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Using empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying as a teaching-learning strategy to confront xenophobic attitudes in a context of higher education

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Abstract

Xenophobia poses a threat to social cohesion in South Africa. It is vital that pre-service teachers engage with their beliefs and attitudes about this phenomenon, so that they can promote socially inclusive education in a way that is sustainable. In support of the March 2019 National Action Plan in South Africa to address racism, including xenophobia, we recently undertook a small-scale research project, underpinned by the notions of diversity and inclusivity, at a Higher Education Institution, in the School of Education. In this article, we offer a methodological contribution in arguing for the efficacy of empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying as a teaching-learning strategy that contributes to transformed teaching praxis. This could provide a pathway to social inclusivity for education. This teaching-learning strategy serves a decolonial agenda in changing the way in which teaching-learning takes place. We explored various perspectives and positions with regard to the other in the interests of building a sustainable foundation for future generations to live with dignity, regardless of ethnicity.

Keywords: classroom praxis, empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying, social inclusivity, sustainability. xenophobia

Introduction

We maintain that promoting meaningful, social inclusivity for education can never be achieved with a mere technicist approach to the curriculum. Such an approach is limiting, reducing education to merely quantifiable measures and techniques. There is a need to go

against this grain (Batchelor & Sander, 2017; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Reyes et al., 2021) by employing teaching-learning strategies that can provide for transformative classroom praxis (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Quinlan, 2014). To this end, we offer a methodological contribution by presenting empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying (ERDR) as a teaching-learning strategy that contributes to "a continuous rethinking and re-contexualising [of human rights issues, in particular] to bring about newness in a dialectical manner" (Hlatswayo et al., 2020, p. 3), that is potentially emancipatory. ERDR is infused with Mbigi's (1997) Collective Fingers Theory, with voice and agency given to the lived experience of the participants. In alignment with an understanding that knowledge is a social construct and that currere is a co-produced set of understandings as individuals engage with one another, creating something new and, as yet, unseen (Le Grange, 2014), ERDR provides a teaching-learning strategy that promotes a deeper understanding of socially constructed concepts. A "deep examination of current hegemonies. . . for a reimagining [or re-storying] of how to shape the outcome" (Council for Higher Education (CHE), 2017, p. 2) serves an understanding of quality higher education that is purposeful with the potential to be transformative. Such transformation could begin to heal a broken society through "increasing understanding, reducing prejudice and expanding toleration" (Chidester, 2008, p. 273), protecting the dignity and human rights of all peoples (Gupta & Vegelin, 2016).

Decoloniality focuses on the iniquitous balance of power around the globe, with special reference to the global north and global south, theoretically, epistemologically, and pragmatically. However, it is equally about examining prejudicial relationships within and between African continental partners (Sium et al., 2012). Decolonial theory suggests that the historical philosophy of colonialism is premised on a process of othering and that the polarity of difference between those who other and those who are othered has to be addressed. ERDR, as a teaching-learning strategy, serves a decolonial agenda, changing the way in which teaching-learning takes place, by contributing to debates against xenophobia, including how colonial othering continues to pervade relations within and between African countries.

The concept of ubuntu "calls for an ontology of co-being and coexisting" (De Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 10). Ubuntu principles, linked with humaneness, sharing and cooperation, and the spirit of participatory humanism (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015; Letseka, 2014; Mangena, 2012; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013) are implemented since this strategy allows the curriculum to be shaped by all stakeholders. The participants become agents of their own learning as they engage in a way that is transdisciplinary, engaging in the space between, across, and beyond academic disciplines (McGregor & Volckmann, 2013; Nicolescu 2005, 2012). They move to a place "where they become open to others' perspectives . . . letting go of aspects of how they currently know the world" (McGregor & Volckmann, 2013, p. 62). ERDR creates the opportunity for participants to explore various perspectives and positions with regard to the other, with the possibility of generating new understandings (Nicolescu, 2005) that have the potential to be socially transformative. Social inclusion contributes to the well-being of all people, including migrants described as those leaving their country of citizenship to stay and live in another country, for whatever reason (Carnemolla et al., 2021; Felix, 2016). These migrants rarely experience inclusion in broader communities. On the

contrary, their lived experience is that of social isolation. By promoting empathetic-reflective-dialogical engagement, classroom praxis could well serve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8 (United Nations, 2012) that focuses on social inclusion.

