heterosexual thought (Hammer, 2004). It is multi-stranded in that a range of authors contributed towards articulating understandings of marginalisation and discrimination in post-colonial societies (Grosfoguel, 2007; Odora Hoppers, 2009).

Post-colonial theory is used internationally to study what happens when two cultures clash and one occupying a position of superiority and dominance over the other (Ilieva and Odiemo-Munara, 2007). Critiquing dominant discourses is key to PC scholarship and helps us theorise what Sherry (2008) refers to as contact zones: ‘...sites of transition and displacement where dominant assumptions are unsettled and new hybrid forms of power and identity emerge’.

Post-colonial research has gained prominence since the publication of seminal texts by Ngugi (1986, ‘Decolonising the mind’), Smith (1999, ‘Decolonising research’), Brydon (2000), Mutua and Swadener (2004), and others. Internationally, post-colonial research is located in a transformative paradigm (Chilisa, 2008, 2012; Mertens, 2008). This involves a systematic analysis of the dilemmas and problematic of what is colonial as a dominant research tradition favouring the interests of colonialist Western societies, which is evident in both philosophical assumptions and research methods (Smith, 1999). The transformative intent of post-colonial research has been strengthened by notions of anti-colonial, indigenous, socially critical research. This intent is part of an emerging tradition that goes beyond social critique and change to advancing indigenous epistemologies (see Mertens, 2008, Chilisa 2011).

The historical response of post-colonial research is aimed at examining colonial legacies (Macedo, 1999; Semali and Kincheloe, 1999); an attempt to study the problematic influence of ‘imperial eyes’ and the ‘positional superiority’ of Western knowledge (Smith, 1999). It is an attempt to follow the position stated by Prah (1999:6) that the relevance of knowledge forged in ‘Western conditions’ may be questioned, especially because knowledge is an instrument for social change.

Post-colonial research aims to pursue an agenda of decolonisation which, according to Porteus (2003) involves ‘...the liberation of social agency, the movement away from the passive on both the personal and collective levels’. It is seen as an indigenous, anti-colonial, cultural criticism of research methods;

a way of understanding racism for example, as a rationale for ‘liberation epistemologies’ (Rigney, 1999). As such, ‘Indiginist research’ involves opposition as emancipatory imperative, political integrity and ‘privileging indigenous voices’ (Chilisa, 2011; Rigney, 1999).

In Southern Africa, post-colonial research seems to have been pursued with different emphases. Various authors offered analyses of how the apartheid education system, as an extension of colonial traditions, shaped educational research in support of apartheid ideologies (Meerkotter, 2001; Prah, 1999). Seepe (1998) and several other authors have called for an African-centred research discourse, a discourse that would increase subjectivity and agency of African academics, and would advance knowledge and epistemological perspectives that are rooted in the African experience (Seepe, 1998). This position is very much supported and extended by Odora Hoppers who, in her analysis of how research and social science in Southern Africa should be transformed, argued strongly for the development of indigenous knowledge systems, and for the integration of ‘Western oriented’ systems with such systems (Odora Hoppers, 1993, 2002).

Crossley and Tickly (2004) described the themes/strands of post-colonial research in Education include critical multi-culturalism, focusing on diverse communities in post-colonial eras and critically analysing the essentialisation of cultural identities and racial inferiority. Secondly, there is the focus on language, multilingualism and the contradiction between what is local and indigenous, and the dominant languages of the colonial era. Lastly, there is the strand that endeavours to develop research methods more suited to the study of indigenous cultures in ways that give expression to historically marginalised people (Crossley and Tickly, 2004). These strands indicate the broad range of emphases in post-colonial research.

Extending PC theory, Mertens (2008) has argued how a transformative paradigm, drawing on post-colonial theory, is a moral imperative if the needs and realities of local communities are to be taken seriously. This needs to ensure the relevance of educational research practices has been advanced recently by Lincoln and Gonzalez (2008) who proposed very specific strategies in the context of the USA, to promote liberatory and democratic research. They argue the need for Western scholars who work in ways not sensitive to the historical injustice of colonised, to question their paradigmatic assumptions and research practices and develop strategies together with the non-Western and non-English-speaking scholars they work with, in order to further the ideals of social justice and democratic practice in research.