ERDR has been implemented previously with groups of pre-service teachers in South Africa (SA) to consider human rights issues and best practice in teaching (Jarvis, 2018, 2021a, 2021b; Jarvis & Mthiyane, 2018, 2019; Jarvis et al., 2018, 2021). In 2020, in support of the March 2019 National Action Plan in SA to address racism, including xenophobia, we undertook a small-scale research project, employing ERDR, at a Higher Education Institution, and, more specifically, in the School of Education where pre-service teachers were given the opportunity to engage with the phenomenon of xenophobia.

The phenomenon of xenophobia

Xenophobia is a global phenomenon fuelled by rising fundamentalisms and protections of nation-states and their borders in reaction to neo-liberal market forces ushered in by globalisation (Chao et al., 2017; Haslam & Hollard, 2012; Kinge, 2016; Munro, 2017). Powerful nationalistic forces are associated with this, and these, in turn, have shown themselves to be capable of reinforcing xenophobic attitudes (Hjerm, 1998). Such attitudes manifest themselves strongly in more economically developed countries that are able to generate more employment opportunities in attracting labour migrants from less developed countries.

Xenophobia, with its social, political, and economic roots that are closely intertwined, could be considered a product of the colonial project of reinforcing differences of groups of individuals based on race and so-called nationhoods (essentialist nationlisms). The construct of nationhood is increasingly being challenged as the world becomes more intersected (entangled) through coerced or natural migration across previously hardened and defined boundaries/borders (Calhoun,1993).

Xenophobia has been defined as a strong dislike, prejudice against, or fear of people from other countries (Hornby, 2005). Attitudes, prejudices, and behaviours that exclude individuals based on perceptions and stereotyping lead to discrimination (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2017). Xenophobia is an attitudinal orientation of great hostility against those who are not locals, and they are, accordingly, often prey to victimisation (Petkou, 2006). The tendency exists for people to categorize those similar to them as the ingroup and people different to them as the outgroup. Hostility towards the latter is inevitable since the outgroup is viewed as a threat (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). On the level of a national collective, categorisation of ingroups and outgroups plays a major role in the perpetuation of xenophobia. Ingroup members (the locals) consider migrants as less than themselves and react negatively towards them during encounters.

The African continent has not been spared, with xenophobic sentiments rife in countries including Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Tanzania. Almost without exception, xenophobic incidents and attacks have been fuelled by hatred of foreign

Africans, called *Amakwerekwere* (Kinge, 2016). This term originated in SA and is now used in other African countries in referring disparagingly to migrants who are believed to pose a threat to the wellbeing of locals (Kinge, 2016; Ngwane, 2016). According to the Citizens Rights in Africa Initiative of 2009 (cited in Misago et al., 2015), the racial segregation and isolation under apartheid created fertile ground for xenophobia by creating "racialised notions of identity and worth, which encouraged Black South Africans to see themselves not only as inferior to whites, but also as separate from the rest of the continent" (p. 93). In addition, separation and compartmentalisation of various populations was encouraged as a means of governance and this discouraged integration or contact between groups**.** Apartheid was premised on the notion of difference, stressing the difference between white and black, teaching black people that they were the other and, therefore, teaching whites to other black people. The spate of xenophobia in South Africa (post-apartheid) has been variously regarded as the dark side of democracy, a new pathology, apartheid vertigo and substantiation of the demonic nature of the society (Bonga, 2021; Crush & Ramachandran, 2014). Xenophobia in the South African context tends to equate those they see as foreigners with African migrants, not with European or American immigrants. Sium et al. (2012, p. iii) have spoken of this as complicity with the political legacy of colonialism in the way in which difference and separation continue to be manifested both in SA and globally.

The scapegoating hypothesis of xenophobia states that the foreigner is used as a scapegoat, to be blamed for many of the country's socio-economic ills, and, thereby, becoming a target for hostility and violence (Amisi et al., 2011; Maringe et al., 2017; Misago, 2011; Peberdy & Crush, 1998). The very term *foreigner* indicates *othering*. The Pew Research Poll of 2018 (Tamir & Budiman, 2019) showed that 62% of South Africans viewed migrants as a burden on society in their taking jobs and social benefits, and they were considered to be more responsible for crime than other groups. During the recent Covid-19 pandemic and especially during harsh lockdown measures, attitudes of discrimination, dislike, and hatred became increasingly evident. There are several accounts of xenophobic attacks in SA along with the appearance of anti-migrant slogans such as *Phansi Ngama Kwerekwere* (down with foreigners).

There are two categories of migrants, namely illegal immigrants (referring to migrants who do not have the authorisation of the South African authorities) and legal immigrants (migrants who are in possession of a valid work visa). The Constitution of the Republic of SA (Republic of SA, 1996) protects the rights of all people in SA, including immigrants. Everyone in the country is entitled to human rights by virtue of being human. In order to work in SA, immigrants require a valid work visa and employers are required to ensure that they do not employ illegal immigrants.

Notwithstanding the systemic roots of xenophobia and mindful of underlying xenophobic attitudes at the Higher Education Institute (HEI) where this small-scale research project took place, we sought, in the interests of social inclusivity, to address this human rights issue by engaging pre-service teachers in a consideration of their own position with regard to migrants and the way in which they are treated by South Africans. The premise driving this research is

that a society free of xenophobia will not be possible if generations are not educated to become agents of inclusion and conscious of living in harmony with people who do not belong to the same group. Building an understanding of what it means to be inclusive of migrants could, possibly, build a pathway to connected communities and opportunities to foster a sense of belonging, and social inclusivity that is sustainable (Carnemolla et al., 2021).

Theoretical framework

Against this theoretical analysis of the origins and consequences of xenophobia and, in particular, the historical philosophy of colonialism that is premised on othering, intergroup perception theory provides a framework for understanding the perceptions, causes, and consequences of the social categorisation that creates conflict (Kawakami et al., 2017). Categorisation of the ingroup and the outgroup, or outsiders, is dependent on identifying and emphasising similarities and differences between groups of people (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). When people are categorized into either the ingroup or the outgroup, this dramatically influences identification, stereotyping, intergroup conflict, and group relations (Kawakami et al., 2017). Locals are regarded as *us* and migrants as *them*. Intergroup perception theory shows how the attitudes associated with this categorisation can manifest as xenophobia. The way in which people perceive themselves is determined by how they understand, perceive, and interact with others in a social environment (Kawakami et al., 2017).

Intergroup contact theory speaks to social cohesion enhanced by tolerance, mutual respect, acceptance, and understanding of each group. Graf and Paolini (2016) advocate for the establishment of common ground between the ingroups and outgroups. For this to take place preconceived ideas need to be revisited. Such preconceptions by locals include the notion that migrants are criminals, and that their aim is to steal jobs and positions that rightfully belong to the locals (Otu, 2017). Migrants are then targeted and abused, often violently, in a quest to protect what locals think belongs to them (Kawakami, et al., 2017).

Methodology

We undertook the research within a feminist research paradigm adopting narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Craig, 2011) as the research approach. Forty pre-service teachers in Social Sciences in Education Honours registered for the module called *Perspectives in Social Sciences Education*, at a South African HEI agreed to participate in this study. It so happened that all the participants were black African, South African citizens. As researchers, we positioned ourselves as facilitators guiding the research process. Given Covid-19, engagement took place via Zoom and WhatsApp and written narratives were submitted via email. The ethical protocols of the HEI were followed including our receiving consent from each of the participants, who also consented to our recording the Zoom sessions. Limitations in this study became apparent when only 26 participants were able to engage via Zoom because of inadequate network coverage, load shedding, or lack of data. Another limitation is that the participants all belong to one ethnic group and the findings could well have been

different had they come from various ethnic groups and had included migrants. Possible future research could consider this.

ERDR provided the opportunity to re-search in a way that decolonises interviews as typically western methods of data collection (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Rather, an opportunity was created for seeking to engage in a re-search context that was safe. Participants met in a figuratively safe space, both in terms of dignity and intellect (Callan, 2016). Callan (2016) defined dignity safe as being free from any reasonable anxiety that others will treat one as inferior; this means that all contributions have legitimacy. This was also a brave space (Arao & Clemens, 2013) since participants were required to challenge previously held positions, often rooted in deep-seated prejudices, with regard to migrants. Participants took responsibility for the generation of new knowledges and by so doing, become agents of their own learning. This disruptive learning (Mills, 1997), encouraging the participants to identify and challenge assumptions, relies on the participants' participation, with their being honest with themselves as they confront prejudices and stereotypes. If there had been migrants in the group, this learning may well have been more challenging.