One of the most prominent voices in Southern Africa advancing the tradition of post-colonial research, is Bagele Chilisa from Botswana. In several papers (Chilisa, 2005, 2008) and a seminal research methodology text (2011) she clarifies the problematic of mainstream Western research traditions, and advances on levels of philosophical assumptions and research practices, clear direction of local more responsive research. Her argument against mainstream Western-oriented research involves the idea of ‘otherness’, ‘othering’ and the use of research to relegate people to otherness, to the point of an ‘otherness ideology’ (Chilisa, 2005). Otherness is in a binary relation to sameness/uniformity and similarity by which people are divided into groups and are attributed the same characteristics. This ideology is characteristic of the binary/opposites that are clear in international literature and through which the distinction between white and black, coloniser and colonised, developing and developed, centre and periphery is further strengthened (Chilisa, 2005). In times of globalisation and global capitalism this is taken further by the displacement of sub-Saharan Africa from a structural position of exploitation to one of irrelevance (the so-called ‘fourth world’) (Castells, 1993, quoted by Chilisa, 2005).

In terms of philosophical assumptions, post-colonial research has been described by Mertens (2007) and others as located in a transformative research paradigm. With reference to evaluation research, Mertens (2007, 2012) argued that the transformative paradigm deals with questions of epistemology, ontology, axiology that are sensitive to for example knowledge processes, understanding of life experiences, research relationships and power positions. In a transformative tradition, how such questions are dealt with, demonstrate a conscious awareness that certain individuals occupy a position of greater power and that individuals with other/different characteristics may be associated with a higher likelihood of exclusion from decisions about the definition of the evaluation focus, questions and other methodological aspects of the inquiry (Mertens, 2007). In addition, questions of research ethics and moral behaviour would be interrogated to the extent that the research practices are characteristic transformative changes (Mertens, 2012).

Chilisa (2011) expands on these questions about epistemological and ontological assumptions by referring to an understanding of research relations. In her research, she works with the African assumptions that (ontologically) ‘a person is through others’, that the living and non-living are part of the research process, and (epistemologically) that research is cyclical and has spiritual dimensions in the sense that it is ‘creation centred’. Research as a relational

process works with an ontology/epistemology of connectedness which sees human beings spiritually and materially as part of the universe; an assumption that sees research as part of life in a holistic sense, guiding research practices. The emphasis is not on socially constructed knowledge, but on a holistically created reality and knowledge. This attitude of the researcher has specific implications for methods of data gathering and analysis (also see Chilisa, 2008).

The African-centred worldview in research furthermore, according to Chilisa (2005, 2008, 2011), originates from questions such as: Who are we? Whose side are we on? Researchers are seen as ‘healers’, working with communities, with an ethical responsibility of transforming communities to the natural order of the universe, etc. This worldview considers research methodologies in terms of African metaphors: ‘...our hearts are circular, our stories go round and round, the collective I/we, multiple, interconnected, etc’. African-centred ethics emphasise the responsibility of the researcher to her community, and describe the researcher as being the healer, with a deep respect for the spirituality and beliefs of others, an ethics that underscores agreement and consensus, built on circles of dialogue, solidarity, and rebirth. Such a worldview would have researchers work with sources of data such as dance, stories, songs, dress, praise songs; developing an ‘African hermeneutics’ (Chilisa, 2011).

It needs to be noted that notions of African-centred research such as described by Chilisa (2011) cannot remain unproblematised. Authors such as Mbembe (2001) wrote critical analyses of post-colonial societies in Africa, pointing to the need for more diverse views of African experiences, or of a ‘pluriversal world (as opposed to a universal world), as proposed by Grosfoguel (2007). These need to be incorporated in the articulation of worldviews and how they shape research practices, reflecting diverse beliefs.

Perspectives on post-colonial research, as described thus far, are echoed, in the Australian context by Martin (quoted by Steinhauser (2002)), in terms of notions of indigenous research methodologies, which would entail:

- acknowledgement of worldview, knowledge and realities that form the framework of research;
- acknowledgement of local [Aboriginal] social norms as the essential processes according to which people live, learn and situate themselves as indigenous people;
- emphasis on the social, historical and political contexts that form people’s lives, positions and futures;

- privileging the voices, experiences and lives of indigenous people;
- identification and correction of the issues that are important to indigenous people.

Of significance here, is the disposition on the part of the researcher to recognise, explore, acknowledge, and pursue ways of ‘indigenising’ research on levels of practice and paradigm (Adair, 1999; Chilisa, 2012; Mertens, 2012).