ERDR, with five levels of engagement, provided the framework for these pre-service teachers to explore their self-dialogue with regard to their understandings and lived experiences of xenophobia. A visual participatory method was introduced in the interests of generating, interpreting, and communicating knowledge (Morris & Parish, 2022), with the intention of shedding light on the political, cultural, and ethical dynamics of xenophobia in SA. We acknowledge that the video clips (level 1) might impose a particular way of thinking about xenophobia, either presenting stakeholders as demonised or as heroic (see Bagnoli, 2009). Participants may also have seen themselves at the centre of a relational world with no opportunity to express an individual perspective. However, the use of collage (level 3) afforded an opportunity to deconstruct the work of representation and to explore stereotypical responses.

Level 1

Hermans's dialogical-self theory provides a link between self and society (Hermans, 2011; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) advocating that the dialogical self is multi-voiced, private but also collective, and that individuals live not only in external spaces, but also in the internal space of their society-of-mind. The dialogical self in action (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007) takes place when the individual, engaged in self-dialogue about xenophobic attitudes, to an internal audience in their society-of-mind, considers their own positionality, and possibly adopts a counter-position to a dominant narrative such as that of othering. This counter-position assists them to move from one position to another in their society-of-mind as a way of gaining an understanding about themselves in relation to the world (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010); in this case, in relation to migrants and the dominant narrative of xenophobia.

The participants were shown three video clips each depicting xenophobic attacks in SA. In the first migrants are blamed for stealing jobs, committing crime, promoting prostitution, and

engaging in illegal narcotics trade. The overriding sentiment expressed in this clip is that the migrants should be punished. The second clip captures scenes of xenophobic violence with migrants being aggressively threatened and told to go back to their countries. There is the possibility that watching these clips could have predisposed students to reinforce their own xenophobic attitudes. However, the third clip explores the notion of possibly learning from and working together collaboratively with skilled migrants.

The participants were then asked to consider the following in their self-dialogue to an internal audience: their understanding of the phenomenon of xenophobia; how they feel about migrants living in SA; their possible lived experience of xenophobic attitudes; and their considered position with regard to xenophobia. By considering these questions participants would be required to think about the phenomenon of xenophobia and why African migrants are othered and what the consequences are for these people. They would be required to reflect on their own possible xenophobic attitudes.

Level 2

The participants were asked to capture their self-dialogue (level 1) in the form of a written self-narrative. This written form of their dialogical self in action can play a central role in fragmenting master narratives (Spry, 2001). Scholars have emphasised the importance of individual agency that is borne of being able to tell your own story (McAdams, 2011; Riessman, 2008). As participants construct their own meaning, translating their self-dialogue into their written narrative, the potential exists for them to create an alternative to a dominant narrative (Tsang, 2000), such as that of xenophobia. As participants author themselves in self-narration they are engaged in a "dialogic experience that encompasses the multitude of discourses that shape life experiences" (White, 2012, p. 30) and the potential exists for them to reclaim themselves by identifying their own positionality regarding relation to othering and then employ agency to reposition themselves (Nuttall, 2009; White, 2012).

Level 3

Visual methods can articulate written self-narratives in a way that can shed light on participants' understanding and positionality with regard to the political, cultural, and ethical dynamics of xenophobia in SA since images can travel in ways that words cannot (Glaw et al., 2017, Morris & Parish, 2022). Meaning is constituted by representation, by what is present, what is absent, and what is different (Bagnoli, 2009). When dialoguing about sensitive and possibly emotive issues, such as xenophobia, that might be difficult to articulate textually or verbally, using a visual representation, namely, a collage, served to provide the participants with the opportunity to consider their position regarding relation to their other (in this case, migrants) and to synthesise and contextualise their responses (Pink et al., 2011; Winton, 2016). They could exercise agency by possibly dis-identifying with and adopting a counter-position to the master/popular narrative with regard to xenophobia. The participants took control of their construction of these collages. Particular attention was paid to what they made visible and also to what was absent.

Some participants constructed hard copy collages while others did so digitally. The collages were shared via Zoom and participants were equipped with the skills required to scan and save hard copy collages and taught how to share their screens. For the most part this was successful, given the limitations referred to previously. In a Community in Dialogue (CiD) (level 4) participants would be able to speak to these visual representations to an external audience.

Level 4

A CiD, referred to by Chilisa (2012, p. 212) as a "Talking [Circle]" promoted the opportunity for reciprocal exchanges based on tolerant and empathetic understanding. This approach refers to the capacity to understand and respond to one another with an increased awareness of the other person's position and concerns, and recognising that these matter (Barton & Garvis, 2019).

The participants met online, via Zoom, to share their self-narratives expressed through collage (level 3). Dialogue reflected different positionalities in response to, *inter alia*, understandings of the root cause of xenophobic violence in SA and the consequences of an exclusionary xenophobic attitude. Participants were given the opportunity at the end of the CiD to listen to the testimony of a Rwandan refugee who fled the genocide in his country after losing seventeen family members, and who now resides in SA. This powerful disrupting testimony brought the lived experience of a migrant who is now a legal immigrant into the virtual classroom space. While in levels 1–3 the opportunity was afforded to consciously challenge othering, this testimony was pivotal in redirecting the trajectory of the possible reinforcement of othering. This disruption, moving the participants out of their comfort zones (see Mills, 1997), was key to leveraging re-storying of previously held narratives of othering.

Level 5

A Community for Transformation (CfT) followed the CiD with the aim of reflecting on ERDR as a teaching-learning strategy for transformed teaching praxis. In particular, participants were asked to consider the possible value that ERDR could add to lessons focusing on human rights issues, such as xenophobia, with the aim of promoting social inclusivity that is sustainable. The participants were encouraged to be reflective, thinking back on their own engagement in ERDR, each step of the process, and possible transformation in their own attitudes. They were asked individually to commit their reflections in a written piece for submission and, in particular, to write about possible re-storying that took the place of their previously held xenophobic attitudes.

Findings and discussion

The findings are drawn from the CiD (level 4) and from the CfT (level 5), and are presented according to three themes: ingroup and outgroup; efficacy of ERDR; and ERDR for transformed classroom praxis. Pseudonyms are used throughout in the interests of anonymity.

While the term migrant has been used throughout this article, some participants used the othering term, *foreigner* and this is retained in their verbatim quotations.

Ingroup and outgroup

It became clear that the participants had a good understanding of what xenophobia is, with several having had lived experiences of holding xenophobic attitudes towards migrants. One of the participants, Bongani, recounted what happened to his friend's father, a legal immigrant.

> My friend's father had opened a clothing shop in town and Mangosuthu Buthelezi had announced that illegal migrants should go back to their respective countries. The next few days South African citizens organized a violent march. They raided his shop and took all his stock, he was left with no goods sell. He had lost money to feed his family.

He went on to explain the devastation this caused his friend and the family, emphasising that it is not only illegal migrants that are subjected to xenophobic violence.

Lindo had a similar experience in 2019 when country-wide, violent xenophobic attacks were prevalent.

> Some people in my area took it into their own hands to break in and demolish migrants' shops and stole stock and gave them a beating claiming that they were taking away opportunities for them to make money.

He went on to say that while he was against this behaviour, there were many members in the community who were very supportive thereof. This anti-migrant sentiment was endorsed by Andile, Thabile, and Zanele.

Andile stated his position clearly when he said,

> I feel like they are over populating our country, increasing the percentages of poverty and unemployment. As much as we are one as Africans, but I feel intimidated when I get to a particular work place with my qualification and get to be told that the vacancy has been filled by a migrant and I [become one of] the large number of unemployed graduates in SA.

According to Thabile,

> [M]ost of them [migrants] are here in SA illegally, and others, their passports being expired. They have occupied most buildings of an area, selling drugs, making SA's women prostitutes. Killings and crime rate reportedly have increased . . .

Zanele stated that she is not happy with migrants living in SA. She contended that

> since the arrival of migrants, unemployment rate increased in our communities. Local employers, particular Indians, are no longer interested in employing local South Africans but are employing migrants because they are cheap to hire.

She specifically blamed Nigerians for the perceived increase in drug peddling and usage and contended that "they [the Nigerians] are using our young girls to work for them in their clubs as prostitutes." Amanda concurred, citing an increase in human trafficking. She did concede however, that migrants can contribute to the South African economy saying that

> migrants are equipped with skills that us South Africans do not have. They are cognitive well-developed and they can turn what we consider as trash into a product, and that can impact greatly in the South African economic development. They seem to be doing well for themselves because of the long hours they put in their work.

Zanele also conceded that

> the main cause of xenophobia violence or attack in SA is that migrants are hardworking and succeeding accordingly. South Africans are jealous that foreign nationals are succeeding in doing business.