In summary, the features of post-colonial research may be organised in three broad categories. Firstly, because post-colonial research is described as a response to colonial and other dominant mainstream methods, one may expect that such research would problematise existing research traditions in explicit ways. This would involve, as demonstrated in for example the study by Chilisa (2005), pointing to the inaccuracies and unfair decisions made by researchers and decision makers as a result of ‘mainstream methods’ used in for example HIV AIDS research in Botswana, reinforcing stereotypes and not contributing to solving social problems.

Secondly, one would expect post-colonial research projects to articulate and draw on local, indigenous philosophical assumptions. This would involve advancing a transformative perspective of research, as was explicated by Mertens (2007) and concretised by Chilisa (2005, 2008) with reference to for example holistic world views and relational epistemologies and ontologies (see also Chilisa, 2011). In addition, because of the emphasis in post-colonial research on the tension between knowledge systems and the need for the development of indigenous systems, one would expect theoretical frameworks used in educational research to not only have a transformative/socially critical intent, but also acknowledge and promote indigenous/local perspectives. Such theories are relevant and applicable to the degree in which a balance can be found between what can be learned from different knowledge systems (Odora Hoppers, 2002). As such, one would also expect, as was argued by Adair (1999), conceptual frameworks that are ‘indigenised’, analysed for their relevance to indigenous perspectives and adapted accordingly.

Thirdly, on the level of research design and methodological choices, one would expect post-colonial research to be clearly rooted in indigenous world views, for example designs that offer space for post-colonial epistemologies. The latter would include more participatory designs, designs that are more open to role distributions and inclusivity. In designing research, role interpretations of the researcher and the researched are problematised in terms of shared world views.

Such world views may see research as a relational process; a holistic process, one of connectedness where people are seen as spiritually and materially part of the universe. This kind of worldview and relational ontology/epistemology is reflected in story-based methods (relying on indigenous narratives), language-based methods (drawing on local languages and interpretations), and cyclical and space-based methods (Chilisa, 2008, 2011).

Framework for the analysis of policy research from post-colonial theory perspective

For the purpose of answering questions about the relevance and contribution of policy research to transformation imperatives, the following framework of questions is proposed, informed by the review of literature reported above. These questions are categorised in terms of the broad dimensions of the research process:

(a) In the *statement of the research problem* and the framing of the study: How is the study framed as a post-colonial/transformational project? How critical is the study of mainstream education research traditions? How well is the study contextualised and how sensitive is it to the transformation imperatives in South African education, such as relevance, responsiveness, equity etc.? (see Van der Westhuizen, 2007).

(b) In the exposition of the *theoretical framework*: To what extent is indigenous and socially critical perspectives utilised? How are issues of worldview, diversity, relevance, etc. accounted for when it comes to motivating the relevance of the framework of choice?

(c) The research *design* of the study: What makes this study an example of post-colonial research? To what degree are assumptions of transformational research reflected in the methodological choices? Furthermore: How does the study go beyond the limitations of mainstream methods, e.g. in accounting for culture, context and local traditions/ language?

(d) In the *analysis*, findings and discussions: How are paradigmatic assumptions accounted for? How well do the findings reflect realities of research participants? How open are they to diverse and local voices? In the discussion – What is the contribution to theorising of post-colonial research? How does the study lead to a re-valuation of the indigenous, and the creation of multiple identities?

(e) The overall *contribution* of the study: How is the study supporting the post-colonial research project which is about transforming research practices to be

more relevant and responsive? What knowledge interests are served, knowing the democratic post-colonial agenda? How responsive is the study to the post-colonial need for relevance, empowerment, and multiple voices?

Evaluation of policy research examples

Selection of articles for this analysis

Articles were selected which reported on recent empirical research on issues of Inclusive Education. Selected articles had in common that they reported empirical inquiries about policy implementation. Argumentative, conceptual analyses articles were excluded because of the purpose of this inquiry which is to assess the extent to which empirical research into the implementation of Inclusive Education policies reflect principles of post-colonial research.

Two comprehensive electronic databases that contain references to educational research in South Africa were scanned. These are ‘SA E-publications’ and ‘Africa wide’, databases covering publications in the humanities on research in South Africa, but also internationally. Keywords used were ‘Inclusive Education’, ‘policy research’, and ‘empirical methods’. Four articles were identified:

Dada, S., and Alant, E. 2002. A comparative study of the attitudes of teachers at special and educationally inclusive schools towards learners with little or no functional speech using communication devices. *South African Journal of Education* 22(3): 213–218.