This ambivalence towards illegal migrants was also expressed by Sabelo who said that he was raised "knowing that calling foreigners by Kwerekwere [insulting] words is right" and that this influenced him to think that "foreigners deserve attacks and violation of rights." He provided an example of a Zimbabwean science teacher, in a particular South African school, who was promoted to Head of the Science by the school principal (a promotion for which he also had to pay said principal). This teacher was then "attacked by community members and jealous teachers who thought a foreigner not deserving of being promoted." Sabelo said he agreed with the community, and their behaviour served to entrench his xenophobic attitude towards foreigners.

It became clear that the social categorisation of ingroups (locals) and outgroups (migrants) has created conflict (Kawakami et al., 2017; Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). The use of language including *us* and *them*, and the *other*, entrenches this polarisation. Conflict appears to be founded largely on perception, fear, and suspicion. A generalisation was made, based on specific examples, that all migrants are up to no good and that their aim is to take jobs away from locals and to promote drug abuse, prostitution, and other related criminal activities (see Otu, 2017).

Jerome commented on the role played by social media in promoting this social categorisation that underpins xenophobic attitudes when he said,

> Social Media has a power to influence a community whether the report is valid or just a propaganda. This then creates an image or conclusion about what is being said in a report, video, or magazine about foreigners. I have seen many videos circulating on social media where foreigners being involved on many evil acts . . . this has then led me not trusting foreigners anymore, especially African foreigners.

Amanda concurred but added that social media seldom, if ever, records any positive contribution made to South African society by migrants. She said that

> [t]he media always projects us with what we seek for, to feed our mind set. We always seeking someone to blame with regards the challenges we face and not own up to our own mistakes. For example, the media will show us the drugs trafficked by a Nigerian to South African borders but will not show you the number of foreign doctors who [save] lives in our hospitals and clinics.

The participants noted that one of the video clips in particular, shown at the beginning of the ERDR process, did the same. However, the third clip offered a different perspective that drew their attention.

Thabo made an interesting contribution to the discussion when he said that he faced xenophobia in what he referred to as "a cultural manner." He explained,

> I did not experience it from other countries but within the boundaries of my country. I have travelled to other provinces where they spoke different language and cultural norms were different from where I came from. Some of the people would laugh at me when I ask questions in middle language (English) they would respond with their Setswana language just to tease me. Basically, my experience was about the differences of language and culture not to mention that I was from KwaZulu-Natal, which made them feel threatened in some sort way due to the propaganda that says Zulu people are violent people.

It would appear that it is difficult to establish common ground between perceived ingroups and outgroups, even, as in the case of Thabo's experience, when crossing provincial borders, let alone international ones (see Misago, 2011). In this article, we advocate for the inclusion of empathetic-reflective-dialogical engagement with groups of people, such as the participants in this small-scale project. These engagements, infused with empathy and mutual respect, could contribute to social cohesion by unpacking xenophobic attitudes founded on perception and by establishing common ground between the ingroups and outgroups (see Graf & Paolini, 2016).

Efficacy of ERDR

In the CfT, participants reflected that they are far more aware of their self-dialogue (level 1) to an internal audience in their society-of-mind and how this determines their othering attitudes. They said that each step of the process contributed to sensitising them to the possibilities of their dialogical self in action (see Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007).

Thabo expressed the opinion that the CiD

> provides informal sharing of information in a good condition of a space. This is a good approach when dealing with the issues such as xenophobia . . . conversation refers to negotiations and collaboration. Meaning that different opinions, perspectives,

> and personal experiences from different people can collaborate their understanding of who is foreign, why there are issues such as xenophobia and how can we integrate those perspectives and deal with this matter.

For Jabu,

> ERDR provided me with the opportunity to empathetically search for meaning and understanding of xenophobia which are different from my own as I engaged in discussions with the whole class.

Bongi concurred, saying that ERDR "is a good strategy. . . it allows people the ability to view the world through the lens of other people." She was referring to the video clips that showed the violent abuse of migrants and, in particular, the clip that explored the notion of possibly learning from and working collaboratively with skilled migrants. The refugee testimony also impacted many of the participants, including Bongi, dispelling, as it did, the perception that all migrants are criminals. Lawrence illustrated this saying that

> [i]t is important to look at an issue from different perspectives. . . having looked at different sides of the story about the xenophobic attacks I have come to realise that it is not always the case that people leave the countries for engaging in illegal activities in SA.