Hay, J.F., Smit, J., and Paulsen, M. 2001. Teacher preparedness for Inclusive Education. *South African Journal of Education*, 200121(4): 213–218.

Muthukrishna, N., and Sader, S. 2004. Social capital and the development of inclusive schools and communities. *Perspectives in Education* 22(1): 17–26.

Swart, E., Engelbrecht, P., Eloff, I., and Pettipher, R. 2002. Implementing Inclusive Education in South Africa: Teachers’ attitudes and experiences. *Acta Academica* 34(1): 175–189.

The articles were purposefully selected, and taken to be exemplary of empirical research that one could expect after the establishment of a new educational policy, in this case White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education. Proposals for this policy had been under discussion since 1994 and culminated in 2001 with the

publication of the White Paper and the consequent implementation strategies (Department of Education, 2001). The main criterion for selection of the articles was that they were exemplary of policy evaluation studies post 1994. All four articles zoomed in on the problematic of implementation of the policies and issues as experienced in schools (i.e. the article by Dada and Alant [DA], and the one by Muthukrishna and Sader [MS]), and issues related to teacher training (i.e. the articles by Hay, Smit and Paulsen [HSP] and Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff and Pettipher [SEEP]). The article of Swart and colleagues was taken as representative of other similar publications by the same authors.

The intention with this study was to analyse the contribution of policy research studies from a post-colonial perspective. This required a selection of articles not categorised before according to paradigm and methodological preferences to allow the analyses to highlight varied approaches.

A brief content summary of the four articles is offered in the Appendix.

Findings from the analysis

a. Framing of the studies

The four studies have in common that they have been framed as policy inquiries aimed at a specific challenge in the implementation of Inclusive Education. The purposes range from an analysis of policy implementation [MS], to teacher attitudes/preparedness in relation to policy requirements [DA and HSP], and to experiences of the new policy [SEEP]. The studies have been set up to clarify policy implications and to make recommendations based on standard survey, qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The contextualisation of three of the studies is limited to policy documents, and previous (or lack of) research on similar topics. This means that, by design, specifics of local and individual contexts of teaching and Inclusive Education in particular schools have not been referred to. For example, HSP looked at how prepared teachers are for implementing the Inclusive Education policy, and framed the study as policy inquiry without reference to contextual realities of teachers' lives.

None of the four articles make any reference to post-colonial research perspectives. The study by MS stands out as an attempt to frame the research on Inclusive Education in more contextualised ways. It links the study of implementation of Inclusive Education policy to issues of community

development. This framing of the study is authentic and allows it to account for community and local perspectives. The remaining three studies have research purposes that seem rather technical and limited to one particular issue such as for example teacher attitudes regarding the use of technologies in the teaching of hearing-impaired learners in an inclusive class [DA], or teacher preparedness [HSP]. There is a clear lack of any broader contextualisation and reference to the transformation imperatives of relevance and responsiveness.

b. Theoretical perspectives

From the outline of theoretical concepts and perspectives, it is clear that the four articles draw heavily/exclusively on ‘mainstream’ Western international authors. In each case, the reference lists contain a majority of sources from United States of America and Western Europe, with some references to South African publications, mostly quoted in uncritical ways. The studies by SEEP and HSP for example, rely on a small selection of American and European authors to clarify what the concept of inclusion is about, not reflecting socially critical perspectives. Similarly, DA draws on an impressive list of sources to summarise international research on the topic of teacher attitudes towards hearing impaired learners, accepting findings and perspectives of such studies in uncritical ways. In addition, contextual differences between empirical studies quoted and theoretical perspectives are not accounted for. One illustration is the references by DA to international studies on teachers, teaching methods and learners with disabilities without reference to contextual realities.

In contrast, the study by MS, by design, required a socially critical analysis, also of the theoretical perspectives on the development of inclusive schools. The authors have referred to prominent mostly Western authors in fairly critical terms. International perspectives on social capital are compared for example, and this adds to a more relevant understanding of the issues of the inquiry.

c. Research designs

The four studies in this analysis differ in their designs – the first three [DA, SEEP, HSP] utilise standard designs of qualitative research [SEEP], quasi-experimental with random sampling and measured attitudes [DA], and questionnaire-based surveys [HSP]. From these designs no ‘transformative intent’ was clear and the limitations of methodological choices were not explicitly problematised. These research designs may therefore be described as mainstream, technical variations of the positivist tradition of research as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

The three studies have in common an emphasis on uniformity and sameness – teachers for example, are treated as ‘the other’, as ‘similar’, and there is an apparent lack of richness of multiple voices, identities and events/experiences in authentic situations. In the case of HSP for example, descriptions from 1,133 teachers of what Inclusive Education is about, was actually marked for ‘correctness’, while variations of interpretations were not clearly accounted for.

In contrast, the study by MS utilised a critical action research design, with some elements of participatory learning. Methods included interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document analysis. This design included methods of research that allowed for multiple voices, including for example perspectives from rural teachers.

d. Analysis, findings and discussions

The studies reviewed here yielded findings limited to the designs and methods used by the researchers. The analyses and findings are therefore limited and this leaves various questions unanswered. For example, the study by DA revealed that teachers are positive about technological devices in teaching hearing impaired children. But the study is fairly quiet about contextual realities, and variations in access to such devices. Broader issues of socio-economic access and social inclusion have not been problematised.

The articles furthermore seem to make conclusions that are offered as universally true. This is done without any suggestions about validity and without accounting for paradigmatic assumptions.

Except for the inquiry by MS, no claim can be made that ‘multiple voices’ have been documented. In fact, the studies did much to reduce complex phenomena to essential decontextualised general findings/truths. The best example is the study by HSP which ended up describing the typical teacher, based on data from 2,577 teachers from a range of contexts.

e. Contribution of each study

The four inquiries were designed to study issues of implementation of the policy of Inclusive Education. This review indicates that the studies have yielded results and recommendations that seem useful to policy audiences, e.g. that teachers need to be trained to do technology-based teaching [SA], that a ‘huge effort’ is needed to shift teacher perspectives from notions of special education to notions of Inclusive Education [HSP], and that policy makers should keep teachers’ attitudes and emotions in mind in teacher development

programmes [SEEP]. The MS study recommends that the goals of Inclusive Education may be better served through the development of human capital defined in educational and community terms.

On a surface level, it seems that the four studies, in different ways, succeeded in their intentions to research Inclusive Education policy issues and make recommendations that should be attended to. From a post-colonial perspective however, these contributions are limited and limiting in that they are closed for local and indigenous perspectives and world views. As they stand, the generalised findings serve technical/rational knowledge interests while the socially critical dimensions of the research problems they focused on, were not really explored. The study by MS went a long way towards opening up these possibilities by forging the school/community link and by drawing on notions of social capital as conceptual framework and by promoting a situational understanding.

Discussion

The main finding of this inquiry is that the research on Inclusive Education utilise research designs and methods that are very much ‘standard’, textbook versions of qualitative and quantitative research. The studies are not well contextualised and unproblematised in terms of paradigmatic assumptions. As such, the research is limiting while researchers remain distant, independent, and unconnected outsiders.

The finding of this analysis came as no surprise – they confirm the observation that not much has changed in terms of educational research methods in South Africa since 1994. The studies lacked any critical analysis of methodological choices or paradigmatic assumptions, and as such contribute to maintaining the standard and mainstream methods of qualitative and quantitative research. The exception is the study by Muthukrishna and Sader which seem more contextualised, inclusive and responsive to community perspectives.

From a post-colonial perspective it is clear that the mainstream methods lack any meaningful articulation of local, indigenous worldviews. For example, the study on the use of technology in inclusive schools to assist learners with little functional speech could have benefitted from community education perspectives and analyses of individual case examples, in context. In addition, the inclusion of multiple perspectives would have refined the understanding of how technology is/could be realistically used.

Similarly, the study on teacher preparedness ‘averaged out’ questionnaire information to come to some universal summary of the situation of a typical teacher. From a post-colonial perspective researchers would have pursued local, community meanings of social inclusion. The questionnaire method limits the bearing of context on findings. Data gathering could have been enriched by a focus on relations and a holistic perspective of Inclusive Education. Also, multiple perspectives, diverse identities, and contextual realities needed to be accounted for. With this perspective such research would also have advanced the agenda of transformative research which is about promoting the development of indigenous knowledge (Odora Hoppers, 2001).