Thabile, who initially displayed strong anti-migrant sentiments (see above), concluded that the empathetic-reflective approach promoted in ERDR was helpful. She said that

> ERDR takes one through the process of empathy, which is putting yourself in somebody else's shoes and look at a situation from their point of view. It then goes on to allow one to reflect after witnessing what others have been going through, to think about what one can change so that one will not repeat the same mistakes.

Thabile is an example of a participant who underwent a re-storying of her previously held narrative. The same can be said for Zanele who had previously presented with ambivalent feelings towards migrants (see above). A few weeks after the conclusion of the module, she sent one of the researchers an email saying that she had, once again, listened to the audio testimony of the Rwandan refugee. She said,

> Thank you so much for opening my eyes on xenophobia. I never knew how this is so serious. I cried when am listening to this story. . . my heart just [aching]. . . This is a sad story. I so wish everyone especially South Africans can hear this message. #No to Xenophobia #We are all Foreigners somewhere.

Several participants expressed the view that ERDR can be transformative, promoting as it does, social inclusivity that could be sustainable. Jerome said,

> ERDR gave me a chance to hear other people's perspective regarding xenophobia violence in SA. . . and to change how I used to understand xenophobia violence. I

> used not to blame South African people when attacking foreigners. But after watching the videos and engaging with Zoom discussion, I was convinced that there is no need to be xenophobic to migrants. We are all African no matter the differences we may have regarding dress code, language, and country of origin.

Nonhlanhla said that she found hearing the different perspectives of her peers, coming from different backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures, nothing less than inspiring. After the CfT, she reflected again on her self-dialogue and how she initially positioned herself with regard to xenophobia attitudes. She concluded that participating in ERDR

> has only made my feelings and beliefs about this human rights issue stronger. . . I still stand firmly and believe that no one should be living in fear because they chose to uplift themselves, no matter which part of the world you [are] in . . .

ERDR for transformed classroom praxis

Thabile observed that learners who are exposed to violent xenophobic attacks are taught that

> It [is] okay to beat people up and vandalize resources if you want to be heard . . . the children take what they see outside of school inside the classroom. You would find them bullying and being racist towards the foreigners and sometimes towards other learners that are South African, but from a different ethnic group.

In response to this observation, Zoleka commented, in particular, on the value of using ERDR as a teaching-learning strategy in the classroom, for transformative teaching praxis. She said that

> ERDR. . . as a strategy to engage with issues such as xenophobia could be of a high value because it will allow teachers to mediate or facilitate knowledge and skills concerning human rights in education.

Thabo expressed the opinion that ERDR, employed in the classroom, "could identify challenges and possibilities for constructive engagement that can result in new dynamics of understanding of xenophobia and that can as well lead to [transformatory] action."

Sandi concluded that

> [t]he curriculum needs to be adjusted [to include] strategies such as empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying as a teaching and learning strategy as it gives learners and teachers an opportunity for self-introspection and thereafter makes changes to initial myths and perceptions. Empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying would be effective in the classroom as daily, teachers deal with learners from a diverse cultural background . . . [and] sensitive issues in human rights may make learners shy away from the topic or display hostility against other learners in the classroom. Through the various levels in this teaching-learning strategy, the experience of learning becomes more enriched.

Conclusion

In this article, we have attempted to provide a theoretical basis for the phenomenon of xenophobia and, in particular, the colonial legacy of othering that extends to migrants from Africa. We have offered a methodological approach to considering xenophobic attitudes, as was employed with pre-service teaching in an African HEI. This teaching-learning strategy provided the framework for participants to engage dialogically, empathetically, and reflectively in a space in which, following Ipgrave (2016), they were open to the possibility of learning from the other. ERDR provided the opportunity for the participants to think critically about social categorisation, to discuss this, and begin the process of deconstructing it. They became empowered agents of change. There was evidence of re-storying of previous narratives of othering and the co-production of new knowledges occurred as new interpretations of perceptions were applied in the light of clarified, or new, understandings (see Foote, 2015; Slabon et al., 2014; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016).

We believe that while these participants engaged in ERDR they experienced teaching against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Reyes et al., 2021) and the possibilities to move from "technical educators to teacher leaders and educational advocates" (Batchelor & Sander, 2017, p. 3). Such transformed teaching praxis could possibly provide a pathway for education that is socially inclusive and sustainable.

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