Not one of the studies relied on local languages for purposes of data gathering, analysis and interpretation. This is problematic. The role of language is seminal – it is by means of language that one voices/describes one’s reality, and makes meaning. Language is the psychological and mediating instrument for knowledge development (Vygotsky, 1978), the semiotic instrument of meaning making (Lemke, 1997). It is widely accepted that language communities develop, through their language, conceptual frameworks and ways of thinking about their lived realities and everyday lives (Odora Hoppers, 2002). These are then the indigenous ways of knowing reflected in the language use (Odora Hoppers, 2002; Smith, 1999). In a way, languages hold people ‘captive’ and their way of talking reflects their thinking and who they are (Andersen, 1998). Language and cognition/conceptualisation are sides of the same coin, as has been indicated by, for example, the study of Zaja and Odhiambo (2007) on evaluation terminology in English and Kiswahili.

This study supports the observation that educational research in post apartheid South Africa, at least with reference to research on Inclusive Education, is not post-colonial at all. This means that researchers are maintaining the dominant research approaches that existed before 1994. It also means that they miss out on contributing to transformation agendas by working with alternative research methods that draw on indigenous worldviews. In pursuing such an agenda, post-colonial theory has proven to be useful as this article attempted to show.

While PC theory was a useful basis for the policy analysis framework used here, questioning the philosophical assumptions on levels of research paradigm and practice remains in order. Part of the problematic of post-colonial work that researchers problematise their own growth and identity – in terms of their historical position, participation in community life, and contribution towards creating new identities. At the same time this would ensure that there

is no continuation of the colonial mentality of subjugating knowledge (Odora Hoppers, 2001).

Conclusion

The findings of this study hopefully point to the value of post-colonial theory in the analysis of education policy research. The specific shortcomings on levels of research paradigm and practices have been pointed out, and the need to transform policy research practices highlighted. In this regard, post-colonial research represents a vision of the establishment of a new research tradition aimed at a rediscovery of authentic voices, methods, ways of knowledge development through research, and a revaluation of the role of the researcher. As such, the post-colonial research tradition is clearly part of a bigger project of social justice – it argues for a re-evaluation of indigenous knowledge contents and systems, and for diversity of identities in research. It is also a return in educational research practices to the community, the indigenous, incorporating other forms of knowledge, sources, origins and knowledge systems. This needs to be pursued by educational researchers, acknowledging the diversities of postcolonial contexts, and in so doing, contributing to the transformation of policies and research practices.

APPENDIX

Dada, S., and Alant, E. 2002. A comparative study of the attitudes of teachers at special and educationally inclusive schools towards learners with little or no functional speech using communication devices. *South African Journal of Education* 22(3): 213–218.

- Studying 28 teachers' attitudes [Likert scale with 35 questions] towards learners with little or no functional speech (LNFS), using a digital speaker (Alpha Talker TM) and a communication board.
- Found teachers were generally positive towards both high and low technology devices. No significant differences between inclusive and special education teachers' attitudes towards the devices.

Hay, J. F., Smit, J. and Paulsen, M. 2001. Teacher preparedness for Inclusive Education. *South African Journal of Education*, 21(4): 213–218.

- Sample of 2,577 teachers from 12 education districts.
- Questionnaire to ascertain attitudes towards Inclusive Education policy

implementation.

- Concludes with a description of the ‘average respondent’: primary school teacher with 13 years of teaching experience; not heard of inclusion, whole school approach, or mainstreaming.
- Proposes that a ‘huge effort’ is necessary on the part of policy makers and provincial administrators to bring about a paradigm shift away from ‘special education’ to Inclusive Education.

Muthukrishna, N., and Sader, S. 2004. Social capital and the development of inclusive schools and communities. *Perspectives in Education* 22(1): 17–26.

- Researching a national education pilot project – using critical action research design and ‘participatory learning and action’ [PLA] in 13 schools/education centres. Data collection techniques used in the project included interviews, observations, focus group interviews and document analysis.
- PLA methods helped clarify dominant issues in people’s lives, contradictions and tensions, and the overt and covert pressures from people in power.
- Develops the argument that ‘building social capital’ is a way to address social exclusion: social capital as the knowledge and identity resources of a community through networking.

Swart, E., Engelbrecht, P., Eloff, I., and Pettipher, R. 2002. Implementing Inclusive Education in South Africa: Teachers’ attitudes and experiences. *Acta Academica* 34(1): 175–189.

- Comparative analysis of three studies.
- Utilised group and individual interviews and questionnaire responses.
- Study found that teachers have inadequate knowledge, lack of knowledge, resources and support and that as a result, the impact on learners is/could be problematic.
- Based on the inquiry, argues for extended interpretations of teacher development and education change.

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